

Independent Panel Report on a Provider's Programme Review

Provider	National College of Ireland
Programme(s) Reviewed	Master of Science in International Business Postgraduate Diploma in International Business

Independent Panel Members

Name	Role on Panel	Affiliation
Danny Brennan	Chair	Former Registrar, Letterkenny IT and Principal, DNB Education Consultants
Michael Kelly	Recording Secretary	Education & Training Consultant
James Collins	Subject Matter Expert	Technical University Shannon
Stefan Jooss	Subject Matter Expert	University College Cork
Dan Taylor	Subject Matter Expert	University of South Wales
Siobhan Kinsella	Industry Representative	Noel Recruitment Group
Keeva Carpenter	Learner Representative	Postgraduate Student, Griffith College

All members of the independent panel declared their independence of National College of Ireland and that they have no conflict of interest.

INTRODUCTION

The National College of Ireland (NCI) or Coláiste Náisiúnta na hÉireann (CNÉ) is a not-for-profit, state aided third-level education institution based in central Dublin. Its mission has been to change lives through access to further education by bringing innovative learning to all areas of Irish society. This social justice heritage carries through to NCI's business education programmes, placing business in the context of the wider society. Furthermore, NCI places a strong emphasis on the needs of the learner and provides a range of learning options that extend beyond traditional classroom dynamics.

NCI has approximately 5,500 learners enrolled on programmes within two Schools – Business and Computing. NCI offers 120 full-time and part-time QQI accredited programmes, across Business, Computing, Education, ICT and Psychology at Levels 6-9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). NCI also provides programmes in conjunction with a number of professional training organisations.

NCI successfully completed the QQI Re-Engagement process in June 2019, wherein NCI's Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES) and Handbook were formally approved.

Part 1. EVALUATION PROCESS

1.1 Documents Supplied to the Panel

Document Type	Document Name
Programme Review Report	Master of Science and Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business Provider Programme Review Report – 16 Nov 2021
Self-Evaluation Report	Master of Science in International Business Programme Validation Self-Evaluation against Criteria for Validation – November 2021
Revalidation Descriptor	Master of Science in International Business / Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business Programme Revalidation – November 2021 – Version 2
Terms of Reference	Postgraduate Business Programmes - Terms of Reference, November 2021
Postgraduate Business Modules	Summary Sheet - PG Business Modules
Postgraduate Business Programmes - Common Spine	Summary Sheet & Graphic Explanation
Current & Historic Module Overview	Postgraduate Business Modules (2015 v. 2021)
Staff CVs	Programme Revalidation - Postgraduate Business Programmes - Appendix 3 - Staff CVs, Nov 2021

Postgraduate Business Modules - detailed module descriptors	Programme Revalidation - Postgraduate Business Programmes - Appendix 1 – School of Business Postgraduate Modules, Nov 2021
Postgraduate Business Modules - sample assessments	Programme Revalidation - Postgraduate Business Programmes - Appendix 2 – Sample Assessments, Nov 2021
External Examiner reports	External Examiner reports 2018-2020

1.2 Provider's Representatives Met

Person	Role / Job Title
Prof Jimmy Hill	Vice President Academic Affairs & Research
Dr Colette Darcy	Dean of School of Business and Programme Director
Karen Jones	Registrar (designate)/Director of Quality Assurance and Statistical Services
Fabián Armendáriz	Lecturer in Entrepreneurship
David McCarthy	Quality and Institutional Effectiveness Specialist
John McGarrigle	Registrar & Company Secretary
Karen Murray BL	Lecturer in Law
Dr Paul Hanly	Lecturer in Economics
Victor Del Rosal	Lecturer, School of Computing
Dr Gerard Loughnane	Lecturer in Statistics
David Hurley	Assoc Lecturer in Entrepreneurship
William Hogan	Facilitator, Enterprise Simulation module
Dr Michelle Killian	Lecturer in Marketing & Entrepreneurship
Dr Philip McGovern	Associate Lecturer in Strategy & Management
Dr Louise Maguire	Lecturer in Marketing
Frances Keating	Lecturer (Assoc Faculty - School of Business)
Rob McDonald	Lecturer (Assoc Faculty - School of Business)
Anne Cooper	Lecturer in Accounting
Theresa Mulcahy	Lecturer in Accounting
Dr David Mothersill	Lecturer in Psychology

Karina Septore	Careers Advisor, Careers Office
Rachel Smith	Programme Coordinator, School of Business
Karen Mooney	Student Support Supervisor
Mary Buckley	Librarian
Leah Kinsella	Programme Coordinator, School of Business
Sheila Mahon	International Officer

1.3 Description of evaluation process

During November 2021, the NCI QA team, working in conjunction with the School of Business, provided the QQI review panel with a suite of documentation and related materials for the Programme Review and Revalidation process.

The QQI review panel comprised a Chair and three Subject Matter Experts, plus external Industry and Learner Representatives, together with a Report Writer.

The Programme Review process followed NCI's own internal quality assurance (QA) processes which in turn are aligned with QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*. Reviews normally occur at five-yearly intervals, although the planned review had been extended by a further two years due to external factors. The review was framed against ten objectives with an approach which included a consideration of stakeholder feedback, historic programme performance and other data sources,

The suite of Postgraduate Business Programmes to be reviewed covered revalidation of seven existing programmes related to the four principal awards, plus a further four new proposed awards (exit/micro-credentials). Panel members carried out a desktop review of the Programme Revalidation documentation in late November 2021 prior to a site visit which took place in early December 2021. Due to the restrictions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, the panel review was arranged online via MS Teams. The panel followed a structured agenda covering the twelve QQI criteria for validation over the two days of the virtual site visit, with online sessions with representatives of NCI's academic and QA management, teaching and support staff, plus learner representatives. This report has been prepared using oral evidence arising from these discussions together with information contained in supporting documents. The report has been reviewed by the panel prior to signing by the Chair.

Part 2. PANEL FINDINGS ON PROVIDER PROGRAMME REVIEW REPORT

The following is the panel's commentary and recommendations on the provider's Programme Review Report. It follows the section structure of the report in headings and in sequence. References to specific parts of the provider report will use the relevant report reference, e.g. 2.2.4 Programme Management.

Section A. Context and Terms of Reference for the Programme Review

At the outset, the panel would like to commend the School of Business on the quality of the documentation presented. The consistent clear presentation made the task of navigating the documents considerably easier.

Commentary:

The panel is satisfied that NCI's response to the most recent Programme Review Report was appropriate and comprehensive.

The panel has reviewed the Terms of Reference for the review, agreed with QQI, and in particular the Special Consideration included therein. The panel is satisfied that the Special Considerations are appropriate to a programmatic review process that must take account of developments in the institution. Such considerations include changes to NCI's academic strategy, its teaching, learning and assessment strategy, the changing needs of international students and new QQI guidelines including Blended Learning and the institution's capacity to deliver programmes effectively in all proposed modes.

The panel is satisfied that the Terms of Reference are appropriate and comprehensive.

Recommendations:

None

Section B. Provider Information and Programme Context

Commentary:

The panel has reviewed NCI's overall mission and strategy as articulated in the Programme Review Report. It commends NCI on its mission of widening access to education and the modalities employed to achieve this. The panel commends the School of Business for its development of an ambitious School Strategy that has transformed it from a teaching-only focused institution to one which is research active. This strategy is based on the three pillars of Student Engagement, Research Excellence and Global Community. The School also has ambitions to secure International Business School accreditation.

The panel is supportive of the School's proposal in the current review in building a suite of programmes off a single spine and to develop this concept further in the future with a new suite of executive education programmes, aimed at post experience graduates seeking to upskill or fill a skills deficit within their current competencies.

The panel is particularly impressed with the development of a set of School of Business Programme Learning Outcomes that ensures that all programmes and modules within its programmes, speak directly to the mission of the School.

The management of programmes outlined in the Programme Review Report, including the operation of programme committees as sub-committees of the School Committee, should ensure the effective operation of programmes.

The panel is supportive of the design of the programmes where the Master of Science in Management forms the spine of a suite of NFQ Level 9 programmes, including the Master of Science in Entrepreneurship and the Master of Science in International Business, offered within the School of Business. This should have the effect of giving students a realistic choice of a wider range of electives.

The panel supports the programme's suite of modules as presented. This suite of modules arose from a detailed exercise based on consideration of all the appropriate inputs to a comprehensive programmatic review process, as detailed in this report. Some modules were retired and replaced with more appropriate modules, and existing modules were subject to a detailed refreshment process to bring them up to date and ensure their ongoing relevance. The panel is supportive of the resulting suite of modules. Notwithstanding this, the panel believes that the programme would benefit from more explicit references to the circular economy, sustainability and ethics and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Recommendations:

1. Having reviewed the programmes as presented, the panel believes that the School might consider having more explicit references in the programme material to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the circular economy and the treatment of sustainability and ethics in the curriculum, which the panel believes is fundamental to the education and training of business graduates at Level 9.
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Section C. **Baseline qualitative and quantitative information**

Programme Data Overview

This section will include the panel's views on any or all of the following topics covered in the provider's review report: Applications, Enrolment, Attrition Transfer and Progression, Award Classification and Graduate Destinations

Commentary:

The panel understands that there are some limitations to the detail that the current Management Information Systems can provide. Notwithstanding this, the School has provided a comprehensive analysis of data relating to the programme. In respect of the enrolment date the panel agrees that the economies arising from the design of the Master of Science in International Business as a single stage programme, sharing a number of modules with the MSc in Management and MSc Entrepreneurship, should ensure the future viability of the programme, particularly in part-time mode where the numbers are relatively weak.

In section 3.1.2 the School has provided a comprehensive review of enrolment data for the programme model of delivery, by academic year and gender, by age and by domestic/international students. Full-time enrolment, with two intakes per annum, is relatively healthy, while enrolment on the part-time programme is less so. It has also provided comparative data from a number of HEIs offering similar programmes. The panel believes the School's analysis of this range data supports the structural changes proposed.

The panel supports the School's decision to seek validation for the Postgraduate Diploma programme as a stand-alone programme. This will have the effect of removing the current requirement that only those learners who have attempted, and failed, the dissertation element of the full Master of Science in Management may apply for an exit award of the postgraduate diploma.

The panel reviewed the analysis of completion data provided in section 3.1.3 of the documentation in absolute and percentage terms. The School's analysis of completion rate data for both full-time and part-time modes of delivery shows the rates are consistently high. Following one year where completion rates dropped, the School put in place additional supports that resulted in significant improvements in completion rates.

The panel considered the School's response to its analysis of award classifications in section 3.1.4. The number of H1 classifications is low, and behind other QQI institutions in that regard. It improves with the part-time cohort. The number of H2 and Pass award classifications is in line with other institutions. The statement that 'the Programme Team are keen to maintain the high standards which are currently in place and there is a recognition that for some learners, particularly those travelling for the purpose of study, that it is difficult to achieve a consistently high standard from the very outset', is understandable, but may not provide a comprehensive answer given that a number of other providers will also have an international cohort of learners. The factors involved are likely to be multifaceted, with no single issue dominant. While the matter is discussed at programme board meetings, perhaps there is a case for conducting a wider review in the interests of fairness and consistency. Such a review might focus on programme design and implementation, for example pre-entry educational attainment or a comparative review of overall student workload, to check if there are any significant contributory factors that may be amenable to amelioration, other than through providing additional supports. The initiative relating to increasing the focus on orientation for new students is welcomed in this regard. It may be that the reduction in the assessment burden may also lead to an increase in the number of H1 grades awarded.

The destinations of the graduate of the programme detailed in section 3.1.5, show very high employment rates, which compare favourably with other programmes.

Recommendations:

1. The panel supports the speedy implementation of NCI's new Flexible Curriculum System.
2. The School should continue to review the low numbers of H1s awarded, particularly in the full-time cohort, to check if there are programme design or operational issues that may be contributory factors.

Programme Delivery and Teaching & Learning Strategies

This section will include the panel's views on any or all of the following topics covered in the provider's review report: Physical Facilities and Resources, Timetabling, Learner Workload, Attendance, Teacher Learner Ratios, Community of Practice Learning, Teaching and Learning Strategies, Learning Outcomes achieved, Assessment Strategies.

Commentary:

NCI, like all higher education providers, was forced to react very quickly to the situation it found itself in with the Covid-19 pandemic. The panel commends the School on the pro-active continuing investment in its online delivery methodologies, including its physical facilities and the upskilling of its faculty in this vital development, which will undoubtedly help NCI deliver on its mission to widen access to education. The concept of dual delivery spaces is particularly welcomed by the panel.

The programme is delivered in either the physical or online classroom environment as appropriate. The panel support this model of blended delivery as it is suitable for the range of target learners on the programme and will suit the part-time cohort in particular. The panel also supports the methodology of block delivery of modules.

In section 3.2.2, the School provided detailed timetables for the programme for both the full-time and part-time cohorts, and the panel notes the positive feedback from the students for the model. The panel notes that the School goes to great lengths to spread the assessment load across the semesters and has reduced the assessment burden in most modules.

The panel is impressed with the degree of attendance monitoring and follow-up that is done in the programme, as outlined in section 3.2.4.

The panel has reviewed the narrative provided in section 3.2.7 around the assessment strategies for the programme. It commends the School for taking the opportunity presented by the Covid-19 contingency arrangements to not only reduce the assessment burden but also to design and deploy a wider range of assessment tools. These changes have received very positive support from the students as evidenced in their student experience surveys.

Recommendations:

None

Section D. **Evaluation of the programme by stakeholders**

Evaluation by current learners and graduates of the programme

Commentary:

The panel commends the School on its use of a focus group of current and past students to input into the review process. The focus group was complimentary of faculty and the range of support services offered, particularly the International Office. The focus group also expressed its support for the recording of classes that enabled those whose mother tongue wasn't English to review course material, in their own time. The learners were also generally supportive of the curriculum changes proposed.

Recommendations:

None

Evaluation of the programme by Staff

Commentary:

The panel is supportive of the approach where, as previously noted, the School took the opportunity offered by the programmatic review process to develop a set of School of Business Programme Learning Outcomes and to use these to inform the MIPLOs for this programme.

Recommendations:

None

Evaluation of the programme by external stakeholders

Commentary:

The panel commends the initiative by the School to engage with employers on a one-to-one basis to ascertain feedback on graduate skills required in the workplace. The feedback included positive comments on employers' engagement with the careers service.

Recommendations:

None

External Examiner Feedback

Commentary:

Two external examiners had been appointed to the programme for the period under review. Both examiners were generally complementary of the programme.

The panel notes from section 4.4, that one external examiner suggested a review of the MIPLOs which under NCI's currently approved quality assurance procedures can only be undertaken as part of the programmatic review process. The responsibilities of external examiners in the Quality Assurance Manual do indeed include reviewing the appropriateness of MIPLOs, but the panel is unclear how this is compatible with their overall quality assurance procedures relating to major changes to a programme. The panel believes this apparent anomaly should be addressed by NCI as it could lead to potential difficulties.

Recommendations:

The panel recommends that NCI address the apparent conflict where the duties of the external examiner include responsibility to review the appropriateness of the MIPLOs, presumably on an annual basis, the result of which may not be within the scope of NCI to amend other than as part of the quinquennial programmatic review process.

Section E. **Programme Quality Assurance**

Complaints, appeals and commendations

Commentary:

The panel notes that In relation to the MSc International Business, no formal complaints were noted by the Registrar's Office for the period under consideration. The panel commends the School on the arrangements that are in place to satisfactorily resolve issues in an informal manner.

Recommendations:

None

Quality Assurance Systems and Processes

Commentary:

The panel notes the concerns of faculty relating to access to reliable timely data to inform decision making and the efforts being made by the quality assurance team to address this issue.

Recommendations:

None

Additional Quality Assurance Systems and Processes required (e.g. online delivery / assessment)

Commentary:

The panel's previous comments under programme delivery and assessment are appropriate also in this context.

Recommendations:

None

Section F. **Summary Analysis of the programme**

Commentary:

The panel believes that the NCI School of Business has carried out a thorough, comprehensive and detailed review of the programme. That review has taken into account the experiences of delivering the programme since the last programmatic review in 2015, NCI's and the School's strategic and academic plans and the views of all stakeholders, internal and external. The development of additional synergies, through module sharing with other programmes within the suite, will contribute to the goals of improving student choice and deliver significant economies in operational terms.

The panel is satisfied that the resulting programme will continue to offer a fulfilling learning experience to students and enable them to achieve their goals in life.

The panel believes that the structure of the MSc programme with 90 ECTS credits being gained in a calendar year is appropriate and is aligned with the sector norm. The panel does have a concern however, with the breakdown of the credits between the three semesters, in full-time mode. The ECTS Users Guide states that '60 ECTS credits are allocated to the learning outcomes and associated workload of a full-time academic year or its equivalent'. An academic year is generally understood to comprise two semesters of about 15 weeks each. The programme under review has allocated a total of 70 ECTS credits to semesters 1 and 2, or one academic year. The panel believes therefore that the School should engage with QQI to determine if this programme structure complies with QQI policies in this regard.

Recommendations:

The panel believes that the School should engage with QQI to determine if the programme structure with a total of 70 ECTS credits in semesters 1 and 2, complies with QQI policies.

Section G. **Revision of the programme**

In this section the panel will respond to any proposals made by the provider in respect of changes to the programme arising from the review. The revised programme's readiness for validation will be reported on in more detail in the Independent Evaluation Report for Validation.

Commentary:

The following Table gives details of the changes to the programme, proposed by the School:

Current Modules	Proposed New Modules	Rationale for Change
Strategy for Decision Making	Business Models, Strategy and Tactics	This change was made to reflect a change in industry requirements as well as developments in contemporary research in this field.
MNE and Global Business Environment	Global Business	Given this programme is a Master of Science in International Business the Programme Team felt that the inclusion of a Global Business, 10 credit module, was warranted. The module has been refreshed and updated to include changes in contemporary research in this area.

Managing the Organisation	Leading, Managing and Planning in the Organisation	This module has undergone a title change as it was felt the old title did not truly reflect the content of the module. The new title is more explicit in relation to the intent of the module and the contents have also been refreshed and updated.
New elective	Management in Postmodern Markets	The module encourages learners to think about markets from a different perspective – as fragile and temporary socio-technological arrangements and ongoing organizational achievements.
New elective	Business Intelligence	The module seeks to imbue in the learners an understanding of the language of data analytics and understanding of how data analytics can help inform and therefore guide effective decision making within organisations.

The panel is satisfied in general that, at a high level, the proposed revisions to the programme are well founded and appropriate. Notwithstanding this, the panel has made a number of comments and recommendations in the Independent Evaluation Report for Validation.

Recommendations:

1. Having reviewed the programmes as presented, the panel believes that the School might consider having more explicit references in the programme material to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the circular economy and the treatment of sustainability and ethics in the curriculum, which the panel believes is fundamental to the education and training of business graduates at Level 9.
2. The School should continue to review the low numbers of H1s awarded, particularly in the full-time cohort, to check if there are programme design or operational issues that may be contributory factors.
3. The panel recommends that NCI address the apparent conflict where the duties of the external examiner include responsibility to review the appropriateness of the MIPLOs, presumably on an annual basis, the result of which may not be within the scope of NCI to amend other than as part of the quinquennial programmatic review process.

Part 3. OVERALL FINDINGS

In this section the panel will give its overall feedback on the conduct of the review and the findings therein. This feedback will inform future provider review processes and will also contribute to the refinement of any programmes being proposed for revalidation following this review process.

Commentary on review process:

The panel is satisfied that a thorough and robust process was put in place to guide the School Team in reviewing the suite of programmes that are the subject of this programmatic review. The process, lead by the Dean of School of Business, has resulted in a set of documents that were very detailed and comprehensive.

The panel found the team with which it engaged during the virtual site visit, to be highly professional and committed to their individual modules. The engagement with the members of the team was conducted in a collegiate manner. During the discussions, each member of the team demonstrated an openness to take on board points made by the panel.

Recommendations on review process:

1. The panel supports the speedy implementation of NCI's new Flexible Curriculum System, that should result in the availability of more timely and comprehensive data analysis.
2. The panel recommends that NCI address the apparent conflict where the duties of the external examiner include responsibility to review the appropriateness of the MIPLOs, presumably on an annual basis, the result of which may not be within the scope of NCI to amend other than as part of the quinquennial programmatic review process.

Commentary on programme revisions:

The panel approves the programme's suite of modules as presented. This suite of modules arose from a detailed exercise based on consideration of all the appropriate inputs to a comprehensive programmatic review process, as detailed in this report. Some modules were retired and replaced with more appropriate modules, and existing modules were subject to a detailed refreshment process to bring them up to date and ensure their ongoing relevance. The panel is supportive of the resulting suite of modules. Notwithstanding this, the panel believes that the programme would benefit from more explicit references in modules to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the circular economy, sustainability and ethics.

Recommendations on programme revisions:

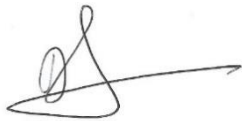
1. Having reviewed the programmes as presented, the panel believes that the School might consider having more explicit references in the programme material to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the circular economy and the treatment of sustainability and ethics in the curriculum, which the panel believes is fundamental to the education and training of business graduates at Level 9.
2. The School should continue to review the low numbers of H1s awarded, particularly in the full-time cohort, to check if there are programme design or operational issues that may be contributory factors.

3. The panel believes that the School should engage with QQI to determine if the programme structure with a total of 70 ECTS credits in semesters 1 and 2, complies with QQI policies.

Panel chairperson: Danny Brennan

Date: 21 January 2022

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'D' followed by a horizontal line that curves upwards at the end.

**QQI**Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Independent Evaluation Report on an Application for Revalidation of a Programme of Education and Training

Part 1. PROVIDER DETAILS

Provider name	National College of Ireland
Date of site visit	1st/2nd December 2021
Date of report	16 January 2022

Section A. Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Master of Science in International Business
	Award	Master of Science (NFQ Level 9)
	Credit	90 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory

Embedded programme 1	Title	Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business
	Award	Postgraduate Diploma (NFQ Level 9)
	Credit	60 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory

Section B. **Expert Panel**

Name	Role	Affiliation
Danny Brennan	Chair	Former Registrar, Letterkenny Institute of Technology and Principal, DNB Education Consultants.
James Collins	Subject Matter Expert	Lecturer, Technical University Shannon, Limerick
Stefan Jooss	Subject Matter Expert	Lecturer, University College Cork
Dan Taylor	Subject Matter Expert	Senior Lecturer, University of South Wales
Michael Kelly	Report Writer	Independent Education Consultant
Keeva Carpenter	Learner Representative	Postgraduate Student, Griffith College
Siobhan Kinsella	Industry Representative	Director, Noel Recruitment Group

Section C. Principal Programme

Names of centre(s) where the programme(s) is to be provided	Maximum number of learners (<i>per centre</i>)	Minimum number of learners
National College of Ireland, Mayor Street Lower, IFSC, Dublin 1	300	15

Proposed Enrolment	
Date of first intake	September 2022
Maximum number of annual intakes	2
Maximum total number of learners per intake	Full-time: 100 Part-time: 50
Programme duration (<i>months from start to completion</i>)	Full-time: 12 months Part-time: 24 months
Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment: The panel has no specific concerns or commentary regarding the proposed enrolment.	
Target learner groups	
<p>The programme is designed for a broad range of learners, covering anyone seeking to gain a deeper knowledge of the international business environment, as an employee or as an owner/manager of a business with international operations and facing into international markets. Learners will be able to think globally but act locally in their career and job roles. There is a strong representation of international students, both from other EU states and the wider global community.</p> <p>The Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business is an embedded award within the principal programme, delivered part-time for Irish students availing of government funding initiatives.</p>	
Approved countries for provision	Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full-time Part-time
The teaching and learning modalities	
<p>This is a revalidation of an existing validated programme and has demonstrated its use of relevant physical and digital resources to support the teaching, learning and assessment strategy of the programme. The programme will be delivered via NCI's modern business campus based in the IFCS, Dublin.</p> <p>The primary mode of delivery will be Blended Learning involving block delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time students - attendance at IFSC campus two and a half days a week with a typical block of contact time being completed within three weeks. There may be a requirement for students to subsequently submit a piece of assessment or undertake an examination at a later stage, but the contact time would be completed. • Part-time students - a typical 30-hour module would take approximately 6 weeks with students required to attend two evenings a week for three hours. 	

Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)

The underlying principle of the Master of Science in International Business programme is to enable learners to think globally and act locally. Therefore, it is relevant to both Irish and international students seeking to expand their understanding of the international business environment. Partnerships and collaborations across international boundaries are key drivers for economic growth. Furthermore, management development in general is a key goal for Ireland and other established and developing economies in order to sustain economic competitiveness and help in building the knowledge economies of the future. Management development and education can help to enhance business success, promote economic growth, maintain and develop employment, and promote sustainable economic activity into the future.

The Master of Science in International Business with its sister programmes the MSc in Entrepreneurship and the MSc in Management, was designed as one of a suite of three Level 9 programmes designed around a spine of the Master of Science in Management programme, offered within NCI's School of Business. Shared module delivery has allowed learners to make a wide choice of electives, whilst providing an opportunity for learners to develop their personal network beyond their own class cohort.

NCI's vision includes being an inclusive institution offering access to lifelong learning. Learners come from a range of backgrounds in Ireland and abroad. Stakeholder feedback indicates that the programme is relevant to the contemporary business environment as well as NCI being an attractive place to study.

Summary of specifications for teaching staff	WTE
Programme Director - Minimum of a Level 9 qualification but ideally a PhD	.1
Programme Teaching Team - Minimum of a Level 9 qualification. A PhD and/or significant industry experience.	2.32
Programme Co-Ordinator - A Level 8 honours degree and significant administration experience.	.2

Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
Lectures and Workshops	1:129
Dissertation supervision	1:5
Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing:	
The panel was satisfied with programme staffing and the ratio of learners to teaching staff.	

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)		
Code	Title	Last enrolment date
PG21882	Master of Science in International Business	01/09/2021

Section C.1 Embedded Programme – Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business

Names of centre(s) where the programme(s) is to be provided	Maximum number of learners (<i>per centre</i>)	Minimum number of learners
National College of Ireland, Mayor Street Lower, IFSC, Dublin 1	100	15

Proposed Enrolment	
Date of first intake	September 2022
Maximum number of annual intakes	2
Maximum total number of learners per intake	Part-time: 50
Programme duration (<i>months from start to completion</i>)	Part-time: 12 months
Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment: The panel has no specific concerns or commentary regarding the proposed enrolment. The Panel noted that direct recruitment to the PG Diploma will only be available to part-time domestic students availing of Government-funded initiatives such as Springboard.	
Target learner groups	
The target learners on this programme are likely to be graduates from non-cognate degrees wishing to undertake a conversation course or cognate degree holders looking to specialise in the area of International Business. All learners are likely to aspire to senior management positions in time and see the Master of Science in International Business as the first step towards achieving this goal.	
Approved countries for provision	Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Part-time
The teaching and learning modalities:	
The programme team will deliver the programme via lectures and workshops, using relevant physical and digital resources to support the teaching, learning and assessment strategy of the programme. The programme will be delivered via NCI's modern business campus based in the IFSC, Dublin. The primary mode of delivery will be Blended Learning, involving block delivery in the classroom (in-person on campus and online delivery): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part-time students - a typical 30-hour module would take approximately 6 weeks with students required to attend two evenings a week for three hours. 	

Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)

The Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business as a standalone programme embedded within the principal award of the MSc in International Business. As a stand-alone programme, it will only be offered for direct enrolment to part-time, domestic students availing of Government-funded initiatives. The award of PG Diploma is however also available, upon approval from the Registrar of NCI, for students who – for a variety of reasons - wish to exit the full-time principal MSc programme early.

The programme seeks to develop, via its teaching and learning strategies, an understanding of core business and management disciplines and how they interrelate to allow practitioners to identify and resolve issues in a practical business environment.

The programme emphasises the development of business and management skills by familiarizing learners with practical business problems and encouraging them to solve them using analytical, decision-making, effective communication and leadership skills, which can be applied in the modern organisation.

More specifically, the programme has been specifically designed for those wishing to gain deeper knowledge of the international business environment as both employees or as owner/managers of businesses operating internationally. This programme will, therefore, equip managers with the skills and competencies required to succeed in both a global and local context by developing learners' understanding of the vital role that international business practices and considerations perform in the modern corporate environment.

Summary of specifications for teaching staff	WTE
Programme Director - Minimum of a Level 9 qualification but ideally a PhD	.1
Programme Teaching Team - Minimum of a Level 9 qualification. A PhD and/or significant industry experience.	2.3
Programme Co-Ordinator - A Level 8 honours degree and significant administration experience.	.2
<i>* WTE people resources shared across School of Business programmes.</i>	

Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
Lectures and Workshops	1:44
Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing: The panel was satisfied with programme staffing and the ratio of learners to teaching staff.	

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)

Code	Title	Last enrolment date
PG21883	Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	31/08/2022

Section D. Other noteworthy features of the application

The programme is designed as one of three related Level 9 programmes in Business that share a number of modules, making for greater student choice of electives and more efficiencies in delivery.

Part 1A Evaluation of the Case for an Extension of the Approved Scope of Provision (where applicable). Having examined appropriate QA / Governance procedures, comment on the case for extending the applicant's Approved Scope of Provision to enable provision of this programme. (Especially relevant for move to online delivery / assessment)

N/A

Part 2. EVALUATION AGAINST THE VALIDATION CRITERIA

The panel should complete this section with commentary against each criterion to support the recommendation given in the 'Satisfactory?' column i.e. Yes, No, or Partially.

If 'Yes', there should be a comment citing the evidence for this finding. Likewise, there should be an explanation as to why the panel have concluded that the criterion has either not been met or only partially so.

Criterion 1. The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programme

<p>a) The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme.</p> <p>b) The application for validation is signed by the provider's chief executive (or equivalent) who confirms that the information provided is truthful and that all the applicable criteria have been addressed.</p> <p>c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.¹</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme Master of Science in International Business	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that the National College of Ireland (NCI) as the provider has met the requirements of Section 44(7) of the 2012 Act to apply for validation of the programme. NCI successfully reengaged with QQI for approval of its QA procedures in 2019.</p> <p>NCI has established procedures for access, transfer and progression. These are reviewed further in relation to the programme documents submitted to validation under Criterion 4. NCI has complied with Section 65 in respect of arrangements for the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) and provided evidence of this in the application for validation.</p> <p>A declaration accompanying the application for validation has been signed by the NCI President, Ms Gina Quin. This declaration confirms that the information provided is correct and truthful and that NCI has addressed the applicable criteria. The declaration also states that the programme complies with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.</p>
Embedded Programme 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	Yes	As per principal programme.

¹This criterion is to ensure the programme can actually be provided and will not be halted on account of breach of the law. The declaration is sought to ensure this is not overlooked but QQI is not responsible for verifying this declaration or enforcing such requirements.

Criterion 2. The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought

<p>a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly.</p> <p>b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme.</p> <p>(i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme.</p> <p>c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s).</p> <p>d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's <i>Policy and Criteria for Making Awards</i>.</p> <p>e) The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate for example it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p> <p>f) The programme title and any embedded programme titles are</p> <p>(i) Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought.</p> <p>(ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.</p> <p>g) For each programme and embedded programme</p> <p>(i) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified.²</p> <p>(ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are consistent with the relevant QQI awards standards.</p> <p>h) Where applicable, the minimum intended module learning outcomes are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.</p> <p>i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.</p> <p>For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.³</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme Master of Science in International Business	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that the provider's application meets this criterion.</p> <p>This is a revision of an existing validated programme, with the same title, and its aims and objectives are clearly explained in terms of International Business, being specifically designed for those wishing to gain deeper knowledge of the international business environment as both employees or as owner/managers of businesses operating internationally. The programme structure provides learners with a common core of modules plus a wide choice of electives.</p> <p>A QQI award is specified for those learners who complete the programme, and the award title is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's <i>Policy and Criteria for Making Awards</i>. Successful completion of the programme will lead to a Level 9 Master of Science award. Although the MA designation has been applied to other NCI programmes, the view was that the MSc award was appropriate to NCI's target market and its stakeholder expectations, and is consistent similar programmes provided by other HET institutions in Ireland and internationally.</p> <p>During the site visit, the panel discussed NCI's ethos of business responsibility and sustainability and how this influences module design and content. The panel is satisfied that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs) for the principal and embedded</p>

² Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

³ Not all modules will warrant minor awards. Minor awards feature strongly in the QQI common awards system however further education and training awards may be made outside this system.

		programme are explicitly specified and aligned appropriately to the relevant QQI awards standards. The panel discussed simplifying the interpretation of minimum module learning outcomes (MIMLOs) in future, with a view to focusing on skills development in addition to cognate knowledge and the panel would encourage NCI to pursue this approach in future.
Embedded Programme 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	Yes	As per the principal programme.

Criterion 3. The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly based (considering social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives)

<p>a) The development of the programme and the intended programme learning outcomes has sought out and taken into account the views of stakeholders such as learners, graduates, teachers, lecturers, education and training institutions, employers, statutory bodies, regulatory bodies, the international scientific and academic communities, professional bodies and equivalent associations, trades unions, and social and community representatives.⁴</p> <p>b) The interpretation of awards standards has been adequately informed and researched; considering the programme aims and objectives and minimum intended programme (and, where applicable, modular) learning outcomes.</p> <p>(i) There is a satisfactory rationale for providing the programme.</p> <p>(ii) The proposed programme compares favourably with existing related (comparable) programmes in Ireland and beyond. Comparators should be as close as it is possible to find.</p> <p>(iii) There is support for the introduction of the programme (such as from employers, or professional, regulatory or statutory bodies).</p> <p>(iv) There is evidence⁵ of learner demand for the programme.</p> <p>(v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant⁶.</p> <p>(vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.⁷</p> <p>c) There are mechanisms to keep the programme updated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>d) Employers and practitioners in the cases of vocational and professional awards have been systematically involved in the programme design where the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.</p> <p>e) The programme satisfies any validation-related criteria attaching to the applicable awards standards and QQI awards specifications.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme Master of Science in International Business	Partially	<p>The award titles proposed are those of the currently validate programmes. While the Business Award Standards at Level 9 on the NFQ have been used as the basis for the mapping of this programme and its attending MIPLOs and MIMLOs, the programme team also had regard to the Science Award Standards.</p> <p>The panel is of the view that the principal and embedded programmes proposed by NCI for revalidation meet professional, business and societal needs. There is evidence of learner demand for the programmes both at a local and international level, as evidenced by current enrolment figures and trends.</p> <p>The provider seeks both learner and industry feedback, through one-to-one meetings, focus groups and research strategy events. These activities are designed to ensure the continuing relevance of the programme in</p>

⁴ Awards standards however detailed rely on various communities for their interpretation. This consultation is necessary if the programme is to enable learners to achieve the standard in its fullest sense.

⁵ This might be predictive or indirect.

⁶ It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

⁷ There is clear evidence that the programme meets the **target learners'** education and training needs and that there is a clear demand for the programme.

		<p>meeting stakeholder needs, particularly in relation to graduates being “employment ready”. Although the Covid-19 pandemic had temporarily reduced the scope for these interactions, there was evidence of continuing innovation in module design. .</p> <p>At the time of the virtual site visit, the panel was satisfied that the provider's application only partially meets this criterion. This was founded on the concern of the panel relating to the workload of 70 ECTS credits in the first two semesters of the programme. An academic year is generally understood to comprise two semesters of about 15 weeks each. The ECTS Users Guide states that ‘60 ECTS credits are allocated to the learning outcomes and associated workload of a full-time academic year or its equivalent’. The proposed programme has allocated a total of 70 ECTS credits in semesters 1 and 2, which is generally understood to comprise one academic year.</p> <p>The panel discussed this issue with the provider’s senior representatives during the site visit. The panel understands that 10 credits out of the 70 relate to Research Methods which the provider believes are best covered in the first two semesters. The panel was informed that this model is also used in other level 9 programmes in the School, that are not part of this review.</p> <p>Notwithstanding this the panel is of the view that other models of delivery are common in the sector where 60 credits are delivered in semesters 1 and 2, with the balance of 30 credits delivered in semester 3. The panel therefore recommended that the School engage with QQI to check if this programme structure complies with QQI policies in this regard.</p> <p>Following the site visit, the panel understands that the School discussed the matter with QQI and that while QQI acknowledged and commended the concerns raised by the panel, it saw the conventions as providing a framework which is generally observed, but which is flexible enough to allow some flexibilities to meet programme specific requirements such as NCI had described. QQI also acknowledges NCI's assurances to monitor the demands of the programmes on learners.</p> <p>Following this clarification, the panel is satisfied that the provider now meets the requirements of this criterion.</p>
Embedded Programme 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	Yes	As per the principal programme. In addition, it was noted that the Postgraduate Diploma in Business in Management will be offered as part of national funding programmes, such as the Human Capital Initiative and the Springboard programme.

Criterion 4. The programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory

<p>a) The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in QQI's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied⁸.</p> <p>b) Programme information for learners is provided in plain language. This details what the programme expects of learners and what learners can expect of the programme and that there are procedures to ensure its availability in a range of accessible formats.</p> <p>c) If the programme leads to a higher education and training award and its duration is designed for native English speakers, then the level of proficiency in English language must be greater or equal to B2+ in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR⁹) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.</p> <p>d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that target learners are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).</p> <p>e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.</p> <p>f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reflects the core <i>intended programme learning outcomes</i>, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es). (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners; (iii) Has long-lasting significance. <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme Master of Science in International Business	Yes	<p>Following a discussion with NCI representatives, the panel is satisfied that the access, transfer and progression arrangements currently in place are satisfactory.</p> <p>It was noted that most learners enrolling on the programme were returning to college with prior career and work experience. Teaching staff were able to relate with this scenario, based on their own personal work backgrounds and the view was that this approach encouraged learners to engage in active learning and a problem-solving approach to their overall studies.</p> <p>Learner cohorts reflect both domestic and international students. Part-time learners are mostly new entrants to NCI whereas full-time learners may avail of the programme as an academic progression route from undergraduate studies.</p>

⁸ Each of the detailed criteria set out in the Policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training must be addressed in the provider's evaluation report. The detailed criteria are (QQI, restated 2015) arranged under the headings

- Progression and transfer routes
- Entry arrangements
- Information provision

⁹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/2015)

		<p>NCI's support services dealt with non-standard entry via the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process, and this comprised c. 10% of a typical learner cohort. Potential learners were supported via information workshops to assist with the application and related processes. This ensures that potential learners are fully informed and guided on the suitability of the study programme to their individual needs. RPL experience was assessed in terms of how it might add value in an academic environment as part of a transformational learning experience, with NCI providing a vivid example of a senior executive returning to learning who rose to the challenge of academic learning.</p>
Embedded Programme 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	Yes	As per the principal programme.

Criterion 5. The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose

<p>a) The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions.</p> <p>b) In so far as it is feasible the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs.</p> <p>c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended <i>programme</i> learning outcomes.</p> <p>d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff.</p> <p>e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles¹⁰.</p> <p>f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.</p> <p>g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.</p> <p>i) Elements such as practice placement and work-based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.</p> <p>j) The programme duration (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its fulltime equivalent contact time (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.¹¹</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme Master of Science in International Business	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that the programme's written curriculum is coherent in that it reflects modern business experience and practice, with a balance of theory and practical applications. Core modules reflect the role of management education in enhancing business success, economic growth and sustaining workforce employability. The review process had made comparisons with other institutions on programme content to ensure that the programme continued to reflect contemporary business issues in an international context. In addition, new electives reflect digital transformation and the balance of business/public interests in modern management. Individual modules are well structured and generally fit for purpose. There is a broad range of core and elective modules, with 19 in total delivered by the School of Business and available to learners under the MSc in Management.</p> <p>The panel recommends in general that the School continue to develop its practice of the use of live case studies and real life/people examples, as appropriate, in various modules, in order to keep the curriculum relevant to its target learners.</p>

¹⁰ This applies recursively to each and every element of the programme from enrolment through to completion.

In the case of a modular programme, the pool of modules and learning pathway constraints (such as any prerequisite and co-requisite modules) is explicit and appropriate to the intended programme learning outcomes.

¹¹ If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified

		<p>As noted under Criterion 2, there is an opportunity to simplify learning outcomes at module level. There is also scope to develop concepts of sustainability and the circular economy across individual module content.</p> <p>During the site visit, the panel met with members of the lecturing team, with discussions covering curriculum structures, assessment tasks and methods. There was also a discussion on the challenges and opportunities arising from the use of blended learning delivery under the Covid-19 temporary provisions and it was evident that NCI's teaching team had adapted to this online context.</p> <p>The panel would like to comment in particular on the following modules: The newly titled module <i>Business Models, Strategy and Tactics</i> is well planned and follows a good, standard HE Strategy curriculum and content.</p> <p>The new elective <i>Management in Post Modern Markets</i> is an excellent postgraduate module which should make students think more theoretically about their studies. Some important general discussions are included and should allow students to engage in academic and philosophical theories which are sometimes overlooked in curriculum design.</p> <p>There is some degree of overlap between the modules <i>Global Business</i> and <i>International Business</i>, but the panel is satisfied that the modules had been developed as 10 and 5 credit options on different programmes, hence the overlap and similarity.</p> <p>The panel is happy with the new, updated content of the module <i>Strategic Project Management</i>.</p> <p>The panel is happy with the new, updated content of the module <i>Corporate Governance, Business Ethics and CSR</i>.</p> <p>.</p>
Embedded Programme 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	Yes	As per the principal programme.

Criterion 6. There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned

<p>a) The specification of the programme's staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to-practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 c).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of staff¹² (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.</p> <p>c) The programme's complement of staff (or potential staff) (those who support learning including any employer-based personnel) are demonstrated to be competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes and to assess learners' achievements as required.</p> <p>d) There are arrangements for the performance of the programme's staff to be managed to ensure continuing capability to fulfil their roles and there are staff development¹³ opportunities¹⁴.</p> <p>e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.</p> <p>f) Where the programme is to be provided by staff not already in post there are arrangements to ensure that the programme will not enrol learners unless a complement of staff meeting the specifications is in post.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme Master of Science in International Business	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that the provider's revalidation application meets this criterion.</p> <p>The panel met with the teaching faculty and support team, and it was evident from these discussions that there was a strong learner-centred ethos across all staff. A review of CVs provided to the panel, together with discussions with staff, confirmed that NCI's School of Business has a well-qualified and committed team of lecturing staff, comprising both permanent and associate faculty members, with a strong component of programme support staff.</p> <p>Required educational qualifications are at NFQ Level 9 in a relevant subject area and/or equivalent professional awards. NCI provided evidence of having appropriate procedures in place for staff recruitment, professional development and performance monitoring.</p>

¹² Staff here means natural persons required as part of the programme and accountable (directly or indirectly) to the programme's provider, it may for example, include contracted trainers and workplace supervisors.

¹³ Development here is for the purpose of ensuring staff remain up-to-date on the discipline itself, on teaching methods or on other relevant skills or knowledge, to the extent that this is necessary to ensure an adequate standard of teaching.

¹⁴ Professional or vocational education and training requires that teaching staff's professional/vocation knowledge is up to date. Being qualified in a discipline does not necessarily mean that a person is currently competent in that discipline. Therefore, performance management and development of professional and vocational staff needs to focus on professional/vocational competence as well as pedagogical competence. Professional development may include placement in industry, for example. In regulated professions it would be expected that there are a suitable number of registered practitioners involved.

Embedded Programme 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	Yes	As per the principal programme.
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Criterion 7. There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned

<p>a) The specification of the programme's physical resource requirements (physical resources required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme, its defined purpose and its resource/learner-ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 d).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of supported physical resources (or potential supported physical resources) that are available in the context of existing commitments on these e.g. availability of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) suitable premises and accommodation for the learning and human needs (comfort, safety, health, wellbeing) of learners (this applies to all of the programme's learning environments including the workplace learning environment) (ii) suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided) (iii) printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment (iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable (v) technical support (vi) administrative support (vii) company placements/internships – if applicable <p>c) If versions of the programme are provided in parallel at more than one location each independently meets the location-sensitive validation criteria for each location (for example staffing, resources and the learning environment).</p> <p>d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Planned intake (first five years) and (ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake. <p>e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme Master of Science in International Business	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that there are appropriate physical resources in place to implement the programme as planned, supported by NCI's modern campus environment and extensive online resources.</p> <p>Physical and digital resources are in place to support the teaching, learning and assessment strategy of the programme. These include traditional classrooms, collaborative learning spaces, library (both physical and electronic), plus IT resources as required by individual module curriculum (e.g., Moodle VLE, MS Teams, MS Office suite, Turnitin).</p> <p>There is a full range of learner support resources, comprising the library (books, online databases, e-books, chatbox support), careers service (including labour market data), academic supports, dedicated programme coordinators, and an international student team. NCI's approach is to treat learner support as a continuing process, forming part of the overall education experience where learners are safe to seek help and ask questions of the support team. The panel noted the commitment to supporting non-standard and marginalised learner groups to ensure full participation in programmes.</p> <p>Resources were extended and enhanced during the Covid-19 pandemic to provide support for blended learning and the view was that online delivery would form part of NCI's future plans, subject to separate validation.</p>

Embedded Programme 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	Yes	As per the principal programme.
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Criterion 8. The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners

<p>a) The programme's physical, social, cultural and intellectual environment (recognising that the environment may, for example, be partly virtual or involve the workplace) including resources and support systems are consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) Learners can interact with, and are supported by, others in the programme's learning environments including peer learners, teachers, and where applicable supervisors, practitioners and mentors.</p> <p>c) The programme includes arrangements to ensure that the parts of the programme that occur in the workplace are subject to the same rigours as any other part of the programme while having regard to the different nature of the workplace.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme Master of Science in International Business	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that the learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners.</p> <p>During the virtual site visit, the panel engaged in discussions with learners on Level 9 programmes within NCI's School of Business. Learner experiences were influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on teaching as this had moved online and presented new challenges such as extensive "screentime" compared to the conventional teaching environment. Overall, the transition to online learning was handled effectively.</p> <p>Generally, modules were regarded as being well-constructed and relevant to the current workplace. As some learners were also engaged in full-time work, tutors were supportive and took a coaching approach to helping individuals maintain progress through a module. There were concerns over delays in the scheduling of some elective modules which had an impact on learners' own study planning. Also, delayed feedback on coursework meant it was difficult to plan ahead for the next part of a study schedule. However, there was an openness within feedback discussions once these occurred.</p> <p>International students regarded NCI as being supportive, being described as "welcoming and warm" on a support level. Representatives of international students described their experience with lecturers who were motivated and enthusiastic, helping to create a positive learning environment whilst also pushing learners to achieve more.</p>
Embedded Programme 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	Yes	As per the principal programme.

Criterion 9. There are sound teaching and learning strategies

<p>a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>c) The programme enables enrolled learners to attain (if reasonably diligent) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of overall learner effort and a reasonably balanced workload).</p> <p>d) Learning is monitored/supervised.</p> <p>e) Individualised guidance, support¹⁵ and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme Master of Science in International Business	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that sound teaching and learning strategies have been implemented to continue to support the achievement of the intended programme and module learning outcomes.</p> <p>Teaching and learning includes NCI's core themes of a learner focus and the aim of teaching excellence. Panel discussions with faculty and learner representatives confirmed that these themes were being carried out in practice. There are a wide variety of teaching activities and assessment methods which are designed to create authentic learning opportunities geared towards attainment of each module's intended learning outcomes. Programme content and teaching methodologies are designed to be appropriate to a modern business context and practices. Also, learner assessment workloads take into account the respective needs of full-time and part-time students.</p> <p>A strategy has been successfully adapted for blended delivery during the Covid-19 pandemic, using these emergency measures as an opportunity to reconsider future teaching and learning approaches.</p>
Embedded Programme 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	Yes	As per the principal programme.

¹⁵ Support and feedback concerns anything material to learning in the context of the programme. For the avoidance of doubt it includes among other things any course-related language, literacy and numeracy support.

Criterion 10. **There are sound assessment strategies**

<p>a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with <i>Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards</i>¹⁶</p> <p>b) The programme's assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures.</p> <p>c) The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme.¹⁷</p> <p>d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.</p> <p>e) There is a satisfactory written <i>programme assessment strategy</i> for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.¹⁸</p> <p>f) Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable.</p> <p>g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.</p> <p>h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.¹⁹</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme Master of Science in International Business	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that the proposed assessment strategies are generally sound.</p> <p>Assessment follows the provider's overall assessment strategy and QA procedures. There is a mix of continuous assessment, examinations and project work. These have been designed with real life situations in mind, combining core management principles in an international context, enabling learners to address authentic workplace tasks in future. Assessment is geared to developing these skills of enquiry using both analytical and theoretical tools. This approach is enhanced in the Research Methods module which acts as a capstone module where the learner identifies a knowledge gap in their own field of study, undertaking a research project in this area. Completion of this module is a requirement to progress to the Dissertation and full award.</p> <p>Feedback on assessment performance is available on a one-to-one basis or via the Moodle VLE. In particular, international students commented favourably on the quality of lecturer feedback and how it assisted them with their studies and personal development.</p>

¹⁶ See the section on transitional arrangements.

¹⁷ This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

¹⁸ The programme assessment strategy is addressed in the Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards. See the section on transitional arrangements.

¹⁹ If the award is a QQI CAS compound award it is not necessarily sufficient that the learner has achieved all the components specified in the certification requirements unless at least one of those components is a capstone component (i.e. designed to test the compound learning outcomes).

Embedded Programme 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	Yes	As per the principal programme.
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Criterion 11. **Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for**

<p>a) There are arrangements to ensure that each enrolled learner is fully informed in a timely manner about the programme including the schedule of activities and assessments.</p> <p>b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.</p> <p>c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.</p> <p>d) If the programme is modular, it includes arrangements for the provision of effective guidance services for learners on the selection of appropriate learning pathways.</p> <p>e) The programme takes into account and accommodates to the differences between enrolled learners, for example, in terms of their prior learning, maturity, and capabilities.</p> <p>f) There are arrangements to ensure that learners enrolled on the programme are supervised and individualised support and due care is targeted at those who need it.</p> <p>g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.</p> <p>h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities²⁰.</p> <p>i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the <i>Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students</i>²¹ and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.</p> <p>j) The programme's learners will be well cared for and safe while participating in the programme, (e.g. while at the provider's premises or those of any collaborators involved in provision, the programme's locations of provision including any workplace locations or practice-placement locations).</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme Master of Science in International Business	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that learners on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for.</p> <p>Programme information is made available on the NCI website and related marketing materials. Prospective learners also receive guidance regarding the suitability of the programme for their own needs through pre-course discussions and the admissions process.</p> <p>Programme information is made available within a Programme Handbook and assessment schedule, together with the Moodle VLE. Guidance is provided in relation to elective modules with learners receiving guidance on elective choices from lecturers and support staff.</p> <p>The panel met with representatives of NCI's support services teams and individual learners who described their experiences of information and guidance provided by the provider. These discussions reflected the experience of learners who felt well-supported and how the provider was responsive to learner feedback. Learner supports are made available to learners with disclosed disabilities and reasonable accommodations are</p>

²⁰ For more information on making reasonable accommodations see www.AHEAD.ie and QQI's Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (QQI, restated 2015).

²¹ See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

		made in line with NCI's QA policies and procedures, In addition, there is a dedicated International Office which follows best practice in this area with extensive support for international students. This support channel recognises and continually seeks to respond to the particular challenges facing learners who move to Ireland to study, both in terms of academic life and cultural life, together with practical aspects of day-to-day student living in Ireland.
Embedded Programme 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	Yes	As per the principal programme.

Criterion 12. **The programme is well managed**

<p>a) The programme includes intrinsic governance, quality assurance, learner assessment, and access, transfer and progression procedures that functionally interface with the provider's general or institutional procedures.</p> <p>b) The programme interfaces effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures. Any proposed incremental changes to the provider's QA procedures required by the programme or programme-specific QA procedures have been developed having regard to QQI's statutory QA guidelines. If the QA procedures allow the provider to approve the centres within the provider that may provide the programme, the procedures and criteria for this should be fit-for-purpose of identifying which centres are suited to provide the programme and which are not.</p> <p>c) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting persons who meet the programme's staffing requirements and can be added to the programme's complement of staff.</p> <p>d) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting physical resources that meet the programmes physical resource requirements, and can be added to the programme's complement of supported physical resources.</p> <p>e) Quality assurance²² is intrinsic to the programme's maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.</p> <p>f) The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are consistent with QQI's statutory QA guidelines and use continually monitored completion rates and other sources of information that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved.</p> <p>g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.</p> <p>h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme Master of Science in International Business	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that NCI's programme revalidation application meets this criterion. There is a Programme Committee which operates under the governance of the School of Business in terms of annual planning and resourcing. The programme management procedures are also aligned with the NCI's institutional QA procedures.</p> <p>NCI's QA Handbook sets out policies and procedures which have been approved by QQI as being fit-for-purpose. This QA framework governs the management and operation of the programme within the School of Business with annual compliance reviews.</p> <p>During the Covid-19 pandemic, the programme has adopted online teaching techniques on an interim basis and discussions between programme management and the panel indicate that this blended learning approach will be further developed in future, subject to internal QA and external validation approvals.</p>
Embedded Programme 1 Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business	Yes	As per the principal programme .

²² See also QQI's Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

Part 3. OVERALL RECOMMENDATION TO QQI

3.1 Principal programme: Master of Science in International Business

Select one	
X	Satisfactory (meaning that it recommends that QQI can be satisfied in the context of unit 2.3) of Core policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of education and training;
	Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions (specified with timescale for compliance for each condition; these may include proposed pre-validation conditions i.e. proposed (minor) things to be done to a programme that almost fully meets the validation criteria before QQI makes a determination);
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons for the overall recommendation

1. The panel is satisfied that the National College of Ireland (NCI) has presented a strong case for revalidation, and that the proposed recommendations relates to discrete issues that can be addressed by the provider.

Commendations

1. The panel commends the team within NCI's School of Business for its clear ethos which is embedded across all its staff and its international focus evidenced by its aim to secure international business school accreditation.
2. The panel commends NCI's School of Business for its teamwork and enthusiasm across its faculty and support team which was evident throughout the panel's review and discussions with individuals.
3. The panel commends NCI for the quality of positive feedback from learner representatives and its commitment to improving the learner experience.
4. The panel commends NCI's School of Business for the positive manner in which it pivoted towards online delivery during the Covid-19 pandemic and the manner in which it engaged with its staff and learners during this time.

Special Conditions of Validation (directive and with timescale for compliance)

None.

Recommendations

1. Having reviewed the programmes as presented, the panel believes that the School might consider having more explicit references in the programme material to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the circular economy and the treatment of sustainability and ethics in the curriculum, which the panel believes is fundamental to the education and training of business graduates at Level 9.
2. The School should continue to review the low numbers of H1s awarded, particularly in the full-time cohort, to check if there are programme design or operational issues that may be contributory factors.

3. The School should carefully monitor the demands of the programme on their learners in terms of workload, on an annual basis.

- a. **Embedded programme 1:** Postgraduate Diploma in Business in International Business

Select one	
X	Satisfactory (meaning that it recommends that QQI can be satisfied in the context of unit 2.3) of Core policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of education and training;
	Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions (specified with timescale for compliance for each condition; these may include proposed pre-validation conditions i.e. proposed (minor) things to be done to a programme that almost fully meets the validation criteria before QQI makes a determination);
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons for the overall recommendation

As per the principal programme.

Commendations

As per the principal programme.

Special Conditions of Validation (directive and with timescale for compliance)

None

b. Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

c. Summary of recommendations to the provider

No additional comments.

d. Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

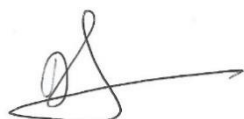
No interests have been declared.

This report has been agreed by the evaluation panel and is signed on their behalf by the chairperson.

Panel chairperson: Danny Brennan

Date: 27 May 2022

Signed:



3.2 Disclaimer

The Report of the External Review Panel contains no assurances, warranties or representations express or implied, regarding the aforesaid issues, or any other issues outside the Terms of Reference.

While QQI has endeavoured to ensure that the information contained in the Report is correct, complete and up-to-date, any reliance placed on such information is strictly at the reader's own risk, and in no event will QQI be liable for any loss or damage (including without limitation, indirect or consequential loss or damage) arising from, or in connection with, the use of the information contained in the Report of the External Evaluation Panel.

Part 4. PROPOSED PROGRAMME SCHEDULES *(POST PANEL FEEDBACK AND CONSEQUENT AMENDMENTS, IF ANY)*
