

Independent Panel Report on a Provider's Programme Review

Provider	Carlow College, St Patrick's, College St, Carlow, R93 A003
Programme(s) Reviewed	BA (Honours) in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care)

Independent Panel Members

Name	Role on Panel	Affiliation
Dr Patrick McGarty	Chair	Senior Lecturer, School of Health and Social Sciences, Munster Technological University (Kerry Campus), Tralee, Co. Kerry
Naomi Jackson	Report Writer	Independent Education Consultant
Helena Doody	Subject / academic representative	Senior Lecturer and Head of Social Care, TU Dublin
Dr Jarka Velartova	Subject / academic representative	Programme Director and Lecturer in Applied Social Care, Atlantic Technological University
Gavin Doyle	Sector / industry representative	Kare Local Service Leader, Moorefield Local Service
Emil Kindl	Learner representative	Learner of BA Sociology and Politics at Atlantic Technological University Sligo

All members of the independent panel declared their independence of Carlow College, St Patrick's and that they have no conflict of interest

Part 1. Introduction

The following report summarises the findings of the Independent Review Panel (the panel) on conclusion of the virtual visit and review of the documentation provided by Carlow College, St Patrick's (the provider) as part of the review and revalidation process of the BA in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care).

The review and revalidation process were informed by the Terms of Reference developed by the provider and approved by QQI.

The BA is a 180 ECTS, 3-year, full-time programme delivered on-campus to a maximum of one intake per year. It has been designed to ensure graduates satisfy the eligibility requirements necessary for registration as Social Care Workers as set out by CORU in their *Standards of Proficiency for Social Care Work (2019)*.

The provider is seeking revalidation of the programme for a five-year period, commencing with an initial intake in September 2025.

The review and revalidation of this programme was conducted in tandem with the review and revalidation of the one-year add-on programme BA Honours Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care) which acts as a progression route for graduates of this programme.

Part 2. Evaluation Process

2.1 Documents Supplied to the Panel

	Document Type	Document Name
1.	Programme Review Report	Programme Review Report
2.	Programme Descriptor	Programme Descriptor
3.	Module Descriptors	Module Descriptors
4.	Datasets for Programme Review Report	Datasets for Programme Review Report
5.	Exam Papers and Assessment Details	Exam Papers and Assessment Details
6.	Monitoring Reports	Monitoring Reports
7.	Amendments to the Programme Since Last Validation	Amendments to the Programme Since Last Validation
8.	Student Handbook 22 - 23	Student Handbook
9.	Hons SC External Examiner Reports 2019 - 2022	External Examiner Reports 2019 - 2022
10.	Programme Descriptor (old version)	Programme Descriptor (current programme)

2.2 Provider's Representatives Met

	Person	Role / Job Title
1.	Fr Conn Ó Maoldhomhnaigh	President
2.	Dr Eric Derr	Vice President/ Head of QA & International Programmes
3.	Dr Thomas Mc Grath	Vice President for Academic Affairs / Registrar
4.	Dr Penny Humby	Head of Academic Programmes & Delivery
5.	Brian Barry	Director of Strategy & Operations
6.	Dr Eoghan Smith	Academic & Research Development Programme Manager
7.	Helen Whelan	Administrator – Office of the Registrar
8.	Dr John McHugh	Programme Director / Design Team Chair
9.	Monica Dowling	Placement Co-ordinator / Design Team
10.	Miriam Denn	Lecturer / Design Team

11.	Jenny Fahy	Lecturer / Design Team
12.	Stephanie Hanlon	Lecturer / Design Team
13.	Antonia Kenny	Lecturer / Design Team
14.	Michael McCarthy	Lecturer / Design Team
15.	Alison Brennan	Programme Administrator / Design Team
16.	Karen Delaney	Admissions Officer
17.	Dr Lisa Fortune	Head of Student Services
18.	Keith Baxter	IT & Students System Manager
19.	Agnes Phelan	Library
20.	Dr Candice Condon	Lecturer
21.	Clare King	Lecturer
22.	Dr Sarah Otten	Lecturer
30.	Inga Daskeviciene	Level 8 Learner
31.	Natalia Rudnik	Level 8 Learner
32.	Debra Sherlock	Level 7 & 8 Graduate
33.	Tracy Collins	Employer / Sector Representative
34.	Grace Dunbar	Employer / Sector Representative
35.	Michael Farrell	Employer / Sector Representative
36.	Sean Fitzpatrick	Employer / Sector Representative
37.	Barry Hade	Employer / Sector Representative
38.	Bernie Loughman	Employer / Sector Representative

2.3 Description of evaluation process

The programme review and revalidation has been conducted in accordance with the guidance issued by QQI in the 2022 publication *Programme Review Manual. A Guide for Providers on HET Programme Review and Revalidation* and the *Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training (Nov. 2017)*.

The evaluation process commenced with a self-evaluation undertaken by the provider and summarised in the provider's Programme Review Report. This, along with associated supporting material and the proposed revised Programme Descriptor, which was informed by the self-evaluation, was then issued to the QQI approved panel for consideration.

Panel members were invited to share their preliminary observations in advance of the site visit and a pre-panel meeting took place on March 4th, 2024. A virtual visit took place on March 6th, 2024. During this visit the panel had the opportunity to meet with a range of stakeholders, members of the programme team and the provider's management team. The panel engaged in discussions and sought information and clarification relating to the approach to the review and looked for evidence and / or justification for proposed revisions or decisions taken in respect of the programme and the revised programme descriptor. The panel was tasked with:

- a. Evaluating the effectiveness of the self-evaluation by the provider, considering the documentation provided including the Programme Review Report, and
- b. Evaluating the proposed modifications and the revised programme, as documented in the Programme Descriptor and module descriptors, when considered in the context of the review findings and the QQI validation criteria.

In completing the virtual visit, the panel summarised their findings and issued the provider with preliminary feedback including the proposed recommendation to QQI and associated

commendations, conditions and recommendations. Following the virtual visit, the panel worked collaboratively to agree the final panel report.

Part 3. 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

Commentary:

The review was conducted in accordance with the QQI approved Terms of Reference. The provider outlined the significance of the programme validation period under review coinciding with the COVID pandemic and the need for this context to be a core factor when considering the experience of the programme to date.

Within the approved Terms of Reference the provider identified high level proposed modifications for consideration. Specifically:

1. The Programme Schedule to be reviewed and revised to ensure that module content is up to date with the evolving professional field of Social Care.
2. The distribution of credits to be reviewed to ensure that the workload of students is balanced across the academic year and reflects the programme and module learning outcomes.
3. To examine the Research and Dissertation as the capstone module against Programme aims and learning outcomes.
4. To review the role of electives as enhancing learner self-direction in learning and professional development

On conclusion of the self-evaluation the provider proposed a number of the changes to the programme as follows:

1. Changes in wording and emphasis to MIPLOs
2. Reduction in maximum learner intake to 60 per years
3. Addition of new modules:
 - a. Research and Dissertation 1
 - b. Research and Dissertation 2
 - c. Advancing Practice: Health Promotion and Community Social Care Work (E)
 - d. Creativity & Digital Media (E)
 - e. Peace and Conflict Studies (E)
 - f. Positive Psychology (E)
 - g. Psychology of Gender and Sexuality (E)
 - h. Project Management & Design (E)
 - i. Community Arts (E)
4. Removal of modules:
 - a. Theology and Social Justice (E)

- b. Research and Dissertation (20 credit module)
- 5. Module title changes
- 6. Curriculum content updates and MIMLO revisions
- 7. Increased emphasis on EDI and authentic assessment

The panel noted that the provider's review report didn't always discuss the context for the proposed changes. Furthermore, the list of modifications summarised at the start of the report did not correlate with the table of modifications in section 7 of the Review Report. In discussion the provider acknowledged the challenge of completing the documentation requirements and the understanding that not all implications needed to be taken into account at that time.

Recommendations:

R1: For future programme review instances, the provider includes more comprehensive insight in respect of identified programme implications and ensure a clear rationale for each proposed modification is included within the body of the report.

Section B. Provider Information and Programme Context

Commentary:

Section 2.1 of the Programme Review Report details the provider's mission, vision and values and strategic developments for the provider since the programme was last validated. This section further outlines quality assurance developments and specifically the approval of the providers quality assurance by QQI as part of the re-engagement process which was successfully completed in September 2019.

The panel notes that significant strategic change is in process for the provider, in particular relating to the evolving relationship with South-East Technological University (SETU). This was further discussed during the panel visit with a view to the panel considering potential implications for learners. The provider outlined the early stage in the formal amalgamation process but also noted the existing collaborative relationship with SETU.

Section 2.2 of the report outlines QQI as the primary validating body for the provider, with SETU also validating some postgraduate provision and being a collaborating provider in respect of a Higher Diploma award.

The revalidation of the programme remains within the provider's approved scope of provision approved scope of provision for face-to-face delivery. However, the panel notes that section 2.3.6 highlights the need to consider flexible delivery options for the programme.

Recommendations:

None

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 noted the detailed baseline qualitative and quantitative data presented by the provider and the appropriate benchmarking that was embedded within this.

It was evident from the analysis within the review report and from discussion as part of the virtual visit that such data is used to inform decisions in respect of programme management, operation and learner supports.

The panel noted the absence of applications data for years 2018 – 19 and 2019 – 20 and the provider's proposal to more systematically collect this data. This was queried by the panel. It was explained that all applicants are internal level 7 graduates and therefore data was not collated in the same way it is for external recruitment. The panel understands this to have been corrected but recognises this may be as a result of considering the programme as being stage 4 of a 4-year honours degree programme rather than a standalone single stage (award stage) programme in its own right. The repeated reference to stage 4 and level 4 in the documentation and throughout the visit supports this. The panel doesn't consider this to be a matter of significance but questions whether this is partly responsible for applications not being forthcoming from external applicants.

In considering the attrition and completion data the panel sought clarification whether the data was based on first day of registration figures or whether the provider operated a census point. The provider confirmed that attrition data was based on students registered on November 1st in the academic year and completion data was based on those learners presented to a Board of Examiners.

In discussing attrition and completion data the panel noted the number of learners who failed to complete the stage whether that be in semester 1 or 2 and questioned what the contributing factors were and whether there was any given module or modules that were of significance. The provider explained that learners are often offered employment opportunities with additional hours but also the dissertation module was a pressure point for some.

Graduate destinations data was highlighted by the panel and in particular the diversity of postgraduate study that graduates progressed to. This was viewed as an indicator of the programme preparing learners well for further study.

Analysis of the attendance data was provided and proposals to enforce minimum attendance requirements. The panel queried why mandatory attendance would be necessary, notwithstanding the direct correlation between attendance and attainment. The provider agreed maximising learner success was the key driver but recognised that learner autonomy needs to be encouraged and developed.

Recommendations:

None

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:

The Programme Review Report documents the physical facilities and resources for teaching and learning and this includes the capacity of each teaching and learning space as well as the equipment and technology available. The use of Moodle as a VLE is also referenced along with Turn-It-In text matching software.

An analysis of the fitness for purpose of the resources is provided and this reflects the views of teaching faculty and learners. A short video tour of the campus was included for the panel and during the virtual visit a brief presentation of photographs provided further insight into the diverse learning spaces and recent enhancements that had been implemented. The contact hours specified on the validated programme schedule have been adhered to through the timetabling model employed, albeit that delivery moved online during COVID restrictions.

Programme workload and the implications is discussed in detail in the review report and a recurring theme appears to be the need to increase the flexibility in the programme delivery model and specifically to investigated opportunities for blended or online delivery of aspects of the programme.

Section 3.2.4 of the review report deals with learner attendance monitoring. Clear data is provided along with an overview of the systems for data recording and the monitoring mechanisms in place. The panel queried what is involved in reviewing learner attendance and how those who fall below the threshold are managed. The provider summarised their attendance monitoring and early warning system along with the mechanisms they have in place to allow learners to evidence their continued engagement with the programme. As previously referenced, the panel queried the justification of mandatory attendance.

Section 3.2.6 documents the teaching and learning strategies employed on the programme and the objective of each methodology. The provider promotes the use of constructive alignment and the integration of teaching and learning strategies that facilitate the attainment of learning outcomes.

Section 3.2.7 discusses the attainment of learning outcomes and presents clear data that shows the number of learners who attain minimum learning outcomes. This is presented at high level and not on a module-by-module basis. Consideration of attainment at the first attempt is not provided. The provider recognises the need to review attainment in greater depth.

The report outlines the approach to assessment which encompasses both summative and formative assessments and incorporates diverse assessment methodologies. The suitability of the dissertation module and the choice of electives being determined by assessment strategy i.e. not an exam, were noted by the provider.

The panel queried why the provider didn't seek an extension of scope to allow for validation of the programme for blended learning delivery. The provider advised that QQI had directed that the programme validation should proceed and that an extension of scope application be put forward subsequently.

Recommendations:

R2. Progress the application for an extension of scope for blended and or online delivery to increase accessibility and flexibility of the programme offering to better support learners managing competing demands on their time and potentially increase the programme's appeal to graduates from other institutions.

Section D. Evaluation of the programme by stakeholders

The panel queried the different stakeholder engagement mechanisms in place. The provider advised that engagement with stakeholders was directly impacted by Covid. Normal systems for data collection were also disrupted but in many ways collaboration increased in order to maintain student support, teaching, learning and assessment.

The programme team described an ongoing system of engagement with students through the use of module feedback mechanisms, class reps on programme boards or through the Academic Advisors. The team outlined how the use of both formal and informal feedback mechanisms supports a continuous improvement approach. An example of this was highlighted whereby facilities management was considered in the context of the student experience and the kind of learnings required by this programme. Learner feedback and lecturer feedback, led by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, has informed changes to learning spaces.

The challenges of capturing learner feedback were highlighted, and the provider acknowledges that various approaches have been employed. The current model involves the use of online surveys on a semester basis and an annual basis to respond to individual modules and aspects of teaching and learning experience. In addition, each class has 1 or 2 class reps supported by the Student Union. The class reps act as a link between the classes and the college and play a role on Programme Board. Attendance of class reps at Course Boards is noted as a challenge in some instances. When the panel probed this, it was acknowledged that this is likely due to timings in the year where matters such as assessment load prevent attendance, and the timing of the meeting in the day when many students are commuting and have transport links to connect with.

It was noted that Class Reps are trained for this role by the SU and also by NStEP. Academic Advisors secure feedback through supporting students with individual issues.

The panel questioned the mechanisms in place for closing the feedback loop where learners have put forward recommendations or raised concerns. While the provider outlined the role of the class rep in feeding back to their class and the availability of meeting minutes to support this, a systematic mechanism for closing the feedback loop for all formal feedback channels was not clearly articulated. The panel were of the view that in the absence of such mechanisms there is an increased risk of students disengaging with feedback processes.

The panel queried what mechanisms are in place to secure employer feedback given the professional context of the programme. The programme team highlighted that availability and opportunity to engage is a core part of this and that the involvement of guest speakers and industry partners in the delivery of the programme provides a useful vehicle for this. It was further explained that plans are in place to develop an industry engagement forum to formalise this collaboration and feedback gathering opportunities.

Recommendations

None

Evaluation by current learners and graduates of the programme

Commentary:

The programme review report includes a summary and analysis of information provided by learners and graduates. The programme specific aspect of this is limited as feedback that is not programme or stage defined is also included. However, the impact of assessment, issues with assessment feedback and the dissertation module are all areas highlighted for consideration.

During the virtual visit the panel met with a graduate and learners of the level 8 programme. Feedback was very positive but further reinforced the time demands and the preference for greater flexibility.

The impact of covid and the move to emergency remote delivery of the programme was identified as being a challenge but one in which the graduate felt well supported by the college.

Recommendations:

None

Evaluation of the programme by Staff

Commentary:

The Programme Team outlined that the approach to the review was to have a broad design team to be as inclusive as possible with regular meetings on a fortnightly basis. This allowed for detailed discussions taking account of the data that had built up over 5 years. It is evident from the provider's review report that staff views were sought and clearly articulated for the panel's consideration. Section 4.2 documents the feedback received from different staff stakeholder groups. The panel noted that staff also highlight concerns with assessment timing and scheduling and the use of small assessments needing to be reduced. Concerns or challenges associated with the operation of the dissertation module were also identified.

The panel met with senior management, academic and professional / support staff as part of the virtual visit. It was evident that a collegiate approach had been taken in completing the review and that all parties had a voice in the review process but also in the ongoing operation of the programme. The review report identified challenges experienced by staff in operating the programme and proposed measures to address these. It wasn't clear from the review report what the rationale was for the removal of modules and the addition of modules, with the exception of the dissertation module and the proposed replacements. This was discussed with staff as part of the virtual visit and further considered as part of the proposed programme put forward for revalidation.

Recommendations:

None

External Examiner Feedback

Commentary:

Section 4.4. of the provider's review report outlines the role of external examiner feedback in the programme monitoring and enhancement process. Specifically it outlines how external examiner recommendations and feedback are discussed at the Programme Board and appropriate actions are proposed. These are captured in the Annual Programme Board Monitoring Report which is considered by Academic Council. Section 4.4.2 of the report summarises the comments from external examiners and the actions taken by the college in response. While the majority of these relate to the level 7 award there are some that apply to the level 8. In particular commentary in respect of the need for a system of second marking of dissertations was highlighted and this has been recognised by the provider as something to be implemented.

Recommendations:

None

Section E. Programme Quality Assurance

Complaints, appeals and commendations

Commentary:

Section 5.1.1 of the provider's review report discusses the approach adopted which encourages open dialogue between staff and students to resolve matters of concern without the need to revert to the formal complaints procedure that is in place. It was noted that there have been no formal complaints, review or recheck applications in respect of this programme.

Recommendations:

None

Quality Assurance Systems and Processes

Commentary:

The provider's review report discusses the QA systems and processes in place and details the engagement in the Annual Quality Reporting process. Revisions and updates to the QA systems since approval through re-engagement are also summarised along with the additional or alternative measures that were introduced to ensure continued effectiveness of college programmes and services during the Covid contingency arrangements.

During the virtual visit the panel discussed a number of different QA processes with the provider including:

- English Language entry requirements and supports for learners with English as a second language.

The provider detailed the English Language policy that has been developed in preparation for the IEM, the standards that are set for entry, and the additional supports that are extended to learners with English as a second language.

- Deferral procedures

The panel queried the procedures for the management of deferrals and any specific limitations associated with this. The provider outlined the close management of deferrals on a case-by-case basis.

- Attendance monitoring system

The panel queried justification for mandatory attendance at level 8 but sought additional information on how the attendance monitoring system worked in practice and the implications of this for both staff and learners. The provider described the role of lecturers in maintaining up to date records and the actions taken by the team when a learner's attendance is highlighted as having the potential of falling below the threshold. The panel were advised that attendance reviews take place at weeks 4, 8 and 12 of the semesters in an attempt to catch learners before attendance or lack of engagement becomes an issue. The role of the Learner Information and Retention Officer (LIRO) was also outlined.

- Learner and external stakeholder mechanisms were also discussed as outlined earlier in this report (section D).
- Programme management and oversight
The provider discussed the role of the Programme Board.

Overall the panel is satisfied that the provider has an effective QA system in place that is being actively implemented and monitored for continued effectiveness.

Recommendations:

None

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

Commentary:

Not applicable.

Recommendations:

None

Section F. Summary Analysis of the programme

Commentary:

The panel is satisfied the provider has carried out a systematic review of the programme in accordance with the approved Terms of Reference. In doing so, consideration has been given to the views of diverse stakeholder groups and information obtained from data analysis.

The modifications proposed for the programme are, in the main, informed by the data collated in the review report. However, it was noted that in some instances proposed modifications were not addressed within the body of the report. These were subsequently discussed with the panel during the virtual visit. It was further noted that delivery of the programme through blended learning was not proposed as part of the revalidation process. The panel acknowledge the guidance provided by QQI in this regard but nonetheless recommend the provider progresses this.

Recommendations:

R1: For future programme review instances, the provider includes more comprehensive insight in respect of identified programme implications and ensure a clear rationale for each proposed modification is included within the body of the report.

R2. Progress the application for an extension of scope for blended and or online delivery to increase accessibility and flexibility of the programme offering to better support learners managing competing demands on their time and potentially increase the programme's appeal to graduates from other institutions.

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 panel is generally supportive of the proposed modifications to the programme.

Recommendations:

Part 4. 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.

Section A. Commentary on review process:

The panel acknowledges the extensive work undertaken by the provider in managing data collection and feedback processes, establishing a regular schedule of review meetings to ensure the review was a fully collaborative process, completion of data analysis and benchmarking, and the effective QA system in place that underpins the review process. The panel further acknowledges the quality of the documentation shared with the panel and the open dialogue with the panel as part of the virtual visit.

Section B. Recommendations on review process:

R1: For future programme review instances, the provider includes more comprehensive insight in respect of identified programme implications and ensure a clear rationale for each proposed modification is included within the body of the report.

Section C. Commentary on programme revisions:

As outlined in part 3, section G, the panel is generally supportive of the proposed modifications to the programme, but the panel encourages the provider to progress an application for extension of scope for blended learning delivery.

Section D. Recommendations on programme revisions:

R2. Progress the application for an extension of scope for blended and or online delivery to increase accessibility and flexibility of the programme offering to better support learners managing competing demands on their time and potentially increase the programme's appeal to graduates from other institutions.

Signed: 
Panel Chairperson:
Date: 26/4/24



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	Carlow College, St Patrick's
Date of site visit	March 6 th 2024 (virtual visit)
Date of report	26 April 2024

Section A. Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care)
	Award	Bachelor of Arts
	Credit	60 ECTS
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions

Section B. Expert Panel

Name	Role on Panel	Affiliation
Dr Patrick McGarty	Chair	Senior Lecturer, School of Health and Social Sciences, Munster Technological University (Kerry Campus), Tralee, Co. Kerry
Naomi Jackson	Report Writer	Independent Education Consultant
Helena Doody	Subject / academic representative	Senior Lecturer and Head of Social Care, TU Dublin
Dr Jarka Velartova	Subject / academic representative	Programme Director and Lecturer in Applied Social Care, Atlantic Technological University
Gavin Doyle	Sector / industry representative	Kare Local Service Leader, Moorefield Local Service
Emil Kindl	Learner representative	Learner of BA Sociology and Politics at Atlantic Technological University Sligo

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
Carlow College, St Patrick's	70	20

Proposed Enrolment	
Date of first intake	September 2024
Maximum number of annual intakes	1 FT 1 PT
Maximum total number of learners per intake	60 Full Time 10 Part Time
Programme duration (<i>months from start to completion</i>)	9 months FT 18 months PT
Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:	
The panel is satisfied that the proposed enrolment is reflective of demand for the programme, supports industry demand for the programme and is within the capacity and capability of the provider to deliver the programme and effectively support the proposed maximum numbers.	
Target learner groups	
Social Care Work is subject to statutory registration by the Health and Social Care Professionals Council. As an emerging profession in a professional field that spans numerous sectors, registration will have an important role to play in the definition and recognition of the professional role. However, in the absence of a clear career structure, the early years of the profession, post registration/regulation, are likely to be characterised by significant professional leadership responsibility being placed on Social Care Workers themselves. This programme targets the graduates our level 7 programme. That programme is approved by CORU so the graduates enter this add-on degree with eligibility to register as Social Care Workers. It also targets past graduates who may possess a level 7 degree and want to enhance it with a higher-level contemporary degree.	
Approved countries for provision	Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Full Time / Part Time credit accumulation
The teaching and learning modalities	
Face to face only	
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)	
This one-year add-on programme sits on top of the B.A. in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care). Therefore, it moves beyond the initial entry-point for registration as a Social Care Worker (CORU, 2017). The Awards Standards for Social Care (QQI 2014) offer guidance regarding Knowledge, Skills and Competence at this level. Close examination of those standards reveals a shift in emphasis from knowledge, skills and competencies associated with engagement in social care work to those associated with ensuring quality services are being provided. This new emphasis demands that graduates at this level have deeper critical analytic skills regarding their	

profession, its theoretical underpinnings, and the organisational, structural and contextual issues that have an impact on it. In short, graduates should be in a better position to take on either assigned or emergent leadership roles in the professional social care setting.

Summary of specifications for teaching staff	WTE
Programme Director - The Programme Director for this programme should have a minimum level 9 academic qualification in the area of Applied Social studies/ Social science or related discipline. They should also be eligible to register as a Social Care Professional with SCWRB.	1
Dissertation Co-ordinator - Level 9 qualification in Applied Social Studies, Social Science of related discipline	1
Lecturer - Level 9 qualification in Applied Social Studies, Social Science of related discipline	4
Dissertation supervisors -. Level 9 qualification in Applied Social Studies, Social Science of related discipline	5

Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
Lecture	1:60 /1:120
Dissertation Supervision	1:6
Tutorial	1:20
Practical	1:25
<p>Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing: The panel is satisfied that the provider has the number of appropriately qualified staff to support the delivery of the proposed programme.</p>	

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)		
Code	Title	Last enrolment date
PG23980	Bachelor of Arts Honours in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care)	September 2023

Section D. Other noteworthy features of the application

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)

Not applicable

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	Yes	The panel has satisfied itself that criteria 1 a, b and c have each been addressed by the provider. The application includes a signed declaration and aligns with the approved scope of provision.

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

- a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly.
 - b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme.
 - (i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme.
 - c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s).
 - d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's *Policy and Criteria for Making Awards*.
 - e) The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate for example it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.
 - f) The programme title and any embedded programme titles are
 - (i) Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought.
 - (ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.
 - g) For each programme and embedded programme
 - (i) The **minimum intended programme learning outcomes** and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified.²
 - (ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are **consistent with** the relevant QQI awards standards.
 - h) Where applicable, the **minimum intended module learning outcomes** are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.
 - i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.
- 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

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Partially	<p>The panel is partially satisfied that criterion 2 has been addressed. The programme aims and objectives are clearly articulated and were further discussed during the virtual visit. The award title is clear, unambiguous, has meaning.</p> <p>MIPLOs are clearly articulated and reflect the graduate attributes.</p> <p>MIMLOs are documented within the module descriptors and, along with MIPLOs, are mapped against award standards, as well as aligned with assessment strategies. However, the panel noted that within the MIPLOs and MIMLOs the word 'understand' or 'understanding' is defined as what the learner must demonstrate. The panel explained the ambiguity of this in a learning outcomes context and the challenge for learners to clearly interpret what is required to attain the MIMLO. It was further noted that some MIMLOs were more aligned to a lower level of the framework and don't necessarily align with the language of the award standards which outline, for example, the ability to think critically analyse and evaluate. The extensive use of "understanding" in MIMLOs is contributing to the question about level appropriateness.</p> <p>Condition 1. Learning outcomes to be reviewed and revised to ensure level appropriateness and removal of ambiguity in respect of assessing understanding.</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.

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>
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	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	<p>It was evident to the panel through the documentation provided and the discussions during the virtual visit that consideration of the views of diverse stakeholders informed the programme as proposed.</p> <p>In the main the programme is well aligned with comparable programmes, and this is discussed in greater detail under criterion 5.</p> <p>The interpretation of the award standards was clearly evident in the mapping provided within the document and was further explained by the programme team in discussions as part of the virtual visit.</p> <p>There is sound evidence of demand for the programme from industry and from learners, with extensive employment opportunities for graduates, though it is noted that increase flexibility in programme delivery may increase the appeal to external applicants.</p> <p>Engagement of industry, learners and graduates has contributed to the design of the revised programme.</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.

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	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that criterion 4 has been met by the provider. The documentation provided evidence satisfaction of the requirements detailed in a-g.</p> <p>It is noted that the entry requirements stipulate the applicant must possess the BA in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care). The panel is of the view that this limits the programme to the provider’s own graduates and is missing the opportunity to extend the offering to graduates of equivalent programmes.</p> <p>Recommendation 1: Extend entry requirements to permit admission for graduates of other level 7 CORU approved degree programmes.</p> <p>Progression to postgraduate study includes a broad range of programmes from diverse providers.</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)

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

- 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.
- 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.
- c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended *programme* learning outcomes.
- d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme’s elements are clear to learners and to the provider’s staff.
- e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles¹⁰.
- f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.
- g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.
- h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.
- i) Elements such as practice placement and work-based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.
- 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

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Partially	<p>The panel discussed the programme’s curriculum in detail and is of the view that criterion 5 has been partially satisfied. Discussion with the provider focused on the panel’s observations following review of the documents provided. Following this discussion, the panel identified ongoing concerns in respect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The generic nature of leadership programme content within the Quality Management, Management and Leadership, and the Project Management module. It was noted that these lacked social care context and therefore did not align with the programme title and objectives. The absence of application to practice was considered to be a shortcoming. The programme team advised that some modules were owned by other programmes and considered this a constraint. • Professional Development and Employability Skills would better serve learners if redesigned and named as a module that reflects that learners are already qualified Social Care Workers who have commenced their careers. • The Introduction to Advocacy module title implies this is a learner’s first engagement with the subject. The panel feels this title has the potential to mislead potential learners and future employers or postgraduate education providers.

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 a result of these ongoing concerns, the panel has specified a condition of validation:</p> <p>Condition 2: Review module content and module titles, giving consideration to the panel’s commentary, and make revisions to ensure both discipline and level appropriateness.</p> <p>The panel also engaged the programme team in discussion about the factors that informed the range of electives available and factors that may influence learner selection of electives. The panel was satisfied with the provider’s justification and acknowledged the provider’s awareness of influential factors such as assessment strategy. The panel is of the view that the programme curriculum would be further enhanced with the inclusion of electives reflecting the broader spectrum of social care work such as addiction or working with refugees and asylum seekers.</p> <p>Recommendation 2: Consider the addition of a wider range of electives to reflect the broader spectrum of social care work</p>
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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	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied the criterion 6 is fully addressed. In reviewing documents and meeting with the provider sub-criteria a – f were considered.</p> <p>The panel met with a significant number of the provider’s academic, management, and professional / support staff and heard in detail about the role of different members of the programme team. This comprises of a combination of lecturers, dissertation coordinator and supervisors who deal with the taught and research aspects of the programme, and also professional / support roles including the Academic Advisor role that some lecturers also undertake, the staff in the academic resource centre, disability support services, counselling services, and the Learning Information and Retention Officer role.</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.

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	Yes	The panel is satisfied that criterion 7 is fully addressed. Notwithstanding that the strategic plans of the institution and the changing relationship with SETU may impact on the 5-year plan for the programme, a plan was provided, and the panel was satisfied that this was reasonable and had given due consideration to the resource requirements of the programme.

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>		
	<p>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p>Principal Programme</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The panel is satisfied that criterion 8 is fully addressed. A virtual tour of the campus was provided for the panel and a brief presentation of different learning spaces was also provided. These included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative room – flexible learning space for movement, puppets, work with musical instruments etc. • Traditional classroom layouts with moveable furniture • Group work layout rooms with white boards positioned throughout the room • Multi-purpose spaces with breakout area • Computer lab <p>It was evident to the panel that there are diverse room types and work has been undertaken to match spaces to programme needs. Increasing accessibility has been a priority focus for the provider through the challenge of this in a building of such age is acknowledged.</p>

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>		
	<p>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p>Principal Programme</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The panel is satisfied that criterion 9 has been fully addressed.</p> <p>The panel queried how the programme team manages increased technology exposure that reflects the social care environment. The programme team outlined the use of technology in diverse ways in teaching and learning and the possibilities being introduced into the programme. It was also outlined how the college is placed to further expand in this area through the CPD available to support that and the growing availability of technology in the classrooms.</p> <p>The provider advised that keeping up with the technologies and the engagement with them is an ongoing agenda item for staff training and development.</p> <p>The panel heard about the proactive nature of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee and examples of different projects and initiatives which they have led on.</p> <p>Throughout the day the panel also heard about advancements in respect of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and were exposed to a range of examples of how these are influencing teaching, learning and assessment practice.</p>

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 programme assessment strategy 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	Partially	<p>The panel is satisfied that criterion 9 is partially met.</p> <p>There are clear policies, procedures and regulations in place in respect of assessment.</p> <p>The overall assessment strategy was clearly laid out and discussed in detail with the panel. Consideration was given to the different assessment types, the assessment volume in terms of number and size, and the assessment scheduling. Discussion also took place in relation to academic integrity and, in particular, the advancement of artificial intelligence and the impact of this for teaching, learning and assessment. In reviewing the assessment strategy the panel observed that there remained a largely siloed approach to assessment in general. It was noted that a number of modules included 3 assessments, which was deemed excessive for 5 credits, but this could be as low as one. Assessment for attendance is sometimes permitted but there didn't appear to be consistency in this. While the need to develop academic skills and written capabilities is acknowledged by the panel, it was also observed that in many instances modules include very traditional exam-based or essay assessments which don't lend themselves to the applied nature of the programme.</p> <p>Following discussions relating to assessment, the panel has specified a special condition of validation:</p> <p>Condition 3: Review and revise the programme assessment strategy with a view to addressing over-assessment, ensuring suitability of</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).

		assessment methodologies for the applied nature of the programme, and maximising opportunities for integration.
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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	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that criterion 11 is fully addressed.</p> <p>The panel were informed of the diverse range of supports available for learners during their taught and research components of the programme. A particular area of focus was the revised approach to the research component. This is now made up of two modules commencing with the semester one module Research and Dissertation 1 which requires the learner to submit their research proposal for partial assessment in this module. It is intended that this approach supports learners progressing their proposal at a more advanced stage. The panel did highlight potential challenges in respect of non-submission or failing the proposal assessment and the implications of this for Research and Dissertation 2, though it is noted that the former is a pre-requisite for the latter module.</p> <p>The college offers extensive writing and digital literacy supports and specific supports for learners with English as a second language. The disability support service manages the identification and implementation of reasonable accommodations where required.</p> <p>The increased application of UDL in teaching, learning and assessment was also noted by the panel.</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)

		<p>The panel were provided with access to the digital learning environment and also provided with copies of the handbooks used on the programme. It was evident to the panel that learners benefit from being able to directly approach lecturers but also that Academic Advisors and LIR Officer is a valuable resource.</p>
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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-the-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	Yes	<p>The panel is satisfied that criterion 12 has been fully addressed. It was evident from the documentation and discussions that the provider implements the approved QA arrangements as documented and that these are proving effective. Ongoing programme monitoring arrangements and annual reporting were identified and noted as consistent with practice across the sector.</p> <p>In discussions throughout the course of the virtual visit the panel heard about the role of the Programme Board, its membership and responsibilities.</p> <p>Discussion in respect of mechanisms to secure feedback took place with the panel enquiring what arrangements were in place for external stakeholder feedback to support the continued enhancement of the programme.</p> <p>The panel also queried how the college secured learner feedback. The provider advised of the formal and informal mechanisms in place including the module surveys, class rep arrangements, participation in Programme Board, and the Academic Advisor system. The challenge of securing learner rep attendance at Programme Boards was noted. The panel welcomed the arrangements and acknowledged the evidence of their use in the documents provided as part of the application. Other than the updates provided to class members by class reps after Programme Board meetings, it wasn’t clear if there are formal mechanisms in place to close the feedback loop.</p> <p>Following discussions relating to programme management, quality assurance and governance, the panel proposes the following recommendations:</p>

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

		<p>Recommendation 3: Introduce formal mechanisms for engaging with, and securing feedback from, industry as part of the ongoing programme management and enhancement.</p> <p>Recommendation 4: Investigate opportunities to strengthen learner rep participation in programme monitoring and enhancement, and in doing so more clearly define the mechanisms for closing the feedback loop with learners when information is provided through the various feedback channels the provider employs.</p>
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Part 3. Overall recommendation to QQI

3.1 Principal programme:

Select one	
	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

The panel is supportive of recommending the programme for validation, subject to the provider satisfying the special conditions of validation, as the provider has evidenced attainment of the core validation criteria and the capacity to address the conditions of validation.

Commendations

Commendation 1: The panel wishes to acknowledge the quality of the validation application and the extensive work undertaken by the provider in progressing this.

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

Condition 1: Learning outcomes to be reviewed and revised to ensure level appropriateness and removal of ambiguity in respect of assessing understanding.

Condition 2: Review module content and module titles, giving consideration to the panel's commentary, and make revisions to ensure both discipline and level appropriateness.

Condition 3: Review and revise the programme assessment strategy with a view to addressing over-assessment, ensuring suitability of assessment methodologies for the applied nature of the programme, and maximising opportunities for integration.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

Recommendation 1: Extend entry requirements to permit admission for graduates of other level 7 CORU approved degree programmes.


Recommendation 2: Consider the addition of a wider range of electives to reflect the broader spectrum of social care work

Recommendation 3: Introduce formal mechanisms for engaging with, and securing feedback from, industry as part of the ongoing programme management and enhancement.

Recommendation 4: Investigate opportunities to strengthen learner rep participation in programme monitoring and enhancement, and in doing so more clearly define the mechanisms for closing the feedback loop with learners when information is provided through the various feedback channels the provider employs.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

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

Signed: 
Panel Chairperson: _____

Date: 26/4/24

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)*

1B.5 Proposed Programme Schedule(s)														
Name of Provider:	Carlow College, St Patricks													
Programme Title <i>(Principal)</i>	BA (Honours) in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care)				QQI Award Title	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)				ECTS	60			
Stage (1,2,3, Award etc)	Award		Exit Award Title <i>(if relevant)</i>							Stage ECTS	60			
Programme Delivery Mode - ✓ <i>one as appropriate.</i>	Face to Face			Blended			Hybrid			Online		Workplace Learning		
	✓													
Teaching and Learning Modalities - ✓ <i>one or more as appropriate.</i>	In-person face-to-face			Synchronous				Asynchronous				Work Based		
	✓													
Assessment Techniques Utilised in Stage - ✓ <i>one or more as appropriate.</i>	Continuous Assessment		Proctored Exam – in person			Proctored Exam – online		Project			Practical Skills Demonstration		Work based	
	✓		✓					✓			✓			
Modules in this stage (add rows as required)														
Total Student Effort Module (hours)									Assessment – Allocation of Marks <i>(from the module assessment strategy)</i>					
Module Title	Sem	Mandatory (M) or Elective (E)	Credits (ECTS)	Total Hours	In person	Synchronous	Asynchronous	Work Based	Continuous Assessment %	Proctored Exam – in person %	Proctored Exam – online %	Project %	Practical Skills Demonstration %	Work Based %
Advancing Practice: Social Care Work with Children	1	M	5	125	24		101		40			60		
Contemporary Sociological Theory	1	M	5	125	24		101		100					
Equality and Diversity and Sustainable Development	1	M	5	125	24		101		100			100		

Management and Leadership: Theory and Practice	1	M	5	125	24		101		100					
Research and Dissertation 1	1	M	5	125	24		101		60				40	
Advancing Practice: Youth and Community	1	E	5	125	24		101		30			70		
Advancing Practice: Working with Older People	1	E	5	125	24		101		40			60		
Creativity & Digital Media Skills	1	E	5	125	24		101		100					
Inequality, Crisis & Change: Sociological Perspectives	1	E	5	125	28		97		100					
SEMESTER TWO														
Advancing Practice: Social Care Work with Families	2	M	5	125	24		101		100					
Professional Development and Employability Skills	2	M	5	125	24		101					100		
Quality Management in Social Care	2	M	5	125	24		101					100		
Research and Dissertation 2	2	M	10	250	30		220		100					
Advancing Practice: Advocacy with Marginalised Groups	2	E	5	125	24		101		100					
Advancing Practice: Health Promotion and Community Social Care Work	2	E	5	125	24		101		100					
Community Arts	2	E	5	125	24		101		50			50		
The Psychology of Gender and Sexuality	2	E	5	125	28		97		100					