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Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes leading to QQI Awards-Further Education and Training

Report of the Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel

Stage 1
Assessment of Capacity and Approval of QA Procedures

Part 1   Details of applicant provider and its proposed education and training provision

1.1   Applicant Provider

Registered Business/Trading Name:	P Byrne Training Services Ltd T/A DCM Learning
Address:	The Mill Enterprise Centre, Drogheda, Co Louth.
Date of Application:	29 April 2016
Date of resubmission of application:	N/A
Date of evaluation:	17 June 2016
Date of site visit (if applicable):	01 July 2016
Date of recommendation to the Approvals and Reviews Committee:	13 July 2016

1.2   Profile of applicant provider

DCM Learning is the trading name of P. Byrne Training Services Ltd established as a limited company in December 2013.Its principal function is as a training provider. It currently provides training on publicly accessible courses and to a range of corporate clients around Ireland. Its current range of courses are short programmes designed to meet the demand it has identified through its market research.
The company owner was previously the Managing Director of Professional Development Ltd for 4 years prior to establishing DCM Learning.
DCM Learning is headquartered in Drogheda, Co Louth and has serviced offices in Dublin and Cork.

1.3   Proposed education and training provision

DCM Learning is proposing to provide programmes leading to QQI Specific Purpose and Minor awards at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 in the ISCED fields of Business and Administration, Marketing and Advertising, Manufacturing and Processing and Teacher Training.

Part 2   The Quality and Capacity Panel Membership

Name	Role of panel member	Organisation
Naomi Jackson	Chair	Dublin Business School
Ann Higgins	QA Expert in Further Education and Training	Galway Roscommon ETB
Maria O 'Donoghue	Industry Expert	Independent Consultant
Kevin Monks	Learner Representative,	Skillnet

Colette Harrison	Secretary to the Panel	QQI
QQI Staff		
Walter Balfe	Site Visit	

Part 3   Findings of the Panel

3.1   Summary Findings

The Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel's (panel) role is to evaluate the capacity of DCM Learning to provide quality education and training to learners in the context of the education and training provision proposed. Core to this consideration, the panel is required to evaluate the draft quality assurance procedures and supporting infrastructure submitted by DCM Learning

The panel reviewed the documentation presented by DCM Learning. Annex 1 lists the documentation submitted. The panel met representatives of DCM Learning (Annex2) and considered their responses made during the course of the evaluation meeting.

A site visit site visit took place on 01 July 2016 and confirmed that DCM Learning premises, facilities and resources detailed in the documentation and presentation are in place.

3.2   Recommendation of the panel

The panel is satisfied that DCM Learning has demonstrated its capacity to provide quality education and training to learners leading to QQI Specific Purpose and Minor awards at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 in the ISCED fields of Business and Administration, Marketing and Advertising, Manufacturing and Processing and Teacher Training. (para 1.3 refers)

DCM Learning has demonstrated, during its presentation to the panel, a full ownership and understanding of its quality system.

The panel is satisfied that the draft Quality Assurance procedures and supporting infrastructure submitted by DCM Learning demonstrates a potentially effective quality management system fit for the purposes of education and training as outlined above.

The panel recommends that the Approvals and Reviews Committee of QQI approves the proposed draft Quality Assurance procedures of DCM Learning. If approved, DCM Learning will be permitted to progress to Stage 2 of the initial validation process.

Part 4 Detailed findings - Evaluation of the capacity of the applicant to provide quality education and training to learners

4.1 Legal and compliance requirements:

4.1.1(a)	Criterion
	Is the applicant an established Legal Entity who has Education and/or Training as a Principal Function?

4.1.1(b)	Finding
	DCM Learning is a limited company that offers training and business consultancy. Training is a principal function

4.1.2(a)	Criterion
	Is the legal entity established in the European Union and does it have a substantial presence in Ireland?

4.1.2(b)	Finding
	DCM Learning was incorporated in Ireland in December 2013. (CRO Number:537009) Its offices are in Drogheda, Co Louth.

4.1.3(a)   Criterion

Are any dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries clearly specified?

4.1.3(b)   Finding

This is not applicable to DCM Learning as it has no declared dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations or subsidiaries.

In its submission, it has indicated an intention to collaborate with other companies to offer accredited training. The panel is of the view that DCM Learning must commit to notifying QQI of any proposed collaborations before they are established. Appropriate QA procedures will need to be developed and approved.

4.1.4(a)   Criterion

Are any third-party relationships and partnerships compatible with the scope of access sought?

4.1.4(b)   Finding

DCM Learning has no third party relationships or partnerships.

4.1.5(a)   Criterion

Are the applicable regulations and legislation complied with in all jurisdictions where it operates?

4.1.5(b)   Finding

DCM Learning, in making the required statutory declaration has certified that it is compliant with all relevant legislation and regulatory requirements applicable to the provision of education and training in Ireland, in particular all employment, health and safety, equality, data protection, and financial regulatory requirements insofar as same are applicable to DCM Learning's operations.

4.1.6(a)   Criterion

Is the applicant in good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in any countries where it operates (or where its parents or subsidiaries operate) or enrols learners, or where it has arrangements with awarding bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators.

4.1.6(b)   Finding

The majority of DCM Learning's current programmes are self-certified. It has no involvement with the qualifications or education and training system in Ireland. Its application to QQI is its first engagement with an awarding body.

4.2   Resource, governance and structural requirements:

4.2.1(a)   Criterion

Does the applicant have a sufficient resource base and is it stable and in good financial standing?

4.2.1(b)   Finding

The panel is satisfied that DCM Learning has sufficient resources and at this time is in good financial standing. Supporting documentation from its accountants supports this finding.

The Managing Director's background as a qualified accountant gives an assurance that financial management will be a focus of DCM Learning's operations.

4.2.2(a)   Criterion

Does the applicant have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?

4.2.2(b)   Finding

DCM Learning commenced operations in December 2013. The panel were provided with further detail on current sales figures indicating growth from 2014 to the current date. During the panel discussion DCM Learning demonstrated an effective use of digital marketing tools to research and market the courses currently offered.

In assessing its next stage of development, it considers that seeking national accreditation for courses specific areas related to their current provision is the next step in its development.

4.2.3(a)	Criterion
	Are fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision making structures in place?

4.2.3(b)   Finding

DCM Learning has not implemented its planned governance and decision making structure in relation to quality assurance for its accredited programmes. The panel considers that the proposed structure is capable of being implemented. However, the roles of the Managing Director / Head of Centre and the membership of its committees need to be reconsidered to ensure a clear separation of the academic and business decision making structures of company. DCM Learning is encouraged to consider an academic governance structure that is fit for the size and nature of the organisation. In particular, the panel noted the potential for one oversight committee that may appoint working groups as required as opposed to having a number of set committees.

The panel recommends the extent of the responsibilities undertaken by the Operations Director be reviewed. The panel welcomed the intention to make a further appointment to support this role.

The role of the non-executive director as Chair of the Board strengthens the proposed governance structure.

4.2.4(a)	Criterion
	Are there arrangements in place for providing required information to QQI?

4.2.4(b)   Finding

As part of the supporting documentation submitted to QQI, it provided a range of reports (sales figures, repeat clients) confirming a capacity to comply with QQI's information requirements. The company has two experienced support staff and appropriate technical resources in place. This was confirmed during the site visit.

DCM Learning confirmed it was investing in a learner management system that would support this requirement.

4.3 Programme development and provision requirements:

4.3.1(a)   Criterion
Does the applicant have experience and a track record in providing education and training programmes?

4.3.1(b)   Finding
DCM Learning has experience and a track record in providing training programmes in the fields of learning proposed. To date that training has been self-certified with a focus on short courses. This experience has been gained through the owner's role as the Managing Director of another training organisation that offers training programmes leading to QQI awards.

A number of its current contracted trainers have experience of delivering certified and self-certified programmes with providers that currently deliver programmes leading to QQI awards.

The company recognises that providing programmes leading to QQI awards places additional responsibilities in the areas of programme design and development and learner assessment on the designated staff.

In its documentation and at the panel presentation DCM Learning expressed its intention to develop blended programmes leading to QQI awards. The panel require DCM Learning to submit the appropriate quality assurance procedures for approval by QQI prior to the development of these programmes.

4.3.2(a)   Criterion
Does the applicant have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?

4.3.2(b)   Finding

DCM Learning has two full time members of staff and 11 contracted training instructors. Two of the directors are directly involved in the business, undertaking key management roles as Head of Centre and Operations Director. DCM Learning indicated that it will shortly recruit an additional resource to support the work of the Operations Director in the implementation of the QA system.

It is usual that contracted trainers undertake work for a number of training providers and this is the situation with all of DCM Learning's contracted trainers. During the panel discussion, the company expressed the intention of having exclusive contracts with some its trainers in the future.

To ensure that the contracted trainers recruited by DCM Learning have the skills and experience to fully engage in the design, delivery, assessment and review of programmes leading to QQI awards, it should establish a trainer profile stating the qualification and experience that is required.

DCM Learning outlined the training and development days organised for trainers which are attended on a voluntary basis. DCM Learning should consider mechanisms for ensuring compulsory engagement in essential training and development for training staff, as appropriate.

4.3.3(a)   Criterion

Does the applicant have the capacity to comply with the standard conditions for validation specified in Section 45(3) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) (the Act)?

4.3.3(b)   Finding

The standard conditions for validation specified in the Act include co-operation with and assistance to QQI in the performances of its functions, including the provision of such information required by QQI, the establishment of procedures for the fair and consistent assessment of learners and provisions for the protection of enrolled learners.

From the documentation submitted and the presentation made by DCM Learning, the panel considers that its quality assurance system is capable of supporting the standard conditions for validation. This determination will be confirmed during the programme validation stage of this process.

4.3.4(a) Criterion

Does the applicant have the fit-for-purpose premises, facilities and resources to meet the requirements of the provision proposed in place?

4.3.4(b) Finding

DCM Learning's offices function as an administrative base for its operations. It is moving to new premises centrally located in Drogheda. All training provision is off site: on client sites or selected sites for which it has selection criteria established Appropriate staffing arrangements and technical resources are in place.

4.3.5(a) Criterion

Are there access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval in place?

4.3.5(b) Finding

The access, transfer and progression arrangements in place meet QQI criteria.
DCM Learning demonstrated an understanding of the challenges that can arise in ensuring that potential learners have the capacity to succeed on programmes leading to QQI awards.

4.3.6(a) Criterion

Are structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners in place?

4.3.6(b) Finding

DCM Learning demonstrated at the presentation a clear understanding of the structures and resources necessary to have in place to ensure fairness and consistency in assessment.
The challenge of ensuring consistency across the contracted trainers delivering programmes leading to QQI awards is understood by DCM Learning. Appropriate resources and supports are required to be put in place to manage this challenge. The roles of the Head of Centre and the

Operations Director in assessment processes requires reconsideration. (para 4.2.3 refers)

4.3.7(a)	Criterion
	Are arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to meet the statutory obligations in place (where applicable)?

4.3.7(b)	Finding
	DCM Learning understands the legislative requirements about protection for enrolled learners and will inform learners of its implications. This policy does not apply to DCM Learning due to the short duration of the programmes they are proposing to offer.

4.4 Evaluation of capacity to provide the proposed education and training provision - Overall finding:

The panel is satisfied that DCM Learning has proven its capacity to provide quality programmes leading to the proposed NFQ Level 5 and 6 Specific Purpose and minor awards in the ISCED fields of Business and Administration, Marketing and Advertising, Manufacturing and Processing and Teacher Training

Part 5 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by DCM Learning

5.1(a)	Criterion
	The quality system is comprehensive, containing policies and procedures for all relevant areas set out in the areas to be quality assured

5.1(b)	Finding
	The documentation submitted by DCM Learning is comprehensive, containing the relevant policies and procedures. The panel noted the high standard of its presentation.

5.2(a)   Criterion

DCM Learning has a governance structure capable of overseeing the effective implementation of its quality system

5.2(b)   Finding

The proposed governance structure is capable of overseeing the implementation of its quality system. A review of the roles of the Managing Director/Head of Centre and the membership of the committees is required. (para 4.2.3 refers)

5.3(a)   Criterion

DCM Learning's policies are required to demonstrate a full knowledge of legislative obligations on providers arising from the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012).

5.3(b)   Finding

The policies submitted by DCM Learning demonstrate its understanding of the legislative obligations of providers who offer programmes leading to QQI awards.

5.4(a)   Criterion

The system for Internal Monitoring is credible i.e. it identifies
- *who is responsible*
- *mode(s) of operation*
- *frequency*
- *indicator(s)/measures of effectiveness*

5.4(b)   Finding

DCM Learning as a small organisation requires its staff to undertake a number of roles, which is understandable.
The roles associated with the proposed internal monitoring system includes the programme leaders and trainers. It is necessary for the requirement to undertake this activity to be included in the terms and conditions of the contracted trainers.

5.5(a)   Criterion
The procedures for Assessment of Learners have the capacity to ensure that assessment as carried out will be fair, consistent and fit for purpose.

5.5(b)   Finding
DCM Learning. provided sufficient assurance from its documented procedures and in discussions with the panel that it had the capacity to ensure that assessment carried out will be fair, consistent and fit for purpose.
Sufficient supports will be required to ensure that the procedures are fully implemented by the contracted trainers involved in programme delivery. (para 4.3.6 refers)

5.6(a)   Criterion
The policy for Protection of Enrolled learners clearly states the provider's obligations in this area.

5.6(b)   Finding
A policy statement on protection for enrolled learners should be included in DCM Learning 's QA Manual. (para 4.3.7 refers)

5.7(a)   Criterion
The system for Self-Evaluation and Improvement is credible and has the potential to support quality provision in the provider.

5.7(b)   Finding
In its documentation and at the panel meeting DCM Learning provided the panel with sufficient assurance that it understood the requirements of an effective self-evaluation system. The panel noted the commitment to sourcing external expertise to support the self-evaluation process.
DCM Learning, due to the short nature of the programmes they are providing is required to increase the frequency of programme reviews from five years to an annual review.

5.8(a)   Criterion

There is evidence of involvement of all significant stakeholders (learners, staff, independent evaluator, external stakeholders) in the process of self-evaluation.

5.8(b)   Finding

There is evidence that DCM Learning understands the requirements for all stakeholders to be involved in its self-evaluation processes.
It is unclear how DCM Learning will use the range of stakeholder feedback to improve its programmes. This should be clarified further.

5.9a)   Criterion

The presentation to the panel demonstrates a full ownership and understanding of the quality system by DCM learning management.

5.9(b)   Finding

It was evident from the knowledgeable responses given by DCM Learning during the presentation to the panel that its directors have full ownership and understanding of its quality system. Appropriate CPD will need to be developed to ensure that the contracted trainers and support staff understand and can implement the proposed quality system.
The panel recommends that networking opportunities should be developed with other established providers who offer accredited education and training

5.10(a)   Criterion

The procedures are capable of being effectively monitored by the provider and/or by QQI.

5.10(b)   Finding

The procedures set out in the quality assurance manual are capable of being effectively monitored by the provider and QQI.

The panel considers that the role of the Director of Operations as QA officer should be revisited to ensure that what has been proposed can be effectively implemented.

Evaluation of draft QA Procedures - Overall finding

> The panel is satisfied that the draft Quality Assurance procedures and supporting infrastructure submitted by DCM Learning demonstrates a potentially effective quality management system fit for the purposes of education and training programmes leading to Specific Purpose and minor NFQ Level 5 and 6 awards.
>
> The implementation of the draft Quality Assurance procedures will require regular review by the directors to ensure they remain fit for purpose as proposed delivery of programmes commences.
>
> The conditions and recommendations made by the panel will strengthen the procedures to support the implementation of an effective quality management system by DCM Learning.

Part 6   Conditions and Recommendations

6.1   Conditions

The panel, at the conclusion of the evaluation process, has set a number of conditions for DCM Learning. These conditions must be met to the satisfaction of QQI prior to the commencement of Stage 2 of the access to initial programme validation process: submission of programmes for validation.

Evaluation of the capacity of DCM Learning to provide quality education and training to learners

- DCM Learning to commit to notifying QQI of any proposed collaborations prior to their establishment. (para 4.1.3)

- Reconsider the roles of the Managing Director/ Head of Centre in the governance structure to ensure a clear separation of the academic and business decision making structures of the organisation. (para 4.2.3)

- Submit the appropriate quality assurance procedures for approval by QQI prior to the development of blended programmes. (para 4.3.5)

- Establish a trainer profile stating the qualifications and experience required by DCM Learning contracted trainers. (para 4.3.5)

- Develop appropriate resources and supports to ensure consistency of assessment across the contracted trainers delivering each programme. (para 4.3.6)

- Reconsider the roles of the Managing Director/Head of Centre and the Operations Director in proposed assessment processes. (para 4.3.6)

Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by DCM Learning

- Revise the terms and conditions of the contracted trainers to ensure that their responsibility for participating in monitoring activity is clearly stated. (para 5.4).

- Include policy statement on protection for enrolled learners in QA Manual (para 5.6)

- Review the programme review procedure to include annual reviews (para 5.7).

- Review how feedback provided by stakeholders will inform decisions to improve its programmes. (para 5.8)

- Review the role of the Director of Operations as QA officer to ensure that what has been proposed can be effectively implemented. (para 5.10)

It is a standard condition of the initial access to programme validation process that providers who have their draft QA procedures agreed by QQI must apply to validate

the proposed programmes within six months of their approval. This condition applies to DCM Learning.

6.2   Recommendations

The panel, at the conclusion of the evaluation process, makes the following recommendations to DCM Learning for it consideration:

- Examine the potential of simplifying the proposed committee structure (para 4.2.3)

- Consider mechanisms for ensuring compulsory engagement in essential training and development for training staff. (para4.3.1)

- Network with other established providers who offer accredited education and training (para 5.9).

Part 7   Approval by Chair of the Panel

This report of the Quality and Capacity Panel is approved and submitted to QQI for its decision on the recommendation to approve the draft Quality Assurance Procedures of DCM Learning and approve its progression to Stage 2 of the initial programme validation process.

Name:

　　　　　　Naomi Jackson   *Chair*

Date: 01 July 2016

Annex 1:   Documentation provided to the Panel in the course of the Evaluation

- Applicants completed application form, including the statutory declaration and supporting documentation.
- Applicant's self-assessment against the criteria for access to initial validation.
- Provider draft QA procedures and supporting documentation.
- .QQI report of site visit dated 01 July 2016

Annex 2:   DCM Learning's staff met in the course of the Evaluation

Name	Role/Position
Patrick Byrne	Managing Director/Head of Centre.
Denise Howard	Director/ Operations Director
At site visit	
Sean McEntee	Chairperson of Board
Belinda Neary	Support Staff
Emma Jane	Support Staff

Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel's Report-DCM Learning July 2016