Reengagement Panel Report

Assessment of Capacity and Approval of QA Procedures

Part 1   Details of provider

1.1   Applicant Provider

Registered Business/Trading Name:	Computer Training Specialists Limited / Dorset College
Address:	8 Belvedere Place, Dublin 1
Date of Application:	21/05/2019
Date of resubmission of application:	
Date of evaluation:	28th June 2019
Date of site visit (if applicable):	28th June 2019
Date of recommendation to the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee:	16 July 2020

1.2   Profile of provider

Dorset College (T/A Computer Training Specialists Limited) is a private college delivering programmes in English Language, Computing, Business Studies, Accounting and Finance, Information Technology, Business Administration, Childcare, Montessori, Nursing Studies and Healthcare.

The college delivers programmes leading to awards from Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications, providing for three distinct learner cohorts:
English Language School Students: International students from a range of countries, including Brazil, Saudi Arabia, China, Mexico, Argentina, Japan and Korea.
Further Education Students: Irish and international learners, including mature learners, who may or may not hold the Irish Leaving Certificate award, and who are seeking vocational education at Levels 5 and 6 in specific fields of learning.
Higher Education Students: Irish and international students seeking Level 7 and Level 8 awards.

The college puts forward 400-500 learners per year for certification, with the breakdown, based on 2018 figures, as follows:

1. Level 8 – 115
2. Level 7 – 83
3. Level 6 – 70
4. Level 5 – 217

Programmes of study are presented using a variety of teaching strategies and methods to facilitate individual learners to achieve success. The college's educational ethos is reflected in the following statements:

- to prepare learners for the demands of higher education and the workplace.
- to fulfil their potential.
- to provide them with the knowledge and skills and competence that they require for their careers and personal development.
- to equip learners with the requisite skills for them to be successful in the workplace.

Dorset College delivers programmes leading to awards accredited by the following awarding bodies:
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
- The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
- Cisco
- European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)
- Microsoft
- Accreditation and Coordination of English Language Services (ACELS).

Dorset College is a second provider of the Letterkenny IT (LYIT) BSc in Early Childhood Care, Health and Education.

The college is housed in a dispersed campus, including two grade 1 listed buildings in the centre of Dublin.

Part 2   Panel Membership

Name	Role of Panel member	Organisation
Dr Marion Palmer	Chairperson	Retired Head of Department of Technology and Psychology IADT
Ms. Angela Higgins	Report Writer	Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board
Mr. Callaghan Commons	Panel Member student representative	Dublin City University Student Union
Ms. Clodagh Beare	Panel Member	Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board
Professor Martin McKinney	Panel Member	University of Ulster
Ms. Celestine Rowland	Panel Member	Galway Business School

Dr. Deirdre Stritch Provider Approval and Monitoring Manager, QQI attended the site visit as an observer.

Part 3   Findings of the Panel

3.1   Summary Findings

Following review of Dorset College's application documentation and a site visit on June 28th, 2019, the Panel found that Dorset College had engaged in the reengagement process in an exemplary manner. It was clear that there had been a root and branch review of Dorset College's QA processes. The Panel recommended however, that the college fine tune the structures, processes and QA documentation for consistency, coherence and clarity.

The Panel recommended refusal to approve Dorset College draft quality assurance procedures pending the implementation of the twelve mandatory changes set out in Section 6.1 of this report.
The Panel commended:
1. The college's committed and professional engagement in the reengagement process.
2. The commitment of staff to education and training and to quality assurance.
3. The quality of facilities – these are immaculate. College management have made significant efforts to create accessibility in the context of the building's grade 1 listing. The college also has a fully accessible building (ABC) in Drumcondra, and takes a flexible approach to scheduling programmes to accommodate learners with specific needs on a case-by-case basis.
4. The commitment to staff development, including lunchtime training sessions, Moodle support, including a Moodle area for sharing professional experience and reporting on learning experiences of staff; and support for staff to engage in continuous professional development.
5. The establishment of an Advisory Board – but recommended some reflection on how this might be best used in order to be sustainable and provide strategic guidance in a range of themes.
6. The Framework Curriculum for English Language Learning – this was particularly well written in accessible, clear language.

Dorset College resubmitted updated quality assurance documentation, and the panel reconvened on April 27th, 2020. However, the panel required further clarification from Dorset College on a number of points in order to make a recommendation to QQI. The panel paused the process at that meeting to allow the provider to make some last corrections and clarifications to the documentation and concluded the process with a final meeting on 26th May 2020, at which the panel recommended approval of the Dorset College quality assurance procedures to QQI.

The Panel commends the way in which Dorset College staff have worked through a period of significant disruption (Covid 19 emergency) to implement the mandatory requirements and to restructure the college's reporting lines; improve the QA manual and to put in place new roles within the college structures. The panel congratulates the management and staff of Dorset College on the outcome of the process.

Please refer to Part 6 for Mandatory Changes and Specific Advice.

3.2 Recommendation of the Panel to Programmes and Awards Executive Committee of QQI

	Tick <u>one</u> as appropriate
Approve [the provider's – insert name] draft QA procedures	✓
Refuse approval of Dorset College's draft QA procedures **with mandatory changes** set out in Section 6.1 (If this recommendation is accepted by QQI, the provider may make a revised application within six months of the decision)	
Refuse to approve [the provider's – insert name] draft QA procedures	

Part 4   Evaluation of provider capacity

4.1   Legal and compliance requirements:

	Criteria	*Yes/No/ Partially*	*Comments*
4.1.1(a)	*Criterion: Is the applicant an established Legal Entity who has Education and/or Training as a Principal Function?*	*Yes*	Dorset College has provided evidence that it is a company limited by guarantee, trading as Dorset College.
4.1.2(a)	*Criterion: Is the legal entity established in the European Union and does it have a substantial presence in Ireland?*	*Yes*	The company is established as a legal entity in Ireland, and is based in Dublin.
4.1.3(a)	Criterion: *Are any dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries clearly specified?*	**Yes**	This was an issue identified by the Panel in 2019; however, Dorset College subsequently provided a list of dependencies, including details of MoUs for student exchanges and mobilities.
4.1.4(a)	*Criterion: Are any third-party relationships and partnerships compatible with the scope of access sought?*	*Yes*	Lack of clarity in this area was identified as an issue by the Panel at the 2019 site visit. However, a full list of MoUs was subsequently provided to the panel.
4.1.5(a)	Criterion: *Are the applicable regulations and legislation complied with in all jurisdictions where it operates?*	**Yes**	Statutory policies have been followed.
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*	**Yes**	The College has confirmed that it is in good standing in the qualifications and education and training system in Ireland and abroad.

authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators.		

Findings

> The Panel found that Dorset College is compliant with legal requirements, apart from the exclusion of the list of MoUs. During the reengagement meeting, the Panel found that the college had established and was planning relationships with international organisations. The panel required that details of these relationships be included with the application/resubmission.
>
> The reengagement process was paused following the reconvened panel meeting on April 27th, 2020 to allow Dorset College to make further revisions to eliminate low-level errors and to ensure accuracy and consistency. Dorset College has made the required revisions to the QA documentation, and the panel has found that Dorset College's governance and management structures accurately reflect the requirements.
>
> The Panel finds that Dorset College is compliant with legal requirements, based on the documentation provided.

4.2 Resource, governance and structural requirements:

	Criteria	*Yes/No/ Partially*	*Comments*
4.2.1(a)	**Criterion:** *Does the applicant have a sufficient resource base and is it stable and in good financial standing?*	**Yes**	Accounts provided. PEL policy provided. Provider has own buildings.
4.2.2(a)	**Criterion:** *Does the applicant have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?*	**Yes**	The college provided a Strategic Plan with a clear vision for the next five years. Projected student numbers would indicate that there is a case for sustainable provision, and the management team informed the Panel that they plan to sustain the quality of provision, emphasising sustainable development in their existing fields of expertise rather than extending scope.
4.2.3(a)	**Criterion:** *Are fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision making structures in place?*	**Yes**	Dorset College has provided the panel with a Quality Assurance Handbook which illustrates the college's governance, management and decision-making structures.
4.2.4(a)	**Criterion:** *Are there arrangements in place for providing required information to QQI?*	**Yes**	The college has had a positive working relationship with QQI throughout the reengagement process. Formal systems are in place for the finalisation and communication of certification results to QQI.

Findings

The Panel found that the applicant's resource base and business case were appropriate.

The provider was required to complete a review of all quality assurance documentation, policies and procedures to ensure that language and terminology, including roles and committee titles are used consistently to ensure that the QA system functions effectively and could be easily understood by all stakeholders.

The reengagement process was paused following the reconvened panel meeting on April 27th, 2020 to allow Dorset College to make further revisions to eliminate low-level errors to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Dorset College has made the required revisions to the QA documentation, and at its 26th May 2020 meeting the panel found that Dorset College's governance and management structures accurately reflected the requirements.

4.3 Programme development and provision requirements:

	Criteria	*Yes/No/ Partially*	*Comments*
4.3.1(a)	**Criterion:** *Does the applicant have experience and a track record in providing education and training programmes?*	**Yes**	Dorset College has been a QQI provider for 6 years and delivered programmes leading to HETAC and FETAC awards for 7 years prior to this.
4.3.2(a)	**Criterion:** *Does the applicant have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?*	**Yes**	The applicant provided a list of academic staff and qualifications, and these are fit for purpose and stable. The meeting with the staff team (teaching and administrative), confirmed a strong commitment to the ethos and goals of the college.
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)?*	**Yes**	The college has successfully applied for validation of programmes and demonstrated a strategic approach to the development and validation of programmes of education and training.
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?*	**Yes**	The provision of accessibility is constrained by nature of premises, two of which are in Grade 1 listed buildings on Belvedere Place. The applicant has commendably installed an

			access point, providing limited access to and egress from the building. The Panel commends the college management for the steps taken to make one area accessible, and providing a universal toilet in spite of this. The College has another building, ABC, on Dorset Street, which is fully accessible, and the college makes flexible arrangements for learners on a 'case by case' basis.
4.3.5(a)	**Criterion:** *Are there access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval in place?*	**Yes**	Access, transfer and progression arrangements are clearly specified in the Dorset College QA Manual, and these meet QQI's criteria for approval. The college has also provided a process for RPL.
4.3.6(a)	**Criterion:** *Are structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners in place?*	**Yes**	The panel had identified a need for improvements in the QA Manual to ensure that the distinctions between summative and formative assessment were clear, and that there was provision for clear information to learners. Dorset College have provided evidence of the existence of structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners, in line with the criteria specified.
4.3.7(a)	**Criterion:** *Are arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to meet the statutory obligations in place (where applicable)?*	**Yes**	Policy and arrangements are in place.

Findings

At the site meeting the Panel found that the management and staff at Dorset College had done an impressive job in their efforts to meet the requirements in a relatively short timeframe, taking into account that a number of the team were recently appointed, or had changed role very recently to reflect the changing requirements of work in relation to QA. The Panel acknowledged that the management and staff of this college are on a trajectory that features a positive focus on quality assurance.

The Panel commended the commitment of the college to providing up to date programmes, and their commitment to applying and engaging in the programme validation process strategically to support this.

The Panel commended the efforts of the college management team to improve physical access to the buildings despite significant constraints.

The Panel found that criteria 4.3.5 and 4.3.6 were partially met, and that the RPL policy required review to include an appeals stage. During the meeting, the Panel found that the organisational chart would benefit from review and improvement to show clear workflows, and to illustrate the channels for processing the work of different committees or teams. This was evident, for example in the lack of a level to process appeals for the RPL process.

A mandatory change to review all policies to include appeals stages was required, and has been met. The panel advised that a standard timeframe should be included for processing of appeals. This is typically 10 working days.

The Panel found that the definition of formative and summative assessment was accurate in the QA Manual (Page 166). Mandatory change 8 required that this definition be reviewed and replaced with an accurate definition. The college made this change. The panel commends the changes made by the college to policies and procedures based on specific advice given following the site visit on June 28th, for example, introducing a very comprehensive group work policy.

Following the reconvened meeting of the panel in May 2020 the panel finds that all of the mandatory changes have been met.

4.4 Overall findings in respect of provider capacity to provide sustainable education and training

Dorset College's business and strategic plans indicate that they have the capacity to provide sustainable education and training.

Following the site visit the Panel found that, despite a strong commitment to quality that was particularly evident during the meeting with the college's teaching and administrative staff, the organisational plans, documentation, QA manual, policies and procedures required some review and alteration to accurately reflect this commitment. The panel reviewed updated documentation submitted by Dorset College, and reconvened on April 27th, 2020, when the process was paused until May 26th, 2020, to allow Dorset College to provide the panel with additional clarifications and address low-level errors to ensure coherence throughout the Quality Assurance Manual and across other platforms in order to avoid confusion.

The Quality Assurance Manual and documentation provided to the panel in advance of the reconvened panel meeting indicates that Dorset College have met the criteria stated by QQI. The panel's recommendation to QQI is to approve the draft QA procedures of Dorset College.

Part 5 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by Computer Training Specialists Limited (T/A Dorset College)

The following is the Panel's findings following evaluation of Computer Training Specialists Limited (T/A Dorset College) *quality assurance procedures against QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016). Sections 1-11 of the report follows the structure and referencing of the Core QA Guidelines.*

1	GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY

Panel Findings:

Organisational Chart

During the original site visit, The Panel found that the Organisational Chart submitted by Dorset College required some revision, in order to clarify the governance pathways for the organisation. The chart submitted featured both roles and operations or functions; for example, GDPR and programme validations were placed under the role of the Registrar, together with the QA and Assessment Officer role. The Registrar was the current GDPR Officer, and was thus shown to be reporting to herself. The panel recommended that GDPR should be removed from the 'roles' chart, and that the chart should feature the roles in the organisation.

The roles of Admissions Officer and Student Experience (Officer) were identified as reporting to the Sales and Marketing Director. Admissions decisions are academic decisions, and student experience is linked to quality and must be reflected in the diagram. A risk of conflict of interest between educational goals and commercial goals was identified by the panel. The Panel recommended that the organisational chart should be adjusted to reflect actual reporting lines to ensure that there are clear distinctions between academic decision making and commercial decision making

At the reconvened panel meeting (27th April 2020), the panel found that the structures and roles had been changed to reflect improved reporting lines, and that a number of new roles had been created. Mandatory change 3 was met by the college.

Programme teams: During the site visit, the Panel found that there was a need for more information about the programme teams in the organisational chart. Under the English Language School heading, a Director of Studies and Programme Team were listed. The panel recommended inclusion of similar information about the other programmes. The central section of the Organisational Chart under the Director of Academic Operations required more consistency in relation to each programme being run in the college to provide information at a glance about the structures of the college. The college has put in place a number of additional programme leads, and restructured the organisational chart according to mandatory changes 3 and 4.

QA Structures: During its original site visit, the Panel found that the QA chart required review and revision to reflect more effective processes for the governance of quality assurance, and to make the processes of quality assurance more visible. The Panel recommended changes to this chart to meet QQI criteria to make the academic decision-making body more visible, and to give a clear insight into the management of the college and management of assessment.

Dorset College has put in place a clear structure of programme Boards and Programme Leads and the organisational chart has been reworked to include a Leadership Team.

A mandatory change (2) to review all policies and include appeals stages was required, and at the reconvened panel meeting, the panel found that this change was met. The panel advised that a standard timeframe should be included for the processing of appeals. This is typically 10 working days.

The Panel found that the Director of Academic Operations (DAO) was responsible for chairing a rather large number of the Committees in the QA structure. The Panel recommended that the Director of Academic Operations' role on most of the committees be revisited, and that other personnel take responsibility for being on the committees. Dorset College have restructured their committees to address this change.

The Panel required that the name of the 'Assessment Committee' be changed to 'Appeals Committee'. The documentation for this committee in the QA manual required adjustment to reflect its operations. Dorset College has made this change.

The Panel recommended that Programme Boards and the Appeals Committee be sub-committees of the Academic Quality Committee. Reports produced by the former two should be read into the record of the latter, thus creating an effective reporting loop. Dorset College has made this change.

The Panel found ambiguity about the inclusion of the 'Programme Manager'/'Academic Operations' roles in some of the committees (1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10). This, together with the number of committees and Boards and number of likely committee meetings, requires review and adjustment.

The QA structure – The Panel recommended that the Academic Management Group should report to the Senior Management Group. The Panel recommended the inclusion of a HE and FE academic in the Academic Management group because this group has an operations function.

At the reconvened panel meeting on April 27th, 2020, the reengagement process was paused until May 26th, 2020 to allow Dorset College to complete further revisions to address low-level errors and to address consistency of structures in the documentation.

The Academic Quality Committee (AQC).

The Panel recommended renaming this as the 'Academic Council' and that the college ensure that the AQC (Now named Academic Council) be the final arbiter for policy and procedures i.e. this committee should have responsibility for proposal, development and sign off of policy.

A short annual report should be introduced for the Academic Quality Committee (Academic Council). Inclusion of academic voice on the Academic Quality Committee (Academic Council) in the form of a Programme Leader is recommended.

The college has implemented this mandatory change (Number 6). When reviewing the resubmitted documentation however, the panel discovered that the Advisory Board was cited as the arbiter for programmes. The panel advised that the role of the Advisory Board should be adjusted to accurately reflect its intended role and this has been done.

Advisory Board

The Panel commended Dorset College on the development of the Advisory Board, and recommended that their terms of reference be expanded to include, for example, Strategic Development and Planning. The role of the Advisory Board as an external voice/sign off on annual reports is important, and this should be clear from the Terms of Reference.

The Panel recommended that membership of the Advisory Board should reflect the needs and purpose of the Board and the College, and include, for example, industry representatives reflecting the broad sweep of programmes delivered by the college.

This advice was implemented.

Quality Assurance Committee – The panel recommended that the college review the terms of reference of this committee which should develop and propose policy. It should then report to Academic Council (AC) through its minutes. Policy and procedures would then be approved by Academic Council and the date at which policies are adopted is that of the AC meeting or another date determined by Academic Council.

These recommendations have been implemented through the redesign of the QA structure.

Programme Boards – the Panel recommended that an academic should chair the Programme Boards. The Panel recommended inclusion of class representatives on these boards.

The Panel recommended that the Registrar and Examinations Officer should not sit on the Programme Boards. Programme Boards should be sub-committees of the Academic Quality Committee, which is now titled 'Quality Assurance Committee'

The Panel found that two Programme Board meetings per annum is insufficient and recommended an increase of this number to three per annum. The Provider agreed that an additional Programme Board meeting will be introduced, bringing the total to three per annum. The Panel recommended the inclusion of class representatives in the Programme Boards. Dorset College has met these requirements.

Other Committees

The Panel suggested that *the 'Impropriety Committee'* should be a sub-committee of the Academic Quality Committee (now titled Quality Assurance Committee), and should meet as required. In the Quality Manual, the formal and informal plagiarism procedures were almost identical. It was suggested that the policy be reviewed.

Student Services Committee – The Panel recommended the inclusion of student representatives in this committee.

These recommendations have been met.

Procedures

At the site visit, and having reviewed the original documentation submitted, the Panel found that the provider's QA procedures needed to be expressed clearly, in a common format, to reduce ambiguity. For example, there was no description of the role of the Class Representative, nor of the process for election of Class Representatives, together with a clear description of the management of the election in a neutral, independent manner. The Panel recommended that all procedures be mapped using process maps, and included in the Quality Assurance Manual.

The college has implemented this advice.

Scheduling and calendars

The Panel recommended sequencing of committee meetings, to minimise overlaps, and provide effective time for preparation and dissemination of reports.

The Panel recommended that a common format be applied for all academic calendars, and that these give accurate information about start dates; assessment deadlines; examination dates; issue of results; key dates in the academic year and appeals deadlines.

The college has implemented this advice.

2   DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

Panel Findings:

The work of college management to develop QA documentation was commended by the Panel, given the trajectory of change described during the site visit, which the Panel wishes to acknowledge. The plan for publication of QA documentation to staff in an electronic platform developed by the Librarian was commended. This information will be provided in a 'stripped out' accessible format in order to ensure clear understanding of policies and procedures.

During the site visit, the Panel met with staff and asked them about their knowledge of the QA Manual. They responded that the QA Manual describes what the team does in practice, and as one staff member said, 'we live it and it is real'. The Student Experience Officer reported that the team was invited to a meeting where the manual was presented, and sections highlighted as relevant to certain team members. Each staff member was given access to an online copy. One member of staff described QA as being like an umbrella, including all of the college, and always focussed on improving. Staff felt that they knew who they could refer to in relation to QA issues, and that the application of the manual content was excellent.

The Student Experience Officer was working on a flow chart for students – illustrating sources of support and advice, and a 'how-to' chart for using Moodle, in collaboration with the Librarian/ICT Officer.

The Panel recommended that process maps be introduced to eliminate any ambiguities, and that Committee terms of reference and titles be reviewed, as noted in Section 1. It was advised that process maps should clearly indicate levels of 'sign-off' for reports and confirmation of policy implementation for example.

The Panel recommended that the provider develop and publish a schedule of meetings, cognisant of the dependencies between committees, to ensure that business is conducted in an orderly fashion, and there is easily documented follow through.

There is potential for overarching policies with defined procedures for each sector. There were problems with the QA documentation: items were left out of where they should be included, but then turned up elsewhere. For example, the Work Placement section is very sparse, with no reference to how placements were identified and supervised by the college to ensure duty of care for students etc.; however, these gaps were addressed in other parts of the QA Manual (e.g. Learner Experience), or in other documentation (e.g. Learner Handbook or the clarification letter sent to the panel).

The Panel recommended that all documents are proofread to ensure the quality and coherence of the documents.

Documentation required further revision to ensure accuracy and consistency. The reengagement process was paused to allow the college to address low-level errors and inconsistencies, and to ensure that all platforms accurately reflect the QA Manual.

Dorset College has implemented the mandatory changes cited by the panel, and resubmitted the Quality Assurance Manual and details of Memorandums of Understanding which addressed the panel's previous concerns.

3	PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Panel Findings:

The college teams have participated in review and development of programmes and submission of programmes for validation. The team was involved in this development and in the transition to the new validation process, and tutors felt empowered to write programmes in a learner-focussed way, applying weightings for assessment, and writing briefs and criteria as a team. Briefs have since been modified and changed based on feedback and informed by the experience of colleagues working on the ground. The Panel recommended that the QA Manual section on Programme Development and Validation be improved by including the details regarding internal gap analysis and submission to QQI subsequent processes.

The Panel found that there is a robust approach to the proposal of a programme development process, which mirrors the programme writing process and the requirements of the QQI policy on Validation of Programmes of Education and Training. However, while the Registrar reviews the self-evaluation of the programme validation documentation, it is not clear who approves it for submission for the validation process. The panel reviewed the resubmitted documentation prior to the reconvened panel meeting: the Advisory Board was listed in the documentation and the graphics as approving the submission. This was adjusted by Dorset College in the process of implementing the Mandatory Changes and Specific Advice recommended by the panel.

The panel advised Dorset College to review the teaching learning and assessment strategy to reflect the strands of the NFQ – i.e. Knowledge, know-how and skills, and competence and learning outcomes.

The Panel recommended that more information should be included in handbooks regarding learning outcomes, credits and grades. The Panel recommended that the general and programme handbooks be improved to include this information.

The college has addressed this advice.

International Foundation Programme (programme reviewed in February and awaiting revalidation): This is aimed at international learners who have a qualification that is not quite at the level of the Irish Leaving Certificate, and who may require additional supports and preparation in order to effectively engage with Irish HE programmes of study. HEIs require the prospective learners to complete a foundation programme in order to prepare for access as an undergraduate. This is referred to as an 'undergraduate' programme on the website - this may not deliver the correct message, as it is technically an access programme. The Panel required that this be reworded, including on the website, to reflect the programme accurately, i.e. that it leads to a Level 5 General Studies award.

The reconvened panel has given additional specific advice that the updated website should reflect the QA Manual consistently.

Dorset College submitted documentation reflecting that it had appropriately addressed the panel's concerns prior to the second reconvened panel meeting on May 26th, 2020.

| **4** | **STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT** |

Panel Findings:

The Panel commended the provider on its genuine assessment of its own context and situation, and its honesty in identifying potential areas of vulnerability.

The Panel commended the continuous professional development provided to staff, and recommended that the existing human resources be used to ensure document proofing and review results in high quality, clear documentation of the QA governance, policies and procedures.

The Panel found that the organisational chart provided required some additional work. Certain roles, such as that of the Student Experience Officer, have changed since the appointments were made, and as a result, their reporting lines needed to change. The Student Experience Officer reported through the Marketing Officer to the Sales and Marketing Director, who originally proposed the need for such a role. The Panel identified that there may be a conflict of interest in this arrangement, and the college confirmed that queries received from students overlap with concerns about programmes and quality assurance issues, as well as learner wellbeing. The Panel required that Student Experience role be moved into the academic sphere.

Similarly, the Panel found that the Admissions Officer reported to the Sales and Marketing Manager, with an additional line to the Registrar. The Panel discussed the admissions process with staff, and the first step of the process is to determine whether the learner has the ability to pass the course. This was commended by the Panel. If a prospective student is not ready for the level, they are advised about doing a course at a different level. Documents are sent to the Registrar for a final decision, and when approved, the Admissions Officer issues a notification and invoice to the student. The Panel recommended that this role be moved to within the academic remit, as the bulk of the interactions and decision-making falls into this arena. Exploration of the RPL processes espoused in the college also indicated that this role fits with the academic rather than the commercial remit.

In documents submitted to the reconvened panel, Dorset College confirmed that it has made the recommended changes.

Academic Staffing Structures

The Panel found that there were gaps in the coverage of academic staff structures as they apply to the programmes delivered in the College. In the organisational chart presented, there was a clear structure for the English Language School, listed under the Director of Academic Operations (DAO), while the School of Business, Health and Social Sciences and Professional Courses were all listed in one line, with Programme Teams, faculty and administrator listed under a separate heading. The Panel recommended that standard structures for all Programme Teams should be put in place to reflect a similar structure to that of the English Language Programme. The Panel recommended the expansion of the 'Programme Leader' role across all programmes, including HE and FE, to provide consistent structures and reduce the workload of the DAO. This structure already exists within the college, for some programmes, with the programme leader allocated 2 hours per week to carry out their responsibilities. The English Language School has a 'Director of Studies' for example, and the strategic impact and coherence provided by this role is evident in the quality of the Learner Handbook provided with the QA documentation.

The QA documentation submitted originally by Dorset College illustrated that the Dean of Academic Affairs (DAA) DAO chaired five committee meetings three times per year, as well as sitting on nearly every other committee. The panel recommended the adoption of Programme Leaders who could act as chairs would be more appropriate and would reduce the over-reliance on the DAA. The Panel recommended that the Programme Boards should be 'owned' by the academic personnel and that linear reporting structures are optimised to ensure clear decision-making routes, and to protect staff and management.

Dorset College demonstrated that this advice has been addressed in revised documentation, and an organisational chart submitted in 2020.

Staff Handbook

The Panel commended the comprehensive Staff Handbook provided.

Staff Development

The Panel met with a group of academic and administrative staff during the site visit on June 28th, 2019, and the college's appetite for, and commitment to, staff development was clearly evident in the conversation. The Panel commended the commitment displayed by the management to the provision of ongoing staff development, and the commitment displayed by staff to participating in continuing professional development enthusiastically. This commitment ranges from support for participation in higher education programmes through to commitment to supporting practice of the skills learned within the college. In addition, the college provides once-off policy-based training, for example there is a scheduled visit from the Office of the Data Commissioner to provide training in GDPR. The college also arranges 'lunchtime briefings', at which staff and invited guests can present and share knowledge, and the Librarian/ICT Officer is developing a platform in the Moodle package as a repository for staff to share their learning and knowledge with other staff. The Panel found evidence that the strategic value placed on development extends to opportunities for staff to shift roles within the college too, with one member of staff training in counselling, then moving from a lecturing to a counselling role to provide for a specific need identified in the college for the provision of learner support. The commitment to continuous improvement was evident in the collegiate atmosphere, and the support for staff development and positive change management.

One member of staff described the experience of participating in the Dundalk IT (DKIT) master's degree in Learning and Teaching finding that her teaching practice had changed and as a result, she had received very positive feedback from students. Staff share conference papers and their own learning experiences from attendance at conferences.

Lecturer recruitment: At the time of the site visit, the College was experiencing challenges in the recruitment of ICT lecturers to deliver the newly validated programme, mainly due to competition from industry demands.

Development of new roles: During the site visit, the Programme Administrator welcomed the development of new roles within the college, stating they will help everyone, and support improved communication, adding to the great atmosphere. The staff said that the Director is helpful, and will talk through issues if necessary. The Panel commended the efforts of the college to create very positive

working relationships. The staff team expressed excitement in relation to the growth in progress. There is a single staff room for all staff. Staff meetings take place before terms start.

Director of Academic Operations (DAO) Role and Registrar Role

Prior to the site meeting in June 2019, a job description was provided for the DAO role. The DAO and Registrar roles were relatively new positions, established in the previous two years. This job description was extremely comprehensive. The role of the Registrar looks considerably lighter than that of the DAO. The Panel recommended that the roles and responsibilities for both of these positions should be clarified, and that roles and responsibilities in the next layers should also be formalised and clarified in order to provide appropriate support for senior management. This would ensure distinct decision-making pathways and clearly comprehended technical terminology used commonly in all college documentation. This would assist the college in its goal of moving to a model of distributed leadership. The appointment of the DAO has resulted in an improvement in outcomes and resourcing, and the college hopes to expand the team, with more programme leaders in the short to medium term.

The Panel asked staff about their experience of the college, and one new member of staff observed that it has been a wonderful experience. As many of the staff are part-time, most communication is through e-mail and phones, with the faculty responding in a timely manner. They are always available and have a very positive attitude. The QA/Examinations officer and Registrar roles are crucial and they are very helpful for part-time lecturers.

Subsequent to the site visit the DAO and Registrar's roles were reorganised and a Dean of Academic Affairs appointed. The role is clearly stated in the updated quality assurance manual.

New documentation provided prior to the reconvened panel meeting in 2020, illustrated changes in the roles and responsibilities of key personnel.

Dorset College submitted evidence that showed it had appropriately addressed the panel's concerns.

5   TEACHING AND LEARNING

Panel Findings:

The college has a teaching, learning and assessment policy, which demonstrates commitment to monitoring learners' experience and uses it to inform improvements, and to develop technology enhanced learning. The espoused commitment to creating a focus on learner engagement and on excellence in teaching and learning were reflected in our meeting with the staff team.

The Panel recommended a review of the teaching, learning and assessment strategy to include the strands and language of the NFQ – i.e. knowledge, know- how and skills, competence, and learning outcomes.

During the 2019 site visit, the Panel met with thirteen of the staff team, including administrative and academic staff. During this section of the visit, the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff team was very evident, and they described quality assurance, teaching practices, learning and the overall environment knowledgeably and with confidence.

One teacher described her application of the flipped classroom, in which learners investigate themes, and then present their findings back to their class. Learners also carry out lab work and learn how to review their tasks. The teacher uses Moodle to assess, including multiple-choice questions. There is an emphasis on review and reflection, and on giving feedback on responses. Staff are using some elements of blended learning in their practice, although there is no blended learning policy as yet.

Class sizes vary from 25-60 students. Number of students in classes for electives may number 10-50. Formative assessments take place throughout the year. There is no defined college guideline on number of examinations, but a number of courses have 'cumulative exams' through which learners accumulate marks. The results of these examinations contribute to the final result.

All business degrees have a presence in the Moodle system. FE presence on Moodle is in development. There is a standard interface on Moodle designed by the college. Moodle is perceived as a critical resource for both students and lecturers and is an essential source of information for teaching and learning. There has been strong adoption of Moodle, and the role of the Librarian has recently been extended to include ICT based on the extent of development work, and integration of teaching and learning into the system. Learners use the library as a source of support when they are starting to work with Moodle.

The Bachelor of Science programme includes the methodologies of group work and team work to develop and build on communication skills and to enhance learners' soft skills.   The goal is to support interaction between people from different cultures. Learners are examined in groups, which is a form of assessment in which it is difficult to ensure fairness. Learners are engaged in reflective process and critical evaluation in order to measure group participation. The teams write reports for assessment, but there are also individual reflections. The principle behind this approach is that it will prepare learners very well for workplaces where the range of employees is diverse.

The Panel recommended a policy for group work to ensure that learners are fairly assessed on the learning outcomes when there is assessment of group work.

Dorset College has implemented this recommendation, including a comprehensive group work policy in the updated Quality Assurance Manual submitted prior to the reconvened Panel meeting.

Diversity

The Student Experience Officer piloted an induction day for students. This gives learners one day to get to know each other, and to strengthen the group relationship. It is designed to focus on helping learners to understand the importance of their own strengths. Learners who participated in the induction day have bonded very well, and as a group are engaging in more study time together. This approach will be continued.

The Childcare and Montessori lecturer uses a map of the world to illustrate the range of nationalities in class, and hosts international food days. Respect for diversity is essential in the nursing and healthcare fields too, as it is recognised as one of the key underpinning attributes for these vocations. The faculty embraces cultural diversity, and recognises that, as adults, learners arrive with existing knowledge. The programme administrator observed that students become transformed as a result of their experience at the college. The staff highlighted the positive culture in the college, and cited the positive interaction between staff which is the norm, and the fact that everyone is on 'first name terms and everyone knows one another', and that students feel supported by the fact that we are there for them. As one member of staff put it: 'nurturing is what we do' (CL).

6 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

Panel Findings:

The Panel found that Dorset College takes a positive approach to the assessment of learners, using a range of assessment instruments and techniques. During the site visit meeting with staff, the approach to assessment was described to the Panel. The Panel found that the college must review and update the quality assurance documentation to ensure that there is clarity about the assessment (i.e. ensure that there is clear differentiation between formative and summative assessment) and that all assessment-related policies and procedures are clearly mapped out.

Dorset College implemented this mandatory change (number 8).

Higher Education Programmes

In the HE programmes, a combination of examination (50%) and continuous assessment (50%) are used, and these approaches are explicit in the newly validated Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Business programmes.

Examinations must be written within a specific timeframe and submitted to the QA/Examinations Officer and to the External Examiner with marking schemes for moderation. Following approval, the Examinations Officer prints them and retains them under lock and key (HE).

In the case of the Business Programme, the examinations are 'run by' the DAO to ensure that they fit with college policy and are consistent with the programme and learning outcomes. The three lecturers collaborate to ensure assessment is not skewed in one direction, everything is being covered, and that a variety of tasks, techniques and instruments is used. The assessment choices are made to ensure learners apply theory to the assessment, and that the assessment is relevant to current issues. The focus is on

allowing learners to see theory in action. Learners in Entrepreneurship start their own company, and this forms part of a realistic assessment experience. This robust practice to ensure the integrity and robustness of assessment materials is commended by the Panel.

An assessment schedule is issued to learners by the Programme Administrator at the start of the year, including assessment deadlines. The schedule is agreed by the programme teams to reduce pressure on students. Learners are issued with marks four weeks after the deadline, and sometimes receive them earlier, depending upon the size of the class. The Panel recommended giving general feedback to the class close to the submission deadline where this practice has not been adopted. It is applied in the business school. Students in this college demand feedback.

FE (Level 5 & 6 Programmes)

For FE Programmes, the percentage of assessment techniques varies from component to component, depending on specifications. Assessments are devised by lecturers. Learners receive a minimum of four weeks' notice of the deadline for submission of assignments and projects.

In the FE sector, a pass by compensation cannot be used. Every module is a module in its own right, and all learning outcomes must be assessed. It is important to reflect this in the handbooks. There are no penalties for late submissions in the Common Awards System because assessment is criterion-referenced (QQI Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers, updated 2018).

Feedback is provided to learners within four weeks of the submission of assessments. Feedback is designed to inform improvements. Feedback is given to learners on assignments before they participate in examinations. This supports learner achievement and confidence when facing the examination. Learners are clearly informed about where marks have been lost and gained.

Dorset College has established a relationship with Belvedere College – allowing teachers to use the science laboratories so that the science students can practice carrying out experiments and writing lab reports. This enables learners to gain 'hands-on' experience, and this fulfils the requirements for skills demonstrations. Feedback from learners going to university is very positive about this lab experience. Learners on the International Foundation Programme (Science and Health, Level 5) report that this is very useful for them when they progress to university.

Assessment in the work place.

All Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) students are placed in early years settings recognised by TUSLA. Learners are marked by a supervisor in the workplace. The programme team are working with the Registrar to improve the quality of assessment in the workplace. Learners complete specified assignments and tasks during their placement. In the Healthcare environment, Skills Demonstrations are stamped and signed by a nurse. Learners are also assessed on simulated skills demonstrations with specialist equipment in the college environment. The college has put Child Protections policies and guidelines in place.

Group Assessments

Students on the BSc programmes participate in group assessments (see section 5). The Panel recommended a cross-cutting policy for group work to ensure that learners are fairly assessed on their learning.

Overall findings

The Panel recommended that the principles of learning and assessment as they apply to programmes leading to QQI awards should be referenced in the QA manual and student handbooks to ensure clarity.

The Panel recommended that the QA Manual be adjusted to reflect assessment techniques other than examination, and the associated processes – for example, the processes for group projects.

The Panel recommended review of assessment schedules and calendars to ensure that they include all information about assessment, including issue, deadlines and submissions; Programme Board meetings; date for issue of results; appeals deadlines.

The panel identified as mandatory changes the need for Dorset College to review assessment sections of the QA Manual and handbooks to ensure that there is consistency with the definition of formative assessment (Please refer to Page 7 of the QQI Guidelines on Assessment for Providers, updated 2018). Where necessary, the Panel recommended the use of a single overarching policy, with provisions for differentiated procedures where there is a difference between programmes, specifically where distinctions need to be made between different procedures for the HE programmes and the FE programmes. The college was directed to rename the Assessment Committee the Appeals Committee as this better reflects its function. The Panel recommended that there should be clear role descriptions identifying the levels of sign-off – for example on receipt, analysis and decision-making in the case of appeals. This clarity will enhance the systematic approach to processes and to record-keeping.

The Panel paused the reengagement process following the reconvened Panel meeting to allow Dorset College to address the low-level errors in the Quality Assurance Manual. Following the review of resubmitted documentation and the reconvened panel meeting, the panel commended Dorset College for the improvements to the manual and structures to date.

The Panel is satisfied that Dorset College has submitted the required evidence, and has addressed the panel's concerns in relation to the QA manual.

7	SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

Panel Findings:

Information and support to learners.

The main sources of information for learners are the Student Handbooks and the academic calendars. There is one handbook available for the HE and FE students and another for the English Language Students. The Panel finds that information in this handbook, particularly details of procedures, should be accurately aligned with the procedures in the QA Manual, and reference the relevant Committees. It is also advisable for language used throughout to be accessible and clear.

Academic Calendars

Academic calendars are published on the Moodle platform. The Panel recommended that more consistency is required in these calendars, across programmes. The provider is aiming to move towards a paperless system, which will include calendars, schedules and induction documentation, and will be featured on the updated college website. All current forms are currently available to learners in the Registrar's page on the Moodle system. The new website will include a section for student information.

Dorset College has introduced a common academic calendar for all students.

The panel recommended that all language be standardised across documentation to ensure consistency and accessibility. The reengagement process was paused at the reconvened Panel meeting to allow the college to address remaining low-level errors in the QA Manual and documentation. This has now been done.

Class Representatives

The college is planning to extend the induction period, providing 'just in time' information to students over a longer period of time. The Class Representatives act as a channel for two-way communication on behalf of students, and the Student Experience Officer meets with class representatives at the beginning, middle of the year and before the end of the year. Qualitative feedback is sought from Class Representatives once per semester to inform the monitoring of the learning experience. The Programme Manager meets with the Class Representatives regularly.

The process for election of Class Representatives was described. Following the Induction Day, when learners get to know one another, Class Representatives are selected through in-class voting, supervised by the Academic Operations Officer. According to the Organisational Charts submitted, there are learner representatives on the Academic Quality Committee, the Quality Enhancement Committee and the Student Services Committee. The Student Experience Officer currently meets, and guides the Class Representatives using a checklist. According to the QA Manual, NStEP training is provided (https://studentengagement.ie/), however, the College confirmed that this training is not yet in place, but delivery will start in September 2019. There is a plan for the college to become part of the NStEP programme.

The Panel recommended that procedures for election of Class Representatives be put in place; that consistency of language be used – ref use of term 'learner representative' or 'Class Representative' and this consistency be applied across all committees, groups and documentation; NStEP training be planned and provided for Class Representatives.

Dorset College has ensured that all Class Representatives will be included in Programme Boards and all other committees, ensuring that there is collaboration with learners at all levels.

Learner supports: The Panel found that more information was required in relation to the provision of reasonable accommodations for learners with specific needs. Policy and procedures regarding reasonable accommodations and associated adaptations to assessment are required. In the Learner Handbook information about reasonable accommodations is taken word for word from the QA manual. Appeals of the reasonable accommodations process are heard by the Registrar.

The Panel recommended that policy and procedures for reasonable accommodations be developed and made available to staff and learners.

The Panel recommended adoption of more personal language for the student handbook and advocates using the format of the English Language Student Handbook for the HE/FE Handbook. The handbook could be adapted for HE and FE students, as some of the requirements are different.

The Panel recommended that Programme Handbooks be prepared in order to provide course-specific information to learners. These handbooks should include Programme Lead details. A Programme Handbook is a way of making the information personal for learners. Include relevant diagrams in the Learner handbook to break up blocks of text. Plain English 'proof' the handbook. The Panel recommended that the handbook be checked for errors and omissions before publication. Make the general learner handbook and other key information available on Moodle.

Learner handbooks have been updated.

Learner recruitment and access

Access via RPL

The Panel recommended that there be a separation of the Registrar's role from the RPL process so that there is a higher level of authority available in the case of appeals. The Panel recommended that a clear process map detailing key responsibilities for RPL be added to the procedure for Recognition of Prior Learning, and that the procedure be adapted to reflect separation of roles. Similarly, information provided in the Learner Handbook should be adapted to reflect changes. If possible, the information should be delivered in 'plain English' to learners. Sometimes using a statement like 'What to do if you wish to apply for Recognition of Prior Learning' helps to frame the steps in an accessible format for students.

RPL is not normally used for award years. Exemptions for award years are only allowed if they are calculable (Bologna).

Course Adviser

Dorset College employs a Course Adviser for short courses such as Health Care. He is the first point of contact for prospective learners, working with them to come to an understanding of their needs and motivation for choosing a programme, and discussing with them programme objectives and content. The Course Adviser also supports prospective students to complete and submit the application form, and gathers information from learners regarding special learning requirements (e.g. to meet the needs of learners with a dyslexia diagnosis.

The Registrar is involved in interviewing learners for programmes. She shows prospective students programme schedules and talks them through assignments, etc. Prospective students are given all the information required to allow them to make a decision. Applicants who have previously completed Level

3 are invited to interview with a view to supporting them in the RPL process in which life experiences can be taken into account. The college team described a number of cases where this process led to very positive experiences and outcomes for learners.

The Panel recommended separation of the Registrar's role to ensure that there is recourse to appeal of decisions if necessary – see recommendation above.

The Registrar's role has been changed to that of Dean of Academic Affairs, and a new job description for this role and other key roles in the college have been published.

International Officer

Dorset College employs an International Officer who is responsible for the recruitment of International students to participate in the Foundation, Pre-Masters and English Language programmes. Recruitment of learners to these programmes is based on the aim of ensuring success for learners in their future institutions. These programmes are designed as a 'bridge' to assist learners to transition to programmes in Irish Higher Education Institutions, for example, where the school leaving examination in the country of origin is not similar to the Irish Leaving Certificate. Applications are processed on a case by case basis because the programmes are linked to specific programmes in the HEIs. Sometimes, the International Officer asks existing class representatives and past students to talk to prospective international students about their experience. The majority of these learners progress to other higher education institutions, and some already have conditional offers of places. They do not generally progress to Dorset College programmes.

Policy for attendance

Information about GNIB is only relevant to international students (P14 Student Handbook) –this information should be included under a separate heading. The Panel recommended that this should be separated from information regarding attendance that is pertinent to all students to ensure that is does not confuse other learners.

8   INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Panel Findings:

The Panel commended the efforts of the college to progress to a paperless environment for the publication of documentation.

The Panel commended Dorset College's arrangement of GDPR training from the Office of the Data Commissioner for College Staff. The Information and Data Management Policy will require completion and updating following this briefing to reflect current regulations and good practice. A named Data Controller will also be required, with role definition.

Management of documents – The Panel recommended that there should be a location for publication of up to date versions of the QA documentation, with clear responsibility for version tracking and archiving.

9 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Panel Findings:

The Panel found that there were inconsistencies in the advertising of the Foundation and Pre-Masters Programmes on the College's current website which are potentially misleading to international students. The International Foundation Programme is listed as an Undergraduate Programme. This one year programme is at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

The Panel required that programme levels should be accurately documented on the rebuilt College website. This will ensure that prospective learners receive accurate information about the relevance of the award they will receive if they participate in the programme, and about their progression options. (Mandatory Change 12).

The Panel recommended that clear information be provided regarding entry criteria for Level 5 programmes and RPL processes.

The Panel recommended that all documentation and the website be revised to reference learning outcomes and the strands of the NFQ (Know-how; Knowledge; Skill; Competence).

10 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING (incl. Apprenticeships)

Panel Findings:

Dorset College is an active member of the Higher Education Colleges Association

The Panel found that Dorset College has Memos of Understanding (MoU) with a number of international organisations in Europe and the Middle East which were not reflected in the original application.

The Panel required that a list of current MoUs be published with the QA documentation to reflect dependencies, together with which programmes, learners and modules they refer to. (Mandatory)

While additional information on MoUs was supplied to the panel, the panel paused the reengagement process to allow the college address low level errors and to submit a spreadsheet giving additional details of the institutions with which they have MoUs, and the relationship of these MoUs to programmes, modules and learners.

Prior to the second reconvened meeting on May 26th, 2020, Dorset College provided the panel with a spreadsheet detailing institutions with which they have MoUs, as requested, addressing the concerns of the panel.

11 SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Panel Findings:

> Following the site visit on 28th June 2019, the Panel commended the collegiate environment created in Dorset College for the development of its QA documentation and notes the exemplary 'buy-in' of the staff to developing a culture of quality in the college, and their involvement in this work will ensure sustainability of the culture. The Panel recognises that the college is on an upward trajectory in relation to these developments.
>
> The Panel commends the Dorset College team's commitment to continuous improvement.

12	TOPIC-SPECIFIC QA PROCEDURES: BLENDED LEARNING

Panel Findings:

> There was brief discussion of the use of Moodle in some programmes, and strategic plans for further roll out of Moodle. The College has also embedded a commitment to developing ICT systems to support flexible modes of learning in the Strategic Plan (2016-2019). It was recognised however, that there is value in developing specific QA Policy and Procedures for Blended Learning.

Evaluation of draft QA Procedures - Overall Panel findings

> The Panel found that the management and staff at Dorset College had done an impressive job in their efforts to meet the requirements in a relatively short timeframe (a number of the team are recently appointed, or have changed role very recently to reflect the changing requirements of work in relation to QA). The Panel acknowledged that the management and staff of this college are on a trajectory that features a positive focus on quality assurance.
>
> The Panel commended the commitment of the college to providing up to date programmes, and their commitment to applying and engaging in the programme validation process strategically to support this.
>
> The Panel commended the efforts of the college management team to improve physical access to the buildings despite significant constraints.
>
> The Panel found that, despite a strong commitment to quality that was particularly evident during the meeting with the college's teaching and administrative staff, the organisational plans, documentation, QA manual, policies and procedures required some review and alteration to accurately reflect this commitment.
>
> Twelve mandatory changes and 21 items of Specific Advice were identified at the conclusion of the site visit on June 28th 2019. Following the decision by QQI, Dorset College had six months within which to address the mandatory changes identified.

The Panel reconvened on April 27th, 2020 having reviewed evidence submitted in support of the changes made.   The panel paused the meeting in order to seek additional clarification on a number of points to enable the panel make a final recommendation to QQI.

The reconvened panel met again on May 26th, 2020, to review the evidence submitted by Dorset College. The panel was satisfied that the identified changes had been made and that these addressed the concerns of the panel. The panel is recommending approval of the Dorset College Quality Assurance documentation. Some additional Specific Advice was identified by the Panel and this is set out in Section 6.2 of this report.

The panel commended the management and staff on the hard work they have done in advance of, and during the process and congratulates them on their achievement.

Part 6 Mandatory Changes to QA Procedures and Specific Advice

6.1 Mandatory Changes

The following mandatory changes were identified at the conclusion of the site visit on 28th June 2019 by the panel.

Following decision by QQI, Dorset College had six months within which to address the mandatory changes identified. The Panel reconvened on 27 April and 26 May 2020 to evaluate evidence submitted by Dorset College in support of the mandatory changes. Following an evaluation of the evidence submitted, the panel is satisfied that Dorset College has adequately addressed the issues set out in Section 6.1 below

> Mandatory Changes June 2019
> 1   Review all documents to ensure that there is full consistency and clarity (in terms of terminology, language, reporting structures).
> 2   Review all policies and procedures to include appeals stages.
> 3   Review QA structures and membership of committees, especially Programme Boards. Review the QA chart to make the processes of quality assurance more visible. Map all procedures using process maps, and include the maps in the Quality Assurance Manual.
> 4   Review the central section of the Organisational Chart under the Director of Academic Operations to provide greater consistency in relation to the management of each of the College's programmes. Review and make the necessary adjustments to the membership, number and frequency of committees affected by this change. The 'Programme Manager'/'Academic Operations' roles in some of the committees (1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10), together with the number of committees and Boards and number of likely committee meetings, requires review and adjustment.
> 5   Move Student Experience Officer to report to the Registrar and adjust the organisational chart to reflect actual reporting lines.

6   Ensure that the Academic Quality Committee is the final arbiter of QA decisions.

7   Review the need for a Disciplinary Committee.

8   Review the definition of formative assessment (P166 of manual). The current definition is incorrect. Formative assessment is usually not grade bearing. If it is grade bearing, it is summative assessment i.e. it counts towards the final result. Amendment may be required for FE (as opposed to HE).

9   Provide a list of current Memos of Understanding together with which programmes, learners and modules they refer to.

10 Change the title of the Assessment Committee to Appeals Committee.

11 Make the language of policies/handbooks accessible to learners.

12 Review accuracy of language and information on website - e.g. Certificate of Undergraduate Foundation Studies – this needs to be clear to prospective learners for whom English is not a first language, so that the purpose of this programme is evident.

6.2   Specific Advice

Specific Advice: June 2019

1   Changing the title of the Academic Quality Committee to 'Academic Council'.

2   That membership of the Advisory Board should reflect the needs and purpose of the Board and the College, and include, for example, industry representatives reflecting the broad sweep of programmes delivered by the college. It recommended that the terms of reference be expanded to include, for example, Strategic Development and Planning.

3   That Programme Boards and Appeals Committee be sub-committees of Academic Quality Committee. Reports produced by the former two should be read into the record of the latter, thus creating an effective reporting loop.

4   That the Director of Academic Operations' role on most of the committees be revisited, and that other personnel take responsibility for being on the committees.

5   That leadership roles for the FE and HE programmes are put in place, similar to the Programme Leader role in place in the English Language School.

6   That the Registrar and Examinations Officer should not sit on the Programme Boards. Programme Boards should be sub-committees of the academic quality committee.

7   That the Academic Management Group should report to the Senior Management Group. The Panel recommends the inclusion of a HE and FE academic in the Academic Management group because this group has an operations function.

8   The inclusion of class reps in the Programme Boards.

9   That the QA Manual section on Programme Development and Validation be improved by including the details regarding internal gap analysis and submission to QQI/ subsequent processes

10 That student representatives are included on the Student Services Committee.

11 That the 'Impropriety Committee' should be a sub-committee of the Academic Quality Committee, and should meet as required.

12 That the formal and informal plagiarism procedures be reviewed to ensure that there is differentiation between the two.

13 That a common format be applied for all academic calendars, and that these should give accurate information about start dates; assessment deadlines; examination dates; issue of results; key dates in the academic year and appeals deadlines.

14 That the College reviews the sequencing of meetings to ensure coherence between the meetings and decisions taken, and to allow for logical and timely reporting dependencies.

15 That the College's teaching learning and assessment strategy is reviewed to reflect the strands of the NFQ – i.e. knowledge, know-how and skills and competencies, and learning outcomes.

16 That a policy for group work is developed to ensure that learners are fairly assessed on the learning outcomes when there is a group work assignment.

17 That procedures for election of Class Representatives be put in place. That the language used e.g. 'learner representative' or 'class representative' and is consistent across all committees, groups and documentation. NStEP training be planned and provided for Class Representatives.

18 That more information should be included in student handbooks regarding learning outcomes, credits and grades.

19 A glossary of terms is created for all staff to ensure consistency of naming, role titles and technical terminology.

20 That the College reflects on its self-evaluation and monitoring progress paying particular attention to ensuring that all loops are closed e.g. the Programme Monitoring Report is produced by a Programme Board and then sent to Academic Quality Committee.

21 A review of management of, and version control of documents, and proof reading of all documentation for language and clarity.

Specific Advice: May 2020

1. That Dorset College reviews its Quality Assurance Manual internally next year, to ensure that all of the original structures and policies function effectively within the college. In the event that a significant change is required, the QA Manual will be required to be submitted to QQI for evaluation again.

2. That the Spreadsheet documenting Memorandums of Understanding with other institutions be updated regularly to reflect new arrangements and relationships.

Part 7   Proposed Approved Scope of Provision for this provider

NFQ Level(s) – min and max	Award Class(es)	Discipline areas
Level 5 – 8	Major, Minor	Healthcare, Childcare, Business, IT, ELT.

![QQI logo - Quality and Qualifications Ireland / Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann](image)

Part 8 Approval by Chair of the Panel

This report of the Panel is approved and submitted to QQI for its decision on the approval of the draft Quality Assurance Procedures of Computer Training Specialists Limited / Dorset College.

Name: _____Dr Marion Palmer _____

Date: _____2 June 2020_____

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

Document	Related to
Dorset College Quality Assurance Handbook	Quality Assurance and Governance of QA
Application Form and Document Map	Application
Employee Handbook 020219F	Staff Recruitment and Development
GDPR Infographic	Governance
HRM-02 Policy Induction, Appraisal, and Development of Staff	Staff Recruitment and Development
Learner Handbook 2019: English Language Education	Information to Learners
Learner Handbook 2019: Further and Higher Education	Information to Learners
Learner Handbook 2019: Professional Courses.	Information to Learners
RPL Mapping Document 2019	Access, Transfer and Progression
Draft Learning, teaching and assessment strategy sample: BSc in Computing 2019	Programme Development, Delivery, Review and Assessment
Academic Calendar Sample: Healthcare Support 2018-2019	Programme Delivery
Dorset College Strategic Plan	Governance
Letter of clarification to Panel 26.06.19	Application
Organisational Chart: Personnel 2019	Governance
QA Structure 2019	Governance
RPL/APEL Interview Questions 2019	Access, Transfer and Progression
Sample Annual Monitoring Report	Governance; Quality; Continuous Improvement.

Annexe 2:   Provider staff met in the course of the Evaluation

Name	Role/Position
Mary Anderson	Further Education Lecturer: Childcare; Montessori Teaching; Programme Leader.
Rory Byrne	Director of Academic Operations/ Deputy Managing Director
Loretta Coughlan	Further Education, Foundation and Pre-Masters Programme Leader
Colm Dunne	Higher Education Lecturer: Strategic Management; Entrepreneurship.
Mary Gordon	Registrar
Hugh Hughes	Managing Director
Jeanne Le Corre	Programme Administrator/Academic Operations Officer
Celine Lowry	Higher Education Lecturer: Pre-nursing Studies
Erin McDonald	Admissions Officer/ International Relations
Irene McGinn	Higher Education Lecturer: ICT and Pre-Masters Programme
Matt Murray	Higher Education Lecturer: Business
Analuz Muslera	Student Experience Manager
Neha Sahni	Quality Assurance Officer; Examinations Officer.
Paulo Santana	Sales and Marketing/Short Course Adviser.
Manon Vanalphen	Head Librarian/Head of ICT
Alan Yu	Admissions Officer

Appendix: Provider response to the Reengagement Panel Report

12/06/2020

Quality and Qualifications Ireland,
27 Denzille Lane,
Saint Peter's,
Dublin,
D02 P266

Re: Formal response to QQI regarding Reengagement Panel Report dated 02/06/2020

Dear Sirs,

We would like to formally acknowledge receipt, and acceptance, of the QQI Panel Report dated 02/06/2020, pursuant to Reengagement by QQI with Dorset College and we welcome the recommendation by the Panel to approve Dorset College QA Procedures.

Kindly find enclosed Factual Accuracy Form submitted on behalf of Dorset College in repose to the Panel Report.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the Panel of experts who generously provided advices to the College and staff to ensure we continue to engage in a root and branch review of our processes where quality assurance is at the core of all processes ensuring learner success.

A special word of thanks to our Dr Marion Palmer who skillfully chaired the panel of exemplary experts and the staff of QQI who have ensured a wholly positive experience for all involved.

Is mise le meas,

Mary Gordon

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Mary Gordon
Dean of Academic Affairs

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