Reengagement Panel Report

Assessment of Capacity and Approval of QA Procedures

Part 1   Details of provider

1.1   Applicant Provider

Registered Business/Trading Name:	International School of Business 472193
Address:	Wicklow House 84-88 South Great Georges Street Dublin 2
Date of Application:	25.06.2020
Date of resubmission of application:	
Date of evaluation:	
Date of site visit (if applicable):	18.09.2020
Date of recommendation to the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee:	03.12.20

1.2   Profile of provider

The International School of Business provides bespoke semester abroad education programmes to international students as a niche expert. Its offering consists of a small suite of certified QQI special purpose business awards for a wide number European and American partner institutions. ISB has also developed a range of bespoke courses for which QQI certification is not a requirement. English language support classes enhanced by a range of social and cultural extracurricular activities are key features of its programmes.   ISB is also part of a network of American study abroad providers i.e. CEA and ASAPI, and has more than 40 partner institutions from across Europe.

The International School of Business (ISB) was established in June 2009 and is a private limited company (registration number 472193). Its first students started in September 2010. The International School of Business enrols 450 exclusively international students onto its programmes in a normal year and has three intakes; two semester intakes in Autumn and Spring, and a June intake for shorter courses. Of the 450 students, 120 are registered on QQI validated programmes. Demand for QQI programmes is from students

who would typically choose Erasmus type programmes but are unable to access Irish public institutions. All students are recruited directly from partner institutions; a B2B model rather than B2C model.

The following are the QQI validated programmes offered by the International School of Business:

Certificate in Business for International Learners	Level 6	14 weeks
Certificate in Sales and Management	Level 6	14 weeks
Certificate in Digital Marketing and Media	Level 6	14 weeks

Each QQI validated programme carries 30 ECTS which consist of 6 modules of 5 credits each.

For reengagement, ISB has involved faculty and students in the QA reengagement and enhancement process which is a significant change. Previously, quality assurance was an exclusively management driven process. This involvement of all stakeholders was an organisation wide, consultative process and was done, for example, through Zoom focus group meetings with students on the structure of the student handbook, accessibility of the website and feedback from previous students. Staff were also surveyed extensively through questionnaires on governance structures, on policies and procedures, and how feedback to management and the academic board is collected and acted upon. In addition, the provider liaised with peer institutions as part of the reengagement process and these included meetings with and feedback from CCT, City Colleges and ICD Business School.

While ISB found the process onerous as a small institution, the team engaged with the process and a lot of energy and commitment was expended which showed through in both the documentation and during the virtual site visit. ISB recognises that the benefits for the future enhancement of its offering far outweigh the commitment required in getting ready for reengagement.

Reengagement allowed the documentation of processes and procedures which had become custom and practice to be formally documented and updated. Through active engagement, ISB has developed the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report (QAER) which will now form a fundamental part of its annual review process. It will capture some areas of regulation and best practice that hitherto did not form part of other quality processes within the College, like the Annual Academic Review.

To counter the perception that there could be a conflict between academic and commercial management and decision making within the College, the College Director is no longer part of the Academic Board, which is now chaired by an external educational expert. The level of commitment of staff to a culture of quality was very evident during the site visit and while largely part-time, a significant number have been working with ISB for more than 10 years.

ISB is located in the city centre of Dublin and prides itself on the experience which it offers its students. It has eight classrooms, a student lounge, IT resources, the online learning platform Moodle, and a student resource centre. It is a sub-tenant of City College which allows flexibility in acquiring additional classrooms when needed as well as access to additional ancillary services of the larger institution.

The programmatic review process in respect of the QQI validated programmes offered by ISB (revalidation) is due to take place in 2021.

Part 2   Panel Membership

Name	Role of Panel member	Organisation
Dr. Áine Ní Shé	Chair	Cork Institute of Technology
Celestine Rowland	Report Writer	Galway Business School
McKinney, Martin	Subject Expert	University of Ulster
Dr. David McCarthy	QA Expert	National College of Ireland
Elijah Alaje	Student Representative	TU Dublin

Part 3   Findings of the Panel

3.1   Summary Findings

At the outset of this report, the Panel makes several commendations in relation to the International School of Business's approach to the reengagement process.

The Panel would like to thank ISB and its team for the constructive and open manner in dealing with queries in detail in advance of the virtual site visit.

The Panel commends ISB on the quality and layout of the documentation, particularly of the Quality Assurance Manual which is both easy to navigate and easy to read, making it accessible to all stakeholders particularly students. The College has made a genuine and serious attempt to formulate a quality assurance manual that is holistic, fit for purpose and proportionate to the organisation and its scope of provision.

During the visit the Panel got a real sense of a team working together with a genuine love of teaching and learning and the Panel would like to commend ISB for its engagement on the day. The Panel was particularly impressed with the inspiring mission of the College and the community of learning that it advocates. The enthusiasm of the whole team was impressive, and their commitment and energy are to be commended.

Commitment to pastoral care and the welfare of each student is embedded in the culture of ISB and really came to light during the virtual site visit. This was particularly evident in the additional and ancillary services provided by the College outside of class times.   The consideration given to international students coming from different institutions and countries and needing to be brought to an equilibrium in a short period was evident across the management and teaching teams and is a commendable strength. As a boutique niche provider that is focused solely on international students from partner institutions across Europe and the USA, ISB has a good track record with QQI.

The gap analysis in the application documentation does not fully reflect the obvious engagement of the management and academic teams in the process which was apparent during the site visit. It was evident that the provider understands the strengths and the opportunities that a small institution affords them in the care of their students as well the potential risks and challenges for a small team in keeping abreast of changes to regulation and developments in the market.

Notwithstanding these commendations, the Panel had concerns about assessment, staff development, quality assurance, the student voice, academic honesty and integrity and staff contracts of employment. There were identified as proposed mandatory changes and are outlined in detail in Section 7.1 of this report. Additional items of specific advice are included in Section 7.2. However, given that these issues were discrete, and in the Panel's view could be addressed quickly by the provider, the Panel availed of the

option to defer its overall decision for a period of six weeks, and allowed the International School of Business this time to submit evidence to the Panel that the changes identified had been satisfactorily addressed.

The Panel reconvened on 16th November 2020 to undertake a desk review of the evidence subsequently submitted by the International School of Business. It is the Panel's view that the provider has now satisfactorily addressed the proposed mandatory changes and has responded appropriately to the Panel's initial specific advices. The Panel commends the provider on its clear and considered responses to the queries and proposed mandatory changes. The Panel consequently recommends that QQI approve the International School of Business's QA procedures.

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

	Tick <u>one</u> as appropriate
Approve the International School of Business's draft QA procedures	X
Refuse approval of [the provider's – insert name] 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**	The International School of Business is a company limited by guarantee. ISB documentation indicates that it has 450 students registered of which 120 are registered on QQI validated special purpose awards.
4.1.2(a)	***Criterion:*** *Is the legal entity established in the European Union and does it have a substantial presence in Ireland?*	**Yes**	ISB has provided a Certificate of Incorporation, registration number 472193
4.1.3(a)	**Criterion:** *Are any dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries clearly specified?*	**Yes**	ISB confirmed that there are no collaborative relationships with other providers.
4.1.4(a)	***Criterion:*** *Are any third-party relationships and partnerships compatible with the scope of access sought?*	**Yes**	ISB's application does not reflect any partnerships or relationships to the scope of the access sought.
4.1.5(a)	**Criterion:** *Are the applicable regulations and legislation complied with in all jurisdictions where it operates?*	**Yes**	The evidence provided in support of the provider's application is indicative of compliance with Irish / EU legislation
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*	**Yes**	ISB is in good standing with QQI. ISB is a HE QQI provider since 2010.

bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators.		

Findings

The Panel has been assured that ISB meets the legal and compliance requirements within 4.1 and the Panel accepts this assurance and evidence presented and is of the view that the provider meets this criterion in full. ISB has a track record of providing QQI special purpose awards since 2011.

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**	Evidence submitted is indicative that ISB has a sufficient resource base and is stable and in good financial standing. ISB's application was accompanied by: • Tax Clearance Certificate • Auditor's report pertaining to 2020 • Summary of Insurance Policy Cover
4.2.2(a)	**Criterion:** *Does the applicant have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?*	**Yes**	The applicant has an established track record and has a five-year strategic plan that was shared with the Panel.
4.2.3(a)	**Criterion:** *Are fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision making structures in place?*	**Yes**	The Panel identified a number of proposed mandatory changes in relation to this criterion which are listed in Section 7.1 of this report, namely a review of the Academic Board and a review of the remit of the Academic Director. The remit of the Programme Boards should be expanded to include responsibility for quality assurance appropriate to the size of the institution. The panel is satisfied that these have now been satisfactorily addressed by the provider.
4.2.4(a)	**Criterion:** *Are there arrangements in place for providing required information to QQI?*	**Yes**	ISB is in good standing with QQI.

Findings

The Panel commends the provider on the structure and membership of the Academic Board in terms of separating academic and commercial decision making.

However, the Panel identified a number of proposed mandatory changes in relation to the Academic Board and considered that a distributed model of quality assurance would be more appropriate to the size and scope of ISB.

The Panel identified a proposed mandatory change in relation to the remit of the Academic Director and the need for the College to formalise the core roles and responsibilities of the two Assistant Directors which will further enhance succession planning. These are outlined in full in Section 7.1 of this report. The panel is now satisfied that the provider has undertaken a review of the Academic Board and has distributed more responsibility for quality assurance to other committees, namely the Programme Boards. The panel is also satisfied that the provider has formalised the core roles and responsibilities of the two Assistant Directors and has reviewed the remit of the Programme Boards to create a more distributed quality assurance system that fits with the size and scale of the provider.

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**	The Provider has an established record with QQI since 2010 as a niche provider of special purpose awards.
4.3.2(a)	**Criterion:** *Does the applicant have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?*	**Yes**	The number of full-time and part-time staff and contractors are well established. The Panel identified a proposed mandatory change in relation to staff training and development which is outlined in Section 7.1 of this report. This was satisfactorily addressed by ISB.
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 Panel is satisfied that the Provider's track record of certification and its approach to the reengagement process reflects its capacity to cooperate and assist QQI with information as specified in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act.
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 Provider is well established and well resourced. Its premises are rented in the city centre from another educational provider which provides it with additional facilities and

			complementary services as and where needed.
4.3.5(a)	**Criterion:** *Are there access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval in place?*	**Yes**	ISB's access, transfer and progression routes are clearly documented. As a B2B provider of programmes for partner institutions, access requirements onto its programmes are verified by the sending institution.
4.3.6(a)	**Criterion:** *Are structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners in place?*	**Yes**	At the time of the initial site visit, the Panel found that the QA documentation needed to more adequately reflect a consistent assessment policy and identified proposed mandatory changes in relation the overall assessment strategy of the College and to policies on academic integrity, plagiarism and collusion. This is outlined in Section 7.1 of this report. These proposed mandatory changes have since all been satisfactorily addressed by ISB.
4.3.7(a)	**Criterion:** *Are arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to meet the statutory obligations in place (where applicable)?*	**Yes**	ISB has PEL in place as per QQI requirements. Proof of PEL was included as part of ISB's reengagement application.

Findings

The Panel recognises that the provider has an established track record with QQI as a niche provider of special purpose awards in the business area and is well resourced.

The Panel identified as a proposed mandatory change that the provider now formally states its intent to undertake a complete review of its assessment strategy, in anticipation of programme revalidation scheduled to take place in 2021. The panel is now satisfied that the provider has committed to undertaking a complete review of its assessment strategy and demonstrate a richness of assessment techniques that more adequately reflects the modern student experience..

The Panel also identified a proposed mandatory change in relation to academic integrity, plagiarism and collusion. Both are outlined in section 7.1 of this report. The panel was impressed with the comprehensiveness of ISB's response to this proposed mandatory change and is therefore satisfied that this mandatory change has been met

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

Overall, the Panel commends a great number of aspects of ISB's QA infrastructure. Nonetheless, at the close of the initial site visit, the Panel identified some proposed mandatory changes (set out in Section 7.1 of this report), to be addressed before approval of ISB's QA procedures could be recommended to QQI. The provider was permitted six weeks in which to address these changes. Following a review of the revised documentation submitted by ISB, the Panel is satisfied that the issues identified have all been addressed and commends the thoroughness with which ISB undertook this work. The Panel is happy to recommend approval of ISB's QA procedures to QQI.

Part 5   Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by International School of Business

The following is the panel's findings following evaluation of International School of Business 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:

Following review of the documentation submitted and at the conclusion of the virtual site visit, the Panel found that QQI's guidelines under this criterion had not yet been fully addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require a system of governance to be in place that protects the integrity of the academic processes and standards.

During the site visit it was clear to the Panel that the provider had taken effective steps to separate academic and commercial decision making by appointing an external chair of the Board and releasing the Managing Director from any responsibility or presence on the Academic Board.

The Panel identified that the provider should consider a more distributed model of quality assurance that might better fit the size and scope of the institution. As a small college, responsibility for quality assurance currently lies with the Academic Board in the absence of a Quality Assurance Committee or a Quality Manager. The Panel identified as a proposed mandatory change that the College delegate some responsibility for quality assurance to the Programme Boards thus creating a more distributed model for quality assurance.

QQI's guidelines also require that the groups or units responsible for the oversight of education and training, research and related activities are identified in the provider's documented procedures, and that the terms of reference for these groups or units are documented and published.

The Panel identified that the remit and terms of reference of the Programme Boards as reflected in the QA documentation did not adequately reflect what is happening in practice as detailed during the site visit. The Panel therefore identified as a proposed mandatory change that the terms of reference of the Programme Boards be reviewed to accurately reflect their current remit and additionally include a more expanded responsibility for quality assurance within their programme remit. The proposed mandatory changes are set out in Section 7.1.

The panel is now satisfied that the provider has undertaken a review of the Academic Board and has distributed more responsibility for quality assurance to other committees, namely the Programme Boards. The panel is also satisfied that the provider has formalised the core roles and responsibilities of the two Assistant Directors and has reviewed the remit of the Programme Boards to create a more distributed quality assurance system that fits with the size and scale of the provider.

The Panel identified as a proposed mandatory change that the Terms of Reference of the Student Council be reviewed and included in the Quality Assurance Manual. The Panel also identified as a proposed mandatory change that the procedures for the Student Council's interaction with the Academic Board be formally included in the Quality Assurance Manual in order to ensure that the student voice is represented and heard on the Academic Board. The panel is now satisfied that the provider has reviewed the Terms of Reference of the Student Council and that the student voice is now represented on the Academic Board.

2   DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

Panel Findings:

Following review of the documentation and having concluded the virtual site visit, the Panel found that QQI's guidelines under the criterion of QA had not yet been fully addressed by the provider.

QQI's guidelines require the provider's quality assurance policies and procedures to be fully documented, published and available as required in usable formats. As well as that, procedures must be effective and fit for purpose.

The Panel commends ISB on the quality and layout of the documentation, particularly of the Quality Assurance Manual which is easy to navigate and easy read making it accessible to all stakeholders. The College has made a genuine and serious attempt to formulate a quality assurance manual that is holistic, fit for purpose and proportionate of the organisation and their scope of provision.

The Panel commends the College on the creation of two reporting mechanisms that will review, monitor and enhance the quality assurance processes. The annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report will review the regulatory, legislative and annual feedback across the whole institution which had been identified as an area of potential vulnerability. The report will identify potential risks and enhancement measures to improve ISB's offering for learners not currently covered in the Annual Academic Report.

The Annual Academic Report is the annual self-evaluation report used for the governance and management of academic quality within ISB.   Key metrics are used including enrolments, examination performance, feedback from learners, inputs from faculty and the external examiners. It also assesses its programmes against 12 criteria to confirm that they are valid, current and fit for purpose. The report is reviewed by the Academic Board which makes recommendations to the Management Committee on the quality objectives outlined in the report and how these can be enhanced. Please see Section 7.1 of this report in relation to the inclusion of assessment in these two reports.

The Panel identified as proposed mandatory changes:
a)   That the Provider undertake a review of the Academic Board in order to distribute some responsibility for quality assurance to other committees, namely the Programme Boards.
b)   That the remit of Academic Director is reviewed in order to delegate some of the current responsibilities of the role to the Assistant Directors and to the Programme Leaders. This is with a view to a more effective distribution of responsibility for quality assurance through the organisation.
c)   That the Provider reviews the remit of the Programme Boards as set out in the QA documentation so that it more adequately reflects the work that is done as was outlined during the virtual site visit. The terms of reference for the Programme Board should include responsibility for quality assurance appropriate to its remit to create a more distributed quality assurance system that fits with the size and scale of this provider.

The panel is now satisfied that the provider has addressed this mandatory change by creating a more distributed form of quality assurance and that the remit of the Programme Boards has been reviewed and updated to include these changes.

3   PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Panel Findings:

The Panel is satisfied that the provider operates a very transparent and open communication culture in relation to programme development. Each programme is run by a small committee which meets prior, during and after each semester to ascertain that overall programme objectives are being met, to consider individual modules and to ensure that there are linkages between modules particularly to facilitate group projects.

As students come from different colleges, often with varying different levels of proficiency in English, creating an equilibrium of knowledge in a short period, while challenging, is key to successful outcomes. English is not the first language of most students. However, QQI programmes require a minimum level of B2+. Additional English classes of 3.5 hours per week are provided for non-native speakers.

The process of access, transfer and progression is thus controlled by the sending institutions in line with QQI ATP criteria and standards, and students return to their home institution to complete their course of study. Students can be drawn from first, second, or third-year cohorts in their own institution depending on the requirements of the sending college. The second semester sees the largest enrolment each year as many markets are heavily imbalanced in favour of the spring semester because of college life, sports etc.

The documentation presented did not fully reflect the remit of the Programme Boards as outlined during the site visit and the Panel identified as a proposed mandatory change that the terms of reference be expanded to include what is happening in practice on Programme Boards. The panel is now satisfied that the provider has expanded the terms of reference of the Programme Boards and updated the documentation to reflect these changes. The Panel recommended that the 'minor' role attributed to Programme Boards in the management of quality is reconsidered to more accurately describe their more active role in the quality assurance of the programme offering, as was evidenced during the site visit. The overall remit of the Programme Boards needs to be enhanced and improved in the documentation.

The external examiner has an informal role in the development and enhancement of programmes. All decisions in relation to programme development are taken at Academic Board level.

4	STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Panel Findings:

QQI's guidelines require that a provider assures itself as to the competence of its staff, that the pedagogical standards of teaching staff are maintained and enhanced, and that procedures be in place for performance management. The Panel found that QQI's guidelines under this criterion had not been fully addressed and identified a number of proposed mandatory changes in this regard.

The Panel was impressed with the knowledge and expertise of the teaching team and the obvious enthusiasm for their students that was reflected throughout the virtual site visit. As a small college with a cohort of mainly part-time highly experience lecturers, the collegiate nature of the College is evident.

The team was evidently committed to the reengagement process further enhancing the supportive atmosphere of ISB. There was a real sense of a team working towards the same aims with buy in from each member of the team towards the final outcome.

As a small college there is constant communication and informal feedback between lecturers and management and there is a real sense of support for each other and for students. It is a very close working environment which is very collegiate, and this is to be commended.

The Panel notes that staff induction and a staff handbook are provided to each member of the team. However, the Panel also finds that the training and development needs of the ISB teaching team are not adequately addressed via other institutions as stated in the Quality Assurance Handbook.

The Panel notes that the review of the assessment strategy may impact on the provider's Teaching & Learning Strategy and on staff development needs. The Panel identified as a proposed mandatory change that the provider formally states its intent to develop a Staff Development Policy and Plan that adequately reflect the community of learning the provider's mission advocates. The panel advised that this should be informed by a need's assessment carried out in consultation with staff. Arising from other proposed mandatory changes identified in this report, assessment design, academic honesty and integrity, and use of technology in teaching, learning and assessment should be key pillars of the plan. The panel is now satisfied that the provider has carried out a Staff Development Plan and further advises the provider to include details and timelines in the AIQR.

The Panel identified as a proposed mandatory change that the provider reviews its contracts of employment to ensure that they are compliant with current legislation. The Panel suggested that advice of other providers be sought in this regard. Having reviewed the documentation submitted by ISB in response to this proposed mandatory change, the Panel is satisfied that the review has been undertaken and that the mandatory change has therefore been addressed.

5   TEACHING AND LEARNING

Panel Findings:

The Panel found that QQI's guidelines under this criterion had not been fully addressed and identified a proposed mandatory change in this regard.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require that a provider respects and attends to the diversity of learners and their needs, and encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while encouraging adequate support and guidance.

The College's vision of a safe but demanding community of learning where effective and imaginative teaching and learning approaches are fostered and supported is a very powerful statement as outlined in the Quality Assurance Manual.

On the basis of the discussion at the virtual site visit, the Panel is satisfied that the College has a very clear teaching and learning philosophy that is student centred and supports the learner throughout their journey in ISB. However, the Panel founds that this philosophy was not clearly articulated in the documentation and therefore identified, as a proposed mandatory change, that the Provider develop a teaching and learning strategy that reflects the work it is already doing in this area and includes a staff training and development strategy that better reflects the community of learner that the provider's mission advocates. The panel is now satisfied that the provider has consulted with staff and identified key areas for training and development and further advises that these training events are documented in the AIQR.

While staff have been encouraged to take on additional training and development, a College strategy in this area will enhance the work of the teaching team and reflect in student achievement.

| 6 | **ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS** |

Panel Findings:

Following review of the documentation and the virtual site visit, the Panel found that QQI's guidelines under this criterion had not been fully addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require a provider's policies and procedures to ensure the credibility and security of assessment procedures and to address how assessment promotes and supports effective learning and teaching and enables learners to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes.

A review of best practice and the experience of other providers in the area of assessment will aid the development of a fair and consistent assessment strategy for the College. How missed assignments are treated, and marks awarded for final exams in such instances needs to be reviewed as part of the new assessment strategy. Lecturers are empowered and are discipline experts and as such, are not micromanaged, which is supported by the academic management. While this works well, an assessment audit is essential as a monitoring and enhancement mechanism. The Panel noted that there seems to be an overreliance on terminal examinations/assessments across all programmes and this does not adequately reflect the ethos and mission of the College. Due to the summative nature of final exams, it does not afford the opportunity to give feedback to students to support their academic development.

The College also needs to review the policies and procedures in relation to academic integrity, plagiarism and collusion and identifies this as a proposed mandatory change. The College should develop a consistent set of policies and procedures for the modern learner. As the full cohort of students of the College are international and come from a variety of countries and disciplines, the establishment of clear policies on academic integrity is particularly essential. The panel is now satisfied that the provider has updated its policy on academic integrity and commends the provider on the currency and extensiveness of that policy.

The Panel identified as a proposed mandatory change that the provider now formally states its intent to undertake a complete review of its assessment strategy, in anticipation of programme revalidation scheduled to take place in 2021. The effectiveness of the various assessment instruments should be considered. The review should also be informed by a reflection on best practice and the experience of other providers. Due to the circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the context of the forthcoming programme revalidation, the Panel notes that there is a unique opportunity for the provider to widen the focus beyond high stakes terminal examinations and other closed book assessment, and to adopt alternative forms of assessment. Thus, by programme revalidation, the provider can demonstrate a richness of assessment techniques that more adequately reflects the modern student experience.

The Panel also identified a proposed mandatory change that the provider builds ongoing review of the effectiveness of its assessment into its QA lifecycle as well as benchmark its assessment strategy to other

providers. The Panel suggested that the monitoring of the assessment strategy be built into the annual internal quality monitoring reports, the AAR and/or QAER, as well as the AIQR.

Having reviewed the Statement of Intent provided by ISB in its response, the panel is now satisfied that the provider has committed to undertaking a complete review of its assessment strategy and demonstrate a richness of assessment techniques that more adequately reflects the modern student experience.. The panel is also satisfied that the Provider intends that this will review will consider the effectiveness of assessment instruments, be informed by a reflection on best practice and the experience of other providers, and that ongoing review of effectiveness will be built into the QA lifecycle.

7 SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

Panel Findings:

The Panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this criterion of QA has been addressed and has offered commendations to ISB in this regard in section 3.1 of this report.

QQI's guidelines require that in addition to learner supports and resources being integrated and coherent, that the learning environment includes pastoral care supports provided by staff for learners.

ISB sees its role as an educator with the ability and expertise to respond to the needs of each student. The provider is fundamentally and holistically involved in providing high quality demanding courses as well as a host of outside class ancillary activities. The College provides pre-booked housing, extra-curricular and cultural activities, and a level of pastoral care that is unique to the College. The International School of Business has five full time management and academic staff and 20 part-time teaching staff which has now reduced due to the COVID crisis.

As previously noted, ISB management and staff work very diligently on behalf of each ISB student and have a very clear and cohesive support system in place to support the learner in their journey through the course. The College provides a level of pastoral care that is unique to the College and are holistically involved in all aspects of the student experience both inside and outside the classroom and the Panel highly commends them for this.

The ethos of the College is student focused. The Panel was impressed with the amount of input that the students have into their experience, and with how changes and adjustments have been made to the semester and how it is run to meet the needs to a particular group while still following the syllabus and achieving the learning objectives and learning outcomes is admirable.

The College provides a wide range of ancillary supports for students including pre-booked residences, insurance, a very active social programme that introduces them to the culture and history of Ireland largely manned by the teaching and management teams, health care and counselling services provided by external partners and a 24/7 emergency phone cover.

ISB's commitment to the welfare of its learners is key to the success and sustainability of its operations and it was obvious to the Panel during the site visit the level of enthusiasm and engagement given to each student by all members of the management and academic teams. Many students come from countries where different hierarchies pertain and the collegiate atmosphere and informal structure of student and teacher on a learning journey together at ISB can be surprising for some students. Building a working relationship with each student and creating a supportive atmosphere encourages a very pragmatic and practical approach as to how and what the students learn and the importance of the whole semester experience in their development.

8   INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Panel Findings:

The Panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this criterion of QA has been addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require that reliable information and data are available for informed decision-making.

All information is stored on a shared drive and downloaded onto a removable disk and removed from the building. ISB shares some data hosting infrastructure with their landlord who provides IT supports on data protection. Access to the shared drive is password protected. Access to examinations and results is limited to the key academic managers.

An Assistant Director is in charge of IT, management of the VLE and of GDPR. As members of ICOS, certain policies regarding GDPR and other policies have been adapted by ISB.

Induction for staff and students includes information on data protection, management and security.

9   PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Panel Findings:

The Panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this criterion of QA have been addressed.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require that policies and procedures are in place to ensure information published is clear, accurate, objective, up to date and easily accessible.

The International School of Business has a comprehensive website and has received input from stakeholders particularly students on the quality of the information and the ease of access of the website. As the College recruits directly from its partner institutions, the website is used for information purposes rather than as a recruiting tool for direct applicants which are not a feature of the ISB model.

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

Panel Findings:

n/a

Panel Findings:

QQI's 2016 Core statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require a provider to review, evaluation and report on education and training services it provides and the QA systems and procedures that underpin these.

The Panel recognises that the provider has met this criterion and commends it on the creation of two reporting mechanisms that will review, monitor and enhance the quality assurance processes.

For the first time the Quality Enhancement Annual Report will review the regulatory, legislative and annual feedback across the whole institution which had been identified as an area of potential vulnerability. The report will identify potential risks and enhancement measures to improve the College's offering for learners.

The Annual Academic Report is the annual self-evaluation report used for the governance and management of academic quality within ISB. Key metrics are used including enrolments, examination performance, feedback from learners, inputs from faculty and the external examiners. It also assesses its programmes against 12 criteria to confirm that they are valid, current and fit for purpose. The report is reviewed by the Academic Board who makes recommendations to the Management Committee on the quality objectives outlined in the report and how these can be enhanced.

Evaluation of draft QA Procedures - Overall panel findings

The Panel acknowledges the established track record and good standing of ISB with QQI and with its stakeholders. The reengagement process involves a comprehensive review of a provider's QA policies and procedures, as well as a site visit to the provider's premises that facilitates a full day of discussions between the Panel and the provider.

In the case of ISB and in the current circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, a virtual site visit was organised on 18th September between the ISB team and the Panel members.

ISB representatives have engaged in a consistently constructive and open manner with the Panel and been responsive to requests for additional information as well as to the Panel's suggestions and observations. The Panel was impressed with the buy in and engagement of the whole team in the quality assurance and enhancement process.

In Section 3.1 of this report, the Panel has offered several well-deserved commendations to ISB.

Notwithstanding those, following review of the documentation submitted and at the conclusion of the site visit, the Panel had concerns about assessment, staff development, quality assurance, the student voice, academic honesty and integrity and staff contracts of employment. There were identified as proposed mandatory changes and are outlined in detail in Section 7.1 of this report.

The Panel reconvened on 16th November 2020 to undertake a desk review of the evidence subsequently submitted by the International School of Business. It is the Panel's view that the provider has satisfactorily addressed the proposed mandatory changes and has responded appropriately to the Panel's initial specific advices. The Panel commends the provider on its clear and considered responses to the queries and mandatory changes. The Panel consequently recommends that QQI approve the International School of Business's QA procedures.

Part 6   Conditions of QA Approval

6.1   Conditions of QA Approval

1.

Part 7   Mandatory Changes to QA Procedures and Specific Advice

7.1   Mandatory Changes

The following proposed mandatory changes were identified at the conclusion of the site visit on 18th September 2020 by the Panel. The Panel availed of the option to defer its decision to allow the International School of Business an opportunity to address these issues within a six-week period.

The Panel reconvened on 16th November 2020 to evaluate evidence submitted by the International School of Business in support of the proposed changes. Following the evaluation of the evidence submitted, the Panel is satisfied that the International School of Business has adequately addressed the issues set out in Section 7.1 below.

The Panel commends the International School of Business on its very clear responses to the Panel's queries and proposed mandatory changes set out below.

1. Assessment

The Panel has identified as a proposed mandatory change that the provider now formally states its intent to undertake a complete review of its assessment strategy, in anticipation of programme revalidation scheduled to take place in 2021. The effectiveness of the various assessment instruments should be considered. The review should also be informed by a reflection on best practice and the experience of other providers. Due to the circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the context of the forthcoming programme revalidation, the Panel notes that there is a unique opportunity for the Provider to widen the focus beyond high stakes terminal examinations and other closed book assessment, and to adopt alternative forms of assessment. Thus, by programme revalidation, the provider can demonstrate a richness of assessment techniques that more adequately reflects the modern student experience.

The Panel has also identified a proposed mandatory change that the provider builds ongoing review of the effectiveness of its assessment into its QA lifecycle. The Panel suggests that this can be built into the AAR and/or QAER.

2. Staff Development

The Panel notes that the review of the assessment strategy may impact on the provider's Teaching & Learning Strategy and on staff development needs. The Panel has identified as a proposed mandatory change that the provider formally states its intent to develop a Staff Development Policy and Plan that adequately reflect the community of learning the provider's mission advocates. This should be informed by a need's assessment carried out in consultation with staff. Arising from the proposed mandatory changes set out in Item 1 above, assessment design, academic honesty and integrity, and use of technology in teaching, learning and assessment should be key pillars of the plan.

3. Responsibility for Quality Assurance

The Panel has identified as proposed mandatory changes:

a)   That the provider undertake a review of the Academic Board in order to distribute some responsibility for quality assurance to other committees, namely the Programme Boards.

b)   That the remit of Academic Director is reviewed in order to delegate some of the current responsibilities of the role to the Assistant Directors and to the Programme Leaders. This is with a view to a more effective distribution of responsibility for quality assurance through the organisation.

c)   That the provider review the remit of the Programme Boards as set out in the QA documentation so that it more adequately reflects the work that is done as was outlined during the virtual site visit. The terms of reference for the Programme Board should include responsibility for quality assurance appropriate to its remit to create a more distributed quality assurance system that fits with the size and scale of this provider.

4. Student Council

The Panel proposes as a proposed mandatory change that the Terms of Reference of the Student Council be reviewed and included in the Quality Assurance Manual. The Panel also proposes as a proposed mandatory change that the procedures for the Student Council's interaction with the Academic Board be formally included in the Quality Assurance Manual in order to ensure that the student voice is represented and heard on the Academic Board.

5. Academic Honesty & Integrity

The Panel proposes as a proposed mandatory change that the provisions in relation to academic integrity and honesty be reviewed, particularly in relation to plagiarism and collusion. The provider should cultivate a set of policies and procedures that is consistent across all programmes and modules and appropriate for the modern learner.

6. Staff Contracts of Employment

The Panel has identified as a proposed mandatory change that the provider reviews its contracts of employment to ensure that they are compliant with current legislation. The Panel suggests that advice of other providers be sought in this regard.

7.2   Specific Advices

The Panel provides the following specific advices in relation to the International School of Business's Draft QA policies and procedures:
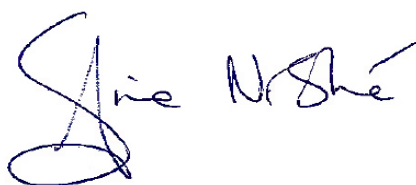
1. The Panel advises the provider to include changes to its assessment strategy in its Annual Institutional Quality Report as well as in its AAR and/or QAER to include consideration of the effectiveness of various assessment instruments used in the academic year, the opportunities taken to widen the focus of assessments beyond high stakes terminal examinations and to review the effectiveness of the assessment instruments employed.
2. The Panel advises the provider to include timelines around the Staff Development Plan which should also be detailed in the AIQR. The Panel makes a special commendation on the provider's revised policy on Academic Integrity for its currency and extensiveness.
3. The Panel advises that the provider use the AIQR as a monitoring mechanism of its QA policies and procedures.

Part 8 Proposed Approved Scope of Provision for this provider

NFQ Level(s) – min and max	Award Class(es)	Discipline areas
6	Special Purpose Awards	Business

Part 9 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 International School of Business

Name: _____

Date: 18th November 2020

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

Reengagement Application

QA Manual (Draft)

Statutory Declaration

Additional Information required by the Panel

Certificate of Incorporation

ISB's Organisational Chart

Letters from ISB's Auditors

Certificate of Insurance

Tax Clearance Certificate

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

Name	Role/Position
Francis Kelly	Director
Darragh O' Brien	Academic Director
Colin Hogan	Assistant Director (absent due to a family emergency)
Damien Kelly	Assistant Director
Neil Gallagher	Chair of the Academic Board
Philip Byers	Marketing Communications Lecturer
Gerry Delaney	Accounting and Finance
Pauline Flusk	Lecturer
Michael Grant	Management, Cross Cultural Management, Supply Chain Management
Michaela Quinn	Lecturer
Ivan Robertson	Lecturer with special responsibility for Study Aboard American students

Appendix: Provider response to the Reengagement Panel Report

20 November 2020

Quality and Qualifications Ireland,
27 Denzille Lane,
Dublin 2

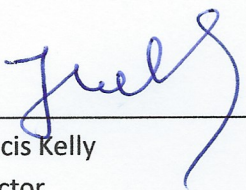**Re: Reengagement Panel Report – Provider Response**

To whom it may concern,

ISB would like to formally acknowledge receipt, and acceptance, of the QQI Panel Report dated 18/11/2020, pursuant to reengagement by QQI with ISB and we also hereby welcome the recommendation by the Panel to approve our Quality Assurance Procedures.

May we also take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the expert panel for the manner in which they conducted the business of their virtual visit. All members were fair, challenging and thought provoking.   We appreciate the good natured, collegial and developmental exchanges and recognise the positive impact they will have on ISB and its learners. The Chair, Aine Ni Shé, must also be commended for steering the sessions of the day in such an efficient, thorough and balanced way, with extreme good nature.

Finally, ISB would like to thank most sincerely all its staff, particularly faculty, for their time and dedication to the reengagement process.

Yours faithfully,

Francis Kelly
Director