



**QQI**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

## **Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes leading to QQI Awards**

### **Report of the Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel**

#### **Stage 1**

#### **Assessment of Capacity and Approval of QA Procedures**

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

#### **1.1 Applicant Provider**

Registered Business/Trading Name:	<b>PCI College</b>
Address:	Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Date of Application:	4 <sup>th</sup> February 2020
Date of resubmission of application:	29th July 2021
Date of evaluation:	First panel meeting: 8 <sup>th</sup> September 2020 Second panel meeting: 21 <sup>st</sup> September 2021
Date of recommendation to the Approvals and Reviews Committee:	First Recommendation: 3rd February 2021 Second Recommendation: 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2021



## 1.2 Profile of applicant provider

PCI College (formerly Personal Counselling Institute) was founded in 1991 to provide a broad education in counselling and psychotherapy for mature students with a strong ethos of second-chance education. PCI College offers a variety of courses to mature learners including:

- Personal and Professional CPD courses and workshops (non-accredited)
- Certificate in Counselling and Psychotherapy (Intended for QQI Validation)
- BSc (Hons) Counselling and Psychotherapy (Middlesex University Validated)
- Advanced Diploma in Clinical Supervision (Middlesex University Validated)
- MSc Child and Adolescent Counselling and Psychotherapeutic Skills (Middlesex University Validated)
- MSc Family Therapeutic and Counselling Skills (Middlesex University Validated)
- MSc Addiction Counselling and Psychotherapy (Middlesex University Validated)

In 2001, PCI College became a Collaborative Partner of Middlesex University, validating an Advanced Diploma in Clinical Supervision, aimed at qualified practitioners working with individual supervisees in an organisational context, and a part-time (four year) BSc (Hons) Counselling and Psychotherapy. The BSc (Hons) Counselling and Psychotherapy is accredited with the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) across all 9 teaching sites and the Advanced Diploma in Clinical Supervision also meets the accreditation criteria with the IACP.

PCI College is now seeking to extend its scope of provision to include QQI validated programmes beginning with a Certificate in Counselling and Psychotherapy for which QQI validation would be sought at level 6 following a successful QA approval process and hopes to offer this programme as a QQI Level 6 certificate.

## 1.3 Proposed education and training provision

NFQ Level	Award Class	QQI Award / Proposed Programme Title
6-7	SPA	Certificate in Counselling and Psychotherapy – Level 6 initially



## Part 2 The Quality and Capacity Panel Membership

Name	Role of panel member	Organisation
David Denieffe	Chair	Registrar, Institute of Technology, Carlow
Ruth Ní Bheoláin	Report Writer and QA Expert	Quality Assurance Officer, Hibernia College
Jane Alexander	Subject Matter Expert	Vice President of Academic Affairs, Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences
Grainne Conole	Blended Learning Expert	Independent consultant
Teena Choudhary	Student Representative	Project Management Student, University of Limerick

## Part 3 Findings of the Panel

### 3.1 Summary Findings

Following review of PCI College’s documentation and a site visit that took place 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020, the panel recommended refusal to approve PCI College’s draft quality assurance procedures pending implementation of a number of mandatory changes.

At this time, the panel commended PCI College on the strong student-centred ethos presented to the panel and the transparency with which the provider presented its strengths and weaknesses and responded to panel queries throughout the panel visit process. The student experience was clearly demonstrated to be at the heart of the learning experience in all discussions with the panel.

The panel advised the provider that the purpose of the peer-review panel is to review finalised QA documentation as it compares to the QQI context and to seek assurance for a provider’s future capacity to deliver programmes in the QQI context. Although the panel had confidence in PCI College’s ability to deliver its current programmes in their existing context and commended the transparency throughout their discussions with the panel, it is not possible for the panel to recommend approval of QA procedures that have not been contextualised within the QQI QA Guidelines.

**Information related to transnational and collaborative arrangements is noted, however, approval of these arrangements is not within the remit of this panel.**

The panel reconvened 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021 to review PCI’s updated documentation. At this time the panel recommended approval of the PCI College’s quality assurance procedures to QQI in line with specific advices outlined in section 7.2. The panel acknowledged the significant work completed by PCI College to address the mandatory conditions and congratulates the whole PCI College team on the positive outcome of the process.



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### 3.2 Recommendation of the panel to Approvals and Review Committee of QQI

	Tick <u>one</u> as appropriate
Approve PCI College's draft QA procedures	X
Refuse approval of PCI College's draft QA procedures pending 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 PCI College's draft QA procedures	



## Part 4 Evaluation of the capacity of the applicant to provide quality education and training to learners

### 4.1 Legal and compliance requirements:

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Partially</b>	<b>Comments</b>
4.1.1(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Is the applicant an established Legal Entity who has Education and/or Training as a Principal Function?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The applicant's legal entity is PCI Counselling Limited, trading as PCI College, which is a 100% subsidiary of CCS Training Limited.
4.1.2(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Is the legal entity established in the European Union and does it have a substantial presence in Ireland?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	PCI was established as a legal entity in Ireland and its primary premises is based in Clondalkin, Dublin 22 with additional premises in Belfast, Limerick, Westmeath, Cork and Kilkenny.
4.1.3(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are any dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries clearly specified?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Lack of clarity in this area was identified as an issue by the Panel at the September 2020 virtual panel visit. The legal relationship between CCS Training and its related subsidiaries has now been outlined and clarified within the PCI College QA Manual, Section 2 Entitled Governance and Quality Management.
4.1.4(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are any third-party relationships and partnerships compatible with the scope of access sought?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The scope of provision sought is for part-time programmes in Counselling & Psychotherapy up to NFQ level 7 and including for delivery through blended learning modes. The College provides programmes up to NFQ level 9 that are awarded by Middlesex University but is not seeking approval for provision of programmes at this level.
4.1.5(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are the applicable regulations and legislation complied with in all jurisdictions where it operates?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Lack of clarity in this area was identified as an issue by the Panel at the September 2020 virtual panel visit. PCI College subsequently clarified the transnational nature of some programmes. The panel noted updated documentation in this regard but also noted



			that approval of transnational arrangements is not within the remit of the panel.
4.1.6(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>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 enrolls learners, or where it has arrangements with awarding bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators.</i>	<b>Yes</b>	As part of the College's partnership with Middlesex University, the College's QA procedures adhere to the standards set by the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and were selected as a collaborative partner of Middlesex to participate in the <a href="#">TNE Ireland Review</a> in 2017.

### Findings

Following the virtual site visit in September 2020, the panel found that additional clarifications are needed in relation to PCI's legal and compliance requirements in regard to the legal structure of the College's jurisdictional requirements. On review of updated documentation following the reconvene panel meeting in September 2021, the panel is satisfied these criteria have been addressed.

**4.2 Resource, governance and structural requirements:**

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Partially</b>	<b>Comments</b>
4.2.1(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have a sufficient resource base and is it stable and in good financial standing?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The following appendices were provided to the panel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Director's report 3.1</li><li>• Copy of public liability insurance 3.2</li><li>• Copy of current tax clearance cert 3.3</li><li>• PCI College Accounts</li></ul>
4.2.2(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The College has a demonstrated track record in delivering programmes and provided the panel with the College strategy and 5-year plan.
4.2.3(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision making structures in place?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The Panel recommended that governance committees be updated to accommodate appropriate student representation and externality at the September 2020 virtual panel visit. This has since been implemented. A specific advice has been provided in relation to externality.
4.2.4(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are there arrangements in place for providing required information to QQI?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The panel noted at the September 2020 panel visit that systems have not yet been documented as to how required information would be provided to QQI. The College notes that an Institutional Link Tutor to act as the main communicator between PCI College and all Validating Bodies. A specific advice has been provided related to the development of documented processes for sharing of information and data with QQI.



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## **Findings**

Following the virtual site visit in September 2020, the panel found that some minor updates are required in relation to student representation and externality on governance committees and in relation to the documentation of processes for providing required information to QQI.

On review of updated documentation following the reconvene panel meeting in September 2021, the panel is satisfied these criteria have been addressed and will be further supported by the implementation of specific advices.



**4.3 Programme development and provision requirements:**

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/No/Partially</b>	<b>Comments</b>
4.3.1(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have experience and a track record in providing education and training programmes?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	PCI College (formerly Personal Counselling Institute) was founded in 1991 to provide a broad education in counselling and psychotherapy for mature students. The College became a collaborative partner of Middlesex University in 2001 and currently has five programmes validated under this arrangement.
4.3.2(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Aside from various commercial and academic appointments, the College employs 12 Faculty Lecturers with a set number of module allocations per Faculty Lecturer specified in their contract of employment.
4.3.3(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>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)?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Lack of clarity in this area was identified as an issue by the Panel at the September 2020 virtual panel visit. Following resubmission of documentation, the provider has demonstrated its capacity to comply with Section 45(3) of the Act.
4.3.4(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have the fit-for-purpose premises, facilities and resources to meet the requirements of the provision proposed in place?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The provider has provided a list of owned and leased premises.
4.3.5(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are there access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval in place?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Lack of clarity in this area was identified as an issue by the Panel at the September 2020 virtual panel visit.  The provider has since provided documented processes in relation to RPL. A specific advice has been provided in this regard.



4.3.6(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners in place?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Lack of clarity in this area was identified as an issue by the Panel at the September 2020 virtual panel visit as the structures currently in place were aligned to Middlesex University's assessment regulations. The provider has now demonstrated alignment with a QQI assessment and standards to ensure consistent assessment of learners.
4.3.7(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to meet the statutory obligations in place (where applicable)?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Lack of clarity in this area was identified as an issue by the Panel at the September 2020 virtual panel visit. The provider has since documented a Protection of Enrolled Learners Policy and secured an appropriate insurance policy.

**Findings**

Following the virtual site visit in September 2020, the panel found that the documentation as written does not meet the programme development and provision requirements as the submitted QA documentation does not strictly align to the requirements of QQI provision.

On review of updated documentation following the reconvene panel meeting in September 2021, the panel is satisfied these criteria have been addressed and will be further supported by the implementation of specific advices.



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

Following the virtual site visit in September 2020, overall, the panel found that the College needs to address a number of areas in its written documentation in order to demonstrate the required capacity to provide the proposed education and training provision in the Irish context and specifically with regard to the QQI guidelines.

On review of updated documentation following the reconvene panel meeting in September 2021, the panel is satisfied these criteria have been addressed and will be further supported by the implementation of specific advices.



## Part 5 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by PCI College

*The following is the panel's findings following evaluation of PCI College's quality assurance procedures against QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016) and Topic Specific QA Guidelines - Blended Learning.*

*Sections 1-11 of the report follows the structure and referencing of the Core QA Guidelines.*

### 1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY

#### **Panel Findings:**

The PCI College Board has overall responsibility for strategic academic decision-making. Membership includes the CCS Board of Directors, PCI College Director, Academic Director who provides support, guidance, advice and decision making on higher academic issues pertaining to the strategic development of training provision, together with the Head of Counselling & Psychotherapy.

Responsibility for QA sits jointly with the Head of Counselling and Psychotherapy and College Director, who seek guidance from the Academic Director on QA updates and matters arising as required. The Head of Counselling and Psychotherapy is responsible for day-to-day academic decision-making and Programme Leaders are responsible for the day-to-day course management, overseen by the Head of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

The College operates a number of academic governance meetings including the TLA Committee, Subject Boards, Assessment Boards, Awards Boards, Progression Boards and Programme Voice Groups. All College committees have Terms of Reference.

The TLA Committee has overall responsibility for the maintenance of academic governance. A graphic representation outlining the hierarchy of committees, and other established groups such as the student voice group, and formal communication lines between these would be a useful resource. It is not clear within the documentation that a committee with delegated responsibilities, e.g., the Assessment Board, is a formal subcommittee of the TLA Committee as required by QQI's Assessment and Standards (revised 2013).

The panel queried externality and student representation within formal governance decision-making structures. Although there is a programme voice group which seeks to engage students in dialogue, there is no student representation on the TLA Committee. Externality is included primarily through the use of external examiners and through inclusion of external individuals on committees on an ad-hoc basis. The Panel recommends that governance committees be updated to accommodate appropriate student representation and external representation as appropriate. This is reflected in a mandatory change (please see Section 7 of this report) that was addressed in advance of the panel reconvening 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021.



## 2 DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

The provider's existing QA framework is written in the context of its existing programmes validated by Middlesex University. Throughout the panel visit, the panel queried how various QQI QA Guidelines, policies and standards had been reviewed and sought to be integrated into PCI College's QA framework. The provider informed the panel that it had chosen to present its QA procedures as they currently exist, in the context of the current delivery, believing that the formal integration could occur at a later stage and with the guidance of the panel on specific areas that needed to be updated.

The panel identified a mandatory change in relation to this, as set out in Section 7 of this report, at the original site visit in September 2020. Following the reconvened meeting of the panel in September 2021, the panel finds that this mandatory change has been met.

## 3 PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### ***Panel Findings:***

The College has documented procedures to ensure that new programmes are developed systematically which was further supported by panel discussions. The panel queried the College's use of learning development frameworks in the development of programmes, particularly in relation to blended learning, and advised that the College use such frameworks to complement QA requirements in the development of academic programmes.

Programmes are developed in line with the requirements of Middlesex University. These procedures do not reference and have not been explicitly mapped to ensure that they meet the requirements of the National Framework of Qualifications and associated policies and procedures on Access, Transfer and Progression, and QQI Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training.

There is no explicit mechanism in place for consultation with employers in respect of programme outcomes and content during programme development although a robust market research process appears to be in place as part of new programme development processes. The panel had identified a mandatory change in this regard (please see Section 7 of this report).

This mandatory change was identified at the site visit in September 2020. Following the reconvened meeting of the panel in September 2021, the panel found that this has been addressed.

**4 STAFF RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT****Panel Findings:**

The staff recruitment and ongoing appraisal process is documented in the QA manual. Staffing requirements are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure there is a full complement of qualified staff available to fulfil all College requirements.

The provider spoke to staff support and development at the virtual panel meeting and the College's Staff Development Plan was provided to the panel as an appendix. The staff development plan is reviewed at the end of each academic year and new areas of staff development are identified and incorporated into the staff development plan as required. Staff training includes area such as essay writing and grading support, research upskilling and lecturer induction. CPD days for professional requirements are facilitated and staff also engage in peer review processes as an additional form of professional development.

**5 TEACHING AND LEARNING****Panel Findings:**

The College's TLA Committee has two main functions:

- *To oversee the management and operation of existing academic and professional programmes and those which are in development.*
- *To protect, maintain, and develop the standards and quality of academic and professional courses provided by the College.*

Consequently, the TLA holds overall responsibility for safeguarding the standards of the design, delivery and ongoing improvement of college programmes as specified in the College's application and reiterated during site visits.

Approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment are detailed in the College's programme handbooks including programme outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment methods and a full overview of required assessment on a given programme.

Learners' feedback is sought at multiple points in the programme including learner feedback questionnaires and End of Module Feedback Forms which are collected anonymously by Student Voice Leaders and returned to the College. Progress Review Meetings are held with students twice a year where they are expected to reflect on their learning experience and engagement on their programme. Elected Student Voice Leaders represent their classmates at two Programme Voice Groups a year where they discuss their learning experience directly with College and Course Programme Leaders.

As programmes are delivered across multiple locations, consistency of TLA environment is of paramount importance. Lecturers are facilitated to meet regularly to review module content and deliver lectures according to agreed lesson plans to ensure consistency of experience for students. Students have access to consistent module material, supporting information and resources via the student portal.

**6 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS*****Panel Findings:***

The procedures for assessment of students are outlined in Section J of the QA manual. A further appendix detailing assessment practice in the College was provided to the panel. The panel was satisfied that College's assessment framework incorporates procedures and systems for the security and integrity of the assessment process including the development of robust assessment materials, moderation processes, provision of formative assessment and external oversight from external examiners and other relevant parties.

The structures currently in place are aligned to Middlesex University's assessment regulations and have not been aligned to QQI assessment and standards to ensure consistent assessment of learners e.g. ensuring sectoral conventions for assessment, as presented in Assessment and Standards, are clearly documented within the QA manual. Please see Mandatory Change 7.1 in this regard.

Following the reconvened meeting of the panel in September 2021, the panel found that this has been addressed.



## 7 SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

### **Panel Findings:**

The panel wishes to commend the College on its strong student-centred ethos encompassing pastoral, administrative and academic supports. During the site visit the College spoke more to this ethos where meaningful learner engagement is cultivated by the learning environment. Students are prompted to look after themselves and are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning experience.

Examples of some supports provided to students by the College include:

- Student Services, Programmes Office, Clinical Manager, Low-Cost Counselling Service
- Academic Support and QA Structure: Programme Leaders, Year Heads, Academic Team Leaders, Student Development and Progression Officers, Module Leaders, Student Voice Leaders
- Student portal: Online timetable, Handbooks, Electronic submissions, Module materials, 'How To' videos, Forms/templates
- Academic Writing Knowledge Base: Contains suite of academic writing supports, including presentations, tools and templates
- Academic writing webinars: Live and interactive, Recorded for playback
- Microsoft Office Suite: Personal email and outlook, one drive, Office tools: word, power point, excel, Teams, SharePoint

Disability Support Training, facilitated by AHEAD, is provided to core staff to support the role of Disability Support Officer, Student Services Manager and Programmes Office. Appropriate student-centred QA processes are in place including reasonable accommodations, appeals, complaints and extenuating circumstances.



**8 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT****Panel Findings:**

Microsoft Dynamics 365 Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is used to maintain student records where students each have a dedicated profile that contains all information related to their student journey. CRM training for all staff in the effective use and functions of the CRM is integrated as part of the staff development plan.

A GDPR policy is documented and GDPR training for core staff is also integrated in the staff development plan. Access to student information is allocated to staff as required for explicit purposes of their roles. Data is provided in various formats as required for different purposes e.g. the production of reports on student progression and assessment for analysis at Assessment Boards.

**9 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION****Panel Findings:**

The College's QA manual is publicly available on its website and is available to students in the course information section of the College's Student Portal. Core QA procedures pertaining to the student experience are also detailed in the programme handbooks e.g. Mitigating Circumstances, Complaints, Appeals. Presently, the College references and links to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Quality Code as the majority of the Colleges existing offerings are validated by Middlesex University. The College's existing programmes are clearly communicated to prospective learners on the College website.

Although the College's application supports the College's intention to publish consistent and accurate public information, there is no published policy governing how information is communicated and published about validated programmes including protection of enrolled learners, access transfer and progression, accuracy of information etc. The requirement to address this is set out in Section 7 as a mandatory change. This mandatory change was identified at the site visit in September 2020. Following the reconvened meeting of the panel in September 2021, the panel found that this has been addressed.

**10 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING****Panel Findings:**

A number of other parties are involved in education and training related to PCI College including the following as highlighted by the College:

- Course accreditation with professional bodies: IACP and NCS.
- Course validation with Middlesex University.



- Sister College: Iron Mill, UK; networking, sharing of supportive strategies and co-relationship with members of the academic and programme teams, for example, course development, marketing, CPD collaboration, etc.

PCI College has a partnership arrangement with Middlesex University which outlines a full memorandum of cooperation in relation to the partnership arrangements whereby PCI College own all programmes and the process of delivery of programmes. There is no explicit policy for collaborative or transnational provision.

The panel sought clarity on the legal structure of the College. The provider clarified that PCI College trades under CCS Training Ltd, as does its sister College, Iron Mill, that is based in UK. An additional company, PCI education, was established in Belfast to facilitate variance in financial structures. The panel advised that these relationships would need to be clarified in the College's application and they would need to seek guidance on whether transnational approval would be required for the delivery of cross-border programmes. Guidance from QQI would also be needed on the appropriateness of a transnational PEL agreement and whether a PEL agreement within the context of a single parent company was sufficient. A mandatory change has been identified in this regard. This mandatory change was identified at the site visit in September 2020. Following the reconvened meeting of the panel in September 2021, the panel found that this has been addressed.

**11 SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW****Panel Findings:**

Section G of the provider's QA manual outlines "Ongoing Programme Monitoring". Internal self-monitoring processes include receiving reports from external examiners on three occasions throughout the year, submitting annual reports on each programme led by the Programme Leader, elected student voice leaders contributing feedback as biannual Programme Voice Group meetings, student module surveys and staff feedback at meetings convened at least once in a semester.

Programme evaluation is dealt with under section H 'New Programme Evaluation'. A detailed process of programme review is outlined in this section as is required for the College's existing structure. This should be updated to incorporate requirements for programme review and re-validation for programmes validated by QQI under the Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training.

External QA arrangements in relation to programme development are documented and outline a robust programme development process. Further external QA arrangements in relation to processes such as cyclical review, under the Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions, and annual quality reporting are not documented.

**12 TOPIC-SPECIFIC QA PROCEDURES: BLENDED LEARNING****Panel Findings:**

As outlined in the College's application, and explained further at the panel visit, the College's existing programme development processes do not separate procedures for the development of taught and blended learning programmes. Explicit policies and procedures based on the topic specific guidelines for blended learning have not been developed.

Should PCI College determine that it wishes to proceed with an application to include blended learning within its scope of provision, it will need to develop and / or identify and submit with its revised documentation:

- a strategy for blended learning;
- its governance structures with oversight responsibility for all stages of blended learning including programme development; delivery and review;
- its programme development processes, including appropriate programme design frameworks and learning and assessment frameworks relevant to blended learning; and
- ensure staff development opportunities are provided to support the steps outlined above.

This had been identified as a mandatory change by the Panel. On review of updated documentation following the reconvened panel meeting in September 2021, the panel is satisfied that this mandatory change has been addressed.



## Evaluation of draft QA Procedures - Overall panel findings

The panel commended the strong student-centred ethos presented to the panel and the provider's demonstrated commitment to its student and experience of delivering programmes with Middlesex University. The panel appreciated the College's transparency throughout the virtual site visit that facilitated open dialogue and discussion of core matters arising throughout the day.

Following the initial site visit, the panel included a number of mandatory changes that outline the range of areas in which the requirements of QQI's QA Guidelines were not currently met and that needed to be integrated into, and referenced within, the provider's QA manual.

The panel acknowledged that the provider sought to present its QA procedures as it was currently implemented and that the provider believed that many of its existing practices mirror those required by QQI. The panel was not in a position to recommend approval of a provider's QA procedures without seeing how the requirements of QQI policies and standards will be explicitly integrated into the provider's QA system. The panel noted that in some instances, changes would not be required and where the provider could demonstrate that the QA procedures were sufficient for a particular area, referencing appropriate documentation will be sufficient to demonstrate compliance.

In areas where the standards vary substantially, e.g. sectoral conventions for assessment, these would need to be explicitly incorporated into the provider's QA manual. The Panel, therefore, recommended refusal of PCI College's QA procedures pending mandatory changes following the initial site visit.

The panel reconvened 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021 to review PCI's updated documentation. At this time the panel recommended approval of the PCI College's quality assurance procedures to QQI in line with specific advices outlined in section 7.2. The panel acknowledged the significant work completed by PCI College to address the mandatory conditions and congratulates the whole PCI College team on the positive outcome of the process.



## Part 6 Conditions of QA Approval

### 6.1 Conditions of QA Approval

1. N/A

## Part 7 Mandatory Changes to QA Procedures and Specific Advice

The following mandatory changes were identified by the panel at the conclusion of the site visit on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Following this, PCI College had 6 months to address the mandatory changes and resubmit updated documentation to QQI.

The panel reconvened 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021 to evaluate the resubmitted documentation. Following this evaluation, the panel is satisfied that that PCI College has adequately addressed these changes and has identified specific advices outlined in section 7.2.

### 7.1 Mandatory Changes – First Meeting

#### 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020

1. Integrate, and clearly demonstrate how QQI QA Guidelines and relevant policies, criteria and standards are integrated, throughout the QA manual and governance structure, including, but not necessarily limited to:
  - Core QA guidelines
  - Sector specific QA Guidelines for Private and Independent Providers
  - Topic Specific Guidelines for Blended Learning
  - Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training
  - Assessment and Standards (revised 20130)
  - QQI Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training
  - Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions
  - Policy and Criteria for Making Awards
  - External Examining Guidelines
  - Protection of Enrolled Learners
  - Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning
  - Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards
2. Integrate externality and student representation into the governance committee structures
3. Should PCI College determine that it wishes to proceed with an application to include blended learning within its scope of provision, it will need to develop and / or identify and submit with its revised documentation:
  - a strategy for blended learning;
  - its governance structures with oversight responsibility for all stages of blended learning including programme development; delivery and review;
  - its programme development processes, including appropriate programme design frameworks and learning and assessment frameworks relevant to blended learning; and
  - ensure staff development opportunities are provided to support the steps outlined above.



4. Clearly set out the legal framework in which PCI College operates and related jurisdictional requirements.
5. Set out published policy governing how information is communicated and published about validated programmes including protection of enrolled learners, access transfer and progression, accuracy of information etc.

## **7.2 Specific Advice – September 2021**

### **21<sup>st</sup> September 2021**

The panel offers the following specific advices:

1. Further developing student-facing QA materials so that they are written in plain English and accessible to a diverse audience.
2. Increasing clarity of process within RPL policy.
3. Developing policy and process for sharing of information with QQI.
4. Considering the role of externality and how it can be achieved through diverse means including, but not limited to, external consultancy. Recent QQI publication may be useful in this regard (Governance and Management of Quality- A Practical Resource for Providers and Panel Members)
5. Further consideration be given to blended learning and ensuring the availability of in-house expertise to support this, including support for learners and professional development for staff. Engagement with bodies such as the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) and JISC could provide additional support in this area.

## **Part 8 Proposed Approved Scope of Provision for this provider**

<b>NFQ Level(s) – min and max</b>	<b>Award Class(es)</b>	<b>Discipline areas</b>
6-7	Major	Counselling & Psychotherapy
Delivered via Face -to-Face and Blended Modes		



**QQI**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

## **Part 9                      Approval by Chair of the Panel**

This report of the Quality and Capacity Panel is approved and submitted to QQI for its decision on the recommendation to approve PCI College's draft QA procedures.

Name:

Date:                      19<sup>th</sup> October 2021



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

Document	Related to
Application Form and document map	Reengagement Submission
QA Manual	Documented QA
a. Company details 1.2.pdf aa. criteria for external examiners.doc b. Organisational Chart 2.3.pdf bb. MDX MOC Agreement 2.4.pdf c. Directors report 3.1.pdf cc. GDPR policy.docx d. Copy of public liability insurance 3.2.pdf dd. Disability Support .pdf e. Copy of current tax clearance cert 3.3.jpg ee. PVG code of conduct.docx f. QA Manual.pdf ff. Online Certificate handbook .pdf g Sample AMR MDX.docx gg. Risk Register .xlsx h. End of Module Feedback Form - student.docx hh. Module Leader Resource Pack .docx i. End of module form -Lecturer.docx ii. Safety Statement .pdf jj. PCI College Terms and Conditions 2019.docx k. Sample PVG Minutes.docx kk. Sample application form.pdf l. Sample Contract of Services.docx ll. Student Code of Conduct.docx m. Sample Board sheet.xlsx mm. Supporting Breastfeeding in class policy.docx n. Sample External Examiners report.doc nn. Venue Checklist.xlsx o. Lecturer feedback stats.xlsx p. Academic QA Co-ordinator role.pdf	Supporting Evidence





<p>q. Link Tutor role description.docx r. Sample Boards agenda.docx s. Blended Learning Certificate CP Programme Leader role.pdf t. Sample programme handbook.docx u. HOD committee Terms of reference.docx v. Staff Handbook.pdf w. Staff Development Plan.docx x. Appraisal documentation template.docx y. Session observation form.docx z. criteria for external assessors.doc</p>	
<p>Assessments.docx Commitment to Privacy.docx Contingency plan MoC MDX programmes 2020.docx Fitness to practice policy.docx MDX Regs RPL.docx PCI 5 Year Devel Plan updated August 2020.docx PCI College accounts.pdf Primary premises &amp; teaching locations.docx QAA RPL v 2017 statement.docx QQI Clarification Questions.docx RPL info for students MDX.docx Strategic Position Statement Updated 2020 RM.docx Student Conduct and Disciplinary Policy .docx Student Support &amp; mitigating circumstances.docx</p>	<p>Additional Information for Panel Members</p>
<p>Copy of Presentation</p>	<p>Reengagement Panel Visit</p>

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

Name	Role/Position
Pat Kitterick – College Director	Company Director
William Fitzpatrick-	Company Director
Rose Bedford-	Academic Director
Rhiannon Murphy-	College Director
Jade Lawless	Head of Counselling and Psychotherapy
Gael Kilduff	PL/lecturer
Antoinette Stanbridge	QA/Lecturer
Brian O’ Murchu (QA)	QA
Alina Lupu	HOD – Student Services
Ethan Moore	HOD – Prorgammes Office
Carolina Cirillo	HOD - Marketing
Louise Brennan	HOD – Clinical Team
Colm Earl	Lecturer

***Appendix:*** Provider response to the Initial Access to Validation Panel Report



Dear QQI,

On behalf of PCI College, I am delighted to confirm acceptance of the IAV Panel's Report and Specific Advice, as outlined on page 22, following a reconvening of the panel on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September.

I would also like to confirm that we have submitted the Factual Accuracy report requesting one change related to the Company Director's titles for the panel's consideration.

Finally, I would like to thank the panel for giving of their time and their guidance which has been instrumental in assisting and guiding PCI College throughout this process.

We are very pleased with the outcome.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Jade Lawless', followed by a vertical line.

Jade Lawless  
Head of Counselling and Psychotherapy