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Report of the Programme Evaluation Panel

Provider's Name:	National College of Ireland
Address:	Mayor Square
	IFSC
	Dublin 1
QA procedures agreed on:	2006
QA procedures reviewed on:	2010
Programme()s submitted for approval:	Leading to the award of:
BA Hons in Marketing Practice	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
Date submitted to QQI:	April 2016
Date of Evaluation:	19th July 2018
Date of Report:	26.07.2018

Membership of the Programme Evaluation Panel:

Role	Name	Area of Expertise	QQI Peer Review Reference Listing
Chairperson/Secretary	Ms Naomi Jackson	QA	
External Specialist	Dr Marian Crowley-Henry	HRM	
External Specialist	Mr Nicholas Read	Marketing	
Learner	Mr Jonathan Mukoko		

Profile of provider:

NCI, through its two schools, the School of Business, School of Computing, offers over 80 full-time and part-time programmes at levels 6-10 of the National Framework of Qualifications.
NCI's programmes are accredited by the QQI, the Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD) and the Institute of Commercial Management (ICM).

Programmes in Accounting and Finance enjoy recognition by such professional bodies as the Chartered Accountants Ireland (ACA), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA). National College of Ireland is the largest provider of Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) accredited programmes in the Human Resource Management area.

Although a company limited by guarantee, the College is partially funded through the Department of Education and Skills for 925 undergraduate full-time students. All other funding comes from student fees and commercial income. As part of its internationalisation strategy, the College is active in India, Malaysia, China and more recently Brazil and Africa. Over 50 nationalities are represented within the study body, mainly from communities in the Greater Dublin area.

Enrolment in May 2018 stands at c. 5500 of which 43% are part-time. 70% of learners are enrolled on undergraduate programmes which range from major awards to professionally focussed special purpose awards. The College is currently one of the largest providers of Springboard/ICT programmes in the country.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) provides additional funding under initiatives such as Funds for Students with Disability and the Student Assistance Funds.

In line with its mission of widening access to education, the College places a strong emphasis on the needs of the learner and provides a range of learning options that extend beyond traditional classroom dynamics, including distance learning and internet-based learning programmes.

Programmes are delivered by a combination of full-time and part-time (associate faculty) which bring current experiences and issues from the workplace into the classroom. The College currently has a policy of normally only appointing holders of PhD to full-time faculty and supports any member of staff who is undertaking PhD study both financially and via workload rebalancing. The College currently has 52 full-time academic staff, of which 60% are holders of a PhD.

R1 Context

This programme based on the originally validated 3-stage BA Honours in Marketing Practice degree attracting 180 credits, is being differentially validated to accommodate the inclusion of a credit-bearing work placement stage. The panel has evaluated the inclusion of additional programme learning outcomes to accommodate this stage.

R2 Planning:

Programme development since agreement of QA procedures / the last review

The College has developed a significant number of programmes since its last institutional review in 2010 culminating in 2015 with a complete programmatic review of its portfolio across the Business, Computing and Education subject areas. During the period 2014-2016, 31 programmes have been revalidated and a further 35 programmes (15 in 2015) have been validated/revalidated. The College has also developed statutory apprenticeships and continues to work closely with employers through the development of special purpose awards.

2.1. Purpose of the award

Does the proposed programme address a clear market demand?
The programme has been designed in response to requests from employers to provide programmes which include a placement element, thus producing graduates with employment experience to complement their academic qualification. Additionally, the panel were advised of the demand from learners to have access to a work placement to improve their employability in a meaningful way.
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2.2. Avoidance of duplication

Has the Programme Development Team identified the availability of similar programmes locally, regionally, nationally?
The panel were advised of the availability of programmes in the same discipline leading to the same award. The inclusion of a credit bearing placement varies. This isn't something that is commonly available locally, but the College has identified a need and is responding to that. The College has drawn upon the experience in applying this model in their School of Computing and the additional experience gained through the development of apprenticeships.

2.3. Stakeholder consultation

Was the level of stakeholder engagement satisfactory?
Support for the programme (industry/business/community)

The panel were provided with evidence of consultation with learners and information about a range of consultation activities with employers and sector representatives. The panel were impressed with the strength of employer links and the initiatives implemented by the College to maximise the benefit of these to students.

2.4. Efficient and effective use of resources

Does the proposed programme represent both efficient and effective use of the provider's resources?
Yes. The panel were assured of the ongoing resource monitoring and allocation. The panel specifically questioned the capacity of the Careers Service to support the delivery of the Career Development Skills module and support the Business Placement module and were advised of the increased capacity along with the approval for the addition of further Careers Advisors.

2.5. Resource development over last 5 years (or in direct support of this programme)

The College outlined the expansion of the Careers Service over recent years along with the development of increased employer links and initiatives to promote employer engagement and employability within the programme.

2.6. Planned development over the coming 5 years?

The panel were advised of the intentions to expand the Careers Service, further develop international opportunities for students and to investigate opportunities for placements with start up organisations or using the College's business generator as a placement experience opportunity for students. The panel welcomed these plans.

Have the QQI award standards been explicitly referred to in the programme and does the programme meet those standards at the specified level?
The programme document clearly articulates how the programme maps to the award standards, specifically highlighting where the additional placement year evidences award standards being met. The panel discussed the proposed assessment and learning outcomes and were satisfied of the level appropriateness of the proposal and the direct correlation with the award standards.

Has the Provider complied with Protection for Enrolled Learner requirements?
Yes. Protection for Enrolled Learners will be provided through alternate provider arrangements.

2.7. Access

Is the expected minimum and maximum number of all learners entering the programme explicitly stated?
The minimum and maximum learners entering the programme remains unchanged from the main programme validation. Learners accessing the placement year will be determined by clearly specified criteria. Learners are advised that access to the placement year is determined by academic performance or progress and that it is also a competitive process controlled by the number of suitable placements available.

Have any/all prerequisite knowledge, skills or competence or any other specific entry requirement been articulated?
The panel sought clarification on the criteria for access to placement and the process for discretionary decision-making in respect of case by case applicants who fall outside of the criteria. The process and criteria were informed by the College's experience of managing placement provision and student participation. The panel were confident in the suitability of the criteria and process but noted that documented criteria should be amended to ensure clarity of intention and avoid misinterpretation.

The panel asked about access to placement opportunities for students with a disability and also for international students. The programme team outlined their experience of dealing with and supporting such students and that appropriate policies and procedures were in place to ensure that all students were given the opportunity of participating in a placement.

R3   Quality Assurance

3.1. Application of agreed quality assurance procedures for development of programmes

Were the agreed quality assurance procedures for programme development followed?
Yes. The College outlined the development process and confirmed the approval of the Academic Council to proceed with the differential validation application.

Has the programme team demonstrated how programme delivery will be monitored in accordance with agreed QA procedures?

Yes. The programme team outlined the arrangements in place for selecting, managing and monitoring placements and for securing learner feedback in respect of modules, programmes and placements.

Are programme management arrangements adequate and coherent?
The programme management arrangements in pace for the current 3 stage programme will apply to the extended 4-stage programme with the addition of a member of academic staff being assigned responsibility for the management of the placement year. Management of students undertaking the placement will be overseen by this staff member through a team of supervisors.

R4 Programme structure and content

Is the programme structure well designed, coherent and fit for its stated purpose?
Yes. The panel supported the requirement for students to complete the Careers Development module if they wish to access the Business Placement, and recommended the College consider making this module mandatory for all students. The placement model that requires continued interaction with the College through some attendance and regular submission of reports was supported by the panel.

4.2 Programme learning outcomes

Do the programme learning outcomes comply with national standards for the level of award proposed?
Yes. The panel evaluated the programme learning outcomes for level appropriateness in the context of the award standards. The panel sought clarification on how the programme and its learning outcomes would be marketed in the context of the existing 3-stage programme. The programme team confirmed that it would be clear to potential learners that access to the placement, and fulfilment of the PLOs associated with the extended 4 stage programme, will only be attained if all the requirements are met.

Are module descriptions adequate and relevant?
Yes. The module descriptors provide give a clear insight into the intentions of the module and the requirements of learners to complete the module. There is clear linkage between the module and programme learning outcomes underpinned by the assessment strategies.

Are modules relevant and current?
Module content was considered to be relevant and current and the programme team advised the panel of how content may vary in response to specific interests of student groups. The panel investigated the potential for a greater focus on entrepreneurship within the Careers Development module and were advised of how it is addressed and where else in the programme it is addressed. The panel questioned whether entrepreneurial placement opportunities, and particularly opportunities in start-up organisations, were facilitated. The programme team advised that such placements can be provided in response to individual requests where a student can provide a strong rationale for their request and evidences motivation in the areas related to the start-up activity. The team further advised of the College's business incubator and the potential to consider that for placement experience in the future.
The panel questioned the availability of international placements and the programme team advised that this is feasible and is something the College is experienced with. The mechanisms for supporting students in international placements were outlined to the panel.

Does the combination of modules chosen have the coherence to support the proposed award?
Yes. The panel is confident that the requirement to complete the Careers Development Module will provide a strong foundation for learners going into a placement year where they are required to set their goals and critically reflect on their progress and development. The panel were further satisfied that the combination of modules will complement the existing validated programme and provide learners with a coherent learning experience. The panel noted the student natured focus of the proposal and supported the provision of the placement after stage two, allowing students to make a more informed decision on their preferred area of practice, reflect on and apply their learning to that

point, and subsequently bring learning from the placement year into the final stage, potentially informing their capstone project.

4.3 Learning Modes

Can the teaching and learning strategies proposed support achievement of the required learning outcomes?
Yes. The 4-stage programme is only available in full time mode. The teaching and learning strategies are appropriate for the attainment of module and programme learning outcomes, recognise and reflect different learning styles, and, in relation to the placement year, provide a means for the College to effectively monitor progress and engagement.

Are the delivery mechanisms proposed adequate to the needs of the programme and the proposed learner cohorts?
Yes. The panel took confidence from the experience the programme team has reflected upon to inform their approach.

4.4 Assessment strategies

Are assessment processes and methods adequately described?

Assessment methods are explained in detail, breaking down the timing and weighting of individual assessments as well as the assessment technique utilised. The panel enquired as to the arrangements for repeat assessment for the placement module. The programme team advised that as the assessment is comprised of activities that the student can repeat without having to repeat the placement, the standard repeat assessment arrangements would apply.

The panel welcomed the details provided by the programme team outlining the variety of assessment techniques used throughout the programme and, in particular, the use of real life assessments, including optimising employer links to inform assessments.

The panel noted that the students were asked to carry out self-reflection and critical analysis and asked the programme team if the students were taught how to self-critique effectively. The programme team advised that the content of the careers module covered this, and that careers staff were MBTI trained and that MBTI was administered to students and analysed as part of the module.

Are these strategies appropriate to this type of award, in terms of type, frequency and volume?

Yes. There is an effective use of formative and summative assessments and the size and nature of assessments is appropriate for the subject matter, the specific modules, and the award type.

Is assessment explicitly linked with intended learning outcomes?

Yes. The module descriptors clearly map each assessment to the specific outcomes addressed.

Does the assessment strategy underpin the achievement of the relevant standard of knowledge, skill and competence?

Yes, there is clear alignment between the award standards, programme learning outcomes, module learning outcomes and the assessment strategies.

4.5 Duration

What is the intended duration of the Programme?

4 stages over 4 academic years.

What is the lifespan of the programme (e.g. single cohort intake to satisfy limited local demand; multiple intakes over the following 5 years etc.?)

The programme team advised that there will be one intake per year commencing September 2019.

Does the Panel believe this to be realistic?
Yes.

Are there flexible modes of participation?
No

4.6 Credits

Is credit allocation in accordance with national and international guidelines?
Yes. Credits are allocated reflecting 60 ECTS for one full time academic year and 25 notional learning hours per credit.

Considering the level, outcomes and volume of each module, is the number of credits attached to each appropriate?
Yes.

Considering the stated objective of the programme is the number of credits attached to the award appropriate?
Yes

4.7 NFQ Level

Is the proposed level of the programme in accordance with institutional policy/national norms?
Yes. The programme will remain as a level 8 honours degree with the addition of a placement year at level 7.

4.8 Programme titles and award

Is the title consistent with national policy, is it informative and is it fit for purpose?
Yes. The programme and award title remain unchanged from the validated 3-stage programme.

4.9 Transfer and Progression

Has the Programme Development Team identified realistic transfer and progression opportunities/possibilities that learners may avail of following achievement of this award?
The transfer and progression opportunities outlined as part of the validated 3-stage programme will continue to be applicable to students undertaken the 4-stage model.
The panel enquired as to arrangements for learners who commence the placement stage but do not complete it. The programme team confirmed that within the initial 4 weeks a learner can revert back to the 3-stage programme and commence the award stage. After this point they will be required to either complete the placement year or defer the year and commence the award stage in the next academic year.

5 Module Titles, Content and Assessment Strategy

Module Title: Career Development Skills

Is the title informative and is it fit for purpose? Yes. The module aims, content and assessment strategy are accurately reflected in the title.

Are the specific learning outcomes a) properly stated, b) sufficient and c) achievable? Yes, as indicated in earlier comments.

Is the content sufficiently informative and is it fit for purpose? Yes.

Does the Assessment Strategy align sufficiently with the intended learning outcomes? Yes, as indicate din earlier comments.

Is the required reading and supplementary reading appropriate, current and realistic? Yes.

Module Title: Business Placement

Is the title informative and is it fit for purpose? Yes. The title will have relevance for students and future employers reviewing transcripts or Diploma Supplements and remains broad enough to allow for the flexibility of placement type.

Are the specific learning outcomes a) properly stated, b) sufficient and c) achievable? Yes, as indicated in earlier comments.

Is the content sufficiently informative and is it fit for purpose? Yes. The panel recognises the value in the ongoing provision of classes relating to the module during the placement period and supports the College's decision in this regard.

Does the Assessment Strategy align sufficiently with the intended learning outcomes? Yes, see earlier comments.

Is the required reading and supplementary reading appropriate, current and realistic? Yes.

6 Specific Issues to be addressed by the provider

The panel wishes to commend the provider on the following:

- The Careers Development module and how it is delivered and assessed representing genuine value to students long into the future.
- The student-centred approach to programme development, programme design and support services.
- The extent and use of employer and community links to enhance the student experience.

6.2 Conditions of Approval:

To revise the programme document to accurately reflect the special regulation, as articulated to the panel, relating to the criteria for access to the placement year.

6.3 Recommendations:

The panel recommends:

- The plans for expanding the resourcing of the Careers Service are implemented;
- The programme team considers introducing the Careers Development module as a mandatory module for all students;
- Opportunities for international placements or student exchange be furthered;
- The use of business start-up organisations and the College's business incubator as placement opportunities be investigated.

7 Overall Result of Evaluation Panel Review:

The Programme is recommended to the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee for approval subject to the provision to QQI of a revised submission document including programme schedule(s), which addresses the conditions and recommendations required in the report and which has been signed off by the Panel Chair if necessary.

This report has been agreed by the Evaluation Panel and is signed on their behalf by the Chair.

Panel Chairperson: Naomi Jackson   Date: 26.07.2018

Signed: Date: 26.07.2018