

**QQI**Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
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## Report of the Programme Evaluation Panel

<b>Provider's Name:</b>	National College of Ireland
<b>Address:</b>	Mayor Square
	IFSC
	Dublin 1
<b>QA procedures agreed on:</b>	2006
<b>QA procedures reviewed on:</b>	2010
<b>Programme(s) submitted for approval:</b>	<b>Leading to the award of:</b>
BA (Hons) in Accounting & Finance	Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
<b>Date submitted to QQI:</b>	
<b>Date of Evaluation:</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> April 2017
<b>Date of Report:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> May 2017

### Membership of the Programme Evaluation Panel:

Role	Name	Area of Expertise	QQI Peer Review Reference Listing
<b>Chairperson</b>	Ms Eva Juhl	QA	
<b>External Specialist</b>	Dr Cormac O'Keefe	Finance	
<b>External Specialist</b>	Mr Hugh McBride	Accounting & Finance	
<b>Industry/Employer Perspective</b>	Mr Bruno Doutrelepont	Finance	
<b>Secretary</b>	Dr Richard Hayes	QA	



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## 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 2016 stands at 4600 (3700 fte) 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 rising to over 800 places in 2015/16.

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, which was originally validated as a 3-year Honours 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.

### **2.1. Purpose of the award**

*Does the proposed programme address a clear market demand? Yes*

### **2.2. Avoidance of duplication**

*Has the Programme Development Team identified the availability of similar programmes locally, regionally, nationally? Yes*

### **2.3. Stakeholder consultation**

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

### **2.4. Efficient and effective use of resources**

*Does the proposed programme represent both efficient and effective use of the provider's resources? Yes*

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

On the evidence presented the resources directed towards the programme seem satisfactory.

### **2.6. Planned development over the coming 5 years?**

*Have the QQI award standards been explicitly referred to in the programme and does the programme meet those standards at the specified level? Yes*

*Has the Provider complied with Protection for Enrolled Learner requirements? Yes. Protection for Enrolled Learners will be provided via Dublin City University and Maynooth University.*



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## 2.7. Access

*Is the expected minimum and maximum number of all learners entering the programme explicitly stated? Yes*

*Have any/all prerequisite knowledge, skills or competence or any other specific entry requirement been articulated? Yes, but note the general comments below.*

## 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*

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

*Are programme management arrangements adequate and coherent? Yes*

## R4 Programme structure and content

*Is the programme structure well designed, coherent and fit for its stated purpose? Yes*

### 4.2 Programme learning outcomes

*Do the programme learning outcomes comply with national standards for the level of award proposed? Yes*

*Are module descriptions adequate and relevant? Yes*

*Are modules relevant and current? Yes*

*Does the combination of modules chosen have the coherence to support the proposed award? Yes*

### 4.3 Learning Modes

*Can the teaching and learning strategies proposed support achievement of the required learning outcomes? Yes*

*Are the delivery mechanisms proposed adequate to the needs of the programme and the proposed learner cohorts? Yes*

### 4.4 Assessment strategies

*Are assessment processes and methods adequately described? Yes*

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



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*Is assessment explicitly linked with intended learning outcomes?* Yes

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

#### 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.?)*

*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, but see general comments below.*

*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, but see general comments below.*

#### 4.7 NFQ Level

*Is the proposed level of the programme in accordance with institutional policy/national norms? Yes.*

#### 4.8 Programme titles and award

*Is the title consistent with national policy, is it informative and is it fit for purpose? Yes, but see general comments below.*

#### 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? Yes.*



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## **5 Module Titles, Content and Assessment Strategy**

### **Module Title: Career Planning**

*Is the title informative and is it fit for purpose?* Yes

*Are the specific learning outcomes a) properly stated, b) sufficient and c) achievable?* Yes

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

*Does the Assessment Strategy align sufficiently with the intended learning outcomes?* Yes

*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

*Are the specific learning outcomes a) properly stated, b) sufficient and c) achievable?* Yes.

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

*Does the Assessment Strategy align sufficiently with the intended learning outcomes?* Yes.

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



## 6 Specific Issues to be addressed by the provider

The panel is satisfied that the programme proposed for differential validation meets the discipline-level requirements for a programme in this domain.

The panel is satisfied with the arrangements proposed for the supervision/mentoring of students while on placement. The panel is also satisfied with the Career Planning module as proposed.

The panel is concerned however at a number of structural issues relating to the programme, as follows:

- A. The panel notes that in the arrangement proposed two pathways attracting different credit weightings offered by the same provider will nonetheless lead to the same award. The panel is not convinced as to the legitimacy of this approach.
- B. The panel notes the proposal that a lottery system will be used to select from amongst eligible applicants where demand outstrips available placements in a given year. The panel has a concern that this approach could create the perception of the additional year being a *reward* year leading to a higher *status* qualification; in other words, otherwise eligible candidates who are unlucky in the lottery would be consigned to taking an award pathway that is perceived to be the lesser.
- C. The panel is aware that other panels have considered or will consider other versions of the same set of arrangements. There is a danger that multiple panels will come to different sets of recommendations on the overall structure of the award.

The panel therefore suggests the following:

*With regard to A above:* QQI must provide written clarification on the legitimacy of the proposed arrangement. Otherwise it is the view of the panel that the awards to be given upon successful completion of the each of the two pathways must be differently named. Discrete programme documentation for what will then be two separate awards (with shared elements), to include appropriately differentiated programme outcomes, must be created.

*With regard to B above:* The panel favours a merit-based selection system.

*With regard to C above:* The panel favours a unified solution to the infrastructural and design issues associated with the programme (which follow from A). The panel suggests to QQI to issue a definitive comment on the legitimacy of the arrangement in order to assist in aligning multiple panel outcomes.

As a final suggestion, consideration could be given by the College to the creation of a Supplemental or Special Purpose Award to encompass the Work Placement stage (65 credits) and the preparatory Career Planning module (5 credits). This would enable certification of the work placement stage while avoiding the noted issues for the main award. Should the College decide to investigate this route, due regard should however be given to the need to take a coherent approach across the different NCI programmes with comparable arrangements.



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The panel does not need to review this proposal again. The Chair and Secretary however are available to assist with the development of the unified solution suggested above.

## 6.2 Conditions of Approval:

## 6.3 Recommendations:

## 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: Eva Juhl

Date: 16 May 2017

Signed \_

Date \_

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### Appendix 1: Staff

Staff Name	Role
Dr Colette Darcy	Vice Dean, Postgraduate Programmes & Research, School of Business
Dr Corina Sheerin	Lecturer in Finance
Ms Caroline Kennedy	Careers & Employability Service