Independent Evaluation Report on an Application for Validation of a Programme of Education and Training

Part 1

Provider name	National College of Ireland
Date of site visit	3rd March 2020
Date of report	29th June 2020

Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Educational Practice in Teaching for Further Education
	Award	Postgraduate Diploma in Arts
	Credit	60 ECTS
	Recommendation *Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory*	Satisfactory

Evaluators

Evaluators		
Name	**Role**	**Affiliation**
Dr Marcella Finnerty	Chair	College President and Director of Programmes, IICP
Mary Doyle	Secretary	Project Manager – Programme Development, Griffith College Dublin
Dr Roisin Curran	Subject Matter Expert	Lecturer in Higher Education Practice, Ulster University
Dr Camilla Fitzsimons	Subject Matter Expert	Lecturer in Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University
Peter Egan	Industry Representative	Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB
Eve Murray	Learner Representative	Final Year, Bachelor of Education, Mary Immaculate College

Principal Programme

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners *(per centre)*	Minimum number of learners
National College of Ireland, IFSC Campus	60	10

Enrolment interval *(normally 5 years)*	**Date of first intake**	September 2020
	Date of last intake	August 2025
Maximum number of annual intakes	1	
Maximum total number of learners per intake	60	
Programme duration (months from start to completion)	1 years	
Target learner groups	Target learners are primarily those seeking a Teaching Council recognised initial teacher education training for Further Education	
Approved countries for provision	Republic of Ireland	
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Part time (weekday evenings and some Saturdays) and placement/practicum May include online delivery	
The teaching and learning modalities	Evening Delivery with Daytime Placement Face-to-Face Blended – incorporating a combination face-to-face and on-line	
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)	The Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Educational Practice in Teaching for Further Education is an initial teacher education qualification recognised by the Teaching Council of Ireland for Further Education teachers. The programme is specifically designed for pre-service teachers to develop the relevant knowledge, competence and skill for teaching within the sector. Those who have successfully completed the Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Educational Practice in Teaching for Further Education may progress to the Master of Arts in Educational Practice.	

Summary of specifications for teaching staff	**WTE**	**Qualifications and experience**
	1*	Lecturing staff should normally hold a PhD in Education or related discipline or, at a minimum, a Level 9 award with relevant professional experience. * These figures are based on anticipated intake of 35 students and will be scaled accordingly.
	1	Programme Director
	1	Programme Co-ordinator
	6*	Placement Tutors with professional experience within the relevant educational sector
	1	Placement Director

	1	Placement Coordinator
		* These figures are based on anticipated intake of 35 students and will be scaled accordingly.
Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	**Staff to learner ratio**	**Learning activity type**
	1:35	Lectures and Workshops
	1:6	Practicum and Placement
Overall WTE staff/learner ration	1:35	

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)		
Code	**Title**	**Last enrolment date**
PG21909	Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Learning and Teaching	01/09/2019

Other noteworthy features of the application

Not Applicable

Part 1A Evaluation of the Case for an Extension of the Approved Scope of Provision (where applicable).

Not Applicable

Comment on the case for extending the applicant's Approved Scope of Provision to enable provision of this programme.

Not Applicable

Part 2 Evaluation against the validation criteria

QQI's validation criteria and sub-criteria are copied here in grey panels.

Criterion 1

The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programme	
a) The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme.	
b) The application for validation is signed by the provider's chief executive (or equivalent) who confirms that the information provided is truthful and that all the applicable criteria have been addressed.	
c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	**Comment**
Yes	The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been satisfactorily addressed by the College during the review event and in the documentation provided.

As an established provider of higher education programmes, NCI has met the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of this programme. It was noted that NCI has in place procedures for access, transfer and progression.

It was stated that NCI has established arrangements for the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) which have been approved by QQI.

NCI has completed the Re-Engagement process for re-approval of its QA procedures with QQI. Process, policies and procedures had therefore been reviewed as part of the re-engagement application and self-evaluation process.

Within the programme documentation provided, NCI provided a copy of the letter to be submitted to QQI with the application for the revalidation of the programmes. The letter contained the necessary signature and declaration required under sub-criteria 1b) and 1c).

The panel was provided with the evidence that the programme team had conducted an evaluation of the programme against the validation criteria (as required by the QQI Programme Validation Manual for Programmes of HET and Apprenticeships (FET and HET), (Edition 3, 2018) - ref section 12. This needs to be completed for the programmes under review to facilitate their revalidation.

Criterion 2

The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought
a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly.
b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme.
(i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme.
c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s).
d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's *Policy and Criteria for Making Awards.*
e) The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate for example it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.
f) The programme title and any embedded programme titles are
(i) Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought.
(ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.
g) For each programme and embedded programme
(i) The **minimum intended programme learning outcomes** and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified.
(ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are **consistent with** the relevant QQI awards standards.
h) Where applicable, the **minimum intended module learning outcomes** are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.
i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.
For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been satisfactorily addressed by the College during the review event and in the documentation provided.

The panel found that, in general, the aims, objectives and rationale for this separate (new) programme were expressed clearly and were consistent with the level of the award.

The panel noted from the documentation, and conversations with the programme team during the site visit, that there are a number of substantial changes proposed for the programme under review, including the change in MA programme title from 'Learning and Teaching', to 'Educational Practice', which was stated to reflect the wider changes and norms across the sector. The programme team indicated that the new title more accurately describes the scope and focus of this professional development award, and the embedded postgraduate award is available through stage one of the MA award. The previously embedded FE award has been redeveloped with a separate award title which is purported to be a more accurate description of the initial teacher education award. The rationale for the introduction of this named EXIT AWARD was clearly identified by the programme team in the opening session. The programme title is appropriate.

The MIPLOs for the programme have been informed by the QQI Generic Awards Standards and have been mapped against these standards. The documentation provided details on the rephrasing and synthesis of some of the MIPLOs and MIMLOs. The reduction in MIPLOs from the 2015 validated programme, enables succinctness and better captures the learning outcomes of the programme without repetition.

The panel commends NCI and the programme team on the participatory and democratic teaching practice exemplified throughout the programme, which reflects the ethos of the college and the programmes under consideration. [N1]

Criterion 3

The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly based (considering social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives)

   a) The development of the programme and the intended programme learning outcomes has sought out and taken into account the views of stakeholders such as learners, graduates, teachers, lecturers, education and training institutions, employers, statutory bodies, regulatory bodies, the international scientific and academic communities, professional bodies and equivalent associations, trades unions, and social and community representatives.
   b) The interpretation of awards standards has been adequately informed and researched; considering the programme aims and objectives and minimum intended programme (and, where applicable, modular) learning outcomes.
   - (i) There is a satisfactory rationale for providing the programme.
   - (ii) The proposed programme compares favourably with existing related (comparable) programmes in Ireland and beyond. Comparators should be as close as it is possible to find.
   - (iii) There is support for the introduction of the programme (such as from employers, or professional, regulatory or statutory bodies).
   - (iv) There is evidence of learner demand for the programme.
   - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant.
   - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.
   c) There are mechanisms to keep the programme updated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.
   d) Employers and practitioners in the cases of vocational and professional awards have been systematically involved in the programme design where the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.
   e) The programme satisfies any validation-related criteria attaching to the applicable awards standards and QQI awards specifications.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been satisfactorily addressed by the College during the review event and in the documentation provided.

Overall, the programme meets a current need in Irish society. The modules included seem very relevant to those wishing to commence or enhance their career in education practice, and the overall award should be of great value to learners. Learners stated that they felt that the programme title and the module mix meets their requirements and would support their future career objectives (based on previous experience). The programme team have looked at the profile of learners and determined what learners actually require from their programme.

The learner, employment-related and educational demands are evidenced within the programme documentation. The programme appears to be well informed by research on the needs of relevant stakeholders, seems to address a need within the market for such courses to support the preparedness of graduates to register for the Teaching Council for FE teaching purposes. Within the programme documentation, the graduate destination surveys indicate positive employment outcomes within 6 months of course completion. It is evident that FE programme participants often have no intention or wish to complete the Master's programme, and they are on a trajectory to support their career within that area. This was subsequently reiterated by the learners.

The aims, objectives and outcomes are clear across the programme. Consultation with stakeholders (section 5.3 in Programme Review (Self Evaluation) Report) – how much engagement with stakeholders has taken place – is very thorough. School Principals have been contacted and schools' placement visits used to facilitate the gathering of feedback for the review process. The programme team identified how this has been taken on board and reflected in the modifications now being proposed to the programme. The College management team also identified a number of organisations that the College has links with, and committees that College representatives participate in. The panel suggested that the outward focus and external links utilised in the development of the programme may not be fully captured in the review documentation.

A review process appears to be in place to keep the course current and up-to-date. The programme appears to be well-informed by research on the needs of relevant stakeholders and stakeholders' opinions have been sought and commented on. Where applicable their suggestions are mostly taken on board. The mapping of the programme to the MIPLOs of comparable national programmes concerned with the provision of initial teacher education for FE teachers has been completed.

The QQI award standards for Generic Awards have been used in reviewing the programme and use of this standard is explained and motivated.

Criterion 4

The programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory

a) The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in QQI's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied.

b) Programme information for learners is provided in plain language. This details what the programme expects of learners and what learners can expect of the programme and that there are procedures to ensure its availability in a range of accessible formats.

c) If the programme leads to a higher education and training award and its duration is designed for native English speakers, then the level of proficiency in English language must be greater or equal to B2+ in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.

d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that **target learners** are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).

e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the **recognition of prior learning** for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.

f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-
   (i) Reflects the core *intended programme learning outcomes*, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es).
   (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners;
   (iii) Has long-lasting significance.

g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been satisfactorily addressed by the College during the review event and in the documentation provided.

The panel was of the opinion that the programme information provided to learners is appropriate.

The access, transfer, progression, RPL, and entry requirements are documented and appropriate, and appear to facilitate participants with alternative learning. The programme team indicated that the College has an RPL strategy and process which it implements effectively. The RPL process utilised for programme entry, and the support provided for this to applicants. The programme attracts largely mature applicants - the FE pathway/practice is of particular interest to mid-career individuals, they are getting younger (mid-20s, and younger).

A certain level of technology/digital literacy is required before a learner can engage with these programmes. This may be underestimated for staff and learners. The Teaching Enhancement Unit is key in supporting these activities within the programme (seminars and lunchtime talks), to facilitate the development of an integrated professional (learner and staff member) – supporting the transition from having a lecture to delivering it on/through Moodle.

Progression opportunities for programme graduates seem good and employment prospects are positive. The process for a learner to avail of the (60 ECTS) Postgraduate Diploma named award, and

the facility for returning graduates to progress to the Master's programme in the future, are welcomed.

Criterion 5

The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose
a) The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions.
b) In so far as it is feasible the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs.
c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended *programme* learning outcomes.
d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff.
e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles.
f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.
g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.
h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.
i) Elements such as practice placement and work based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.
j) The programme duration (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its fulltime equivalent contact time (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been satisfactorily addressed by the College during the review event and in the documentation provided.

The panel is satisfied that the programme and its modules are appropriately structured and scheduled. In general, the module descriptors are well-written and fit for purpose

The programme team outlined how the module mix was determined, and how the programme was reviewed and developed. The rationale for new module titles was discussed with the programme team. The programme team discussed how pedagogical vs androgogical approaches to programme delivery were facilitated in, and through, the programme curriculum.

The panel commends the programme team/lecturer commitment to the programme and its learners, and the technical expertise of the team. The support of learners and accessibility of the programme staff to learners was evident in the documentation, and in the engagement with both the staff and the learners at the panel. Learners confirmed that the programme has provided them with a strong theoretical base, supported by though real-world examples. The programme team utilises e-resources, and mechanism such as lecture capture, to support further reflection by learners post-delivery. However, the panel recommends that the cohesiveness of the overall programme would be better served by the team coming together to review the content of the programme and the changes being considered.

The module descriptors provide clear information regarding the syllabus and learning outcomes.

The ability of learners engaging with future careers was discussed with the programme team, particularly in relation to the use of FE Jargon and professional terms that learners may be unfamiliar with e.g. levels of the NFQ, Award types, IV, EA, component spec, scheme of works, pedagogical and

andragogical, etc. The learners indicated that even an induction workshop which would give oversight of the sector and the terminology in use within the space, would be hugely beneficial.

Consideration of ethics is important, as is development of the competence to become an ethical professional in future employment/roles. The panel queried ethics is covered, it was noted that ethics considerations are applied to the dissertation and a form is required.

In the meeting with learners, they indicated that the programme could benefit inclusion of topics on working with students with additional needs (learning difficulties and disabilities) and universal design for learning. These would greatly support those working in the space and the learners of this programme.

Criterion 6

> **There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned**
>
> a) The specification of the programme's staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 c).
> b) The programme has an identified complement of staff (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.
> c) The programme's complement of staff (or potential staff) (those who support learning including any employer-based personnel) are demonstrated to be competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes and to assess learners' achievements as required.
> d) There are arrangements for the performance of the programme's staff to be managed to ensure continuing capability to fulfil their roles and there are staff development opportunities.
> e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.
> f) Where the programme is to be provided by staff not already in post there are arrangements to ensure that the programme will not enrol learners unless a complement of staff meeting the specifications is in post.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been satisfactorily addressed by the College during the review event and in the documentation provided.

The necessary qualification profile for academic staff is identified within the modules, and is appropriate.

In relation to capability, 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. Specifications for programme staffing requirements seem appropriate and realistic, and the College stated that it currently has 81 full-time academic staff, of whom 58% are holders of a PhD. The College indicated that it 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 staff CVs provided show excellent qualifications, up-to-date skills, and experience to provide such a programme, with staff also showing plenty of experience in lecturing, and engagement with research. The panel commended the participatory and democratic teaching practice exemplified throughout the programme, which reflects the ethos of the college and the programmes under consideration.

The use of the programme for review forming part of a CPD for new and existing staff at the College was welcomed by the Panel. The College also has appointed learning technology and instructional design staff to facilitate staff in the delivery of college programmes.

The nature of academic staff contracts (hours and teaching requirements) were outlined for the panel. Specific contractual arrangements are in place to facilitate academic staff supervising learners' projects.

Criterion 7

There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned

a) The specification of the programme's physical resource requirements (physical resources required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme, its defined purpose and its resource/learner-ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 d).
b) The programme has an identified complement of supported physical resources (or potential supported physical resources) that are available in the context of existing commitments on these e.g. availability of:
   (i) suitable premises and accommodation for the learning and human needs (comfort, safety, health, wellbeing) of learners (this applies to all of the programme's learning environments including the workplace learning environment)
   (ii) suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided)
   (iii) printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment
   (iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable
   (v) technical support
   (vi) administrative support
   (vii) company placements/internships – if applicable
c) If versions of the programme are provided in parallel at more than one location each independently meets the location-sensitive validation criteria for each location (for example staffing, resources and the learning environment).
d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address
   (i) Planned intake (first five years) and
   (ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake.
e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been satisfactorily addressed by the College during the review event and in the documentation provided.

The panel noted that a five-year plan had been provided for the programme under review.

From the documentation provided, and the meeting with senior management, there appears to be sufficient and appropriate physical resources available within NCI to support delivery of the programme, as the College seeks to optimise space they have. NCI is currently leasing space and looking at the possibility of securing a second campus (with a view to growth to 9/9,500 learners).

As the Panel event was off-site, an overview of the library facilities and a short tour by some of the panel members was undertaken. The panel were informed how the technology is supporting programme delivery – as an adult learning programme, use of online collaboration space, learner involvement in the delivery of the programme (androgogy vs pedagogy/flipped classroom). The panel were also advised of the supports available to support learners in their course work- additional tutorial and technology supports. Adobe connect is utilised for online delivery (integrated with Moodle) and requires low band-width.

In the meeting with learners and graduates there were no resource issues identified, and learners indicated their satisfaction with library, IT, online learning and support facilities.

Criterion 8

The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners	
a) The programme's physical, social, cultural and intellectual environment (recognising that the environment may, for example, be partly virtual or involve the workplace) including resources and support systems are consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes. b) Learners can interact with, and are supported by, others in the programme's learning environments including peer learners, teachers, and where applicable supervisors, practitioners and mentors. c) The programme includes arrangements to ensure that the parts of the programme that occur in the workplace are subject to the same rigours as any other part of the programme while having regard to the different nature of the workplace.	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	**Comment**
Yes	The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been satisfactorily addressed by the College during the review event and in the documentation provided.

Just under one third of learners enrolled at NCI are full-time postgraduate learners. From the documentation provided, and the meeting with learners and graduates, the support systems for learners at NCI generally appear sufficient to support delivery of the programme and meet learner needs.

The panel noted that a five-year plan had been provided for the programme under review. A description of the learning environment in place to support students is provided in Section 3.5 of this report. The programme team acknowledged the challenge of not being able to see the premises (by being off site for the panel event) and a brief tour of the physical facilities was facilitated later in the day (for two panel members).

The Library provides support systems and resources. A librarian supports learners on the programme with sessions on resources and assessments – this is done online or in class. Induction sessions covers the library and other available supports and resources.

Learners are also provided with support in relation to the IT system for online and asynchronous delivery. The initial session covers IT, the remaining sessions support pedagogy, the move away from linear delivery, the flipped classroom, and classes being split into groups.

The workload created by the implementation of the assessment strategy, for both lecturers and students, was highlighted within the sessions with the panel.

Learner pastoral support service were also identified to the panel, including, Get a Grip – a drop-in service which is available to all students. The panel were informed that individual learning supports (including disability supports) are available to learners on the programme.

Criterion 9

There are sound teaching and learning strategies	
a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.	
b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.	
c) The programme enables enrolled learners to attain (if reasonably diligent) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of overall learner effort and a reasonably balanced workload).	
d) Learning is monitored/supervised.	
e) Individualised guidance, support and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	**Comment**
Yes	The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been satisfactorily addressed by the College during the review event and in the documentation provided.

The College has developed a Learning and Teaching Strategy for the programme. The panel was generally satisfied that the programmes and their modules were appropriately structured and scheduled. In general, the module descriptors are well-written and fit for purpose

The panel commends the programme team/lecturer commitment to the programme and its learners, and the technical expertise of the team. The support of learners and accessibility of the programme staff to learners was evident in the documentation, and in the engagement with both the staff and the learners at the panel. Learners confirmed that the programme has provided them with a strong theoretical base, supported by though real-world examples. The programme team utilises e-resources, and mechanism such as lecture capture, to support further reflection by learners post-delivery. However, the panel recommends that the cohesiveness of the overall programme would be better served by the team coming together to review the content of the programme and the changes being considered.

The module descriptors provide clear information regarding the syllabus and learning outcomes. The panel sought clarity on the programme contact hours and minimum attendance for the programmes.

Consideration of ethics is important, as is development of the competence to become an ethical professional in future employment/roles. The panel queried ethics is covered and it was noted that ethics considerations are applied to the dissertation and a form is required.

Criterion 10

There are sound assessment strategies

    a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with *Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards*

    b) The programme's assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures.

    c) The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme.

    d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.

    e) There is a satisfactory written **programme assessment strategy** for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.

    f) Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable.

    g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.

    h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been satisfactorily addressed by the College during the review event and in the documentation provided.

The panel was satisfied that the programme modules were appropriately assessed and scheduled. The overall assessment (strategy) of the programme has changed. This has resulted in the removal of examinations, and inclusion of alternative assessment for this purpose (supported by the external examiners). However, there are some modules for which overall constructive alignment needs to be reconsidered and clarity of assessment is required. The concept of group assessment was discussed with the programme team, and the need for them to look at the best practice in and alternative mechanisms of assessment.

The panel commends the programme team/lecturer commitment to the programme and its learners, and the technical expertise of the team. The support of learners and accessibility of the programme staff to learners was evident in the documentation, and in the engagement with both the staff and the learners at the panel. The panel also commends the engagement with the external examiner and the inclusion of their feedback in the development of the programme.

Criterion 11

Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for

a) There are arrangements to ensure that each enrolled learner is fully informed in a timely manner about the programme including the schedule of activities and assessments.

b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.

c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.

d) If the programme is modular, it includes arrangements for the provision of effective guidance services for learners on the selection of appropriate learning pathways.

e) The programme takes into account and accommodates to the differences between enrolled learners, for example, in terms of their prior learning, maturity, and capabilities.

f) There are arrangements to ensure that learners enrolled on the programme are supervised and individualised support and due care is targeted at those who need it.

g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.

h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities.

i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students* and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.

j) The programme's learners will be well cared for and safe while participating in the programme, (e.g. while at the provider's premises or those of any collaborators involved in provision, the programme's locations of provision including any workplace locations or practice-placement locations).

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been satisfactorily addressed by the College during the review event and in the documentation provided.

The panel noted that the College website contains information on the supports and services available to students. The student handbook was not provided to the panel so was not considered in the context of this report.

In the meeting with learners and graduates they indicated that while they may find elements of the programme a challenge the College Learner support services and personnel support learners' engagement with the programme. Learners indicated that they are treated respectfully and 'as adults' throughout the programme.

The access, transfer, progression, RPL, and entry requirements are documented and appropriate.

The panel noted the additional activities (library and IT workshops) which support learners' engagement with learning material during the academic year. In relation to having experienced any challenges with the IT system, the learners stated that the technology-enhanced module was very powerful and empowering, for example, in learning how to set up a Moodle page for your own programme. Others indicated that learning instructional design would be very useful.

The learners and graduates that met with the panel spoke extremely positively and impressively about the programme. It appeared they were well informed of what was required of them in class and for assessments. Learners are advised that there is a significant workload at initial conversations, and they confirmed that the programme workload is significant, and is not necessarily conducive to work-life balance.

The positive employment prospects of the programme's graduates were a significant driver of learners' satisfaction with the programme. The college stated that learners are provided with practicum and career supports. Each learner is allocated a mentor teacher within their placement.

Queries about how the placement is conducted and the amount of work that's also required in addition to the modules themselves. Significant time and administration attached to the programme. Learners indicated that the programme is scheduled out-of-synch with the delivery in FE programmes so this can make it challenging in relation to learners meeting their placement teaching requirement for the Teaching Council (130 hour teaching requirement). The programme was definitely useful to inform practice, with a huge amount of support available and a facility to debrief post-placement, in class and group discussions.

In terms of additional topics on the programme, learners indicated that the programme could benefit from inclusion of:

- an induction workshop which would give oversight of the sector and the terminology in use within the space.
- working with students with additional needs (learning difficulties and disabilities), universal design for learning. This would greatly support those working in the space and the learners.
- an industry engagement to support the AWE stream of the programme – guest lecturers are currently not representative of/drawn from that sector.

It appeared that the lecturers were very dedicated to lecturing on the programme, and to the learning and support of their students. Some of the final examinations were a little daunting for those for whom it was a long time since they had that experience.

There are assessment and placement appeals processes. Where there is a concern over suitability to practice, there is a pause on activity while investigation/remediation processes are implemented. The Learners indicated that an issue presented during last year was identified and dealt with professionally and effectively.

Criterion 12

The programme is well managed

a) The programme includes intrinsic governance, quality assurance, learner assessment, and access, transfer and progression procedures that functionally interface with the provider's general or institutional procedures.

b) The programme interfaces effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures. Any proposed incremental changes to the provider's QA procedures required by the programme or programme-specific QA procedures have been developed having regard to QQI's statutory QA guidelines. If the QA procedures allow the provider to approve the centres within the provider that may provide the programme, the procedures and criteria for this should be fit-for-the-purpose of identifying which centres are suited to provide the programme and which are not.

c) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting persons who meet the programme's staffing requirements and can be added to the programme's complement of staff.

d) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting physical resources that meet the programmes physical resource requirements, and can be added to the programme's complement of supported physical resources.

e) Quality assurance is intrinsic to the programme's maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.

f) The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are consistent with QQI's statutory QA guidelines and use continually monitored completion rates and other sources of information that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved.

g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.

h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The panel is satisfied that this criterion has been satisfactorily addressed by the College during the review event and in the documentation provided.

It was noted that the QAE manual and associated policies and procedures have been developed in line with QQI statutory guidelines, and that NCI has successfully completed its reengagement process with QQI. Programme QA and oversight is currently planned for overhaul (post reengagement) to be consistent and implicit across the college.

The programme development team have completed an extensive review of the programme in accordance with the programmatic review terms of reference and QQI programme validation criteria. The team work with IT support team to facilitate information and data provision to support decision making and programme review. While the panel would have liked to see further reflection on the data and statistics within the Programme Review (Self-Evaluation) Report to contextualise some of the information provided (particularly in the instance of small class-sizes), discussions during the event indicated that the reflection had occurred.

The documentation suggests a well-conceived programme management strategy and structure. Reflection and reflexive practice is central to the support of programme operation.

The panel was satisfied that there are effective structures in place for the governance and management of the programmes under review. The QAE manual contains the governance structures for the College and procedures for access, transfer and progression, learner assessments and supports, and teaching and learning.

The specifics for supervision for the *Dissertation* module, while provided, should be more detailed in the document and, in the absence of the *Dissertation* Handbook, the individual responsibilities outlined.

Notwithstanding, the panel commends the lecturer commitment to the programme and its learners, and the technical expertise of the team. The support of learners and accessibility of the programme staff to learners was evident in the documentation, in the engagement with both the staff and the learners at the panel.

In relation to areas for improvement, the conditions and recommendations identified in this report capture the feedback from the panel. The identified commendations identify areas that serve to enhance the College's activities.

Overall recommendation to QQI

Principal programme

Select one	
X	Satisfactory (meaning that it recommends that QQI can be satisfied in the context of unit 2.3) of Core policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of education and training;
	Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions (specified with timescale for compliance for each condition; these may include proposed pre-validation conditions i.e. proposed (**minor**) things to be done to a programme that almost fully meets the validation criteria before QQI makes a determination);
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons for the overall recommendation

The panel were satisfied that there are effective structures in place for the governance and management of the programmes under review. The College QA Procedures contain the governance structures for the College and procedures for access, transfer and progression, learner assessments and supports, and teaching and learning.

It was noted that the QA procedures and associated policies and procedures have been developed in line with QQI statutory guidelines, and that NCI have completed its process for reengagement with QQI. The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are outlined in Section 10 of the programme document.

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

All special conditions of validation made during the revalidation panel visit were subsequently addressed by the programme team and evidenced by modifications to the programme documentation.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

All recommendations to the provider made during the revalidation panel visit were subsequently addressed by the programme team and evidenced by modifications to the programme documentation.

Summary of commendations to the provider

In undertaking the review, the panel commends NCI and the programme team on:

- The participatory and democratic teaching practice exemplified throughout the programme, which reflects the ethos of the college and the programmes under consideration.
- The interview process for the programme and recommends that it is retained, particularly in the context of the changing demographic of (younger) learner.
- The RPL process utilised for programme entry, and the support provided for this to applicants.

- The engagement with the external examiner comments and the inclusion of the feedback in the development of the programme.
- The fact that an issue presented during last year was identified and dealt with professionally and effectively.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

No interests have been declared by members of the revalidation panel that would affect the impartiality of the panel and its ability to make a recommendation to QQI regarding the revalidation of the primary programme and the two embedded programmes.

This report has been agreed by the evaluation panel and is signed on their behalf by the chairperson.

Panel chairperson: Dr Marcella Finnerty   Date: 29th June 2020

Signed:

Marcella Finnerty

Disclaimer

The Report of the External Review Panel contains no assurances, warranties or representations express or implied, regarding the aforesaid issues, or any other issues outside the Terms of Reference.

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Part 3: Proposed programme schedule

Name of Provider:	National College of Ireland
Programme Title	Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Educational Practice in Teaching for Further Education
Award Title	Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Educational Practice in Teaching for Further Education
Stage Exit Award Title	N/A
Modes of Delivery (FT/PT):	FT, PT
Teaching and learning modalities	Blended learning including face to face and online instruction.

Award Class	Award NFQ level	Award EQF Level	Stage (1, 2, 3, 4, …, or Award Stage):	Stage NFQ Level	Stage EQF Level	Stage Credit (ECTS)	Date Effective	ISCED Subject code
Major	9	7	1	9	7	60	14/09/2020	N/A

Module Title (Up to 70 characters including spaces)	Semester no where applicable. (Semester 1 or Semester2)	Module		Credit Number	Total Student Effort Module (hours)					Allocation Of Marks (from the module assessment strategy)				
		Status	NFQ Level where specified	Credit Units	Total Hours	Class (or equiv) Contact Hours	Directed e-learning	Hours of Independent Learning	Work-based learning effort	C.A. %	Supervised Project %	Supervised practical demonstration	Proctored practical demonstration	Proctored written exam %
Strategies of Learning and Teaching	1	M	9	10	250	36		214		100				
Educational Practice for Diversity and Inclusion	1	M	9	5	125	24		101		100				
Technology Enhanced Learning	1	M	9	10	250	36		214		100				
Practicum in Teaching for Further Education	1 & 2	M	9	15	375	30		215	130	100				
Theories of Learning & Teaching	2	M	9	10	250	36		214		100				
Contemporary and Enduring Questions in Education	2	M	9	5	125	24		101		100				
Educational Assessment and Feedback	2	M	9	5	125	24		101		100				
Special Regulations (Up to 280 characters)														
Placement must be passed.														