

**QQI**Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

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

## Part 1. Provider details

<b>Provider name</b>	National College of Ireland
<b>Date of site visit</b>	06 August 2021
<b>Date of report</b>	11 August 2021

## Section A. Overall recommendations

<b>Principal programme</b>	<b>Title</b>	Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)
	<b>Award</b>	Special Purpose Award
	<b>Credit</b>	Level 6, 10 ECTS
	<b>Recommendation</b> <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	<i>Satisfactory subject to conditions</i>

<b>Embedded programme 1</b>	<b>Title</b>	N/A
	<b>Award</b>	
	<b>Credit</b>	
	<b>Recommendation</b> <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	

## Section B. Expert Panel

Name	Role	Affiliation
Dr Tara Ryan	Chair	Registrar, Irish Management Institute
Lori Johnston	Secretary & QA Expert	Registrar, Dublin Business School
Dr Gerry Jeffers	Subject Matter Expert	Lecturer, Education Department, Maynooth University
Paul Collins	Subject Matter Expert	Lecturer, Computing Science, Munster Technological University
Yvana Mpressa	Learner Representative	Student on BCL (Law and Business) degree programme, Maynooth University
Michael Owens	Industry Representative	Service Delivery Executive, Citizens Information Board

## Section C. Principal Programme

Names of centre(s) where the programme(s) is to be provided	Maximum number of learners (FT)	Maximum number of learners (PT)
Marino College and Marino College of Further Education		150
Larkin Community School		150
St Joseph's CBS		150

Proposed Duration and Enrolment					
	First Intake Date	Duration	Intakes per Annum	Enrolment i.e. learners per Intake	
			Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Full-Time</b>					
<b>Part-Time</b>	01 September 2021	36 months	15	75	450
<b>Intake Schedule</b> e.g. January September		September			

### Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:

The panel noted the proposal and also the budget to support this development. As indicated later in the report, the budget and any implications on the provision of the programme should be documented in the Memorandum of Agreement.

The panel noted, and was highly supportive of, the intent that the *Certificate in P-TECH* will be open to all Transition Year students, including those who might subsequently decide to follow a Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) route

**Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)**

**Programme Synopsis**

**Programme Context**

In July 2016, the Irish Government launched a major Initiative for Dublin's North East Inner City (NEIC) to oversee the long-term social and economic regeneration of the area. A report entitled "Dublin North East Inner City – Creating a Brighter Future" (Mulvey Report) was published in February 2017 and made a number of recommendations. One of the recommendations was to "to align education, training and employment activation efforts". The P-TECH Programme was identified as one way to address this recommendation.

Accordingly, the North East Inner City Programme Implementation Board and the Department of Education and Skills convened a steering committee to examine and develop the P-TECH a public education reform initiative that combines secondary school education with elements of third level education and work experience. It was established by IBM in the United States, but is not a proprietary programme nor are there copyright, intellectual property or branding rights accruing to any party. NCI was brought into discussions by IBM, Northeast Inner City Programme Implementation Board (NEIC PIB) and the Department of the Taoiseach and following this engagement support was sought from the Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

Three schools were approached, along with six industry representatives, one of which is IBM, and a Steering Committee consisting of one representative from each of the Parties has overseen the development of the Pilot P-TECH Programme.

**Programme, and Programme Plan**

The *Certificate in P-TECH* will be delivered as part of the senior-cycle curriculum in secondary schools that have signed up to the P-TECH School Model. Transition Year students in these schools will be enrolled on the programme and will complete it alongside their other senior-cycle subjects over three academic years. The Certificate programme forms one element in the National P-TECH initiative, which spans five years of secondary schooling from 2nd year to 6th year. The HE Level 6 *Certificate in P-TECH* Programme would enrol learners within the Transition Year.

The *Certificate in P-TECH* aims to support a wide range of students in earning their traditional second-level qualifications (e.g. a Leaving Certificate) as well as giving them a unique opportunity to also gain HE skills, experiences and a HE award from a HEI. The high calibre work experience delivered as a key component of the P-TECH programme will also provide learners with a competitive advantage in employment in IT and related areas after they finish school. Engagement with HE level learning is also anticipated to help retain them in the education system and give them the confidence to progress to tertiary level education at a FE College or HEI. The qualification offered to students enrolled in the programme will be free of charge to students and their families as it is funded by the Department of Education and Skills.

The Certificate combines second-level school education with elements of higher-level education and authentic high-quality work experiences, mentoring, structured internships, and tasters of subjects

in higher education. Students who enrol on the Level 6 *Certificate in P-TECH* will continue to study their six subjects during the senior cycle and can also achieve an additional qualification or 'second HE/QQI transcript' in place of a seventh subject. The Level 6 HE Award is therefore positioned to sit alongside the senior cycle curriculum as *enhancing* and not competing with students' existing learning and assessment requirements (including a Leaving Certificate) without adding additional burdens or stress.

The *Certificate in P-TECH* comprises two modules entitled "*Skills for Business & Career*" and "*Skills for a Digital World*". Each module carries 5 ECTS at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) mapped against the Generic HE Award Standards and will be delivered simultaneously over the duration of the programme. The programme curriculum is built upon four P-TECH Values which were developed through a consultation process with the National P-TECH Curriculum Working Group. Taking a decision to embed values in the curriculum from the beginning means that values have been part of the curriculum design and decision-making processes relating to the programme and module aims, teaching and learning strategies, content, and assessment approaches. The four values (Valuing Myself, Valuing of Others, Valuing Challenge and Valuing Our World) are also aligned to the programme and module learning outcomes.

#### **Target learner groups**

The *Certificate in P-TECH* programme is designed for delivery in P-TECH Member Schools. The target learners are students in the senior cycle of secondary school (Transition Year, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Year). Students who choose to do Transition Year in school will pursue P-TECH as their programme in that year. In 5<sup>th</sup> Year, students will have an opportunity to choose to continue on the *Certificate in P-TECH* as a seventh subject. This programme provides P-TECH students with an opportunity to gain a second transcript with a recognised HE Level 6 Award from QQI. In addition to the QQI Award, students targeted for this programme will have opportunities to complete Open P-TECH badges which are industry recognised credentials awarded for the completion of e-learning modules on IBM's [Open P-TECH digital learning platform](#).

Students who undertake the programme will avail of authentic and experiential learning opportunities that will support them to develop important industry skills (in areas such as technology, business, communications, design thinking and digital marketing) to open up opportunities for future career paths in the technological industry as well as the possibility of undertaking further or higher education study. The programme develops students' specialised skills and knowledge and supports them to take responsibility for the completion of work and personal goals in line with a Level 6 higher education award.

In addition, students participating in the programme have important personal development opportunities which build their confidence, resilience, self-awareness and learning skills. This aspect of the programme represents an underlying belief that students' learning in all other areas and topics (e.g. project working, specialised technology skills, careers etc.) will be enhanced with a continued emphasis on their well-being and personal development. This belief aligns to the capability approach (Sen, 1992;1998; Nussbaum, 20011) which emphasises the primary importance of well-being in the development of people's capabilities and also the transformative impact of educational initiatives that develop student potential, agency and self-determination. For the P-TECH students, the programme therefore offers unique opportunities and pathways for learning to enhance their potential. In this way, NCI, citing Walker (2008), argued, the learning and the learning

achievements on the *Certificate in P-TECH* can contribute to well-being and to the quality of students' life in some way.

The *Certificate in P-TECH* offers students an alternative programme of learning with alternative assessments. Students with an interest in a career in industry or technology will find career enhancing opportunities on the programme as they build valuable workplace and specialised technical and digital skills in areas including such as visual design, design thinking, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, cloud, coding and data science. Students who find academic work challenging may find the different approach rewarding and validating as they find opportunities to excel and build confidence through their incremental successes. Similarly, students who wish to pursue a third level education will find the programme advantageous as it introduces them to a third-level curriculum including teaching and assessment approaches. NCI's perspective is that this bridge to third level learning also has the potential to increase students' cultural capital, as defined by Bourdieu (1986) and, in turn, aid their future transition to higher education.

<b>Approved countries for provision</b>	Ireland
<b>Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time</b>	Part-time

#### The teaching and learning modalities

Lectures / Classes

Work experience

Self Directed Learning

#### Summary of specifications for teaching staff

Role	Profile	WTE
NCI Programme Director	The Programme Director will hold a PhD in Education or related discipline or, at a minimum, a Level 9 award with relevant professional experience.	1
Education Specialist	The Education Specialist will have experience in relationship management and providing administrative support to faculty involved in the delivery in the programme.	1
NCI P-TECH Suite Programme Team	NCI Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning lecturing staff who hold a PhD in Education or related discipline or, at a minimum, a Level 9 award with relevant professional experience.	3
P-TECH School Co-ordinator	Qualified teacher who is enrolled on or completed the NCI Certificate in Educational Practice for P-TECH Micro-Credential	3 (1 Per School)
P-TECH Teacher/Assessor	Qualified teacher who is enrolled on or completed the NCI Certificate in Educational Practice for P-TECH Micro-Credential	6 (2 per school)

Principle Marking Manager	Qualified teacher who is enrolled on or completed the NCI Certificate in Educational Practice for P-TECH Micro-Credential	3 (1 per school)

Learning Activity	Ratio of learners to teaching staff
Classroom	1:27
Work Experience	1:6
Work and Education Taster sessions	1:27
Groupwork	1:27
One-to-One support	1:1

**Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing:**

The panel felt that the proposed programme outline and staffing is suitable, though further to Recommendation 6 below:

Serious consideration should be given to the involvement of HE lecturers in school or students on NCI campus in respect of elements of the Certificate programme itself. The panel supported the position of NCI and its partners that the US experience and learning was important and that given the experience of the teachers on the ground and their relationships with students, the school teachers are best placed to be the primary educators with regard to the programme.

Nevertheless, there is an opportunity to expose students to different styles and perspectives on the Certificate programme by including some input from the staff from HE and industry.

Collaboration between teachers, HE lecturers and industry mentors could become a very significant dimension in giving young people a different educational experience.

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)		
Code	Title	Last enrolment date
N/A	N/A	N/A

**Section D. Other noteworthy features of the application**

The panel commended the innovative nature of the programme and welcomed the courageous initiative of attempting to offer a QQI Level 6 programme within the senior cycle of second level schooling.

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

Having examined appropriate QA / Governance procedures, comment on the case for extending the applicant's Approved Scope of Provision to enable provision of this programme. (Especially relevant for move to online delivery / assessment)

N/A

## Part 2. Evaluation against the validation criteria

### Criterion 1. The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programme

<p>a) The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.<sup>1</sup></p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)	Yes	<p>NCI is an established provider of programmes of higher education, with QQI approved procedures for quality assurance, access transfer and progression and protection of enrolled learners in accordance with section 44(7) of the 2012 Education and Training Act, and as such is eligible to apply for validation of the programme.</p> <p>The panel was provided with a copy of the letter submitted to QQI with the application for validation of the programme, containing the signature and declaration required under sub-criteria 1b) and 1c).</p>

<sup>1</sup>This criterion is to ensure the programme can actually be provided and will not be halted on account of breach of the law. The declaration is sought to ensure this is not overlooked but QQI is not responsible for verifying this declaration of enforcing such requirements.

**Criterion 2. The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly.</li> <li>b) A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme.</li> </ul> </li> <li>c) There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s).</li> <li>d) The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's <i>Policy and Criteria for Making Awards</i>.</li> <li>e) The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate for example it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</li> <li>f) The programme title and any embedded programme titles are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought.</li> <li>(ii) Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.</li> </ul> </li> <li>g) For each programme and embedded programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) The <b>minimum intended programme learning outcomes</b> and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>(ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are <b>consistent with</b> the relevant QQI awards standards.</li> </ul> </li> <li>h) Where applicable, the <b>minimum intended module learning outcomes</b> are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.</li> <li>i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.</li> </ul> <p>For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.<sup>3</sup></p>
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Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)	Yes	<p>The panel found the aims and objectives of the programme to be clearly articulated.</p> <p>The award title is clear and consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's Policy and Criteria for Making Awards.</p> <p>Broadly, the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and minimum intended module learning outcomes are clearly stated in the documentation and mapped against the Award Standards. Nevertheless it was felt that the language used is complex, and in some cases individual learning outcomes contain multiple elements which would be better presented separately to ensure clarity for learners and which can be clearly assessed.</p> <p>The panel was in agreement that the learning outcomes were set at an appropriate level.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> The manner in which the learning outcomes are expressed would benefit from being simplified, using clear language, for example considering Bloom's Taxonomy, in such a way that the intended target learners (second level students) can</p>

<sup>2</sup> Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

<sup>3</sup> Not all modules will warrant minor awards. Minor awards feature strongly in the QQI common awards system however further education and training awards may be made outside this system.

		<p>understand and fully engage with them and have full clarity on what is expected of them. In addressing this, the programme team should be mindful that a learning outcome should speak to a single element which can be clearly assessed.</p> <p>At all times NCI and its partners should keep a focus on the profile of the learner, who is a 15/16 year old young person, and ensure that all of its communications are developed and directed to ensure the learner will have a clear understanding.</p>
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**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.<sup>4</sup>
- 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<sup>5</sup> of learner demand for the programme.
  - (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant<sup>6</sup>.
  - (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.<sup>7</sup>
- 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.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)	Yes	<p>The panel was extremely supportive of, and commended, the innovative nature of the programme as well as the ambition to provide valid alternative pathways for senior-cycle secondary school students, and seeking to address educational disadvantage. In particular, the panel was impressed with the idea of the project as making opportunities more visible to students: 'If you can see it, you can be it.'</p> <p>As indicated in the programme synopsis, a range of stakeholders has been involved in initiating and developing the project, including government departments, schools, industry leaders and NEIC. The programme is aligned with NCI's mission to 'Change lives through education' and its commitment to contribute to and support the development of the NEIC area in which the campus is located. While the programme is currently unique in the Irish education sector,</p>

<sup>4</sup> Awards standards however detailed rely on various communities for their interpretation. This consultation is necessary if the programme is to enable learners to achieve the standard in its fullest sense.

<sup>5</sup> This might be predictive or indirect.

<sup>6</sup> It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

<sup>7</sup> There is clear evidence that the programme meets the **target learners'** education and training needs and that there is a clear demand for the programme.

	<p>it is supported by the success of the concept in an international context based on a model originating in the US led by IBM, though the content of this programme has been designed specifically in the Irish context and is not directly taken from other programmes elsewhere.</p> <p>The panel was informed that while students on the programme may complete core and elective digital badges on the IBM SkillsBuild.org platform the Certificate programme and its content is neither owned nor controlled by IBM and IBM has no intellectual property rights.</p> <p>The choice of mapping the programme to the Generic Award Standard is considered appropriate based on the objective of the programme as a general introduction to third level education with elective options for students to focus on areas of their own interest across business and digital skills.</p> <p>Due to the unique nature of the programme in the Irish context, whereby a third-level qualification is to be offered to second-level students, with core delivery of the programme carried out by secondary school partners, the panel was concerned to ensure any risks for learners had been fully considered and sufficiently mitigated.</p> <p>The 'jump' for learners from an effective Level 3 in the junior cycle to the Level 6 award is significant, and, as above, is unique in the current structure of the Irish education system and framework. The panel interrogated whether this jump was genuinely achievable and were reassured by the responses of the NCI team. Based on the delivery of the small number of credits (10 ECTS) over 2.5 to 3 years, and the supports provided through the tri partite nature of the programme, it is reasonable and fair to students, giving them sufficient time to develop through exposure to the work place and problem solving experience.</p> <p>The goal of achieving 'Level 6 thinking', as opposed to pure 'skills' was outlined, which was defined as learners being able to critique and reflect on their own learning. It was also noted by the NCI team that at this level there is no evidence that Level 6 outcomes can only be achieved through progression from the levels below given the developmental arc of student in this phase.</p> <p>Further, NCI has a demonstrated commitment to supporting the initiative to achieve success and the panel commended this thinking. It was also extremely encouraging to hear of teachers' enthusiasm for involvement in the programme.</p> <p>Notwithstanding this, the panel felt there was something of a disconnect with some aspects of the programme as presented in line with the needs of the specific learner group. The panel recommends that the NCI revisits materials such as the Learner Handbook, Moodle content and the intended module learning outcomes to ensure they are written in an appropriate manner for the target group.</p>
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		<b>Recommendation:</b> More consideration should be given in the proposed implementation to the nature of the student body and their age profile, in terms of language used in all learner information and teaching materials. Rooting the theoretical learning more in the local context and real-world examples is desirable.
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#### Criterion 4. The programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory

<p>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<sup>8</sup>.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 (CEFR<sup>9</sup>) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.</p> <p>d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that <b>target learners</b> are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).</p> <p>e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the <b>recognition of prior learning</b> for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.</p> <p>f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Reflects the core <i>intended programme learning outcomes</i>, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es).</li> <li>(ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners;</li> <li>(iii) Has long-lasting significance.</li> </ul> <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)	Yes	<p>The panel was in agreement that the programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory. The programme is designed to provide a pathway for students to higher education, further education or the work place. Industry partners involved in the programme are committed to offering entry level opportunities to learners/graduates of the programme.</p> <p>The panel particularly welcomed the Further Education pathway option as distinct from HE.</p> <p>While the Level 6 credits earned are not currently explicitly mapped for exemptions against existing programmes, it was noted that as the programme is established there will be an opportunity to do this over time. Further, NCI indicated that it intends to develop a</p>

<sup>8</sup> Each of the detailed criteria set out in the Policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training must be addressed in the provider's evaluation report. The detailed criteria are (QQI, restated 2015) arranged under the headings

- Progression and transfer routes
- Entry arrangements
- Information provision

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf) (accessed 26/09/2015)

		<p>further P-TECH award which would be a major Level 6 award whereby exemptions would be applicable.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> It is important to communicate the purpose and vision to students in a clearer way, to include all options for progression. NCI should give close attention to revising all documentation/student facing information to ensure progression opportunities are clear and transparent for students.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> Further clarity on the junior cycle P-TECH aspect supporting the progression to the senior cycle P-TECH and beyond should be included in the documentation.</p>
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## Criterion 5. The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended <i>programme</i> learning outcomes.</p> <p>d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff.</p> <p>e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles<sup>10</sup>.</p> <p>f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.</p> <p>g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.</p> <p>i) Elements such as practice placement and work-based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.</p> <p>j) The programme <b>duration</b> (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its <b>fulltime equivalent contact time</b> (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation.<sup>11</sup></p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)	Yes	<p>The panel was satisfied that the programme's written curriculum is appropriate and fit-for-purpose based on knowledge and experience of the target learner group and stakeholder input.</p> <p>The panel was advised that, prior to the work placement, the curriculum is laid out with an emphasis on personal and professional development skills so that students can maximise the experience. In turn, the work placement element is highly structured, with 4 work stream discipline areas offered (technical, soft technical, digital media, customer services/operations) across the industry partners, from which students choose their option. Students are assigned a work placement mentor and specific weekly tasks are set and monitored.</p> <p>It was noted that the NCI team intends to keep this under review, and the intent is to be responsive to learner and sectorial requirements. As things stand, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year of the established Leaving Certificate does not afford space for work placements and the P-TECH model will need to become established and demonstrate its value.</p>

<sup>10</sup> This applies recursively to each and every element of the programme from enrolment through to completion.

In the case of a modular programme, the pool of modules and learning pathway constraints (such as any prerequisite and co-requisite modules) is explicit and appropriate to the intended programme learning outcomes.

<sup>11</sup> If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified

		<p><b>Recommendation:</b> The panel was of the view that a single 6-week work placement in transition year is a wasted opportunity for a programme of this type in the context of the nature of adolescent development between the ages of 15 and 18 years old. Multiple placements throughout the course would be desirable given the development of students of this age profile from transition year to 6th year. It is suggested that, during the course of the P-TECH programme, everyone could experience a placement in each of the industry partners, or at least a subset therein. Internships during school holidays might also be offered by the industry partners to P-TECH students.</p>
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**Criterion 6. There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned**

<p>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).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of staff<sup>12</sup> (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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<sup>13</sup> opportunities<sup>14</sup>.</p> <p>e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.</p> <p>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.</p>		
<b>Programme</b>	<b>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)	Yes	<p>The panel was satisfied that there are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme.</p> <p>The core programme will be delivered by existing teachers in the participating secondary schools. NCI outlined this as a key success factor for the model deployed in the US, whereby teachers in the schools have existing relationships with their students and are best placed to support the students on the programme. NCI has validated a Certificate in Educational Practice for P-TECH (2 modules – Level 9, 20 credits) and all teachers delivering the programme initially will be required to have completed or be enrolled on this (NCI clarified that, longer term, if delivery of the Level 6 programme is scaled up, equivalent qualifications from other institutions could be considered for delivery).</p> <p>Internal NCI staffing includes the NCI Programme Director supported by the Education Specialist. There are also specific</p>

<sup>12</sup> Staff here means natural persons required as part of the programme and accountable (directly or indirectly) to the programme’s provider, it may for example, include contracted trainers and workplace supervisors.

<sup>13</sup> Development here is for the purpose of ensuring staff remain up-to-date on the discipline itself, on teaching methods or on other relevant skills or knowledge, to the extent that this is necessary to ensure an adequate standard of teaching.

<sup>14</sup> Professional or vocational education and training requires that teaching staff’s professional/vocation knowledge is up to date. Being qualified in a discipline does not necessarily mean that a person is currently competent in that discipline. Therefore, performance management and development of professional and vocational staff needs to focus on professional/vocational competence as well as pedagogical competence. Professional development may include placement in industry, for example. In regulated professions it would be expected that there are a suitable number of registered practitioners involved.

	<p>P-TECH staff roles supporting the project within the industry partners including Project and Programme Managers at IBM. The MOU includes a commitment from all industry partners to provide a nominated staff member to coordinate industry placements as well as a mentor for each student in placement.</p> <p>While the panel understood the rationale to use second level teachers in schools to deliver the modules, a key objective of the programme is to build confidence by introducing students to third-level education and making the opportunities for them visible. Therefore, consideration should be given to using lecturers from HE to deliver the programme either in schools or bringing students onto the NCI campus to provide exposure to and 'normalise' the HE experience.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b>  Serious consideration should be given to the involvement of HE lecturers in school or students on NCI campus in respect of elements of the Certificate programme itself. The panel supported the position of NCI and its partners that the US experience and learning was important and that given the experience of the teachers on the ground and their relationships with students, the school teachers are best placed to be the primary educators with regard to the programme. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity to expose students to different styles and perspectives on the Certificate programme by including some input from the staff from HE and industry  Collaboration between teachers, HE lecturers and industry mentors could become a very significant dimension in giving young people a different educational experience.</p>
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**Criterion 7. There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned**

<p>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).</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(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)</li> <li>(ii) suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided)</li> <li>(iii) printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment</li> <li>(iv) suitable specialist equipment (e.g. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable</li> <li>(v) technical support</li> <li>(vi) administrative support</li> <li>(vii) company placements/internships – if applicable</li> </ul> <p>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).</p> <p>d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Planned intake (first five years) and</li> <li>(ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake.</li> </ul> <p>e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.</p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)	Yes	<p>The panel was satisfied that there are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned.</p> <p>The programme will be delivered on the premises of the partner schools with the Work Experience element taking place as agreed on-site with the industry partners.</p>

**Criterion 8. The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme’s learners**

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)	Yes	<p>The panel was satisfied that the learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme’s learners.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> As above for Criterion 6, serious consideration should be given to the involvement of HE lecturers in school or students on NCI campus in respect of elements of the Certificate programme itself. The panel supported the position of NCI and its partners that the US experience and learning was important and that given the experience of the teachers on the ground and their relationships with students, the school teachers are best placed to be the primary educators with regard to the programme. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity to expose students to different styles and perspectives on the Certificate programme by including some input from the staff from HE and industry. Collaboration between teachers, HE lecturers and industry mentors could become a very significant dimension in giving young people a different educational experience.</p>

### Criterion 9. There are sound teaching and learning strategies

<p>a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>d) Learning is monitored/supervised.</p> <p>e) Individualised guidance, support<sup>15</sup> and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.</p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)	Yes	<p>Overall, the panel was in agreement that there are sound teaching and learning strategies.</p> <p>The panel was advised, that, in developing the programme the programme team mapped the 16 abilities derived from the 4 underpinning values. The panel was of the opinion that this artificially corralled skills into the two distinct modules, whereas in practice aspects of all 4 values seem very relevant to both modules. Conceptually, crossover, overlap, reinforcement and interdisciplinarity is desirable. It was confirmed that this exercise is to ensure thorough mapping for abilities onto learning outcomes, and in reality the intent is that the abilities overlap and cross over. The intent is to provide for a curriculum design where by the key elements are threaded throughout all modules. It will be important that all those teaching on the programme are aware of the relevance of all values and abilities to each module.</p> <p>A demonstration of existing content was provided to the panel via the NCI Moodle platform. This content is still in development.</p> <p>The panel recognises that, as a ground-breaking initiative, much will be learned as the programme is implemented. Building in specific evaluation points involving students, teachers, NCI and P-TECH personnel as well as industry partners will be important in the on-going evolution of the programme.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> While the panel was content that the core teaching and learning strategies are in place, as above it is advised that more consideration should be given in the proposed implementation to the nature of the student body and their age profile, in terms of language used in information and</p>

<sup>15</sup> Support and feedback concerns anything material to learning in the context of the programme. For the avoidance of doubt it includes among other things any course-related language, literacy and numeracy support.

		teaching materials. Rooting the theoretical learning more in the local context and real-world examples is desirable.
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## Criterion 10. There are sound assessment strategies

<p>a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with <i>Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards</i><sup>16</sup></p> <p>b) The programme's assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures.</p> <p>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.<sup>17</sup></p> <p>d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.</p> <p>e) There is a satisfactory written <i>programme assessment strategy</i> for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.<sup>18</sup></p> <p>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.</p> <p>g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.</p> <p>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.<sup>19</sup></p>		
Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)	<i>Partially</i>	<p>On the whole the panel was satisfied that there are sound assessment strategies.</p> <p>The panel was advised of the emphasis on assessment for learning, with continuous assessments embedded across the programme whereby there is an on-going dialogue between teachers and students about their progress towards the learning outcomes. This use of continuous assessment seems especially appropriate given the nature of the programme.</p> <p>As with the teaching and learning strategies, there will be need to keep these under close review and evaluate the effectiveness of assessment as the programme becomes established.</p> <p>The panel noted however, that it is particularly important that learners are fully informed about the assessment requirements, including the number and timing of assessments as well as repeat opportunities. While flexibility is to be commended, it can also result in a lack of clarity which needs to be carefully managed.</p> <p><b>Condition:</b> The Programme Assessment Strategy should be revised to provide for a repeat mechanism that is clear and</p>

<sup>16</sup> See the section on transitional arrangements.

<sup>17</sup> This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

<sup>18</sup> The programme assessment strategy is addressed in the Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards. See the section on transitional arrangements.

<sup>19</sup> If the award is a QQI CAS compound award it is not necessarily sufficient that the learner has achieved all the components specified in the certification requirements unless at least one of those components is a capstone component (i.e. designed to test the compound learning outcomes).

		transparent, and details all related time scales. In addition an assessment grid must be provided so students are informed of everything they need to do, and the information should be included in the Student Handbook in simple language. Strategies for explaining and educating on academic good practice and as a corollary how to deal with plagiarism and other forms of academic impropriety must be explicitly included.
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**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<sup>20</sup>.
- i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*<sup>21</sup> 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).

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)	Yes	<p>The panel was satisfied that the programme team has a demonstrated awareness and understanding of the needs of learners and has given careful consideration to the support needed in schools and in setting up and supporting placements. A comprehensive Student Handbook was provided as part of the programme validation application, and during the panel meeting the range of resources and supporting materials being developed in Moodle were demonstrated.</p> <p>While students will be registered with NCI, but day-to-day will be supported by the existing school infrastructure in which they are embedded.</p> <p>The panel was reassured that all mentors will be required to undertake the P-TECH mentor training badge as a minimum, child protection training, and will undergo Garda Vetting.</p> <p>However, as per Conditions 1 and 2 and several of the Recommendations, more detailed documentation is required regarding roles, governance and oversight, and in the case of</p>

<sup>20</sup> For more information on making reasonable accommodations see [www.AHEAD.ie](http://www.AHEAD.ie) and QQI's Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (QQI, restated 2015).

<sup>21</sup> See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

		student facing collateral, presented in appropriate and accessible language.
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**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-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<sup>22</sup> 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.

Programme	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)	<i>Partially</i>	<p>The application for programme validation included a SLA, MOA and MOU setting out roles and responsibilities between NCI, schools and industry partners. However, in reviewing these and in discussions with the programme team, the panel was of the view that these need to be further developed and enhanced to ensure all areas of responsibility are fully and explicitly reflected, and such that any risks for learners are fully mitigated. While the panel commends the initiative overall, the unique nature of the programme makes these considerations of prime importance.</p> <p>Governance and oversight of quality assurance of all aspects is crucial in the particular context of delivery of a Level 6 programme to secondary school-age adolescent students, with the complexity of work placements as well as the collaborative nature of the programme involving a range of stakeholders.</p> <p>The role of industry representatives, as tutors, mentors etc., in particular, needs to be more explicit in the documentation. In developing a training programme for them, considerations should include the adolescent development, the school system, DEIS, legislation, in-school procedures including safeguarding, child protection and codes of behaviour.</p>

<sup>22</sup> See also QQI’s Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)

		<p>The panel presumes that, at school level, teachers and school leaders will be implementing the DES policy “LOOKING AT OUR SCHOOL 2016 A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools”, in particular the emphasis on teachers engaging in “collaborative review of their practice and its outcomes, in the interests of professional accountability.” (p. 25)</p> <p><b>Condition:</b> The SLA and MOA must be fully rewritten, with sufficient detail to address all the responsibilities and authorities, clearly locating appropriate governance and management responsibilities. Make explicit all of the responsibilities and do not simply refer to the standard NCI QA procedures. Students must be clearly defined as NCI learners and registered as such. Services are to be treated separately and learner rights need to be laid out in MOA.</p> <p>Specifically, the following should be addressed in the MOA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Inclusion of specific complaints procedures for each partner/location</li> <li>b) Amend 6.6, and <b>all</b> similar clauses which refer to bespoke arrangements, by including the bespoke arrangements in the MOA (e.g. 6.2) – the MOA is the place where these modifications are identified, either in the text or in an appendix to it.</li> <li>c) Inclusion of responsibilities of industry partners.</li> <li>d) Inclusion of information on intellectual property, branding – including the fact that there are no requirements in this regard.</li> <li>e) Inclusion of information on learner registration with NCI, and detail on the services/supports provided to learners by the Schools, and not NCI.</li> <li>f) QQI is an awarding body, not an accrediting body.</li> <li>g) The responsibilities of the Programme Director in respect of programme monitoring and review across all schools including learner feedback.</li> <li>h) The responsibilities of the Director of the Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning in respect of programme monitoring and review across all schools including learner feedback.</li> <li>i) Distinguish clearly between the responsibilities and authority of the Programme Director and DCELL.</li> <li>j) Amend 6.8 – there is no QQI Exam Board – it is NCI’s board.</li> <li>k) Specify funding arrangements and a mechanism to ensure the programme only proceeds where the funding is secure.</li> <li>l) Section 10 – be more specific on data owner/processor and if the MOA is the data sharing agreement, or if another document is required, and if the latter include as an appendix.</li> </ol>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>m) 6.4 distinguish clearly between the role of an internal examiner as opposed to an external examiner.</li> <li>n) Document the role of the principal marker.</li> <li>o) Document the model of 'double marking' and marking meetings.</li> <li>p) Include the detailed terms of reference for the joint programme board, its membership including learner representation, its annual reporting mechanisms and to which bodies will reports be returned and for which purposes.</li> <li>q) Include issues of Garda Vetting, child protection, staff training around same in the MOA.</li> <li>r) Consider whether some sections of the MOU are now more appropriately included in the final MOA, or consider if a distinct MOA between the signatories of the MOU (or some of them) be developed to be the context for the MOA between NCI and the School.</li> </ul>
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## Part 3. Overall recommendation to QQI

### 3.1 Principal programme: Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)

Select one	
	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 ( <b>minor</b> ) 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 recommends the programme for validation as it see it as a potentially important programme with huge benefits for students and the sector. While there are risks associated with such an innovative initiative, NCI is an experienced and established provider and there is evidence of a high degree of stakeholder involvement and support for the programme, including government backing.

#### Commendations

1. The panel commended the innovative nature of the programme and welcomed the courageous initiative of attempting to offer a QQI approved course within the senior cycle of 2<sup>nd</sup> level schooling.
2. The panel commended the openness and commitment of the programme team.

#### Special Conditions of Validation (directive and with timescale for compliance)

These conditions must be met before the programme can be approved.

##### 1 Condition 1:

The Programme Assessment Strategy should be revised to provide for a repeat mechanism that is clear and transparent, and details all related time scales. In addition an assessment grid must be provided so students are informed of everything they need to do, and the information should be included in the Student Handbook in simple language. Strategies for explaining and educating on academic good practice and as a corollary how to deal with plagiarism and other forms of academic impropriety must be explicitly included.

##### 2 Condition 2:

The SLA and MOA must be fully rewritten, with sufficient detail to address all the responsibilities and authorities, clearly locating appropriate governance and management responsibilities. Make explicit all of the responsibilities and do not simply refer to the standard NCI QA procedures. Students must be clearly defined as NCI learners and enrolled as such. Services are to be treated separately and learner rights need to be laid out in MOA.

Specifically, the following should be addressed in the MOA:

- a) Inclusion of specific complaints procedures for each partner/location
- b) Amend 6.6, and **all** similar clauses which refer to bespoke arrangements, by including the bespoke arrangements in the MOA (e.g. 6.2) – the MOA is the place where these modifications are identified, either in the text or in an appendix to it.
- c) Inclusion of responsibilities of industry partners.
- d) Inclusion of information on intellectual property, branding – including the fact that there are no requirements in this regard.

- e) Inclusion of information on learner registration with NCI, and detail on the services/supports provided to learners by the Schools, and not NCI.
- f) QQI is an awarding body, not an accrediting body.
- g) The responsibilities of the Programme Director in respect of programme monitoring and review across all schools including learner feedback.
- h) The responsibilities of the Director of the Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning in respect of programme monitoring and review across all schools including learner feedback.
- i) Distinguish clearly between the responsibilities and authority of the Programme Director and DCELL.
- j) Amend 6.8 – there is no QQI Exam Board – it is NCI’s board.
- k) Specify funding arrangements and a mechanism to ensure the programme only proceeds where the funding is secure.
- l) Section 10 – be more specific on data owner/processor and if the MOA is the data sharing agreement, or if another document is required, and if the latter include as an appendix.
- m) 6.4 distinguish clearly between the role of an internal examiner as opposed to an external examiner.
- n) Document the role of the principal marker.
- o) Document the model of ‘double marking’ and marking meetings.
- p) Include the detailed terms of reference for the joint programme board, its membership including learner representation, its annual reporting mechanisms and to which bodies will reports be returned and for which purposes.
- q) Include issues of Garda Vetting, child protection, staff training around same in the MOA.
- r) Consider whether some sections of the MOU are now more appropriately included in the final MOA, or consider if a distinct MOA between the signatories of the MOU (or some of them) be developed to be the context for the MOA between NCI and the School.

## Recommendations

1. The manner in which the learning outcomes are expressed would benefit from being simplified, using clear language, for example considering Bloom’s Taxonomy, in such a way that the intended target learners (second level students) can understand and fully engage with them and have full clarity on what is expected of them. In addressing this, the programme team should be mindful that a learning outcome should speak to a single element which can be clearly assessed.
2. More consideration should be given in the proposed implementation to the nature of the student body and their age profile, in terms of language used in all learner information and teaching materials. Rooting the theoretical learning more in the local context and real-world examples is desirable.
3. It is important to communicate the purpose and vision of the programme to students in a clearer way, to include all options for progression. NCI should give close attention to revising all documentation/student facing information to ensure progression opportunities are clear and transparent for students.
4. Further clarity on the junior cycle P-TECH aspect supporting the progression to the senior cycle P-TECH and beyond should be included in the documentation.
5. The panel was of the view that a single 6-week work placement in transition year is a wasted opportunity for a programme of this type in the context of the nature of adolescent development between the ages of 15 and 18 years old. Multiple placements throughout the course would be desirable given the development of students of this age profile from transition year to 6th year. It is suggested that, during the course of the P-TECH programme, everyone could experience a placement in each of the industry partners, or at least a subset therein. Internships during school holidays might also be offered by the industry partners to P-TECH students.
6. Serious consideration should be given to the involvement of HE lecturers in school or students on NCI campus in respect of elements of the Certificate programme itself. The panel supported the position of NCI and its partners that the US experience and learning was important and that given the experience of the teachers on the ground and their relationships with students, the school teachers are best placed to be the primary educators with regard to the programme. Nevertheless, there is an

opportunity to expose students to different styles and perspectives on the Certificate programme by including some input from the staff from HE and industry.

Embedded programme: N/A

## Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

There are two conditions of validation relating to the specifics of assessment and surrounding policy, and full documentation of the roles, responsibilities, governance and QA relating to the programme.

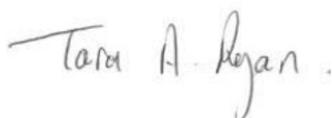
## Summary of recommendations to the provider

Recommendations to the provider relate largely to ensuring that learners on the programme, secondary school students between the ages of 15 to 18 years old, are provided with clear information. It is also recommended that the overarching aim of the programme is reflected and supported by involving HE lecturers and industry directly in delivery.

## Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

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

Panel chairperson: Tara Ryan Date: 11 August 2021



Signed:

### 3.2 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.

While QQI has endeavoured to ensure that the information contained in the Report is correct, complete and up-to-date, any reliance placed on such information is strictly at the reader's own risk, and in no event will QQI be liable for any loss or damage (including without limitation, indirect or consequential loss or damage) arising from, or in connection with, the use of the information contained in the Report of the External Evaluation Panel.

## Part 4. Proposed programme schedules *(post panel feedback and consequent amendments, if any)*

<b>Name of Provider:</b>		National College of Ireland												
<b>Programme Title</b>		Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)												
<b>Award Title</b>		Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology)												
<b>Stage Exit Award Title<sup>3</sup></b>		N/A												
<b>Modes of Delivery (FT/PT):</b>		PT												
<b>Teaching and learning modalities</b>		Face to face, workplace, online												
<b>Award Class<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Award NFQ level</b>	<b>Award EQF Level</b>	<b>Stage (1, 2, 3, 4, ..., or Award Stage):</b>	<b>Stage NFQ Level<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Stage EQF Level<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Stage Credit (ECTS)</b>	<b>Date Effective</b>	<b>ISCED Subject code</b>						
SPA	6	5	Award Stage	6	5	10	Sept 2021	0031						
<b>Module Title</b> (Up to 70 characters including spaces)	<b>Semester no where applicable. (Semester 1 or Semester2)</b>	<b>Module</b>		<b>Credit Number<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Total Student Effort Module (hours)</b>					<b>Allocation of Marks (from the module assessment strategy)</b>				
		<b>Status<sup>23</sup></b>	<b>NFQ Level<sup>1</sup> where specified</b>	<b>Credit Units</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>Class (or equiv) Contact Hours</b>	<b>Directed e-learning</b>	<b>Hours of Independent</b>	<b>Work-based learning effort<sup>24</sup></b>	<b>C.A. %</b>	<b>Supervised Project %</b>	<b>Proctored practical demonstration %</b>	<b>Proctored written exam %</b>	
Skills for Business & Career		M	6	5	150	100	20		30	100				
Skills for a Digital World		M	6	5	150	100	20		30	100				
<b>Special Regulations (Up to 280 characters)</b>														

<sup>23</sup> Mandatory (m) or elective (E)

<sup>24</sup> Work-based learning effort is not the number of hours in the workplace. For example, a person might spend 35 hours in the workplace as a trainee and this might involve 7 hours of learning effort.