



Reengagement Panel Report

Assessment of Capacity and Approval of QA Procedures

Part 1 Details of provider

1.1 Applicant Provider

Registered Business/Trading Name:	Griffith College
Address:	South Circular Road, Dublin 8
Date of Application:	2 nd April 2019
Date of resubmission of application:	
Date of evaluation:	
Date of site visit (if applicable):	27 th May 2019
Date of recommendation to the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee:	18 th July 2019



1.2 Profile of provider

Bellerophon Limited, trading as Griffith College, was established in 1974 and incorporated in 1978 as Business and Accounting (BAT) Training College. In 1991, following a relocation to Griffith Barracks, the provider changed its name to Griffith College Dublin (hereafter referred to as GC). GC now has approximately 7000 enrolled learners annually. In 2018, 1,387 of these graduated with QQI awards. The learner population is diverse; GC enrolls full-time, part-time, Irish, international (EU and non-EU) and mature learners.

GC offers undergraduate and postgraduate QQI validated programmes leading to awards at levels 6 – 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Programmes span a range of disciplines, including accountancy, animation, audio and music technology, business, computing science, education and training, English language, fashion and interior design, photography, film and TV production, hospitality management, industrial engineering, journalism and media communications, law and pharmaceutical science. Programmes are delivered from multiple campus locations, and utilising online platforms. The provider's main campus is located on South Circular Road in Dublin, and GC also has campus locations in Cork and Limerick, as well as a second Dublin location (Wolfe Tone Street).

In addition to QQI awards, GC programmes prepare learners for examinations by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), the Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland (CPA) and the Law Society of Ireland. A range of training programmes leading to certification from Cisco, Microsoft, London City and Guilds Institute and the Business and Technology Council (BTEC) are also offered.

GC has a long track record of partnership and collaboration with other institutions. From 1992 – 1996 GC's first degree courses were validated by the University of Ulster. Currently, GC offers programmes that lead to academic awards from Heriot Watt University. Several QQI validated programmes are delivered in collaboration with other providers and organisations. These include Pulse College, Innopharma Labs and Globe Business College, Munich.

GC is a founding member of the Higher Education and Colleges Association, and has contributed to the development of the Irish Higher Education and Quality Network (IHEQN) *Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Irish Higher Education Institutions*. GC established the International Conference on Engaging Pedagogy (ICEP) to support the development of teaching and learning practices in higher education.



Part 2 Panel Membership

Name	Role of panel member	Organisation
Dr Annie Doona	Chair	President, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology
Prof Sarah Moore	Panel Member	Professor of Teaching and Learning, University of Limerick; Inaugural Chair, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
Dr Mark Irwin	Panel Member	Head of Bimm Institute Postgraduate School, UK
Aishling Mckenna	Panel Member	Director of Quality Promotion and Institutional Research, DCU
Sean McMahon	Panel Member	Outgoing SU President, NCI
Dr Catherine Peck	Report Writer	Independent Education Consultant

Dr. Deirdre Stritch, Provider Approval and Monitoring Manager, QQI, attended the site visit as an observer.



Part 3 Findings of the Panel

3.1 Summary Findings

The panel acknowledges the track record and established good standing of GC in both the Irish and International Higher Education sectors. The reengagement process has involved a comprehensive review by the panel of GC's QAE documentation and a site visit. During the latter the panel engaged directly with provider staff working across a range of academic, administrative and student support functions. In the course of these activities, a high level of commitment across the organisation as a whole to student attainment and student support was evident.

The panel commends GC for its readily observable investment in facilities and support services for both domestic and international learners. The panel further notes that GC's activities to support the ongoing development of pedagogic skills among its teaching staff are conducive to an organisational culture in which excellence in teaching and learning is highly valued.

Nonetheless, at the conclusion of the site visit, the panel had concerns around the formal composition, representation and leadership of units of governance at GC. These were identified as *proposed mandatory changes* and are outlined in detail in Section 6.1 of this report. Additional items of *specific advice* are included in Section 6.2. However, given that these issues were discrete, and in the panel's view could be addressed quickly by the provider, the panel availed of the option to defer its overall decision for a period of six weeks, and allowed GC this time to submit evidence to the panel that the changes identified had been satisfactorily addressed.

The panel reconvened on July 2nd, 2019 to undertake a desk review of the evidence subsequently submitted by GC. It is the panel's view that GC has satisfactorily addressed the *proposed mandatory changes* and responded appropriately to the panel's initial *specific advice*. The panel consequently recommends that QQI approve Griffith College's QA procedures.

Following the desk review, additional *specific advice* from the panel is noted in Section 6.2.



3.2 Recommendation of the panel to Programmes and Awards Executive Committee of QQI

	Tick <u>one</u> as appropriate
Approve Griffith College's draft QA procedures	X
Refuse approval of Griffith College's draft QA procedures pending mandatory changes set out in Section 6.1 <small>(If this recommendation is accepted by QQI, the provider may make a revised application within six months of the decision)</small>	
Refuse to approve Griffith College's draft QA procedures	



Part 4 Evaluation of provider capacity

4.1 Legal and compliance requirements:

	Criteria	Yes/No/ Partially	Comments
4.1.1(a)	Criterion: <i>Is the applicant an established Legal Entity who has Education and/or Training as a Principal Function?</i>	Yes	Bellerophon Limited, trading as Griffith College, is registered as a limited company in Ireland (CRO 60469). It is clear that the principal function of GC is education/training.
4.1.2(a)	Criterion: <i>Is the legal entity established in the European Union and does it have a substantial presence in Ireland?</i>	Yes	GC is a legal entity established in the EU (see comment 4.1.1(a)). GC has 7000 students across locations in Dublin, Cork and Limerick, representing a substantial presence in Ireland.
4.1.3(a)	Criterion: <i>Are any dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries clearly specified?</i>	Yes	Related companies are listed in GC's supporting documentation, and collaborations are clearly indicated.
4.1.4(a)	Criterion: <i>Are any third-party relationships and partnerships compatible with the scope of access sought?</i>	Yes	Several QQI validated programmes are delivered in collaboration with other providers. These include Pulse College, Innopharma Labs and Globe Business College, Munich.
4.1.5(a)	Criterion: <i>Are the applicable regulations and legislation complied with in all jurisdictions where it operates?</i>	Yes	The evidence provided in support of GC's application is indicative of compliance with Irish/EU legislation.
4.1.6(a)	Criterion: <i>Is the applicant in good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in any countries where it operates (or where its parents or subsidiaries operate) or enrolls learners, or where it has arrangements with awarding bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators.</i>	Yes	GC was established in 1974, and has a track record of certification and engagement with NCEA, HETAC and currently QQI, as well as with industry accreditation bodies.



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Findings

The panel is satisfied that GC's legal and compliance requirements meet criteria 4.1.

GC has been operating since 1974, and has a track record of certification. Over the past three years the provider has certified over 1200 learners per year. The provider submitted documentation with its application for reengagement that is indicative of its adherence to the legal and compliance requirements of QQI.

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

	Criteria	Yes/No/ Partially	Comments
4.2.1(a)	Criterion: <i>Does the applicant have a sufficient resource base and is it stable and in good financial standing?</i>	Yes	Evidence submitted is indicative that this is the case. These include GC's CRO account for 2017, a tax clearance certificate for 2016, current public liability insurance and a letter from the company's auditors confirming that the accounts are in conformance with Irish Company Law.
4.2.2(a)	Criterion: <i>Does the applicant have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?</i>	Yes	GC is a well-established provider in the sector, with a strategy for growth. GC mitigates risk to sustainable provision through the diversification of its programmes and cohorts.
4.2.3(a)	Criterion: <i>Are fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision making structures in place?</i>	Yes, upon review of evidence submitted by Griffith post the site visit	At the conclusion of the site visit, the panel was not satisfied that GC's governance and decision-making structures at that time ensured an appropriate separation of academic and commercial decision making, and reflected appropriate levels of externality and learner representation. This is discussed in detail in Section 5.1 of this report. These concerns have been satisfactorily addressed by Griffith College through the appointment of an independent Chair to the Academic and Professional Council (APC), and the amendment of the APC terms of reference to include an external industry representative.
4.2.4(a)	Criterion: <i>Are there arrangements in place for providing required information to QQI?</i>	Yes	There is evidence of processes in place to provide QQI with information as required.

Findings

The panel is satisfied that GC's resource, governance and structural requirements meet criteria 4.2.1(a), 4.2.2(a) and 4.2.4(a).

GC has invested substantially in infrastructure and enhancements to the built environment. During the site visit, the provider's plans to expand and modernize current facilities at the Griffith barracks were



overviewed; these will more than double the current teaching space. GC has a track record of successful provision, and the provider has marketing strategies in place to pursue further growth in student numbers, both Irish and International. GC has a QAE office and processes in place for providing required information to QQI.

However, the panel was not satisfied that the governance and decision-making structures GC had in place at the time of the site visit were fit-for-purpose (see Section 5.1). These concerns have now been satisfactorily addressed through the appointment of an independent Chair to the APC, and the amendment of the APC terms of reference to include an external industry representative.

4.3 Programme development and provision requirements:

	Criteria	Yes/No/ Partially	Comments
4.3.1(a)	Criterion: <i>Does the applicant have experience and a track record in providing education and training programmes?</i>	Yes	GC has a 40-year track record in provision of education and training programmes and is held in high regard in the sector.
4.3.2(a)	Criterion: <i>Does the applicant have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?</i>	Yes	GC employ full-time and part-time teaching staff who are appropriately qualified, and in many instances, active practitioners in their fields. Staff who do not hold qualifications in teaching and learning at appointment are supported to obtain these by GC. The panel note that maintaining an appropriate balance of full-time and part-time staff should be a priority, and advise this is kept under close review by GC.
4.3.3(a)	Criterion: <i>Does the applicant have the capacity to comply with the standard conditions for validation specified in Section 45(3) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) (the Act)?</i>	Yes	The panel is satisfied that GC's track record of certification, and its approach to the re-engagement process reflects its capacity to co-operate with and assist QQI and provide QQI with information as specified in Section 45(3) of the 2012 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act.
4.3.4(a)	Criterion: <i>Does the applicant have the fit-for-purpose premises,</i>	Yes	GC has made substantial investment in facilities, which it continues to upgrade.



	<i>facilities and resources to meet the requirements of the provision proposed in place?</i>		Evidence submitted to support GC's application is indicative of sufficient resourcing.
4.3.5(a)	Criterion: <i>Are there access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval in place?</i>	Yes	GC has appropriate procedures in place to facilitate Access, Transfer and Progression; these are outlined in GC's QA documentation.
4.3.6(a)	Criterion: <i>Are structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners in place?</i>	Yes	GC has clear and up to date policies and procedures in place.
4.3.7(a)	Criterion: <i>Are arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to meet the statutory obligations in place (where applicable)?</i>	Yes	The panel is satisfied that the provider's arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners are in place; confirmation of PEL arrangements with other providers is included in the documentation submitted with GC's application.

Findings

The panel is satisfied that GC's programme development and provision requirements meet criteria 4.3. GC has appropriately qualified teaching staff, and invests in their ongoing development as teachers. The provider has policies in place that pertain to fair and consistent assessment and the protection of enrolled learners; these were submitted to QQI and the panel in GC's application for reengagement. GC has a 40 year track record of certification and history of successful programme validation with QQI.



4.4 Overall findings in respect of provider capacity to provide sustainable education and training

The panel is generally satisfied that GC has the capacity to provide sustainable education and training within its current scope of provision.

Appropriate evidence was submitted as part of the provider's application for reengagement. This evidence was indicative of the provider having a sufficient resource base, appropriate staffing and established procedures.

Within this aspect of the provider's QA, the panel identified one area of potential vulnerability. This is set out in the *proposed mandatory changes* listed in Section 6.1 of this document. This issue has now been satisfactorily addressed by Griffith College through appointment of an external chair to the APC, and the amendment of the terms of reference of the APC to include an external industry representative.



Part 5 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by Griffith College

The following is the panel's findings following evaluation of Griffith College quality assurance procedures against QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016) and Topic Specific QA Guidelines – for Blended Learning. Sections 1-11 of the report follows the structure and referencing of the Core QA Guidelines.

1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY

Panel Findings:

The panel finds that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed. Proposed mandatory changes were identified at the conclusion of the site visit on 27th May 2019 by the panel with regard to this dimension of GC's QA. The panel availed of the option to defer its decision to allow GC an opportunity to address these issues within a six-week period. The Panel reconvened on 2nd July 2019 to evaluate evidence submitted by GC in support of the proposed changes, and was satisfied that this had been achieved. This was achieved through GC's appointment of an independent chair to the APC, and further through GC's amendment of the terms of reference for the APC to include an external industry representative.

QQI's 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require QA systems to ensure that corporate decision-makers within the provider do not exercise undue influence over academic decision-making. In this report, the panel makes no suggestion that undue influence has been exercised at the provider to date, and notes that the provider is reputable and held in high regard in the sector. However, at the close of the site visit, the panel was not satisfied that in this area of governance GC had arrangements in place designed to ensure and protect the separation of commercial and academic decision-making as the organisation moves forward.

A key concern at the close of the site visit was that the president of GC, who is also a major shareholder, chaired the provider's Board of Directors, the Management Board and the Academic and Professional Council (APC). GC notes within its application documentation that the potential for conflict between academic and commercial interests is understood by the provider, but that *'in practice these interests have been appropriately managed'*. The good reputation and standing of GC's operations to date notwithstanding, it is the view of the panel that this overlap was not compatible with QQI's 2016 Statutory Guidelines. These require not only that academic decision making be independent of commercial considerations, but that QA systems and procedures be established that will ensure this.

Further, guidelines for this dimension of QA require a system of governance that considers the results of internal and external evaluation within its self-monitoring processes. At the close of the site visit, there was limited student representation on GC's APC (one senior member of the Student Union). Learner perspectives are considered at APC through means such as feedback forms, and are made known through informal channels of communication. The provider acknowledges that this is an area for improvement in GC's governance, and that this is under active consideration. The panel also raised the lack of an external



voice with GC staff during the site visit. The provider noted that that while not yet documented or formalized in relation to APC, external perspectives are actively sought and considered in decision-making.

Proposed mandatory changes emerging from this dimension of QA were therefore noted by the panel (6.1.1; 6.1.2; 6.1.3). These pertained to the formal composition, representation and leadership of units of governance at GC. These changes will ensure the system of governance within the organisation benefits from appropriate externality and learner representation, and functions transparently to protect the integrity of academic processes and standards.

A further aspect of this dimension of QA is a system of governance that considers risk. GC notes in its application documentation that risk is identified and addressed at multiple levels throughout the organisation. The panel was provided with a copy of GC's Risk Register (Summary of Service Department Reports) and a copy of GC's Overall Risk Analysis for GDPR (February 2019, annual review) in advance of the site visit. In discussion with the Senior Management Team (SMT) the panel sought to gain greater understanding of how the registers are used within the organisation as tools for assessing and managing risk.

In addressing this, GC noted the open culture of the college, stating that all departments are invited to make input to the identification of risk. During the discussion, members of the SMT noted risk in particular relation to fluctuations in the Irish and international economy, and the predicted emergence of competitor programmes offered within the technology sector. The SMT provided examples of how risk is mitigated through diversification of programme offerings and distribution of marketing and recruitment across multiple international markets. Risk mitigation is also noted in relation to budget and financial reporting mechanisms. These ensure close oversight of areas where losses are being incurred within the organisation.



2 DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

Panel Findings:

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

Griffith College details its QA within its Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) handbooks; these contain the provider's policies, procedures and guidelines. The provider's QA is governed by the Griffith College Academic and Professional Council (APC) and is subject to ongoing review and development.

During the site visit the panel explored the extent to which GC's QA is documented and embedded within the organisation, and implemented with consistency across its multiple campuses (Dublin, Cork and Limerick). Staff employed at all of the provider's locations were made available to engage directly with the panel during the site visit (both in person and in some cases virtually). Subsequent to discussions with academic and administrative staff based in Dublin, Cork and Limerick, and responsible for diverse aspects of the provider's operations at those locations, the panel is satisfied that GC is managing the potential QA risks of multi-site programme delivery effectively. This is largely achieved through internal communication and cross-site cooperation. For example, key staff regularly visit other sites, video conferencing is used for remote participation in meetings, and this is supplemented by email communications. A pre-semester in-service day for lecturing staff is run at all three locations. The staff facilitating this travel between the sites to ensure equivalence. Approval of documentation for admissions at all locations is undertaken centrally.

GC also outlined to the panel a process of cross-divisional engagement undertaken by its Quality Assurance & Enhancement Office during preparation for re-engagement. The focus of this engagement was to ensure that the provider's documented QAE was live, and embedded within practices across GC. The provider noted that this process revealed strengths, including a general consistency of understanding of the provider's policies and procedures. Areas for improvement of QAE that were self-identified by the provider included GC's governance and its documentation. An outcome of this has been that the QAE office at GC has worked to align the provider's QA documentation to current QQI guidelines, and a commitment has been made to undertake a process of annual review of the provider's QAE.

Nonetheless, the panel notes that some areas of practice that pertain to the documentation of QA at GC can be improved. This dimension of QA requires QA policies and procedures to be fully documented and to have formal standing within the provider. During the site visit, the panel noted multiple instances in discussions with GC staff where the open and informal culture of the organisation was relied upon to inform activities in lieu of a formal procedure. An example of this is found in the lack of learner representation in committee structures. Academic staff at GC noted that learner feedback and contributions were welcomed and facilitated by an open door policy, but acknowledged that this is not visible within the organisation's processes. Learner issues are discussed at the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Subcommittee (QAES) regularly, and the panel advises that learner representation could usefully be formalized within the QAES.



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An area of specific advice emerging from this dimension of QA is therefore noted by the panel (6.2.1). This pertains to the need for GC to ensure its open and informal culture is balanced with formal structures and documentation.

**3 PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING****Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

GC notes in its application documentation that the provider's decision to commit to a new programme is determined by both the provider's Management Board and the APC. GC's QAE includes documentation of Programme Proposal Procedures (QAE B1) and Programme Validation Procedures (QAE B2).

GC teaching staff outlined areas of programme development in which they were actively involved. This involved working to align the learning outcomes across modules and programmes, while keeping the graduate profile for that programme central to the process. Staff also referred to the industry aligned nature of GC programmes, and the role of staff who maintained active practice in their field alongside teaching duties in informing this. Processes which will formalize industry input into programme development at GC are under development. GC has experience integrating placement opportunities into its programmes, and has a process vetting these.

GC's policies and procedures in relation to learner admission, progression and recognition are outlined in its QAE documentation, and aligned with QQI guidelines. GC facilitate induction for new learners, with supplementary induction activities specific to the needs of international students also available to those learners. Learner induction is staggered over a number of weeks to avoid overwhelming students during their first week.

Programme monitoring and review is a significant aspect of this dimension of QA. A number of channels feed into the ongoing monitoring and enhancement of GC programmes. These include module feedback from learners and lecturers, feedback on assessed work from external examiners, and feedback from programme teams. During the site visit, academic staff at GC outlined monitoring and review processes that drew upon lecturer and learner feedback from all sites where a programme is delivered.

An area of specific advice emerging from this dimension of QA is noted by the panel (6.2.2). This pertains to the potential for GC to more rigorously approach benchmarking its practices against national standards.

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

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

GC offer a Special Purpose Certificate, a Postgraduate Diploma and Master of Training and Education. During the site visit, the panel sought to clarify GC's policy in relation to training and development in the domain of teaching and learning, and how this intersected with these programme offerings. The provider's staff indicated that GC academic staff are encouraged to undertake study in this area. For newly appointed academic staff who do not hold a professional teaching qualification, enrolment in the programme is a condition of contract, and fees are waived by the provider. GC notes that the increasing number of doctoral qualifications attained by the provider's staff is a reflection of changing expectations, and appropriate to GC's delivery of programmes at postgraduate NFQ Level 9.

General staff development and CPD may be sponsored by GC for both teaching and non-teaching staff; the provider's representatives noted that on average at least two staff members per month would request support for some form of CPD. Where this constitutes enrolment in a fee-paying course of study, the standard practice of GC is a contribution of up to 50% of course fees. During the site visit it was noted that this may extend to a 100% fee contribution if the staff member's CPD activity has operational or strategic value to the provider. Teaching staff who met with the panel during the site visit all indicated they had personally been involved in some form of professional development of the previous two year period.

GC representatives estimated the number of full-time teaching staff at GC to be less than 50% during discussions with the panel. This was seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage. Part-time staff concurrently working in industry bring value to GC programmes; these staff contribute practice-based insights and provide current perspectives on changing dynamics in their fields, including feedback on the performance of contemporary graduates. However, it is acknowledged by GC that greater challenges exist in engaging part-time staff in provider-specific CPD due to their reduced availability.

During the site visit, GC staff emphasized the value the provider places on diversity and inclusivity. The panel notes that this statement is well-supported and evidenced at GC with regard to its learners. In discussion with the panel, GC leadership affirmed the provider's equally firm commitment to ensuring appropriate levels of diversity among staff and the SMT. The panel notes that any such commitment is commendable, and advise this should also be formally stated within the provider's written policies and public communications.

GC's QAE includes documentation of Staff Development Practices (QAE 13), Performance Review & Staff Development Principles (QAE I2) and the Full-Time Staff Selection & Appointment Procedure (QAE I1).

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

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

Multiple examples of good practice in teaching and learning arose throughout the panel's discussions with GC staff and leadership across the site visit. The provider's teaching staff were able to articulate philosophies and outline practices that were indicative of a learner-centred pedagogy, and reflected a strong ethos of learner support across GC's programmes. The panel note that the stated mission of GC within its Strategic Plan 2014 – 2022, "*the relentless pursuit of the advancement of individual learner attainment*" is well aligned to this. Discussions with leadership, administrative and learner support staff regarding practices in their areas mirrored the learner-centred focus of the provider's teaching staff, and reflected GC's institution-wide commitment to facilitating a welcoming, inclusive and safe learning environment.

During the site visit, the panel sought clarification from the provider's staff with regard to the Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Strategy under development for 2019, mentioned in the provider's application. Specifically, the panel sought to clarify to what extent teaching staff at GC were involved with this process. Teaching staff at GC confirmed during the discussion that a TLA strategy was already established, and thus the process was in practical terms a review of this. Staff noted that TLA was a standard agenda item at programme meetings, and that from a faculty point of view this item could encompass areas such as the balance of formative versus summative assessment within a course or teaching and learning strategies specific to individual programmes.

The panel explored various dimensions of work-based learning during their discussions with GC staff, including how the organisation assures quality assurance of assessment in the workplace, and were satisfied with the responses of provider staff. GC requires job specifications for work placements to be approved by programme directors to ensure they align with learning outcomes. Vetting of placement opportunities and criteria for this are also standard practice, ensuring appropriate mentoring is in place.

GC engages at an institutional level with Communities of Practice, including IHEQN and HECA. The provider has also established the International Conference for Engaging Pedagogy (ICEP). This offers GC staff opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning with respect to teaching and learning.

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

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

During the site visit the panel sought to explore the degree to which assessment strategies at GC were fit-for-purpose with regard to measuring the achievement of learning, and to what extent they promoted and supported effective learning and teaching. Academic staff outlined a range of approaches to assessment, including practice-based tasks, simulations with industry clients and alternatives to written modes. GC staff noted that traditional examinations have been removed from some modules, and that the assessment was an area subject to continual review and improvement by programme staff.

GC has a policy on Academic Misconduct (QAE J6) and actively combats plagiarism through the use of Turnitin and other tools specific to disciplinary environments, for example in the computing faculty. Academic integrity and plagiarism are integrated into student induction, and training is provided for students within the first 6 – 8 weeks of their enrolment at GC. Academic staff were able to clearly outline to the panel the centralised process followed if plagiarism is identified, including communications with students and potential disciplinary procedures.

GC's policies on Assessment Control Principles (QAE E11), the Role & Responsibilities of External Examiners (QAE E2) and the Roles & Responsibilities of Invigilators and Examination Regulations (QAE E9) are included in its QAE documentation. Procedures are also available, and these include those for the Nomination and Appointment of External Examiners (QAE E1), Assessment Submission, Approval & Correction (QAE E3), Internal Moderation (QAE E6), Assessment Control (QAE E12), Review Board (QAE E13) and Examination Board (QAE E14).

**7 SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS****Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

GC makes a strong commitment to supporting learners through to completion of their programme of study, regardless of commercial pressures. Where programmes cease to be educationally or commercially viable and a decision is taken not to recruit additional cohorts, GC commits to ensuring currently enrolled learners can complete their programme of study in its entirety with GC. The provider has integrated this aspect of learner protection to its collaborative arrangements with partners.

The panel explored the area of supports for learners with special needs with GC staff during the site visit. The provider's staff noted that requests for special accommodations surrounding assessment are increasing; these may require additional resourcing, for example, where separate rooms are required during examinations. In general, following a disclosure of special needs and request for accommodations, the support officer meets with the student and agrees a plan. Within that plan the degree of disclosure of the learner's information to teaching staff is agreed. GC staff indicated that while this is preferably achieved prior to the learner commencing a module or programme of study, disclosure that require special accommodations can be made at any time by a learner.

Access and mobility issues are ongoing challenges for GC; some of the institution's buildings are listed and do not have lifts. Provider staff gave examples of workaround measures (for example, the installation of temporary ramps) that are used to accommodate learners as needed. The panel supports GC's commitment to improvement in the area of accessibility and inclusion. The very positive steps already taken by the provider notwithstanding, the panel notes that there is work to be done in this area. Specifically, developing awareness among academic staff of inclusive practices in teaching and learning and strategies for supporting learners with disabilities and learning differences could usefully be integrated into GCs staff development. Staff induction and training could usefully include information regarding practical measures, such as personal evacuation plans for wheelchair users.

GC states that a key aspect of its strategic plan/intent for growth is to increase recruitment of international learners. The provider has a number of good practices in place to support international students. Pre-departure information is available, and supplementary induction sessions targeting the needs of international learners are available for a four-week period both prior to and following start dates. Prospective international learners are connected with current international students, and small group sessions are also facilitated to foster potential for supportive peer relationships to emerge. Consideration is given to peer support needs in the allocation of on-campus accommodation to international students. International office staff note that the division operates an open door policy, and strives to make students feel welcome and supported.

An area of specific advice emerging from this dimension of QA is noted by the panel (6.2.3), in which the panel emphasizes its support for GC's intention to ensure greater learner representation and engagement with its QAE processes moving forward.

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

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

The panel were provided with a copy of GC's Overall Risk Analysis for GDPR (February 2109 annual review) in advance of the site visit.

During the site visit the panel asked GC staff members what GDPR training they had received. The panel were satisfied that appropriate levels of training in areas across the organisation (including programme administration and marketing) had been provided, and that a senior staff member had a clearly designated role/responsibility as the GDPR compliance officer within the organisation.

The panel were satisfied that GC is working effectively in the area of data management. The provider is capturing and utilising data sets, and working toward predictive usage. Staff in this area are well-informed regarding developments in this field and their potential for the organisation.

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

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

The panel asked staff to elaborate on procedures for ensuring that information published on the provider's website is accurate, up to date and accessible to stakeholders. Staff indicated that they had clear contact and approval lines, which encompassed QAE as well as relevant faculty and programme directors.

GC's web content administrator is the individual solely responsible for what is published on the website, and that individual meets regularly with other divisions including Marketing and IT. Currently the institution has no particular policies pertaining to the accessibility of its online content.

GC's Programme Information Provision Policy is included in its QAE documentation (QAE C1).

10 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING (incl. Apprenticeships)**Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

GC outlines its collaborative provision and external partnership arrangements in its QAE Manual (Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards; QAE L1).

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

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

During the site visit the panel sought to explore how learner engagement was measured, and how information on actions taken in response to learner feedback was circulated. Discussion with GC representatives in this regard spanned multiple aspects of provision. GC undertakes regular review of its facilities, and information on the top ten areas of facility review, including how the institution has responded, is provided on the website.

Academic staff at GC outlined monitoring and review processes that drew upon lecturer and learner feedback from all sites where a programme is delivered. Lecturers complete module reports, which are linked to student feedback and considered during programme reviews, including annual reviews.

GC programme review committees have formal learner representation, and GC staff note that learner feedback captured via multiple channels of informal communication is broadly considered by the provider. Formal student representation has been noted internally as an area of weakness, and a plan is in place to address this.

An area of specific advice emerging from this dimension of QA is noted by the panel (6.2.3), in which the panel emphasizes its support for GC's intention to ensure greater learner representation and engagement with its self-evaluation, monitoring and review processes moving forward.

GC's procedures for Institutional Review (QAE G5), Programme Evaluation (QAE G4), Department Review (QAE G3), Faculty Review (QAE G2) and Programme Review (QAE G1) are included in its documentation. Additional procedures for Learner Feedback (QAE F2) and Gathering External Feedback (QAE F3) are also provided.

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

The panel is satisfied that QQI's guidelines under this dimension of QA have been addressed.

During the site visit discussion of blended learning was appropriately integrated with the panel's broader discussions with GC staff in relation to teaching and learning (see Section 5.5) and assessment (see Section 5.6).

The provider is experienced in provision of programmes using a Blended Learning mode of delivery. GC staff indicated during the site visit that continual improvement in Teaching and Learning practices at GC included a focus on how students learn in virtual environments. Full Moodle rollovers are undertaken at GC, and these ensure that online learning resources are regularly reviewed.

The provider notes in its application documentation that an Implementation Plan is currently being developed to align the College's policies and procedures within that of the QQI Guidelines for Blended Learning, acknowledging that continued development in distance provision is required.

GC's QAE documentation includes an adjacent policy on the Principles of QA for Distance Learning (QAE L2).

Evaluation of draft QA Procedures - Overall panel findings

The panel commends GC on its constructive and open dialog with the panel members during the site visit. Through the reengagement process the panel had opportunity to explore dimensions of GC's QA in depth with the provider's leadership, SMT, academic, administrative and support staff. These discussions have made clear the multiple areas of provision in which GC actively pursue excellence, not least in the areas of Teaching and Learning and Student Support.

The panel notes that the provider has self-identified areas of vulnerability in relation to governance and decision-making processes. The panel also acknowledges that GC has indicated awareness of the need to increase learner representation throughout the provider's processes, and GC is engaging with NSTEP to support this.

The panel confirms that GC effectively addressed, and provided evidence of addressing the *proposed mandatory changes* outlined in Section 6.1 within the allocated 6 week period. As a consequence, the panel recommends that QQI approve GC's QA procedures.



Part 6 Mandatory Changes to QA Procedures and Specific Advice

The following proposed mandatory changes were identified at the conclusion of the site visit on 27th May 2019 by the panel. The panel availed of the option to defer its decision to allow GC an opportunity to address these issues within a six-week period. The Panel reconvened on 2nd July 2019 to evaluate evidence submitted by GC in support of the proposed changes. Following an evaluation of the evidence submitted, the panel is satisfied that GC has adequately addressed the issues set out in Section 6.1 below.

6.1 Proposed Mandatory Changes

- 6.1.1** At the time of the site visit, the chair of the three largest committees was held by the same individual, who was a major shareholder. This ran the risk of not transparently evidencing separation of academic and commercial decision making. To address this, the panel identified this as a mandatory change. Following desk review of the evidence submitted by Griffith College within the six-week period allocated, the panel was satisfied that Griffith College has addressed this proposed mandatory change by appointing an independent chair to the Griffith College Academic and Professional Council.
- 6.1.2** At the time of the site visit, the panel noted that the lack of externality within units of governance needed to be addressed. It was suggested that this could be resolved, for example, through the appointment of an external chair to the Academic & Professional Council.-Following desk review of the evidence submitted by Griffith College within the six-week period allocated, the panel welcomed the appointment of Marion Coy to the position of Chair of Griffith College’s Academic and Professional Council. The panel notes that the terms of reference for the Academic and Professional Council have also been amended to include an external industry representative. The panel notes a further item of *specific advice* in relation to externality in Section 6.2 of this report.
- 6.1.3** The composition of the Griffith College Academic & Professional Council and its range of sub-committees, for example, the Quality and Academic Enhancement Subcommittee must be changed to reflect greater representation of both academic staff and learners. Following desk review of the evidence submitted by Griffith College within the six-week period allocated, the panel was satisfied that Griffith College has taken some steps to address this proposed mandatory change. The panel includes a further note of specific advice in relation to this area in Section 6.2.



6.2 Specific Advice

- 6.2.1** The panel acknowledges that strong informal networks and an open culture of communication within the organisation is a strength. However, the panel advise that Griffith College require a better balance between informal practices and more formal structures and documentation, particularly in a period of growth.
- 6.2.2** The panel advises that Griffith College could be more rigorous in its approach to benchmarking the quality of its programmes, teaching & learning and a range of QA processes against national standards. Specifically, GC is advised to consider the HEA data on learner enrolment, progression and completion rates as part of its benchmarking activity.
- 6.2.3** The panel supports the intention expressed by Griffith College to have greater learner representation and engagement with its QAE processes. GC is advices to consider more formal structures for collecting and acting on learner feedback and the role of learners within such structures, for example, in relation to programme development, monitoring and review.
- 6.2.4** The panel supports Griffith College’s planned expansion of externality on its board of directors. The panel encourages Griffith College to move forward rapidly with its stated plan to develop criteria to assist in the identification and selection of external expert candidates for future appointment.

Part 7 Proposed Approved Scope of Provision for this provider

NFQ Level(s) – min and max	Award Class(es)	Discipline areas
6 – 9	Major, SPA, Minor	accountancy, animation, audio and music technology, business, computing science, education and training, English language, fashion and interior design, photography, film and TV production, hospitality management, industrial engineering, journalism and



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

Document	Related to
Updated Organisation Chart	5.1
Overall Risk Analysis for General Data Protection Regulations Feb 2019 Annual Review	5.1, 5.8
Risk Register – Summary of Service Department Reports – Jan 2019	5.1
National Marketing Strategy to Deliver Growth for Autumn 2019	4.2, 5.1
Presentation – QQI Re-engagement – Panel Visit	General
<i>Evidence Submitted Post Site Visit to Address Proposed Mandatory Changes</i>	
Confirmation of acceptance of role as Chair of Academic and Professional Council	5.1, 6.1.1, 6.1.2
Response to Reengagement Report	General, 6.1, 6.2
Revised Membership of APC	6.1.1, 6.1.2

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

Name	Role/Position
Prof. Diarmuid Hegarty	(President of the College)
Dr Tomás Mac Eochagáin	(Director of Academic Programmes)
Ronan Fenelon	(College Director)
Eamonn Nolan	(Head of Academic Programmes)
Ailish Finucane	(Head of Academic Administration)
Kevin Geoghegan	(Director – International)
Jack Leahy	(QAE Officer)
Madeleine Ford	(Member of Management Board)



Reg Callanan (Director – Professional Programmes)

Pat Sheehan (Chief Financial Accountant)

Kevin O’Sullivan (Griffith College – Director - Limerick Campus)

Jim Daly (Griffith College – Head of Cork Campus)

Noel Daly (Griffith College – Director of Academic Programmes - Cork Campus)

Rabia Mirza – HR Manager

Alice Childs (Learning Technologist Manager)

Robert McKenna (Head Librarian)

Caroline Connolly (Academic Administration Manager)

Suzanne Burdis (Senior Lecturer, Business)

Angela O’Keefe (Associate Lecturer, Business)

Eilis O’Leary (Deputy Head of Faculty, Graduate Business School)

Robbie Smyth (Deputy Head of Faculty, Journalism & Media Communications)

Barry Denby (Programme Director, Computing)

Finbarr Sheehy (Director of Programme Development, Innopharma Labs – Collaborative Partner)

Catherine Horgan (Programme Director / Lecturer – Limerick Campus)

Rebecca Daly (Programme Administrator, Design Faculty)

Anthony Brosnan (Lecturer – Limerick Campus)

Deirdre Casey (Lecturer –Mathematics - Cork Campus)

Sally-Anne McIver (Manager, International Office)

Emily Watts (Business Manager, Marketing)

Sinead O’Dea (Marketing Manager, Cork)

Emma Flynn (Careers Officer)

John Molohan (Head of IT Services)

Orla Butler (Learner Support Coordinator)

Sean Martin (Springboard+ / Employability Officer)

Paul Walsh (Students’ Union Manager)

John Molohan (Head of IT Services)

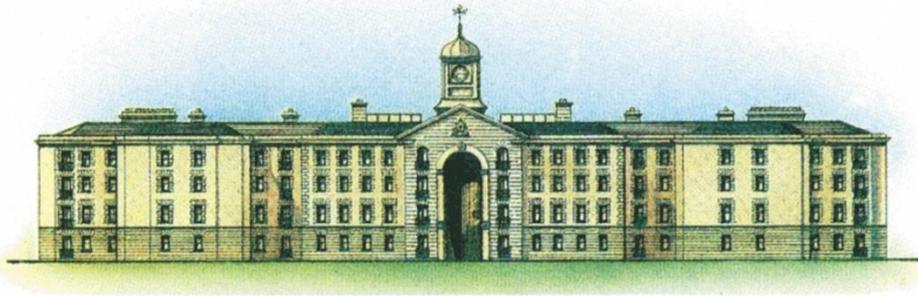
Kieran Hickey (Admissions Officer)

Karl O’Reilly (Senior Examinations Officer)

Fiona O’Sullivan (Programmes Administrator - Limerick campus)

Christine While (Programmes Administrator – Cork campus)

Claire Aston (Deputy Head of Griffith College Student Union)



Griffith College

Coláiste Uí Ghríofa

**Response to the report of the independent review panel
convened to consider Griffith College's reengagement with
Quality and Qualifications Ireland**

Contents

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Overall Comment

Griffith College welcomes the report of the independent panel convened to consider the college's reengagement with QQI. It greatly appreciates the time and commitment given by the panel members to the review process and the constructive and professional manner in which the comprehensive review was undertaken.

The college welcomes the panel's many findings and commendations throughout the report and its overall recommendation to QQI's Programmes and Awards Executive Committee to approve the college's QAE procedures.

The college welcomes and supports the panel's identification and findings in respect of mandatory changes, specific advices and other recommendations.

The college's response is presented below under the following headings:

- Response in respect of mandatory changes
- Response in respect of special advices
- Response in respect of other recommendations
- Concluding commentary from the college

Response in respect of Proposed Mandatory Changes

The panel report identified three proposed mandatory changes. These are presented below, followed in each case by the college's response.

Mandatory Change 1

"At the time of the site visit, the chair of the three largest committees was held by the same individual, who was a major shareholder. This ran the risk of not transparently evidencing separation of academic and commercial decision making. To address this, the panel identified this as a mandatory change. Following desk review of the evidence submitted by Griffith College within the six-week period allocated, the panel was satisfied that Griffith College has addressed this proposed mandatory change by appointing an independent chair to the Griffith College Academic and Professional Council."

Response/Implementation Plan

The college welcomes and supports Mandatory Change 1 above and the appointment of an independent chair of its Academic and Professional Council.

Mandatory Change 2

"At the time of the site visit, the panel noted that the lack of externality within units of governance needed to be addressed. It was suggested that this could be resolved, for example, through the appointment of an external chair to the Academic & Professional Council. Following desk review of the evidence submitted by Griffith College within the six-week period allocated, the panel welcomed the appointment of Marion Coy to the position of Chair of Griffith College's Academic and Professional Council. The panel notes that the terms of reference for the Academic and Professional Council have also been amended to include an external industry representative. The panel notes a further item of specific advice in relation to externality in Section 6.2 of this report."

Response/Implementation Plan

The college welcomes and supports Mandatory Change 2 above and the revision of the terms of reference and membership of its Academic and Professional Council.

Mandatory Change 3

“The composition of the Griffith College Academic & Professional Council and its range of sub-committees, for example, the Quality and Academic Enhancement Subcommittee must be changed to reflect greater representation of both academic staff and learners. Following desk review of the evidence submitted by Griffith College within the six-week period allocated, the panel was satisfied that Griffith College has taken some steps to address this proposed mandatory change. The panel includes a further note of specific advice in relation to this area in Section 6.2.

Response / Implementation Plan

The college welcomes and supports Mandatory Change 3 above and the greater representation of both academic staff and learners on its Academic and Professional Council and range of subcommittees.

Specific amendments in this regard include:

- The addition of full-time and part-time lecturers to APC, subject to election by their peers
- The addition to APC of a second learner (in addition to the President of the Students’ Union)
- The addition to APC of an elected staff member
- Clarification on the method of appointment for representatives of other groups in the college (e.g. programme directors, learner support staff)
- Reconstitution of the quality assurance and enhancement sub-committee to include a learner representative, a lecturer, and a faculty administrator
- Formal constitution of the complaints hearing panel
- Formal constitution of the programme director committee, the heads of faculty committee and the faculty administrator committee as sub-committees of APC

Response to Specific Advices

The panel’s final report offers four specific advices. These are presented below, followed in each case by the college’s response.

Specific Advice 1

“The panel acknowledges that strong informal networks and an open culture of communication within the organisation is a strength. However, the panel advise that Griffith College require a better balance between informal practices and more formal structures and documentation, particularly in a period of growth.”

Response

The college accepts that it has benefitted greatly from the relatively small, open and close-knit staff community it enjoys on each of its campuses and the regular communication it has between members of all campuses at director, head of faculty, programme director, lecturer level and support department level.

It accepts also that the college’s formal structures and documentation must continue to be strengthened. Existing formal structures include – management board meetings, APC meetings, programme committee meetings, programme director meetings, heads of faculty meetings, examination boards, induction, external examination, APL / APEL procedures, complaints processes, HR processes, appeals procedures, etc. The college

also has a number of college wide committees in relation to IT, e-learning, HR, Safety and other issues.

All of these committees and working groups ensure regular up-to-date communication of developments amongst their membership. In many instances, developments arising at working group / committee level are communicated by email to all staff and lecturers as appropriate, for example in the case of programme developments, validations, or changing requirements arising from QQI, GDPR or other external sources.

Proposed

Following this reengagement process, the college's QAE department plans to review the operational effectiveness of the college's communication processes, by seeking feedback from all stakeholders involved.

Greater formalisation is planned in respect of the communication of minutes / key findings of APC subcommittees, for example Programme Directors, Heads of Faculty, etc. to the APC, and to the communication flows between the APC, Management Board and the College's Board of Directors.

Specific Advice 2

“The panel advises that Griffith College could be more rigorous in its approach to benchmarking the quality of its programmes, teaching & learning and a range of QA processes against national standards. Specifically, GC is advised to consider the HEA data on learner enrolment, progression and completion as part of its benchmarking activity”

Response

The college has a track record of benchmarking of its quality processes against national and international best practice. It is committed to continuing and extending the benchmarking of its quality processes as developments in higher education processes arise.

The College will specifically consider the HEA data on learner enrolment, progression and completion with a view to establishing and providing comparable metrics by which the college's learners' performance data can be presented, communicated and evaluated.

The following benchmarking activity is either currently undertaken or planned.

Benchmarking of Programmes

- Programmes are designed and submitted for validation to independent panels appointed by QQI
- Programmes are subject to review by external examiners
- Programmes are formally assessed by learners and lecturers each semester
- Programme learning outcomes and benchmarked against comparable programmes nationally and internationally as part of programme review / revalidation processes
- Programme assessment is subject to internal and external moderation
- Programmes are informed by stakeholders – industry, graduates,

Proposed

- The college has invited other institutions to engage in a benchmarking exercise involving the sharing of examinations within common disciplines (e.g. a sharing of all examinations in a B.Sc. in Computing programme by programme directors as part of a Chatham House style workshop to benefit all institutions' programmes)

Benchmarking of Teaching and Learning

- The college is an active member of the National Forum for Teaching and Learning
- The college's programme and module learning outcomes are aligned to national awards standards as part of the review / revalidation processes
- The college provides a Certificate in Education, Learning and Development – with full funding support for full-time and part-time lecturers.

Proposed:

- Following the review of the college's MA in Education, Learning and Development (in June 2019) it is proposed that the college's formal teaching, learning and assessment strategy be reviewed and further developed, establishing renewed teaching strategies in respect of each faculty and programme.
- This revised / updated programme teaching, learning and assessment strategy will be informed by and aligned with national benchmarks adopted by the National Forum – for example the National Professional Development Framework for all staff who teach in higher education.

Benchmarking of QA processes

- The college has well-established feedback procedures for learner, lecturer and external examiner feedback
- All feedback is acted on in a timely manner
- It chaired the development of the IHEQN code of practice for international learners
- It established the PEL procedures for the private HECA colleges
- It established GDPR procedures in respect of its data procedures
- The college has aligned its programme review, validation and revalidation with those recently proposed and adopted by QQI

Proposed

- The college is committed for further formalising its learner engagement practices / representation.
- The college is completing the alignment of its QA process for e-learning and online provision with those proposed by QQI
- The college welcomes ongoing developments in QA processes arising from QQI and its other accreditation agencies and will continue to support their implementation

Specific Advice 3

“The panel supports the intention expressed by Griffith College to have greater learner representation and engagement with its QAE processes. GC is advised to consider more formal structures for collecting and acting on learner feedback and the role of learners within such structures, for example in relation to programme development, monitoring and review.”

Response

The college will review its formal structures for collecting and acting on learner feedback and the role of learners within such structures in relation to programme development, monitoring and review.

Currently, learners on all programmes provide formal feedback in respect of their experience of each module, typically in week 4 or 5 of each semester. This feedback relates to their evaluation of the module (e.g. structure, delivery, relevance, load) and the module and the college’s related resources. The college and programme teams respond formally to the learner feedback on Moodle – identifying the learners’ findings and any proposed changes. These processes will be retained

Programme review and revalidation processes in the college involves formal active engagement with learners and graduates to establish their experience of the programme and to inform the further development of the programme for future cohorts. These practices will be retained.

The College has an active Students’ Union which provides a range of supports and services for the college’s learners. These include the coordination of clubs and societies and the management of college wide information and social events. The College’s Students’ Union also acts as one of the college’s referral routes for those seeking counselling support.

Each programme cohort elects a learner representative. Learners have access to all members of the programme team and can raise queries directly or via their learner representative as they choose. All faculties have scheduled timetabled slots per week where learner representatives (or in most cases learners) can meet the programme director and/or individual programme team members. Learner representatives also attend programme committee meetings each semester where programme delivery is reviewed by the programme team.

The college has appointed two former executives of the Union of Students of Ireland (USI) with previous experience as elected learner representatives within a university and institute of technology. Both have extensive experience of representing learners’ interests at various committees within their previous institutions and nationally on behalf of USI.

They have been appointed to review, advise on, and advance the engagement of learners across all aspects of college life. In this regard, they will work directly with the college’s existing Students’ Union, the college’s academic faculties and various support services.

Both appointments report directly to the college’s Director of Academic Programmes.

Specific Advice 4

“The panel supports Griffith College’s planned expansion of externality on its board of directors. The panel encourages Griffith College to move forward rapidly with its stated plan to develop criteria to assist in the identification and selection of external expert candidates for future appointment.

Response

The College’s board of directors is fully committed to the expansion of its membership and in particular to the appointment of external independent experts to inform and assist the college in its further development.

Criteria to assist in the identification and selection of external expert candidates are currently being considered to facilitate the appointment of new members to the board of directors in 2019/2020.

Response to Additional Recommendations

The panel report made a number of additional recommendations which are not specified as either mandatory changes or specific advices. These are presented below, followed in each case by the college’s response.

Additional Recommendation 1

The panel noted that maintaining an appropriate balance of full-time and part-time staff should be a priority, and advise this is kept under close review by GC.

Response

The college and its learners benefit greatly from the combination of full-time and part-time staff who provide academic support and direction informed by current industry practice. The college recognises that it is important to balance full-time and part-time staff appointments to ensure the delivery and ongoing development of its activities.

The college proposes to keep the balance under review by formally including consideration of the balance as part of annual programme reviews and annual departmental reviews. Requests for changes in full-time and part-time staffing levels will continue to be formally considered and addressed as part of quarterly performance reviews of faculty / department managers, with appointments managed by the college’s HR department on behalf of the management board.

Additional Recommendation 2

During the site visit, GC staff emphasised the value the provider places on diversity and inclusivity. The panel notes that this statement is well-supported and evidenced with regard to its learners. In discussions with the panel, GC leadership affirmed its firm commitment to ensuring appropriate levels of diversity among staff and the SMT. The panel notes that any such commitment is commendable and advise that this should be formally stated within the provider’s written policies and public communications.

Response

The college greatly welcomes and values the rich diversity of its learning community, in respect of both learners and staff. It operates an open supportive culture that is inclusive and respectful of all. The college welcomes the suggestion of the panel to formally state its commitment in its written policies and public communications. It will review its HR policies, and website to reflect this reality.

Additional Recommendation 3

Developing awareness among academic staff of inclusive practices in teaching and learning and strategies for supporting learners with disabilities and learning differences could usefully be integrated into GCs staff development.

Response

The college supports all academic staff to complete a post graduate certificate in training and education. As part of this, lecturers engage with inclusive teaching strategies and principles of universal design for learning. The learning support office will continue to promote the universal design for learning model with lecturers, through a series of workshops, referring to material made available from AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access and Disability) and through engagement with DAWN (Disability Advisors Working Network) for a best practice approach. Lecturers are also invited to meet with the learning support coordinator to explore additional strategies to support learners with disabilities. The college is also exploring the facilitation of a digital badge in universal design for learning, to offer a non-accredited professional development opportunity for academic staff in this area.

Additional Recommendation 4

Currently, the institution has no particular policies pertaining to the accessibility of its online content.

Response

The College's QAE department and website sub-groups will review the requirements of the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Accessibility Initiative and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and audit the college's online content for accessibility.

Where possible, accessibility guidelines will be established and integrated into the specification and purchase of new systems sourced, serving to align the college's policies and procedures with the EU Web Accessibility Directive (EU) 2016/2102.

Concluding commentary from the college

The college greatly valued the opportunity provided by the reengagement process to reflect at length on its quality assurance and enhancement procedures and on its overall institutional capacity. This internal process was conducted openly, enthusiastically and comprehensively serving the college and its learners well.

The college welcomes the panel's overall recommendation to QQI to approve the college's QAE procedures and recognises the value, privilege and responsibility of QQI reengagement.

The college wishes to thank QQI and the external panel members for the constructive, professional and respectful manner in which the reengagement review process was conducted from start to finish. It welcomes the panel's detailed insights and suggestions and looks forward to implementing their recommendations to benefit the college's future learners and staff.