

Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Validation Report of Expert Panel

Part 1

General Information

Provider:	College of Computer Training
Date of Visit:	3 July 2013
Programme Submitted for Evaluation: Leading to the award of:	Bachelor of Business Bachelor of Business (Ordinary Bachelor Degree)
Programme Recommended for Approval: Leading to the award of:	Bachelor of Business Bachelor of Business (Ordinary Bachelor Degree, Level 7, 180 ECTS)

Panel of Experts:

Name	Area of Expertise	Organisation
Ann Campbell (Chair)	Quality Assurance, Validation	Registrar, Dundalk Institute of Technology
Colm Kelleher	HRM and Management Studies	Lecturer, Galway Mayo Institute of Technology
Des Gargan	Lecturer in Business and HR Management	Lecturer, National College of Ireland
Jim Casey	Former Management Consultant	Retired
Roisin Sweeney (Secretary)	Validation	Manager, Programme Accreditation, Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Summary

The Expert Panel (the Panel), having reviewed the documentation presented by the College of Computer Training (CCT) and considered the responses of the programme team during the course of the evaluation meeting, will recommend approval of the proposed *Bachelor of Business* to QQI, when the conditions identified in the report have been satisfied. The Panel has also identified a number of recommendations which the programme team should consider as the proposed programme document is updated to reflect the requirements set out in sections 3.1 and 3.2 of this report.

Part 2 Findings of the Panel

2.1 Introduction

The College of Computer Training is a private, independent college providing programmes in further and higher education and training. Under HETAC processes CCT has a programme validated for a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (2012), a Higher Certificate in Computing in Information Technology (2009) and minor awards in Computer Networking, Computer Programming and Information Technology.

The Panel noted that significant work has been done on the proposed programme and the blend of modules is appropriate to a Bachelor of Business at Level 7. In particular the Panel noted the engagement with the staff and management was very positive and staff were receptive to suggestions for improvement and change to the proposed programme.

2.2 Examination of the Programme

2.2.1 Education and Training Requirements

The Panel discussed the programme with CCT management. It was advised that the programme is a development in line with the College's growth plan. CCT already offers a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business Administration (UK NQF Level 6) awarded by the University of Hertfordshire. It also has experience of running one cycle of a Masters of Business Administration awarded by the Australian Institute of Business, a private college registered with the Australian government's Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and with accreditation on the Australian Framework of Qualifications (AQF). Arising from experience of these programmes, CCT has built a small faculty of staff in business. These currently stand at three full-time staff including the Head of Faculty of Business and seven part-time staff. An Academic Committee is in place as well as a Quality Assurance Committee. A new Registrar has recently been appointed.

The initial target learner group for the Bachelor of Business will be international students. In Year 1 and Year 2 sixty to seventy percent of intake is expected to be international students. CCT intends to also include the programme with the CAO. In future it may look at part time provision and also at attracting students taking a semester abroad from foreign private colleges. Prospective international applicants will require IELTS 6, (International English Language Testing System measures the ability to communicate in English across all four language skills - listening, reading, writing and speaking - for people who intend to study or work where English is the language of communication). The learner access requirements for the programme will include a placement test, an interview and a language test. The Panel sought clarification on applicants' capability in written English. CCT advised that the Personal Development and Study Skills module is intended to assist students in developing their skills in writing. The College intends to run the programme over 4 days per week, comprising 2 full days (6 hours each day) and two half days (3 hours each day) with language support available if required on a further two days. Such supports are already in place with the existing student cohort.

The Panel queried whether there is demand for the programme given that there are many public and private colleges offering a similar programme at level 7. CCT confirmed that it has direct links to recruit students from , US, Brazil, Russia, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, China, Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, as well as Ireland and will in future look to recruit students from European countries . It also has international students already in this country who are seeking access to programmes. CCT

stated that its programmes fees are more affordable than other private colleges.

The Panel requested an explanation of how the programme will help students develop independent thinking as expected at Level 7 and how students will find the time to develop that skill particularly in the second half of the semester when the College plan to administer all of the programme assessment. The College advised that additional learning support hours will be offered to students and from past experience generally a small cohort will take advantage of this. As the student age profile is generally expected to be 22 years and older they will already have developed independent thinking in a general sense.

The College was asked to elaborate on how it expects to connect to Business through the proposed programme, particularly given that there is no work placement element. CCT indicated it will take a practical approach: making the module content very relevant to learners; utilising guest lecturers from the business world; developing students' knowledge, skills and competence to progress into employment as trainee managers or to set up their own business. The College aspires to developing a Level 8 programme to which students could progress but at this time is concentrating on Level 7. The Panel emphasized the need to develop links with business and expose students to real life examples of running a business if the intent is that students may seek to set up their own business.

The Panel was satisfied that the programme is consistent with the provider's mission, that it does not constitute redundant provision and makes efficient use of resources. The panel was also satisfied with the provider's case on the rationale for the programme and the research undertaken before the programme was proposed to QQI.

2.2.2 Protection of Enrolled Learners

Validation of a programme of education and training pursuant to Section 25 of the 2012 Act is subject to QQI being satisfied that the provider concerned has arrangements in place in accordance with QQI's interim procedures on Protection for Enrolled Learners.

2.2.3 Quality Assurance

The panel heard how the submission had been developed over a period of 18 – 24 months. Experience gained from running Information Technology programmes has shown CCT the importance of including a business element to its provision. The College has looked at the market for Level 7 business programmes and identified it as an area for development. The Panel noted that amongst Irish prospective students numbers have been decreasing. CCT advised that it will focus initially on international students who are required by visa conditions to follow a programme of education. As a result there is increasing demand from international students and CCT's reputation as a price sensitive and quality provider is growing.

Discussion took place on the programme development process. The College advised that a programme team worked collaboratively to identify the modules and the programme learning outcomes. Individual members worked on individual module content and assessment. The team then looked at assessment across the programme and how the modules fitted within the programme.

The programme has been developed and approved internally as a result of the application of the

provider's quality assurance procedures. The Panel was satisfied that those procedures had been applied to the development of the proposed programme and that quality assurance mechanisms are in place to ensure its provision, monitoring and review.

2.2.4 Programme Titles and Award Titles

The panel was satisfied that the title of the programme is clear, accurate and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders and is consistent with the related named award title.

2.2.5 Ethics

It is expected that providers will have procedures in place to ensure that any teaching and learning or research activity at any level shall be conducted in a manner that is morally and professionally ethical.

2.3 Particular Aspects of Programme Provision

2.3.1 Unity

The programme has an underlying unifying theme and the modules are bonded by linkages which are either implicit or explicit. It was also clear how the standards of knowledge, skill and competence, determined by the Council for the named award to which the programme proposes to lead, evolve throughout the programme as a whole.

2.3.2 Teaching and Learning

The Panel explored the connections to the Business sector within the programme. CCT advised that it has identified a small number of entrepreneurs who are prepared to come and talk to students about the reality of developing and running a business. Site visits will take place to a number of businesses and students will be able to relate what they have learned to these businesses. The College has already trialled this approach on an existing programme and it has proved successful. The College will implement site visits as part of the Bachelor of Business programme. The Panel welcomed the proposed initiative and emphasised the importance of students being exposed to what works and mistakes that can happen in business. The programme team also indicated that it has several members who have experience of starting and running successful and unsuccessful businesses and can include these experiences in programme content. The Panel noted that the programme document needs to be checked for consistency in relation to the number of guest lecturers to be used.

The Panel noted that throughout the programme document the same teaching and learning strategy was included in all modules. It queried what strategies are actually going to be used by the programme team. CCT advised there are in fact different approaches by module tutors. In some instances there will be small groups with a group leader and they will look at case studies and role play. CCT noted that there can be particular difficulties with international students in organising effective groups due to cultural differences. It was noted that with a potential for up to 40 learners in a class the group work approach may be difficult to implement so careful planning and resourcing will be needed. Teaching staff should take this into account and adopt appropriate means to get the most out of group work for students.

A discussion took place on how different learning styles will be accounted for within the programme. The Panel queried whether CCT implement the VARK (guide to learning styles) questionnaire to determine learning style. CCT does not as yet do this.

2.3.3 Teacher-Learner Dialogue

CCT also confirmed that it has a Programme Board with class representatives providing student input. The Panel recommended that as this information was not included in the programme document it should be articulated. CCT also provided an overview of the student feedback process. This involves distribution of feedback sheets in weeks 4 or 5 of each semester. These contain both tick boxes and comment boxes. The content from these is collated and an implementation plan developed for matters that can be dealt with. The Panel advised that CCT should publish the feedback from students as it is important to close the feedback loop. The modes of interaction between the teaching staff and the learners were elaborated upon satisfactorily.

2.3.4 Standards

The Panel examined the programme content and raised some queries for clarification including:

- a) How the eight programme learning outcomes are referenced to the HETAC Business Standards. Taking the competency learning to learn sub- stream as an example, the Panel queried how this is reflected in the programme and the programme modules. CCT advised that the capstone module in Business Planning is geared to capture the learning from a number of modules. The student can use the draft business plan as a vehicle for planning their own business and that initiative comes from the learning skills instilled in learners over the course of the programme.
- b) The Panel asked why programme learning outcomes were mapped to generic NFQ sub strands rather than to the actual HETAC Business standards. CCT advised it had done so based on past experience where it had been proposed. The Panel advised that it would be more appropriate to ensure national award standards are being met. They may be intended but need to be more clearly articulated in the programme document.
- c) The rationale for including a module in Irish law rather than international law for a programme principally aimed at international students. CCT advised that students will be exposed to the principles of company law, law of contract and related matters which, whilst delivered in an Irish context, provide the core principles that are applicable in any jurisdiction.
- d) Whether students are likely to set up business in Ireland. The College advised that whilst some students may already be working in Ireland in accordance with their visa conditions they could also start up their own business on return to their home country. The principles of starting a business will be similar.
- e) Consistency is required where reference is made to the NFQ level in the module and in the programme schedule.

- f) The Panel advised that the wording of learning outcomes should be linked to the appropriate NFQ level and should be measurable. There are a number of Learning Outcomes resources available e.g. Dr Declan Kennedy, Dept. of Education, UCC.

On individual modules the Panel made the following observations:

- i. Personal Development Module: there is no mention of intercultural skills nor of coaching skills
- ii. Within the programme there are no language modules and whether this was intentional. The College confirmed it had not considered this at all. As the College has links to a language college it should be something to explore: for example giving students exposure to non-European language such as Mandarin given the importance of China for business purposes.
- iii. The number of hours lecture per week should be clarified as it is consistent in the documentation.
- iv. The delivery of Macro Economics after Micro Economics seems out of sync with how the subject should be taught
- v. The Business Law 1 module could be renamed. There is a lot of safety and health legislation covered. The College advised that Business Law is an umbrella term and the module is related to the various legal aspects of running a business.

The Panel advised:

- 1) that the sequencing of modules needs to be checked as well as their titles.
- 2) the module learning strategy and the teaching and learning strategy should be included in the start of the programme document rather than appearing in every module.
- 3) the Business Ethics module does not contain a book list or resources at all
- 4) the Human Resource Management module ought to contain some reference to industrial relations

The inclusion of a specific module in Sales Management and Customer Care was noted in particular as a positive addition to the programme by the Panel.

2.3.5 Learner Assessment

The Panel discussed the programme assessment strategy. There is a heavy focus on continuous assessment and a final examination. It also noted that the Business Planning module requires the student to undertake research but there are no evident research development skills in the programme other than a reference within the Personal Development and Study Skills to writing for academic and business purposes. The College advised that the programme was aimed at international students who tend, in year one, to learn by rote. The Personal Development and Study Skills module has been placed in Semester 1 and the focus on continuous assessment and a role play will assist them to develop research, writing and speaking skills for independent learning. The Panel strongly advised that there should be no postponing the transition to third level and it is critical to

learner completion rates that they develop learning and writing skills in the first year. It was also emphasised that academic referencing be introduced as early as possible.

There was a discussion on the programmes emphasis on examinations in Year 1. This could in fact impact on the retention rates because of the need to pass all elements to progress to Year 2. The Panel specifically noted that P44 of the Validation submission, under Special Regulations, contained a misinterpretation of HETAC assessment information with reference to a failed element. The Panel recommended that a programme assessment strategy be developed for the programme and that the College consider re-balancing the assessment away from a final examination. Whilst it is up to the programme panel to determine the assessment strategy it would be advisable to get external input and or training on assessment.

The Panel sought clarification as to whether the College has identified the profile and number of external examiners to be used on the programme. It was advised to look for someone from a University or Institute of Technology who could provide significant and robust input to the programme which will add value. The programme's learner assessment methods are fully elaborated and consistent with the QQI's policy on fair and consistent assessment. The assessment methods are capable, amongst other things, of demonstrating attainment of the standards of knowledge, skill or competence, determined by QQI, for the related award.

2.3.6 Access, Transfer and Progression

The programme incorporates the procedures for access, transfer and progression that have been established by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and adopted by QQI. The programme accommodates a variety of access and entry requirements

2.3.7 Staffing and Physical Resources

The Panel noted that a significant number of the book lists included were out of date and some out of publication. Stronger and more detailed use of online resources should be included to strengthen the resource lists. These should be revised and updated. There is also a distinct lack of international references and if the programme is aimed at international students then the resource lists should reflect that fact.

The Panel discussed the CCT approach to staff development in relation to teaching and learning. There is an organisational policy on continuous professional development (CPD). In the past the College has brought in external expertise to deliver programmes. There are programme staff links with the Teaching and Learning Centre in the Institute of Technology Carlow. CCT is also a member of the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA).

The Panel requested clarification on the resources available to run this programme and in particular the expected budget for library resources. CCT advised that it has over 600 texts, access to online resources and will have a budget of €25,000 per year for online and physical library resources. Of that amount it is expected that €10,000-€15,000 will be allocated to the Business programme. The College also has plans to expand the physical floor space available onto the top floor and use it as a learning resource centre.

The panel was satisfied that the necessary staffing levels will be in place and were generally satisfied

with the level of qualifications and competence of the staff concerned.

Part 3 Recommendation

The panel of experts recommend the validation of the programme:

Bachelor of Business

for the purposes of the award of:

Bachelor of Business, (Ordinary Bachelor Degree) Level 7 (180 ECTS)

Subject to:

QQI's general conditions of approval under Section 84 Transition and Savings Provision, 2012 Act.

3.1 Conditions

The panel of experts require that CCT should take note of the following conditions and that a satisfactory response to those conditions shall be received before the validation is considered by QQI.

The College/Provider must:

- C1: Revise the programme document to ensure consistency of information in relation to modules, levels, hours
- C2: Elaborate on programme learning outcomes, mapping them to the themes within the programme and to the award standards
- C3: Establish the operational elements of the external examining system for the programme and include it in the programme document

3.2 Recommendations

The College is advised to:

- R1: Improve the programme assessment strategy based on the discussion with the panel during the site visit. An improved programme assessment strategy will provide internal examiners with clear guidance on assessment of modules to include: reviewing weightings of continuous assessment and final examinations; reconsider Year 1 assessment modalities to aid development of independent learning
- R2: Invest in continuous professional development in teaching and learning for staff
- R3: Afford due status to the development of knowledge and skills for sole trader or entrepreneur

Appendix 1: College Staff

Charlie Dayman	Head of Faculty of Business
Sharon Harris-Byrne	Director of Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance and lecturer
Graham Glanville	Lecturer
Jason Pollard	Lecturer
Eva Perez	Lecturer
Muiris O'Ceidigh	Lecturer
Gemma Davis	Lecturer
Owen Keany	Lecturer
Neil Gallagher	College Director
Gerard O'Callaghan	Director of Admissions and Marketing
Pamela Peris	Faculty Coordinator
Karl Gallagher	Director of Administration
Arjuna de Silva	Library Services
Simon Kendrick	Front of House and Security Management