

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF IRELAND

2022

Annual Quality Report (NCI)
Reporting Period 2020-2021

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Annual Quality Report (NCI)
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2020-2021

PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report (AQR)** (formerly AIQR) forms part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) quality assurance (QA) framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The AQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's internal quality system. It provides QQI with assurance that internal QA procedures have been established and are being implemented consistent with regulatory requirements.

The AQR, particularly part A, should assist with **document management** in the institutional review process and will facilitate institutions in providing review teams with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. It is an important part of the evidence base considered by external **review teams** as part of QQI's CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

Each AQR is **published in full on QQI's website**, providing transparency on the HEIs' assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders. (As such, institutions should ensure that their submissions do not contain any data that they consider to be commercially sensitive.) Collectively, the AQRs comprise a single national repository of quality assurance practice in Irish higher education institutions.

Each year, QQI produces a synthesis report of the key themes highlighted across the AQRs, primarily arising from Part B of the reports.

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Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template¹

Legislation

- [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Technological Universities Act 2018](#)
- [Universities Act 1997](#)

QQI Documents

Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

- [Core QAG](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Independent/Private Providers](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Designated Awarding Bodies](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Institutes of Technology](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Blended Learning](#)

Other QQI Policy Documents

- [QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012](#)
- [QQI's Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015](#)
- [QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression, 2015](#)

Other National/International References

- [European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(2015\)](#)
- [IHEQN Guidelines on Collaborative Provision](#)
- [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#)
- [Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019](#)
- [HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education](#)

¹ These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.

- [The Salzburg Principles](#)
- [The Salzburg II Recommendations](#)
- [SOLAS Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices](#)
- [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - Internal QA Framework	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review				
5.0 - Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	2.4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment	2.5	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - Learner Resources and Supports	2.7	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - Information and Data Management	2.8	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - Public Information and Communication	2.9	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - Programme Delivery and Development	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
9.0 - Details of Arrangements with Third Parties				
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for the **National College of Ireland (NCI)** for the reporting period **1 September 2020 - 31 August 2021**.

The AQR has been approved by the NCI Academic Council and is submitted by Patricia Maguire, Director of Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (QIE). The AQR was approved by Academic Council in February 2022. It was also submitted to the March 2022 meeting of the NCI Governing Body as the Annual Report of the Academic Council. Case studies presented in Section 4 of this report have been prepared by teams across NCI, exemplifying our whole of institution approach to quality assurance and enhancement.

NCI is an independent, not-for-profit College and a registered charity. We have a current student enrolment total of some 5,700 full and part-time students. NCI is partially funded via a core grant through the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and a free fees allocation received for a 'capped' number of undergraduate full-time learners. All other funding comes from registration and tuition fees from self-funded or employer-funded learners and labour market initiatives funded by the HEA. In addition, the College has a modest level of commercial income.

NCI's mission is to change lives through education. Since its foundation in 1951, NCI has developed and evolved in response to various internal and external environmental stimuli. NCI has been committed to supporting the development of Irish society by promoting the principles of access, opportunity, and excellence in education.

NCI's Academic Strategy 2019-2024

NCI's [Academic Strategy \(2019-2024\)](#) is a clear articulation of our academic aspirations. This strategy prompts us to look to a future NCI with an enhanced role and impact on the Higher Education landscape in the wider Dublin region and nationally and internationally. It exhorts us to reimagine NCI as a College with a vibrant undergraduate and postgraduate community, encompassing an expanded academic portfolio of learning, teaching, research and community offerings.

Strategic Themes and Goals 2019 - 2024



Our six strategic academic themes guide our approach to achieving our strategic goals. Our commitment to this academic strategy is collective: the entire college is responsible for delivery and achievement. We monitor and report on progress against our KPIs and targets annually. We anticipate that, over time, the aims and objectives under each strategic goal will remain essentially the same, however our actions/initiatives, targets and may be modified in response to changes in the environment in which we operate and changes in our ongoing performance.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

There have been no material changes to NCI's Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES) policies and procedures within the reporting period. Each QAES chapter remains aligned with ESG Standards and Guidelines and QQI Core and Sector Specific QA guidelines. A wholesale review and refresh of the QAES will be initiated in the 2021/22 academic year and completed as part of a major review of NCI's student success structures to underpin delivery of the new NCI Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026 priorities.

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

NCI's governance and management structures, including roles and responsibilities for are outlined in Chapter 2 of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES). Additional QAES chapters - indicated below- also identify the opportunities and mechanisms for learners and staff to inform and engage in NCI's academic governance and quality management structures.

NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	
Relevant Handbook Chapters Approved by QQI in the 2019 Revalidation Process	Material change made and approved within 2020/2021 reporting period
Chapter 1: Introduction	No material changes
Chapter 2: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System	No material changes
Chapter 5: Learning and Teaching Environment	No material changes
Chapter 7: Support Services for Learners	No material changes

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

NCI is not a Designated Awarding Body (DAB), therefore there are no Linked Providers involved in the delivery of the College's programmes and the College is not involved in making any Joint Awards. The policies and procedures for collaborative and transnational provision are contained in QAES Chapter 3: Section 6 and are aligned with QQI's *Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards* (2012) and benchmarked against IHEQN *Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision*. NCI does not currently have any arrangements for the transnational delivery of programmes. Further details on active articulation arrangements and collaborations are presented in this AQR, Section 9.3.

NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	
Relevant Handbook Chapters Approved by QQI in the 2019 Revalidation Process	Material change made and approved within 2020/2021 reporting period
Chapter 3: Programme Development, Validation and Evaluation	No material changes

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

The policies and procedures for the development and approval of programmes are contained in QAES Chapter 3 and are aligned with QQI's guidelines to reflect the devolved responsibilities conferred to NCI in 2018. While there have been no material changes during the reporting period to the policies and procedures for the development and approval of academic programmes, NCI has refreshed its arrangements with QQI for devolved responsibility in response to the QQI pilot processes for the validation of micro-credentials and fully online delivery. The QAES will be updated to reflect these developments within the 2021/22 academic year.

NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	
Relevant Handbook Chapters Approved by QQI in the 2019 Revalidation Process	Material change made and approved within 2020/2021 reporting period
Chapter 3: Programme Development, Validation and Evaluation	No material changes
Chapter 12: Provision of Apprenticeship Programmes	No material changes

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

The policies and procedures relating to admission, progression, recognition and certification are contained with Chapters 4 and 6 as outlined below and are aligned with QQI's *Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression* (2015).

NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	
Relevant Handbook Chapters Approved by QQI in the 2019 Revalidation Process	Material change made and approved within 2020/2021 reporting period
Chapter 4: Assessment	No material changes
Chapter 6: Admission, Registration and Curriculum	No material changes

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

Chapter 4: Assessment contains the policies and procedures relating to the authentication and approval of assessment results (Section 4.4 and Section 4.11, respectively) and the certification of higher education awards (Section 4.18).

NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	
Relevant Handbook Chapters Approved by QQI in the 2019 Revalidation Process	Material change made and approved within 2020/2021 reporting period
Chapter 4: Assessment	No material changes

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Despite deploying a range of short-term alternative teaching, learning and assessment practices between April 2020 - August 2021, in line with QQI's *Guiding Principles for Alternative Assessments* (March 2020, extended to 31 August 2021), no material changes were made to NCI's QAES in the reporting period. NCI's longstanding experience of blended delivery eased our transition to more online teaching, learning and assessment throughout the periods of government restrictions on campus opening, due to the COVID-19 crisis. NCI's existing approaches to blended delivery are based on policies aligned with QQI's *Topic-Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes* (2018).

NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	
Relevant Handbook Chapters Approved by QQI in the 2019 Revalidation Process	Material change made and approved within 2020/2021 reporting period
Chapter 4: Assessment	No material changes
Chapter 5: Learning and Teaching Environment	No material changes
Chapter 13: Technology Mediated Learning	No material changes

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

The general policies and procedures relating to physical and digital learner resources and supports are contained in the chapters outlined below. Policies outlined in QAES Chapter 7 (Section 12) outline the specific supports for international learners aligned with QQI's *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners* (2015).

NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	
Relevant Handbook Chapters Approved by QQI in the 2019 Revalidation Process	Material change made and approved within 2020/2021 reporting period
Chapter 4: Assessment	No material changes
Chapter 5: Learning and Teaching Environment	No material changes
Chapter 7: Support Services for Learners	No material changes
Chapter 12: Provision of Apprenticeship Programmes	No material changes
Chapter 13: Technology Mediated Learning	No material changes

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

The quality assurance of research activities and programmes at NCI is fully integrated into the College's overall QAES, governing all programmes of education and training and the provision of services to students. The policies and procedures contained in Chapter 11 are aligned with QQI's *Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Research Degree Programmes* (2017).

NCI entered a non-exclusive academic association with Maynooth University in October 2019, with the objective of enhancing the research capabilities of both institutions in subjects offered by both institutions, through the co-delivery of doctoral programmes and PhD student supervision. Changes to the QAES were not required in the reporting period but will be actioned in the QAES refresh alongside the development of the new NCI Research Strategy in 2021/2022.

NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	
Relevant Handbook Chapters Approved by QQI in the 2019 Revalidation Process	Material change made and approved within 2020/2021 reporting period
Chapter 11: Research	No material changes

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

Within the reporting period NCI was successful in securing the Athena Swan Bronze Award and became the second HEI in Ireland to be recognised as an Autism Friendly institution. These commitments to EDI particularly in relation to staff recruitment, development and support, are reflected in NCI's strategic priorities, policies and practices. While no material changes have been made in 2021/21 to Chapter 8 of the QAES, changes are anticipated within the 2021/22 QAES refresh process.

NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	
Relevant Handbook Chapters Approved by QQI in the 2019 Revalidation Process	Material change made and approved within 2020/2021 reporting period
Chapter 8: Staff Recruitment and Development	No material changes

6.0 Information and Data Management

Chapter 9 of the QAES will be updated in the next reporting period as part of the wider refresh of the QAES handbook. The refresh will incorporate new policies developed throughout 2020/21 to ensure continued compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018) and the *Freedom of Information Act* (2014). The refresh process will ensure guidance and training on information and data management is targeted to key stakeholder roles and responsibilities to enhance awareness and understanding of institutional and personal obligations.

NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	
Relevant Handbook Chapters Approved by QQI in the 2019 Revalidation Process	Material change made and approved within 2020/2021 reporting period
Chapter 9: Information Governance and Compliance	No material changes

7.0 Public Information and Communication

Public information and communication about NCI's programmes of education and training are indicated in Chapter 6 (Section 2) and within Chapter 10. It is coordinated and monitored by the Marketing and Student Recruitment Department (MSRD), who ensure accuracy and consistency across all media platforms.

NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	
Relevant Handbook Chapters Approved by QQI in the 2019 Revalidation Process	Material change made and approved within 2020/2021 reporting period
Chapter 6: Admission, Registration and Curriculum	No material changes
Chapter 10: Public Information	No material changes

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

The policies and procedures relating to the monitoring and periodic review of NCI's programmes of education and training are outlined in the QAES Chapters below. In response to the 2019 QQI Re-Engagement process, NCI's Annual Programme Monitoring and Evaluation process will be reviewed and refreshed in the next reporting period (2021-2022) and the QAES will be updated accordingly. Annual monitoring and periodic reviews of programmes have always been features of NCI's Quality Assurance and Enhancement System and are now more explicitly managed within the Programme Lifecycle Management (PLM) structure, launched in the 2020/21 Academic Year.

NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	
Relevant Handbook Chapters Approved by QQI in the 2019 Revalidation Process	Material change made and approved within 2020/2021 reporting period
Chapter 2: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System	No material changes
Chapter 3: Programme Development, Validation and Evaluation	No material changes
Chapter 4: Assessment	No material changes
Chapter 5: Learning and Teaching Environment	No material changes

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	9
Awarding bodies	2
QA bodies	1

1. Type of arrangement - Awarding Body & QA Body	
Name of body:	Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
Programme titles and links to publications	Validated programmes and corresponding publications can be accessed here .
Date of accreditation or last review	13 th June 2019
Date of next review	TBC

2. Type of arrangement - Awarding Body	
Name of body:	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
Programme titles and links to publications	Award in Coaching and Consulting Award in Digital and Blended Learning Award in Employment Law and Employee Relations Award in Reward Management Certificate in Human Resource Management Certificate in Learning and Development Diploma in Human Resource Management Diploma in Learning and Development
Date of accreditation or last review	2015
Date of next review	2021/22

3. Type of arrangement - PSRB	
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Name of body:	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants ACCA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Hons Accounting and Finance (PG21951) BA Hons Accounting and Finance (PG22719) Graduates who meet the criteria decided by ACCA may apply for exemptions from the examinations on completion of these programmes.
Date of accreditation or last review	N/A
Date of next review	N/A

4. Type of arrangement - PSRB	
Name of body:	Chartered Accountants Ireland (CAI)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Hons Accounting and Finance (PG21951) BA Hons Accounting and Finance (PG22719) Graduates who meet the criteria decided by CAI may apply for exemptions from the examinations on completion of these programmes.
Date of accreditation or last review	N/A
Date of next review	N/A

5. Type of arrangement - PSRB	
Name of body:	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in HRM Strategy and Practice (PG21802) Postgraduate Diploma in HRM (PG21880)
Date of accreditation or last review	Reviewed Q3 2015
Date of next review	2021/22

6. Type of arrangement - PSRB	
Name of body:	Certified Public Accountants (CPA)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA Hons Accounting and Finance (PG21951) BA Hons Accounting and Finance (PG22719) Graduates who meet the criteria decided by CPA may apply for exemptions from the examinations on completion of these programmes.
Date of accreditation or last review	
Date of next review	2021/2022

7. Type of arrangement - PSRB	
Name of body:	Institute of Commercial Management (ICM)
Programme titles and links to publications	Diploma in Marketing Advertising and Public Relations
Date of accreditation or last review	N/A
Date of next review	Arrangement ended within the reporting period. Programme no longer offered by NCI

8. Type of arrangement - PSRB	
Name of body:	Mediators' Institute of Ireland (MII)
Programme titles and links to publications	Masters in Human Resource Management (PG21879) 1 module - Mediation - accepted for MMI Membership
Date of accreditation or last review	N/A
Date of next review	MII re-accreditation process to be completed aligned to the revalidation of the MA in Human Resource Management in 2021/22

9. Type of arrangement - PSRB	
Name of body:	Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Psychology (PG23507)
Date of accreditation or last review	November 2019
Date of next review	Interim review 2022

10. Type of arrangement - PSRB	
Name of body:	Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Early Childhood Education and Care (PG24372)
Date of accreditation or last review	May 2020
Date of next review	TBC

11. Type of arrangement - PSRB	
Name of body:	Teaching Council of Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Educational Practice in Teaching for Further Education (PG24375)
Date of accreditation or last review	May 2020
Date of next review	TBC

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Type of arrangement	Total number
Joint research degrees	0
Joint/double/multiple awards	0
Collaborative programmes	7
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

1. Collaborative provision	This programme is co-designed by SIPTU College and the NCI School of Business. Following QQI revalidation by QQI, the programme is delivered by SIPTU College. NCI is responsible for admissions and enrolments, authentication and certification of assessment results, and programme monitoring and review. A Collaborative Agreement is in place for this programme.
Name of body (/bodies):	SIPTU College
Programme titles and links to publications	Certificate in Trade Union Studies (PG24390)
Date of last review	27 th May 2020
Date of next review	TBC (Q2 2025)

2. Collaborative provision	These programmes are co-designed by Quality Matters/The Wheel and the NCI School of Business. Once validated by QQI, the programmes are delivered by staff provided by Quality Matters/The Wheel, while NCI retains responsibility for managing the delivery and monitoring of the programme.
Name of body (/bodies):	Quality Matters/The Wheel
Programme titles and links to publications	Certificate in MIS and Social Impact Measurement (PG22529) Certificate in Non-Profit Leadership and Management (PG22526) Certificate in Project Management and Implementation Science (PG22528) Certificate in Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (PG22527)
Date of last review	20 th July 2016
Date of next review	TBC (2021/22 academic year)

3. Collaborative provision	These programmes were co-designed by the Irish League of Credit Unions and the School of Business. Once validated by QQI, NCI is responsible for the delivery and monitoring of the programmes.
Name of body (/bodies):	Irish League of Credit Unions
Programme titles and links to publications	Certificate in Credit Union Business (PG23937) Diploma in Financial Services for Credit Unions (PG23938)
Date of last review	20 th December 2018
Date of next review	TBC (2022/23 academic year)

4. Collaborative provision	These programmes were co-designed by the Department of Social Protection (DSP). Once validated by QQI, DSP staff are involved in the delivery of the programme, while NCI is responsible for the delivery and monitoring of the programmes.
Name of body (/bodies):	Department of Social Protection (DSP)
Programme titles and links to publications	Certificate in Social Protection Studies (PG23734) Certificate in Social Welfare Decision Making (PG23861) Certificate in Community Welfare Service Provision (PG23856) Certificate in Social Protection Investigative Work (PG23859) Certificate in Public Employment Services Provision (PG23858) Certificate in Social Welfare Appeals (PG23860) Certificate in Managing Social Protection Services (PG23857)
Date of last review	25 th September 2018
Date of next review	TBC (2022/23 academic year)

5. Collaborative provision	NCI is the Coordinating Provider for the provision of this apprenticeship programme.
Name of body (/bodies):	Financial Services Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Higher Certificate in International Financial Services (PG23383) Higher Diploma in Science in Financial Analytics (PG23405)
Date of last review	19 th July 2017
Date of next review	TBC (2021/22 academic year)

6. Collaborative provision	NCI is the Coordinating Provider for the provision of this apprenticeship programme.
Name of body (/bodies):	National Recruitment Federation
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Recruitment Practice (PG24255)
Date of last review	11 th June 2020
Date of next review	TBC (2022/23 academic year)

7. Collaborative provision	NCI is the HE Provider for the provision of this programme.
Name of body (/bodies):	P-TECH Consortium
Programme titles and links to publications	Certificate in P-TECH (Pathways in Technology) (PG24592)
Date of last review	6 th August 2021
Date of next review	Spring 2023

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Articulation agreements - Total number	14 (3 International and 11 Domestic)
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1. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Hebei University
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Human Resource Management (PG22723)
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	Reviewed May 2017
Date of next review	TBC 2022/23
Detail of the agreement	Students complete three years of the Bachelor's Degree in Human Resource Management in Hebei University before completing Award Stage in the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Human Resource Management.

2. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Yunnan Normal University
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting and Finance (PG22719)
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	Reviewed May 2018
Date of next review	February 2022
Detail of the agreement	Students complete three years of the Bachelor's Degree in Accounting in Yunnan Normal University before completing Award Stage in Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting and Finance.

3. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Nanchang Hangkong University
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computing (PG24355)
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	Commencing September 2021
Date of next review	TBC (Q3 2025)
Detail of the agreement	Students complete three years of Bachelor's Degree in Network Engineering in Nanchang Hangkong University before completing Award Stage in Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computing.

4. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Rathmines College of Further Education
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business (PG22721) Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Marketing Practice (PG22899)

	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Human Resource Management (PG22723)
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	Reviewed October 2015
Date of next review	MA HRM (February 2022); BA (Hons) programmes: TBC 2022/23 academic year
Detail of the agreement	Students who attain a Pass Grade in the Advanced Certificate in Business (6M4985) in Rathmines College of Further Education are eligible for advanced entry into Stage 2 of one of the above programmes.

5. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Rathmines College of Further Education
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computing (PG24355)
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	Reviewed April 2020
Date of next review	TBC (2024/25 academic year)
Detail of the agreement	Students who attain a Merit or Distinction Grade in the Award in Software Development (6M0691) in Rathmines College of Further Education are eligible for advanced entry into Stage 2 of the above programme, while students who attain a Pass Grade are eligible for advanced entry into Stage 1 Semester 2.

6. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Coláiste Dhulaigh College of Further Education
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business (PG22721) Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Marketing Practice (PG22899) Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Human Resource Management (PG22723)
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	Reviewed October 2015
Date of next review	TBC (2021/22 academic year)
Detail of the agreement	Students who attain a Pass Grade in the Certificate in Management (6M4587) in Coláiste Dhulaigh College of Further Education are eligible for advanced entry into Stage 2 of one of the above programmes.

7. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Coláiste Dhulaigh College of Further Education
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computing (PG24355)
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	Reviewed April 2020
Date of next review	TBC (2024/25 academic year)
Detail of the agreement	Students who attain a Merit or Distinction Grade in the Award in Software Development (6M0691) in Coláiste Dhulaigh College of Further Education are eligible for advanced entry into Stage 2 of the above programme, while students who attain a Pass Grade are eligible for advanced entry into Stage 1 Semester 2.

8. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Inchicore College of Further Education
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business (PG22721) Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Marketing Practice (PG22899) Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Human Resource Management (PG22723)
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	Reviewed October 2015
Date of next review	TBC (2022/23 academic year)
Detail of the agreement	Students who attain a Pass Grade in the Higher National Diploma in Business in Inchicore College of Further Education are eligible for advanced entry into Stage 2 of one of the above programmes.

9. Articulation agreement:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Blackrock College of Further Education
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Human Resource Management (PG22723) Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Business (PG22721)
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	Reviewed October 2015
Date of next review	TBC (2022/23 academic year)
Detail of the agreement	Students who attain a Pass Grade in the Advanced Certificate in Business (6M4985) or Business Studies/Business and Management (5M2102) in Blackrock College of Further Education are eligible for advanced entry into Stage 2 of the BA in Human Resource Management or the BA Hons Business programme.

10 Articulation agreements:	
Name of body (/bodies):	Coláiste Dhulaigh College of Further Education Whitehall College of Further Education Inchicore College of Further Education Marino Institute of Further Education Liberties College
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care (PG24368)
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	Reviewed July 2021
Date of next review	TBC (2025/26 academic year)
Detail of the agreement	Graduates of the Level 6 Major Award in Early Childhood Education and Care 6M2007 are eligible for consideration for advanced entry to year two of the following programme(s) Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Education & Care

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF IRELAND

2022

Annual Quality Report (NCI)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2020-2021

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

Annual Dialogue Meeting

NCI participated in its first Annual Dialogue Meeting with QQI in July 2021. Within the meeting, NCI outlined its commitments to investing in a sustainable and scalable Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (QIE) Team to manage and monitor evidence of quality and impact across institutional and programme level policies, procedures, and practices. NCI confirmed the establishment of a new Executive Programme Lifecycle Management (PLM) Sub-Group in February 2021, increasing transparency and consistency across decision-making structures while ensuring there is evidence of programme relevance, currency, quality, viability, and demand for all new and existing programmes. These commitments were made in recognition of the need to strengthen NCI's capacity and capability for consistent, evidence-based decision-making about academic programmes, including investment decisions.

NCI Strategic Planning

In Q2 2021, NCI initiated a consultation process to inform the development of the next NCI institutional strategic plan. A team of external consultants was appointed to secure views from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders to maximise NCI's effectiveness, efficiency and impact. The new strategic plan, to be published in 2022, will be focused on enhancing NCI's ability to deliver its mission "to change lives through education," and ensure we continue to place "the learner at the heart of everything we do." The institutional plan will also ensure existing commitments outlined in the [Academic Strategy \(2019-2024\)](#) and the new Research Strategy are aligned to maximise resources and impact.

Within the reporting period, a holistic review was also launched to co-design with our staff and students a more streamlined student success infrastructure. The initiative responds to the outcomes of the 2019/2020 Administration Review by seeking to maximise efficiency, effectiveness, quality, and consistency of services across the NCI student and programme lifecycle. This co-design process is on track to be completed within the next reporting period.

Quality Improvement and Effectiveness Plan (QIEP) Implementation

NCI's Academic Strategy was approved by the Governing Body in May 2019 and launched during the 2019-20 reporting period. Several internal plans and strategies, including the [Quality Improvement and Effectiveness Plan \(QIEP\)](#), were subsequently developed, and published.

The following tables show the progress made in the current 2020-2021 reporting period against the QIEP and the QQI Re-Engagement Action Plan (Section 1.2). In many instances, actions were initiated within the reporting period but were not completed due to workload prioritisation arising from our COVID-19 response. In some cases, actions were paused in a planned way as we identified a need to achieve alignment with NCI's evolving institutional strategic planning priorities that will be confirmed in 2021/22. These activities include the relaunch of NCI's annual monitoring reports and the implementation of the outcomes of NCI's review of School administration services both delivered in 2021/2022.

The strategic, academic, operational, and financial actions and investments outlined above, and initiated in 2020/21, will enhance NCI's capacity and capability to scale and sustain our services into the future, and underpin our commitment to continuous quality assurance, improvement, and impact.

NCI Strategic Theme	Relevant Academic Strategy Objectives	Quality Improvement and Enhancement Plan (QIEP) Actions 2020/2021	Progress	Impact/Output
Outstanding Student Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and recognise students' participation in college-wide activities, which can contribute towards enhancing the college community at NCI, including student representation roles, work experience and helping with a peer-assisted learning scheme Combine our recognised teaching excellence with an outstanding student experience both on- campus, off-campus and online 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a student-centred design approach to refresh the NCI Student Voice structure prior to relaunching in 2021. Engage with NStEP and the NCI Students' Union to support the recruitment, training, and participation of student representatives within QA & QI processes at NCI. Ensure the learner voice, gathered through Student.Survey.ie and internal feedback tools is used to monitor the quality of the student experience and inform effective decision-making particularly around COVID alternative arrangements. Utilise the Academic Risk Register and COVID Alternative Arrangements Action Plan to monitor the quality of the student experience between April 2020 - August 2021. Refresh the annual programme monitoring process to review evidence of consistency of teaching, learning and assessment practices across all validated modes of delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Progress Completed Completed Completed In Progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Student Voice Structure launched 2021/2022. Impact of student reps evidenced across decision-making structures at a programme and NCI level. 5-Year analysis of NCI's ISSE Data considered by Academic Council in Dec 2020. Action plan developed in 2021 and implemented thereafter. Register monitored regularly by Academic Council and the Governing Body. All 34 risks reduced to a green/low rating by Q3 2021. New templates launched in 2021/22 as part of new Programme Lifecycle Management structure.
Global Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that internationalisation, through our International Office, has an appropriate presence and position of influence throughout the college and academic structures Build on the success of our Chinese collaborations, by expanding our academic partnership portfolio across all regions in which we are active Create new support initiatives and advance our existing supports for our international students, alumni, and stakeholders 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review and refresh the terms of reference, membership, and effectiveness of NCI's academic governance structures, to maximise efficiency, transparency, and impact. Contribute to the design and implementation of the 2021-2024 NCI International Plan, ensuring NCI and National QA requirements and expectations for academic partnerships are clearly articulated and met in partnership agreements. Collaborative Partnership Guides prepared and published for use by internal and external stakeholders. Thematic Review of NCI's International Team and services against the QQI <i>Code of Practice</i> for Provision of Programmes to <i>International Learners</i> completed in 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed Completed In Progress Completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refreshed academic governance structure launched 2021/22. International Plan aligned with internal and external QA requirements. Greater clarity and consistency of practice achieved from 2021/22 onwards. Evidence of alignment with QQI Code in place in advance of applying for the QQI International Education Mark (IEM).
Lifelong Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a suite of online programmes, both fee bearing and free, which allow access to those who otherwise would not be able to avail of an NCI education. Continue to understand and develop educational opportunities for those who are looking to reskill, upskill or avail of education that would not be widely available or affordable to them 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively engage with QQI consultations to develop and validate fully online programmes in response to the needs of key external stakeholders. Refresh the NCI QA Handbook (QAES) to include new policies and procedures for ensuring the quality of fully online programmes. Proactively participate in QQI pilots to develop and validate micro-credentials in response to sector, government and COVID-19 recovery plan needs to upskill/reskill the workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Progress In Progress Completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QQI Validated programmes available through online delivery following QQI approval in 2021/22. To be aligned with new QQI guidance to deliver clarity and consistency in practices secured to reassure internal and external stakeholders. First NCI Micro-credential validated in Dec 2020. Nine validated by QQI within reporting period.
Socially Engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed our commitment to social responsibility and sustainability in our curricula, policies, strategies, and procedures Demonstrate and report our main social, environmental, and economic impacts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and launch a new NCI Programme Lifecycle Management Structure (PLM), which requires programme teams to consider embedding their commitment to social responsibility and sustainability within new validated and revalidated programmes. Enhance the accessibility, transparency, and utilisation of qualitative and quantitative data to inform effective decision-making and reporting on NCI's responsiveness, relevance, and impact to external stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed In Progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLM Executive Sub-Group convened in Q1 2021 to inform academic planning and budgetary decisions. Investment underway to establish an agreed single 'source of truth' for internal and external decision-making, planning reporting and review processes.
Enterprise Focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to ensure that all programmes are developed to meet current and future workforce demands Derive maximum benefit from external expertise and participation in national and international networks 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh guidelines and templates for programme validation and revalidation to require evidence of programme currency, relevance, and demand. Participate in national and European networking and peer review activities to enhance benchmarking and identify peer reviewers to participate in NCI programme validations and revalidations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed Completed and Ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with new QQI templates and pre-populated to minimise burden on programme teams. Benchmark NCI programmes and practices against national and international exemplars.
Recognised and Respected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that both schools, all centres and any other departments actively look for accreditations that improve our profile and allow benchmarking against similar organisations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and implement QIE commitments and actions as articulated in NCI's Athena Swan, asIAM, QS Stars and QQI Re-Engagement commitments and action plans. Support alignment with professional body requirements in programme review processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed Completed and Ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QIE commitments embedded in NCI's successful Athena Swan, asIAM and QS Stars accreditations. Professional body recognition and requirements retained throughout 2020/21.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

THEME	QQI RE-ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN COMMITMENTS	PROGRESS
Academic Governance	A Quality Improvement and Effectiveness Plan (QIEP) 2020-2024 to be launched in Q1 2020 following Executive Team approval of business case. This will significantly enhance NCI's ability to demonstrate institutional effectiveness within internal and external monitoring and review processes.	Completed
	Academic Council self-assessment process completed in advance of a wider refresh of the NCI academic governance structure (primarily Academic Council sub-committees).	Completed
	Academic governance refinement process completed - including consultation with staff and students to co-design a refreshed NCI academic governance structure. Review process to provide clarity on qualitative and quantitative data requirements across the committee structure to inform effective decision making.	Completed
	Renew NCI's subscription to the National Student Engagement Programme NStEP) and co-deliver NCI Class Rep Training with the Students' Union 2019/2020 to enhance the effectiveness of the student rep role in decision-making.	Completed
	Student Voice structures refreshed and relaunched through a co-design project between QIE, the Students' Union and Student Support Services. Emphasis placed upon demonstrating the impact of the student voice on decision making and NCI's commitment to enhancing responsiveness and transparency.	In progress. New streamlined student support structure & student hub to be launched 2021/22
	College reporting structures refreshed following Executive Team approval in Q4 2019 with a focus on enhancing quantitative data accuracy, accessibility, and utilisation in a timely way within decision-making.	Completed
Programme Management Lifecycle	Develop and launch a new Programme Management Lifecycle Structure to ensure all NCI programmes demonstrate evidence of alignment with institutional objectives, financial viability, sustainability, relevance, and responsiveness to stakeholder requirements.	Completed
	Refresh and relaunch the NCI Annual Programme Monitoring Structure to strengthen evidence of programme health, relevance, quality, and impact on learner success. The outcomes of which will be analysed annually at an institutional level and inform Academic Council and Executive decision making and investments.	In progress. New process launched Q1 2022 as part of new PLM structure.
	Review of Assessment and Examination Policies and Procedures completed by a working group of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee and outcomes implemented thereafter.	In progress. Led by LTA Committee Sub-Group.
Compliance	New Regulatory Framework to be launched in 2020 to streamline and increase the awareness and understanding of compliance obligations and risk management and monitoring structures.	Reprofiled to be completed in 2021/22 to accommodate COVID-19 priorities.
	NCI policies and procedures to be regularly reviewed, refreshed, and published (at least annually) to ensure ongoing compliance with GDPR.	
	NCI staff recruitment policies and procedures to be regularly reviewed (at least annually) to ensure continued compliance with Garda vetting regulations.	Completed
	QIE communication plan and strategy launched to monitor annually the accuracy, consistency, and completeness of QAES information published to internal and external stakeholders.	Reprofiled to be completed in 2021/22 to accommodate COVID-19 priorities.
Establish and maintain a collaborative partnership register that includes a copy of each partnership contract. Clarifying QA expectations, policies and procedures including monitoring, to be applied within the design and delivery of collaborative programme partnerships.		
Collaborations	Collaborative Partnership Guides prepared and published alongside relevant extracts from QAES for use by internal and external stakeholders.	

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting Dates
Governing Body	23 October 2020 4 December 2020 12 March 2021 21 May 2021
Academic Council	14 October 2020 16 December 2020 10 Feb 2021 5 May 2021
Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee	11 Nov 2020 10 March 2021 12 May 2021
Research Committee	25 Nov 2020 24 March 2021 2 June 2021

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

In July 2021, NCI's Director of Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (QIE) Ms Karen Jones - was appointed Registrar Designate to take over from the Registrar - Mr John McGarrigle. The Registrar Designate post was implemented and the transition completed in January 2022.

A significant structural change in QA leadership and management underpinned the Registrar recruitment process, with the relocation of the QIE Team from the portfolio of the Vice-President (Academic Affairs and Research) to the Office of the Registrar. This relocation was designed to enhance connectivity, consistency and quality across the student and programme lifecycles. This structural change also underpinned the consultation process launched in September 2021 to streamline student success and school administrative structures.

The subsequent appointment of Patricia Maguire as the new Director of QIE in Q4 2021 will also oversee the expansion of NCI's QIE Team in 2022. Key changes within the Team are anticipated to include: the appointment of a dedicated Programme Lifecycle Manager; a QIE administrator, a position to champion and manage NCI's student voice structures, and a dedicated position to ensure the ongoing currency, effectiveness, and impact of NCI's QAES and our academic decision-making structures.

The *Streamlining Student Success Structures* initiative will be utilised to increase transparency, consistency and connectivity in roles and responsibilities for programme and institutional-level quality, as well as ensuring that staff at all levels of the institution are able to inform and impact NCI decision making. Greater clarity, training and support will be available throughout this model to ensure all NCI staff understand their QA and QIE obligations to ensure we continue to deliver a high-quality NCI student experience.

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review (for which report has been published during reporting period)	Date of completion	Links to relevant publications
Programme Validation		
Certificate in Emerging Digital Technologies	October 2020	Irish Register of Qualification (irq.ie)
Certificate in Software Development Fundamentals	November 2020	Irish Register of Qualification (irq.ie)
Certificate in Data Governance and Cybersecurity	March 2021	Irish Register of Qualification (irq.ie)
Certificate in Digital Capabilities and the Learning Experience	May 2021	Irish Register of Qualification (irq.ie)
Certificate in Technologies in Assessment, Feedback and Learning Support	May 2021	Irish Register of Qualification (irq.ie)
Certificate in Technologies in Teaching and Learning	May 2021	Irish Register of Qualification (irq.ie)
Certificate in Leadership, Governance and Change Management in Early Childhood Home Visiting	May 2021	Irish Register of Qualification (irq.ie)
Certificate in Curriculum and Pedagogical Practice for Early Childhood Home Visiting	May 2021	Irish Register of Qualification (irq.ie)
Certificate in Educational Practice for P-Tech	May 2021	Irish Register of Qualification (irq.ie)
Certificate in Strategies of Learning and Teaching for P-Tech	May 2021	Irish Register of Qualification (irq.ie)
Certificate in P-Tech (Pathways in Technology): Internal Review Panel QQI Validation Panel	April 2021 August 2021	NCI Share Portal
Certificate in Workplace Adjudication: Internal Review Panel	August 2021	QQI Programme Portal
Programme Revalidation		
Higher Diploma in Science in Data Analytics Certificate in Data Analytics	October 2020	Irish Register of Qualification (irq.ie)
Thematic/Support Service Review		
Review of NCI Compliance against the QQI Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Learners	July 2021	NCI Share Portal

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels² involved in IQA

(i) Expert Review Team/Panel Size and Related Processes

Ten peer review panels were constructed within the reporting period to conduct the sixteen reviews, validations and revalidations listed in table 1.4.1.

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/ Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review & Revalidation	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes	16	15	1		13	2	1
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes	0						
Desk reviews	9				9		
Virtual processes	7				4	2	1
Average panel size for each process type*	4				4	6	3

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

² QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

(ii) Composition of Expert Review Teams/Panels involved in IQA

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar (Private HEIs - including internals)	Different (Industry, IoTs, Universities)
Chair	10	6	4		3	7				8	2
Secretary	5	4	1		3	2				5	
Academic/Discipline/ Specific	17	11	6		1	16				1	16
Student Representative	2	1	1			2					2
QA	3	2	1		3					3	
External Industry /Third Mission	6	3	3			6				2	4

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

At its October 2020 meeting, Academic Council noted the need to update the NCI Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES) to maintain accuracy and currency with internal and external developments, requirements and needs as well as to support NCI's capacity to scale its provision and services in line with strategic plans for growth.

While work has been initiated within the reporting period, particularly in relation to policies and procedures aligned with alternative assessments throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, this work will be finalised in 2022 as part of the *Streamlining Student Success Structures* initiative. This expanded timeline will enable NCI to review and refresh all QA policies, procedures, and practices, as well as ensure the new policies and procedures can be clearly understood and implemented consistently across NCI. A new QIE team member will be appointed in 2021/22 to manage the necessary review and refresh of the QAES and to introduce methodologies for ongoing monitoring of QAES fitness-for-purpose and impact.

Programme Development

NCI completed a substantial schedule of programme validations, reviews, and revalidations within the reporting period with emphasis placed upon programme development being explicitly aligned with evidence of programme demand, relevance, currency, and impact. This approach will be reinforced on an ongoing basis through the Executive Programme Lifecycle Management Executive Sub-Group (PLM ESG).

Within the reporting period NCI proactively engaged with the QQI micro-credentials pilot, enhancing NCI's ability to respond in a timely manner to emerging government and stakeholder needs, particularly in the post-COVID environment. A total of nine micro-credentials were developed and validated by QQI within the reporting period, with NCI one of the first providers to secure QQI validation for a 10 credit micro-credential in December 2020 - Certificate in Software Development Fundamentals.

Five new programmes also contributed to UN [*Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Quality Education: Widening Access - Promoting Lifelong Learning-Distance Learning-Student Learning Supports*](#). These programmes demonstrate NCI's commitment to lifelong learning and impact, to change lives through education for our learners as well as their families and communities. Two new micro-credentials were designed to underpin the success and impact of the well-known NCI Early Learning Initiative (ELI) Home Visitors programme. Working in partnership with Government and local communities, NCI's ELI team has developed a range of innovative programmes to improve the educational aspirations and outcomes of children and young people. It has grown from 400 participants (children, parents, and professionals) to 14,000+ a year and moved beyond its initial Dublin Docklands catchment area to supporting other communities across the country.

NCI also designed and secured validation for two new NFQ Level 9 micro-credentials for secondary school teachers who will teach the innovative Pathways in Technology (P-TECH) Level 6 HE programme within three Dublin Dublin's North-east Inner City (NEIC) partner schools. The aim of P-TECH (a concept originated in the USA) is to provide post-primary students in the NEIC area with an innovative and highly relevant education programme that enables them to earn third-level credits. The project supports all three progression options for these students to higher and further education routes as well as directly into employment. Along with our consortium partners in the Department of Education and in industry, we anticipate that engagement with HE level learning through the Certificate in P-TECH

will help retain Dublin NEIC students in the education system, and build their confidence to progress to a Further Education College or Higher Education Institution.

Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Administrative Services Review:

Following the completion of the Administrative Services Review in 2019, a working group was established under the leadership of the Vice-President, to identify and implement sustainable solutions to enhance professional administration staff retention, increase opportunities for career progression and improve consistency and effectiveness of administrative services for staff and students. While several structures were debated throughout the reporting period, the Executive approved the Streamlining *Student Success Structures* in 2021/22. This initiative involves the creation of several career progression opportunities through the approved creation of an Academic Operations Management Team and a revised student success services structure. NCI will throughout 2021/22 co-design new structures and systems with staff and student representatives to ensure that the learner is at the heart of what we do, across the student and programme lifecycle. This major project will be regularly reviewed by the Executive and by the Academic Council and should result in:

- The delivery of a more consistent and transparent student experience regardless of registration status, mode of delivery or student location.
- An improvement in how faculty and staff deliver and experience administration and student support services and an increase in the effectiveness of these services (including minimising unnecessary administrative burdens).
- Improved retention of faculty and professional staff and stronger evidence of career progression and satisfaction.
- An enhanced ability to make informed, student-centred decisions at institutional, school and programme levels.

Compliance with QQI Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners

In July 2021 NCI completed a self-evaluation against the QQI *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners*. The self-evaluation considered:

- NCI's evidence of compliance with The Code
- What could be cited as examples of best practices in key processes
- Opportunities for further enhancement in existing service provision

To ensure the robustness of the self-evaluation process, the outputs were considered by a panel of peer reviewers, consisting of two internal and two external experts. The aims of this process were to provide an additional level of support and guidance to NCI and the International Office to help the prioritisation of actions and services to enhance compliance levels and improve the overall quality of the NCI international student experience.

The panel commended the comprehensive and robust self-evaluation completed by the International Office. The self-evaluation and proposed action plan were considered suitably evaluative, addressing all the main areas for compliance, and highlighted areas of improvement considered to be fully compliant. In addition to the actions proposed by the NCI Team, the following high-level recommendations were proposed by the panel for NCI to continue to improve service quality and effectiveness for NCI's international learners:

1. Utilise the new NCI Strategic Plan to reinforce NCI's holistic commitment to internationalisation.
2. Map the international student journey at NCI to streamline services and ensure quality and consistency across the entire international student experience.
3. Systematically capture and analyse qualitative and quantitative data, including formal and informal student feedback, at key points across the international student lifecycle.
4. Review and combine all relevant policies and procedures relating to international student admissions and fees into a single 'user-friendly' document with the aim of increasing transparency, consistency and understanding across staff and students.
5. Secure IT solutions to enhance the scalability and sustainability of key activities conducted by the International Office to ensure the consistent experience of students in their interactions with the College.
6. Engage staff from the International Office in decision making, policy developments and the programme lifecycle management process to ensure the needs and experiences of international students and the expertise of the staff inform effective decision making.

Progress against the action plan is reviewed quarterly by the QIE Director and the International Director, with regular reports to the Executive.

Students as Partners

Throughout 2020/21 the NCI Students' Union (NCISU) and NCI engaged in discussions to review and develop NCI's first formal NCISU/NCI Partnership Agreement. The Partnership Agreement, to be signed in the next reporting period, is benchmarked against the 2021 National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP)'s [Framework for Authentic Student Engagement in Decision Making](#).

The Agreement aims to:

- Place the needs of our learners at the heart of everything we do.
- Empower and engage learners to inform our decision-making processes.
- Ensure learners can formally and informally express their individual and collective experiences and see a timely and proportionate response.
- Ensure we have transparent and appropriate procedures for dealing with learner complaints and appeals.
- Promote a culture of integrity, equality, diversity, inclusivity, and mutual respect between staff and learners, including within the learner-teacher relationship.

By entering into this Partnership Agreement, the College and the NCISU confirm a shared commitment to work together in deliverance of NCI's mission *to change lives through education*. We commit to focusing our combined energies on identifying and responding to the individual, collective and lifelong learning needs of our students. We commit to working together to ensure our learners become independent, work-ready and community-focused lifelong learners by fostering, promoting, and respecting equality, diversity and inclusion and mutual respect across our staff and learners. Once signed the commitments outlined in the Partnership Agreement will be monitored biannually against a formal Service Level Agreement (SLA) and reviewed in line with key stakeholder needs.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity Networking

NCI continues to be a member of the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN). Launched in Q4 2019, the NAIN was designed to enhance sector-led consistency in academic integrity practices, guidance and controls for use across the sector from 2020 onwards. NCI's Librarian, the NCISU President and Vice President are NAIN representatives. They also managed NCI's first National Academic Integrity Week in October 2020.

The Library allocates significant resources to supporting academic integrity in NCI through LibGuides, LibChats and the [NCI Referencing Guide](#), now in its 5th edition. The guidance and support from the Library Team will continue to be a key resource in the next reporting period, with guidance refreshed to reflect the updates to the NCI academic integrity policy and NAIN publications as appropriate in 2021/22.

Data on academic integrity experiences and disciplinary cases throughout 2020/21 was presented by the Registrar for discussion at 2021 internal and QQI Exam Boards. A formal review of assessment experiences throughout the 2019/2020 and 2020/21 alternative arrangements will be completed in the next reporting period and will inform decisions to be made in the post-pandemic assessment environment. Reports are due for review by the Executive, Academic Council and Governing Body, and will be used to inform assessment strategies, policies and practices from 2021/22 onwards.

COVID-19 Contingency Management and Risk Mitigations

NCI's Academic Risk Register and COVID-19 Contingency Management and Mitigation Plan was designed and launched in April 2020 to monitor a wide range of actions to mitigate risks around the COVID crisis. Mapped against QQI's *Guiding Principles for Alternative Assessment* (March 2020, extended to August 2021), the Register was received and reviewed regularly by Academic Council and the Governing Body.

By the end of the 2020/21 academic year, the 34 risks on the COVID Management Risk Register had all been reduced to a green (low) risk rating. This denotes that the risks remained active, but were being successfully monitored, managed, and mitigated. A proposal will be made in 2021/22 for a new Academic Risk Register to be developed to capture academic risks in the post-COVID environment.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment Support Structures

NCI's longstanding experience and investments in blended and online teaching, learning and assessment practices and cloud computing underpinned our ability to respond to the changing needs and expectations of learners throughout the pandemic. Our IT infrastructure, Online Academic Programme Supervisor, Teaching Enhancement Coordinator and Teaching Enhancement Unit continue to be heavily utilised to support the quality of the staff and student experience. 2020/21 investments in dual delivery technology (simultaneous delivery of class content to on-campus and remote learners) across NCI's teaching spaces were vital in preparations for the staggered return to on-campus/dual delivery for 2021/22. The continued use of dual delivery will be reviewed in 2021/22 as part of NCI's ongoing developments around blended delivery to maximise flexibility, while enhancing quality, for learners.

Monitoring Student Feedback throughout COVID

The Student.Survey.ie results of the 2020/21 first year experience provided a good steer that NCI was effective in supporting first year students despite the inherent COVID challenges. NCI exceeded the 'All Studentsurvey.ie' average in that 92.3% of NCI first year respondents (as opposed to 87.6%)

confirmed they “were able to access the online learning sufficiently to engage with my studies.” Similarly, 54.6% of NCI first year respondents (as opposed to 46.7% of the first year All Student.Survey.ie average) confirmed they felt connected to NCI ‘despite the restricted access to campus’. NCI will seek to utilize the 2022 Student.Survey.ie mechanism to monitor the overall and distinct COVID responses, and will further invest in our internal capacity to conduct student surveys as part of our *Streamlining Student Success* initiative.

The data presented in the 2020/21 and the forthcoming 2021/22 national student survey reports will inform our institutional approach to blended and online delivery, including dual delivery technology. For those able to join us again on campus in 2021/2022, NCI will ensure that physical and online services, structures, and classes maximise opportunities to interact and engage with peers and staff. Emphasis will be placed upon increasing interactions for incoming first years as well as the second-year students to actively participate in and contribute to our vibrant, inclusive, and impactful community.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	NCI Strategic Theme	Relevant Objectives	Delivery Lead(s)	Planned Action	Impact/Output
1	Outstanding Student Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and recognise students' participation in college-wide activities, which can contribute towards enhancing the college community at NCI, including student representation roles, work experience and helping with a peer-assisted learning scheme Combine our recognised teaching excellence with an outstanding student experience both on-campus, off-campus and online 	QIE Specialist & NCISU President	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Launch refreshed NCI Learner Voice structure and monitor implementation and impact annually, reporting to Academic Council. 1.2. Ensure the learner voice, gathered through Student.Survey.ie and internal feedback structures is used to monitor the quality of the student experience during and following the lifting of COVID alternative arrangements. 1.3. Review data from the refreshed the annual programme monitoring process to assess evidence of programme level responses to the student voice, and review consistency of teaching, learning and assessment practices across all validated modes of delivery - including online. Academic Council paper to be prepared. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased evidence published of student engagement, student influence and NCI's responsiveness to the NCI learner voice through formal and informal feedback structures. Evidence of NCI's responsiveness to the learner voice to hopefully increase student trust and participation in future internal and external surveys.
2	Global Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that internationalisation, through our International Office, has an appropriate presence and position of influence throughout the college and academic structures Create new support initiatives and advance our existing supports for our international students, alumni, and stakeholders 	QIE Director & International Director	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. Academic Council minutes and Annual Quality Report to capture and report evidence of NCI's global impact and monitor quality across collaborative partnerships. 2.2. Support the application for NCI to secure the QQI International Education Mark following a mapping process to demonstrate compliance with the Code of <i>Code of Practice</i> for Provision of Programmes to <i>International</i> Learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCI secures the QQI International Education Mark (IEM)
3	Lifelong Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a suite of online programmes, both fee bearing and free, which allow access to those who otherwise would not be able to avail of an NCI education. Continue to understand and develop educational opportunities for those who are looking to reskill, upskill or avail of education that would not be widely available or affordable to them 	QIE Director & Deans	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Proactively engage with QQI's consultation to validate fully online programmes in response to the needs of key external stakeholders. 3.2. Proactively participate in QQI pilots to develop and validate micro-credentials in response to sector, government and COVID-19 recovery plan needs to upskill/reskill the workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCI Programmes validated by QQI available in a range of delivery modes and lengths in line with current and emerging stakeholder needs. Work with CELL/ELI for six new micro-credentials to be validated and available for learners from 2021/22 onwards
4	Socially Engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed our commitment to social responsibility and sustainability in our curricula, policies, strategies and procedures Demonstrate and report our main social, environmental and economic impacts 	QIE Director	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1. Review evidence from NCI's Programme Lifecycle Management Structure (PLM), of explicit commitments to social responsibility and sustainability, as well as ethical and data governance embedded within new validated and revalidated programmes - as appropriate. 4.2. Monitor consistency and accuracy in the utilisation of NCI's central qualitative and quantitative datasets to inform decision-making and reporting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased consistency and visibility in the use of a single set of data for internal and external decision-making and reporting.
5	Enterprise Focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to ensure that all programmes are developed to meet current and future workforce demands Derive maximum benefit from external expertise and participation in national and international networks 	QIE Director & QIE Specialist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1. Oversee the revalidation of 40 programmes throughout 2021/22 and 2022/23. Revalidation schedule agreed internally and with QQI in Q1 2021 and workload mapping undertaken to achieve agreed deadlines. 5.2. Participate in national and European networking and peer review activities to enhance benchmarking and identify peer reviewers to participate in NCI programme validations and revalidations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 programmes successfully revalidated in advance of Sept 2023 entry. Pool of trained and qualified peers built to be deployed across the revalidation panels scheduled for 2021/22 and 2022/23.
6	Recognised and Respected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that both schools, all centres and any other departments actively look for accreditations that improve our profile and allow benchmarking against similar organisations 	QIE Director	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1. Support the School of Business progress towards AACSB accreditation. 6.2. Support the alignment with professional body requirements in annual programmer monitoring, validation and (re)validation processes. 6.3. Support the submission of NCI's QS Stars Application 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased recognition of the quality and relevance of NCI's programmes nationally and internationally. QS Stars rating continued for use in communications and marketing materials

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed: Sept 2021 - August 2022	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Programme Validation		
MSc/ PGDip in Artificial Intelligence	October 2021	N/A
MSc/PGDip in Artificial Intelligence for Business		
Certificate in Workplace Adjudication	October 2021	N/A
Certificate in Business Intelligence	December 2021	N/A
Certificate in the Science of Decision-Making		
Certificate in Sustainable Business Leadership		
MSc/PGDip in Accounting	June/July 2022 (TBC)	N/A
Programme Review and Revalidation		
Master of Business Administration	December 2021	2015/16
PG Diploma in Business Administration		
MSc/PGDip in Entrepreneurship		
MSc/PGDip in International Business		
MSc in Management		
PG Diploma in Business in Management		
BA (Hons) in HRM Strategy and Practice	February 2022	2015/16
Diploma in HRM Strategy and Practice		
MA/PGDip in Human Resource Management		
BA (Hons) in Accounting and Finance (180 and 240 Credits)	February 2022	2015/16
MSc/PGDip of Science in Finance		
BA (Hons), Diploma and Certificate in Business Management	March 2022	2015/16
Thematic/Department/Support Service Review		
Review and Refresh of Quality Assurance and Enhancement System (QAES)	2022	2018/2019
Review to Streamline NCI Student Success Structures	2021/22	N/A

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

The reviews planned beyond the next reporting period are outlined here:

Unit to be reviewed: Sept 2022 - August 2023
Programme Review and Revalidation
BA(Hons) in Business (240-ECTS and 180-ECTS)
BA (Hons) in Human Resource Management (240-ECTS and 180-ECTS)
BA (Hons) in Marketing Practice (240-ECTS and 180-ECTS)
BA(Hons) Psychology
BSc Technology Management
MSc/PGDip in Cybersecurity
MSc/PGDip and Higher Diploma in FinTech
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing
Higher Diploma in Financial Services Analytics (apprenticeship)
Higher Certificate in International Financial Services (apprenticeship)
BA(Hons) Recruitment Practice (apprenticeship)

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

The theme identified by QQI for this reporting period is:

Ensuring Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement in Digital Environments

NCI is pleased to include five case-studies for the reporting period. These studies demonstrate selected areas of progress in 2020-21, and most build on success achieved in the College's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in the latter half of the 2019-20 academic year. As the pandemic became the sustained, day to day reality for all of us during 2020-21, the digital operating environment became ever more essential to the delivery of NCI's mission. Against this backdrop, College staff became increasingly aware of the need to assure and enhance the quality of the provision and services that were being facilitated by the digital environment. We include these case-studies as illustrative examples of our efforts to assure and enhance of academic provision and learning supports. They are not a compendium of all relevant activities in the 20-21 digital environment at NCI.

The case-studies are:

1. Online careers planning for Business students
2. Directed e-Learning in Computing modules
3. Norma Smurfit Library Turnitin developments
4. The Flipped Classroom in Postgraduate Economics
5. Building on online LibChat for successful student and staff Library communications

Case Study 1: Online careers planning for Business students

Introduction and Context:

In January 2021, 276 2nd year School of Business students completed an online credit bearing “Career Management Skills” module. This was almost double the 144 students that had taken the module the previous year. Students were surveyed at the start of the module to understand their level of career readiness and allow the module to be tailored accordingly.

- 6% said they knew what they wanted *and* how to get it.
- 20% said they knew that they wanted *but* were not sure how to get it.
- 46% said they had a vague idea of what they might like
- 28% said they had no idea what they wanted

17% of students said they already had work experience related to their area of interest; while 83% had work, experience gained from within the leisure or hospitality sector.

Of note to the Careers and Employability services in NCI, 70% said they had no network to assist them in securing employment.

Given the number of students who had given very little thought to career planning and the number who did not have a professional network available to them the challenge was to ensure that students had at least the same opportunities to interact with industry as they normally would in the non-Covid study environment. Using digital technology and leveraging employer networks, we successfully scaled the module for online delivery, whilst retaining the networking building opportunities that are such an important part of the offering to students.

Summary of the Initiative:

Traditionally, this experiential module had been delivered to students through lecture halls and using large open areas within NCI that facilitated large-group interaction with employer representatives. In 2020-21, their experience would be through the small screens of their laptops.

We single out four digital technology-driven innovations as particularly relevant to the success of the online module sessions:

1. We used Kahoot to survey students at the beginning and end of the module to measure their career readiness and learning gain.
2. We had previously held on-campus mock interviews for students. However, we were at absolute capacity with 144 students. In January 2021, using MS Teams, 276 students undertook individual mock interviews with experienced industry recruiters. HAYS recruitment volunteered 76 hours of mock interviews using over 20 consultants.
3. We had previously used the NCI College Atrium and Kelly Theatre for structured round table networking events. In terms of physical college space, the January 2020 event (pre-Covid) was at capacity with 144 students. However, in 2021, using a virtual conference platform, we held a round table networking event for 276 students and 30 employers over two hours. This would not have been possible in person. Each group of nine students met 15 employers over the course of two hours. Participating employers included Adare HRM, AIB, Arup, Comfort Keepers, CRH, Crowe, Crowleys, Deloitte, Dell, ESB, Hays, Jameson, Kaseya, Peninsula, Personio, SAP and Trane Technologies.
4. Video interviews (via Zoom) became the norm over the last 2 years. To ensure that students could perform effectively, we provided them with free access to the *Sparkhire*³ video interviewing tool. All students undertaking this module completed a one-way video interview.

³ <https://go.sparkhire.com/>

Key Findings and Impact:

Feedback on the module was strongly positive, from both students and participating employers.

Selected Student Module feedback:

- *Big thanks for making this module fun, interesting and worthwhile. You went out of your way to make events happen even in a level 5 lockdown! My favourite module by far.*
- *It pushed me out of my comfort zone (in a good way) by making us do the networking event and the interview and I'm very grateful for this.*
- *Everything was clear and straight forward. She made networking so enjoyable, and I feel this will help me along my networking journey in the future!*
- *The opportunity to network with other college students at NCI and employers from various organisations across different industries was hugely insightful and beneficial. I really enjoyed this module over the second semester - Thank you for all your support!*
- *The talks were a great insight into the minds of what employers today are looking for and what makes an applicant stand out from the rest. The knowledge the employers delivered was impeccable and to a very high standard.*

Employer Feedback on LinkedIn

Natasha Whitney, Crowe: That was great, great students: you organised a really good event. It has been the only positive engagement I have had this year in any college, so thanks so much for that. I enjoyed it so much, a nice change of pace for a morning!

Maria Walsh, BDO - Great to speak with students at the [National College of Ireland](#) yesterday! It is also great to see the creative technology we are still finding to deal with current restrictions.

Ross O'Brien, AIB: Massive thanks [Caroline Kennedy](#) & [National College of Ireland](#) for the invite to this morning's event. I was delighted to represent AIB and meet some of the second-year students on what was a great virtual platform...Well done to all involved!

Conclusion:

The Careers Service aims to support and enhance the graduate outcomes of NCI students. Encouraging and facilitating the development of students' networking skills is a vital component of our work. Leveraging digital technology, we were able to provide 2021 students with even more networking opportunities than would have been possible on campus. Using Kahoot at the start and again at the end of the 2021 Career Management Skills module, it was possible to understand where each student and the overall class was in terms of career readiness and the extent to which they had already engaged in activities that could enhance their employability. This supported effective module design.

In the longer-term, the Careers Services plans to use digital technology to tailor and personalise supports for students. We are considering the introduction of a short online Career Readiness Survey as part of the registration and process for full-time students every year in NCI. This would facilitate the careers service to:

- Better understand students' positions at the beginning of each year.
- Assess how far students need to travel to articulate and then reach their goals.
- Identify the class cohorts most in need of careers support and then deliver more targeted, streamlined and personalised services
- Introduce 'real-time' monitoring of students' career readiness and their engagement with valuable experiences while they are students in NCI.

Making best use of digital technology supports us to better identify current student needs in "real-time". It mitigates the drawbacks of reliance on graduate outcome information which is necessarily retrospective, meaning that enhancements to services can often come too late for some current students whose more immediate needs are not known.

Case Study 2: Directed e-Learning in Computing Modules



Introduction and Context:

Directed eLearning (DeL) is a carefully designed blended learning approach, that mixes asynchronous learning materials and synchronous classes and supports learner retention efforts. This is made possible by intelligent use of the capabilities offered by digital technology.

NCI has been delivering courses to part time learners for well over 10 years and during that time, it has become increasingly clear that adult learners tend to be time poor and need to juggle their studies around their home/work life. Directed e-learning was designed as an attempt to introduce some time flexibility traditionally time-constrained learning activities. NCI made significant advances in the deployment of Directed e-Learning within Computing modules in the reporting period 2020-21.

Summary of the Initiative:

Directed eLearning has similarities with technology-enabled pedagogic models such as the Flipped Classroom, whereby learners initially engage with threshold topics via the exploration of video, assigned readings, laboratory and tutorial-based content on the College's Learning Management System (LMS - Moodle), before bringing their learning to the live classes. Each week learners must complete lab challenges before their classes. Learners then lead the classroom sessions, with the lecturer acting reflexively to design the class based on the student voice, rather than over reliance on didactic methods such as slide based delivery.

In DeL, academic staff carefully design learning content to maximise learner retention efforts. There are many opportunities for formative assessment, and learners can revisit these as many times as they like to test and improve their learning. Additionally, the content has been designed so that reports are generated on a weekly basis regarding learner progress. Lecturers and College student support staff use these to quickly identify when learners are falling behind and to offer support.

First name / Surname	Email address	Lecturer: Sam CoganEm	Week 1 Lesson	Week 1 Lab	Week 2 Lesson	Week 2 Lab	Week 3 Lesson	Week 3 Lab (Marked, 5%)	Link to Lecture	Week 4 Lesson	Week 4 Lab	Week 5 Lesson	Week 5 Lab	Week 6 Lesson	Week 6 Lab Submission	Week 7 Lesson	Week 7 Lab Submission
Learner info removed for privacy		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Below is a sample email for learners who are flagged as behind:

According to your Moodle records, there are items outstanding due to be completed for the Web Design and Client-Side Scripting class tomorrow night. Please ensure you address these items before class. Before class, please ensure you have the following completed: 'Week 4 Lesson', 'Week 4 Lab' Please let me know if I can be of assistance in any way; I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Please note that each week of live classes relies directly on the Moodle content labelled for that week, and therefore it is easy to get left behind in class if you do not keep up on Moodle. If you need

help catching up, please reach out and speak to Computing Support as soon as possible. Their email is computingsupport@ncirl.ie, they will be happy to help.

Key Findings and Impact:

NCI staff and students are reporting positive student outcomes from this model. The isolation and drop off that can sometimes be seen during online modules has lessened, evidenced by stronger retention rates and far more social interaction being seen on the Teams channels for these learner groups than our traditional deliveries. Part-time learners report enjoying the self-paced aspect of the course and the ability to go back over content until they are happy with the level of their learning.

Selected Learner Testimony:

“Through signing up for the online higher diploma in computing I wasn’t quite sure how I would take to the learning experience as my previous education has always been delivered in person. Some of the issues I found with traditional in person lectures were the lack of flexibility for me as a learner to consume content. Luckily for me however this has been totally the opposite when it comes to NCI because of the online directed learning. I have found that I quickly took to the directed learning approach as it allowed me to control the pace of which I consume the content, I could re-watch the content if I didn’t understand something initially and if I still had questions, I had the ability to turn to my lecturers for clarification. The biggest outcome from this course so far has easily been the improvement to my programming skills due to the software development module”

Conclusion

The strengths of Directed eLearning lie in the multiple modes of engagement it affords learners, the self-paced nature of the content and the targeted support that learners receive throughout their modules. The DeL model rolled-out in 2020-21 was designed in alignment with QQI’s Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (2018) and will evolve in line with sectoral best practice.

The model is flexible and can be adapted to programmes from NFQ L6-L9. However, it should be recognised that the DeL model is time and labour-intensive to develop and requires buy in from both learners and staff. It is essential to solicit and implement regular staff feedback: this has been used to implement new curriculum design documents, including implementing Universal Design for Learning to improve accessibility and engagement. We have also implemented a peer teaching and training model for all new staff. Lecturers have been specifically trained in the design and delivery of this material.

Case Study 3: Norma Smurfit Library Turnitin (anti-plagiarism/student learning support) developments



Introduction and Context:

Since the introduction of Turnitin in 2018, the Library became increasingly aware that many students viewed Turnitin as something to be feared. In 2020-21, the Library further enhanced its efforts to promote Turnitin as a tool to support better academic writing and consequently, good grades for students. Below are some of the initiatives the library undertook to contribute to the above aims of changing staff and students' relationship and attitude towards Turnitin.

Summary of the Initiative: Turnitin FAQs and the Draft Submissions function:

One of the main methods the library uses to provide instruction to users is through LibGuides which are online guides that cover different subjects. The online guide has become more popular over time and between January 2020 and December 2021 it was viewed 8,720 times. It is particularly well used during the busy assignment submission periods, such as November 2020 when there were 1,112 views throughout the month. The guide also includes a Turnitin FAQs section where students and staff could search for questions or submit one if they do not find an answer. These Turnitin FAQs have quite high public views particularly those in relation to similarity scores or reports such as, "What does the colour on my Similarity Report mean?", which has had 3,000 views since it was added in 2019.

Students seemed to have a fixation with the Turnitin similarity scores or percentages returned, and Library staff perceived that they often misunderstood what these scores really meant. To address this, we included several FAQs and information boxes emphasising the fact that similarities do not in themselves equate to plagiarism. Rather, Turnitin simply finds similarities but does not determine whether a student has quoted or cited correctly.

The Turnitin guide also included a staff tab that facilitates staff Turnitin training, as well as instructions for setting up assignments and detecting plagiarism. Staff-specific FAQs were also made available. In an effort to help demystify the entire Turnitin process for students, we decided that both the staff and student resources should be available to all-in-one place.

Draft Submissions

The College decided to allow students to make multiple draft submissions prior to their final assignment submission. This has allowed students to check their similarity score and make changes to their assignments if needed, for example by reducing the number of direct quotations and making better use of paraphrasing. This improves the similarity scores students are getting but it should also improve the quality of their writing, and consequently their grades.

Key Findings:

It seems that students continue to be apprehensive about Turnitin. Statistics were collated on the number of draft submissions being made through Turnitin and results showed that for 2020 and 2021 the average student submitted less than one draft submission per assignment. This suggests that there are still a lot of students not utilising the draft submission option. To this end, one future development will be the availability of Turnitin's *Draft Coach* which is expected to be available for integration with Microsoft Word in 2022. This will mean that students can in future get an idea of their similarity scores and sources without having to submit a draft through the Turnitin Moodle plugin. We anticipate that this will encourage more students to use the draft submission function and lead to a better-quality outcome for students.

Conclusion:

In the 20/21 academic year, the Library has been part of a wider College effort to improve student and staff understanding of Turnitin and to dispel many of the misconceptions around it. There is an effort to bring it out into the open and dispel myths and fears. We continue to highlight as much as possible that Turnitin is a tool to help improve academic referencing, paraphrasing, and academic writing in general.

The Library will continue to update its guides and FAQs to ensure that students receive accurate information about this digital learning-support service.

Case Study 4: The Flipped Classroom in Postgraduate Economics



Introduction and Context:

A perennial issue faced by educators of technical subjects in traditional didactic-based modes of teaching is that modules are generally teacher-centred, heavily content driven and involve passive learning, based on slide delivery. Economics at the postgraduate level has particularly suffered from student dissatisfaction with the breadth and depth of technical content which must be absorbed in a short period of time (generally delivered in block format) and this has led to surface level knowledge of content applied to real world issues only in a limited fashion, information overload, and poor learning outcomes. In addition, where English is a second language, this type of traditional lecture style experience can be particularly difficult and oftentimes learners can become disengaged early in the process which makes it extremely difficult in future classes as learning tends to build iteratively.

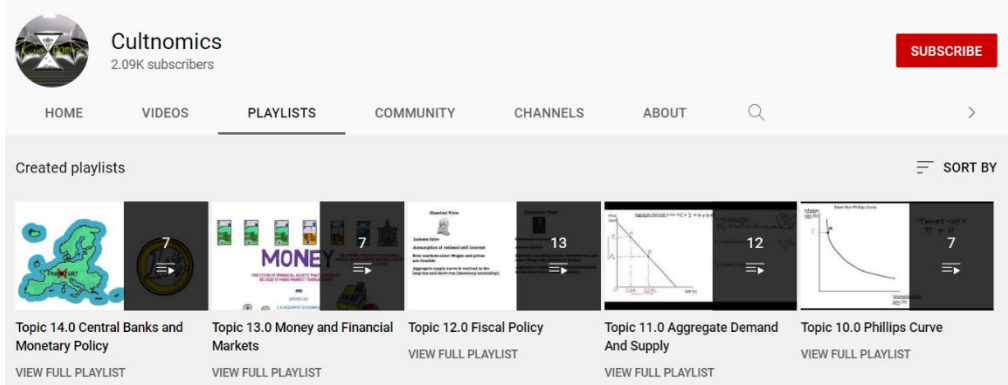
During the reporting period, some postgraduate Economics modules were redesigned and redelivered via the Flipped Classroom method, enabled by enhanced digital technologies available in NCI. This approach was introduced to overcome learner dissatisfaction with the approach to Economics teaching at a postgraduate level, to increase the learning outcomes and standardise the level of content provided, to move towards an active rather than passive teaching approach and to increase the depth of learner understanding of content and to enhance its application to real world issues.

Summary of the Initiative:

The flipped learning approach was deployed for the first time to deliver economic content to learners inside and outside the classroom. Classroom learning was inverted, and learners were provided with module material prior to the class in the form of original and bespoke digital video content, in addition to selected readings and original revision exercises. Classroom time was then dedicated to deeper learning and cognitive thinking in the form of discussions with peers and problem-based application of material to innovative and current real-world business case studies.

In order to facilitate and enhance the use of the flipped learning approach, the lecturer created a digital suite of video resources covering the key theoretical content of postgraduate economics. This involved the development of a YouTube companion channel which explained concepts and theories in a digestible manner and at a suitable academic level. This channel currently contains over 130 original videos and was created using a diverse range of software.

Example of content from *Cultnomics Economics* YouTube channel



The development of supplementary digital resources has facilitated and encouraged a personalised and inclusive learning environment with high levels of classroom interaction where the learning dynamic has become active rather than passive. This approach has engendered individualism of teaching style whereby the speed of classroom learning is adjusted to suit individual learning needs. During this process, learners are expected to become self-directed, active investigators and problem solvers working either individually or in small collaborative groups to identify key issues and problems within business case studies and evaluate potential solutions/strategies for decision-making guided by the classroom facilitator. The channel has the additional benefit of standardisation of economic content in NCI ensuring a minimum standard of content rather than the variable quality of online sources.

Key Findings and Impact:

Learner feedback on the flipped classroom approach to teaching economics at the postgraduate level in the NCI has been positive and the level of critique and application evident in student assessments are of a higher quality following the change to the learning approach. In-classroom engagement has been elevated to a far higher level than previously and the learner experience seems to have improved based on Learner testimony and feedback (evidence provided below).

Learner testimony

- *Students were given videos to understand the course content and then there were some practice sessions held to gauge if the students understood what they as being taught in the videos. It's a really intuitive way of learning and students really enjoy it*
- *Paul's YouTube videos and how he gave us individual attention during class was a great help. His style of teaching eased us and we were always comfortable to ask him questions when in doubt*
- *My favourite module to date. Paul was engaging and extremely organised. His videos were also brilliant to get an overview of new concepts. A clear knowledge of expectations was great to have*
- *His YouTube channel, Cultnomics, was of great help and I'm not sure what I would've done without it; a great idea. Lecture and tutorial material was very well put together.*
- *Pauls YouTube channel was great as I could refresh old topics at my own pace.*
- *Very technical content delivered in a considered and detailed manner. YouTube videos very helpful.*

Conclusion

The flipped classroom approach offers a flexible and active style of learning for technical subject matter where application of material to the real world is of prime importance. The development of digital teaching materials such as bespoke module-based videos facilitates this blend of asynchronous student-centred learning. It provides flexibility for students to study at their own pace and facilitates more dynamic modes of interaction and engagement in the application of theory to real world issues. This approach is particularly appropriate for teaching Economics at the postgraduate level where delivery is often provided in condensed block format.

It must also be recognised that this approach - like any major pedagogical innovation - takes time, effort and resources to create the digital content to enable a flipped classroom approach for technical subject matter. This can be onerous. Shared resource content creation among a group of staff members would expand the scope of material created and aid in standardising the content across Programmes. Learner 'buy-in' can be difficult at the outset of a module. The flipped learning approach necessitates learners investing time outside the classroom and engaging with videos and readings to prepare for the more active problem-based learning during classroom time. It is vital to provide learners with clear instructions (in-person as well as in writing) prior to the commencement of the module, in addition to highlighting the importance of preparation and independent work.

Case Study 5: Building on online LibChat success for successful student and staff Library communications



Introduction and Context:

One of the main issues facing the Norma Smurfit Library during the Covid-19 pandemic was how to effectively support and maintain communication links with students and staff. One of the resources we had access to was LibChat, which is part of the Springshare suite of online resources.

During the 2020-21 reporting period, we built on the success of LibChat in 2019-20 and introduced enhancements for students. We moved LibChat to live student support on a 6-day week basis. Access hours differ depending on the time of the academic year but are generally from 10 am to 8pm. Over the course of the 2021-22 reporting period, LibChat has since become an essential tool for the library in the support of students and staff accessing services remotely.

Summary of the Initiative:

As reported in the 2019-20 case-study, the LibChat service was introduced in March 2020. It allows users to start an instant chat with us by selecting the small speech bubble icon button on the bottom right of the Library website. The LibChat function also appears on our Discovery search page, and we added it to several of our online subject **LibGuides** to increase exposure. Library users are also able to send their questions anytime to **LibAnswers** via the library's FAQs section

Reference Enquiries

Students soon learned to refer enquiries about online databases and eBooks through LibChat or via library email, as if they were approaching the circulation desk in the Library. A noticeable drop in reference enquiries per day was seen throughout the first Covid-19 Lockdown in semesters two and three of 2019/20, which was attributed to a range of factors including:

- The students were relying on resources they had already acquired from the library before lockdown
- They were relying on lecture notes/information from lecturers during lockdown via Moodle
- The Library had an established online presence in place and the move to largely digital footprint has been underway for several years [A-Z Library Resources](#)
- The Library had invested in supporting student learning with a range of Library Subject Guides [NCI Library Online Guides](#)

From September 2020 onwards, the number of queries fluctuated depending on different factors. Unsurprisingly, things got busier closer to exam time and particularly when the library introduced its Click & Collect service in October 2020 (receiving almost 1,200 requests from October 2020 to September 2021). Other unplanned events such as the NCI IT outage in April 2021 led to a high number of queries around this time.

Key Findings and Impact:

During February, March and April 2021, the Library saw an average of 303 LibChats per month. Just beyond the current reporting period (moving into academic year 2021/22), we have observed a drop in the average to 167 chats per month. This is attributable to increased library open-hours (in-person) but also to the reality that students have become more used to and adept at using online resources, therefore requiring less assistance from Library staff.

Of the three main means of communication available to students (LibChat, the LibAnswers FAQ system, and the library email) LibChat accounts for around 84% of queries. The most frequent queries relate to Accessing/finding online resources (39%), followed by eBook availability (14%). Other regular chat queries related to referencing (10%), Login difficulties/error messages (8%), Click & Collect (5%) and Book returns and study space/room bookings (both 4%).

In terms of quality of service, we are proud to report that during the reporting period, 93% of chats were answered within 15 seconds with a further 5% between 15-30 seconds. Only 31 chats were missed, of a total of almost 3,000 received. Of the 502 client ratings left during this time, 457 rated the service as Excellent, 38 Good, four "So-so", and only three users rated LibChat as Bad.

Conclusion:

The Library has upgraded several key digital resources during the 2020-21 reporting period. This has in many ways been because of the Covid-19 crisis but is also due to the feedback loop that LibChat provides: we have become more aware of diverse users' needs of through online LibChat discussions and have been able to adjust services and supports accordingly.

LibChat is now embedded as one of the core services which the Library will continue to offer its users - students and staff - throughout and beyond the Covid environment of physical campus restrictions.