IADT Procedure for Programme Development + Approval (including Micro-credentials)

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Purpose	To guide staff on the process for the development and approval of programmes, including micro-credentials
Policy Author	Office of the Registrar
Policy Owner	Office of the Registrar
Intended Audience	Registrar, Executive, Heads of Faculty, Heads of Department, Programme Co-ordinators, all academic staff
Approved by Academic Council	7 October 2024
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Related Forms	- Business Plan Template - Outline Programme proposal form - Programme Document Template - Micro-Credential Programme Document Template - Programme Validation Report Template

Document Version History

Previous Version	Notes	Replaced by
Version 1 2005		Version 2 2009
Version 2 2009		Version 3 2015
Version 3 2015		Version 4 2017
Version 4 2017		Version 5 2019
Version 5 2019		Version 6 2024
Version 6.0 2024	- Updating the format of the document and addition of Document Version History - Introduction of a new section for the process for the development and approval of Micro-credential Programmes - Edits throughout the document updating and clarifying processes to include references to online panel events, - Addition of an option to run an internal validation event in advance of External Validation. - Replacing the inclusion of outdated form templates from Appendices with a reference of where to obtain them (to facilitate periodic updates of forms as required) – Appendix 1 - Insertion of 12 Validation Criterion as Appendix 2 for reference. - General minor revisions throughout the document, updating of terminology, etc.	

Contents

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.   Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that programmes leading to awards, from Micro-credentials up to and including taught Level 9, developed by the Institute meet the following overarching objectives:

- Compliant with the strategic and academic plan of the Institute
- Fulfil an identifiable need for industry
- Comply with relevant national policies and procedures
- Are of appropriate academic breadth and depth with assessable learning outcomes that are consistent with the levels of knowledge skill and competence as prescribed by the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)
- Maximise opportunities for learners to avail of access, transfer and progression routes, including the flexible and innovative use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- Can be adequately resourced - academic, physical and human resources - and can be provided within a supportive and engaging intellectual and skills-based learning environment

2.   Scope

This procedure applies to all IADT-developed programmes. However, additional policies apply for those programmes leading to joint awards or those developed or delivered in partnership with a third party. For example, the 'Quality Assurance of Collaborative Programmes' which incorporates the Policy & Procedure for Quality Assurance of Collaborative Programmes, including Transnational Programmes and Programmes leading to Joint Awards.

3.   Organisational Responsibility

The Registrar has responsibility for Institute-wide academic planning and quality assurance in academic matters and collaborates with the Faculties in the progression and management of such matters.

The Secretary/Financial Controller collaborates with Faculties in the preparation and management of pay/non-pay budgets and projects of a capital nature, and in the development of business plans for proposed new programmes.

PROCESS: SECTION 1 – Undergraduate + Postgraduate Programmes

4. Overview of the process for the development and approval of Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes

The development and approval process consists of the following steps:

4.1   The programme initiator brings the programme development proposal to the Faculty executive for approval to proceed.

4.2   Outline programme proposal is presented to the Programme Validation Committee (PVC) for approval to proceed.

4.3   Faculty Executive develops a Business Plan in consultation with the Directorate of the Secretary Financial Controller. The Head of Faculty presents the Business Plan to the Executive for approval.

4.4   Programme development commences

4.5   The programme document (See Appendix 1) is presented to the Programme Validation Committee for approval.

4.6   The decision of the PVC committee is noted at Academic Council along with formal Minutes from the Executive approving the Business plan, and permission is requested to convene an external validation panel.

4.7   The Office of the Registrar organises the external validation panel in consultation with the Faculty Executive.

4.8   The Panel conducts a site visit (or participates in an online event), prepares a report and makes a recommendation to IADT regarding the approval of the programme.

4.9   The programme development team responds to the Panel's findings within 6 weeks with a specific response to each panel finding and an updated programme document where relevant.

4.10   The Registrar submits to Academic Council a recommendation that the panel validation be endorsed, presenting the Panel Report and the Response of the Institute to the Council, including any changes to the proposed programme.

4.11   Academic Council notes the validation of the programme.

4.12   Governing Body notes the programme validation.

5. Changes to existing programmes

Where a change is required to an existing programme, if the change affects less than 10% of the programme as determined by the number of credits effected, and provided the title of the programme is unchanged, then in that instance, the change can be approved by the Programme Validation Committee (PVC) without recourse to the full process outlined above.

If a change is proposed to an existing programme and/or a change to the title of a programme is proposed, then the process outlined above must be followed, and the programme must be validated by an external panel.

6. Timelines

In the case of undergraduate programmes, notification to the CAO and other interested groups will normally require **a minimum of 24 months' notice**. Exceptions can be made in the case of compressed development schedules such as might be required for e.g. Springboard Programmes, etc.

In the case of postgraduate or Special Purpose Award (SPA) programmes this time limit may be reduced, but should normally require 12 months' notice.

It is important that new programme proposals are submitted with sufficient time before the proposed starting date, to allow time for the validation process to take place.

7. Submission of Outline Programme Proposal

- Once Faculty Executive approves the programme development, the programme initiator develops an outline programme proposal for presentation to PVC.
- The **Outline Programme Proposal form** (see Appendix 1) is completed and forwarded to the Registrar (via the Senior Quality Officer) one week in advance of the PVC meeting.
- An outline programme proposal should include <u>brief</u> details of the following items :
  - How the Programme fits within the strategic/academic plan for the Faculty/Institute
  - Rationale for the programme
  - Demand for the programme
  - Indicative enrolment targets
  - Employment opportunities, support from potential employers
  - Programme aims and objectives
  - Programme Intended learning outcomes with
    - Indicative structure and content
    - Indicative pedagogical approach
    - Assessment strategy to include modes of assessment, assessment schedule, mapping of module learning outcomes
  - Opportunities for Erasmus and other international exchange students
  - How the Programme responds to the needs of life-long learners for flexibility, e.g. blended learning
  - Requirements for Library/Learning Resources
  - Requirements for ICT resources
  - Any other requirements, e.g. specialised resources, dedicated space
  - Proposed membership of the Programme Development Board

Presentation of this initial outline provides PVC with an opportunity to provide feedback to the proposers and provides a basis for endorsing the development of the detailed Programme Specification.

8. Submission of Business plan

In addition to seeking the approval of PVC, the Head of Faculty will submit a Business Plan detailing financial and staffing plans for the new programme to the Executive management team to review potential costs associated with a new programme of study to be offered by the Institute. Examples of such potential costs should include, but not be limited to, the following:

8.1 Students
- Planned student intake per year
- Level of Programme
- Programme designation (BA, BSc, MA, MSc, etc.)
- Demand for provisions (pipeline)
- Analysis of similar offerings/provisions

8.2 Pay
- Academic staff required to deliver the programme
- Part-time hours' budget
- Technician staff required
- Tutor Demonstrator posts required
- Visiting Lecturers

8.3 Non-Pay
- Programme materials
- Programme development fees
- Advertising/Promotion
- Recruitment Costs
- Travel and Subsistence
- Equipment costs
- Learner Support costs
- Staff training costs
- Library costs
- Insurance
- Detailed space and facility needs

Once the Executive approves the Business Plan, the programme proposer can establish the programme

development team.

9.   Programme Design and Development

With the approval of Outline Planning from PVC and the approval by the Executive for the Business Plan, the Faculty will undertake the detailed research, development and drafting process required to prepare a detailed **Programme Document** to meet the requirements of the Institute. A programme document template is available (see Appendix 1) to assist this work.

A Programme Development Board will normally be established, which will include the relevant internal academic experts. External experts may be co-opted to this Board to assist the design process.

Typically, research will include
- stakeholder feedback on the demand for and benefits of the proposed programme
- a benchmarking exercise with respect to similar programmes in Irish and international HEIs

It is expected that programme development teams will make use of various pedagogical resources to enhance a learner-centred approach, for example, by considering diversity in the type of teaching and assessment strategies to be used.

10.   Programme document submission

- The Faculty should submit the final draft of the Programme Document to the Registrar (via the Senior Quality Officer) for inclusion on the agenda of PVC one week before the committee meeting.
- PVC should formally confirm that Executive has approved the business plan.
- Where PVC indicate that major revision to part or all of the Programme Document is required, the revised document should be submitted in full to a subsequent PVC meeting.
- The final copy of the Programme Document, as approved by the Programme Validation Committee, will be forwarded by the Head of Faculty to the Registrar, who is responsible for organising the Programme Validation Process.
- Time and resources allowing, the Senior Quality Officer may convene an internal panel event in advance of the External Validation Process

11.   Validation Process

Steps in the Validation Process
- A Programme Validation Panel is convened by the Office of the Registrar in consultation with the Faculty Executive.
- The Office of the Registrar organises for the Panel to meet with the programme team and evaluate the programme and facilities. The meeting may convene on-campus or as an online/hybrid meeting.
- The Panel makes its findings and develops a report that includes their conditions/recommendations.
- The Programme Team considers the conditions/recommendations of the Panel and responds and modifies the programme accordingly or withdraws the programme from the validation process.
- The Office of the Registrar communicates the response of the Institute to the Panel Chair.
- The Registrar brings a recommendation to the Academic Council, attaching the Panel report and the Institute response and Academic Council note the panel decision..
- The final version of the programme document is stored by the Quality Office, and the Report + Response is published on the IADT website.

11.1   Establishing a Programme Validation Panel

The Registrar is responsible for appointing the Validation Panel. The Panel typically comprises three to six persons and may include:

- An appropriate senior person from another Higher Education Institute (HEI)
- Academics from a HEI with expertise in the area of the proposed Programme
- Industry/Business expert(s) to reflect employer needs
- A student representative

The aim will be to maintain a gender balance.   Panel members are asked to inform the Institute of any conflict of interest.

11.2   Programme Validation Criteria

The Validation Panel is asked to evaluate the proposed programme to assess how it meets 12 key criteria (see Appendix 2), which incorporates the following:

- *Strategic Mission*: The programme aligns with the strategic plan and objectives of the Institute
- *Business Plan:* Confirmation from the President/Registrar that a Business Plan has been approved by the Executive
- *Access/Entry* Standard: The *prerequisite learning* for participation in the programme and any other assumptions relating to the programme's *target learners* are explicit.
- Outcome Standard: The Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs) are consistent with the relevant *awards standards* and the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) *award-type descriptors***.**
- Learning: The programme can enable its *target learners* to attain the *minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs*) through reliable assessment, efficiency in terms of learner effort and workload, and a stimulating learning environment, cognisant of a diverse cohort of learners.

11.3   Panel Evaluation

The panel members are asked to come to a consensus view as to whether the proposed programme meets the specified criteria. The panel members' decision can be;

- ***Satisfactory***, programme approved without changes.
- ***Satisfactory, with some recommendations***. In this case, the Institute will endeavour to comply with the Panel's recommendations.
- ***Satisfactory, subject to proposed special conditions***. In this case, the condition(s) must be met by the programme team in order for the programme to proceed.
- ***Not satisfactory***

11.4   Panel Visit

Each panel member will receive a soft copy of the documentation (hard copies can be provided if required). During the meeting with the Institute, the Panel will typically follow a full-day agenda as follows:

- Initial session, private to Panel
- Panel meets with President, Registrar and Head of Faculty and/or other senior staff
- Panel meets with Head of Faculty/ Head(s) of Department and academic staff associated with the proposal.
- For on-campus meetings, a tour of Institute facilities follows.
- Panel meets in private session to consider its findings.
- Panel meets with President, Registrar and Head of Faculty to orally convey a summary of its findings.
- The Institute will provide a recording secretary to take Minutes of the proceedings and provide any other administrative needs.

11.5   Validation Report

The recording secretary will provide a draft report to the Panel within ten working days. The Panel Chair and recording secretary will liaise on completing any changes and amendments to the report.

The final report will be sent to the Registrar's Office within four weeks of the initial draft being circulated.

11.6   Responding to the Panel Findings

The Programme Team will compile a response to the panel recommendations/conditions.   The response will outline how any conditions stipulated by the Panel will be addressed, including a timeframe within which the condition(s) will be met. The response will also include a rationale for how the recommendations of the Panel may or may not be incorporated into the programme structure.

On completion of this work, the full programme response will be submitted by the Head of Faculty/Department to the Registrar for verification that the conditions or recommendations as laid down by the external validation panel have been satisfactorily addressed. The Registrar's Office forwards the Faculty response to the Panel Chair to confirm any conditions or recommendations have been addressed.

The Registrar's Office ensures that the revised programme document is subsequently available to all members of the external validation panel.

12.   <u>Commencement of the Programme</u>

Subject to the findings of the validation panel, the Registrar submits to Academic Council a recommendation that the programme commence, presenting the Panel Report and the Response of the Institute to the Council, including any changes to the proposed programme

Academic Council considers the recommendation and approves the commencement of the programme.

13.   <u>Funding Authority approval to offer the Programme</u>

Once a programme has been validated the Institute must advise the Higher Education Authority (HEA). In this context the Institute must ensure that all conditions relating to staffing and resourcing of the programme are provided for in the context of the programmes and budgets estimates provided to the HEA.

14.   <u>Ongoing monitoring and periodic review</u>

The Programme Board is established, and a Programme Co-ordinator is designated. The programme is reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- The programme is subject to annual review by the Programme Board
- A report from the Programme Board is presented annually at Academic Council

PROCESS SECTION 2 – Micro-credential Programmes

15.   Micro-credentials

IADT is aware of the value and necessity of micro-credentials to support and advance flexible learning pathways that align with the Institute's strategic plans. In 2024, the Institute approved a revised programme development and quality assurance process for micro-credentials, separate from the Major Awards process. This will enable IADT to provide a process for developing and approving short programmes (between 5-20 ECTS) and enable the Institute to run a module (already validated within a larger programme) as a stand-alone validated module, via a shorter validation process.

16.   Overview of the process for development and approval of Micro-credentials

16.1   Outline programme proposal is noted at Programme Validation Committee (PVC) and Executive for approval to proceed.

16.2   A completed Micro-credential Programme Document is presented to the Programme Validation Committee for consideration. The document should be forwarded to the Registrar (via the Senior Quality Officer) one week before the PVC meeting.

16.3   If approved, PVC will authorise a Micro-Credential Validation Committee (MVC) to convene to evaluate the programme and, if applicable, recommend if any external expertise (academic or industry) is required.

16.4   The Micro-Credential Validation Committee (MVC) will consist of internal IADT representatives, typically including:

- Registrar / Assistant Registrar or Nominee to act as chair
- 2 Heads of Department (or Nominee), from a different Department than that of the programme.
- *Student Representation, if feasible*
- *External Academic/and or Industry Expert if required.*

16.5   The MVC meeting is convened to review and evaluate the proposed Micro-credential programme and meet with the Programme Development Team (organised by the Office of the Registrar). The Institute will provide a recording secretary to take Minutes of the proceedings.

16.6   The MVC makes its findings and develops a short report (drafted by the recording secretary) that includes conditions/recommendations, if applicable. The programme development team responds to the findings with a specific response and provides an updated programme Micro-credential document where relevant.

16.7   Programme Validation Committee notes the validation of the programme (which in turn is noted at Academic Council via Committee Minutes)

Appendix 1: Forms and Templates and other useful information

Forms and Document Templates

All applicable Forms and Templates are available from the Senior Quality Officer (quality@iadt.ie), including:

1. Outline Programme Proposal form
2. Programme Document Template
3. Micro-Credential Programme Document Template
4. Programme Validation Report Template
5. Business Plan Template

Programme Validation Committee Meeting dates

The Academic Council and Sub-Committee Meeting Schedule is published on the IADT website at the beginning of each academic year. This outlines the scheduled dates for Programme Validation Committee (PVC) and Academic Council meetings during the academic year, and includes the deadline for submission of documents for each meeting. (Dates are also published on the staff intranet calendar)

Appendix 2 - IADT Programme Validation Criteria – Full Descriptions

Criterion 1	
The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programme	
a)	The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the Programme
b)	The application for validation is signed by the provider's Chief Executive (or equivalent) who confirms that the information provided is truthful and that all the applicable criteria have been addressed
c)	The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.[1]

Criterion 2	
The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought	
a)	The programme aims and objectives are expressed plainly
b)	A QQI award is specified for those who complete the programme
(i)	Where applicable, a QQI award is specified for each embedded programme
c)	There is a satisfactory rationale for the choice of QQI award(s)
d)	The award title(s) is consistent with unit 3.1 of QQI's *Policy and Criteria for Making Awards*
e)	The award title(s) is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements
f)	The programme title and any embedded programme titles are:
(i)	Consistent with the title of the QQI award sought
(ii)	Clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders
g)	For each programme and embedded programme
(i)	The **minimum intended programme learning outcomes** and any other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified[2]
(ii)	The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are **consistent with** the relevant QQI awards standards
h)	Where applicable, the **minimum intended module-learning outcomes** are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.
i)	Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.
(i)	For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.[3]

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

[2] Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

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

Criterion 3	
The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly based (considering social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives)	
a)	The development of the programme and the intended programme learning outcomes has sought out and taken into account the views of stakeholders such as learners, graduates, teachers, lecturers, education and training institutions, employers, statutory bodies, regulatory bodies, the international scientific and academic communities, professional bodies and equivalent associations, trades unions, and social and community representatives. [4]
b)	The interpretation of awards standards has been adequately informed and researched. Considering the programme aims and objectives and minimum intended programme (and, where applicable, modular) learning outcomes:
	(i) There is a satisfactory rationale for providing the programme
	(ii) The proposed programme compares favourably with existing related (comparable) programmes in Ireland and beyond. Comparators should be as close as it is possible to find
	(iii) There is support for the introduction of the programme (such as from employers, or professional, regulatory or statutory bodies)
	(iv) There is evidence [5] of learner demand for the programme.
	(v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant [6]
	(vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs [7]
c)	There are mechanisms to keep the programme updated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders
d)	Employers and practitioners in the cases of vocational and professional awards have been systematically involved in the programme design where the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented
e)	The programme satisfies any validation-related criteria attaching to the applicable awards standards and QQI awards specifications

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

[5] This might be predictive or indirect.

[6] It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

[7] There is clear evidence that the programme meets the **target learners'** education and training needs and that there is a clear demand for the programme.

Criterion 4
The programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory
a) The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in IADT's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied[8]
b) Programme information for learners is provided in plain language. This details what the programme expects of learners and what learners can expect of the programme and that there are procedures to ensure its availability in a range of accessible formats
c) If the programme leads to a higher education and training award and its duration is designed for native English speakers, then the level of proficiency in English language must be greater or equal to B2+ in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL[9]) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.
d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that **target learners** are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).
e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the **recognition of prior learning** for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.
f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):
(i) Reflects the core *intended programme learning outcomes*, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es)
(ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners
(iii) Has long-lasting significance
g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.

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[8] Each of the detailed criteria set out in the Policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further, higher education, and training must be addressed in the provider's evaluation report. The detailed criteria are (QQI, restated 2015) arranged under the headings
- Progression and transfer routes
- Entry arrangements
- Information provision

[9] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/2015)

Criterion 5

The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose

a)	The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions
b)	In so far as it is feasible, the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs
c)	Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended *programme* learning outcomes
d)	The objectives and purposes of each of the programme's elements are clear to learners and to the provider's staff
e)	The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles[10]
f)	The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented
g)	The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes
h)	The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes
i)	Elements such as practice placement and work based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements
j)	The programme **duration** (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its **fulltime equivalent contact time** (expressed in hours) are consistent with the difference between the minimum entry standard and award standard and with the credit allocation[11]

Criterion 6

There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned

a)	The specification of the programme's staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to-practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion (12(c))
b)	The programme has an identified complement of staff[12] (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments
c)	The programme's complement of staff (or potential staff) (those who support learning including any employer-based personnel) are demonstrated to be competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes and to assess learners' achievements as required.
d)	There are arrangements for the performance of the programme's staff to be managed to ensure continuing capability to fulfil their roles and there are staff development[13] opportunities[14].
e)	There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.
f)	Where the programme is to be provided by staff not already in post there are arrangements to ensure that the programme will not enrol learners unless a complement of staff meeting the specifications is in post.

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[10] This applies recursively to each and every element of the programme from enrolment through to completion.
In the case of a modular programme, the pool of modules and learning pathway constraints (such as any prerequisite and co-requisite modules) is explicit and appropriate to the intended programme learning outcomes.
[11] If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified
[12] Staff here means natural persons required as part of the programme and accountable (directly or indirectly) to the programme's provider, it may for example, include contracted trainers and workplace supervisors.
[13] Development here is for the purpose of ensuring staff remain up-to-date on the discipline itself, on teaching methods or on other relevant skills or knowledge, to the extent that this is necessary to ensure an adequate standard of teaching.
[14] Professional or vocational education and training requires that teaching staff's professional/vocation knowledge is up to date. Being qualified in a discipline does not necessarily mean that a person is currently competent in that discipline. Therefore, performance management and development of professional and vocational staff needs to focus on professional/vocational competence as well as pedagogical competence. Professional development may include placement in industry, for example. In regulated professions it would be expected that there are a suitable number of registered practitioners involved.

Criterion 7

There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned

a)	The specification of the programme's physical resource requirements (physical resources required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme, its defined purpose and its resource/learner-ratio requirements. See also (criterion 12(d)).
b)	The programme has an identified complement of supported physical resources (or potential supported physical resources) that are available in the context of existing commitments on these e.g. availability of:

	(i)	Suitable premises and accommodation for the learning and human needs (comfort, safety, health, wellbeing) of learners (this applies to all of the programme's learning environments including the workplace learning environment)
	(ii)	Suitable information technology and resources (including educational technology and any virtual learning environments provided)
	(iii)	Printed and electronic material (including software) for teaching, learning and assessment
	(iv)	Suitable specialist equipment (e.g. laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable
	(v)	Technical support
	(vi)	Administrative support
	(vii)	Company placements/internships – if applicable

c)	If versions of the programme are provided in parallel, at more than one location, each independently meets the location-sensitive validation criteria for each location (for example staffing, resources and the learning environment)
d)	There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address:

	(i)	Planned intake (first five years) and
	(ii)	The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake

e)	The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required

Criterion 8

The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners

a)	The programme's physical, social, cultural and intellectual environment (recognising that the environment may, for example, be partly virtual or involve the workplace) including resources and support systems are consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes
b)	Learners can interact with, and are supported by, others in the programme's learning environments including peer learners, teachers, and where applicable supervisors, practitioners and mentors
c)	The programme includes arrangements to ensure that the parts of the programme that occur in the workplace are subject to the same rigours as any other part of the programme while having regard to the different nature of the workplace

Criterion 9	
There are sound teaching and learning strategies	
a)	The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes
b)	The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes
c)	The programme enables enrolled learners to attain (if reasonably diligent) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of overall learner effort and a reasonably balanced workload)
d)	Learning is monitored/supervised
e)	Individualised guidance, support[15] and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme

Criterion 10	
There are sound assessment strategies	
a)	All assessment is undertaken consistently with Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards[16]
b)	The programme's assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures
c)	The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme[17]
d)	The programme includes formative assessment to support learning
e)	There is a satisfactory written **programme assessment strategy** for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules[18]
f)	Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable
g)	There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results
h)	The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award[19]

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

[16] See the section on transitional arrangements.

[17] This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

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

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

Criterion 11	
Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for	
a)	There are arrangements to ensure that each enrolled learner is fully informed in a timely manner about the programme including the schedule of activities and assessments
b)	Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme
c)	Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures
d)	If the programme is modular, it includes arrangements for the provision of effective guidance services for learners on the selection of appropriate learning pathways
e)	The programme takes into account and accommodates to the differences between enrolled learners, for example, in terms of their prior learning, maturity, and capabilities
f)	There are arrangements to ensure that learners enrolled on the programme are supervised and individualised support and due care is targeted at those who need it
g)	The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs
h)	The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities[20]
i)	If the programme aims to enrol international students, it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*[21] and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme
j)	The programme's learners will be well cared for and safe while participating in the programme, (e.g. while at the provider's premises or those of any collaborators involved in provision, the programme's locations of provision including any workplace locations or practice-placement locations)

Criterion 12	
The programme is well managed	
a)	The programme includes intrinsic governance, quality assurance, learner assessment, and access, transfer and progression procedures that functionally interface with the provider's general or institutional procedures.
b)	The programme interfaces effectively with the provider's QQI approved quality assurance procedures. Any proposed incremental changes to the provider's QA procedures required by the programme or programme-specific QA procedures have been developed having regard to QQI's statutory QA guidelines. If the QA procedures allow the provider to approve the centres within the provider that may provide the programme, the procedures and criteria for this should be fit-for-the-purpose of identifying which centres are suited to provide the programme and which are not.
c)	There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting persons who meet the programme's staffing requirements and can be added to the programme's complement of staff.
d)	There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting physical resources that meet the programmes physical resource requirements, and can be added to the programme's complement of supported physical resources.
e)	Quality assurance[22] is intrinsic to the programme's maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.
f)	The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are consistent with QQI's statutory QA guidelines and use continually monitored completion rates and other sources of information that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved.
g)	The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.
h)	There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.

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[20] For more information on making reasonable accommodations see www.AHEAD.ie and QQI's Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (QQI, restated 2015).
[21] See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)
[22] See also QQI's Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)