

2 Appendix A: Preparatory Questions – Programme Validation or Revalidation Process

The independent evaluation report must address whether the programme meets the validation criteria as set out by QQI. Possible Questions are identified below under each of the twelve criteria. These questions are indicative only and are provided to support preparation for a panel visit.

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

Sub-criteria	Possible Questions
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	It is unlikely that questions would arise in relation to these sub-criteria. Any questions arising would likely be confirmation that relevant documentation was submitted as part of the validation submission.

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

Sub-criteria	Possible Questions
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 <i>Policy and Criteria for Making Awards</i> . 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk us through the programme aims and objectives. Would they be clear to your target learners? • Can you explain the rationale for the choice of award stem and award title? • Will the title of the proposed programme be meaningful to your target learners and any other stakeholders that may need to identify it? • Do you think the MIPLOs will be easily understood by diverse audiences including learners and teaching staff? • Can you talk us through how the programme has been mapped to the QQI award standards?

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.

<p>objectives of the programme are explicitly specified.²</p> <p>(ii) The minimum intended programme learning outcomes to qualify for the QQI award sought are consistent with the relevant QQI awards standards.</p> <p>h) Where applicable, the minimum intended module learning outcomes are explicitly specified for each of the programme's modules.</p> <p>i) Any QQI minor awards sought for those who complete the modules are specified, where applicable.</p> <p>For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.³</p>	
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Criterion 3 The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly based (considering social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives)

Sub-criteria	Possible Questions
<p>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</p> <p>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.</p> <p>c) There is a satisfactory rationale for providing the programme.</p> <p>d) 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.</p> <p>e) There is support for the introduction of the programme (such as from employers, or professional, regulatory or statutory bodies).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you talk us through the involvement of stakeholders in the programme/MIPLO development process? Why is this programme needed? What is the demand for this programme? What differentiates this programme from other similar programmes? What evidence is there to show that there is support for the introduction of this programme from the industry? What evidence is there to show learner demand for the programme? What type of jobs will graduates of this programme be qualified for? Is there evidence of availability of these kind of jobs? Why is there a need for this programme within Irish Higher Education? How will you ensure that the programme stays up to date and relevant to its key stakeholders? Describe how you have ensured that this programme meets the applicable QQI and any other relevant award standards.

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.

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.

- f) There is evidence⁵ of learner demand for the programme.
- g) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant.⁶
- h) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.⁷
- i) There are mechanisms to keep the programme updated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.
- j) 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.
- k) The programme satisfies any validation-related criteria attaching to the applicable awards standards and QQI awards specifications.

Criterion 4 The programme’s access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory

Sub-criteria	Possible Questions
<p>a) The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in QQI's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied⁸.</p> <p>b) Programme information for learners is provided in plain language. This details what the programme expects of learners and what learners can expect of the programme and that there are procedures to ensure its availability in a range of accessible formats.</p> <p>c) If the programme leads to a higher education and training award and its duration is designed for native English speakers, then the level of proficiency in English language must be greater or equal to B2+ in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR⁹) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.</p> <p>d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that target learners are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where will potential learners find information about the programme? What information will be made available? What supports will be provided by the College to applicants? • Talk us through the planned admissions process? Will applicants be processed through the CAO or direct entry? • Are there any exceptions to the entry criteria as set out in your documentation? How will mature learners be processed? • How are the minimum entry criteria evaluated? How will English language proficiency be ascertained? • Can you talk us through the interview process? How it will it be managed, how would consistency be assured? • Can applicants gain advanced entry to the programme through RPL? How will that process work? • Would the minimum number of learners provide a sufficient education experience for learners?

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.

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 and higher education and training must be addressed in the provider’s evaluation report. The detailed criteria are (QQI, restated 2015) arranged under the headings

- Progression and transfer routes
- Entry arrangements
- Information provision

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

<p>and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-</p> <p>(i) Reflects the core <i>intended programme learning outcomes</i>, and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es).</p> <p>(ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners;</p> <p>(iii) Has long-lasting significance.</p> <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you were to achieve the maximum number of learners on any intake, how would the learning experience be protected? How would this impact on the quality of programme delivery?
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Criterion 5 The programme’s written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose

Sub-criteria	Possible Questions
<p>a) The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions.</p> <p>b) In so far as it is feasible the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs.</p> <p>c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended <i>programme learning outcomes</i>.</p> <p>d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme’s elements are clear to learners and to the provider’s staff.</p> <p>e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles¹⁰.</p> <p>f) The curriculum is comprehensively and systematically documented.</p> <p>g) The credit allocated to the programme is consistent with the difference between the entry standard and minimum intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>h) The credit allocated to each module is consistent with the difference between the module entry standard and minimum intended module learning outcomes.</p> <p>i) Elements such as practice placement and work based phases are provided with the same rigour and attentiveness as other elements.</p> <p>j) The programme duration (expressed in terms of time from initial enrolment to completion) and its fulltime equivalent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the rationale for the curriculum? Describe how each stage of this programme would support learners to achieve the MIPLOs? • Describe the choices that would be offered to learners and the rationale for these options. • How are modules structured? How is face-to-face learning balanced with online learning? • Describe the credit allocation within the modules/programme and the rationale for this approach. • Describe the design of the practice placements and how these would contribute to the achievement of the MIPLOs and the awarding of ECTS credits.

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.

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

Sub-criteria	Possible Questions
<p>a) The specification of the programme’s staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 c).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of staff¹² (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.</p> <p>c) The programme’s complement of staff (or potential staff) (those who support learning including any employer-based personnel) are demonstrated to be competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes and to assess learners’ achievements as required.</p> <p>d) There are arrangements for the performance of the programme’s staff to be managed to ensure continuing capability to fulfil their roles and there are staff development¹³ opportunities¹⁴.</p> <p>e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.</p> <p>f) Where the programme is to be provided by staff not already in post there are arrangements to ensure that the programme will not enrol learners unless a complement of staff meeting the specifications is in post.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you arrive at the programme’s staffing requirement specifications? • How have you assured that the programme staff (academic and administrative) are competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes? • Describe your plans to recruit any staff who are not currently in place. • How are staff supported to engage in ongoing professional development? • What policies and procedures support adjunct faculty who are not staff or employees? • Are these policies and procedures clear to staff? • Where do you/staff go for professional development support? • What is the role of different members of the programme team? • What are the lines of communication between faculty, adjunct faculty and the rest of the programme team? • How is (your) performance reviewed at Hibernia College? • How is the quality of teaching and learning monitored and reviewed? • Is there a difference in how the work of faculty and adjunct faculty is monitored and reviewed?

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 planned¹⁵

Sub-criteria	Possible Questions
<p>a) The specification of the programme’s physical resource requirements (physical resources required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme, its defined purpose and its resource/learner-ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 d).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of supported physical resources (or potential supported physical resources) that are available in the context of existing commitments on these e.g. availability of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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. kitchen, laboratory, workshop, studio) – if applicable (v) technical support (vi) administrative support (vii) company placements/internships – if applicable <p>c) If versions of the programme are provided in parallel at more than one location each independently meets the location-sensitive validation criteria for each location (for example staffing, resources and the learning environment).</p> <p>d) There is a five-year plan for the programme. It should address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Planned intake (first five years) and (ii) The total costs and income over the five years based on the planned intake. <p>e) The programme includes controls to ensure entitlement to use the property (including intellectual property, premises, materials and equipment) required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are physical venues selected? How would you ensure there will be sufficient physical resources? Are there contingency plans in place? • Are there specific, specialised physical learning requirements for this programme? • As a blended learning programme, there must be significant investment in the online learning aspect of the programme. What plans are in place to assure the quality of the online learning environment? • How is administrative support provided? • Can you outline the five-year plan for the programme? • What contingencies do you have in place if the planned intake is not achieved? • How have you arrived at your financial projections?

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

Sub-criteria	Possible Questions
<p>a) The programme’s physical, social, cultural and intellectual environment (recognising that the environment may, for example, be partly virtual or involve the workplace) including resources and support systems are consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What supports will be provided to students undertaking this programme? • How is the quality of placements monitored and reviewed? • Where would students get support when they are on placement?

¹⁵ For blended programmes, criterion 7 is often where questions may arise in relation to resourcing the blended learning delivery mode including the virtual learning environment.

<p>b) Learners can interact with, and are supported by, others in the programme’s learning environments including peer learners, teachers, and where applicable supervisors, practitioners and mentors.</p> <p>c) The programme includes arrangements to ensure that the parts of the programme that occur in the workplace are subject to the same rigours as any other part of the programme while having regard to the different nature of the workplace.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would students be supported in relation to securing placements? • How would students be supported in relation to an issue arising on placement? • What opportunities would be provided to students to interact with their peers? How would students be supported to collaborate? • How would students interact with teaching and/or support staff? • Would the minimum number of learners provide a sufficient education experience for learners? If you were to achieve the maximum number of learners on any intake, how would the learning experience be protected? How would this impact on the quality of programme delivery?
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Criterion 9 There are sound teaching and learning strategies

Sub-criteria	Possible Questions
<p>a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>c) The programme enables enrolled learners to attain (if reasonably diligent) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of overall learner effort and a reasonably balanced workload).</p> <p>d) Learning is monitored/supervised.</p> <p>e) Individualised guidance, support¹⁶ and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the programme TLA strategy aligned to the MIPLOS? • Can you talk us through the structure of a typical module and how it would be delivered? • How is it face-to-face learning balanced with online learning? • How was student workload considered when structuring the programme? • How is support for TLA provided to learners? • Would students receive regular feedback on their progress? Would students receive feedback in time to inform summative assessment? • How would programme engagement be monitored?

Criterion 10 There are sound assessment strategies

Sub-criteria	Possible Questions
<p>a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with <i>Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards</i>¹⁷</p> <p>b) The programme’s assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider’s QQI approved quality assurance procedures.</p> <p>c) The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/module learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the programme assessment strategy. • How would consistency of assessment be assured? • How would validity and reliability of assessment be assured? • Are clear policies and procedures in place to guide assessment for both staff and learners?

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ See the section on transitional arrangements.

<p>outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme.¹⁸</p> <p>d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.</p> <p>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.¹⁹</p> <p>f) Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable.</p> <p>g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.</p> <p>h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.²⁰</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the weighting of assessment appropriate for each module’s weighting? i.e. what is the difference in assessment load for a 5 credit module versus a 10 credit module? • How is formative assessment integrated across the programme? • Would students have low-stakes learning opportunities? • How would repeat assessments be managed? • How would assessments be moderated or reviewed? • Is programme assessment staggered to avoid a bottleneck of assessment for learners?
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Criterion 11 Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for

Sub-criteria	Possible Questions
<p>a) 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).</p> <p>b) 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.</p> <p>c) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.</p> <p>d) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.</p> <p>e) If the programme is modular, it includes arrangements for the provision of effective guidance services for learners on the selection of appropriate learning pathways.</p> <p>f) The programme takes into account and accommodates to the differences between enrolled learners, for example, in terms of their prior learning, maturity, and capabilities.</p> <p>g) 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how students would be orientated into the programme. • How would different profiles of learners be supported on the programme? • How would information about the programme be communicated to students? • How would information about student supports be communicated to students? • What procedures are in place to find out what learners think of the programme and college services? • Would student partnership be promoted in the programme? • Are procedures in place for students to access their records? What would happen if a student requested access to an assignment submission? • How would students be supported to engage with quality assurance processes e.g. appeals, complaints,

¹⁸ This assumes the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are consistent with the applicable awards standards.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ 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).

<p>h) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.</p> <p>i) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities²¹.</p> <p>j) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the <i>Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students</i>²² 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.</p>	<p>applications for mitigation of extenuating circumstances?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the differences between learners incorporated within the programme design? • How is support provided to those most in need? • Describe your reasonable accommodations process.
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Criterion 12 The programme is well managed

Sub-criteria	Possible Questions
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>e) Quality assurance²³ is intrinsic to the programme's maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.</p> <p>h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the arrangements for governance within the College. How would these apply to this programme? • How would the College quality framework interface with quality assurance of this programme? • How would the programme quality and effectiveness be monitored? • How would decisions regarding programme changes be made? How would that change be managed and formally approved? • How would the programme team respond to student feedback? • How would feedback from employers and other stakeholders sought and used? • Describe how student certification would be managed in line with QQI requirements?

²¹ 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).

²² See Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students (QQI, 2015)

²³ See also QQI's Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)