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6-2020

### CCT Blended Learning QA Approved Final Report

QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland)

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## Reengagement Panel Report

### Assessment of QA Procedures for Blended Learning

#### Part 1 Details of provider

##### 1.1 Applicant Provider

Registered Business/Trading Name:	CCT College Dublin
Address:	30 – 34 Westmoreland Street, Dublin 2, Ireland
Date of Application:	26th of March 2020
Date of resubmission of application:	
Date of evaluation:	
Date of (virtual) site visit:	31 <sup>st</sup> of July 2020
Date of recommendation to the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee:	

##### 1.2 Profile of provider

CCT College Dublin (CCT) is a well-established education and training provider, offering QQI awards at NFQ Levels 6 – 9 in the domains of Information Technology, Computing and Business. The College's QA processes were approved by HETAC in 2009. CCT's current QA procedures were approved following a successful reengagement process with QQI in 2018.

CCT is committed to providing learners with accessible and flexible higher education opportunities. The College offers professional development programmes as well as a range of higher education programmes validated by QQI. The stated ethos of CCT is learner-centred and inclusive. Programmes are industry-aligned, and promote a culture of enquiry and innovation.

The College is committed to continuing and expanding its campus-based programme offerings, and to integrating on campus interaction with the remote study opportunities it will offer learners enrolling in the programmes proposed for delivery in blended mode.



## Part 2 Panel Membership

Name	Role of panel member	Organisation
David Denieffe	Chair	Registrar, Institute of Technology Carlow
Dr. Catherine Peck	QA Expert & Secretary	Independent Education Consultant
Dr. Silvia Gallagher	Blended Learning Expert	Research Fellow, Trinity College Dublin

## Part 3 Findings of the Panel

### 3.1 Summary Findings

The panel would first like to commend the team at CCT on the quality of the College's submission for an extension of the approved scope of provision to include blended learning delivery. The QA documentation and associated resources submitted to the panel for evaluation provided evidence of a strategic and planned approach to blended learning. The panel further notes and commends CCT's commitment of appropriate resources to facilitate the implementation of blended modes of delivery. The College has made substantive investments, and has systematically built its organisational capacity with regard to IT infrastructure and human resources. Finally, the panel would like to commend the team at CCT for the open and constructive tone of dialogue with the panel throughout the evaluation.

At the conclusion of the virtual site visit, the panel identified limited and discrete issues that needed to be addressed by CCT in order to demonstrate the College's comprehensive alignment to QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (2018). These are listed in Section 5.1 of this report as proposed mandatory changes. The panel availed of its option to defer its recommendation, allowing the provider a period of up to six weeks to address these. The panel reconvened to review evidence of implementation of the proposed mandatory changes submitted by CCT on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, 2020. The panel was of the view that CCT had sufficiently addressed these, and proceeded to recommend approval of CCT's draft QA procedures for Blended Learning.



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

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



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## Part 4 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures for Blended Learning submitted by CCT College Dublin

*The following is the panel's findings following evaluation of CCT's quality assurance procedures for blended learning against QQI's Topic Specific QA Guidelines - Blended Learning.*

### **Panel Findings:**

The panel's evaluation of CCT's quality assurance procedures for blended learning was closely guided by QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (2018). The guidelines outline expectations pertaining to the Organisational Context, Programme Context and Learner Context.

#### *Organisational Context*

Within this dimension of the guidelines, providers are required to demonstrate a strategic approach to the use of blended learning, to make appropriate investment in infrastructure and identify accountable key roles. The College's application for an extension of its scope of provision to include blended learning is aligned to the priorities within its current strategic plan, and reflects the provider's development over time from technology enhanced to technology enabled provision. CCT has mapped the relevant strategic objectives and KPIs within the College's current overall strategic plan to its blended learning strategy. The latter document outlines actions identified by the College which will address gaps identified during a self-evaluation process. Although the evaluation of the application occurred following the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on face to face delivery, the application is the outcome of a planned and systematic development process. CCT works with an external service provider to support the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and has identified a suite of platforms and tools that have been approved for programme delivery.

During the site visit, the panel explored what human resources and key roles the College felt were necessary to support the implementation of its blended learning strategy. CCT representatives confirmed that the need for additional technical support to be available to learners during synchronous online delivery had been identified, and consideration was being given to how this would be provided. In the short-term, CCT has developed the capacity of its existing staff in relation to knowledge of blended learning pedagogies and learning design frameworks. In particular, the Head of Enhancement plays a key role in providing support to academic staff. During the discussion, CCT representatives confirmed that if additional expertise (potentially external, part-time or contract) were required the College would commit resources to this as appropriate. At the time of the virtual site visit the panel identified a proposed mandatory change for CCT pertaining to this. This required CCT to finalise and present its capacity plan for this area, identifying and specifying the additional human resource requirements discussed. Acknowledging the dynamic and expanding nature of the College's ambitions, the panel encourages CCT



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to give consideration to both short-term and medium-term capacity, as current arrangements to support the learning design function may not be scalable.

#### *Programme Context*

Within this dimension of the guidelines, providers are required to develop processes that enable close collaboration between academic subject specialists and those responsible for online education technology and/or instructional design. Processes also need to be in place to ensure that all online learning materials and media are subject to informed peer comment, and meet clear quality standards. Protocols for staff and learners regarding online interaction, and information regarding the availability of advice and support are also required. As discussed above, in the short-term, CCT has developed internal staff capacity and the Head of Enhancement holds an accountable key role in relation to supporting academic subject specialists. CCT submitted a 'Good Practice Guide for Faculty' outlining quality standards for online teaching and learning. The panel acknowledged the importance of this document, and references to peer review within the documentation. However, at the time of the virtual site visit the panel identified a proposed mandatory change for CCT relevant to this. This required CCT to develop a clear set of standards for its online learning materials and resources. These should be referenced within the faculty guide but exist as a discrete document that provides a clear reference point for all staff, learners and stakeholders. Within this, CCT must include a visible requirement for informed peer review process for online learning material. The panel notes that standards may usefully encompass elements of QQI's guidelines pertaining to Equality of Opportunity (Section 5.2).

A further requirement under this dimension of the guidelines is that approval and validation processes for blended learning programmes are fit for purpose and include, for example, information regarding the critical review and appraisal of draft learning resources and the ongoing development of staff involved in either developing online resources or teaching online. The panel noted an item of specific advice for CCT pertaining to this.

#### *Learner Context*

Within this dimension of the guidelines, providers are required to have procedures in place to ensure that learners are supported to make informed choices about participating in blended learning programmes, and that learners have identified and available contacts (academic, administrative and technical). Moreover, providers must ensure that learning and teaching activities and associated resources provide all learners with equitable, fair and realistic opportunities to achieve intended learning outcomes. The panel was of the view that learners at CCT are both well-informed and well-supported, and that careful consideration has been given to how learner support will transfer to the online components of blended learning programmes. During the virtual site visit, the panel discussed the range of supports offered with staff working in the areas of learner support, enhancement and the library as well as CCT's academic managers. The panel also reviewed the extensive support materials hosted within CCT's Online Learner Toolkit. Notably, CCT has been able to draw upon its experience of pivoting to online delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic to inform its practices in this area.



## **Part 5 Mandatory Changes to QA Procedures for Blended Learning and Specific Advice**

### **5.1 Mandatory Changes**

The following proposed mandatory changes were identified at the conclusion of the virtual site visit on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. The panel availed of the option to defer its decision to allow CCT an opportunity to address these within a six-week period.

#### **5.1.1**

Develop a clear set of standards for online learning materials and resources. The standards must include a visible process of informed peer review for the design, development and implementation of online learning.

#### **5.1.2**

Finalise areas of the Blended Learning capacity plan that identify and specify the human resource requirements within this, including those specific to technical support for learners.

The panel reconvened to review the evidence submitted by CCT of implementation of the proposed mandatory changes on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, 2020. The panel was of the view that CCT had addressed the mandatory changes identified by the panel on July 31<sup>st</sup> sufficiently for the panel to recommend approval of CCT's QA Procedures for Blended Learning to QQI.

However, the panel have some concerns regarding the practical implementation of the new standards. Specifically, the allocation of the bulk of responsibility for upholding the standards to lecturers and the ready availability of technical support staff.

The panel further advises that future iterations of the capacity plan documentation should include a specification of responsibilities for the proposed roles and an indication of candidate competencies.

### **5.2 Specific Advice**

The panel offers one item of Specific Advice to CCT for consideration as the provider moves forward with the validation and implementation of programmes delivered in blended modes.

#### **5.2.1**

Continue to develop capacity with regard to Blended Learning pedagogies, and ensure that these are visible within programme development processes and programme and module documentation.



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## **Part 6 Approval by Chair of the Panel**

This report of the panel is approved and submitted to QQI for its decision on the approval of the draft Quality Assurance Procedures or Blended Learning of CCT College Dublin.

Name:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DAVID DENIEFFE

Date:

25<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2020





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

Document	Related to
No further documentation was provided during the virtual site visit.	

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

Name	Role/Position
Neil Gallagher	President
Karl Gallagher	Dean of Admin and Finance
Graham Glanville	Dean of School
Naomi Jackson	Registrar/Academic Affairs
Marie O'Neill	Head of Enhancement
Kathleen Embleton	Head of Student Services
Amanda Russell	QA Officer
Justin Smyth	Librarian