

Programme Validation Report

Microcredential Programme

Programme Validation Report for:

**Certificate in Professional Skills for
Graduates**

[Level 8, 5 ECTS]

Date of Panel: 4 May 2022

Date of Report:

Independent Evaluation Report on an Application for Validation of a Microcredential Programme

Part 1. Provider details

Provider name	Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology Kill Avenue, Dún Laoghaire Co. Dublin, Ireland, A96 KH79
Date of report	

Section A. Overall recommendations

Programme	Title	Certificate in Professional Skills for Graduates
	Award	Special Purpose Award
	Credit	5
	NFQ Level	8
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory

Section B. Expert Panel

Name	Role	Affiliation
Dr Seamus Cannon	Chair	Former Director of the Blackrock Education Centre
Aideen Barry	Industry Expert	Lecturer, Limerick School of Art and Design
Dr Feargal Fitzpatrick	Academic Expert	Head of Media, NCAD

Section C. Programme Profile Information (as supplied by provider)

Brief synopsis of the programme
<p>The Certificate in Professional Skills for Graduates supports graduates, recent graduates and those looking to return to the workforce with a short course in professional skills. Designed to accommodate learners for the creative and cultural industries the Certificate in Professional Skills for Graduates will allow learners to participate in practical workshops, seminars, professional portfolio tutorials and networking events so that they may critically engage with professional career planning activities within their chosen fields and support their transition into/across industries.</p>
Target learner groups
<p>Candidates for this programme will be drawn from the recently graduated undergraduate cohorts from IADT and related art, design and performance programmes in Ireland who seek additional professional education and micro credentials in the field.</p> <p>The immediate need and rationale for this certificate arises from the loss of professional opportunities for graduates from 2020, 2021 and potentially 2022, each of whom graduated into the precarious and uncertain professional landscape because of Covid-19. In addition, many members of this graduate cohort were unable to avail of in-situ professional placement, internship and industry-focused exhibitions and events during their undergraduate degree.</p> <p>In the first delivery of this certificate (2022) focus will be on supporting the transition into industry of the specific cohorts of graduates who have been impacted by the covid-19 pandemic. In subsequent years, the certificate will flexibly support the needs of a broader range of learners and graduates.</p> <p>We anticipate that the course will attract a mix of people from a range of backgrounds with diverse skill sets, ensuring the longevity of this programme. The certificate will be targeted towards the needs of: those already working in the sector as freelancers, those returning to the workforce after a period of absence, those who wish to migrate into alternative fields of industry, those who wish to apply for specific grants, residencies, or awards, or those who intend to develop independent projects through which they can build a specific skillset and body of work.</p>
Rationale for Programme
<p>Though there are few accredited programmes in Ireland offering business and entrepreneurial skills for the creative industries as outlined above, there are many opportunities towards skills expansion within the unaccredited space. As recorded within the survey of sectoral provision in the area of skills training (Balfe, 2022) specifically for the film, media and design sectors in Ireland, national Skillnet agencies provide a plethora of courses which offer training in these areas. Though these courses offer pathways towards upskilling in isolated subject areas such as entrepreneurial skills, contract law, networking and engagement, and dignity and respect in the workplace, there is a distinct paucity of opportunities which provide training and accreditation in more than one area of this field.</p> <p>CFA carried out a comprehensive survey of sectoral provision in skills training (Balfe, 2022) specifically for the film, media, and design sectors in Ireland.¹ The organisations included Screen Skills Ireland/Screen Skillnet, Animation Skillnet, Design Skillnet, Design, Print & Packaging Skillnet, Gréasán Na Meán, Learning Waves Skillnet, Immersive Technologies Skillnet, Northern Ireland Screen, and Screen Scene VFX. Some of the training and upskilling opportunities available through these sectoral</p>

¹ Emma Balfe, *Overview of Current Upskilling and Training Opportunities in Ireland: Film, Media and Design Sector*, IADT/CFA, January 2022.

bodies were focused on professional upskilling or further training for professionals already in employment and have not been considered here as comparable programmes. The schemes relevant to the equivalent learner on a **Certificate in Professional Skills for Graduates** were divided into the following categories: traineeships, mentorships, workshops, workshop series, webinar series, work placement schemes, funding schemes, development programmes, short courses, and CPD (Continuing Professional Development) courses. However, of 143 upskilling and training opportunities surveyed, only four provided accreditations validated by the National Framework of Qualifications. The dearth of QQI accredited skills and training for graduate employability skills and preparedness for industry and/or freelance careers strengthens the case for the **Certificate in Professional Skills for Graduates**.

Further evaluative research undertaken by CFA related to the profile of learners undertaking pilot L8 and L9 programmes in IADT in 2021 (Balfe, 2022a).² Students on the six CFA certificates offered by IADT were asked to complete an anonymous online survey to evaluate their overall impressions of learning. This survey gathered both quantitative and qualitative data, through closed and open text questions. Students were asked to reflect upon their motivations for taking the course, their preference of delivery type, and the creative attributes of learning which they value most, amongst other aspects of course delivery.

The student profile derived from the student evaluation surveys accurately reflects the challenges highlighted in the *Together for Design* (EGFSN, 2020)³ report. Respondents to our survey were motivated by the need to upskill to keep up with emerging technologies, they were eager to learn business strategy and project management skills, they valued critical thinking skills and believed them to be most essential to learning, and they sought collaboration and networking opportunities with their peers. Furthermore, if we consider the skills needs highlighted in the *Skills Needs Analysis Report for the Screen Sector in Ireland 2019 -2020* (Screen Skills Ireland, 2020)⁴, which included the need for 'problem-solving, management and leadership skills' (M-Co, 2021, p. 8)⁵, the accuracy of the learner profile is yet again made clear. Moreover, they valued accreditation as an important consideration in their motivation for professional development.

What is evident in the evaluation and feedback from CFA pilots at IADT (Balfe, 2022a) is that the learners who enrolled in the programmes were primarily mid-career professionals. Fewer than 20% of the enrolled learners were recent graduates. Anecdotal evidence from prospective applicants who had graduated within the same year (2021) indicated that they were not ready for a L9 programme, nor did they feel they had the requisite skills or professional experience to engage with the disciplinary demands of the industry-focused programmes, specifically in film and media. This indicated the need for an accredited transition skills programme that will assist graduates into building skills for entry into professional life and/or as a freelance employee in the cultural and creative industries. The needs of recent graduates and the demand for early-career support is the fundamental rationale for the **Certificate in Professional Skills for Graduates** and the MIPLOs were

² Emma Balfe, *Evaluations of Student Feedback on CFA Pilots at IADT: Findings and Recommendations*. January 2022

³ Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2020) *Together For Design: Digital, product and Strategic Design Skills of the Future*. Dublin: National Skills Council. Available at: <http://www.egfsn.ie/expert-group-on-future-skill-group/all-publications/2020/together-for-design.pdf> (Accessed: 20 January 2022).

⁴ Screen Skills Ireland (2020) *Skills Needs Analysis Report for the Screen Sector in Ireland 2019 -2020*. Dublin.

⁵ M-Co (2021) *CFA CREATIVE ATTRIBUTES FRAMEWORK – Consultation Report and Recommendations*. Dublin: M-Co.

written to ensure learners have a meaningful opportunity to engage with productive content and generate useful outcomes for themselves through the assessment process.

There is an ongoing consultation process underway with CFA's Industry Council which is a wide-ranging, expert panel with representatives from key bodies in the creative and cultural industries sectors. Members include: The Design and Crafts Council of Ireland, Institute of Designers, Arts Council, Screen Ireland, Screen Producers Ireland, RTÉ, and Words Ireland. The consultation process is closely informing the priorities and potential of this certificate in relation to graduate readiness for employment.

However, although the **Certificate in Professional Skills for Graduates** is informed through close and consultation with industry, it is not merely lead by industry wants and desires. The **Certificate in Professional Skills for Graduates** prioritises academic excellence through creative pedagogies which ensure alignment with the QQI standards for Art and Design. The certificate is targeted at learners who have already gained their full level 8 undergraduate degree and is it designed to augment their core qualification through immersive, interdisciplinary action learning. Through this model, learners will have the opportunity to contextualise themselves as emerging professionals, establish crucial early-career networks and target their skills towards a range of professional opportunities within the creative and cultural industries.

Evidence of learner demand

There already exists some graduate preparation and training within IADT. The Graduate Employability module in the Bachelor of Business (Level 8/Stage 4) informed the design and the objectives of this **Certificate in Professional Skills for Graduates**. This module identifies transitional skills for business graduates which are applicable and transferrable to graduates in other disciplines. The Careers Office and Final Years Matter programme at IADT are proactive in preparing graduates for entry into industry through their advisory services and the hosting of an annual Careers Fair, however these activities are offered as supports rather than structured learning, but evidence the appetite and need for professional skills for graduates in a structured and accredited environment. In addition to the research outlined at Section 3.3 above, the graduate outcome surveys conducted by IADT's Careers Office has indicated that there is a gap for graduates between leaving college and entering the professional workplace. The results of the surveys from 2011 to 2020 can be found here: <https://iadt.ie/services/institute-student-services/careers-advisory-service/graduate-destination-surveys/> The graduates of 2020 (2021 data is not yet available) confirms the impact of Covid-19 on their professional progression. The unemployment rate of 15% for 2020 graduates is higher than in previous years (9% in 2018). More undergraduates (12%) were unemployed compared to postgraduates (3%), and more Faculty of Film, Art, and Creative Technology graduates (14%) compared to Faculty of Enterprise and Humanities graduates (2%). The higher rate of unemployment for FFACT graduates attests to the impact of Covid-19 on the creative and cultural industry sector. 30% of graduates were actively engaged in further study to change or improve their career options, with 26% of graduate respondents identifying further study as an opportunity for future employment, or ongoing professional development. Only 3% of graduate respondents were primarily motivated in further study by an interest in the course content, suggesting the largest motivations for further study is driven by career progression and upskilling.

Duration and Enrolment					
	First Intake Date	Duration (months)	Cohorts / Intakes per Annum	Enrolment i.e. learners per Intake	
			Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Full-Time	June 2022	1 Term/Terms		10	40
Part-Time					

Panel Commentary on Section C: Programme Profile Information

This should set out the panel's views on the adequacy of the case made by the provider for the approval of this programme as a viable, stand alone offering for the target learner group. The panel should take into account the proposed rationale, evidence of market demand, learner numbers, entry criteria, and marketing information. The information on objectives, MIPLO's and marketing information, rationale, should also be checked.

Where the proposed award is at a different NFQ level to that of its parent programme e.g. where the programme is taken from Stage 1 of a validated Level 8 programme, the panel should check the MIPLO to Level Indicator mapping for consistency.

The following Validation Criteria as they apply to this programme should be borne in mind, while also recognising that the programme of which this microcredential is a module, has already been deemed to have met these criteria.

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)*

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

Criterion 11: *Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for.*

Criterion 12: *The programme is well managed*

Rationale, Learner Demand, Viability:

The Panel were satisfied with the rationale, learner demand and viability and believe this programme fits within the institute's Strategic Plan. They felt the programme concept, implementation strategy, are well informed and soundly based.

Proposed Award - consistency with NFQ: *(refer to the mapping of the programme MIPLOs to the relevant NFQ standards)*

Having discussed the objectives and outcomes of the programme with the Programme Team, the panel were satisfied the programme is consistent with the award level sought.

Learner Interests: - (Information, QA, Supports, Benefits / Skills accruing from programme):

The members of the panel are satisfied the programme meets the needs of prospective students and will benefit the learners from the experiential learning it offers. It was recommended that the programme document is updated to clarify the what the student will experience by way of a case study. They also recognised that this programme is relevant to the target market and demographic of early to mid-career practitioners, provides opportunities for learners who cannot commit to the time to take on full NFQ course.

Section D. Programme Content, Delivery and Assessment

Summary of specifications for teaching staff		
Role	Profile	WTE
	The Certificate coordinator lead should be qualified to at least or equivalent <i>level 9 qualification</i> and with a relevant Third Level Teaching and Learning qualification and/or equivalent relevant and comparable professional experience.	0.25
	Qualified to at least Bachelors of Arts (Hons) in Art, Design or cognate disciplines, or a person with at least 5 years' practical experience in a professional capacity, with contemporary experience of the professional landscape within the Creative and Cultural industries.	0.33

Mode(s) of Delivery
Full-time/Lecture/Studio Practice/Project/Blended Learning

Assessment Strategy
<p>Assessment procedures are flexible to meet individual circumstances within the limits of the Institute's and Faculty's assessment policies. These assessment policies are reviewed and updated annually as part of the review of assessment by the programme board. These policies are adhered to at both programme and module level.</p> <p>The programme minimum intended learning outcomes match the appropriate QQI awards standards. Assessment tasks are developed through constructive alignment of outcomes with learning and teaching strategies, translated into methods of assessment appropriate to the module and its goals. Assessment procedures are fair, consistent, and as far as possible valid and reliable and subject to regular review. External examiners review these procedures annually.</p> <p>Assessment tasks are developed for each module of the programme, are accompanied by grading schemes, and communicated to students appropriately. Student feedback is essential for learning and is given in an ongoing basis in classes, seminars, through the Institute VLE, and by email. Continuous and formative assessment is built into the learning and teaching strategy through class feedback sessions on assessment tasks prior to submission as well as individual and group feedback on completion of continuous assessment tasks. Formal summative feedback is provided to all learners upon the completion of each module and its component learning and assessment tasks.</p> <p>The programme team develop, revise, and manage the assessment tasks. It is aligned to Institute regulations as outlined in the <u>IADT Quality Manual</u> and other relevant policies such as the <u>Institute</u></p>

Plagiarism Policy⁶. Module assessment strategies are developed by lecturers in alignment with the programme assessment strategy.

It is Faculty policy in this programme that:

- The programme is modular with one 5 ECTS module.
- A wide range of assessment methods suitable for the programme are used to enable, engage, and progress learners' knowledge, skills, and competencies.
- There are no special regulations for this programme.
- Development of assessments is done at module level by the module lecturer/leader. Briefing papers adhere to the Institute and Faculty regulations and are reviewed by a peer on the programme and by the external examiners. Continuous assessment takes place during the year.
- Assessment schedules are adhered to and assignment submission dates are only changed where there is a clearly identified need and such changes are agreed by the programme team in consultation with the relevant student representatives. ***Learners are required to adhere to the deadlines for assignments.***
- Assignment briefs, marking criteria are issued to students in good time and suitable time is allocated to the completion of assessment tasks. Feedback sheets are used to provide student feedback and progress learning for each of their assignments. Typically, assignments are marked by the module lecturer(s).
- Extensions are not granted for individual work. ***Penalties may be applied where there is no reason for the late submission of work.*** Deferral of module assessment is permitted in exceptional cases. This should be discussed with the Programme Chair. Forms for deferral are available in the Faculty Office.
- All work is appropriately referenced and adheres to the requirements of the *Institute Plagiarism Policy*.
- Institute policy on repeat assessments and Institute policy on the capping of grades for repeat assignments are adhered to.

Appeals: the programme adheres to the Institute Appeals policy outlined in the Student Handbook.

⁶ http://www.iadt.ie/content/files/00_iadtpolicy_IADT_Plagiarism_Policy_and_Procedures_January_2019.pdf
last accessed 10.6.19

Panel Commentary on Quality Assurance of the Programme

This should set out the panel's views on (1) how the provider has quality assured the programme development process and (ii) how it proposes to quality assure the programme when validated

The following Validation Criteria as they apply to this programme should be borne in mind:

Criterion 12: *The programme is well managed.*

Criterion 6: *There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned*

Criterion 7: *There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned*

Criterion 8: *The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners*

Criterion 10: *There are sound assessment strategies*

The headings below are indicative only and can be removed

QA of programme development process:

The Panel were satisfied with the programme development process the programme documentation was commended, for the level of research completed, and some suggestions were made to add more detail to provide more clarity on the expectations of learners about the content and outcomes.

QA of Programme Resourcing (Human and ICT) and Resilience:

It was agreed by the panel that there are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff and resources available to implement the programmes as planned and the Panel acknowledged the quality of the staff CVs included in the documentation and noted they were very thorough and industry-focused.

QA of Assessment:

The panel were satisfied that there are sound assessment strategies and recognised it is tied to the content. It was noted that option to create an artefact by the students (producing a deliverable) is a very good concept and ensures the learning is experiential and useful to the students. However the panel felt providing some examples in the documentation would help clarify what is expected of a student .

Part 2. Overall recommendation to QQI

2.1 Programme: Certificate in Professional Skills for Graduates

Select one	
X	Satisfactory (meaning that it recommends that QQI can be satisfied in the context of unit 2.3) of Core policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of education and training;
	Satisfactory subject to proposed special conditions (specified with timescale for compliance for each condition; these may include proposed pre-validation conditions i.e. proposed (minor) things to be done to a programme that almost fully meets the validation criteria before QQI makes a determination);
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons for the overall recommendation

Overall the Panel were satisfied and enthusiastic about this programme and welcomed it as a relevant addition.

Recommendations to the Provider

1. The Panel outlined some minor adjustments required in the programme documentation: such as consistency of hours referred to in different sections.
2. The term “Graduate Launchpad” is referred to in the document, and the panel accepted this will primarily be used for promotional purposes. However, it was recommend the document terminology is amended to ensure clarity to avoid confusion with the Title of the programme.
3. The following recommendations were also suggested to provide more detail in the documentation:
 - Provide more information on resources rather than just providing web links – to provide clarity on what is going to be delivered.
 - Include a case study and examples, to clarify what the student can expect to experience.

Any other observations:

- The Panel welcomed, in particular, the presentation by Dr E Sisson about Creative Futures Academy, in addition to the introduction by the Registrar about IADT.
- The panel commended the team and institute on the development of this programme and believe it will be a great addition.
- The panel commended the Department and programme team on the quality of the documentation, which was of a high standard and noted it was very well researched.
- In relation to assessment, the concept of the students producing an Artefact was commended as a very practical option ensuring learning is experiential and practical for the learners.

Special Conditions of Validation (directive and with timescale for compliance)

None

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

This report has been agreed by the evaluation panel and is signed on their behalf by the chairperson.

Panel Chairperson: **Dr Seamus Cannon**

Signed: 
Seamus Cannon (May 25, 2022 12:57 GMT+1) Date: May 25, 2022

2.2 Disclaimer

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FACULTY RESPONSE

The panel accepts all of the recommendations and thanks the Validation Panel for their thoughtful and considered responses.

Certificate in Professional Skills for Graduates

Recommendation (1) It was recommended that the programme document is updated to clarify what the student will experience by way of including case studies or examples

Recommendation (2) The panel recommended that information about resources is expanded in the programme documentation. For example; additional details are included with web links to provide clarity on what is going to be delivered

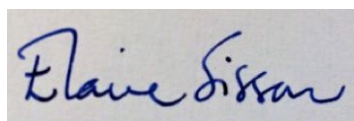
Recommendation (3) The term "Graduate Launchpad" is referred to in the document, and the panel accept this will primarily be used for promotional purposes, but recommend the Programme Document terminology is amended to ensure clarity and avoid confusion with the Title of the programme.

Recommendation (4) The panel felt providing some sample assessments in the documentation would help clarify what is expected of a student.

IADT Response

The documentation will now include the additions noted, but to increase clarity for students in Recommendations 1 and 2 and 4 (as they are unlikely to read programme validation documentation), we will include samples of assessments in programme handbooks and/or briefs circulated to learners to provide clarity for what is expected from students. Similarly, expanded information about resources pertinent to the course being offered (via weblinks, podcasts, videos etc) will be included in briefing papers and student communications on assessment.

The use of 'Graduate Launchpad' has been used for marketing and promotional purposes but the title of the award is Certificate in Professional Skills for Graduates. We have amended the webpage for the Graduate Launchpad to make this clear to currently enrolled students, and the use of 'Graduate Launchpad' in the validation documents to only refer to the specific roll-out of this module.



June 2022