Independent Evaluation Report on an Application for Validation of a Programme of Education and Training

Part 1 A

Provider name	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
Date of site visit	13 & 14 October 2021
Date of report	21 December 2021
Is this a re-validation report (Yes/No)	No

Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA)
	Award	Level 10 NFQ
	Credit[1]	240
	Recommendation *Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions[2] OR Not Satisfactory*	**Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions**

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[1] Specify the credit units because more than one system of units is in use. E.g. 20 (ECTS).

[2] Normally an application that fails to meet the criteria in any of its aspects will be considered as not satisfactory. Nevertheless, so as to ensure that the validation process will not be implemented unreasonably, if an independent evaluation finds that a programme virtually meets the validation criteria but needs some minor modifications, the independent evaluation could conclude "Satisfactory subject to recommended special conditions" where the special conditions prescribe the defects that require to be corrected.

Further, in exceptional cases the 'special conditions' may be used to identify parts of the application that are considered satisfactory on a stand-alone basis. For example, an application might propose a programme to be provided at two locations but the independent evaluation report may find the application satisfactory on condition that it be provided only at one specified location and not at the other. These conditions will not however be used to recommend that QQI can be satisfied with a programme conditional on a different QQI award (e.g. at a lower NFQ level or having a different CAS award title) being sought than the one identified in the application.

Contents

Evaluators

Evaluators		
Name	**Role**	**Principal occupation**
Professor Paul Giller	Coordinating Chair	Former Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic, University College Cork, Ireland
Kim O'Mahony	Report Writer	Quality Officer, University of Limerick, Ireland
Colette Real	Learner Representative	PhD student at Dublin City University Business School, Ireland
James Flynn	Industry Representative	University Programme Manager, Innovation Exchange, IBM, Ireland
Dr. Meera Sarma	Content Expert	Director of Studies for the Online DBA (Doctor of Business Administration), University of Liverpool, UK
Prof. Liang Han	Content Expert	Director of the Henley DBA programme, Henley Business School, University of Reading, UK
Professor Denis Harrington	Content Expert	Head of Graduate Business, Waterford Institute of Technology, Ireland

Part 1 B
Principal Programme

Names of centres where the programmes are to be provided	Maximum number of learners *(per centre)*	Minimum number of learners
Letterkenny Institute of Technology		

Enrolment interval *(normally 5 years)*	**Date of first intake**	17 January 2022
	Date of last intake	2026
Maximum number of annual intakes	One	
Maximum total number of learners per intake (over all centres)	2022 – 12 2024 – 12 2026 - 12	
Programme duration (<u>months</u> from start to completion)	48 months (4 years)	
Target learner groups	Senior managers and professional experts who have already established themselves as business leaders or are on track to being appointed to executive positions. Participants will typically hold a master's degree in a business-related area or equivalent and have a minimum five years' professional experience at managerial level.	
Approved countries for provision	n/a	
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time	Part-time	
The teaching and learning modalities	Blended delivery of modules over a 12-week period (50% online, 50% face to face for each module), self-learning and research.	
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)	This is a four-year, part-time structured doctorate aimed at senior managers and professional experts. The DBA programme is structured around two phases: Phase 1 is the taught element of the DBA undertaken in year 1 and 2 amounting to 60 ECTS credits; Phase 2 is the research component during which the DBA candidate will be engaged in writing the DBA dissertation following a paper series (in year 3 and 4). On completion of these two phases, learners will develop critical skills at doctoral level requiring to think conceptually, apply critical thinking and reasoning skills, and challenge the existing body of knowledge and research related to the area studied. The thesis must include material of publishable quality. The programme leads to the award of Doctorate in Business Administration. There are two exit awards: Postgraduate Diploma in Business Research and Master of Business Research.	
Summary of <u>specifications</u> for teaching staff	The Principal Supervisor should meet the following requirements:	

	• Be a full-time academic member of the staff of the Institute. • Have academic qualifications at least at the level of the award being sought by the candidate in the broad discipline-area of the proposed research project. • Have experience and demonstrated ability to supervise at least one research student to completion at the appropriate level at a recognised academic institution. • Be research active and have a demonstrable track record in the relevant research field. • Support the student in preparing for progress reviews and as applicable for the review process.
Summary of specifications for the ratio of learners to teaching-staff	None provided in programme submission documentation.
Overall WTE staff/learner ratio.[3]	n/a

Other noteworthy features of the application

In preparation for the main review visit, the panel reviewed comprehensive documentation provided by the Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) for a QQI Level 10 award of Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA). The validation criteria upon which the programme was assessed included QQI Core Validation Criteria, QQI Research-Specific Criteria and the National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles. Documentation provided by LYIT in support of the application included:

- A Self-Evaluation Report
- Doctorate in Business Administration Submission Document
- LYIT Research Strategy (2016-2020)

The application documentation was supported by relevant appendices.

The panel acknowledges the significant amount of work undertaken in preparing the application by LYIT and also the rapid provision of additional material requested by the panel prior to the site visit.

The site visit was held remotely using MS Teams on 13 and 14 October 2021. The panel met with representatives from LYIT including senior management at Institute and Faculty level, academic, administration and support staff and a number of current and recent students, as well as a number of external stakeholders. The panel enjoyed open, good natured and constructive discussions with all representatives which helped the panel significantly in clarifying and resolving issues that arose from the application materials and in formulating recommendations and specific conditions.

The panel was particularly impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of the staff in respect of the development of the DBA and of research at LYIT as a whole, as well as the level of collegiality, team-work and collaboration. There was very positive feedback from current and past postgraduate students in relation to the care and attention given to students and the current facilities. Likewise, the external stakeholders were very complementary about the interactions with LYIT and the potential value of the proposed DBA.

It also became evident during the site visit that considerable thought has been given to the programme design based on a degree of benchmarking against some other DBA programmes and matching programme learning outcomes with module outcomes. However, the panel identified a number of issues in the proposed programme design that will require clarification and modification

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[3] This is the total wholetime equivalent number of staff dedicated exclusively to this programme divided by the maximum number of learners that can be enrolled with that complement of staff.

in order to ensure the quality of the programme and moderate the expectations of prospective students.

The panel noted with approval the strides made by the Faculty of Business to enhance research activity and qualifications of its staff but also noted that the current supervisory experience of the academic staff is very limited. Whilst there were clear plans proposed by LYIT to address this current deficiency, the panel was not convinced of the sustainability of the proposed approach.

Having considered the submission documentation and following discussions during the site visit, the panel has arrived at the following overall recommendation to QQI:

- **The panel found sufficient merit in the DBA programme proposals and in the growing research activity and quality of the faculty to recommend validation of the NFQ Level 10 DBA at LYIT <u>subject to LYIT satisfying a set of special conditions</u> of validation that relate in particular to supervision delivery and capacity, programme duration, programme structure and content and the enhancement of the DBA research environment.**

Part 2A Evaluation against the validation criteria

QQI's core validation criteria and sub-criteria (from Part 2 of its *Policies and criteria on the validation of programmes of education and training*, pp. 29 et seqq.*),* as well as its research-specific criteria (*Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria*, pp. 9-13) and the principles contained in the *National Framework for Doctoral Education* (p. 4) are copied here in grey panels.

The expert panel must evaluate the proposed programme against each of the core validation criteria with regard to the relevant supplementary criteria and principles outlined underneath the core criterion in question.

Core 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.[4]

With regard to:
QQI Research-specific Criteria n/a
National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles 9 - **robust quality assurance system** underpins all doctoral provision.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The panel is satisfied that LYIT is eligible to apply for validation of the programme.

Doctorate of Business Administration

The Faculty of Business at LYIT currently has designated awarding powers to offer research master's programmes at NFQ Level 9 and QQI has also previously validated two LYIT programmes leading to awards at NFQ Level 10 in other disciplines. Based on the detailed documentation provided, the LYIT Self-Evaluation Report and, following consultation with QQI, the Panel is satisfied that LYIT is eligible to apply for validation of the Doctorate in Business Administration Degree Programme in the Faculty of Business.

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[4] 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.

Core 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.[5]
   (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. For each minor award specified, the minimum intended module learning outcomes to qualify for the award are consistent with relevant QQI minor awards standards.[6]

With regard to:

QQI Research-specific Criteria
3.2.5 – Research degree programme structure

The research degree programmes should be structured appropriately to enable the efficient attainment of the intended learning outcomes by the learner

- For each discipline-area the following should be available:
   o General and transferable skills training;
   o Specialised training required to develop a broad understanding of the relevant discipline-area and as dictated by the nature of the research being undertaken;
   o Seminars, both focused and interdisciplinary, to inform and to facilitate the dissemination and exchange of the fruits of research, enabling peer review and quality assessment.
- Ideally the elements above should be integrated into a structured research degree programme. The research apprenticeship is still an important part of a structured research degree programme and distinguishes it from taught programmes. This underlines the need for the presence of active researchers who can provide authoritative guidance and support and an active research community in the discipline area concerned.
- Providers of research degree programmes should consult with other higher education institutions and with industry when developing their programmes.
- Research students should have access to appropriate career guidance and networking opportunities which should include options outside academia.
- PhD programmes in particular always involve the 'advancement of knowledge through original research'. They always involve the production of a thesis. The term thesis here

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[5] Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.
[6] 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.

should be understood inclusively to signify a coherent body of original work by the candidate. It consists of a (written) dissertation which may possibly be accompanied by a portfolio or supporting artefacts.

National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles
1 – The core of doctoral education is **deep engagement with a question, problem or hypothesis at the frontier of knowledge, and advancement of this frontier under the guidance of expert and committed supervision**. to be awarded a doctoral degree, the candidate must have made an **original contribution to knowledge**.
3 – Doctoral education **increases significantly the students' depth and breadth of knowledge of their discipline and develops their expertise in research methodology** which is specific to both a specific project and a wider context. It provides a high-quality **research experience, training** (include a formalised integrated programme of personal and professional development) and **output consistent with national and international norms and best practice**.
5 – Recognising that each doctorate is unique, doctoral education is also **flexible** so as to support students within individual disciplines or within interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary groups
9 (see *core criterion 1* above)

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment:
Partially	The panel is partially satisfied that the programme objectives and outcomes are met.

Doctorate of Business Administration

It was evident to the panel, based on a detailed review of the content of the DBA programme and its objectives, and wide ranging interactions with programme management and the Faculty of Business, that there has been much discussion in respect of the programme's design and intended learning outcomes. The programme team evaluated equivalent programmes in some other Irish, UK and European business schools in determining an appropriate model and approach for the LYIT DBA. The programme objectives are based on the principles set out in the National Framework for Doctoral Education, and these have been mapped to the learning outcomes in the DBA handbook, outlining requirements in respect of depth and breadth of knowledge, engagement with the question or hypothesis and taking into account the presence of established structures such as supervision and quality assurance.

Following the site visit, the panel is confident that programme staff have sufficient depth and breadth of knowledge about how the DBA candidates will meet the learning outcomes as currently specified, but nonetheless the panel has concerns that the pedagogy that underpins the programme is not articulated in a sufficiently clear manner. More consideration should be given to the type of DBA being offered. For example, if the aim of the programme is to produce practitioner scholarship in the discipline of business, it is expected that this would be reflected in the objectives and learning outcomes. Specific emphasis should be given to reflective practice and the manner in which candidates will be supported to develop as critically reflective practitioners. Equally, the interventions that support managers' capacity to deal with complexity and uncertainty in the work context should be emphasised. Further, the programme objectives should elaborate more fully the requirement for candidates to integrate scholarship into their professional lives and organisational work contexts. The development of the scholar-practitioner, which is at the heart of the DBA programme, should be better reflected in the objectives and learning outcomes of the programme.

The Panel makes the following **special condition** of validation:

C2.1 The learning objectives and learning outcomes must be clarified and clearly articulated in the light of the desired underlying programme pedagogical outcomes.

Core 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.[7]

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[8] of learner demand for the programme.

   (v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant[9].

   (vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.[10]

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.

With regard to:

QQI Research-specific Criteria
3.2.2 – Research context and strategy

There should be a clearly documented, relevant and realistic research strategy for the discipline-area concerned.

- This strategy should be consistent with and relevant to the provider's mission and the research strategy for the institution as a whole.
- It should also address the national and international context.
- Collaboration with other providers of research degree programmes and with industry should feature prominently in the strategy.

The planned research should promise an appropriate scientific, social, economic or cultural impact which is consistent with the provider's mission.

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[7] 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.

[8] This might be predictive or indirect.

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

[10] 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.

| National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles | |
| 3 (see *core criterion 2*, above) | |

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Partially	The Panel is partially satisfied that the programme concept, implementation strategy and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well-informed and soundly based.

Doctorate of Business Administration

Based on the application material and conversations with staff during the site visit, it was clear that there was strong support for the programme development, significant commitment across the board and considerable enthusiasm for the enhancement of research within the institution. The panel notes that there is currently one other DBA in Ireland and that there may therefore be demand for a new programme in the west of Ireland and across the border into Northern Ireland. Discussions with external stakeholders supported this view. Focus group discussions were undertaken with select industry representatives and reported upon within the submission document. The panel was equally reassured from discussions with these stakeholders and LYIT staff that sufficient demand was present and that the mode of delivery would likely open the programme up to potential students from further afield.

As discussed earlier, the course structure and general nature of programme content both appear to have been benchmarked against some other DBA programmes, but the panel was not convinced that the overall content, volume of assessment and proposed length of the research thesis met with the requirements commensurate with the majority of such programmes internationally. In particular, the panel was not satisfied that the proposed duration of four years part-time was consistent with the duration of similar programmes nationally and internationally, particularly given that only 30 ECTS credits were allocated to Year 1 of the programme and that the required thesis length was only 30-35,000 words (less than half that of other DBA programmes known to the panel). In the panel's view, this is not sufficient to meet international standards for a DBA. Whilst a four-year part-time programme has recognised marketing advantages, the panel was of the view that students' expectations of the duration of their studies would need to be tempered, as – based on the experience of several members of the panel of managing DBA programmes elsewhere – it is unlikely that the target students, i.e. middle to senior-level managers in full-time employment, would be able to complete the full programme and submit the (larger) thesis of the necessary quality within a four year part-time time scale. (It is noted that QQI Research-Specific Criterion 3.2.7 indicates that Industrial doctoral programmes, where the research student is based in industry, may require more time than the **normal four-year full-time equivalent** to allow the student to achieve a doctorate). The discussion under Criterion 4 below is also relevant here.

The panel recommends a number of special conditions of validation in this regard; these must be met prior to validation by QQI.

The Research Strategy supplied is consistent with the general aims and objectives of the institution although it is now somewhat out-of-date (the document was published in 2015/16 and applied for a five-year duration). The panel notes that the institution's context has since changed with the development of the opportunity to apply for Technological University (TU) status. This, in turn, has provided the clear driver for this current application. It was clarified during the site visit that a successful application to establish a TU with partner institutions would change LYIT's research context and opportunities within the expected TU mission.

The institution had self-assessed the current standing of the Business Faculty as being at Stage 1 of the TU criteria for establishment of a research centre. Details in the application document also made it clear that faculty currently had very limited supervisory experience at Level 10 (although the document did demonstrate that faculty do have significant experience of supervising Research Master's at Level 9). The mechanism proposed by LYIT to deal with this gap is the introduction of visiting professorial staff to act as primary supervisors while internal staff gain experience through co-supervision activity under these primary supervisors, as well as outside of the faculty and institution. The proposed mechanism by LYIT was not considered sustainable or suitable by the panel and an alternative mechanism (based around formal partnerships with other institutions) is recommended as a condition of approval.

The panel therefore set the following **special conditions of validation**

C3.1 In light of the current lack of sufficient supervisory experience at NFQ Level 10, and until the internal staff expertise has increased sufficiently to manage the supervision of student cohorts enrolled on the DBA programme, the Faculty of Business must establish formal relationships, based on detailed MoUs, with one or more institutions that have the capacity to support the primary supervision of DBA students.

C3.2 The Faculty of Business, through Academic Council, must examine existing policies and regulations to ensure that they allow for external primary supervision of PhD students and define precisely LYIT's requirements for eligibility to supervise PhD students.

C3.3 The Faculty of Business must recast regulations regarding programme duration to provide for a minimum duration of four years, no penalty for students enrolled for a period of up to six years and the option to extend the duration of the programme to a maximum of eight years.

C3.4 The Faculty of Business, through Academic Council, must provide for the proposed thesis length to be at least doubled to require a range of between 60,000 and 80,000 words.

Core 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 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 satisfied[11].

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[12]) 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.

With regard to:

QQI Research-specific Criteria
3.2.7 – Duration of research degree programmes

The duration of a PhD programme should normally be four years (fulltime equivalent) which may include time spent pursuing a Master's degree programme (or PhD probation) prior to transferring to the PhD register.

Industrial doctoral programmes where the research student is based in industry may require more time.

The duration of a Master's degree should normally be at least one-and-a-half years (fulltime equivalent) and may be no less than one calendar year.

National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles
7 – The **admission** of doctoral students takes into account preparedness of the applicant, the availability of qualified, competent and accessible supervision and the resources necessary to conduct the research.

8 – Doctoral education is **supported by established structures** with:
- supervision by a principal supervisor(s), normally with a supporting panel approved by the institution;

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[11] 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

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

- formal monitoring of progress to completion against published criteria, supported by institutional arrangements; - clearly defined examination processes, involving external examiners, assessment criteria and declared outcomes.	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	**Comment**
Partially	The panel is partially satisfied that the programme's access, transfer, and progression arrangements are satisfactory.

Doctorate of Business Administration

The application document and supporting materials provided a comprehensive description of the programme including entry criteria and the progression process (section 5 & 10 are particularly relevant). Several clarifications were provided by LYIT during the virtual site visit. In addition, the panel met with a selection of LYIT postgraduate students and industry practitioners in relation to their experience of LYIT and their views on the potential DBA programme.

The student representatives confirmed the attraction of the proposed DBA and suggested that there could be student demand for the programme. The industry representatives also confirmed the potential value of the DBA programme for both companies and prospective students. In particular, the value of applied research on issues and problems with relevance to industry practice was highlighted as a key attraction of the proposed programme for both perspective students and business enterprises. The design of the programme to include exit points at post-graduate diploma and master's level is also an attractive feature of the programme from a student viewpoint.

Expectations regarding programme duration emerged as a key discussion point during the site visit, as discussed earlier (in relation to Core Criterion 3). Although the documentation presented a four-year part-time duration as the norm with allowances for extension, in conversation with the panel, LYIT acknowledged that, in practice, programme completion would likely often take longer. Students frequently referred to the four-year duration of the DBA as an attractive proposal. Students did not seem to be aware that the less structured phase 2 could take longer in the majority of cases (which could potentially lead to a total programme duration of five to six part-time as a norm, and – based on panel members' observations of other well established DBA programmes - could even lead to students requiring seven to eight years part-time to complete the programme). Similarly, industry representatives seemed to be aware only of a four-year duration, and even expressed some concern that the industry research proposals might not remain topical over this period. The condition in regard to programme duration stated under Criterion 3 (3.3) is relevant here.

During the site visit, the panel confirmed that Recognition of Prior Learning (section 5.1 plus QA handbook) will apply only in relation to accepting sufficient industry experience in lieu of a master's level qualification, and not in relation to the taught modules of the programme.

During the site visit, LYIT also confirmed that the general expectation was that students would be sponsored financially by their employer to partake in the programme, although it was acknowledged that this may not apply in all cases – in particular for those students employed in the small-to medium-enterprise sector. Other potential funding options (for example, the Irish Research Council, Skillnet) have not been explicitly explored by LYIT in relation to the proposed DBA programme at the time of application. The post-graduate students and industry practitioners interviewed did not have any awareness of potential funding opportunities or implications.

The panel therefore makes the following **special condition of validation**

C4.1 In order to ensure that prospective students have realistic expectations in respect of the duration of their studies, LYIT must ensure that all advertising material and programme descriptions specify that the duration of study is likely to be, on average, significantly longer that the four-year minimum duration .

The panel makes the following **recommendations** regarding access, transfer, and progression arrangements in respect of the programme:

R4.1 LYIT should ensure that student documentation regarding exiting with a master's award should highlight that this is likely to require an extension into a 3rd year (1 or 2 semesters) and clarify any fee implications (or write-up fee) relating to this option.

R4.2 LYIT should include a programme life cycle and duration diagram (such as that provided in the site-visit presentation) in student communications. This would aid student understanding of the programme structure and duration. This life cycle should explicitly include realistic timeframes for data collection, paper integration and thesis production, and the submission/viva process.

R4.3 Although the conduct of a pre-registration interview is supported, the panel urges caution with respect to ranking candidates based on interview performance. For transparency and legal protection, the panel recommends that LYIT consider programme entry ranking based only on prior academic qualifications and results along with evaluation of relevant industry experience.

R4.4 Given that this student cohort will comprise part-time students/senior professionals, it is to be expected that requests for extensions and leave of absence will be the norm rather than the exception. Therefore, LYIT should make explicit to students the impact of leaves of absence on programme duration and programme fees (e.g., does the 8-year maximum exclude leave of absence? Does the 2-year cycle impact availability of taught module deferrals?).

R4.5 LYIT should explore and communicate to students opportunities for funding other than employer sponsor.

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[13].

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.[14]

With regard to:

QQI Research-specific Criteria
3.2.5 – Research degree programme structure

The research degree programmes should be structured appropriately to enable the efficient attainment of the intended learning outcomes by the learner

- For each discipline-area the following should be available:
  o General and transferable skills training;
  o Specialised training required to develop a broad understanding of the relevant discipline-area and as dictated by the nature of the research being undertaken;
  o Seminars, both focused and interdisciplinary, to inform and to facilitate the dissemination and exchange of the fruits of research, enabling peer review and quality assessment.

- Ideally the elements above should be integrated into a structured research degree programme. The research apprenticeship is still an important part of a structured research degree programme and distinguishes it from taught programmes. This underlines the need for the presence of active researchers who can provide authoritative guidance and support and an active research community in the discipline area concerned.

- Providers of research degree programmes should consult with other higher education

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[13] 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.
[14] If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified

	institutions and with industry when developing their programmes.
	• Research students should have access to appropriate career guidance and networking opportunities which should include options outside academia.
	• PhD programmes in particular always involve the 'advancement of knowledge through original research'. They always involve the production of a thesis. The term thesis here should be understood inclusively to signify a coherent body of original work by the candidate. It consists of a (written) dissertation which may possibly be accompanied by a portfolio or supporting artefacts.

| **National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles** |
| 3 (see *core criterion 2* above) |
| 5 (see *core criterion 2* above) |

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Partially	The panel is partially satisfied that the programme curriculum is well structured and fit for purpose.

Doctorate of Business Administration

The application document and supporting materials provided evidence of well-thought-out and structured schedules of delivery and described adequately the programme's written curriculum including its module descriptions. Several clarifications, including the bespoke nature of the modules for the programme and under what circumstances students could choose or be forced to exit the programme, were provided by LYIT during the virtual site visit. The panel raised some concerns that there was a considerable lapse of time before the candidates were required to submit their first paper under the proposed course structure and the panels' experience of other DBA programmes indicates that the sooner that students are required to formulate their research ideas through the paper writing process, the better their preparedness as they move from Phase 1 to Phase 2. The panel also raised some concerns over the relatively low volume of assessment overall (only 3 research papers) compared to DBA programmes elsewhere and in the context of a balanced assessment loading across the programme, noting that there would generally be an expectation at doctoral level that students would undertake an additional research paper (RP4) that would underpin research capacity-building for students and prepare them for the final phases of their DBA studies.

The panel also queried the timelines and process for allocation of supervisors to students and how cases are to be dealt with where the research proposal is not deemed viable. Further discussion on the general topic is provided under Criterion 9 below.

The Panel makes the following **special conditions** regarding the programme curriculum:

C5.1   In view of the significance of the research proposal and of the need for a more appropriate overall assessment load within the programme, LYIT should require students to prepare a concept paper at this stage, which would be presented to a panel of examiners (internal examiner/external examiner, supervisors and invited faculty). Specifically, students should be required to critically reflect on their readings, peer interactions and tutor/supervisory discussions to develop out an overall conceptualisation of their proposed topic area. This paper would then be the basis for the presentation of their research proposal WP6 (end of phase 1/S4).

C5.2   LYIT must clarify to students the approach that will be taken in cases where the proposed research proposal is not viable.

C5.3 LYIT should ensure that the professional development module incorporates additional content and materials on reflective practice. The module must also include greater detail on how students will be supported to develop their practitioner research questions.

C5.4 LYIT must provide students with further details within the programme description and relevant regulations in respect of supervisor allocations and appointment process. There should be a very clear outline for students setting out when their supervisors will be appointed and the support that they can expect to receive in stage 1 in preparation for the research proposal phase and in stage 2 for the research papers phase.

The panel makes the following **recommendations** regarding the programme curriculum

R5.1 For all modules presented, LYIT should provide greater clarity on the delivery mode, particularly in relation to the breakdown between face-to-face and online delivery.

R5.2 For all modules, LYIT must provide a comprehensive readings pack to students; bibliography should also be included in the module catalogue.

R5.3 LYIT should provide a more detailed outline of the nature and extent of the integration between the modules in stage 1 and the ways in which these support the student in developing the capacity to undertake stages 2 and 3 i.e. the research papers and thesis production/defence.

R5.4 LYIT should provide further information on the ways in which research papers will link or integrate with each other: for example, will short 'linking' introductions be included at the start of each paper, or will these be included at the start of the overall section on the cumulative papers within the thesis? This requires some further clarification.

R5.5 LYIT should give further consideration to the paper preparation and examination process warrant. The scheduling proposed for the paper preparation and examinations is not realistic and needs to be fully revised. The timelines appear very tight, and the panel notes that this could negatively impact student workload. For example, in Table 7.2, (p.122), students are required to complete their assessments in 3 weeks. At this level, it is also recommended that the paper length should be in the region of 8,000 words.

R5.6 LYIT should provide greater clarity in the regulations and in the progamme description in respect of student progression and the circumstances under which circumstances they will fail or will be granted an exit award.

R5.7 The panel recommends that further information be provided on the form and structure of the dissertation. Specifically, there should be an outline discussion of the kinds of knowledge and professional impacts that would be expected from student submissions. This should be made explicit in the outline of the dissertation structure.

Core 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[15] (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[16] opportunities[17].

   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.

With regard to:

QQI Research-specific Criteria
3.2.6 – Research productivity

The unit responsible for the discipline-area should be productive as evidenced by recognised research performance indicators (especially its recent publication record e.g. over the past five years).

- *The institution's claims about the quality of its research (regional, national, international recognition) should be justified by reliable evidence.*

National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles
4 – Doctoral education is conducted in a learning community where **sufficient critical mass of internationally recognised research activity exists** to allow students to gain access to a training programme of appropriate breadth and to interact with peers engaged in their field, nationally and internationally.

Partial	Comment
	The panel is not satisfied that there are currently sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned but this deficiency may be rectified by compliance with the Special Conditions proscribed.

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[15] 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.

[16] 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.

[17] 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.

Doctorate of Business Administration

It is evident to the panel that staff are passionate and enthusiastic about their research and, overall, they appear very committed to the development and delivery of the DBA programme. Faculty research appears to be grouped into a series of thematics and these appear well considered. Staff work collaboratively on research papers (as evidenced by the CVs provided to the panel), research projects and funding applications. This is very positive and underlines the Faculty of Business' commitment to developing further its strategic research agenda.

As noted elsewhere in the report, the panel notes the limits to current supervisory capacity within the Faculty of Business to successfully deliver the DBA programme. Based on the evidence provided, only one staff member has successfully supervised a doctoral student to completion. While others are currently involved in PhD supervision in other universities, they represent only a small cluster of the overall faculty and it will take time to develop sufficient internal supervision expertise to support incoming DBA student cohorts. The Special Conditions set out under Criterion 3 in relation to supervision are relevant here.

In addition to earlier Special Conditions set out under Criterion 3 (**C3.1, C3.2**), the Panel makes the following **Special Conditions** in relation to programme staff:

C6.1 Further consideration must be given, and a detailed plan put in place, to how the faculty will deal with the significant increase in overall workload that will arise as a result of DBA doctoral supervision, given the very high current teaching load for faculty members, and the recruitment plan that envisages 10-12 DBA students every two years.

C6.2 In addition, further details must be provided in respect of the Faculty of Business' strategy to support staff development in relation to training and support interventions planned for staff. These could be in the form of training and mentoring workshops, lunch-time developmental events, collaborations with other universities, publication workshops and other research supports.

The panel makes the following **recommendations** regarding programme staff:

R6.1 The faculty should provide further information on the approach taken to support publication efforts by staff/students. While it is clear that staff are keen to publish their work, much of the journal output is confined to a small group of staff and further support is needed to widen the scope and opportunities for staff to publish in internationally peer reviewed journals.

R6.2 The panel recommends that the school provide further details on how the established research thematics will inform DBA student research activities. For example, will there be an expectation that students will be required to select a topic from these research thematics or will opportunities be provided for greater choice for students and – if so – how will this be managed?

R6.3 There was evidence of cross-school/departmental collaborations in the research and teaching activities undertaken by staff. This is to be commended as evidence of staff engagement and commitment to interdisciplinary research activity. It is recommended that these initiatives be included as a key aspect/dimension of any

faculty-developed research strategy as part of the new proposed technological university.

R6.4 There is evidence to suggest that some staff who are engaged in international collaborations (e.g. with the UK (Lancaster) and other universities). Further resource should be provided to support this collaborative activity. For example, initially, a small number of important and mission-critical research collaborations could be identified and supported from which further activity could be encouraged.

Core 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. kitchen, 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.

With regard to:
QQI Research-specific Criteria **3.2.4 – Research facilities and funding** There should be adequate physical resources as well as technical and administrative support structures and attendant staff appropriate to the research being undertaken. There must be adequate informational resources to enable learners to read what other researchers are publishing in relevant discipline-areas. Research degree programmes should be adequately funded.
National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles 6 – Doctoral education is conducted in a **research environment with a high degree of academic quality and infrastructure** and where it is **consistent with institutional strategies**. Academic quality includes quality supervision and training for supervisors.

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Partially	The panel is partially satisfied that there are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned.

Doctorate of Business Administration

The physical space provided at LYIT for post graduate research centres is based at the CoLab facility with dedicated accommodation for 60 students across the institution. In addition, there are break out rooms and other spaces available for students. Additional research space, including library facilities is planned to be completed in 2022.

However, with 74 research students currently registered, 20 at PhD level and 54 at master's level, the panel notes that it may be challenging for LYIT to accommodate an increase in the number of students arising from the proposed DBA cohort and other research programmes.

LYIT appears to be well resourced in terms of general facilities available to students including libraries, computer suites, access to relevant databases and to current digital tools and technologies.

A further dimension of this criterion relates to providing supports specific to the needs of research students. The panel notes that there is no clear mechanism for students to give feedback nor any plans ot facilitate training programmes on topics such as how to present research results and on teaching undergraduate students.

Included in this criterion is the training for supervisors (see NFDE principle 6). The panel has noted the limitations of the faculty's current supervisory capacity to successfully deliver the programme to the planned intake of 10 to 12 students every two years under earlier criteria (3 and 6). As noted elsewhere in this report, consideration must also be given to the DBA workload for doctoral supervision and a plan will need to be put in place for capacity-building for supervision of DBA students.

The Panel notes the following Recommendation regarding sufficient physical resources:

> **R7.1** LYIT should ensure that there is sufficient dedicated space for the DBA cohort within the CoLab or a similar facility.

Core 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.

With regard to:

QQI Research-specific Criteria
3.2.3 – Research environment and community

The provider should have an active, supportive academic environment and research community in the discipline-area demonstrated by recognised research performance indicators.

- *There should be evidence of the presence and active participation of people who can provide academic guidance, authority and leadership in the discipline-area concerned. They should be well connected with the broader research community in the discipline area. They should also be capable of managing the implementation of the discipline area research strategy.*

- *There should be evidence of the presence and participation of sufficient staff who are capable of and have experience of supervising research students in the discipline-area at the appropriate NFQ level.*

- *There should be a sufficient volume of research activity to create a stimulating environment for research students.*

- *There should be evidence of co-operative behaviour and collegiality.*

- *There should be opportunities for research students to interact with other researchers both within and outside the institution and opportunities, where appropriate, for collaboration with other providers, industry and commerce and the public sector.*

National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles
3 (see *core criterion 2* above)
4 (see *core criterion 6* above)
5 (see *core criterion 2* above)
6 (see *core criterion 7* above)

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	
Partially	**Comment** The panel is partially satisfied with the learning environment available to support the programme's students.

Doctorate of Business Administration

As noted elsewhere in this report, the panel noted with approval with the enthusiasm and commitment of the staff in relation to the development of the DBA and the growing research activity in the faculty, spearheaded by a (relatively small) group of academic staff. The high level of collegiality, team-work and collaboration is particularly notable.

As mentioned previously, the panel also had an opportunity to meet current and past postgraduate students who gave positive feedback in respect of the current facilities and the care and attention given to students. The theme of peer learning, and the benefits thereof, was frequently mentioned.

The panel views this as evidence of the need for a stronger research culture to develop within the faculty and amongst the proposed DBA cohort. This will be difficult to achieve if students are on campus only three days a semester. The panel is of the view that there should be more on-campus activity to facilitate the sharing of experiences and peer learning among students to create a community of practice within the DBA student cohort.

DBA students will have specific challenges and requirements and, given their probable professional standing and maturity, they will have high expectations; having a structured approach to providing student supports will be particularly important as the number of students and the range of projects ongoing within the faculty increases, and when international students are engaged on the programme. Greater clarity as to the resources that are available to the research students would be beneficial.

LYIT organises an annual symposium, which is institute-wide and it is well recognised internally. However, the panel views it as essential that there be specific events for the DBA cohort, which could also take place in concert with other researchers in the faculty. This would provide opportunities for students to showcase their work and to network with external communities, which could include receiving additional input from industry experts and guest speakers.

The Panel notes the following recommendations regarding the learning environment:

R8.1 Research activities are organised for current PhD students within other discipline areas. LYIT should plan formal and regular on-site research activities and opportunities for DBA students to showcase their work, to share experiences and to benefit from peer learning in order to create a stimulating environment and a community of practice within the student cohort. This is elaborated upon further under Criterion 11.

R8.2 The Faculty should embed a formal student feedback mechanism within the programme to evaluate workshop, supervision and research activities as well as the whole programme.

R8.3 LYIT should clearly identify the skills required by learners to ensure they are adequately equipped to carry out their research, and put in place a range of solutions to support a learner skills development programme.

R8.4 LYIT should develop an online space to allow students to share ideas and to encourage interaction with alumni.

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[18] and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.	
With regard to:	
n/a	
National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles 1 (see *core criterion 2* above) 2 – successful **completion and examination of the research thesis**, comprising **work of publishable quality**, is the basis for the award of the doctoral degree. The thesis can be presented in a variety of formats. 3 (see *core criterion 2* above)	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	**Comment**
Partially	The panel is partially satisfied with the teaching and learning strategies.

Doctorate of Business Administration

Based on the comprehensive documentation provided in the application as well as on the discussions that took place during the site visit, it was evident to the panel that there should be a clearer articulation of the overall approach to teaching and learning for the proposed DBA programme. At this level (i.e. all students will be part-time, mature students at senior management level or equivalent in their organisations), there will be an expectation that the teaching and learning envisaged for all phases of the DBA programme will be clearly described. The capacity-building measures planned to support students in becoming critically reflective practitioners will need to be more explicitly articulated. Interventions that will help students transition through the various phases of the DBA also need to be articulated; this includes the ways in which the modules in phase 1 link and integrate to phase 2 and how the student is prepared for the final examination in phase 3. The paper examination process also warrants further consideration and refinement. From a teaching and learning perspective, the panel is of the view that students enrolled on the DBA programme will experience challenges in respect of workload and potential learning difficulties under the current model planned (specifically, as discussed earlier, the paper timelines appear to allow very little margin for any slippage and warrant further consideration; further, it is not clear to the panel (on indicative schedule p.122/23) how this current model will operate in practice).

As discussed under Criterion 5 (special condition **C5.1**) above, a concept paper should be introduced at the end of year 1 which would be presented to a panel of examiners (internal examiner/external examiner, supervisors and invited faculty. Specifically, students should critically reflect on their

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[18] 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.

readings, peer interactions and tutor/supervisory discussions to develop out an overall conceptualisation of their proposed topic area. This paper would then be the basis for the presentation of their research proposal WP6 (end of phase 1/S4). It would be envisaged that the research proposed would in time lead to a substantial contribution to the advancement of knowledge and practice of management in their profession.

Issues in respect of how the overall pedagogy is reflected in the learning strategies, mapping of the student journey and opportunities for mentoring outside of the supervision panel were also identified by the panel.

The Panel notes the following recommendations regarding teaching and learning strategies:

> **R9.1** LYIT should revise learning strategies in light of the development of the overall pedagogy that underpins the programme.

> **R9.2** LYIT should ensure the mapping of individual student journeys as they progress through the stages of the DBA programme; this can be achieved using spreadsheets (instead of data analytics tools).

> **R9.3** LYIT should consider individual support for students through mentoring (outside the supervisory panel).

Core 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*[19]

    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.[20]

    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.[21]

    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.[22]

With regard to:

QQI Research-specific Criteria

3.3 – Criteria for the procedures for the assessment of learning

[*Note: Reference is made within this criterion to further sections of QQI's Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria, available at the link above. Reference is also made to the IUQB document 'Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Higher Education, which has since been replaced by '*Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes*'*]

The following criteria are used when agreeing a provider's procedures for the assessment of candidates for research degrees.

- The provider's formative and summative assessment procedures are consistent with:
  - Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013, and
  - IUQB's Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Higher Education 2009 (particularly Chapters 8 and 10 both of which concern assessment).
- The transfer of a research student from the Master's Register to the Doctoral Register must involve a formal transfer process. The transfer process must involve the external review of the proposed research by an independent expert in the discipline-area concerned. Transfer is only possible within a provider if the provider has (at least) doctoral research approval in the discipline-area concerned.
- Each candidate for a research degree is assessed against the relevant standard in Section 5.2 below by at least two examiners after the thesis has been submitted.
- The provider has formal and robust procedures for selecting and approving external examiners which ensure that the examiners are independent, qualified to the NFQ level of the award sought by the candidate, recognised experts in the field and research-active. There should be procedures for the avoidance of all conflicts of interests (whether real or apparent or potential or actual) and declaration of relevant interests. External examiners for research degrees should be approved by the provider's Academic Committee or equivalent before being confirmed. If a nominated external examiner is not affiliated with a higher education institution then additional procedures are normally required to confirm that the nominee is competent to carry out the required functions. The procedures for selecting and approving internal examiners should be equally robust.
  - Examiners are selected on a case-by-case basis for each thesis submitted.
  - At least one examiner should always be external to the provider. The external examiner is independent of the candidate and the provider and is a recognised research-active expert in the thesis topic.

    o One examiner may be a member of the provider's staff except where the learner concerned is also a member of the provider's staff. The internal examiner is otherwise independent of the candidate and supervisory team. Providers which do not have the scale required to provide a suitable internal examiner rely upon external examiners (i.e. they appoint two or more).

    o The supervisor and all members of any supervisory team are ineligible to be examiners in the assessment of any learner supervised.

- The provider's assessment procedures should detail the internal and external examiner's roles and responsibilities. The examiners' task is to assess the candidate against the relevant award standard using the thesis as evidence. See Section 5 on the precise criteria for recommending the award of research degrees.

- Structured PhD programmes may include taught elements which are assessed. Such assessments are enabling assessments (to determine whether or not a learner may submit a thesis) rather than assessments that have a bearing on the PhD result which must hinge on the thesis and the performance of the candidate at the viva voce.

- The assessment process is transparent. A viva voce is mandatory for the Doctor of Philosophy degree and professional doctorate degrees and is optional but available if requested by either one of the examiners or the candidate in the case of a Master's degree.

- The assessment procedures (for both Master's and Doctoral degrees) provide for the engagement by the provider of a non-voting chairperson who is independent of the candidate and supervisory team. The role and responsibilities of the chairperson should be made explicit in the provider's procedures and should include (see also the special condition on the nomination of the chairperson for research approved providers in Section 2.2.2):

    o Communicating with the examiners to achieve consensus among them;

    o Ensuring that the process and assessment criteria are properly applied; and

    o Reporting to QQI where it is the awarding body.

- There should be a procedure which 'can be implemented in case of examiner disagreement as to the' assessment outcome (see Chapter 10 of the aforementioned IUQB Code).

- Where required, the chairperson should send his or her report to QQI as soon as possible after the assessment. The report should include a brief outline of the learning outcome, the names of each of the examiners along with an outline of the assessment (the reports of the examiners may be attached) and a report of the consensus recommendation. The acceptable (for the purpose of consistency) recommendations are:

    o Recommended;

    o Recommended with minor revisions;

    o Not recommended but referred for major revision and re-examination; and

    o Not recommended.

The procedures state clearly that the option to refer the thesis for revision is normally only available the first time the thesis is examined.

National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles

1 (see *core criterion 2* above)

2 (see *core criterion 9* above)

3 (see *core criterion 2* above)

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Partially	The panel is partially satisfied with the assessment strategies

Doctorate of Business Administration

For quality assurance purposes, the panel is of the view that all papers, including all assessments of the taught elements, should be subject to review by external examiners. The Faculty of Business Studies has already implemented peer learning and peer sharing practices in its Executive Education programmes and the panel expects that the delivery of the DBA programme would follow in a consistent way. The panel is of the opinion that the programme team should elaborate in more detail how quality assurance mechanisms would be managed through external examination and programme board. External input to examination content and external examination are normal examining processes and the appointment of external examiners should occur through an appropriate office at institute level, independent of the faculty, to ensure the independence of the external examining process.

The application was well presented in terms of the structure of the programme and it was clear to the panel the distinction between the taught elements and the final dissertation stage. The panel recommends the programme team invite external reviewers to review the progress of students in the second 'paper' stage; this should be distinct to the external examiner's role in examining the assessment of taught modules. The proposed research papers are part of a structured process to ensure successful student progression. For each paper, students must produce work of DBA standard. Therefore, involving external input and feedback is essential to ensure quality control and the panel recommends that each candidate have at least one of their 4 research papers considered by an external reviewer to ensure consistency.

The Panel makes the following special conditions of validation regarding assessment strategies

> **C10.1** LYIT must introduce internal and external examiners to formally examine students' research papers and to review the progress of students in the second 'paper' stage; further, at least one of each student's research papers should be reviewed by an external reviewer for consistency.

The Panel makes the following recommendations regarding the assessment strategies:

> **R10.1** LYIT should ensure that the appointment of external examiners occur through an office at institute level, independent of the faculty, to ensure the independence of the external examining process.

Core 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[23].

    i.   If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the *Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students*[24] 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).

With regard to:

QQI Research-specific Criteria

3.2.3 – Research environment and community

The provider should have an active, supportive academic environment and research community in the discipline-area demonstrated by recognised research performance indicators.

- *There should be evidence of the presence and active participation of people who can provide academic guidance, authority and leadership in the discipline-area concerned. They should be well connected with the broader research community in the discipline area. They should also be capable of managing the implementation of the discipline area research strategy.*

- *There should be evidence of the presence and participation of sufficient staff who are capable of and have experience of supervising research students in the discipline-area at the appropriate NFQ level.*

- *There should be a sufficient volume of research activity to create a stimulating environment for research students.*

- *There should be evidence of co-operative behaviour and collegiality.*

- *There should be opportunities for research students to interact with other researchers both within and outside the institution and opportunities, where appropriate, for collaboration with other providers, industry and commerce and the public sector.*

National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles

3 (see *core criterion 2* above) 4 (see *core criterion 6* above) 8 (see *core criterion 4* above)

Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Yes	The panel is satisfied that learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided, and cared for.

Doctorate of Business Administration

The application document and supporting materials provided a comprehensive description of the learner communication and support processes proposed for the DBA programme (Section 8 is particularly relevant), along with a description of the general research environment. LYIT already delivers a range of postgraduate programmes, and, therefore, many of these communication processes and support structures are already in place. The panel also received an impression of the student experience of the existing learning environment during a virtual meeting with a selection of current and past LYIT postgraduate students.

As set out earlier in this report, during this meeting, the panel noted the positive feedback from students in relation to the care and attention they received at LYIT. The key role of the supervisor (and to a lesser extent the supervisory panel) as the main support mechanism was highlighted by students. In addition, the value of student support services in general, and student wellbeing support in particular, was acknowledged by students.

An institution-wide online induction launch pad has recently been introduced in LYIT, which is a welcome development. It is proposed by LYIT that this will be supplemented for DBA students with a face-to-face induction session. Overall, the taught element of the DBA programme is expected to be 50/50 face-to-face vs. online. Greater clarity on the exact breakdown between the face-to-face and online delivery components of the programme is recommended as discussed earlier.

There is evidence of co-operative behaviour and collegiality within the Faculty of Business, and, indeed, with several other institutions such as University of Ulster and Queens University. However, opportunities for students to interact with other researchers, especially outside of LYIT, must be strengthened and formalised. As recommended under Criterion 8, the DBA research environment should contain more opportunities for students to meet/connect and undertake peer learning, both formally and informally.

The dedicated post-graduate student space in the CoLab industry hub building appears to provide great potential for a research support environment. This has, understandably, been limited over the past 18 months due to the COVID lockdown. However, as noted elsewhere in this report, the available space is limited and further developments will be needed to meet growing demand from an expanding postgraduate cohort.

The Panel makes the following **recommendations** in relation to student support:

> **R11.1**   LYIT should consider opportunities for greater student-to-student engagement. This could take many forms including:
>   i.   More time for peer exchange, both structured and unstructured, to be built into on-site face-to-face modules and online discussion forums
>   ii. Virtual and face-to-face coffee mornings for informal networking
>   iii. Collaborative workshops for DBA students (e.g., academic writing, advanced research methods)
>   iv. The establishment of a post-graduate research society and programme of support
>   v.   Opportunities to network across cohorts as the programme develops

      vi.   Opportunities to network with LYIT alumni

R11.2   LYIT should develop an extended business research environment appropriate to a programme at level 10. This should include:
- i.   An annual research symposium dedicated to business school students to supplement the overall LYIT annual research student symposium
- ii.   An annual or semester schedule of external speakers, including both academic experts and industry practitioners
- iii.   More explicit emphasis on academic conference attendance and presentations by students
- iv.   The provision of research publication advice and expertise from research experts in the targeted disciplines and journals of focus

R11.3   LYIT should formally embed opportunities for student feedback into the programme design and evaluation processes. This should include formal establishment of a post-graduate student representative role, and a DBA class representative.

Core 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[25] 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.

With regard to:

QQI Research-specific Criteria

3.2.5 – Research degree programme structure

The research degree programmes should be structured appropriately to enable the efficient attainment of the intended learning outcomes by the learner

- For each discipline-area the following should be available:
  - General and transferable skills training;
  - Specialised training required to develop a broad understanding of the relevant discipline-area and as dictated by the nature of the research being undertaken;
  - Seminars, both focused and interdisciplinary, to inform and to facilitate the dissemination and exchange of the fruits of research, enabling peer review and quality assessment.
- Ideally the elements above should be integrated into a structured research degree programme. The research apprenticeship is still an important part of a structured research degree programme and distinguishes it from taught programmes. This underlines the need for the presence of active researchers who can provide authoritative guidance and support and an active research community in the discipline area concerned.
- Providers of research degree programmes should consult with other higher education institutions and with industry when developing their programmes.
- Research students should have access to appropriate career guidance and networking opportunities which should include options outside academia.
- PhD programmes in particular always involve the 'advancement of knowledge through original research'. They always involve the production of a thesis. The term thesis here should be understood inclusively to signify a coherent body of original work by the candidate. It consists of a (written) dissertation which may possibly be accompanied by

a portfolio or supporting artefacts.	
National Framework for Doctoral Education Principles 1 (see *core criterion 2* above) 3 (see *core criterion 2* above) 5 (see *core criterion 2* above)	
Satisfactory (yes, no, partially)	**Comments**
Partially	The panel is partially satisfied that the programme is well managed

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The documentation and supporting material provided to the Panel, along with the discussions with members of staff at the site visit, indicate a strong culture and intent to manage and support the programme. The panel identified a number of areas that could benefit from further consideration and clarification. It was also noted that the application and associated documentation would have benefited from treating the Postgraduate Diploma and Masters as exit awards from the DBA rather than giving them equal prominence in the documentation.

The Panel makes the following **recommendations** for strengthening the management of the programme.

R12.1 LYIT should develop specific governance guidelines for DBA supervision, for example clarity around communication timelines, supervision meetings is recommended.

R12.2 LYIT should provide further clarity in respect of procedures regarding the student appeals processes.

R12.3 LYIT should provide further clarity regarding the institutional-level support mechanisms that students can avail of.

R12.4 LYIT should provide formal consideration and guidelines for situations where too many students opt to conduct research in the research area of particular supervisors (i.e. potential supervision overload).

R12.5 The importance of the DBA Programme handbook is clear but LYIT should carefully outline for students the 'walk-through' from application to entry and then through the different phases.

Part 2B Overall recommendation to QQI

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Select one	
	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;
X	**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);[19]
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons[20] for the overall recommendation

The panel found sufficient merit in the DBA programme proposals and in the growing research activity and quality of the faculty to recommend that QQI validate the proposed level 10 DBA programme at LYIT **subject to the institution meeting a set of special conditions** that relate in particular to supervision delivery and capacity, programme duration, programme structure and content and enhancing the DBA research environment.

The rationale for the conditions and recommendations set out in this report are provided under the individual criteria for validation.

Summary of recommended Special Conditions of Validation

Core Criterion 2	C2.1	The learning objectives and learning outcomes must be clarified and clearly articulated in the light of the desired underlying programme pedagogical outcomes.
Core Criterion 3	C3.1	In light of the current lack of sufficient supervisory experience at NFQ Level 10, and until the internal staff expertise has increased sufficiently to manage the supervision of student cohorts enrolled on the DBA programme, the Faculty of Business must establish _formal_ relationships, based on detailed MoUs, with one or more institutions that have the capacity to support the primary supervision of DBA students.

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[19] Normally an application that fails to meet the criteria in any of its aspects will be considered as not satisfactory. Nevertheless, so as to ensure that the validation process will not be implemented unreasonably, if an independent evaluation finds that a programme virtually meets the validation criteria but needs some minor modifications, the independent evaluation could conclude "Satisfactory subject to recommended special conditions" where the special conditions prescribe the defects that require to be corrected.

[20] Give precise reasons for the conclusions organised under each of the 12 criteria (for the programme and each embedded programme and any modules proposed to lead to QQI awards) citing supporting evidence. If any criteria or sub-criteria are not met by the application this must be stated explicitly giving precise reasons with evidence. A "Not Satisfactory" recommendation may be justified if any one of the applicable criteria or sub-criteria are not demonstrated to be satisfied.

	C3.2	The Faculty of Business, through Academic Council, must examine existing policies and regulations to ensure that they allow for external primary supervision of PhD students and define precisely LYIT's requirements for eligibility to supervise PhD students.
	C3.3	The Faculty of Business must recast regulations regarding programme duration to provide for a minimum duration of four years, no penalty for students enrolled for a period of up to six years and the option to extend the duration of the programme to a maximum of eight years.
	C3.4	The Faculty of Business, through Academic Council, must provide for the proposed thesis length to be at least doubled to require a range of between 60,000 and 80,000 words.
Core criterion 4	**C.4.1**	In order to ensure that prospective students have realistic expectations in respect of the duration of their studies, LYIT must ensure that all advertising material and programme descriptions specify that the duration of study is likely to be, on average, significantly longer that the four-year minimum duration
Core criterion 5	**C5.1**	In view of the significance of the research proposal and of the need for a more appropriate overall assessment load within the programme, LYIT should require students to prepare a concept paper at this stage, which would be presented to a panel of examiners (internal examiner/external examiner, supervisors and invited faculty). Specifically, students should be required to critically reflect on their readings, peer interactions and tutor/supervisory discussions to develop out an overall conceptualisation of their proposed topic area. This paper would then be the basis for the presentation of their research proposal WP6 (end of phase 1/S4).
	C5.2	LYIT must clarify to students the approach that will be taken in cases where the proposed research proposal is not viable.
	C5.3	LYIT should ensure that the professional development module incorporates additional content and materials on reflective practice. The module must also include greater detail on how students will be supported to develop their practitioner research questions.
	C5.4	LYIT must provide students with further details within the programme description and relevant regulations in respect of supervisor allocations and appointment process. There should be a very clear outline for students setting out when their supervisors will be appointed and the support that they can expect to receive in stage 1 in preparation for the research proposal phase and in stage 2 for the research papers phase.
Core criterion 6	**C6.1**	Further consideration must be given, and a detailed plan put in place, to how the faculty will deal with the significant increase in overall workload that will arise as a result of DBA doctoral supervision, given the very high current teaching load for faculty members, and the recruitment plan that envisages 10-12 DBA students every two years.
	C6.2	In addition, further details must be provided in respect of the Faculty of Business' strategy to support staff development in relation to training and support interventions planned for staff. These could be in the form of training and mentoring workshops, lunch-time developmental events, collaborations with other universities, publication workshops and other research supports.

Core criterion 10	C10.1	LYIT must introduce internal and external examiners to formally examine students' research papers and to review the progress of students in the second 'paper' stage; further, at least one of each student's research papers should be reviewed by an external reviewer for consistency.

Summary of Recommendations to the Provider

Core criterion 4	R4.1	LYIT should ensure that student documentation regarding exiting with a master's award should highlight that this is likely to require an extension into a 3rd year (1 or 2 semesters) and clarify any fee implications (or write-up fee) relating to this option.
	R4.2	LYIT should include a programme life cycle and duration diagram (such as that provided in the site-visit presentation) in student communications. This would aid student understanding of the programme structure and duration. This life cycle should explicitly include realistic timeframes for data collection, paper integration and thesis production, and the submission/viva process.
	R4.3	Although the conduct of a pre-registration interview is supported, the panel urges caution with respect to ranking candidates based on interview performance. For transparency and legal protection, the panel recommends that LYIT consider programme entry ranking based only on prior academic qualifications and results along with evaluation of relevant industry experience.
	R4.4	Given that this student cohort will comprise part-time students/senior professionals, it is to be expected that requests for extensions and leave of absence will be the norm rather than the exception. Therefore, LYIT should make explicit to students the impact of leaves of absence on programme duration and programme fees (e.g., does the 8-year maximum exclude leave of absence? Does the 2-year cycle impact availability of taught module deferrals?).
	R4.5	LYIT should explore and communicate to students opportunities for funding other than employer sponsor.
Core criterion 5	R5.1	For all modules presented, LYIT should provide greater clarity on the delivery mode, particularly in relation to the breakdown between face-to-face and online delivery.
	R5.2	For all modules, LYIT must provide a comprehensive readings pack to students; bibliography should also be included in the module catalogue.
	R5.3	LYIT should provide a more detailed outline of the nature and extent of the integration between the modules in stage 1 and the ways in which these support the student in developing the capacity to undertake stages 2 and 3 i.e. the research papers and thesis production/defence.
	R5.4	LYIT should provide further information on the ways in which research papers will link or integrate with each other: for example, will short 'linking' introductions be included at the start of each paper, or will these be included at the start of the overall section on the cumulative papers within the thesis? This requires some further clarification.
	R5.5	LYIT should give further consideration to the paper preparation and examination process warrant. The scheduling proposed for the paper preparation and examinations is not realistic and needs to be fully revised. The timelines appear very tight, and the panel notes that this

		could negatively impact student workload. For example, in Table 7.2, (p.122), students are required to complete their assessments in 3 weeks. At this level, it is also recommended that the paper length should be in the region of 8,000 words.
	R5.6	LYIT should provide greater clarity in the regulations and in the progamme description in respect of student progression and the circumstances under which circumstances they will fail or will be granted an exit award.
	R5.7	The panel recommends that further information be provided on the form and structure of the dissertation. Specifically, there should be an outline discussion of the kinds of knowledge and professional impacts that would be expected from student submissions. This should be made explicit in the outline of the dissertation structure.
Core criterion 6	R6.1	The faculty should provide further information on the approach taken to support publication efforts by staff/students. While it is clear that staff are keen to publish their work, much of the journal output is confined to a small group of staff and further support is needed to widen the scope and opportunities for staff to publish in internationally peer reviewed journals.
	R6.2	The panel recommends that the school provide further details on how the established research thematics will inform DBA student research activities. For example, will there be an expectation that students will be required to select a topic from these research thematics or will opportunities be provided for greater choice for students and – if so – how will this be managed?
	R6.3	There was evidence of cross-school/departmental collaborations in the research and teaching activities undertaken by staff. This is to be commended as evidence of staff engagement and commitment to interdisciplinary research activity. It is recommended that these initiatives be included as a key aspect/dimension of any faculty-developed research strategy as part of the new proposed technological university.
	R6.4	There is evidence to suggest that some staff who are engaged in international collaborations (e.g. with the UK (Lancaster) and other universities). Further resource should be provided to support this collaborative activity. For example, initially, a small number of important and mission-critical research collaborations could be identified and supported from which further activity could be encouraged.
Core criterion 7	R7.1	LYIT should ensure that there is sufficient dedicated space for the DBA cohort within the CoLab or a similar facility.
Core criterion 8	R8.1	Research activities are organised for current PhD students within other discipline areas. LYIT should plan formal and regular on-site research activities and opportunities for DBA students to showcase their work, to share experiences and to benefit from peer learning in order to create a stimulating environment and a community of practice within the student cohort. This is elaborated upon further under Criterion 11.
	R8.2	The Faculty should embed a formal student feedback mechanism within the programme to evaluate workshop, supervision and research activities as well as the whole programme.
	R8.3	LYIT should clearly identify the skills required by learners to ensure they are adequately equipped to carry out their research, and put in place a range of solutions to support a learner skills development programme.

	R8.4	LYIT should develop an online space to allow students to share ideas and to encourage interaction with alumni.
Core criterion 9	**R9.1**	LYIT should revise learning strategies in light of the development of the overall pedagogy that underpins the programme.
	R9.2	LYIT should ensure the mapping of individual student journeys as they progress through the stages of the DBA programme; this can be achieved using spreadsheets (instead of data analytics tools).
	R9.3	LYIT should consider individual support for students through mentoring (outside the supervisory panel).
Core criterion 10	**R10.1**	LYIT should ensure that the appointment of external examiners occur through an office at institute level, independent of the faculty, to ensure the independence of the external examining process.
Core criterion 11	**R11.1**	LYIT should consider opportunities for greater student-to-student engagement. This could take many forms including: 　i.　More time for peer exchange, both structured and unstructured, to be built into on-site face-to-face modules and online discussion forums 　ii.　Virtual and face-to-face coffee mornings for informal networking 　iii.　Collaborative workshops for DBA students (e.g., academic writing, advanced research methods) 　iv.　The establishment of a post-graduate research society and programme of support 　v.　Opportunities to network across cohorts as the programme develops 　vi.　Opportunities to network with LYIT alumni
	R11.2	LYIT should develop an extended business research environment appropriate to a programme at level 10. This should include: 　i.　An annual research symposium dedicated to business school students to supplement the overall LYIT annual research student symposium 　ii.　An annual or semester schedule of external speakers, including both academic experts and industry practitioners 　iii.　More explicit emphasis on academic conference attendance and presentations by students 　iv.　The provision of research publication advice and expertise from research experts in the targeted disciplines and journals of focus
	R11.3	LYIT should formally embed opportunities for student feedback into the programme design and evaluation processes. This should include formal establishment of a post-graduate student representative role, and a DBA class representative.
Core criterion 12	**R12.1**	LYIT should develop specific governance guidelines for DBA supervision, for example clarity around communication timelines, supervision meetings is recommended.
	R12.2	LYIT should provide further clarity in respect of procedures regarding the student appeals processes.
	R12.3	LYIT should provide further clarity regarding the institutional-level support mechanisms that students can avail of.
	R12.4	LYIT should provide formal consideration and guidelines for situations where too many students opt to conduct research in the research area of particular supervisors (i.e. potential supervision overload).

	R12.5	The importance of the DBA Programme handbook is clear but LYIT should carefully outline for students the 'walk-through' from application to entry and then through the different phases.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

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

Panel chairperson: Date: 21-12-2021

Signed:

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