

Independent Panel Report on a Provider's Programme Review

Provider	Fastrack into Information Technology (CLG)
Programme(s) Reviewed	Advanced Certificate in Cybersecurity (Cybersecurity Associate Apprenticeship)

Independent Panel Members

Name	Role	Affiliation
Martin McKinney	Chair & Subject Matter Expert	Professor Emeritus Ulster University
Alexandra Anton-Aherne	Secretary & Report Writer	Education Consultant ThreeSixtyInsights
Jan Carroll	Academic Subject Matter Expert	Fortify Institute
Kate O'Loughlin	Industry Subject Matter Expert	Industry Representative
Anna Marie Woods	QA Expert & ETB Representative	QA representative & ETB Rep

All members of the independent Panel declared their independence of Fastrack into Information Technology and that they have no conflict of interest

Part 1. Introduction

This document presents the findings of the Independent Panel (hereafter, 'the Panel') following a review and evaluation of the Programme Review Report and the modified Cybersecurity Apprenticeship provided by Fastrack into Information Technology CLG (hereafter, 'FIT').

It is closely guided by the terms of reference agreed by FIT with QQI for the programme review of the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship leading to a level 6 Advanced Certificate in Cybersecurity (200 FET Credits).

It is noted that the programme was reviewed by the provider and by the Panel with reference to QQI's Award Standards. The revalidation sought for the programme is for a five-year period commencing with an intake in November 2024.

Part 2. Evaluation Process

2.1 Documents Supplied to the Panel

	Document Type	Document Name
1.	A. Instructions for Independent Panel Members	1. Cybersecurity Independent Panel Instructions 2. Tech Apprenticeship Organisational Structure Summer 2024 3. Proposed Programme Schedule and Colour Key V2 220824
2.	B. Programme Review & Revalidation Terms of Reference	FIT ToR Cybersecurity Apprenticeship Review and Revalidation V7 300724
3.	C. Programme Review Report (QQI Template)	Adv Cert in Cybersecurity Programme Review Report Final Sat 030824
4.	D. Self-Evaluation Reports (Blended Learning & Validation Criteria)	1. Self Assessment Blended Learning Report V5 final 290724 2. Self Assessment QQI Validation Criteria V2 020824
5.	E. Revised Programme Descriptor (QQI Template)	Adv Cert in Cybersecurity Revised Programme Descriptor V2 030824
6.	F. Stakeholder Guides	Tech Apprenticeship Apprentice Handbook V1.0 To be updated post cyber reval Tech Apprenticeship Employer Handbook V1.0 To be updated post cyber reval
7.	G. Consortium Review Activity	0824 Tech Industry Alliance Letter of Support 0824 Technology Ireland Letter of Support A. Mid Cycle Consortium Board Review Activity--JP Morgan

		B. Mid Cycle Consortium Board Review Activity-- Accenture
8.	H. MIPLO & MIMLO Mapping to Award Standard	MIMLO Cybersecurity remapped to PATD 220824 final MIPLO's Cybersecurity remapped to PATD 220824 Professional Award-types (QQI ref for Cybersecurity apprenticeship)
9.	I. Proposed Book of Modules	A. Module Descriptor CS-TA-001 Networking Fundamentals I B. Module Descriptor CS-TA-002 Cybersecurity in Operating Systems - Linux & Windows C. Module Descriptor CS-TA-003 Intermediate Network Management (CompTIA Network+) D. Module Descriptor CS-TA-004 Cybersecurity Threat Detection (CompTIA Security+) E. Module Descriptor CS-TA-005 Analysing Cyber Risks with AI (CompTIA CySA+) F. Module Descriptor CS-TA-006 Project Management & Communications G. Module Descriptor CS-TA-007 Capstone Project H. H. Module Descriptor CS-TA-008 & CS-TA-009 Applied Learning in the Workplace Year 1 & Year 2
10.	J. Assessments (following 2023 & 2024 review)	Subfolders: CS-TA-001 Networking Fundamentals I CS-TA-002 Cybersecurity in Operating Systems - Linux & Windows CS-TA-003 Intermediate Network Management (CompTIA Network+) CS-TA-004 Cybersecurity Threat Detection (CompTIA Security+) CS-TA-005 Analysing Cyber Risks with AI (CompTIA CySA) CS-TA-006 Project Management & Communications CS-TA-007 Capstone Project Document: CS-TA-008 & CS-TA-009 - Transversal Skills - Marking Guide for ICT Assessors
11.	K. QAH Part A – All Tech Apprenticeship QA Policies – final	Various documents
12.	L. QAH Part B – Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy - final	FIT Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy 2022-2025
13.	M. QAH Part C – Terms of Reference (All Tech Apprenticeship Roles) – final	Various documents

14.	N. QAH Part C – Terms of Reference (All Tech Apprenticeship Boards & Committees) – final	Various documents
15.	O. QAH Part C – Operational Procedures (Apprentices) - final	Appeals Procedure and Form V1.0 Complaints Procedure and Form V1.0 PMC Procedure and Form V1.0
16.	P. QAH Part C – Key Tech Apprenticeship Process Maps & Flows – final	Various documents
17.	Q. External Examiner Reports	Subfolders: 2021-2022 2023-2024
18.	R. Syllabus Review Group (Cyber review inputs)	Various documents
19.	S. Original Programme (initial validation)	Cybersecurity PG24039_Cert of Validation 2019-2024 Initial Cybersecurity Programme Descriptor

2.2 Provider's Representatives Met

	Person	Role / Job Title
1.	Peter Davitt	FIT CEO
2.	Andrew Finn	Director of Academic Affairs
3.	Gemma Cassidy	FIT Registrar
4.	Clare Stewart	Innovation and Development Manager
5.	Anne Marie Gavin	Corporate Services Manager
6.	Danielle Barr	Director of Training and Employment Services
7.	Michelle Cox	National Fulfilment Manager Tech Apprenticeship
8.	Nicola Dowling	Learner/apprentice representative
9.	Conor Kearney	Learner/apprentice representative
10.	Dean Harrison	Senior Learning Technologist
11.	Daire Boyle	Digital Learning Resources Coordinator
12.	Clodagh Kearns	People, Analytics and Wellbeing Officer
13.	Ollin Flynn	Tech Apprenticeship Officer (employer outreach)
14.	PJ Weldon	Tutor with experience in programme delivery
15.	Philip Hogan	Tutor with experience in programme delivery

2.3 Description of evaluation process

FIT has provided clear information pertaining to the programme review process. Following the review process, the provider notes that amendments are proposed across several areas such as intake size and frequency, modules and titles, MIPLOs, teaching & learning strategy, assessment strategy and lastly QA procedures. Proposed changes to the programme are included in the introduction of this report. These proposed changes are detailed further in Section G of this report.

Part 3. Panel Findings on Provider Programme Review Report

The following is the Panel's commentary and recommendations on the provider's programme review report. It follows the section structure of the report in headings and in sequence. References to specific parts of the provider report will use the relevant report reference e.g. 2.2.4 Programme Management

Section A. Context and Terms of Reference for the Programme Review

Commentary:

FIT has provided clear information pertaining to the programme review process carried. The review report notes that the process included various stages, such as:

1. the initial compilation of coherent and logical Terms of Reference (ToR),
2. targeted review activity based on the ToR, and
3. the compilation of a high level of data and feedback.

Further areas of focus were agreed between FIT and QQI, for example:

1. Workplace mentorship arrangements.
2. Adopting best practices from recent QQI publications.

Following the review process, the provider notes that amendments are appropriate. A number of proposed changes are presented across the programme, including:

- The frontloading of the workplace induction and the non-accredited GDPR introduction. Induction is now considerably longer, encompassing: (i) a FIT programme induction, and (ii) a three-week employer-led workplace induction.
- The CompTIA IT Fundamentals module is removed and replaced by a new module, M01 (Networking Fundamentals). This new module provides a better understanding of basic networking concepts within the computing environment and also provides a solid knowledge base for progressing into M03 (Intermediate Network Management).
- M03 (Intermediate Network Management) was previously called 'CompTIA Network+'. The module now has a series of clearer learning outcomes but still uses the CompTIA Network+ exam as part of the module assessment regime. It is noted that other modules described in the original programme under the CompTIA framework of certifications now follow the style used by M03 in relation to the use of the relevant CompTIA exams.

- The assessments for M03 (Intermediate Network Management), M04 (Cybersecurity Threat Detection) and M05 (Analysing Cyber Risks with AI) have been updated to allow apprentices to reflect on their learning while providing authentic opportunities to apply knowledge within a real-world context.
- A new module, M02 (Cybersecurity in Operating Systems: Linux and Windows) has been introduced exploring the Linux and Microsoft operating systems in detail.
- Some of the modules in the original programme had a degree of repetitive content that did not assist in the sustained building of skills and knowledge, for example City and Guilds Personal and Professional Development and Effective Communications in Business. This module content has now been removed and replaced by M06 (Project Management and Communications) module which considers effective communication and professional development.
- The City and Guilds Professional Recognition module has been removed from the provision.
- M08 (Applied Learning in the Workplace Year 1) and M09 (Applied Learning in the Workplace Year 2) now incorporate a reflective journal with a specified marking scheme.
- In response to learners reporting being somewhat overburdened in the assessment load nearing the programme's end, FIT proposes not to proceed with including the CompTIA penetration Testing Module in the revised programme. However, as penetration testing is important to the field of cybersecurity, facets of penetration testing practices are still included as constituent elements of other modules stated as part of the revised programme. Specifically, modules M06 (Analysing Cyber Risks with AI) and M08 (Capstone Project) will encompass the penetration testing activities within a sandbox environment. FIT also noted that in the future, a facility will exist for graduate Cybersecurity Associate apprentices to complete the CompTIA penetration testing certification for CPD purposes in rare instances where an employer might require a graduate apprentice to prove attainment of this certification. However, this will sit separately from the Advanced Certificate in Cybersecurity award.
- All modules that form the reviewed programme will utilise a FIT-devised template consistent across all modules and assessment briefs.

A full list of proposed module level changes is provided in a table on page 7/8 of the review report.

Section 1 of the review report provides thorough information in a concise manner pertaining to the locations within the various Education and Training Boards (ETBs) where the programme has facilitated a programme intake:

- City of Dublin ETB (CDET),
- Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB (DDLETB),
- Kildare and Wicklow ETB (KWETB),
- Cork ETB (CETB),
- Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB (MSLETB),
- Kerry ETB (KETB) and
- Louth and Meath ETB (LMETB);

The review report notes that the various modes of programme delivery are outlined in the Programme Descriptor, noting that FIT anticipated delivering off-the-job elements of this programme through in-person or synchronous formats. Information pertaining to programme enrolment is presented in section 1.4.7.

Section 1.5 provides detailed information pertaining to FIT addressing the conditions and recommendations within the Initial Validation Report. In section 1.5.1, FIT suggests that following revalidation, the commonly used apprenticeship programme title be changed from 'Advanced Certificate in Cybersecurity' to 'Cybersecurity Associate'. This change would better fit in with FIT's two other apprenticeship programmes as well as provide adequate differentiation between this and the Cybersecurity Practitioner apprenticeship at degree level.

The remainder of the subsections provide information in relation to:

- Matters related to the use of CompTIA certifications within the programme;
- Minimum candidate language proficiency;
- Progression arrangements;
- Approved Delivering Partner ETB Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) and necessary resources for delivery;
- Assessment repeat mechanisms;
- Disruption to training and access to broader support for apprentices;
- GDPR module;
- Intellectual property;
- Statement of MIMLOs in the original programme;
- Integration of soft/transversal skills content;
- External Examiner assessment sampling;
- Inaugural Academic Council.

Section 1.6 provides information pertaining to the location of the Terms of Reference approved by QQI. Section 1.6.2 lists two special considerations that were included in the Terms of Reference, specifically:

- workplace mentorship; and
- adherence to best practices as notes in recent QQI publications.

Recommendations:

The Panel does not have any specific recommendations pertaining to the above.

Section B. Provider Information and Programme Context

Commentary:

Section 2.1.1 outlines FIT's history, noting that FIT is an industry-led initiative that collaborates closely with government departments, national education and training agencies, local development entities, and a host of community-based organisations. Section 2.1.1 also provides information around FIT's mission, which is to promote an inclusive Smart Economy by creating a fast track to marketable technical skills for those at risk of unemployment long term. Further information in this section notes that as part of the initial validation of the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship FIT completed a re-engagement exercise with QQI that sought to detail an implementable quality assurance and governance system, consistent with draft Topic Specific Apprenticeship guidelines for the provision of apprenticeships. FIT drafted the first apprenticeship-centric Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy 2022–2025, with the aim of coordinating continued and sustainable apprenticeship growth, which FIT holds to be vital. The review report notes that the quality assurance and governance documentation provided as part of the current application illustrate a significant strengthening of processes around the delivery of this programme.

Section 2.2.2. notes that FIT currently delivers three distinct apprenticeship programmes, with National Apprenticeship Alliance approval in place for the development of another apprenticeship programme, in the field of data analytics.

Programme management information is provided in section 2.2.4, noting that FIT manages the off-the-job provision in collaboration with Approved Training Delivering Partners (Education and Training Board collaborating providers). The review report further notes that on-the-job provision is also monitored by FIT in collaboration with approved participating employers. A comprehensive list of FIT's responsibilities as Coordinating Provider is listed within section 2.2.4.

Section 2.3 sets out the programme aims and objectives. These are separated out in two sections: Technical Objectives, and Transversal Learning Objectives. Information around the specific target profile is provided in section 2.3.4 and FIT notes that their target candidates must be 18 years or older; must show a desire and motivation for the technology sector (specifically for a cybersecurity role); and be generally cooperative. The review report notes that FIT promotes candidate applications from all genders, seeking to move to a 50/50 male-to-female ratio on the programme in the coming years.

Section 2.3.5 provides information around the minimum entry requirements. Candidates must provide evidence of completing the Irish Leaving Certificate, with pass grades in a minimum of five subjects at Ordinary level (including Mathematics and English), or having achieved O6/H7 or higher, in five or more subjects based on the current grading structure, including Mathematics and English. Candidates that have completed a Further Education qualification at NFQ Level 5 or 6 (Major awards) that are nationally recognised, such as those accredited by QQI or its predecessor organisation FETAC, are also welcome to apply, as are candidates that have successfully completed nationally recognised Higher Education awards in a broader discipline at NFQ Level 6 or higher.

Section 2.3.6 notes that FIT does not have another QQI-validated programme associated with this apprenticeship. However it is noted that FIT has developed a Pre-Tech apprenticeship programme based on provision accredited by another agency. No further detail is provided in this regard.

Section 2.3.8 outlines implications/changes suggested for the programme, namely FIT states that Programme Technical Objective 12 was updated as part of the review process to include references to artificial intelligence and machine learning threat detection solutions.

Recommendations:

The Panel does not have any specific recommendations pertaining to the above.

Section C. Baseline qualitative and quantitative information

Programme Data Overview

This section will include the panel's views on any or all of the following topics covered in the provider's review report: Applications, Enrolment, Attrition Transfer and Progression, Award Classification and Graduate Destinations

Commentary:

FIT highlights that, since 2019, candidates have been able to apply for the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship programme via the FIT website. It is noted that the application process involves three aspects: (i) information dissemination; (ii) understanding of the programme requirements, and (iii) a suite of wrap-around supports.

Section 3.1 of the review report notes that FIT's candidate recruitment process includes: a live information session using MS Teams; online access to an aptitude testing portal; a supported approach to the assessment of prior qualifications; CV review, and mock interview support as required. FIT notes that this supported recruitment model allows them to expand the available candidate pool. In addition to these supports, section 3.1 further details the work of FIT in ensuring that the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship is accessible to those who have a disability and may require reasonable accommodations. This work includes candidates being provided with the opportunity to disclose such information during the recruitment stage, as well as when they have been selected as apprentices; completion of needs assessment training with AHEAD by three members of staff to ensure that FIT facilitates accommodations as required; development of apprentice and employer handbooks to better support candidates through the process and beyond.

FIT provides an outline of the candidate recruitment process and a brief synopsis of the critical stages of the process is noted as follows:

1. Meet prior educational requirements.
2. Demonstrate a desire and motivation for a tech role.
3. Complete an online aptitude test to an acceptable level.
4. Be numerate and literate (CEFR B2+ benchmark).
5. Be willing to participate in a FIT information session.
6. Engage in CV preparation activity.
7. Complete a mock interview with FIT.
8. Be available for an employer interview.

Candidate application numbers are presented in section 3.1. Over the past five years and despite the onset of Covid-19 in 2020, FIT has received a steady stream of candidates. It is further noted that currently, the conversion rate from those enrolling to securing a placement within the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship programme is approximately 2:4. It is noted that candidates that are not placed within the programme are further supported by FIT, who assist them in seeking further education opportunities in the FET sector including motivating candidates to upskill in anticipation of the start of their apprenticeship programme.

Candidate application data is provided in section 3.1 and illustrates a decline from 2019 (463) to 2022 (270), with an increase noted in 2023 (532). A total of 240 applications were made in 2024 between January and end of June. Section 3.1.1 notes that the candidate recruitment function (as detailed

earlier) has grown in scale and will require additional resources in the future to scale effectively while still providing a supportive environment.

Information pertaining to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) entry is presented in section 3.1.2.2. Since the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship programme commenced in 2019, 13 separate programme intakes have commenced; six of these have now concluded, and information is presented on these cohorts.

FIT notes that a total of 152 apprentices entered a programme. Of these, 104 (68%) of apprentices entered via standard entry and 48 (32%) via an RPL application. In terms of RPL, FIT had anticipated the majority of interest to be from candidates that had completed post-primary education, however that was not the case. FIT experienced a broader and more vibrant diversity in those seeking access to the programme. The most populous category for RPL was NFQ Level 7/8 which supplied 20 apprentices (42%) (as an aside, 80% of HE qualifications furnished were not in an ICT discipline) and 13 (27%) coming from NFQ Level 5 & Pre-Tech. Further analysis shows that out of those who entered the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship programme using RPL, 29 (60%) identified as male, with 19 (40%) identified as female.

Section 3.1.2.3 notes the English language proficiency requirements, noting that a B2+ grade on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is required. Additional resources and supports are made available to candidates as appropriate.

Information pertaining to gender spread is presented in section 3.1.2.4, with a note that FIT has steadily promoted the inclusion of women in the programme. The current female participation rate in the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship programme is 18%. The overall aggregate rate of female participation in FIT's three Tech Apprenticeship Programmes is 26%. FIT notes that their current target is a 50:50 male-to-female ratio by the end of 2027. To achieve this and to help overcome misconceptions that apprenticeships are predominantly male-oriented activities, FIT is continually adding to their portfolio of multiple and easily accessible female testimonial resources. FIT also continues to address this misconception in all their direct media messaging campaigns; FIT features women as part of their digital campaigns; and FIT has developed relevant landing pages that were more gender-specific and therefore more relevant to prospective applicants.

Age profile information is outlined in section 3.1.2.6. FIT notes that of 128 apprentices who commenced the programme since 2019, 52 were in the 26-35 age range (41%); 44 (34%) were in the 18-25 age range; and 24 (19%) were in the age range 36-50. Just 5 (4%) of apprentices were aged 50+ and 3 apprentices (2%) did not indicate their age. In terms of age profile information for apprentices that entered the programme via RPL, similar results are noted with the largest number of apprentices in the 26-35 age range (40%), 36-50 age range (26%), 18-25 age range (19), 50+ age range (10%) and 5% did not indicate their age.

FIT presents information pertaining to disability in section 3.1.2.7, noting that 5% of tech apprentices have sought extra supports due to a disability (excluding those who have disclosed having a disability but do not require support, and acknowledging that some individuals may not disclose at all). FIT outlines various initiatives undertaken to support students with disabilities, such as:

- Partnering with AHEAD on projects such as the 'Tips for Employers Sheet' (section 3.1.2.8)
- The upskilling of FIT staff members through completion of online CPD training (section 3.1.2.8)

- Reviewing the application process and creating a comfortable environment for candidates/apprentices in which they can disclose the requirements for reasonable accommodations (section 3.1.2.9)
- Adding testimonials from apprentices with disabilities in the 'Become an Apprentice' section on FIT.ie to encourage more applicants with a disability to feel comfortable progressing to the initial entry stage (section 3.1.2.10)
- Enabling various opportunities to disclose the need for reasonable accommodations during the onboarding stage and throughout the apprenticeship programme (section 3.1.2.11)
- Ensuring that disclosures are stored securely and only shared with third parties where necessary to facilitate the smooth running of the programme on a 'need to know' basis (section 3.1.2.12)
- Using information sessions as an excellent opportunity to increase inclusivity and create a comfortable environment should an applicant wish to disclose a disability subsequently (section 3.1.2.13)

FIT has identified implications for the revised programme which include:

- future monitoring of RPL candidates;
- continuing to enhance candidate entry support regarding access;
- providing permanent designations of pronouns such as he/him, she/her and they/them;
- further promotion is required for initiatives leading to increased gender balance.

An analysis of learner attrition and progression data is presented in section 3.2 and includes information such as the reasons why apprentices have opted out of the programme. FIT notes that an analysis of those who achieved full graduation status and partial graduation shows that a total of 10 out of 55 left the programme within two years (82% retention rate / 18% attrition rate). Furthermore, the overall total QQI Award certification rate is 60% (which is based on those who participated in the programme and met the full requirements for certification) and 40% for those who did not meet the full QQI certification requirements, achieving various component certificates. FIT notes that 96% of apprentices that have been active on the programme have completed substantial elements of module assessment. FIT further notes that the progression metric into full-time ICT-related employment is 67.2%. This indicates that even though some apprentices did not achieve the total QQI certification rate, they were retained in many cases by their employers in a continuing full-time employment scenario. FIT has identified an implication for the revised programme. Namely, to increase the current full certification rate from 60% to an 80% full certification in the next five years.

Section 3.2.1 provides an analysis of data pertaining to attrition, transfer, progression and completion. FIT notes that evidence regarding overall attrition in cohorts that commenced more recently details several apprentices withdrawing to take up full-time employment. Further reasons are noted including medical reasons and termination by the employer for matters of progression.

Grades and classification information is presented in section 3.2.2. FIT notes that award classification outcomes for the completed programme intake cohorts detail a spread of grades across all individual cohort intakes and the three multi-site locations at the programme completion point. FIT further notes that rather than the standard curve across Pass, Merit, and Distinction outcomes, more Passes and Distinctions are noted. FIT assign this to the fact that their apprentice cohorts are vibrant and diverse.

Graduate destination information is presented in section 3.2.2.4. FIT notes that almost 70% of apprentices from the first five cohorts of this programme have progressed into full-time ICT roles related to the matter of this apprenticeship programme. An analysis of the graduate destinations (those that received the full award) reveals that the original employers of apprentices have retained 100% of those who have progressed into full-time ICT roles in roles such as Junior IT Security Engineer, Systems Tester and Cybersecurity Specialist. In section 3.2.2.6, FIT has identified an implication for the revised programme. That is, FIT must continue to foster relationships with employers to advocate for the longer-term employment of apprentices in their business. FIT notes that measures have been developed to support apprentices where an employer does not engage in discussions around long-term employment prospects. These include CV and interview preparation.

Recommendations:

The Panel recommends that presenting data purely as percentages is not ideal and can be misleading. The underpinning raw numbers used in any such calculations should be unambiguous and made explicit to the reader.

Programme Delivery and Teaching & Learning Strategies

This section will include the panel's views on any or all of the following topics covered in the provider's review report: Physical Facilities and Resources, Timetabling, Learner Workload, Attendance, Teacher Learner Ratios, Community of Practice Learning, Teaching and Learning Strategies, Learning Outcomes achieved, Assessment Strategies.

Commentary:

Section 3.3.1 details the availability of physical facilities and resources. FIT notes that before approving a new employer, a process is undertaken to ensure that the employer has the required facilities to undertake the relevant workplace learning activities. A series of checks is also made to ensure the availability of physical resources such as IT hardware, software and systems that enable participation in the apprentice role. FIT reports that all Approved Delivering Partners have provided a physical training environment consummate with the optimal delivery of this programme. FIT notes the implication for the revised programme is a need to continue to monitor physical training locations and virtual classrooms regarding the adequacy of the training environment.

Timetabling information is presented in section 3.3.2. FIT notes that an initial agreement exists between the FIT Registry Team and Approved Training Delivery Partners regarding the final delivery schedule draft, which is also provided to participating apprentices and approved employers. Implications for the revised programme include changes to the existing scheduling practice, which may result in a variation of the block or day release timings in the future.

Information pertaining to learner workload by module and stage is presented in section 3.3.3. FIT acknowledges that the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship programme requires early engagement in the learning environment. Certain factors cause additional pressure on new apprentices, for example: preparing for entry to the workplace, getting to know new work colleagues, and getting to grips with designated work duties. FIT notes that the revised programme offers a reduced assessment load. FIT

has appointed two new staff that continue FIT's efforts to plan, enhance and deliver a Transition into the Workplace workshop for each insitu apprentice.

An implication for the revised programme is that FIT must continue to provide sufficient support to apprentices in the context of a programme that 'ramps up' consistently throughout delivery.

Section 3.3.4 provides information relating to apprentice attendance. To ensure consistent monitoring of the programme, FIT requests a weekly report from each Approved Delivering Partner that notes any deviation in attendance in off-the-job elements. Based on analysis of attendance reporting, FIT notes a rate of less than 9% of apprentices who have shown any significant level of poor attendance such as unauthorised absence, arriving late, or leaving early on the training day. The review report notes that in cases where attendance, or lack thereof has been identified, this occurrence is directly correlated to the individual's eventual success in their apprenticeship, particularly towards attaining the Advanced Certificate in Cybersecurity. FIT highlights the importance of capturing apprentice attendance in off-the-job training and acknowledges that it is a cumbersome process for all stakeholders. FIT notes an implication for the revised programme, that is to use the new Learning Management System to find efficiencies with a purpose-designed reporting process rather than current arrangements that require a volume of manual data input.

Section 3.3.5 of the review report presents information on off-the-job tutor to learner ratios and notes that the initial validation of the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship programme noted a maximum ratio of 1:18 regarding off-the-job tutor-to-apprentice ratios per module. FIT notes that in practice, the average-sized cohort was a ratio of 1:11 per module. FIT also notes that during 2020 and 2021 (years heavily impacted by Covid-19), intakes commenced with lower-than-normal apprentice numbers. This was not optimal in terms of facilitating apprentice discussion and collaboration. An implication for the revised programme is noted. FIT plans to increase the tutor/apprentice ratio to a maximum of 1:25, with the average cohort or intake size expected to be in the range 1:12 - 1:18.

Teaching and learning strategies are presented in section 3.3.6. FIT notes that in the future, while synchronous arrangements will be available, in-person instruction for off-the-job delivery will still be the primary delivery mechanism. FIT notes that in June 2024, 29% of apprentices reported that they would prefer in-person classes and 71% preferred live synchronous arrangements. The review report notes that tutors, apprentices, and employers are the principal stakeholders who mould the learning process at FIT.

Section 3.3.6.9 notes the importance of pedagogical innovation and outlines FIT's adoption of the approaches noted in Laurillard's Conversational Framework. FIT aims to ensure the inclusion of activities that directly lead to vibrant teaching practices, making adequate provisions for various types of learning. Implications for the revised programme include the continued allocation of targeted resources and ensuring the provision of continuous support to tutors by providing high-quality digital resources.

Information related to learning outcomes achieved is provided in section 3.3.7. FIT's review looked at apprentices that had failed assessed elements of modules. Distinction was made between standard entry apprentices and those who accessed the programme through the RPL route. FIT notes that the overall number of failed assessments is minimal as apprentices are given both time and opportunities to repeat their assessments. Overall, 152 apprentices have been recruited to date (May 2024) and 13

apprentices (12 standard entry, 1 RPL) have recorded a failed grade for one assessment thus far, and 26 (24 standard entry, 2 RPL) apprentices recorded a failed grade in more than one assessment.

FIT has identified an implication for the revised programme, namely that further focus is required to provide additional support in situations where an apprentice has not achieved the requirements for full QQI certification but has participated in the programme past the Stage 1 end point. This may enable FIT to satisfy its plans to increase the overall certification rate from 60% to 80%.

Assessment strategies information is presented in section 3.3.8 of the review report. Information is presented in terms of integration of assessment tasks; opportunities for workplace assessment; regulations for apprentices repeating assessments; and regulations for apprentices appealing grades. In terms of implications for the revised programme, FIT comments that the new layout for all assessments on this programme will bring consistency to future delivery, in terms of concise apprentice instructions and tutor administration.

Section 3.3.9 of the review report, application of community of practice learning, notes that FIT's Technology Enhanced Learning Unit facilitates regular meetings with a Tutor Community of Practice, which brings together those who have delivered the programme for some time and those coming relatively new to the delivery of the programme. The report notes that while the Tutor Community of Practice does not have a formal place in its programmes' governance, these meetings provide a valuable reference point for the enhancement and improvement of processes and FIT aims to continue and further develop these interactions.

Recommendations:

The Panel does not have any specific recommendations pertaining to the above.

Section D. Evaluation of the programme by stakeholders

Evaluation by current learners and graduates of the programme

Commentary:

The review report notes that the Tech Apprentice Team at FIT take pride in ensuring that each programme's apprentices receive relevant learning opportunities, high quality work placements, and overall satisfaction with the delivery of the apprenticeships they undertake. Feedback is sought via both informal routes such as open communication, and formal routes such as the completion of surveys and class representative focus groups. The review report notes that the purpose of these data collection methods is to provide the apprentices with the opportunity to provide feedback in terms of what is working well and what could be improved or changed in relation to the on-the-job and off-the-job experiences and processes. The feedback provided by apprentices also provides FIT with guidance not only for their review and modifications to the course material but also for their procedures and processes, from the application stage to the certification stage.

Section 4.1.1 provides information pertaining to the gathering of apprentice feedback data. FIT notes that during 2023, tech apprentices were asked to complete a survey on three separate occasions (March, June and September) providing a mix of quantitative and qualitative feedback. The review report notes that 238 apprentices completed the survey, 55 of which were cybersecurity apprentices which represents 86% (55 out of 64) of the cybersecurity apprentices active on the programme during the survey period. The review report also outlines that class representative focus groups were facilitated, and a total of 5 (out of 7) class representatives provided feedback.

Section 4.1.3 of the review report details what is working well within the programme. The qualitative feedback from the cybersecurity apprentices indicates that they are, overall, very content. Areas of praise included tutors going above and beyond to support apprentices, and that work experience is very fulfilling. In terms of areas of recommended change, section 4.1.4 includes the following: classes and general learning can be fast paced; more rapport needed between apprentices and their employers; hybrid approaches to off-the-job training; and having access to Cisco and 101 Labs.

In terms of quantitative feedback, section 4.1.6 of the review report, apprentices noted that peer-to-peer interactions and course material/structure play a crucial role in the success of the programme. The review report notes that 27.3% of the apprentices reported that their off-the-job experience is often positive, while 36.4% reported their experience to always be positive.

In terms of the class representative focus groups, section 4.1.8 details points of feedback. Class representatives were positive about various aspects, including the following: access to resources and labs; tutors were knowledgeable, had good teaching styles and were available to answer any questions apprentices may have; in-person classes were beneficial, and they have enjoyed their live synchronous arrangements; and positive on-the-job experiences.

Class representatives also identified several recommended changes, detailed in section 4.1.9. These include the following categories: (i) exam preparation, and (ii) the transitional period between on- and off-the-job training. Specifically, support needed to narrow down relevant resources for exams; pressure placed upon themselves to pass exams; improvements needed with regard to booking of exams. Support for the switching between on- and off-the-job tasks and mindsets was identified.

Overall, section 4.1.10.1 of the review report summarises that 63.7% of those who completed the survey were satisfied with their off-the-job training experience, and 73.3% of the cybersecurity apprentices who completed the survey were satisfied with the on-the-job training element.

FIT has identified several specific implications for the revised programme in section 4.1.11, pertaining to enhancing employer-apprentice relationships; changes to assessment instruments to ensure better clarity around assessments; and the continuation of developing a bank of high-quality digital learning resources for all tech apprenticeship programmes.

Recommendations:

The Panel does not have any specific recommendations pertaining to the above.

Evaluation of the programme by Staff

Commentary:

The process of gathering feedback and input from staff is outlined in section 4.2 of the review report. FIT notes that interviews and surveys were conducted with ETB representatives. In addition, FIT also conducted a large-scale review of employer feedback (response rate of 52% of active Cybersecurity Apprentice Employers) which focused on their viewpoint on off-the-job and on-the-job elements of the apprenticeship programme, as well as their satisfaction with their engagement with FIT.

Employer survey responses are detailed in section 4.2.2.1 and include the following points:

- 90% felt they had practical relevance to the work required during the on-the-job training, while 10% reported that it was too early to tell, as their apprentice had just commenced semester two of the programme;
- 100% of the Cybersecurity employers who completed the survey reported that the soft, or non-technical, skills that had been demonstrated by the apprentices to date were relevant to the workplace environment;
- All employers acknowledged that the blend of off- and on-the-job training is important and that the schedule meets their business needs;
- 91.7% of those that completed the survey noted that they are satisfied with the tech apprenticeship recruitment team communication levels; and
- 84.6% reported to be satisfied with the registry team communication levels.

Changes suggested, specific to the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship programme, included the following: establishing risk as a central concept and placing a stronger focus on GDPR and other data regulations; adoption of Linux and Windows operating systems components and how these systems relate to cybersecurity operations.

A number of implications for the revised programme have been identified by FIT, which include increasing the percentage of time apprentices spend in the workplace; a stronger emphasis on GDPR and other data regulations to be incorporated into the apprenticeship programme; accommodating additional programme content on Linux and Windows operating systems; the continuation of the Tech

Apprenticeship Team and tutors within the programme regularly communicate with the apprentices that they will be responsible for a variety of tasks.

Recommendations:

The Panel does not have any specific recommendations pertaining to the above.

External Examiner Feedback

Commentary:

FIT also conducted an evaluation of the programme by external stakeholders, namely two of FIT's Consortium members. Section 4.3.2 notes that a review was undertaken by one of the Consortium members. The review makes several recommendations that are aimed at FIT increasing scale exponentially in future apprenticeship provision while focusing on the highest value business activities which, for FIT, includes the provision of a suite of technical apprenticeship programmes. FIT indicates an implication for the revised programme, namely that the review process led FIT to critically assess future capacity planning from a human resource, structural, and governance perspective.

Section 4.4 of the review report outlines how FIT works with external examiners and notes that a report has been produced for each year the programme has graduated apprentices (2022, 2023, 2024). The analysis of feedback notes that the External Examiner and Moderator report does not highlight any significant areas for improvement but provided confidence in the overall structure and content of the programme. Section 4.4.1 of the review report notes that annual External Examiner and Moderator reporting and commentary provided informally to the FIT Registry Team, and through the formal Examination Board process, have yielded an opinion of fair and consistent assessment across all multi-site locations.

In terms of implications for the revised programme, the review report notes that FIT will aim to appoint a new External Examiner and Moderator in the next twelve months to ensure a fresh external perspective on the programme implementation.

Recommendations:

The Panel does not have any specific recommendations pertaining to the above.

Section E. Programme Quality Assurance

Complaints, appeals and commendations

Commentary:

FIT outlines processes for complaints and appeals in section 5.1 of the review report and notes that no formal complaints or appeals have been recorded since the last programme review. It is noted however, that FIT has managed instances where apprentices have approached the FIT Registry Team with a query noting an issue or problem and, in some cases, where the matter was required to be rectified.

Section 5.1.2 of the review report notes that provisional assessment results to apprentices has led to a very clear communication channel and unlike some provisions, apprentices do not receive their summative module results at a single point in the year. Apprentices receive information including provisional grades and feedback pertaining to their assessments as they progress through the various modules, which reduces the likelihood of a formal assessment appeal being required.

No implications for the revised programme are identified.

Recommendations:

The Panel does not have any specific recommendations pertaining to the above.

Quality Assurance Systems and Processes

Commentary:

FIT outlines that key metrics have been gathered for this review process, through outputs associated with defined roles that form a critical part of the quality assurance system and related governance. FIT deems the system capable of monitoring the programme and the wider evaluative efforts to improve the provision.

FIT outlines that the current quality assurance system has proved satisfactory for managing the provision in recent years. The review report notes that changes made to quality assurance, policies/procedures and governance arrangements will ensure that FIT can manage the provision for in-person delivery and where technology-enhanced synchronous arrangements are deployed in the future.

It is noted that a significant volume of development work has occurred in the past twelve months regarding FIT's QA system. FIT will need to further develop this system in the future and within the context of ongoing service enhancements. The review report also states that FIT's Tech Apprenticeship Blended Learning Self-Assessment Report & Action Plan details a series of upcoming actions to evaluate the implementation of FIT's new Learning Management System, due for implementation in late 2024. FIT notes that changes in future quality assurance policies and procedures may be needed. FIT believes that the adoption of new policies and procedures will ensure that the programme can meet the needs of apprentices in the future.

An implication for the revised programme includes the implementation of the QA system to its fullest practical extent possible.

Recommendations:

The Panel does not have any specific recommendations pertaining to the above.

Additional Quality Assurance Systems and Processes required (e.g. online delivery / assessment)

Commentary:

A section is not specifically included on additional quality assurance systems and processes required in the review report.

Recommendations:

The Panel does not have any specific recommendations pertaining to the above.

Section F. Summary Analysis of the programme

Commentary:

An analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the programme is included in the review report in section 6.

Section 6.2 of the review report overall concludes that based upon the demonstration of a clear rationale for the programme and an extensive and ongoing candidate demand, FIT should continue to offer the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship programme.

Recommendations:

The Panel does not have any specific recommendations pertaining to the above.

Section G. Revision of the programme

In this section the panel will respond to any proposals made by the provider in respect of changes to the programme arising from the review. The revised programme's readiness for validation will be reported on in more detail in the Independent Evaluation Report for Validation.

Commentary:

The Panel endorses the general direction of the revisions proposed at a high level. However, the Panel has identified four special conditions of validation for FIT relating to validation criteria 4, 5, 9 and 10.

Recommendations:

The Panel recommends that presenting data purely as percentages is not ideal and can be misleading. The underpinning raw numbers used in any such calculations should be unambiguous and made explicit to the reader.

Part 4. Overall Findings

In this section the Panel will give its overall feedback on the conduct of the review and the findings therein. This feedback will inform future provider review processes and will also contribute to the refinement of any programmes being proposed for revalidation following this review process.

Section A. Commentary on review process:

During the site visit, the Panel heard more about FIT's review process. The Panel noted that the volume of documentation received was large and within that it was clear that the programme team have fully engaged in self-assessment as part of the review process.

Section B. Recommendations on review process:

The Panel has commended FIT on the standard and comprehensiveness of the documentation submitted as well as the thoroughness of the review process.

The Panel recommends that presenting data purely as percentages is not ideal and can be misleading. The underpinning raw numbers used in any such calculations should be unambiguous and made explicit to the reader.

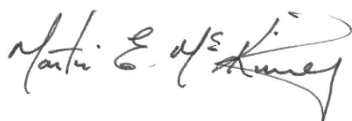
Section C. Commentary on programme revisions:

As per Section G of this report, the Panel endorses the general direction of the revisions proposed. However, the Panel has identified four special conditions of validation pertaining to criteria 4, 5, 9 and 10. These are further detailed in part 3 of the IER.

Section D. Recommendations on programme revisions:

The Panel have identified a recommendation pertaining to the programme revisions noted by FIT. The Panel encourage FIT to revisit the proposed module titles and ensure that they are reflective and indicative of the content.

Signed:



Panel Chairperson: MARTIN MCKINNEY (PROF.)

Date: 24 OCTOBER 2024

**QQI**Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

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

Part 1. Provider details

Provider name	Fastrack into Information Technology (CLG)
Date of site visit	28/08/24
Date of report	24/10/24

Section A. Overall recommendations

Principal programme	Title	Cybersecurity Associate (apprenticeship)
	Award	Advanced Certificate in Cybersecurity
	Credit	200 (FET Credits)
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	Satisfactory subject to completion of identified conditions

Embedded programme 1	Title	N/A
	Award	
	Credit	
	Recommendation <i>Satisfactory OR Satisfactory subject to proposed conditions OR Not Satisfactory</i>	

Section B. Expert Panel

Name	Role	Affiliation
Martin McKinney	Chair & Subject Matter Expert	Professor Emeritus Ulster University
Alexandra Anton-Aherne	Secretary & Report Writer	Education Consultant ThreeSixtyInsights
Jan Carroll	Academic Subject Matter Expert	Fortify Institute
Kate O'Loughlin	Industry Subject Matter Expert	Industry Representative
Anna Marie Woods	QA Expert & ETB Representative	QA representative & ETB Rep

Section C. Principal Programme

Names of centre(s) where the programme(s) is to be provided	Maximum number of learners (per centre cohort)	Minimum number of learners
1. CDETB Finglas Training Centre	25	6
2. CDETB Cathal Brugha Street	25	6
3. DDLETB Baldoyle Training Centre	25	6
4. DDLETB Loughlinstown Training Centre	25	6
5. KWETB M4 Business Park Celbridge	25	6
6. CETB Cork Training Centre	25	6
7. MSLETB Sligo Training Centre	25	6
8. KETB Kerry College	25	6
9. LMETB Advanced Manufacturing Centre	25	6

Note on centres who will provide/deliver off-the-job delivery in the future

The above table notes nine locations/centres involved to date in the programme's off-the-job delivery. The maximum number of learners/apprentices per centre will not, in total, exceed FIT's total volume of new apprentices (350 P/A) within years 1-5 of the revalidation. FIT anticipates expanding delivery to various locations within all 16 Education and Training Board regions. A Memorandum of Understanding is already in place with all ETBs to support this expansion, subject to FIT's satisfactory approval of each particular site, resourcing, aligned staffing, etc.

Proposed Enrolment	
Date of first intake	November 2024
Maximum number of annual intakes	50
Maximum total number of learners per intake	350 (total apprentice enrolment in a given year)
Programme duration (months from start to completion)	24
Panel Commentary on proposed enrolment:	
The Panel is satisfied that the provider has the appropriate physical and human resources in place to sustain the maximum number of learners proposed for the programme.	
Target learner groups	
The specific target profile of learners, as set out in FIT's Programme Descriptor, is as follows: <p>“Target learners must be 18 years or older upon commencement of their apprenticeship programme. In addition, candidates must show a desire and motivation for the technology sector, specifically for a cybersecurity role. FIT warmly promotes candidate applications from all genders seeking to move in the coming years to a 50/50 male-to-female ratio on the programme.</p>	

Candidates must be willing to undertake aptitude testing, work with the FIT Tech Apprenticeship recruitment team to hone their CV, and complete mock employer interviews before placement on a Panel for selection by participating employers.”		
Approved countries for provision		Ireland
Delivery mode: Full-time/Part-time		Full-time
The teaching and learning modalities		
Off the job elements of the programme:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback/review sessions (tutor; staff to apprentice ratio – 1:1) • Instruction/lecture (tutor; staff to apprentice ratio – 1:25) • Demonstration practical/virtual (tutor; staff to apprentice ratio – 1:25) • Group/peer learning activity (tutor; staff to apprentice ratio – 1:25) 		
On the job elements of the programme:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task planning (Workplace Mentor directed/led; Workplace Learning Officer) • Supported direction/supervision (Workplace Mentor directed/led) • Monitored practice (Workplace Mentor directed/led; Workplace Learning Officer) • Evidencing completion of tasks (Workplace Mentor directed/led; Workplace Learning Officer; ICT Assessor) • Review sessions (Workplace Mentor directed/led; Workplace Learning Officer) 		
Brief synopsis of the programme (e.g. who it is for, what is it for, what is involved for learners, what it leads to.)		
<p>The programme leading to an Advanced Certificate in Cybersecurity placed at NFQ Level 6 aims to enable the apprentices to secure and retain employment in a cybersecurity role. The apprentice should be able to combine technical, communications, project management, and personal development skills to meet the requirements of their employer and should be able to act autonomously or as part of a team as the occasion demands.</p> <p>Target candidates must be 18 years or older upon commencement of their apprenticeship programme. In addition, candidates must show a desire and motivation for the technology sector, specifically for a cybersecurity role. Finally, candidates must be willing to undertake aptitude testing, work with the FIT Tech Apprenticeship recruitment team to hone their CV, and complete mock employer interviews before placement on a Panel for selection by participating employers.</p>		
Summary of specifications for teaching staff		WTE
Role e.g. Lecturer, Mentor, Librarian	Profile (Qualifications and Experience expected)	No. (WTEs¹) of Staff on the programme with this role and profile
Off-the-Job Tutor & Assessor	Level 7 or above ICT qualification and relevant subject matter expertise. Train the Trainer at a minimum.	8

¹ WTE is the whole-time equivalent number. The number 1 indicates a fulltime person fully dedicated to the programme. 0.5 indicates a part-time person available to this programme half of the time.

On-the-Job Workplace Assessor	Level 7 or above ICT qualification and relevant subject matter expertise.	6
On-the-Job Workplace Mentor	Level 6 or above qualification and relevant subject matter expertise.	50+ active August 2024
Learning Activity		Ratio of learners to teaching staff
Methodology / Learning Activity	Description	Staff to Learner Ratio e.g. 1:12
Tutor	Feedback/review sessions	1:1
Tutor	Instruction/lecture	1:25
Tutor	Demonstration practical/virtual	1:25
Tutor	Group/Peer learning activity	1:25
<p>Panel Commentary on programme outline and staffing:</p> <p>The Panel is satisfied that the staffing proposed is appropriate to the programme outlined. The programme curriculum is discussed under Criterion 5 in this report and the programme staffing is discussed under Criterion 6.</p>		

Programmes being replaced (applicable to applications for revalidation)		
Code	Title	Last enrolment date
N/A	N/A	N/A

Section D. Other noteworthy features of the application

- The Panel offer a number of commendations to the provider. These include the following:
- The quality and comprehensive nature of the self-evaluation and reflection undertaken by the team at FIT as documented within the programme review report.
 - The quality and clarity of the documentation submitted to the Panel for review.
 - The engagement with FIT members on the day of the site visit, and in particular the learner apprentices who are tremendous ambassadors for the programme.
 - FIT's commitment to approaches of wellbeing, support and accommodations to learners, as well as the strong emphasis on inclusivity and access throughout all areas of the programme activity.
 - FIT's commitment to attaining diversity goals and work on progressing female participation in the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship.
 - The development of the new learning management system that FIT plans to incorporate, which will benefit both FIT and its apprentices.

Part 1A Evaluation of the Case for an Extension of the Approved Scope of Provision (where applicable). Having examined appropriate QA / Governance procedures, comment on the case for extending the applicant's Approved Scope of Provision to enable provision of this programme. (Especially relevant for move to online delivery / assessment)

N/A

Part 2. Evaluation against the validation criteria

The panel should complete this section with commentary against each criterion to support the recommendation given in the 'Satisfactory?' column i.e. Yes, No, or Partially.

If 'Yes', there should be a comment citing the evidence for this finding. Likewise, there should be an explanation as to why the panel have concluded that the criterion has either not been met or only partially so.

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

<p>a) The provider meets the prerequisites (section 44(7) of the 2012 Act) to apply for validation of the programme.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>c) The provider has declared that their programme complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.²</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	<p>The Panel is satisfied that the provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programme.</p> <p>FIT has complied with section 44(7) of the 2012 Act. Specifically, the provider has had its procedures for quality assurance approved by QQI. The provider has published procedures for access, transfer and progression, which are discussed with specific reference to the programme proposed for validation under Criterion 4 in this report.</p>

²This 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.

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.³
 - (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.⁴

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	<p>The Panel is satisfied that the programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought.</p> <p>The Panel noted that the programme's aims and objectives had been detailed appropriately in the revised programme documents. It also noted that there were no embedded programmes.</p> <p>In discussion, FIT noted a change to the title of the apprenticeship for delineation purposes from other programmes (Level 8). The proposed title is Cybersecurity Associate (formerly Cybersecurity Apprenticeship). Following revalidation, FIT suggests the commonly used apprenticeship programme title to state Cybersecurity Associate, leading to the level 6 Advanced Certificate in Cybersecurity. Such nomenclature is consistent with FIT's other</p>

³ Other programme objectives, for example, may be to meet the educational or training requirements of a statutory, regulatory or professional body.

⁴ 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.

	<p>apprenticeship programmes at level 6 on the NFQ (i.e. Software Development Associate and Computer Networking Associate). Furthermore, a degree-level cybersecurity apprenticeship has commenced in recent years with the title of Cybersecurity Practitioner. Since two programmes of similar discipline-specific material now exist at differing NFQ levels, it is important that adequate differentiation in their commonly used titles is deployed. The Cybersecurity Associate designation should provide the necessary differentiation.</p> <p>The Panel was persuaded by the rationale for the proposed change and also for the associated proposed title. It was, however not within the Panel's gift and FIT is encouraged to discuss this matter separately with QQI.</p> <p>Members of the Panel queried the use of QQI award standards at FIT and how the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship meets those requirements/standards. FIT members explained that the professional award descriptors are used, which have 14 threads across three main categories: knowledge, skills and competence. The programme and module learning outcomes were separately mapped to the professional award descriptors and a matrix was also included, noting instances of each thread, to ensure that good coverage was achieved within the apprenticeship programme.</p> <p>The Panel asked for an example as to how a MIPLO was mapped to the professional award descriptor, and this was provided by FIT representatives to the satisfaction of the Panel. FIT representatives noted that this process explicitly outlines what must be covered surrounding each learning outcomes, which is useful for tutors, and for identifying and compiling the associated necessary learning resources.</p>
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Criterion 3. The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly based (considering social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives)

<p>a) The development of the programme and the intended programme learning outcomes has sought out and taken into account the views of stakeholders such as learners, graduates, teachers, lecturers, education and training institutions, employers, statutory bodies, regulatory bodies, the international scientific and academic communities, professional bodies and equivalent associations, trades unions, and social and community representatives.⁵</p> <p>b) The interpretation of awards standards has been adequately informed and researched; considering the programme aims and objectives and minimum intended programme (and, where applicable, modular) learning outcomes.</p> <p>(i) There is a satisfactory rationale for providing the programme.</p> <p>(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.</p> <p>(iii) There is support for the introduction of the programme (such as from employers, or professional, regulatory or statutory bodies).</p> <p>(iv) There is evidence⁶ of learner demand for the programme.</p> <p>(v) There is evidence of employment opportunities for graduates where relevant⁷.</p> <p>(vi) The programme meets genuine education and training needs.⁸</p> <p>c) There are mechanisms to keep the programme updated in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>e) The programme satisfies any validation-related criteria attaching to the applicable awards standards and QQI awards specifications.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	<p>The Panel is satisfied that 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).</p> <p>The Panel noted that there had been extensive engagement with stakeholders as part of this review and revalidation process which had met with the terms of reference as agreed with QQI.</p>

⁵ 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.

⁶ This might be predictive or indirect.

⁷ It is essential to involve employers in the programme development and review process when the programme is vocationally or professionally oriented.

⁸ 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.

	<p>The Panel noted that FIT claimed several hundred applicants who would immediately avail of this programme if/when additional participating employers are identified. The Panel sought clarity on FIT's intake plans over the coming years. FIT representatives noted that three intakes are planned for the remainder of 2024 and that they are currently refining plans for 2025 intakes. FIT noted that they would prefer a greater national spread of intakes and not be so heavily reliant on the Leinster region.</p> <p>The Panel sought to understand FIT's planned engagement with the ETBs. Specifically, the Panel queried why all ETBs were not involved in delivering the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship given that MoUs are in place for all 16 ETBs. FIT noted that from their previous experience deploying the Tech apprenticeships, employer engagement is essential. FIT representatives reported difficulties this year with regard to employer onboarding. However, it was noted that FIT's goal is to be delivering this programme in conjunction with all 16 ETBs.</p> <p>The Panel queried how FIT plans to maintain currency of the programme in this fast-changing field. The FIT documentation had highlighted that this is achieved through close collaboration and/or consultation with its various stakeholders including its governance boards, committees, and broader stakeholder feedback e.g. employers. The programme team also noted that time is allocated to the staff to allow them to stay up to date with the subject content. FIT members noted that a session had been organised for tutors with CompTIA, where the latest developments were presented and discussed. The Panel was advised that aspects of the programme elements which are not directly linked to professional accreditation also require flexibility, for example contemporary elements in legislation and regulation.</p>
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Criterion 4. The programme’s access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory

<p>a) The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression are consistent with the procedures described in QQI's policy and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners for providers of further and higher education and training. Each of its programme-specific criteria is individually and explicitly satisfied⁹.</p> <p>b) Programme information for learners is provided in plain language. This details what the programme expects of learners and what learners can expect of the programme and that there are procedures to ensure its availability in a range of accessible formats.</p> <p>c) If the programme leads to a higher education and training award and its duration is designed for native English speakers, then the level of proficiency in English language must be greater or equal to B2+ in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR¹⁰) in order to enable learners to reach the required standard for the QQI award.</p> <p>d) The programme specifies the learning (knowledge, skill and competence) that target learners are expected to have achieved before they are enrolled in the programme and any other assumptions about enrolled learners (programme participants).</p> <p>e) The programme includes suitable procedures and criteria for the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of access and, where appropriate, for advanced entry to the programme and for exemptions.</p> <p>f) The programme title (the title used to refer to the programme):-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reflects the <i>core intended programme learning outcomes</i> and is consistent with the standards and purposes of the QQI awards to which it leads, the award title(s) and their class(es). (ii) Is learner focused and meaningful to the learners; (iii) Has long-lasting significance. <p>g) The programme title is otherwise legitimate; for example, it must comply with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements.</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Partially	<p>The Panel is partially satisfied that the programme’s access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory.</p> <p>In reviewing the documentation, it was noted that FIT’s mission is to promote an inclusive Smart Economy by creating a fast track to marketable technical skills for those at risk of long-term unemployment. FIT collaborates with government, education & training providers, and disadvantaged communities to enable greater access to employment for marginalised job seekers, particularly those vulnerable to long-term unemployment. Its</p>

⁹ 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

¹⁰ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (accessed 26/09/2015)

	<p>courses must therefore be accessible and results achievable for those who may not have taken part in formal education for a number of years.</p> <p>Against this background, FIT is likely to experience applications from a wide and varied group of prospective apprentices. The Panel sought clarification on the admissions process as operated at FIT. FIT provided an outline of the admission process including the RPL process. While the standard admissions process appears to be operating in a satisfactory manner and included early interventions to identify and support apprentices requiring reasonable accommodations, the Panel was less assured by the RPL processes.</p> <p>The Panel was advised that all RPL applications are dealt with by the Registrar and that consistency is maintained based on familiarity with previous cases. Recognising that some applicants did not have Irish qualifications, FIT referenced the use of NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union) to compare academic qualifications. It was also noted that admission is generally not awarded solely based on prior experiential learning. Advanced admission was not permitted.</p> <p>Members of the Panel were broadly satisfied that certificated learners could be accommodated but sought to understand how consistency and fairness within the process is maintained when experiential learning was being used for access. The Panel queried whether the criteria as applied to applicants is clearly stated and available to learners. FIT representatives noted that specific criteria would not necessarily be immediately available to applicants (although an advisory note exists relating to RPL), however the criteria is clear to the recruitment/admissions team and further contact is made where additional information is needed.</p> <p>Panel members were of the view that criteria relating to prior experiential learning should be made explicitly available on the admissions portal in order for applicants/candidates to initially assess whether they were likely to meet those criteria. There would also be the expectation of support for pursuing such an application.</p> <p>The Panel sought to understand whether a clear process existed for RPL appeals. FIT representatives outlined that an appeals process exists but noted that an appeal of this nature has never taken place.</p> <p>The Panel had concerns around the RPL process at FIT and has identified a mandatory condition of validation (No. 1) pertaining to this criterion. The Panel requires FIT to develop a clear, documented RPL policy that incorporates the various stages of RPL,</p>
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		including support for such applicants, as well as a robust appeal policy and associated process.
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Criterion 5. **The programme’s written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose**

- a) The programme is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of its intended programme learning outcomes. The programme (including any stages and modules) is integrated in all its dimensions.
- b) In so far as it is feasible the programme provides choice to enrolled learners so that they may align their learning opportunities towards their individual educational and training needs.
- c) Each module and stage is suitably structured and coherently oriented towards the achievement by learners of the intended *programme* learning outcomes.
- d) The objectives and purposes of each of the programme’s elements are clear to learners and to the provider’s staff.
- e) The programme is structured and scheduled realistically based on sound educational and training principles¹¹.
- 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.¹²

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Partially	<p>The Panel is partially satisfied that the programme’s written curriculum is well structured and fit-for-purpose.</p> <p>The Panel noted that one of the attributes that industry looks for in graduates is what they can do on day one and commended the spread/arrangement of modules across the two years of the apprenticeship.</p> <p>The Panel noted however that the focus for the first year of the apprenticeship is on specific tasks and the content does not broaden until the second year of the apprenticeship. The Panel also noted that the first year of the apprenticeship appeared to be “network heavy” and sought to understand the rationale behind this decision.</p>

¹¹ 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.

¹² If the duration is variable, for example, when advanced entry is available, this should be explained and justified

		<p>FIT acknowledged that there is a high volume of network content early within the apprenticeship but noted the importance of forming a solid foundation early on which would be further developed later. This was a view which was shared by employers.</p> <p>FIT also clarified that while in semester 1 (year 1), the apprenticeship has a strong focus on networking and other technical modules, semester 2 introduces apprentices to other highly valued topics such as project management and threat detection. Members of the Panel welcomed and commended the inclusion of project management early within the apprenticeship (module Project Management and Communications). FIT noted that this module has been broadened somewhat in the revised programme and includes development of transversal skills that will be of additional benefit to apprentices especially when they undertake their Applied Learning in the Workplace modules (years 1 and 2).</p> <p>The Panel noted that the revised programme no longer offers a dedicated penetration testing (pen-testing) module, which had been part of the compulsory suite of modules previously. FIT representatives explained the CompTIA Penetration Tester is one of CompTIA's more advanced industry certifications and has a heavy assessment load. FIT noted that not all employers facilitated pen-testing, and it was decided not to offer this certification a stand-alone module. The Panel was advised that the capstone project module enables apprentices to demonstrate that they have assimilated the theoretical and practical learnings associated to a specific domain which relates to their own role. The choice of domain will be identified from a FIT-approved list, which includes pen-testing. FIT representatives therefore noted that pen-testing still features within modules of the apprenticeship, and a decision was made not to offer certification. FIT further noted that if apprentices successfully complete the apprenticeship, vouchers for CompTIA and pen-testing can be made available.</p> <p>The Panel proceeded to discuss each module on the revised apprenticeship programme. FIT made an opening statement in relation to each module in turn and the Panel members commented and engaged in discussions.</p> <p>In light of the discussions with the FIT tutors, the Panel makes a recommendation (No. 1.a) that FIT reviews the content for all modules at the event (making minor content adjustments as appropriate).</p>
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		<p>Some key takeaways (per module) are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS-TA-001 Networking Fundamentals I: The Panel was pleased that this module sets a foundation on which other modules can build upon. The Panel had some concerns about the duration of the assessment on the module. • CS-TA-002 Cybersecurity in Operating Systems - Linux & Windows: FIT members noted that this is a new module as a result of direct feedback from the syllabus committee. The Panel sought clarification on certain elements and expressed some concerns about the tight timeframe of delivery for this module. • CS-TA-003 Intermediate Network Management (CompTIA Network+): Overall the Panel felt that this module represented a good continuation from previous modules. The Panel sought clarification in terms of the knowledge that apprentices are progressing into placement with. The Panel noted that the total learning hours are extensive, however the programme team stated that the initial validation and CompTIA were consulted, and this is reflected in the timings. • CS-TA-004 Cybersecurity Threat Detection (CompTIA Security+): The Panel queried the relevancy of the title for this module, noting that it may be perhaps too broad. The FIT programme team were accepting of this. • CS-TA-005 Analysing Cyber Risks with AI (CompTIA CySA+): The Panel was of the view that the title of this module is too specific. Opportunities were noted to contextualise the CompTIA modules and ensure they were more “Ireland focused”. The Panel queried how FIT intends to keep this module relevant and up to date. The programme team listed various means such as updating the learning resources and reviewing the indicative content to ensure relevancy.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS-TA-006 Project Management & Communications: The Panel was complimentary of this module, noting that an understanding of project management and being able to communicate with various stakeholders are important skills to develop early on. • CS-TA-007 Capstone Project: The Panel had a number of queries for the FIT team in relation to the Capstone Project module, in particular around supports available for apprentices, grading of projects, and potential issues with intellectual property/proprietary data. The Panel has identified a mandatory condition of validation (No. 1) in relation to the Capstone Project, in part 3 of this report. FIT must supply more information within this module to provide the necessary clarity. This should include details of approval, support, monitoring and marking of the project work. FIT should also reflect and include other assessment instruments/tools as appropriate. • CS-TA-008 & CS-TA-009 Applied Learning in the Workplace Year 1 & Year 2: The Panel queried whether apprentices receive support in relation to professional report writing. The programme team advised that professional report writing is covered in a previous module (Project Management & Communications), but the Panel suggested that this should be supplemented as appropriate. In addition to the condition and recommendation previously identified in this section, the Panel has identified a further recommendation (No. 1.b) in relation to this, in part 3 of this report. The Panel recommends that FIT revisits the module titles to ensure that they are more indicative of module content.
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Criterion 6. There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned

<p>a) The specification of the programme’s staffing requirements (staff required as part of the programme and intrinsic to it) is precise, and rigorous and consistent with the programme and its defined purpose. The specifications include professional and educational qualifications, licences-to practise where applicable, experience and the staff/learner ratio requirements. See also criterion 12 c).</p> <p>b) The programme has an identified complement of staff¹³ (or potential staff) who are available, qualified and capable to provide the specified programme in the context of their existing commitments.</p> <p>c) The programme's complement of staff (or potential staff) (those who support learning including any employer-based personnel) are demonstrated to be competent to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes and to assess learners’ achievements as required.</p> <p>d) There are arrangements for the performance of the programme’s staff to be managed to ensure continuing capability to fulfil their roles and there are staff development¹⁴ opportunities¹⁵.</p> <p>e) There are arrangements for programme staff performance to be reviewed and there are mechanisms for encouraging development and for addressing underperformance.</p> <p>f) Where the programme is to be provided by staff not already in post there are arrangements to ensure that the programme will not enrol learners unless a complement of staff meeting the specifications is in post.</p>		
	<p>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p>Principal Programme</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Panel is satisfied that there are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned.</p> <p>The Panel noted in the documentation supplied that each module laid out in the reviewed Programme Descriptor details the applicable tutor requirements for that module and the tutor/apprentice ratio.</p> <p>The Panel sought to understand how FIT ensures that academic and administrative staff are suitably qualified to enable learners to achieve learning outcomes. FIT noted that in terms of recruitment,</p>

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.

		<p>roles are screened to ensure that staff are in possession of the desired skillsets; terms of reference are used with collaborating providers in terms of tutors; a community of practice has also been developed at FIT to enable further learning and development.</p> <p>Members of the Panel were keen to understand more about the community of practice and how engagement with members took place. FIT representatives explained that regular sessions are scheduled, and agendas are circulated. FIT members noted that they have had some positive interactions and useful exchanges in the community of practice so far.</p> <p>The Panel have identified a recommendation (No. 2) in relation to this, in part 3 of this report. Namely, the Panel encourages FIT to look at opportunities to widen the scope of the community of practice (even beyond FIT and the members from its Approved Delivering Partners) and to take cognisance of what happens elsewhere.</p> <p>With respect to staff performance monitoring, FIT's documentation advises that all internal FIT staff are managed through a process of Performance Management Development System (PMDS) that sets out a series of ongoing expectations and goal setting, including the potential for professional development opportunities. External staff who provide input into the programme are managed through rigorous monitoring of the provision, including processes around moderation, internal verification, etc. It should also be noted that FIT has indicated that an Approved Delivering Partner will only be permitted to deliver the programme if the staffing requirements are fully met by the partner prior to delivering to a programme intake/cohort.</p>
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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.

	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	<p>The Panel is satisfied that there are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned.</p> <p>FIT’s documentation describes the physical resources necessary to deliver this programme and any applicable virtual classroom delivery requirements. In addition, FIT ensures policy dissemination around key aspects of the learning environment that the tutors must maintain over time.</p> <p>Each Approved Delivery Partner (ETB) provides access to its high-quality training facilities and infrastructure, facilitating in-person delivery for off-the-job modules. FIT also ensures the provision of all appropriate resources to apprentices.</p> <p>The Panel queried supports provided by tutors within ETBs and how FIT ensures consistency of those supports across all collaborating</p>

		<p>providers. The programme team noted that a thorough induction is provided to collaborating providers, that includes the operating environment, reporting processes, etc.</p> <p>The Panel further queried whether FIT provides any supports to apprentices with regard to hardware. It was noted that FIT endeavours to provide additional support where possible for those making an application with a physical or hidden disability. The programme team highlighted that apprenticeship requirements are outlined at the outset; however a scheme exists for instances where a temporary loan of hardware is required, and this can be facilitated.</p> <p>In reflecting on this and in light of a further review of the Learner Handbook which states (Section 3.1, P.6) that:</p> <p><i>“You will be required to have the following to complete your apprenticeship programme:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Laptop (with the ability to store/download software/systems when needed)</i> • <i>Memory Storage</i> • <i>Earphones/headphones</i> • <i>Broadband/good connectivity for live synchronised webinars</i> <p><i>Should you not have the above resources, please contact your assigned employer who may be able to assist you with sourcing the appropriate equipment“</i></p> <p>The panel makes a recommendation (No. 3) in part 3 of this report. Namely, that FIT seeks to establish a fairer and more even-handed approach to address this important (equipment) support for those in need.</p>
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Criterion 8. **The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme’s learners**

<p>a) The programme’s physical, social, cultural and intellectual environment (recognising that the environment may, for example, be partly virtual or involve the workplace) including resources and support systems are consistent with the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) Learners can interact with, and are supported by, others in the programme’s learning environments including peer learners, teachers, and where applicable supervisors, practitioners and mentors.</p> <p>c) The programme includes arrangements to ensure that the parts of the programme that occur in the workplace are subject to the same rigours as any other part of the programme while having regard to the different nature of the workplace.</p>		
	<p>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p>Principal Programme</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Panel is satisfied that the learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme’s learners.</p> <p>Panel members sought to understand whether the geographical location of ETBs and employers is considered and whether this has impacted on apprentices in any way. FIT representatives outlined that apprentices tend to prefer being close to the training location. FIT outlined that support staff work closely with apprentices and employers in terms of the logistical arrangements, to enable successful placements.</p> <p>The Panel sought to clarify whether the on-the-job learning takes place fully in person or whether there are blended elements incorporated. FIT confirmed that the on-the-job learning element takes place on-site, however there may be an arrangement for remote work (perhaps) one day per week depending on the needs and practices of the employer.</p> <p>On-the-Job activities are carefully monitored. FIT appoints a Workplace Assessor for each intake to monitor the apprentices' completion of prescribed technical tasks. The Workplace Mentor also ‘signs off’ on these tasks. In addition, every three months, the FIT Workplace Learning Officer meets with the apprentice and mentor to discuss progress and to help ensure a fair and consistent implementation of the off-the-job activity. The Panel noted that Terms of Reference for all of these roles had been supplied.</p> <p>The Panel had questions around FIT’s new LMS platform. FIT representatives noted that effort has gone into embedding core resources within the LMS in order to provide improved support for both apprentices and tutors. It was noted that the new LMS (due for launch in Autumn 2024) included a range of tools which would</p>

		<p>allow FIT further enhance the reporting of the tech apprentices' engagement levels when participating in synchronous learning.</p> <p>The system will also be able to capture several key metrics which will allow for closer monitoring of attendance. It will also be able to capture the different levels of apprentice interactions, which, in turn, will potentially guide the tutors and FIT's TEL (Technology Enhanced Learning) Unit as to what learning style the apprentices respond better to.</p>
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Criterion 9. **There are sound teaching and learning strategies**

<p>a) The teaching strategies support achievement of the intended programme/module learning outcomes.</p> <p>b) The programme provides authentic learning opportunities to enable learners to achieve the intended programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>c) The programme enables enrolled learners to attain (if reasonably diligent) the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of overall learner effort and a reasonably balanced workload).</p> <p>d) Learning is monitored/supervised.</p> <p>e) Individualised guidance, support¹⁶ and timely formative feedback is regularly provided to enrolled learners as they progress within the programme.</p>		
	<p>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p>Principal Programme</p>	<p>Partially</p>	<p>The Panel is partially satisfied that there are sound teaching and learning strategies.</p> <p>The Panel noted that FIT had provided a new Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy (2022-2025). In this strategy FIT identifies four distinct areas that make up the cornerstones of the FIT Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Strategy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing digitally competent and well-rounded Tech apprentice graduates, 2. Accommodating diversity in all forms, 3. Utilising technology to enhance teaching, learning, and assessment, 4. Pedagogical Innovation—setting standards by adopting a defined framework for programme delivery. <p>The Panel welcomed the fact that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPOs) were generally well written. Moreover, while the number of minimum intended module learning outcomes (MIMLOs) was broadly consistent across the programme, the Panel noted that too often the verbs deployed in the MIMLOs were difficult to measure. For example, the use of verbs such as ‘to understand’ - it can be difficult to measure whether something is understood or not. Panel members noted that this is a well-known criticism, but it is preferable to be more specific and use action verbs such as explain, summarise, review etc.</p> <p>The Panel have identified a mandatory condition of validation (No. 3) in relation to this, in part 3 of this report which is to reflect on</p>

¹⁶ Support and feedback concerns anything material to learning in the context of the programme. For the avoidance of doubt it includes among other things any course-related language, literacy and numeracy support.

		<p>the use of verbs used in the module learning outcomes for each module and be more precise such that they are more indicative of the manner in which a module is being assessed.</p> <p>The Panel sought to understand how FIT plans to maintain consistency and quality in terms of the LMS. The programme team noted that currently the LMS falls under the remit of two new members of staff, however others will be trained in this regard. It was also noted that the LMS will prompt tutors when content does not match the required standard.</p> <p>The Panel have identified a recommendation pertaining to this matter (No. 5). The Panel recommends that FIT carefully monitors the resourcing requirement as this and other programmes under the authority of the FIT mature.</p> <p>The Panel met with learner representatives on the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship programme. They were complementary of various aspects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The on-the-job activities;• The learning undertaken;• The maintenance of the logbook which allowed progress to be easily monitored.
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Criterion 10. **There are sound assessment strategies**

<p>a) All assessment is undertaken consistently with <i>Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards</i>¹⁷</p> <p>b) The programme’s assessment procedures interface effectively with the provider’s QQI approved quality assurance procedures.</p> <p>c) The programme includes specific procedures that are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled learners to ensure the minimum intended programme/module learning outcomes are acquired by all who successfully complete the programme.¹⁸</p> <p>d) The programme includes formative assessment to support learning.</p> <p>e) There is a satisfactory written programme assessment strategy for the programme as a whole and there are satisfactory module assessment strategies for any of its constituent modules.¹⁹</p> <p>f) Sample assessment instruments, tasks, marking schemes and related evidence have been provided for each award-stage assessment and indicate that the assessment is likely to be valid and reliable.</p> <p>g) There are sound procedures for the moderation of summative assessment results.</p> <p>h) The provider only puts forward an enrolled learner for certification for a particular award for which a programme has been validated if they have been specifically assessed against the standard for that award.²⁰</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Partially	<p>The Panel is partially satisfied that there are sound assessment strategies in place.</p> <p>The Panel sought to understand FIT’s processes for ensuring quality around assessment. The programme team noted that current content and assessment has been developed internally by the FIT team and will be approved by external examiners. The Panel was surprised to learn that tutors do not appear to have input into the process of developing the assessments and has issued a recommendation (No. 4) that FIT is encouraged to involve tutors in the development of assessments.</p> <p>The Panel was unclear about certain elements of the assessment schedule, particularly in relation to the CompTIA Network+ module, where assessment was expressed as an 85% exam and 15% assignment. This was queried with FIT who provided a breakdown of the assessment. The Panel was also concerned about the duration of examination sessions as listed on the assessment schedule, where in some cases examinations were listed as being 4</p>

¹⁷ See the section on transitional arrangements.

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

¹⁹ The programme assessment strategy is addressed in the Assessment Guidelines, Conventions and Protocols for Programmes Leading to QQI Awards. See the section on transitional arrangements.

²⁰ If the award is a QQI CAS compound award it is not necessarily sufficient that the learner has achieved all the components specified in the certification requirements unless at least one of those components is a capstone component (i.e. designed to test the compound learning outcomes).

		<p>hours long. This was concerning especially when the CompTIA examination itself is only 90 minutes in duration.</p> <p>The Panel has therefore identified a mandatory condition (No. 4) of validation in relation to this criterion, in part 3 of this report. FIT must develop and supply a much clearer breakdown of the allocation of marks for all assessments, to include the time allocation and more details on the precise nature of the assessments, such that they are clearer to all parties and more indicative of what is actually required.</p> <p>Panel members noted that some apprentices that have already completed the CompTIA Network assessment are awarded exemptions in this regard and sought to understand this further. FIT explained that they may have a rare instance whereby an apprentice may join the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship with an existing CompTIA certification. It was noted that learners are still brought through the module and the learning associated as there is value in that (the learning is broader than the CompTIA certification), however they would be exempt from the assessment/examination aspect, as long as evidence of their CompTIA certification is provided. FIT highlighted that the certification is not valid for life and therefore FIT must ensure that it is valid at the point that the apprentice would certify. It is expected that the certification is renewed periodically, every three years.</p> <p>FIT also explained the process which led them to propose changes to the revised programme, which allow a more reflective aspect in relation to the CompTIA process and certification. The Panel further sought to understand whether FIT has experienced any pushback from learners in regard to retaking the learning. FIT noted that it is not desirable that the same body of learning be retaken, however there is value in engaging within the peer group and the wider concepts within the module. FIT further noted that in these very rare instances, the terms are discussed and agreed at the outset with the learner.</p>
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Criterion 11. Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for

<p>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.</p> <p>b) Information is provided about learner supports that are available to learners enrolled on the programme.</p> <p>c) Specific information is provided to learners enrolled on the programme about any programme-specific appeals and complaints procedures.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>g) The programme provides supports for enrolled learners who have special education and training needs.</p> <p>h) The programme makes reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities²¹.</p> <p>i) If the programme aims to enrol international students it complies with the <i>Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Students</i>²² and there are appropriate in-service supports in areas such as English language, learning skills, information technology skills and such like, to address the particular needs of international learners and enable such learners to successfully participate in the programme.</p> <p>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).</p>		
	Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)	Comment
Principal Programme	Yes	<p>The Panel is satisfied that Learners (apprentices) enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for.</p> <p>The Panel met with learner representatives (apprentices) from the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship programme. The apprentices were most impressive and proved themselves to be articulate, thoughtful and excellent ambassadors for FIT. They were complementary of various aspects, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complimentary of the class representative system at FIT, as well as the feedback opportunities available; • the CompTIA certification was felt to be very useful, especially when at job interviews; • the apprenticeship time was well spaced out; • satisfaction with the on-the-job element and training aspect;

²¹ For more information on making reasonable accommodations see www.AHEAD.ie and QQI's Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners (QQI, restated 2015).

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

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they were given the advance delivery schedule for the duration of the apprenticeship which was accurate and informative; • they felt well supported by their lecturers and learner support staff. <p>The Panel also heard a few concerns from learner representatives primarily relating to the need for some additional time to complete some of the modules (the CompTIA Security + module was cited). One of the representatives highlighted a slow response to requests for additional resources for repeat examinations but noted, however, that when the resources were received, they were comprehensive.</p> <p>Panel members queried FIT’s reasonable accommodations process and supports provided to applicants with additional needs. FIT provided information around their 5-step recruitment process. They noted that there are various channels available to disclose such additional needs. Once additional needs are disclosed, a needs assessment is carried out and once supports are agreed, tutors within ETBs are notified.</p> <p>The Panel noted that many apprentices are mature (often mid-30s) and were likely to be juggling life and education. The Panel sought to understand whether specific supports or accommodations can be made, for example in terms of taking leave, or leave of absence. FIT representatives noted that apprentice responsibilities are outlined to apprentices at induction, however there is some flexibility in the system, within reason which can be applied to support the apprentices.</p> <p>Panel members queried whether supports are available for applicants that are non-native English speakers, especially those who have found this a barrier to entry. FIT representatives noted that they have a number of projects that run outside of the Tech apprenticeship programmes which include access to English language classes. Additional English language classes are also available to learners throughout the programme. It was noted that unsuccessful applicants are invited to take part in pre-Tech programmes which would help them with a future application.</p> <p>Panel members also sought clarity in terms of graduate outcomes and progression opportunities available to graduates. FIT representatives noted that employers are encouraged to have conversations with apprentices around the prospect of future employment. In terms of cohorts that have graduated,</p>
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	<p>approximately 70% of apprentices have transferred into employment with their apprenticeship employer.</p> <p>Except for the availability of the L8 Cybersecurity Practitioner apprenticeship the Panel noted that no (purely academic) progression routes had been identified within the documentation. Further education opportunities were highlighted, and it was noted that several graduates have indicated a desire to progress to further education. Information is also provided in terms of FIT partnerships with various organisation in terms of ICT online learning programmes, for example Accenture, IBM Skills Build, Microsoft, etc.</p> <p>The Panel sought to understand FIT’s marketing and promotion of the programme, in particular to women, and how they intend to improve inclusivity. FIT representatives noted that they aim to have 50:50 participation. Although the apprenticeship is quite male dominated, FIT has put effort into promoting to the female audience and noted that employers also want to drive female participation. FIT has run female only cohorts of the Software Development Associate which have been successful in the past. While historically they have run female only cohorts once per year, they have indicated interest in increasing this in the coming years to include intake cohorts of cyber apprentices. The Panel further queried involvement with women on cybersecurity groups. FIT noted that they are members of Tech Industry Alliance (TIA) and would seek to leverage that particular network. FIT representatives also noted that testimonials from female apprentices are also promoted on social media. FIT further noted that they have given talks in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) promoting apprenticeships and advocating the programme to women in the home.</p> <p>The Panel queried any specific supports available to returners and individuals changing careers as many apprentices appear to fall into that category. The Panel sought to understand the learner journey at FIT and queried the supports available to apprentices throughout their time at FIT. The programme team outlined the process and identified a comprehensive range of available supports, including interview skills and preparation; CV support; onboarding with employers; comprehensive inductions; a reasonable accommodation process; appeals and complaints; plagiarism awareness; code of conduct and participation agreements; assessment induction processes; class representative system; attendance and annual leave arrangements; workplace learning/logbooks/transversal skills.</p>
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		<p>The Panel considered the level of content within the induction process, and particularly its timing. It was concerned about apprentices being overloaded with information at what was typically the most challenging time of the programme i.e. the start. The Panel has identified a recommendation (No. 6) in relation to this in part 3 of this report. Specifically, the Panel recommends that that FIT reflect on the induction and consider a phased induction, delivering relevant material in an appropriate and timely manner.</p> <p>The Panel queried the availability of academic supports available to apprentices struggling with a particular module. The programme team outlined various supports, such as wellbeing workshops, one-to-ones with the People, Analytics and Wellbeing Officer. Assigned workplace mentors are also available for guidance. Further supports were also outlined such as time management skills. FIT representatives noted that recurrent issues are discussed at Programme Board meetings.</p> <p>Members of the Panel queried the supports available at FIT for apprentices with disabilities. The programme team provided a recent example of a profoundly deaf apprentice who had successfully completed the apprenticeship, noting that suitable accommodations to support the needs of the apprentice had been put in place by both the collaborating provider and the employer. A further example was provided of a visually impaired apprentice, and once again, a range of necessary supports had been provided.</p> <p>FIT representatives noted that reasonable accommodations in the on-the-job element are essential and that further awareness of this needs to be highlighted to employers.</p>
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Criterion 12. The programme is well managed

<p>a) The programme includes intrinsic governance, quality assurance, learner assessment, and access, transfer and progression procedures that functionally interface with the provider’s general or institutional procedures.</p> <p>b) The programme interfaces effectively with the provider’s QQI approved quality assurance procedures. Any proposed incremental changes to the provider’s QA procedures required by the programme or programme-specific QA procedures have been developed having regard to QQI’s statutory QA guidelines. If the QA procedures allow the provider to approve the centres within the provider that may provide the programme, the procedures and criteria for this should be fit-for-the-purpose of identifying which centres are suited to provide the programme and which are not.</p> <p>c) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting persons who meet the programme’s staffing requirements and can be added to the programme’s complement of staff.</p> <p>d) There are explicit and suitable programme-specific criteria for selecting physical resources that meet the programmes physical resource requirements and can be added to the programme’s complement of supported physical resources.</p> <p>e) Quality assurance²³ is intrinsic to the programme’s maintenance arrangements and addresses all aspects highlighted by the validation criteria.</p> <p>f) The programme-specific quality assurance arrangements are consistent with QQI’s statutory QA guidelines and use continually monitored completion rates and other sources of information that may provide insight into the quality and standards achieved.</p> <p>g) The programme operation and management arrangements are coherently documented and suitable.</p> <p>h) There are sound procedures for interface with QQI certification.</p>		
	<p>Satisfactory? (yes, no, partially)</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p>Principal Programme</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The panel is satisfied that the programme is well-managed.</p> <p>The Panel sought to understand details around governance, for example how high-level decisions within FIT are made with regard to the review of the apprenticeship. FIT representatives noted that input from various channels is sought prior to decision making. This includes the following: the consortium, employers, the syllabus review group (a collection of tutors, employers and FIT staff), the external examiner; and other industry groups (such as Cyber Ireland and Tech Ireland).</p> <p>FIT noted that these channels provide a comprehensive range of feedback. They highlighted that consistent feedback was received around validity of the technical content within the apprenticeship and noted the repackaging of content to better benefit apprentices.</p> <p>The Panel had questions around blended learning and the FIT’s new LMS platform, namely how quality will be ensured going forward.</p>

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

	<p>FIT representatives noted that module pages will be set up for tutors by FIT and inductions will also be provided. In addition, various policies have been developed to set out standards and expectations, including the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Learning Policy, • Tutor Recording Policy, • Intellectual Property and Copyright Policy, and • Plagiarism Policy <p>It was noted that some of these new policies are responding to the gap analysis carried out. In terms of academic integrity, FIT also noted that all assessment submissions will be checked for originality. FIT noted that the LMS will be monitored closely throughout its rollout and thereafter to ensure that it remains effective and fit-for-purpose.</p> <p>The Panel had questions in terms of attendance and engagement monitoring at FIT. Representatives from FIT explained that weekly attendance for off-the-job learning is mandatory and is monitored by ETB collaborating providers. If there is disengagement with the off-the-job element, this is communicated to employers. FIT members noted that this causes a break in trust and is a challenging aspect for employers. The Panel further sought to understand whether lack of engagement will be monitored on the LMS platform. FIT representatives noted that while the previous LMS platform had limited functionality in this respect, the new LMS platform provides detailed analytics in terms of apprentice engagement on the LMS and more specifically, their engagement with certain features and resources within the LMS.</p> <p>During the Panel’s earlier meeting with learner representatives, one of the representatives identified some communication issues with the mentor that they were assigned in the workplace. They also highlighted an issue with regard to employers not giving enough notice in terms of their employment post-graduation (specifically, whether or not they would be retained). It was noted that three months’ notice must be given to apprentices in this regard, however this guideline is not always adhered to.</p> <p>Within this context, the Panel has identified a recommendation (No. 7) pertaining to communications with, and between the various stakeholders. The Panel recommend that FIT ensure that all communication links are formalised thus ensuring that communication is properly facilitated in accordance with any agreed specifications and via the appropriate defined channels.</p>
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Part 3. Overall recommendation to QQI

3.1 Principal programme:

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);
	Not satisfactory.

Reasons for the overall recommendation

FIT has proposed a strong apprenticeship for revalidation. However, the Panel has identified four special conditions of validation. With the exception of conditions identified, the apprenticeship is found to have satisfied the validation criteria.

Commendations

The Panel offers a number of commendations to the provider. These include the following:

- The quality of the self-evaluation and reflection undertaken by the team at FIT within the programme review report
- The quality and clarity of the documentation submitted.
- Engagement with FIT members on the day of the site visit, in particular the learner apprentices who are tremendous ambassadors for the programme.
- FIT's commitment to approaches of wellbeing, support and accommodations to learners, as well as the strong emphasis on inclusivity and access throughout all areas of the programme activity.
- FIT's commitment to attaining diversity goals and work on progressing female participation in the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship.
- The use of the new learning management system that FIT plans to incorporate, which will benefit FIT and its apprentices.

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

1. The Panel has concerns around the RPL process at FIT and has identified a condition of validation pertaining to criterion 4 – access, transfer and progression arrangements. FIT must develop a clear, documented RPL policy that incorporates the various stages of RPL, including support for such applicants, as well as a robust appeal policy and associated process.

2. The Panel has identified a mandatory condition of validation in relation to the Capstone Project. FIT must supply more information within this module to provide the necessary clarity. This should include details of approval, support, monitoring and marking of the project work. FIT should also reflect and include other assessment instruments/tools as appropriate.
3. The Panel has identified a mandatory condition of validation in relation to the terminology used within the module learning outcomes. FIT must reflect on the use of the verbs used in the module learning outcomes for each module and be more precise so that they are more indicative of the manner in which a module is being assessed.
4. The Panel has identified a mandatory condition of validation in relation to FIT's assessment strategies. FIT must develop and supply a much clearer breakdown of the allocation of marks for all assessments, to include the time and nature of assessments, such that they are more indicative of the content.

Summary of recommended special conditions of validation

1. FIT must develop a clear RPL policy that incorporates the various stages of RPL, including support for such applicants, as well as a robust appeal policy and associated process.
2. FIT must supply more information within the Capstone Project module to provide the necessary clarity. This should include details of approval, support, monitoring and marking of the project work. FIT should also reflect and include other assessment instruments/tools as appropriate.
3. FIT must reflect on the use of the verbs used in the module learning outcomes for each module and be more precise so that they are more indicative of the manner in which a module is assessed.
4. FIT must develop and supply a much clearer breakdown of the allocation of marks for all assessments, to include the time and nature of assessments, such that they are more indicative of the content.

Summary of recommendations to the provider

1. The Panel has identified a recommendation in relation to criterion 5 – written curriculum.
 - a. The Panel recommends that FIT reviews the module content for all modules in light of the discussions at the event (making minor adjustments as appropriate);
 - b. The Panel recommends that FIT revisits the module titles to ensure that they are more indicative of the module content.
2. The Panel recommends that FIT is encouraged to look at opportunities to widen the scope of the community of practice (even beyond FIT and the members from its Approved Delivering Partners) and to take cognisance of what happens elsewhere.
3. The Panel recommends that FIT seeks to establish a fairer and more even-handed approach to address important equipment supports for those most in need.
4. The Panel recommends that FIT is encouraged to involve tutors in the development of assessments.

5. The Panel recommends that FIT carefully monitors resourcing as the programme continues to mature.
6. The Panel recommends that FIT reflect on the induction and consider a phased induction, delivering material in a timely manner, where relevant.
7. The Panel have identified a recommendation pertaining to communications with, and between various stakeholders. The Panel recommend that FIT ensure that all communication links are formalised thus ensuring that communication is properly facilitated in accordance with any agreed specifications and via the appropriate defined channels.

Following FIT's submission of evidence of having met the conditions set out by the panel, the panel issued one further recommendation to FIT as follows:

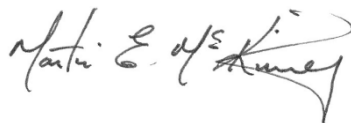
The panel were of the view that what is lacking, and would enhance the RPL Policy, is any formally documented support for accepting and approving experiential learning. The panel recommends that, as such learning is equally valuable and it should be at the forefront of future discussions within FIT.

Declarations of Evaluators' Interests

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

Panel chairperson: MARTIN MCKINNEY (PROF.)

Date: 24 OCTOBER 2024



Signed

3.2 Disclaimer

The Report of the External Review Panel contains no assurances, warranties or representations express or implied, regarding the aforesaid issues, or any other issues outside the Terms of Reference.

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Part 4. Proposed programme schedule

Principal Programme	Award Class	Award Level	Award Credits	Award Title					
Advanced Certificate in Cybersecurity <i>Cybersecurity Associate</i>	Major	L	200 FET	Advanced Certificate in Cybersecurity					
Programme Module Number and Title	M/O	On / Off the Job	Mode/s of delivery	Module credits	Total Apprentice Effort Module (hours)		Assessment Techniques and Weightings		
					Directed	Self-Directed	Technique	Weighting	Assessment Due
Programme Induction	M	On and off-the-job	In person & Via virtual classroom		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1. Networking Fundamentals	M	On and off-the-job	In person & Via virtual classroom	15	94.5	55.5	Examination Practical	50% 50%	Module end
2. Cybersecurity in Operating Systems: Linux and Windows	M	On and off-the-job	In person & Via virtual classroom	15	31.5	118.5	Examination Practical	80% 20%	Module end
3. Intermediate Network Management	M	On and off-the-job	In person & Via virtual classroom	35	315	35	Examination Continuous Ass	85% 15%	Module end
4. Applied Cybersecurity: Threat Response and Secure Architecture	M	On and off-the-job	In person & Via virtual classroom	30	252	48	Examination Continuous Ass	85% 15%	Module end
5. Cybersecurity Operations: Risk analysis and Artificial Intelligence	M	On and off-the-job	In person & Via virtual classroom	30	252	48	Examination Continuous Ass	85% 15%	Module end
6. Project Management and Communications	M	On and off-the-job	In person & Via virtual classroom	10	63	37	Continuous Ass Practical	60% 40%	Module end

7. Capstone Project	M	On and off-the-job	In person & Via virtual classroom	15	75	75	Project Practical	70% 30%	Module end
8. Applied Learning in the Workplace Year 1	M	On-the-job	In person	25	250	0	<i>Online Logbook</i> Practical Tasks Reflective Journal	70% 30%	Year 1 end point
9. Applied Learning in the Workplace Year 2	M	On-the-job	In person	25	250	0	<i>Online Logbook</i> Practical Tasks Reflective Journal	70% 30%	Year 2 end point
FET Credit Value Total:					200				