

Programme specification

(Notes on how to complete this template are provide in Annexe 3)

1. Overview/ factual information

Programme/award title(s)	BSc (Hons) Accounting Technology (Top Up)
Teaching Institution	Southern Regional College – Newry East Campus South West College – Dungannon Campus Belfast Metropolitan College – Titanic Quarter
Awarding Institution	The Open University (OU)
Date of first OU validation	September 2023
Date of latest OU (re)validation	N/A
Next revalidation	N/A
Credit points for the award	120 Credits
UCAS Code	
HECoS Code	
LDCS Code (FE Colleges)	
Programme start date and cycle of starts if appropriate.	September 2023
Underpinning QAA subject benchmark(s)	<p>The QAA Subject Benchmark Statements applicable are as follows:</p> <p>Accounting (2019) https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/subject-benchmark-statements/subject-benchmark-statement-accounting.pdf?sfvrsn=da39c881_7</p> <p>Business and Management (2022) https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/subject-benchmark-statements/subject-benchmark-statement-business-and-management.pdf?sfvrsn=db39c881_5</p> <p>Finance (2019) https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/subject-benchmark-statements/subject-benchmark-statement-finance.pdf?sfvrsn=f8f3c881_7</p> <p>Computing (2022) https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/sbs/sbs-computing-22.pdf?sfvrsn=ebb3dc81_2</p>

Other external and internal reference points used to inform programme outcomes. For apprenticeships, the standard or framework against which it will be delivered.	10X Skills Strategy Skills Barometer 2021 Sub Regional Skills Barometer Industrial Strategy NI 2023
Professional/statutory recognition	Accounting Technicians Ireland (ATI)
For apprenticeships fully or partially integrated Assessment.	N/A
Mode(s) of Study (PT, FT, DL, Mix of DL & Face-to-Face) Apprenticeship	Part-Time / HLA
Duration of the programme for each mode of study	2 Years Part Time (6 semesters).
Dual accreditation (if applicable)	Accounting Technicians Ireland (ATI)
Date of production/revision of this specification	TBC

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content, and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in student module guide(s) and the students handbook.

The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by the University and may be verified by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

2.1 Educational aims and objectives

All three Regional Colleges involved in this proposal namely Southern Regional College (SRC Lead College) Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC) and South West College (SWC) have a number of common attributes in Higher Education that provided a solid foundation for this proposal.

1. Each College has Institutional approval and current validation arrangements with the Open University Ireland. (OU)
2. Each College offers Accounting Technician Ireland (ATI) Awards and has had a longstanding working relationship with this all-Ireland professional body that spans over 20 years.
3. Each College has been involved and supported ATI in the development and implementation of the Accounting Apprenticeship at levels 4 and 5 of the QAA FHEQ Framework/ and at levels 6 and 7 of the QQI Qualification Framework.
4. The current Accounting Apprenticeship offered by the three Colleges is fully supported and funded by the Department for the Economy (DfE) in Northern Ireland and has undergone two quality reviews over the past 7 years undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The outcomes from these reviews were exceptional across the board with considerable areas of good practice and strengths having been identified.

Accountancy is one of the largest areas of academic interest across the island of Ireland, with a broad-based body of knowledge and an increasing interest in the development of new knowledge. Accounting Technicians Ireland (ATI) is a professional awarding organisation and membership body founded in 1983 to deliver innovative professional Accounting Technician education, and to represent and advocate for a developing professional Accounting Technician Community. ATI's vision is to be the clear leader in the provision of such education on the island of Ireland that addresses the challenges of the future, builds a more diverse and active member community of practice and provides visible pathways for those who want to progress. ATI has 10,000 professional members and students across the island of Ireland and enjoys a close working partnership with its sister body Chartered Accountants Ireland, who have over 31,000 members globally. Consequently, the overarching aim of the BSc (Hons) Accounting Technologist (Top-Up) course is to provide a coherent yet flexible programme of study which will immerse and engage students in an academically challenging and stimulating educational experience; and produce dynamic graduates who are intellectually competent and vocationally prepared to build and develop professional careers in the field of accountancy.

The BSc (Hons) Accounting Technologist (Top-Up) programme will focus on developing knowledge of the field (content) whilst giving the learners the opportunities to apply their learning in practical contexts (experience) whilst enhancing their learning through problem solving approaches (challenging and authentic tasks). The learning approaches will take into account the diverse backgrounds of learners at Level 6, whilst developing them into independent learners and critical divergent thinkers ready for employment or postgraduate study (Inclusive environment, activities linked to student experience). The BSc (Hons) Accounting Technologist (Top-Up) is viewed as a natural progression route for students completing the level 5 Dip Accounting Technology within SRC/SWC/BMC.

2.2 Relationship to other programmes and awards

(Where the award is part of a hierarchy of awards/programmes, this section describes the articulation between them, opportunities for progression upon completion of the programme, and arrangements for bridging modules or induction)

The Accounting Technologist will be educated and trained by means of a degree apprenticeship programme. The **two-year programme** will build on the preceding two years of education and training that is required to obtain the Accounting Technician qualification. The Accounting Technologist will therefore be qualified after a total of four years of education and training. The degree apprenticeship structure of the Technologist programme is unique in several respects when compared to alternative accounting degree programmes:

- As an apprenticeship programme, its development will be employer-led. There will be a consortium steering group of employers from a variety of relevant backgrounds who will contribute to the practical development of the programme. The employer voice will complement the academic development of the programme. Employers of apprentices will be reassured as to the relevance and practicality of the skillsets that graduates of the programme will have.
- ATI's Technologist programme is designed to include topics such as information systems, data analytics, and sustainability as core elements of the programme. The Technologist programme specifically recognises these topics as essential to the roles that are needed in the workplace. This approach contrasts with many existing accounting programmes that offer such topics separately to a core qualification or as a bolt-on to an existing programme.
- As an apprenticeship programme, the apprentice is learning in a relevant workplace from the outset of the programme. There are strong linkages between classroom learning and workplace experience. Apprentices will therefore gain experience at levels that correspond to classroom learning throughout the period of the apprenticeship.
- The Red Brick Research notes the increasing prevalence of employers 'growing their own' trainees in-house. This approach is a natural fit with the apprenticeship structure of the Technologist programme.
- The Red Brick Research also identifies the development of 'softer skills' as a key demand by employers. The development of these skills through a combination of classroom and work-based learning makes the apprenticeship model a good fit to meet employer requirements.

Included in the scope of the Red Brick Research was to determine whether a programme similar to the Technologist programme already exists. The Red Brick Research notes the increasing prevalence of employers 'growing their own' trainees in-house. This approach is a natural fit with the apprenticeship structure of the Technologist programme. The Red Brick Research also identifies the development of 'softer skills' as a key demand by employers. The development of these skills through a combination of classroom and work-based learning makes the apprenticeship model a good fit to meet employer requirements. Included in the scope of the Red Brick Research was to determine whether a programme similar to the Technologist programme already exists. Red Brick Research concluded as follows:

'There is no evidence of a Degree Level qualification that encompasses all the accounting technologist subject domains and offers the practical benefits of a workplace-based apprenticeship. The All-island Accounting Technologies Apprenticeship Degree is a unique qualification that will support the future skills needs within the accounting and finance sector and wider industry.'

2.3 For Foundation Degrees, please list where the 60 credit work-related learning takes place. For apprenticeships an articulation of how the work based learning and academic content are organised with the award.

N/A

2.4 List of all exit awards

BSc (Hons) Accounting Technology (Top Up) Year 2

3. Programme structure and learning outcomes

(The structure for any part-time delivery should be presented separately in this section.)

Programme Structure - LEVEL 6

Compulsory modules	Credit points	Optional modules	Credit points	Is module compensatable?	Semester runs in
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Governance • Sustainability for Accounting and Finance Professionals • Sustainability Accounting • Strategic Management • Performance Management • Financial Reporting • Financial Management • Taxation • Business Information Systems • Data Analytics • Information Security, Governance, and Digital Transformation • Data Analytics and Visualisation • Professional Practice and Industry Project 1 • Professional Practice and Industry Project 2 	???	N/A	???	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes No No	Sem 1 Yr1 Sem 2 Yr1 Sem 1 Yr2 Sem 2 Yr2 Sem 1 Yr1 Sem 2 Yr1 Sem 1 Yr1 Sem 2 Yr2 Sem 1 Yr1 Sem 2 Yr1 Sem 1 Yr2 Sem 2 Yr2 Sem 2 Yr1 Sem 2 Yr2 Sem 3 Yr 1 Sem3 Yr 2

Intended learning outcomes at Level 6 are listed below:

<u>Learning Outcomes – LEVEL 6</u>	
3A. Knowledge and understanding	
Learning outcomes:	Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods
<p>A1. Demonstrate an appropriate conceptual knowledge base together with the practical competencies and skills that are necessary to operate effectively as an Accounting Technologist in a business environment.</p> <p>A2. Demonstrate knowledge and synthesised understanding of higher-order theoretical concepts and their practical application to a business environment as they relate to accounting and finance.</p> <p>A3. Demonstrate knowledge and synthesised understanding of higher-order theoretical concepts and their practical application to a business environment as they relate to business information systems, data management, and data analytics.</p> <p>A4. Demonstrate knowledge and synthesised understanding of higher-order theoretical concepts and their practical application to a business environment as they relate to organisational governance with particular reference to corporate governance, sustainable organisations, and strategic management.</p>	<p>Lectures; tutor directed seminars to include case studies, independent research and study skills; student-led seminars, to include research, critical thinking, communication and teamwork skills.</p> <p>Assessment Methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies • Work based projects as groups/individuals • Reports • Presentations • Research • Debate • Practical demonstration – video, posters, posts, website, blogs, vlogs, podcast • Client briefs and associated campaigns • Reflective logs • Written exam • Practical observation / examination

3B. Cognitive skills	
Learning outcomes:	Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods
<p>B1. Demonstrate a capability to think creatively and to exercise judgement for problem-solving, decision-making, communicating, and implementing logical solutions in support of the evolving governance responsibilities of business organisations.</p> <p>B2. Demonstrate advanced technical domain competencies in relation to the preparation, manipulation, analysis, and interpretation of financial and non-financial data to provide evidence that supports decision-making, opinions, and judgements.</p> <p>B3. Demonstrate a capability to accept professional responsibility and to use initiative to resolve routine and non-routine accounting, data analytics, and sustainability issues.</p> <p>B4. Reflect on the evolving sustainability agenda and the dynamic nature of the technological landscape in business organisations in terms of the consequences for identification of own learning needs, continuous professional development, and lifelong learning.</p>	<p>Similar methods will be used as for knowledge skills, however content chosen for these methods intend to tease out cognitive ability in terms of presenting different theoretical and practical interpretation of issues, use of independent research which will require critical thinking, reasoning and problem solving.</p> <p>Methods will include lectures; tutor directed seminars to include case studies, independent research and study skills; student-led seminars, to include research, critical thinking, communication and teamwork skills; practical sessions; e-learning technologies, to include Go-to meeting, padlet, nearpod.</p> <p>Assessment Methods:</p> <p>Assessment methods will remain the same as per knowledge skills, however the content of the brief/coursework/exam will challenge cognitive thinking and ensure a deeper level of thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies • Work based projects as groups/individuals • Reports • Presentations • Research proposal • Debate • Practical demonstration – video, posters, posts, website, blogs, vlogs, podcast • Client briefs and associated campaigns

3B. Cognitive skills	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective logs • Written exam • Practical observation / examination
3C. Practical and professional skills	
Learning outcomes:	Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods
<p>C1. Apply a range of relevant methods, techniques, and tools that reflect the domain competencies and professionalism necessary to support the breadth of accountancy, data analytics, and sustainability responsibilities for which executives of business organisations are accountable.</p> <p>C2. Assess professional and personal development pathways to identify career opportunities that align with personal values and attitudes.</p> <p>C3. Communicate with peers from accountancy, data analytics, and sustainability backgrounds to identify limits of own knowledge, to discuss different viewpoints, and to resolve issues on a collaborative basis.</p> <p>C4. Recognise the evolving nature of modern business environments and demonstrate a capability to propose creative and practical solutions to business issues.</p>	<p>All students will work or complete placement hours in an accountancy settings. Tri-partitate agreements are agreed between employer, students and employers. Visits are made by the work based learning tutor to ensure a close working relationship between the workplace supervisor and the college tutors. This enables the student to develop their workplace skills. There are opportunities for students to compare the approach taken in their workplace to those offered in other settings through visits and discussions focused on sharing good practice and professional development. In addition students will engage in a practical toolkit workshop alongside theoretical modules within each semester. The intention is to ensure the development of practical skills which can be used in a professional context and to a professional standard. This will be taught in a practical setting with the relevant hardware and software.</p> <p>Assessment Methods:</p>

3C. Practical and professional skills	
	<p>Assessment methods will be used to focus on the quality of the student work experience, in terms of their applied knowledge from theory to practice, gained practical and business acumen knowledge, skill and ability. As such, the latter will be captured using one or more of the assessment methods below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work based projects as groups/individuals • Placement reports • Presentations • Client briefs and developed campaigns • Reflective logs • Site visits /Practical observation • Practical demonstration – video, posters, posts, website, blogs, vlogs, podcast
3D. Key/transferable skills	
Learning outcomes:	Learning and teaching strategy/ assessment methods
<p>D1. Assess professional and personal development pathways to identify career opportunities that align with personal values and attitudes.</p> <p>D2. Communicate a personal view on the roles of accountancy, data analytics, and sustainability in business organisations and society that reflects informed opinion based on participation in the programme.</p>	<p>Lectures, tutorial, practical sessions and work-based learning.</p> <p>Assessment Methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work based projects as groups/individuals • Placement reports • Presentations

3D. Key/transferable skills	
<p>D3. Illustrate the broader numeracy, literacy, data retrieval, and information management skills that underpin technical domain competencies.</p> <p>D4. Demonstrate appropriate personal and interpersonal skills for effective performance within a team environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective logs / workbook • Site visits /Practical observation

[BSc (Hons) Accounting Technologist (Top Up)

BSc (Ordinary Degree) Accounting Technologist (Top Up)]

4. Distinctive features of the programme structure

- **Where applicable, this section provides details on distinctive features such as:**
 - where in the structure above a professional/placement year fits in and how it may affect progression
 - any restrictions regarding the availability of elective modules
 - where in the programme structure students must make a choice of pathway/route
- **Additional considerations for apprenticeships:**
 - how the delivery of the academic award fits in with the wider apprenticeship
 - the integration of the 'on the job' and 'off the job' training
 - how the academic award fits within the assessment of the apprenticeship

This programme of study will offer clear routes that facilitate opportunities for successful progression from the Level 5 Dip ATI.

The BSc (Hons) Accounting Technologist (Top Up) Programme is subject to high levels of employer engagement in areas such as curriculum and module design. Employer engagement will be encouraged throughout the programme in curriculum development, evaluation, and self-sourced placements on an ongoing basis. Learners will engage in Work Based Learning (WBL). Learners completing the final year of study BSc (Hons) (Top Up) programme will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge in all modules.

Personal development planning will also be evident in the tutorial support within the course where learners will engage in activities to allow them to complete their course and progress into employment or level 7-8 education. This will include career planning, job searching, applications and interview techniques.

Learners have access to a range of facilities including, online applications, Adobe Suite, and a range of digital marketing equipment eg tripods, cameras, iPad, gimbals, AR/VR.

Learners have the opportunity to engage in empirical research in an area of their choice.

Learners are able to apply theoretical concepts into practice while networking with potential employers.

A strong teaching team and academic rigour will support industry engagement to give the student a high quality experience of teaching and learning at SRC/SWC/BMC.

Microsoft Teams and the College's VLE (Canvas) are used extensively to support learning.

The course team have worked with various employers and has excellent links with organisations such as: internal stakeholders e.g Marketing Department and external stakeholders e.g. Local Councils.

5. Support for students and their learning.

(For apprenticeships this should include details of how student learning is supported in the work place)

Students learning is supported in a number of different ways:

- A comprehensive induction programme for new students takes place on commencement of the course.
- Student handbooks and module booklets are referred to at point of induction and available on CANVAS for students to reference throughout the course duration.
- Timetabled tutorial sessions on a weekly basis will be provided for all students with an experienced course tutor who will offer support for students.
- Access for students to the Course Director and academic staff through an 'office hours' system.
- Student representation on course committee.
- Opportunity to address general concerns through regular scheduled staff / student consultative committee meetings and online surveys.
- Facilities and assistance offered by the library and computer services.
- Student e-mail accounts and full access to the college VLE (CANVAS).
- College's email systems are accessible for students to contact tutors for support and advice in and out of office hours.
- Student services provide help in the field of health, counselling and guidance, careers, finance and special needs, direct access to these services at all times through online sites.
- Placement co-ordinator provides careers advice and the preparation for Work-based Learning.
- The Colleges have protocols for assessment of and provision for students with disabilities.
- Assignment of students to a year tutor for pastoral and studies advice.

6. Criteria for admission

(For apprenticeships this should include details of how the criteria will be used with employers who will be recruiting apprentices.)

The admission criteria for this programme are as follows:

- Have completed the Level 5 ATI Diploma or equivalent. GCSE Grade C in English and Maths or equivalent.
- Graining credit at level 6 has no bearing.
- All applicants will be interviewed and may be required to provide additional evidence to support their application e.g. accredited qualifications

In addition, as an HLA prospective students will need to:

- Be in paid employment as an apprentice, or be an existing employee moving to a new job role, with a Northern Ireland based company;
- Work a minimum of 21 hours per week (which includes time for 'off-the-job' training);
- Have achieved all necessary entry qualifications determined by the relevant sector;
- Pass any entry tests specified by the relevant sector-;
- Be the minimum school leaving age in Northern Ireland.

7. Language of study

English

8. Information about non-OU standard assessment regulations (including PSRB requirements)

N/A

9. For apprenticeships in England End Point Assessment (EPA).

(Summary of the approved assessment plan and how the academic award fits within this and the EPA)

N/A

10. Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning.

All HE programmes at SRC/SWC/BMC are subject to the Quality Management and Enhancement processes within each College. In line with FHEQ Benchmark Statements (2014) and the QAA HE Toolkit (2021) the following processes are in place:

- Cross marking, internal verification and external examining processes used to ensure validity and reliability of assessment process.
- The Course Committee considers learner feedback from each module.
- Learner/staff consultative meetings provide the means of highlighting any difficulties, relating to the course, experienced by the cohort.
- Annual Course Review procedures consider quantitative and qualitative feedback from each course within a subject area.
- Staff appraisal is carried out on a two-year cycle with attention given to the development needs of the individual staff member.
- The College annually complete the OU course review & evaluation documentation if applicable.
- The College has a Staff Development Programme, which facilitates specific training/development for staff.
- All staff are encouraged to complete Information & Learning Technology qualifications.
- Views of external examiners are considered and SRC/OU reporting mechanisms are followed.
- Learner performance data and career progression is annually monitored.

All team/staff members in each College have to attend programme specific team meetings during the year, all with pre-set agendas, and the Course Directors have to attend Higher Education Committee Meetings, which consider quality management.

10. Changes made to the programme since last (re)validation

N/A

Annexe 1: Curriculum map

~~Annexe 2: Curriculum mapping against the apprenticeship standard or framework
(delete if not required.)~~

Annexe 2: Notes on completing the OU programme specification template

Annexe 1 - Curriculum map

This table indicates which study units assume responsibility for delivering (shaded) and assessing (✓) particular programme learning outcomes.

Level	Study module/unit	Programme outcomes																		
		A1	A2	A3	A4		B1	B2	B3	B4		C1	C2	C3	C4		D1	D2	D3	D4
6	Corporate Governance	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓					✓			
	Sustainability for Accounting and Finance Professionals	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓				✓	✓
	Sustainability Accounting	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓			✓
	Strategic Management	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓					✓					✓	
	Performance Management	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓			✓			✓				✓	✓
	Financial Reporting	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓				✓	✓
	Financial Management	✓					✓					✓	✓				✓			
	Taxation	✓	✓				✓	✓				✓			✓				✓	
	Business Information Systems	✓					✓					✓					✓			
	Data Analytics	✓					✓	✓				✓			✓				✓	✓
	Information Security, Governance, and Digital Transformation	✓	✓				✓		✓			✓		✓	✓					✓
	Data Analytics and Visualisation	✓	✓				✓	✓				✓			✓			✓		
	Professional Practice and Industry Project 1	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓		✓					✓	✓
	Professional Practice and Industry Project 2	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Annexe 2 - Curriculum mapping against the apprenticeship standard

This table indicates which study units assume responsibility for delivering (shaded) and assessing (✓) particular knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Please ammend this mapping to suit Frameworks used within the different Nations if appropriate.

Annexe 3: Notes on completing programme specification templates

- 1 - This programme specification should be mapped against the learning outcomes detailed in module specifications.
- 2 – The expectations regarding student achievement and attributes described by the learning outcome in section 3 must be appropriate to the level of the award within the **QAA frameworks for HE qualifications**: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/Pages/default.aspx>
- 3 – Learning outcomes must also reflect the detailed statements of graduate attributes set out in **QAA subject benchmark statements** that are relevant to the programme/award: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/subject-guidance/Pages/Subject-benchmark-statements.aspx>
- 4 – In section 3, the learning and teaching methods deployed should enable the achievement of the full range of intended learning outcomes. Similarly, the choice of assessment methods in section 3 should enable students to demonstrate the achievement of related learning outcomes. Overall, assessment should cover the full range of learning outcomes.
- 5 - Where the programme contains validated **exit awards** (e.g. CertHE, DipHE, PGDip), learning outcomes must be clearly specified for each award.
- 6 - For programmes with distinctive study **routes or pathways** the specific rationale and learning outcomes for each route must be provided.
- 7 – Validated programmes delivered in **languages other than English** must have programme specifications both in English and the language of delivery.