

## Open Training College (OTC)

### COVID-19 Contingency Planning (March 2020 to date);

#### including Summary of contingency arrangements for September 2020 to December 2020

This document provides details of the OTC Contingency Plan for the duration of the COVID-19 National emergency.

**Summary of new and continuing arrangements for September to December 2020.** Where arrangements have already been put in place and will continue, these have been highlighted in this section. Planned developments and contingent actions are also highlighted here.

The objectives for this OTC Contingency Plan are:

- To minimise infection spread, protecting students and staff
- To follow national and organisational (St. Michael's House – SMH) guidelines
- To minimise impact on students
- To ensure continued programmes delivery and assessment validity
- To continue to operate within QA approved structures and procedures
- To meet commitments to stakeholders and workplace partners
- To address potential financial and other impacts
- To continue to recruit an intake for 2020/21
- To continue in so far as possible with strategic/developmental initiatives
- To maintain College reputation and commitment to students throughout the emergency

## Summary of new and continuing arrangements for September to December 2020

Topic	The plan includes...
Approval by Academic Council	<p>The plan has been approved by the Academic Council (AC), adopted 4<sup>th</sup> August 2020, and has been signed by the Chair in respect of academic matters and by the College Director in relation to associated operational and commercial matters.</p> <p>Original plan: Sanctioned on 11/03/2020 and during subsequent weekly/fortnightly meetings. Ongoing review and revisions through the College Executive Committee (CEC) meetings process; key decisions on academic matters brought to AC.</p> <p><b>Sept.-Dec. 2020:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External examiners and AC consulted/approved modifications with regard to changes in delivery and assessment.</li> <li>• Continuing Increased frequency of AC and CEC meetings.</li> </ul>
Involvement of External Examiner	<p><i>Consultation with Extern on alternative assessment instruments, practices, arrangements etc</i></p> <p>In relation to the above changes all Course Directors were in contact with external examiners since the PHE was declared. In addition to discussion on and agreement of alternative assessments a key output was the extension of the academic year and assessment deadlines and the resulting rearrangement of the exam boards from September to November.</p> <p><b>Sept.-Dec. 2020:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External examiners and AC consulted/approved modifications with regard to changes in delivery and assessment.</li> </ul>
Alternative programme delivery methods	<p><i>Summary of what means of programme delivery will be used to substitute for face to face interaction</i></p>

	<p>Ensuring ongoing content delivery to students and support of students through their studies including those affected by placement restrictions. Plans to address this required change in the OTC blended model of delivery.</p> <p><b>Sept.-Dec. 2020:</b>  <b>Delivery and Assessment Modifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recording of lectures for synchronous and asynchronous learning and fulltime availability</li> <li>• Online workshops that included breakout sessions to replace face -to-face workshops</li> <li>• Q&amp;A sessions online in live time</li> <li>• Presentations and discussions (tutor and student-led)</li> <li>• Podcasts on a range of areas</li> <li>• Links and readings</li> <li>• Substantial increase in tutoring hours available to students via Zoom, Phone and email</li> <li>• Increased video, telephone and email tutorials</li> <li>• Facilitation to support online socialising</li> <li>• Specific podcasts to support assessment</li> <li>• Changes to exam protocols</li> <li>• Pausing of placements and determining alternative arrangements for students following engagement with IASCE and CORU</li> </ul>
<p>Alternative assessments</p>	<p><i>Summary of what methods of assessment will be used where the currently approved methods are no longer possible</i></p> <p>Ensuring compliance with QA requirements including assessment validity – ongoing - based on information from QQI, the National Forum and HECA and contact with these bodies.</p> <p><b>Sept.-Dec. 2020:</b>  <b>Assessment Modifications</b></p> <p>A key area where the approved methods had to be modified was in the provision of examination centre examinations. An alternative approach was devised through discussion with QQI, HECA and based on the National Forum for Teaching and Learning resources. An online, open book, time bound examination was devised and communicated to the students. The process has been used four times so far with no major issues identified. How it works:</p>

	<p>The students are provided with an open book, time bound examination.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The exam paper is emailed to all students 9.00 am on Day One.</li> <li>2. The students must return the complete paper to assessments by 9.00 am on Day 2 (24 hours later). Any papers submitted after this time are not accepted.</li> <li>3. Students submit the completed paper to the electronic assessment portal</li> <li>4. Students record exam number only on the paper</li> <li>5. Before submitting the completed paper the student must upload the paper to Turnitin.</li> <li>6. The student must complete the entire paper on google drive – do not cut and paste from any other document.</li> <li>7. The student may use the module booklet or other reference material when completing the paper.</li> </ol>
<p>Alternative arrangements for work placement</p>	<p><i>Summary of alternative arrangements, if any, where learning and / or assessment currently carried out on work placement are no longer possible.</i></p> <p>The Practice Coordinator, in consultation with the Irish Association of Social Care Educators provided the OTC CEC and the Social Care Programme Board with 5 options for alternative assessment, as all students had their placement stopped when lockdown commenced.</p> <p><b>Sept.-Dec. 2020:</b>  <b>Social Care Practice Placement Modifications</b>          The option selected and implemented is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an individual contingency plan for each student that is based on foundational aspects, including</li> <li>• Students will complete 400 hours of work-based learning in total in their paid employment Where this is not possible alternative placement hours will be sought through voluntary work</li> <li>• Explore and practise the relevant SOPs in a social care setting – from a combination of the hours they have already completed in placement and from paid hours in their own workplace</li> <li>• Support/supervision from a social care worker within placement of employment will be sought</li> <li>• Support of a social care worker from within the college team will be provided</li> <li>• Linking in with the original PE in the placement site to arrange for the completion of the mid-way evaluation aspect of the Assessment</li> <li>• Record Book – in order to sign off on any SOPs the students had achieved prior to the pausing of placement</li> <li>• Each student to complete their placement portfolio in their new context</li> </ul>

<p>Resource implications</p>	<p><i>Summary of what additional resources (hardware/ software / broadband) will be required for the organisation and learners to conduct / participate in programmes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tests commenced with virtual meeting software, new online delivery software – Zoom used for all meetings, all staff received voice thread license, training ongoing;</li> <li>• April to date – all features of Zoom employed for varied content delivery. This will continue for 20/21 delivery:</li> <li>• Delivery model revised to take account of social distancing requirements; a number of actions developed, piloted and are currently in roll-out as detailed above;</li> <li>• External examiners and AC consulted/approved modifications with regard to changes in delivery and assessment.</li> </ul> <p><b>Sept.-Dec. 2020:</b>  <b>Social Care Practice Placement Modifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full team review and further planning scheduled for September 2020.</li> <li>• Recruitment for vacancies ongoing;</li> <li>• Agency cover employed where required;</li> <li>• Homeworking IT supports continually under review.</li> </ul> <p>Corporate Services Manager is addressing needs that arise e.g. venues bookings.                  Online Supports: Agreed with our contractor Wholeschool (on 03/04) to increase capacity of online to 6000 users on YourOTC. A further increase has been prepared for and can be implemented as necessary at short notice.                  Academic staff upskilling with regard to online delivery using Zoom or other resources.</p> <p>Currently no plans to scale back or suspend operations but this is under continual review. Factors which may impact identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any impact of staff illness, self-isolation requirements, building shut down (access to documents- mitigated through use of Drive as an interim shared folder)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students having issues accessing course due to redeployment or other family/health issues;</li> <li>• Loss of income from student numbers dropping.</li> </ul>
<p>Information to learners</p>	<p><i>Detail on how learners are informed and kept up to date on new arrangements</i></p> <p>Students and their representative advised and consulted through website and email.</p> <p><b>Sept.-Dec. 2020:</b>  <b>Student Supports &amp; Communications Modifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zoom individual and Group tutorials introduced in addition to telephone and email</li> <li>• Additional online reading and resources links created and circulated</li> <li>• Online introductory session at start of each module via Zoom/podcast</li> <li>• Creation of student Whatsapp groups supported by College</li> <li>• Making online social contact a requirement to help those less comfortable with technology</li> <li>• Weekly programme team meetings on Zoom to keep staff up to date and connected</li> <li>• Increased contact with members of AC to advise of changes</li> <li>• Updated website and circulation of information emails to students and staff</li> </ul> <p>OTC is basing all decisions on national guidelines, HSE and SMH.                  Repositories of information in place and system for fast dissemination of information are in place and operating.</p>
<p>Induction of New Learners</p>	<p><i>Summary of how starting learners will be inducted onto the programme.</i></p> <p><b>Sept.-Dec. 2020:</b>  <b>Plan for Management Programmes Intake 2020/21:</b></p> <p>At the current time it is envisaged that the management programmes will continue to be delivered online utilising all the supports and initiatives that have been developed to date and outlined above; indeed, the OTC has a validation submission with QQI on this very issue. Under current validation and with regard to the 2020/21 intake, applications are strong and the commencement of a cohort is fully expected to commence in autumn. To this end the following is in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Calendars are developed and available;</li> <li>• The Management team continues to work on the annual updating of content where necessary, developing new online content and enriching existing content;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial planning has commenced with regard to the staffing required to deliver on the expected application;</li> <li>• The Student Handbook and QA manual is being updated as is usual at this time of year.</li> </ul> <p>With regard to the induction of new learners, the Open Training College utilised a blended learning model before the public health emergency. Therefore, the induction always included a dedicated online induction programme for all new students. The main difference is the move from workshops to online webinars. This move has been supported with additional online supports including online group tutorials and an increased availability of 1:1 tutorials.</p>
<p>Training / Support of Staff</p>	<p><i>Detail on how staff are briefed / supported to change to online delivery and assessment</i></p> <p>Named person assigned responsibility to ensure full circulation of all relevant information to the full OTC team. Rests with CEC, ongoing two-way communication with staff teams through managers; all relevant information provided.</p> <p>Programme Directors in communication with all contract tutors and workshop presenters.</p> <p>Ensuring the parent organisation SMH is fully informed and updated on activity of the College during the period of COVID-19.</p> <p><b>Sept.-Dec. 2020:</b></p> <p>Full team review and further planning scheduled for September 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector partner agencies seeking training for redeployed staff and maintaining skills and training. As part of this we have developed and are running a Foundation Programme for Residential Staff to support staff training needs at this time.</li> <li>• The sector using OTC as a touchstone for online education and training for staff.</li> </ul> <p>Business partners such as the DoH programme – OTC has developed alternative models of provision.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff (internal and associate) required training.</li> <li>• Creation of online material internally.</li> <li>• Recruitment continues as required.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Staff Well-Being and Mental Health Resource developed by OTC for SMH available to all staff including OTC staff and available online. Includes all levels of resources including free online to the formal employee assistance Scheme (EAP).</li> <li>• Regular circulation of material on the Resource and the EAP.</li> <li>• Regular check-in by managers with staff.</li> </ul> <p>Ongoing material available also through the regular communication channels.</p>
<p>Monitoring arrangements</p>	<p><i>Detail on how the feedback from staff and learners on the effectiveness of new arrangements is monitored.</i></p> <p>College Executive Committee – CEC: From early March to end May 2020 this team held at minimum a weekly meeting and fortnightly meetings from June 2020 to date; this will continue for the remainder of 2020. Head of QA and AA also acts as the link to Academic Council and external bodies - e.g. QQI, HECA etc.</p> <p><b>Sept.-Dec. 2020:</b></p> <p>To continue to monitor the efficacy of the modifications the College’s standard feedback mechanisms have been in use since commencement of the PHE. The College has observed the increasing role for the student rep working hard to gain feedback from many students in multiple locations. Grades have been monitored to ensure there has been no discernible decrease (or increase) in marks. All year heads have held general zoom conferences to discuss any ongoing issues with all students. The normal annual QA review work will be undertaken for this year albeit with a longer timeframe.</p> <p>In regular and ongoing contact with SMH, HECA, IASCE, SCI QQI, National Forum, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies.</p> <p>Critical activities and the inputs required were identified by each Director /Manager for each programme and area of activity;</p> <p>These were presented to the CEC for review, agreement and sign-off.</p>



Continual feedback on each activity is presented, reviewed and any changes required identified at each CEC – a continual cycle of plan, do, review.

- Withdrawal rate being monitored, Student response to plan being monitored, marketing approach softened but commenced (application trends being monitored); worked with stakeholders to support our main sector (disability), worked with main organisation (SMH) to support staff education and training through the crisis.

Ongoing: Risk register developed and continually revised by Head of QAAA; Risk rating has decreased from 20 (on a scale of 1 -25) (red rating) at the commencement of the crisis to 12 (amber rating) currently. Work continues to bring this down further.

- Ongoing discussion on other actions the OTC can take in relation to being retooled for COVID-19 with regard to the core business of HE and FE programme delivery;
- Development of new initiatives to address business continuity during and after the emergency;

Further Strategic Planning being tabled for October/November 2020.

Commenced in relation to workshop delivery and online options. Using Videothread and Zoom respectively.

Concern numbers will fall in the 2020/21 intake; a number of measures implemented to seek at address this.