

PROTECTION OF ENROLLED LEARNERS (PEL) POLICY OPEN TRAINING COLLEGE

1. Introduction

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 contains provisions for the protection of learners enrolled in programmes of education and training (Part 6, S. 64-67). The legislation applies to all education providers (other than those specifically exempt under legislation) and to any programme of 3-month duration or longer where fees have been charged. QQI has developed protocols to facilitate providers in the fulfilment of their legal obligations with regard to PEL.

As summarised by QQI, the 2012 Act seeks to ensure that:

- (1) Learners have an opportunity to complete a programme leading to an award, or
- (2) Learners are refunded the moneys most recently paid if a programme ends before they complete it, and
- (3) Learners are provided with adequate and accurate information about the programme that they wish to pursue and about the protection in place for them in event that the programme ceases prior to their completion.

2. Purpose

To outline how the OTC complies with its legal obligations in respect of the protection of enrolled learners.

3. Scope

Protection of learners enrolled in OTC, QQI approved, undergraduate and postgraduate accredited programmes of 3 months duration or longer where moneys have been paid by, or on behalf of the learner.

4. Policy Statement

OTC has learner protection arrangements in place with respect to enrolled learners on all QQI validated programmes of 3 months duration or longer, where moneys have been paid in advance of delivery of programme by, or on behalf of the learner, ensuring learners' education at OTC is protected, and in accordance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Part 6 "Protection of Enrolled Learners".

OTC strives to ensure that all its programmes are taught out and finished. The purpose of the policy and related 'Protocols and Procedures on PEL document' is to facilitate OTC's reaching workable and tangible PEL solutions across all relevant programmes, for its continuation to completion. Arrangements which facilitate learners to complete their studies, is the preferred PEL option and approach for QQI and OTC, as this accommodation is in the best interests of the learner.

In addition, OTC seeks to strengthen public confidence by:

- (1) Having a refund policy in place which will be communicated to students in their programme documentation and made publicly available on the website;
- (2) Making arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners known to the Designated Awarding Body, if collaborative arrangements are not already agreed and stated within the joint contractual agreements;
- (3) Minimising risk through appropriate control and monitoring activities, including:
 - Designing and delivering programmes in accordance with contractual agreements with the Designated Awarding Body and in compliance with national Quality Assurance requirements and guidelines;
 - Fulfilling corporate governance and financial reporting and regulatory obligations;
 - Conducting risk assessment activities during the programme design stage and programme evaluation stage, and analysing environmental threats.

Learner Protection insurance is provided by O'Driscoll O'Neil and underwritten by Hiscox Insurance Company Limited. This insurance policy provides either for the completion of the programme or the return of fees most recently paid in line with the 2012 Act.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The College Director has ultimate executive responsibility for the effective development and implementation of academic policies. The Head of Quality & Academic Affairs has overall delegated responsibility for coordinating the day to day operation of the policies and the development, maintenance and monitoring of supporting procedures. Programme Directors and Tutors are responsible for pursuing the implementation of these policies in relation to the activities of their programmes.

6. Definitions

Enrolled Learner: student fully registered with the College. Application form accepted and required fee/part fee paid – for the purposes of completing an accredited programme of 3 months duration or longer.

7. Related Documentation

This policy should be read in conjunction with *Procedures for PEL*.

8. Contacts

The Head of Quality & Academic Affairs/Corporate Services Manager

Policy Title:		Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL)
OTC Policy No		1802
Version		1.2
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Document Owner/Contact:		Head of Quality & Academic Affairs Corporate Services Manager
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:		Procedures for PEL
Audience:		Public – accessible to anyone
Reference(s)		The Qualifications and Quality Act (Education and Training), 2012 Statutory Instruments relating to PEL European Standards and Guidelines for QA in the European Higher Education Area