BLENDED LEARNING & ONLINE LEARNING

STRATEGY –

OTC – APRIL 2020 (V2.0)

1.0 Context:

The Open Training College (OTC) is a section of St. Michael's House (SMH), Dublin and a third level Institution offering programmes of education and training to staff who work in the disability, health-related, non-profit, community and voluntary sectors nationally. St. Michael's House was established in 1955 and since then has grown to become the largest provider of services to people with intellectual disabilities, and their families, in the greater Dublin region and the third largest provider nationally.

In the early 1990s, St. Michael's House was providing extensive education and training to staff and sought to formalise and accredit the programmes delivered. To this end an application for (non-funded) designation as a third level educational institution was made to the then Minister of Education. On achieving this designation St. Michael's House set up the OTC in 1992 as the operational mechanism for the delivery of accredited training.

As part of the designation as a third level institute, OTC was required to offer the programmes and training it developed to all staff employed in disability services nationally. To achieve this objective the organisation was innovative in developing a model of delivery based on a distance learning approach, but with significant adult-friendly supports built in. This model is known as the Supported Open Learning (SOL) Model and has been operated successfully by the College since 1992. In 2003, the College introduced online learning into the model to increase accessibility and flexibility for learners.

More recently other educational providers and educational researchers have referred to this model as 'blended learning'. Blended learning is defined as the complementary use of face-to-face teaching, technology, online tools and resources to support and enhance student education.

In 2016, the College's use of this model won an International E-learning Award (IELA) for blended learning.

The Open Training College is committed to delivering programmes with a comprehensive support system that facilitates effective learning. Flexibility and accessibility are key characteristics of any strategy devised to provide learning opportunities for adults. The SOL Model is always evolving to

ensure that the flexibility, effectiveness and user-friendliness of the model is optimised. The College recognises that managing learning can be difficult while juggling other commitments; to that end this model ensures that students are supported to effectively manage their learning through timely supports.

The following figure outlines the Supported Open Learning (SOL) Model, as employed by the Open Training College for **Blended Learning (1992 – Date)**.
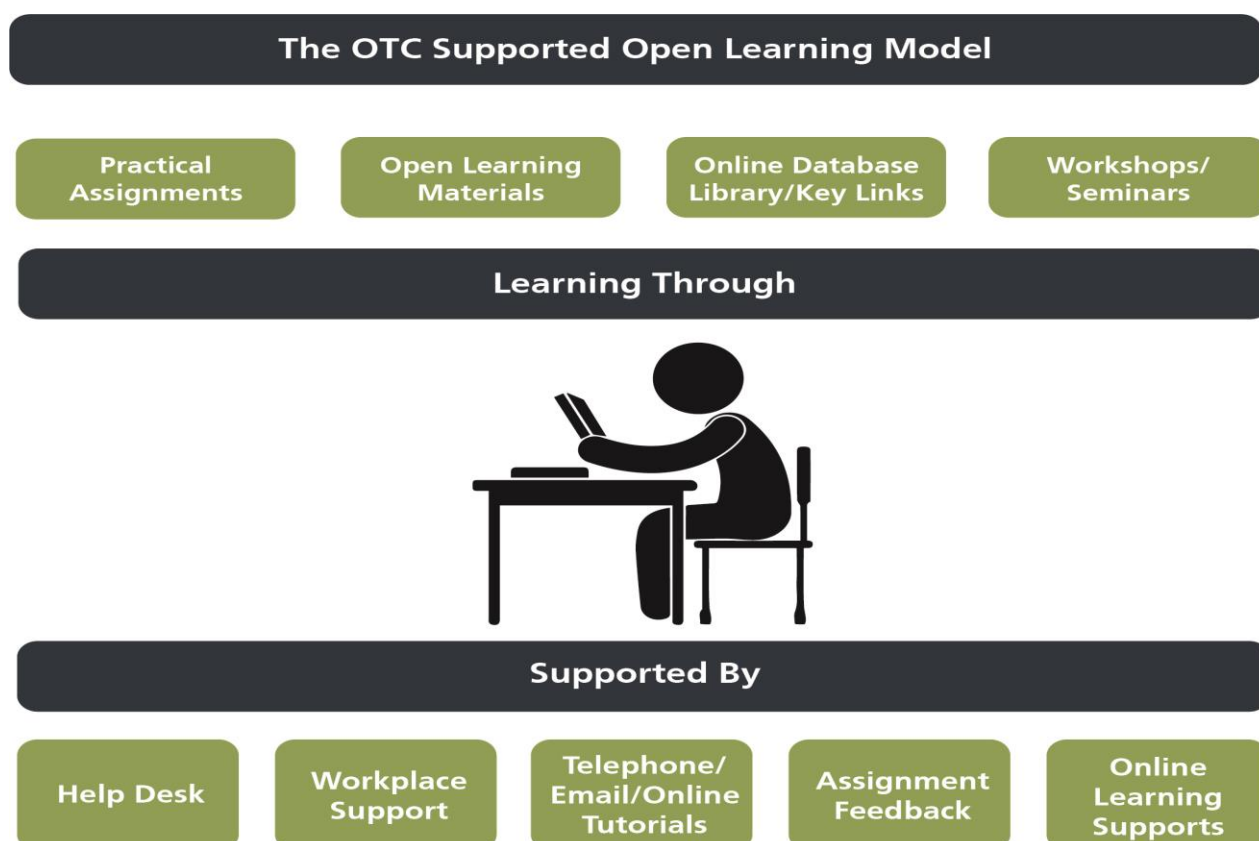

*Figure 1: The Supported Open Learning (SOL)Model – **Blended Learning***

The student <u>learns through</u> the following key resources:
Open learning materials;
Online database library;
Workshops;
Practical assignments.

Students are <u>supported</u> in this learning through the following key support structures:
Tutorials;
Feedback (Formative and Summative);
Helpdesk Support;
Relevant and timely feedback;
Workplace Support.

In November 2019, the senior decision-making team of the Open Training College, the College Executive Committee (CEC) met to review the strategic objectives achieved during the four quarters of 2019 and to develop a draft document that would identify the strategic objectives for 2020.

One of these objectives was to develop a:

- Proposal looking at moving all 3 years of the Management Programmes online.

This led to the further development of this strategy, in order to assure the quality of fully online delivery. As part of the 'Differential Validation' application made to QQI, in respect of the above programmes, an adapted version of the College's successful SOL Model was stipulated.

This is presented here as the Supported Open Learning **(SOL) Model – ONLINE Learning (2020 – date)**:
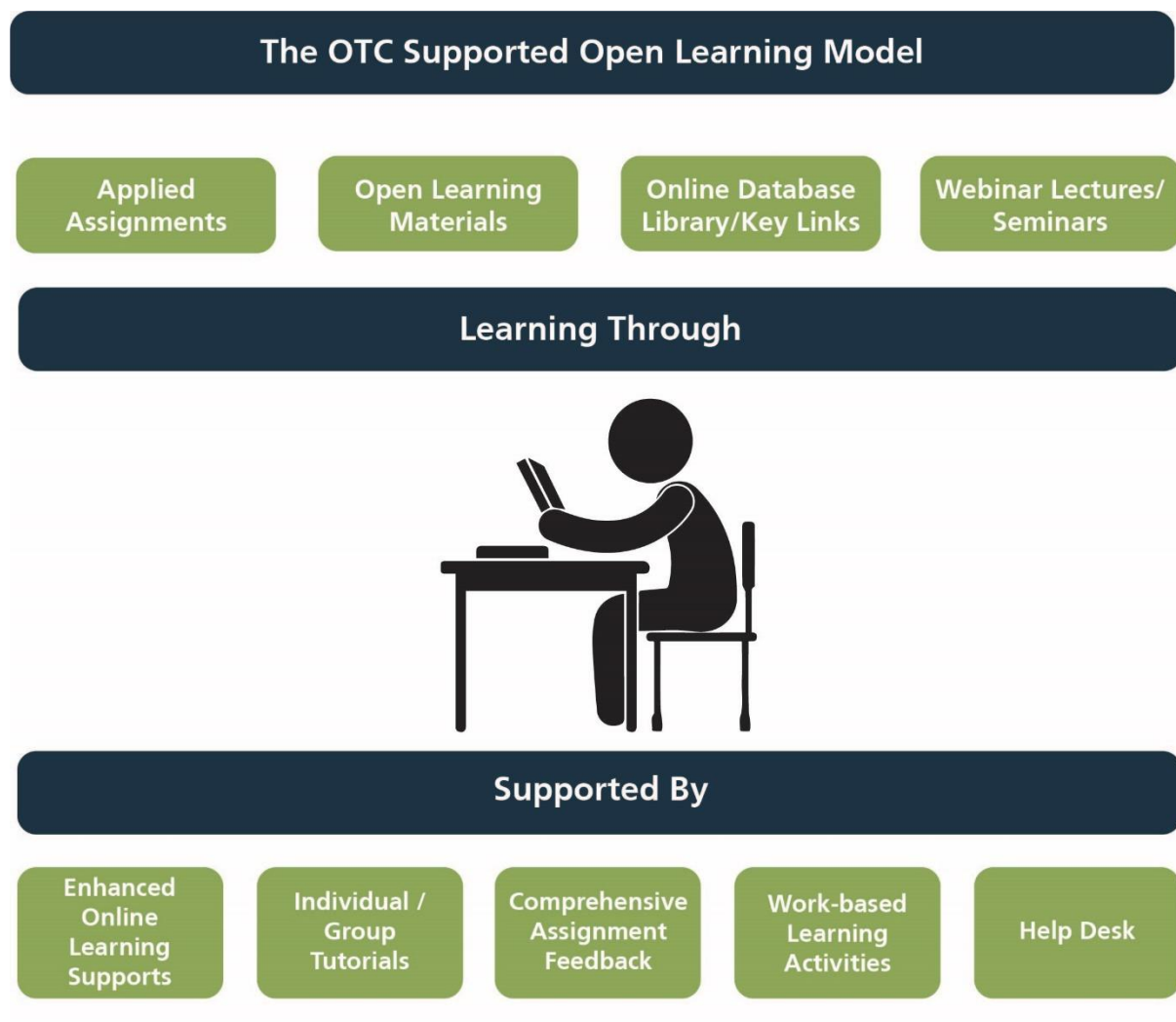

Figure 2: Supported Open Learning (SOL) **Online Model**

The Open Training College's Supported Open Learning (SOL) Online model is outlined in figure 2 above, the model has two types of elements; the elements the student learns through and is supported by.

The key support for each student in their studies is their tutor. The tutor is an associate faculty member who they can contact throughout their year of study via email, video, telephone or in group tutorials online. Tutorial supports are provided through a variety of media including telephone, e-mail and online teleconferencing. Any or all of the following areas may be discussed during tutorials:

- student's progress with the learning materials;
- assignment preparation and feedback;
- additional issues that may arise relevant to the learning process.

The student also has access to the E learning team to ask about any online learning or technical issues.

The student commences each module by accessing the online area created specifically to support the identified MIMLOs. The online area provides high quality open learning materials that are regularly updated. The materials are structured to cater to the needs of adult learners, through the provision of separate sections that support each learning outcome. The materials are accompanied by a series of self-directed learning activities. In addition, in the online module area, the student will have access to relevant videos (the College for quality purposes usually uses Ted Talks), podcasts and other multi-media supports. The student will also have access to the assessment brief, rubric and assessment checklist (this document lists all the elements they must complete to ensure the assessment is submitted in its entirety).

The student will also have access to a variety of online areas to have discussions in the community of learning with their peers, lecturers and associates. These discussion areas provide an opportunity to provide valuable formative feedback to the student and the student group. Note participation in some of the online discussion areas may be assessed summatively.

In addition, the College has an online library and databases; online academic writing guide, online how to use MyOTC guide and a study skills area that covers areas like referencing, plagiarism and writing skills.

The student can contact their tutor if they have any questions during the first two weeks. In week three the student will attend online lectures/seminars. These are held in a designated online venue and allow for a lecture style session where knowledge sharing and skill construction is carried out. The

students will also complete a variety of small group seminar activities through online break out rooms to explore topic and assessment issues. The online synchronous workshop is recorded for reference purposes and placed on the online platform.

After the lecture/seminars, students continue studying within their online area using the open learning materials. There will be one point when the student can contact their associate for a telephone tutorial or Zoom call to ensure they have grasped all the essential learning and they are on course for their assessment.

On deadline day the student must submit their assessment in the College style, through Google Drive. There is a dedicated administrative coordinator who ensures that the assessments are submitted on time and in the correct format.

The College provides immediate office hour support on matters related to IT, academic or practice issues. In availing of this support students are provided with immediate access to an experienced member of the faculty who can provide support and guidance to deal with the difficulty they are facing.

Online Learning Community and Socialisation

One of the key barriers to online learning for students is the perception of reduced interaction (Muirilenberg and Berge, 2007). The need for a functioning learning community and the creation of opportunities for online socialisation are key. (Young (2010).

The Open Training College bases their online supports on the five-stage model developed by Salmon (1996). For online learning to be successful, participants need to be supported through a structured developmental process. The five-stage-model provides a framework or scaffold for a structured and paced programme of online activities.

The five-stage-model offers essential support and development to participants at each stage as they build up expertise in learning online.

The five stages are outlined below with an indication of the learner's journey in relation to the aims for students; the level of learning community development; and the technology support and online

facilitator support focus at each stage. In addition, the key learning analytics required to assess the success or otherwise of each stage are noted.

Stage	Aims of student development at this stage	Learning Community Development	Technology Support for Stage	Online Facilitation support for this stage	Analytics used to ensure supports are working
1 – Access and Motivation	To gain access to the key online areas To be able to use the online areas To start to feel comfortable online To understand netiquette	Commencing. Inducting the student Creating opportunities for first online peer to peer links To emphasis netiquette and what happens if it is not followed	Online orientation course Identification of software/hardware needs Identifying where the student can get technology support	Introduction to online facilitator/tutor Initial activities to ensure Individual emails, phone calls if a student is having issues Checking in after week 1 to ensure the students are comfortable, gaining feedback	Student tracking of initial activity completion Student time online Student engagement with icebreakers Identify any netiquette issues
2 - Online Socialisation	To commence networking peer to peer Commence learning activities Start interacting with other students through a variety of media	Learning community starts to focus on activities linked to the knowledge construction; Bridges built based on common goals and backgrounds are encouraged	Students are supported to interact in a number of ways through a number of online activities	Student peer to peer interactions are encouraged. Feedback is provided on the student's engagement with the learning activities. Students who are not interacting effectively are provided with 1:1 support and linked in with other students.	Student participation in online discussions Students completion of online activities Number of peers each student dialogues with
3 - Information Exchange	To cooperate on online tasks Identify what areas of their own study they need	Learning community is producing relevant focussed knowledge based on	Support is provided on ensuring the student is maximising their use of their online	The online facilitator is supporting the students to maximise their use of the online software.	Discussion types, engagement measured. Amount of personalisation of software

Stage	Aims of student development at this stage	Learning Community Development	Technology Support for Stage	Online Facilitation support for this stage	Analytics used to ensure supports are working
	online support Increase their peer to peer dialogue Students starting to personalise and develop more advanced ways to use the online supports	peer to peer activity.	software through personalisation and using it to support their progress in the module.	Weaving of online discussions provide the learner with an opportunity to develop the knowledge they have created	Engagement with databases, library area Questions to tutor
4 - Knowledge construction	Student should now be an integral member of the online learning community Able to use their online learning to develop the knowledge required Engage with multiple peers on the areas they want to develop	Learning community is functioning as a key knowledge construction area with maximum peer involvement and engagement	Support to access further software, including advanced databases/library searches	The online facilitator is ensuring that the students are meeting their assessment requirements and capturing any other knowledge construction that may be professionally or academically useful. Each student gets an opportunity to present their key findings and gets feedback from peers and online facilitator.	Number of discussions held. Number iof threads from each discussion. Activities completed. Requests for further support.
5 -Develop-ment	The student captures their learning effectively. Has an opportunity to reflect on	The learning community is ending. The learner leaves the community bringing the	Provides links to further online skill development opportunities, internal or	The online facilitator wraps up the learning community with a feedback session, and provides an opportunity for	Overall view of engagement through discussion, activity completion, student

Stage	Aims of student development at this stage	Learning Community Development	Technology Support for Stage	Online Facilitation support for this stage	Analytics used to ensure supports are working
	the process identifying what all stakeholders did well, needs to improve	skills and knowledge they have developed.	external to the College. Gets feedback on supports, helpdesk.	students to present their key learning from the process.	completion, requests for deadlines. Survey on the experience for all stakeholders.

Modular learning

The College employs a modular approach to learning. Modules are made up of:
- Clearly defined modular learning outcomes
- Learning objectives
- An introduction to the material
- A summary of material
- Activities that engage with the material
- Opportunities to practise, apply, analyse, synthesise new information, including the ability to link with practice-based examples
- Opportunities to reflect and articulate acquired knowledge
- Opportunities for formative feedback
- Additional resources for students to extend their learning
- A clear assessment opportunity contained within a defined area
- Identification of academic issues early in the learning process, rather than with some semesterised models where most assessment is at the end of a defined period

There are distinct advantages to modular learning. These include:
- Modular learning allows for better evaluation and more focussed revision and improvement.
- Flexibility in relation to delivery.
- Ability to provide a spiral curriculum, where students meet recurring themes in each module building on their expertise on each topic at each juncture. For example, in this programme the student continually engages with the theme professional development in key modules at each stage.

Comprehensive Feedback (Formative and Summative)

The College allows for a number of key checkpoints during each module for formative feedback for each student. These include tutorials, online activities, open learning materials activities, peer discussion, online and in the classroom, and engagement with online supports like referencing quizzes. The student is provided with comprehensive feedback for each summative assessment that allows them to see how their assessment rated against the assessment requirements. In addition, the student is provided with an annotated version of their assessment with feedback comments from the marker.

Programme learning environment

The programme learning environment includes:

1. Synchronous eLearning (Webinars for lectures, seminars, small group discussions, tutorials)
2. Asynchronous directed eLearning on MyOTC
3. Online supports and learning activities
4. Individual and group tutorials
5. Online Library/Databases

1.1 Guiding Principles

The Open Training College has operated under the influence and direction of a number of guiding principles when designing, implementing and evaluating blended learning:

- **Programme-focused rather than technology led**: All blended learning approaches which support learning and enhance the student experience at the Open Training College should be utilised to support learning rather than being used because the technology is available.
- **Educationally appropriate:** Technology intervention should be curriculum focussed and aligned to the learning strategy. Approaches should be consistent with current educational literature and described in appropriate documentation such as specifications and reviews.
- **Optimising contact time**: Each element of the blended model should be used to its maximum effect; namely the online supports should mainly focus on conceptualisation and contextualisation of ideas, while focus on skill construction should mainly be the focus of classroom time.
- **High quality content**: All digital learning materials, whether produced internally or sourced from external open educational resources (OERs), should be relevant and fit for purpose.
- **Available, Responsive and Accessible:** All tools and digital materials should be designed with mobile technologies in mind, normally made available ahead of time and be usable on multiple device types.
- **Skills development:** All students and tutors should be supported to develop the required skills to be able to use any online resource effectively and efficiently.
- **Online experience:** Each online experience should:

  o be consistent (laid out in a similar way to increase intuitive use of the online resources),
  o be clear (expectations of any online engagement should be communicated from the start, with supports available to deal with any issue that arises),
  o offer variety (each programme should have a range of online supports to support the learning),
  o provide feedback (there should be opportunities for the student to provide feedback on a regular basis).

- **Community of Learning:** Each programme should be constructed to enhance the community aspect of learning including the provision of online facilitators and opportunities for online socialisation and collaboration.

Please see Appendix 2 for a more detailed 'explanation of blended learning' at OTC.

Through this Blended Learning and Online Learning Strategy, and its future iterations, we look forward to the realisation of a teaching, learning and assessment delivery which provides optimal outcomes for our student body, their employers, service users and all other internal and external College stakeholders.

2.0 Integration of Blended Learning & Online Learning with the Quality Assurance & Enhancement (QA&E) System:

The following documents were key in the OTC's successful undertaking of Re-engagement with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in 2018/19:

A. Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines – QQI, April 2016.
B. Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers – QQI, April 2016.
C. Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Independent/Private Providers coming to QQI on a Voluntary Basis – QQI, April 2016.
D. Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes – QQI, March 2018.
E. Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards (QQI, Revised 2012)

In relation to blended learning, document D above, is of particular relevance. As part of the re-engagement process, OTC undertook a full gap analysis against all of the blended learning criteria outlined in this publication. This is presented here as Appendix 1.

From the gap analysis, it can be seen that OTC meets all criteria as outlined. However, the re-engagement process also highlighted that this level of full compliance may not be immediately obvious to all stakeholders. Therefore, this explicit strategy has been developed in order to make the College's compliance and planned direction more transparent to all.

The mapping for Online (only) learning was initially carried out against OTC's existing mapping to QQI's statutory QA guidelines for Blended Learning (updated in each of the years 2018, 2019 and 2020), in order to identify whether there were any gaps which might not meet the standards for fully online provision. This focused primarily on the face-to-face elements and how these would be replaced, and how the replaced elements would be synthesised into a fully online environment. It also proved a useful tool in identifying other issues contingent on the change to such delivery.

An additional mapping is provided against the indicators laid out in ENQA's "Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision; Report from the ENQA Working Group VIII on quality assurance and e-learning" (2018). These indicators have also been approved for inclusion in the College's current Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020). This is presented in Appendix 3.

The primary aim of this strategy statement is to set the strategic direction for Blended Learning (BL), and Online Learning (OL) for the next three years, based on an examination of current implementation and a representation of key aims for future and further application. In order to provide a relevant basis for this strategic direction, each section of the College's Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) – Sections based on Document B above (Statutory QA Guidelines) - is explored below with reference to the blended learning and online learning specific elements relevant to that particular section.

From these, overarching themes are extracted in the next section (3.0) and actions related to achieving the strategic objectives are outlined in the final section (4.0).

2.1 Governance and Management of Quality

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- Inclusion of the development of the College's Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) delivery, as part of the College's overall strategic plan
- Updating on BL/OL developments and initiatives through the College's Governance structures
- Setting of an annual budget for BL/OL
- Availability of IT support and Helpdesk
- BL/OL as part of the College's overall Quality Culture
- Key quality output; student support
- BL/OL induction for all external representatives on Academic Council and its sub-committees
- Reviews of BL/OL delivery

Blended Learning: This section meets **"***Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes***"** (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. Quality management arrangements for online learning provision and other non-face-to-face learning are supported by fit-for-purpose organisational infrastructure and processes.

ii. Online developments that are subject to business case approval for viability and sustainability.

iii. Appeals and complaints policies and processes which accommodate remote learning.

iv. Regulations and arrangements for Boards of Examiners and external examiners which include any additional consideration of online learning experiences.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:

(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• E-learning is part of the overall strategy for the institution's development as well as the policy for quality assurance.
• The institution uses a clearly articulated policy framework and governance structure when deciding on the adoption of new technologies to ensure the expected quality of e-learning provision.
• The institution has a clear strategy for digital innovation, e-learning being a part of it. This strategy is known within the institution at all levels and is adopted by teachers in charge of designing the curriculum.
• E-learning programmes are aligned with the institutional mission.
• The institution takes into account the European, national, and local policies, as well as ethical and legal considerations when designing its policy for quality assurance and its internal quality assurance system.

2.2 Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- Meeting European standards
- Documented policies and procedures relating to Blended Learning (BL) & Online Learning (OL)
- Policy development takes account of BL/OL
- Regular review of policies and procedures
- External peer review
- Publication of this BL/OL Strategy

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. This usually means there needs to be a strategy and plan, an appropriate investment of time, money and other resources to develop capacity and resources to deliver high quality blended learning that will offer learners a consistent, enjoyable and effective learning experience.

ii. The provider's strategy, infrastructure and policies systematically address and enable existing or planned arrangements for blended learning (incorporating online learning).

iii. Policies, regulations and processes (including administration) are fit-for-purpose in the context of blended learning.

iv. Fees policy and processes which take note of online provision.

v. Arrangements for quality management in general are consistent with the Core Statutory QA Guidelines for all providers and topic- or sector-specific guidelines as appropriate.

vi. The provider has approved and published expectations for the overall quality of the blended learning provision, including expectations on the effectiveness and accessibility of learning resources and other learning materials to support online provision. The provider also has approved and published expectations for the effective delivery of teaching and learning and assessment in a blended learning context, which are available to stakeholders.

vii. Make available benchmark or specification documents for learning resources and information specific to monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of learning resources and the learning environment. These are all considered as part of a programme validation and review process.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:

(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• E-learning is part of the overall strategy for the institution's development as well as the policy for quality assurance.

• The institution uses a clearly articulated policy framework and governance structure when deciding on the adoption of new technologies to ensure the expected quality of e-learning provision.
• The institution takes into account the European, national, and local policies, as well as ethical and legal considerations when designing its policy for quality assurance and its internal quality assurance system.
• Specific e-learning criteria for external quality assurance procedures (institutional or programme evaluation) are publicly available.

2.3 Programmes of Education and Training

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- BL/OL focus as part of Programme Review/Revalidation/Validation
- External review
- Informing of External Panel Members on BL/OL
- Induction of external academic Council and Sub-committee members re. BL/OL
- Design of programmes around BL/OL delivery
- Equality of access
- Information provided to prospective learners on BL/OL requirements
- Evaluations and surveys relating to BL/OL
- BL/OL expertise on programme development committees

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. Organisational structures and processes ensure that technology is in the service of pedagogy.

ii. All materials and media (for example audio-visual, printed or digitised assets) used to deliver online learning are subject to informed peer comment at one or more draft stages and allow for the incorporation of feedback into subsequent and final versions of the learning resources.

iii. The programme as a whole is intended to achieve learning outcomes. Online learning is effectively integrated into the programme for this purpose. Overall programme design is informed by best practice in curriculum design.

iv. Curriculum development processes with an appropriate representation of subject, educational technology, instructional design and other key internal stakeholder expertise. For example, specialist student support advisers and administrators, library and information professionals play significant roles in effective online learning as well as the teaching staff who will support learners.

v. Developments are subject-led rather than technology-led.

vi. A focus on the delivery of an interactive learning experience for each module delivered online and academic content appropriate to the unit of study.

vii. Information for individuals developing online learning modules to ensure the use of the platform the institution has committed to and that they are bound by the institutional policies, systems, hardware and processes for online learning.

viii. Approval and validation processes for blended learning programmes including online learning modules are appropriate and fit-for-purpose.

ix. Testing of delivery mechanisms for online modules or parts of modules. For example, confirming that (where appropriate) it is possible to access learning on a private computer or on a mobile device or other as appropriate.

x. Programmes are fully designed before being offered to learners.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:

(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Authors of learning materials are relevant for the subject. Learning materials are reviewed and updated periodically.
• External quality assurance considers the characteristics of e-learning in regular procedures, such as innovation in teaching and learning processes (institutional or programme evaluation).

2.4 Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- Relevance of Blended and Online Learning (BL/OL) expertise in staff recruitment and selection
- Acceptable usage of E-learning environment policy
- Staff induction and training
- CPD policies and procedures
- Performance management
- Evaluating impact and disseminating good practice

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. The strategies and processes for the appointment, induction, training, professional development and appraisal arrangements for teaching and support staff are appropriate and specific to blended and online learning.

ii. Staff engaged to support online learners can either demonstrate previous experience of online provision or are provided with appropriate induction and training.

iii. There is a planned approach to the appointment of (or access to) specialist staff to support the provider's blended learning strategy.

iv. There is planned close collaboration between the academic and other support personnel and specialist staff, such as teams involved in designing learning technologies and other methodologies supporting online learning.

v. also include appropriate competencies required, for example, in designing a programme, understanding the pedagogical differences within a curriculum of supporting learners in a blended learning environment, such as virtual learning environment.

vi. Planned and controlled opportunities for staff to test new or evolving technologies not currently supported by the existing policy or provider platform.

vii. Staff qualifications and experience in online learning.

viii. Arrangements for the induction and continuing professional development (CPD) of staff involved in a) the development and support of online resources; b) online teaching, where such experience is lacking; c) support services for learners.

ix. Staff induction processes for staff employed to support or assess learners are in place. Staff are appropriately inducted and trained for their role in online learning.

x. Arrangements that provide assurance that all those involved in teaching and learning or supporting learning are appropriately qualified, supported and developed to provide effective online learning. This will include the protocols for communication and facilitation of online discussions and other challenges of teaching with technology.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:

(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Teaching staff involved in designing/developing/evaluating programmes are familiar with the advantages/disadvantages of using e-learning in particular course contexts.
• The institution has defined the structure, profile, and role of the teaching staff that is aligned with the pedagogical model.
• The institution uses appropriate instruments to guarantee that the profile of the teaching staff corresponds to their duties.

• The teaching staff is trained and proficient in the use of learning technologies and e-assessment methods. There are particular training activities for new staff.
• The institution has developed procedures to identify the support requirements of the teaching staff.
• Technological and pedagogical support services for teachers are adequate, accessible, and timely.
• The teaching staff-student ratio avoids excessive workload for teachers and tutors.
• The institution has implemented appropriate procedures for recruiting and hiring teaching staff.
• The teaching staff is coordinated effectively.

2.5 Teaching and Learning

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- The Supported Open Learning (SOL) Model = Blended Learning (BL) Model; Adapted for Online Learning (OL) only = SOL – Online Model
- Student support policy
- Student handbooks
- Staff handbook
- The Tutorial function
- Monitoring effectiveness
- An ethos that promotes learning
- Applied nature of programmes
- National and International effective practice
- Learning environments; Physical and Online

Blended Learning: This section meets **"***Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes***"** (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. Blended learning providers should be particularly mindful of using a learner-centred approach, for example when using technology-enhanced/assisted learning, which may pose a challenge for some learners while creating opportunities for others.

ii. The delivery system for each online section/unit of study is fit-for-purpose.

iii. Learning and teaching practices that are informed by best practice in blended and online provision. Subject-specific and educational scholarship informs the pedagogy and instructional design.

iv. Developments are learner centred.

v. Open education resources referenced by the provider are subject to quality evaluation.

vi. Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms are appropriate, fit-for-purpose, monitored and reviewed.

vii. Learners can test and monitor their progress at appropriate points. The whole learning environment for blended learning used in conjunction with the learning resources requires active engagement by the learners.

viii. Robust arrangements for the quality assurance of learning resources, the learning environment and other learning resources.

ix. Teaching and learning resources for online learning which meet the provider's specified expectations around equality of opportunity, interactivity and the empowerment of autonomous learning.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:

(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• E-learning is part of the overall strategy for the institution's development as well as the policy for quality assurance.
• Institutional policies, structures, processes, and resources are in place to guarantee the successful teaching and learning process of students, including those with special educational needs.
• Teaching methodologies and learning activities are chosen with the aim of achieving learning outcomes.
• Learning materials fit the pedagogical model and facilitate student learning.
• The technical infrastructure is aligned with the teaching methodology, learning activities, and e-assessment methods, and it eases the teaching and learning process.
• Students are trained in how to appropriately paraphrase, cite, and reference, regarding both online and print sources.
• The institution gives advice on appropriate online behaviour (netiquette rules).
• Students are informed about the workload and pedagogical model of the e-learning programme.
• The institution has a policy and procedure in place for recognition of prior learning.

2.6 Assessment of Learners

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- External examiner induction
- Approved programme schedules; balance of blended learning (BL) elements
- Additional supports for Online learners
- BL/OL induction for students as part of Access
- Formative online assessment and summative submission
- Feedback from Tutors/Markers
- Plagiarism policy and procedures; use of Turnitin
- Use of technology in External examination process
- Assessment strategies take full account of BL/OL
- BL/OL expertise of examination boards

Blended Learning: This section meets **"*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*"** (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. Tracking learner progress and achievement, marking and returning assessments, providing feedback to learners and assessors are just a few of the areas where existing policies, systems and processes are unlikely to be fit-for-purpose in an online learning context.

ii. Appeals and complaints policies and processes which accommodate remote learning.

iii. Arrangements for online assessment including pre-assessment, the conduct of assessment and marking/grading which are robustly tested and invoke confidence.

iv. Robust and consistent systems and processes across the organisation to manage the submission, receipt, marking and return of assessments.

v. Include assessment practice and process that are published and provide consistent, equitable and fair arrangements for the setting of, marking of and return of feedback on assessment tasks. Learners are provided with consistent, secure and reliable means for submitting work to be assessed and confirmation of receipt. There are institutional regulations and protocols to ensure confidentiality and security in feedback to individual learners on assessment, and for the recording of marks or scores.

vi. Assessment strategies with opportunities for learners to engage in formative assessment activities that will check and reinforce learning remotely.

vii. Moderation processes are in place to ensure consistency and share good practice where more than one associate is employed to support or assess more than one group of learners. Documentation of best practice examples and exchange of information among all staff is important where there is a growing knowledge base, a growing availability of additional open access resources and constant demands to update ICT skills. Provider support through structured networking is in place to facilitate this.

Online Learning: <u>Indicators</u>, for mapping and monitoring:

(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• The institution has a policy and code of practice to ensure academic integrity and freedom and ethical behaviour.
• The technical infrastructure is aligned with the teaching methodology, learning activities, and e-assessment methods, and it eases the teaching and learning process.
• E-assessment methods are fit for purpose, allowing students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.
• Students are aware of plagiarism rules.

2.7 Supports for Learners

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- MyOTC (Online platform-Moodle) Induction
- Academic Tutor support
- Additional supports (Assistive Technology / Reasonable accommodation etc.)
- Online library
- IT support
- E-learning consultation
- Learning & Development in Higher Education (LDHE) module
- Online facilitators
- Intervention support strategies
- Learner analytics
- Equality policy
- Complaints & Appeals
- Freedom of Information
- Monitoring, Review & Improvement of Resources & Support Services

Blended Learning: This section meets **"***Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes***"** (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. The provider's arrangements for the validation of online programmes will focus on some additional issues such as: design and development mechanisms for **approving and updating learning resources**; **arrangements for student support and guidance**; and the availability and accessibility of appropriate learning resources.

ii. Specialist, reliable and accessible computer hardware and software applications are required for designing, developing and delivering online learning.

iii. There is a planned approach to staff guidance of online learners on any open education resources referenced including any intended or unintended endorsement of such resources.

iv. The infrastructure and resources required to support good quality blended learning are understood, planned, and routinely monitored and evaluated. These arrangements should take into account that, while online, learners are likely to be remote from the provider and from teachers and/or assessors. There is an institutional approach to these matters.

v. Any blended learning elements of provision have had the reliability of their delivery systems tested and signed off in advance, with confirmation that appropriate technical support and contingency plans are in place.

vi. Intellectual property rights and software licensing issues are addressed in the development and delivery of online learning.

vii. The delivery system for each online section/unit of study is fit-for-purpose.

viii. Curriculum content and student support that accommodates enhancement or updating, for example, in response to feedback or other quality assurance mechanisms. All online content is subject to approval and ongoing quality assurance. Resource planning at programme level includes a budget for the updating of content to ensure it remains current.

ix. Open education resources referenced by the provider are subject to quality evaluation.

x. All materials and media (for example audio-visual, printed or digitised assets) used to deliver online learning are subject to informed peer comment at one or more draft stages and allow for the incorporation of feedback into subsequent and final versions of the learning resources.

xi. Learners are supported to make informed choices about participating in a blended learning programme and to develop the necessary independent study skills to successfully progress towards becoming an autonomous learner. The level and nature of support available to learners is clear.

xii. Processes to ensure the delivery of any study materials direct to learners remotely through, for example, online methods or correspondence, are secure and reliable, and there is a means of confirming its safe receipt.

xiii. Deliberate steps taken to assist every learner to understand their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided and to shape their own learning experience.

xiv. Learner support for monitoring their own programmes. Every learner undertaking online learning is supported in monitoring their own progression and achievement through the provision of regular opportunities to test their knowledge and understanding, reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff and/or their peers.

xv. Appropriate interventions and mechanisms to identify learners who may be struggling with online remote learning. Learners are encouraged to complete their programme. Progress is monitored, and learners are provided with prompt and helpful comments on their progress in relation to learning guidelines and goals.

xvi. Equality of opportunity.

xvii. Arrangements that make reasonable effort to ensure blended learning experiences are accessible to all learners, including learners with disabilities.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:

(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Students are clearly informed about the e-assessment.
• Students/prospective students are informed about requirements concerning equipment, e-learning and digital skills, pre-knowledge and prerequisite subjects, and attendance.
• Learning resources: – The VLE supports a variety of methods and tools. – The technical infrastructure ensures the accessibility of the e-learning programme by students with special educational needs. – The institution defines the electronic security measures that guarantee standards of quality and information integrity and validity. – The VLE is based on non-proprietary web standards and is constantly updated to reflect technological changes. – The institution provides students with an adequate e-library and virtual labs.
• Student support: – The institution has procedures in place that cover student support, including tutoring, pedagogical, technological, and administrative elements. – Student support is offered according to the student's profile and their specific needs. – The student support reflects characteristics of e-learning. – Support for the development of learning, as well as digital skills (students are guided towards reflection, developing time management skills, etc.), is provided. – Students receive guidelines/training in using e-learning resources (VLE, e-library, etc.). – Hours of support are transparent and suit the needs of students; for instance, periods of peak demand (evenings, weekends, holidays, etc.) are considered.

2.8 Information and Data Management

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- The Information Management System (IMS)
- Survey tools
- Policy and procedures for Data Protection & the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Special categories of data
- Subject Access Requests (SARs)
- Assessment, feedback and rubrics
- Management Information Systems (MIS)

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. Tracking learner progress and achievement, marking and returning assessments, and providing feedback to learners and assessors are fit-for-purpose in an online learning context.

ii. Clarity in any additional registration arrangements deemed necessary by the provider.

iii. Policies, regulations and processes (including administration) are fit-for-purpose in the context of blended learning.

iv. Arrangements for assuring compliance with any legal or regulatory obligations are appropriate to the blended learning and online learning context.

v. Clear parameters on data protection including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

vi. Mandatory training includes child protection, intellectual property and copyright, and protection for enrolled learners.

vii. A planned approach to the procurement of services (e.g. cloud services), hardware and software to support online learning and a clear policy on a common platform for approval of exceptions.

viii. Contingency arrangements in the event of platform, hardware or software failures.

ix. A student record system designed or adapted to support blended learning programmes and learners and their quality assurance.

x. There are nominated academic/professional moderators who understand and have the authority to intervene in, for example, cyber bullying that may constitute risk to learners and/or the provider.

xi. Processes for learner records are sufficient and accurately maintained, and up-to-date learner records are available for monitoring progression and achievement.

xii. Privacy laws on data protection are appropriate for all aspects of online provision. Learner concerns about the confidentiality of learner records are respected.

xiii. A unique learner identity used by the provider; that protects learners and indicates their own electronic trail or digital persona.

xiv. Mechanisms that facilitate a safe, accessible and reliable blended learning environment for all learners. These mechanisms promote dignity, courtesy and respect in their use and encourage gender sensitivity amongst both learners and teachers.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:

(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Electronic security measures are considered by the institution's policy/code of practice.
• Collected data is used in order to evaluate e-learning programmes (e.g. comparative analysis of course design).
• There is a strategy on the use and purpose of learning analytics within the institution (i.e. the aim is improving student support).

• The information management system includes relevant, updated, and reliable information concerning the institution and its programmes.
• The institution considers ethical norms and government policy with respect to data protection and the privacy of students.

2.9 Public Information and Communication

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- Publication of Reports (incl. IERs-Independent Evaluation Reports) and Reviews
- External reviews
- College website and information to learners
- Annual QA reports
- Surveys
- AIQR

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. That a strategic approach to the use of blended learning is explicit and is shared with staff, learners and other stakeholders. A strategic plan includes appropriate investment in infrastructure and contingency arrangements to support all options for blended learning in an online context. Accountable key roles have been identified.

ii. Arrangements for assuring compliance with any legal or regulatory obligations are appropriate to the blended learning and online learning context.

iii. The provider has approved and published expectations for the overall quality of the blended learning provision, including expectations on the effectiveness and accessibility of learning resources and other learning materials to support online provision. The provider also has approved and published expectations for the effective delivery of teaching and learning and assessment in a blended learning context, which are available to stakeholders.

iv. Make available benchmark or specification documents for learning resources and information specific to monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of learning resources and the learning environment. These are all considered as part of a programme validation and review process.

v. The availability of appropriate information that adequately explains the online sections of the programme and assesses the suitability of a programme. This is available in advance of the programme commencing.

vi. Clear terms and conditions: Prior to enrolment on a particular programme, the prospective learner is made aware of all terms and conditions relevant to that programme, either in the prospectus or similar material, by correspondence, or in discussion with the provider.

vii. Requirements for access, bandwidth and any prescribed hardware or software are appropriate and viable, are communicated well in advance to the learners and all requirements are published.

viii. There is clarity in the information provided to learners and staff about communication channels and the availability of advice and support, for example, communication must manage learner expectations of communication and availability of staff in the provider. What learners may reasonably expect is specified, for example, expectations of staff and learners on developing any meta skills as part of engaging with the online aspects of the blended learning programme.

ix. Learners have access to:

• Descriptions of the online components of the blended learning programme, or aspect of study, to show the intended learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment methods of the unit or module.
• A clear schedule for the delivery of their online learning study materials, learner support (local and/or remote) and for the submission and assessment of their work. This will include learner responsibilities in this regard.
• Information on the ways in which their achievements will be judged, and the relative weighting of online and other remote parts of the programme in respect of assessment overall.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:

(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Students are clearly informed about the e-assessment.
• The institution gives advice on appropriate online behaviour (netiquette rules).
• The institution has a policy and procedure in place for recognition of prior learning.
• The institution publishes reliable, complete, and up-to-date information on study programmes (i.e. recognition of qualifications, learning objectives, credits, requirements, assessment methods, timelines, dates relevant for the programme).
• The institution publishes reliable, complete, and up-to-date information on institutional technical support.
• Technical requirements to enable the full and effective use of the system are clearly identified and published.
• The institution publishes information on completion rates, pass rates, and dropout rates.
• Specific e-learning criteria for external quality assurance procedures (institutional or programme evaluation) are publicly available.

2.10 Other Parties involved in Education and Training

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- Collaborative provisions include all Blended Learning and Online Learning (BL/OL) considerations
- External referencing to and representation on bodies such as the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education (NFETL –HE) and the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA)
- Cross-institutional peer relationships for networking and collaboration
- Joint projects
- External stakeholder consultations and reviews

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. The use to be made of external consultants and experts in online provision, including in critical review and appraisal of draft learning resources.

ii. Arrangements for assuring compliance with any legal or regulatory obligations are appropriate to the blended learning and online learning context.

iii. Arrangements for collaboration or partnership as set out in the Core Statutory QA Guidelines facilitate any additional responsibilities to be specified for learners in a blended learning context.

iv. Intellectual property rights and software licensing issues are addressed in the development and delivery of online learning.

v. Where a provider is relying on a second provider, partner or collaborator to provide aspects of blended learning such as online learning, a number of aspects are covered by the internal QA procedures.

vi. Formal written agreements are in place and clearly specify the respective rights and division of responsibilities, including in the case of data protection for those processing data.

vii. Learners and staff are made aware which organisation carries legal responsibility for the delivery or support of defined sections of the blended learning provision.

viii. (Where appropriate) information about the respective responsibilities of the provider and any third parties – such as local study centres or administrative offices - that may be involved in supporting the provider's online learning.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:

(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Authors of learning materials are relevant for the subject. Learning materials are reviewed and updated periodically.
• Site visit − The site visit takes place at a location where most of the institution's technical infrastructure is situated.

– Interviews with stakeholders include representatives of all groups involved (i.e. teaching staff, tutors, students, technical staff, administration, alumni, employers, etc.).   – The institution provides reviewers with access to the VLE, classrooms, e-library, etc.
• The criteria for the composition of expert groups includes e-learning competence/ experience.
• The QA agency holds trainings for all experts before the site visit. Special attention is given to characteristics of e-learning.

2.11 Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- Surveys of students on modules, End-of-year, Graduate Destinations etc.
- Stakeholder consultations
- External examiner reports
- Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs)
- Internal self-monitoring
- Quality Assurance & Enhancement
- Engagement with External QA
- Affiliations, memberships and representations
- Risk management

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. Quality management arrangements for online learning provision and other non-face-to-face learning are supported by fit-for-purpose organisational infrastructure and processes.

ii. This usually means there needs to be a strategy and plan, an appropriate investment of time, money and other resources to develop capacity and resources to deliver high quality blended learning that will offer learners a consistent, enjoyable and effective learning experience.

iii. That a strategic approach to the use of blended learning is explicit and is shared with staff, learners and other stakeholders. A strategic plan includes appropriate investment in infrastructure and contingency arrangements to support all options for blended learning in an online context. Accountable key roles have been identified.

iv. The strategies and processes for the appointment, induction, training, professional development and appraisal arrangements for teaching and support staff are appropriate and specific to blended and online learning.

v. The infrastructure and resources required to support good quality blended learning are understood, planned, and routinely monitored and evaluated. These arrangements should take into account that, while online,

learners are likely to be remote from the provider and from teachers and/or assessors. There is an institutional approach to these matters.

vi. Arrangements for quality management in general are consistent with the Core Statutory QA Guidelines for all providers and topic- or sector-specific guidelines as appropriate.

vii. Learners can test and monitor their progress at appropriate points. The whole learning environment for blended learning used in conjunction with the learning resources requires active engagement by the learners.

viii. Mechanisms that monitor and/or moderate standards (both in terms of learner outcomes and teachers and/or assessors' practice). Assessment arrangements conducted through online learning are valid, reliable, and secure and provide learners with appropriate confidential feedback on their progress.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:

(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Stakeholders (especially students) are involved in the internal quality assurance system, even if they are not on campus.
• Student needs are considered when developing the learning model and the curricula design.
• E-learning programmes are reviewed, updated, and improved.
• Pedagogical developments are aligned with the institutional strategy.
• ICT and pedagogy developments are analysed and implemented when appropriate.
• The internal quality assurance system includes feedback to stakeholders (especially to students).
• External quality assurance considers the characteristics of e-learning in regular procedures, such as innovation in teaching and learning processes (institutional or programme evaluation).
• All relevant stakeholders are involved in developing e-learning criteria (institutional or programme evaluation).
• The self-assessment report makes specific reference to e-learning by describing, for example: – the institutional strategy, pedagogical model, and VLE;   – the innovation of instructional design; – the profiles and experience of teaching staff;   – the online study programme (with detailed learning outcomes, course description, and competencies of teaching staff).

2.12 Other Specific Elements which support Blended & Online Learning

In addition to the multiple elements outlined across all sections of the Quality Assurance Document, the following also supply specific support to this area:

- o E-learning team
- o St. Michael's House (parent organisation) support
- o Mandatory training
- o ICLA Licence
- o GDPR Policy (1808)
- o PEL Policy (1802)
- o Validation applications
- o Collaborative Provision policy and Collaborative agreements

3.0 Themes:

Overarching: A fundamental tenet of OTC's Blended Learning and Online Learning Strategy will remain that it addresses, and will continue to update accordingly with reference to, all relevant publications from the College's accrediting body, QQI, with regard to blended and/or online criteria and guidelines, for as long as the College continues to have its programmes validated by that body.

In addition, the current Blended Learning and Online Learning Strategy will also always be referenced against best national and international practice in this sphere. Based on the QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes 2018, there are three principle headings; namely organisational context, programme context including development and assessment; and learner experience context. The themes are listed under these three headings.

Organisational Context

1. **Strategic plan**

    The approach to blended and online learning by individual departments and faculty is consistent with the overall College Strategic Plan and Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy;

2. **Induction and Training**

    Appropriate induction and training is provided to staff who design/support/teach/assess blended and online learning programmes/modules;

3. **Legal and regulatory obligations**

    All legal and regulatory obligations including intellectual property, copyright and data protection are fully adhered to;

4. **Institutional policies**

    All College policies designed for exclusively face to face learning are reviewed and updated to take account of the unique context of blended and online provision;

5. **Infrastructure and resources**

    Appropriate infrastructure and resources to support high quality provision of blended and online learning are planned, developed and evaluated.

Programme context including development and assessment

1. **Best practice design**

   The programme design should be informed by best practice in curriculum design;

2. **Support of the SOL model**

   The Blended Learning and Online Learning Strategy should support the SOL model, as adapted, and maximise learning outcomes for the learner;

3. **Student centred**

   The learning experience should be student centred;

4. **Learning resources and delivery**

   The learning resources and delivery mechanisms should be of high quality and appropriate to the programme content and context;

5. **Programme documentation of Blended Learning**

   The validated programme document should contain:

   i.   completed tables mapping module content/assessment to delivery mode;
   ii. details of the delivery and assessment modes for online components with any specific resources or delivery requirements/costs specified;
   iii. a schedule of key assessment deadlines (including all e-tivities and continuous assessment);
   iv. detailed specification of the time required for online discussion, forums and e-tivities;
   v.   an account of how learners can test and monitor their progress at appropriate points;
   vi. an account of how online components of the programme are evaluated and provide opportunities for feedback and review;
   vii. details of assessment implementation issues with respect to verification of learners' identity and the authenticity of submission.

6. **Assessment rigour**

   The rigour of assessment of online components should be equal to any face to face components and appropriate measures for verifying assessment validity are followed;

7. **Effective pilot testing**

   Programme/module delivery mechanisms should be tested and validated in advance of programme launch;

8. **Assessment piloting**

   The mechanisms for module assessment should be tested and validated in advance of programme launch;

9. **Regular evaluation**

   The programme as a whole, as well as individual modules (including delivery and assessment), should be evaluated after each cycle of delivery in terms of the delivery of content and/or the operation of assessment;

10. **Programme resourcing**

    Programme resourcing issues such as time for facilitating, moderating and assessing online activities should be specified.

Learner experience context

1. **Explanation of experience**

   A clear explanation of the blend of learning that will be experienced;

2. **Student induction**

   Any student who engages with blended or online learning will be provided with an online induction as part of the application process to determine suitability;

3. **Technology skills requirements**

   An account of the technological skills necessary to participate and successfully complete the programme;

4. **Hardware/software requirements**

   Details of hardware/software/broadband and any additional technological requirements for access/participation in the programme;

5. **Time commitment**

   Information on the direct contact time commitment and the independent learning required to successfully complete the programme;

6. **Clear scheduling**

    Details of scheduling of any synchronous classes and delivery of any asynchronous learning resources;

7. **Collaboration requirements**

    Details of requirements with respect to collaborative participation such as involvement in webinars and online discussion fora;

8. **Assessment requirements**

    A detailed schedule of both formative and summative assessments including feedback timelines;

9. **Authenticity of online assessment**

    Details of assessment implementation issues with respect to verification of learners' identities and the authenticity of submission;

10. **Support service availability**

    Information on support services available (academic/technical/pastoral) including time and scope of availability.

4.0 Strategic actions: 2019-2022:

The strategic actions for 2019-22 are listed under the relevant theme headings as follows:

Organisational Context

1. **Strategic plan**
   To build the Blended Learning and Online Learning Strategy into the OTC QuAD. To look to further collaborations, e.g. recent re-engagement project with fellow HECA member, Institute of Integrative Counselling & Psychotherapy (IICP) and Practice educator online training programme with fellow Irish Association of Social Care Educators (IASCE) member, Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT).

2. **Induction and Training**
   To ensure that all associate tutors are trained in the skills required to deliver effective blended & online learning.

3. **Legal and Regulatory obligations**
   To build on policies in areas such as data protection, copyright, intellectual property rights, licensing and sharing of digital resources.

4. **Institutional Policies**
   To investigate the impact of blended and online learning on FET policies and programmes.

5. **Infrastructure and Resources**
   In consultation with our online providers, to investigate further efficient and effective ways to deliver blended and online learning, in particular in the areas of lecture capture and online collaboration.

Programme context including development and assessment

1. **Best practice design**
   Continue engagement with the National Forum in relation to blended and online learning practices in the area and the use of learner analytics to improve blended learning experience.

2. **Support of the SOL Model**
   To investigate how blended and online learning can make the model more accessible and flexible. In particular with attention to disability access.

3. **Student centred**
   To maintain evaluation of all online modules as per College procedure, collate response and implement identified need and opportunities for improvement through the E learning Team.

4. **Learning resources and delivery**

   To ensure that all resources attain identified criteria to ensure best possible experience for learners.

5. **Programme documentation of blended learning**

   To build in the elements identified into any further programme documentation in relation to QQI.

6. **Assessment rigour**

   To benchmark the OTC practices against other blended and online learning programmes and create an action plan to update processes.

7. **Effective pilot testing**

   To devise a procedure for pilot testing of blended and online learning programmes.

8. **Assessment piloting**

   To review and update the procedure for assessment piloting.

9. **Regular evaluation**

   To look at mechanisms for gaining feedback on blended and online learning programmes and identify a more responsive model to capture learner feedback while they are learning as well as the current end of programme/module evaluation.

10. **Programme resourcing**

    Develop costing and risk assessment models for blended and online learning programmes within the College.

Learner experience context

1. **Explanation of experience**

   Develop a multimedia presentation on the blended and online learning experience within the OTC.

2. **Student induction**

   Evaluate the student induction to blended and online learning experience especially in relation to short blended learning programmes.

3. **Technology skill requirements**

   Set up automated opportunities for students to test their technology skills before or during a programme providing micro-credentialling (virtual badges) to show proficiency.

4. **Hardware/software requirements**

   Set up an automated area to allow students to test their current hardware/software against the OTC requirements.

5. **Time commitment**

   All College information to contain the time requirements for each mode of delivery within the blended or online learning model.

6. **Clear scheduling**

   Develop a tool to ensure that all students are aware of any synchronous or face to face element of the course that is being delivered.

7. **Collaboration requirements**

   Investigate including collaboration skill requirements in the online induction and early assessments.

8. **Assessment requirements**

   Complete a desk top review of how others approach this area and implement any new developments.

9. **Authenticity of online assessment**

   Complete a desk top review of how others approach this area and implement any new developments.

10. **Support service availability**

    Look at providing a FAQ section to deal with any issues and evaluate its effectiveness. Optimisation of general and additional supports.

Appendix 1: OTC Gap analysis; Blended Learning against QQI Criteria (2020)

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
A provider moving into blended learning formats is in a position to demonstrate that it has understood, planned and approved any differences in its quality management that may be appropriate for such learning, and has reviewed its policies and regulations to ensure they are fit-for-purpose in context.	OTC has been a blended learning provider since 1992 - all QA is designed around this delivery
Quality management arrangements for **online learning provision and other non-face-to-face learning** are supported by fit-for-purpose organisational infrastructure and processes. For example, the collection and evaluation of feedback from internal and external stakeholders may require different arrangements to those in place for face-to-face provision.	Sec 1 - Mgt of Quality; Sec 11 - Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review
The provider's arrangements for the validation of online programmes will focus on some additional issues such as: design and development mechanisms for approving and updating learning resources; arrangements for student support and guidance; and the availability and accessibility of appropriate learning resources.	Sec 7 - Student Support. Availability and updating: MyOTC. 5.4 Learning environments + 7.5 Procedures to Monitor, Review and Improve the Effectiveness of Resources and Student Supports
provision that was originally designed for a face-to-face learning environment may be poorly adapted for learners. For example, teaching staff with no knowledge or experience of blended delivery may not appreciate the pedagogical opportunities and challenges. Learners will not generally have a good experience if what they receive are essentially learning resources, lectures and other resources that have been designed for face-to-face learners and made available online.	Designed for blended learning. Focus on knowledge, context online with skill construction in workshops.
Blended learning providers should be particularly mindful of using a learner-centred approach, for example when using technology-enhanced/assisted learning, which may pose a challenge for some learners while creating opportunities for others.	Sec 5 - T&L. SOL Model
Specialist, reliable and accessible computer hardware and software applications are required for designing, developing and delivering online learning.	Sec 7 - Student Support. Availability and updating: MyOTC. 5.4 Learning environments + 7.5 Procedures to Monitor, Review and Improve the Effectiveness of Resources and Student Supports

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
Tracking learner progress and achievement, marking and returning assessments, providing feedback to learners and assessors are just a few of the areas where existing policies, systems and processes are unlikely to be fit-for-purpose in an online learning context.	Sec. 6 - assessment of learners and feedback
This usually means there needs to be a strategy and plan, an appropriate investment of time, money and other resources to develop capacity and resources to deliver high quality blended learning that will offer learners a consistent, enjoyable and effective learning experience.	Designed for blended learning. Process involved includes content design for MIMLOs, asset identification, piloting of new systems/techniques.
The provider's strategy, infrastructure and policies systematically address and enable existing or planned arrangements for blended learning (incorporating online learning).	Designed for blended learning
3.1.1 That a strategic approach to the use of blended learning is explicit and is shared with staff, learners and other stakeholders. A strategic plan includes appropriate investment in infrastructure and contingency arrangements to support all options for blended learning in an online context. Accountable key roles have been identified.	Organisational Chart - Elearning team +Section 4 Staff Induction and Development
3.1.2 Policies, regulations and processes (including administration) are fit-for-purpose in the context of blended learning.	Designed for blended learning
online developments that are subject to business case approval for viability and sustainability	Sec 1 - New Programme Development Committee
robust costing models which take into account the additional costs associated with IT support; developing and updating learning resources; induction, training and support for staff and learners	Programme Development assesses viability and Helpdesk support etc. provided. Sec 4 - Staff induction. Sec. 7 - Student induction
proposals where market intelligence demonstrates that the scale of demand and income will ensure viability and sustainability	Programme Development assesses viability and Helpdesk support etc. provided.
recruitment and admissions policies and processes that allow for any online requirements	Information to learners, Applicant's Day, Interview, Online induction
clarity in any additional registration arrangements deemed necessary by the provider	Information to learners, Applicant's Day, Interview, Online induction
appeals and complaints policies and processes which accommodate remote learning	6.2.8 Appeals - + ToR of Sub-committees Sec. 1
fees policy and processes which take note of online provision	Sec 2 - Documented approach - Student fees policy (1710)

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
arrangements for online assessment including pre-assessment, the conduct of assessment and marking/grading which are robustly tested and invoke confidence	Sec. 6 -assessment. + Turnitin + Plagiarism policy (1701) + Supervision policy and Guidelines (1712)
regulations and arrangements for Boards of Examiners and external examiners which include any additional consideration of online learning experiences	Sec 1- Exam Boards (sub-committee of AC)
3.1.3 The strategies and processes for the appointment, induction, training, professional development and appraisal arrangements for teaching and support staff are appropriate and specific to blended and online learning.	Sec 4 - recruitment, management and development
Staff engaged to support online learners can either demonstrate previous experience of online provision or are provided with appropriate induction and training.	Sec 4 - recruitment, management and development
There is a planned approach to the appointment of (or access to) specialist staff to support the provider's blended learning strategy.	Sec 4 - recruitment, management and development + E-learning team
There is planned close collaboration between the academic and other support personnel and specialist staff, such as teams involved in designing learning technologies and other methodologies supporting online learning.	Sec 4 - recruitment, management and development + E-learning team
There is a planned approach to staff guidance of online learners on any open education resources referenced including any intended or unintended endorsement of such resources.	Sec. 7 - Support for learners
also include appropriate competencies required, for example, in designing a programme, understanding the pedagogical differences within a curriculum of supporting learners in a blended learning environment, such as virtual learning environment.	Sec 4 - recruitment, management and development + E-learning team
3.1.4 Arrangements for assuring compliance with any legal or regulatory obligations are appropriate to the blended learning and online learning context.	E-learning team + SMH support
• child protection	Mandatory training
• intellectual property and copyright	ICLA Licence
• clear parameters on data protection including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	GDPR Policy (1808)

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
• protection for enrolled learners	PEL Policy (1802)
• applicable professional or statutory body requirements	CORU application in preparation
• local regulatory considerations in the context of transnational provision	N/A
3.1.5 Processes are fit-for-purpose in the case of learners located outside Ireland.	N/A
3.1.6 Arrangements for collaboration or partnership as set out in the Core Statutory QA Guidelines facilitate any additional responsibilities to be specified for learners in a blended learning context.	Collaborative Agreement - appendix 1 - Re. ZLC
3.2 Infrastructure and resources	
The infrastructure and resources required to support good quality blended learning are understood, planned, and routinely monitored and evaluated. These arrangements should take into account that while online, learners are likely to be remote from the provider and from teachers and/or assessors. There is an institutional approach to these matters.	Sec. 7 - Supports for learners
3.2.1 A planned approach to the procurement of services (e.g. cloud services), hardware and software to support online learning and a clear policy on a common platform for approval of exceptions.	Designed for blended learning. Sec. 8 - Information and Data Management. IMS, MyOTC
3.2.2 Contingency arrangements in the event of platform, hardware or software failures.	E-learning team + SMH support
3.2.3 Robust and consistent systems and processes across the organisation to manage the submission, receipt, marking and return of assessments.	Sec. 6 - assessment of learners and feedback
all systems and processes used are capable of:	
• verifying the identity of learners;	Unique user identification and learner analytics - Elearning team
• guarding against cheating, plagiarism or other kinds of unfair advantage;	Live exam sittings
• being reliable and scalable in the context of the provider and the strategic plan;	Designed for blended learning

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
• timing and synchronizing assessment to take into account factors such as cultural or religious calendars and provision that is offered across different time zones.	N/A
3.2.4 A student record system designed or adapted to support blended learning programmes and learners and their quality assurance.	IMS -Section 8. VLE platform up to date version.
3.2.5 Effective institutional arrangements to provide assurance that:	
• Any blended learning elements of provision have had the reliability of their delivery systems tested and signed off in advance, with confirmation that appropriate technical support and contingency plans are in place.	NPDC - + Elearning/SMH + SLA with external suppliers
• Intellectual property rights and software licensing issues are addressed in the development and delivery of online learning.	Elearning/SMH + ICLA licence
• The delivery system for each online section/unit of study is fit-for-purpose	Designed for blended learning + SLA with external providers
3.3 Published expectations on blended learning	
The provider has approved and published expectations for the overall quality of the blended learning provision, including expectations on the effectiveness and accessibility of learning resources and other learning materials to support online provision. The provider also has approved and published expectations for the effective delivery of teaching and learning and assessment in a blended learning context, which are available to stakeholders.	QuAD V.3.2; Student handbooks; Applicants' Days, Interviews and Presentations
3.3.1 Make available benchmark or specification documents for learning resources and information specific to monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of learning resources and the learning environment. These are all considered as part of a programme validation and review process.	External Review - Pilgrim Report
3.3.2 Include assessment practice and process that are published and provide consistent, equitable and fair arrangements for the setting of, marking of and return of feedback on assessment tasks. Learners are provided with consistent, secure and reliable means for submitting work to be assessed and confirmation of receipt. There are institutional regulations and protocols to ensure confidentiality and security in	Sec. 6 - Assessment

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
feedback to individual learners on assessment, and for the recording of marks or scores.	
3.4 Learners outside Ireland	N/A
Where the online learning element is to be offered to learners based outside of Ireland, due diligence and risk management arrangements are robust and fit-for-purpose.2	N/A
3.5 Collaboration and other partners	Collaborative Agreement - appendix 1 - Re. ZLC
Where a provider is relying on a second provider, partner or collaborator to provide aspects of blended learning such as online learning, a number of aspects are covered by the internal QA procedures.	Collaborative Agreement - appendix 1 - Re. ZLC
3.5.1 Formal written agreements are in place and clearly specify the respective rights and division of responsibilities, including in the case of data protection for those processing data.	Collaborative Provision Agreement - 2018
3.5.2 Learners and staff are made aware which organisation carries legal responsibility for the delivery or support of defined sections of the blended learning provision.	Collaborative Provision Agreement - 2018 + Information to Learners. Sec 10 Other parties; Sec 9.2 Learner Information
3.5.3 Arrangements for quality management in general are consistent with the Core Statutory QA Guidelines for all providers and topic- or sector-specific guidelines as appropriate.	QuAD V.3.2; Re-Engagement December 2018
3.5.4 Where one provider offers a programme that aims to enhance or provide additional (usually face-to-face) support for online programmes offered by a different provider, the relationship between the two providers is made clear to all stakeholders, including any requirements regarding technical compatibility or technology protocols.	N/A
4.1 Programme outcomes	
The programme as a whole is intended to achieve learning outcomes. Online learning is effectively integrated into the programme for this purpose. Overall programme design is informed by best practice in curriculum design.	Validation procedures - Sec. 3.4: Procedures for programme review, revalidation and validation

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
4.1.1 Learning and teaching practices that are informed by best practice in blended and online provision. Subject-specific and educational scholarship informs the pedagogy and instructional design.	Section 5 - Teaching & Learning
4.1.2 Curriculum content and student support that accommodates enhancement or updating, for example, in response to feedback or other quality assurance mechanisms. All online content is subject to approval and ongoing quality assurance. Resource planning at programme level includes a budget for the updating of content to ensure it remains current.	Sec. 7.5 Procedures to monitor, review and improve the effectiveness of resources and support services. + Sec. 11 Self-evaluation, monitoring and review
4.1.3 Assessment strategies with opportunities for learners to engage in formative assessment activities that will check and reinforce learning remotely.	Sec. 6 - assessment +SOL 5.1.1 - formative feedback
4.1.4 Curriculum development processes with an appropriate representation of subject, educational technology, instructional design and other key internal stakeholder expertise. For example, specialist student support advisers and administrators, library and information professionals play significant roles in effective online learning as well as the teaching staff who will support learners.	Validation procedures - Sec. 3.4: Procedures for programme review, revalidation and validation + New programme development
• developments are learner centred	SOL 5.1.1
• developments are subject-led rather than technology-led	New Programme Development - Refers to Awards Standards - Knowledge, Skills and Competences driven
• organisational structures and processes ensure that technology is in the service of pedagogy	All - QuAD V 3.2
• open education resources referenced by the provider are subject to quality evaluation	Sec 7 - Student Support. Availability and updating: MyOTC. 5.4 Learning environments + 7.5 Procedures to Monitor, Review and Improve the Effectiveness of Resources and Student Supports
4.1.5 A focus on the delivery of an interactive learning experience for each module delivered online and academic content appropriate to the unit of study.	New Programme Development - Refers to Awards Standards - Knowledge, Skills and Competences driven - Presented on MyOTC

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
4.1.6 Information for individuals developing online learning modules to ensure the use of the platform the institution has committed to and that they are bound by the institutional policies, systems, hardware and processes for online learning.	New Programme Development Committee Sec.1 + 3.4 procedures for programme review, revalidation and validation
4.1.7 Planned and controlled opportunities for staff to test new or evolving technologies not currently supported by the existing policy or provider platform.	Sec 4 - incl. staff development. CPD policy (1705)
4.2 Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms	
Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms are appropriate, fit-for-purpose, monitored and reviewed.	Availability and updating: MyOTC. 5.4 Learning environments + 7.5 Procedures to Monitor, Review and Improve the Effectiveness of Resources and Student Supports
4.2.1 All materials and media (for example audio-visual, printed or digitised assets) used to deliver online learning are subject to informed peer comment at one or more draft stages and allow for the incorporation of feedback into subsequent and final versions of the learning resources.	New Programme Development + 7.5 Procedures to Monitor, Review and Improve the Effectiveness of Resources and Student Supports
• There is clarity in the information provided to learners and staff about communication channels and the availability of advice and support, for example, communication must manage learner expectations of communication and availability of staff in the provider. What learners may reasonably expect is specified, for example, expectations of staff and learners on developing any meta skills as part of engaging with the online aspects of the blended learning programme.	QuAD, Student Handbooks, Induction and on MyOTC
• Learners can test and monitor their progress at appropriate points. The whole learning environment for blended learning used in conjunction with the learning resources requires active engagement by the learners.	MyOTC + Formative feedback +SOL 5.1.1
• The relationship between learning materials and other components of learner support activity such as face-to-face tutorials and residential schools is defined.	Course Calendar- My-OTC. Applicants' Days and Induction

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
• Protocols and information are provided to learners and staff on the use of the full range of online interactions and forums in their learning.	My-OTC. Applicants' Days and Induction. Workshop guidance
• There are nominated academic/professional moderators who understand and have the authority to intervene in, for example, cyber bullying that may constitute risk to learners and/or the provider.	Elearning Team + Social Media Policy (1803) + Code of Conduct + netiquette
4.3 Approval and programme validation processes	
Approval and validation processes for blended learning programmes including online learning modules are appropriate and fit-for-purpose.	3.4 procedures for programme review, revalidation and validation
4.3.1 A robust programme development process designed for online learning that includes explicit consideration of, for example:	
Staff qualifications and experience in online learning.	3.4 procedures for programme review, revalidation and validation
• The use to be made of external consultants and experts in online provision, including in critical review and appraisal of draft learning resources.	External Review - Pilgrim Report. Consultation for programme review/validation. Critical readers of drafts and feedback
• Arrangements for the induction and continuing professional development (CPD) of staff involved in a) the development and support of online resources; b) online teaching, where such experience is lacking; c) support services for learners.	Sec 4 - Staff recruitment, management and development
• Testing of delivery mechanisms for online modules or parts of modules. For example, confirming that (where appropriate) it is possible to access learning on a private computer or on a mobile device or other as appropriate.	Programme Development - Elearning team
4.3.2 Processes to establish sustainable timescales and planning for resources including:	
• Early confirmation of staffing resources. If the programme is dependent on local associate faculty for support, confirmation will need to be provided at an early stage to determine a demonstrable local supply of appropriate staff, and the criteria for their appointment.	Programme Development - Elearning team

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
• Timescale for subsequent development and approval of online sections and associated learning resources at the various levels in the programme, and the identification of the external assessors who are involved (if relevant). The timescale is influenced by factors such as pre-requisites, progression rules, applicable legal or regulatory body requirements, and programme flexibility.	QIPs - Gannt charts
• Programmes are fully designed before being offered to learners.	New Programme Development Committee Sec.1 + 3.4 procedures for programme review, revalidation and validation
4.3.3 Robust arrangements for the quality assurance of learning resources, the learning environment and other learning resources.	5.4 Learning Environments - + App. 4 Facilities Checklist.
4.3.4 Processes that highlight the availability and timeliness of feedback to learners.	Sec. Assessment - Feedback (re. EE reports)
4.3.5 Processes for learner records are sufficient and accurately maintained, and up-to-date learner records are available for monitoring progression and achievement.	Sec 8 - Information and data management
4.3.6 Privacy laws on data protection are appropriate for all aspects of online provision. Learner concerns about the confidentiality of learner records are respected.	8.7 Data Protection. GDPR policy and procedures (1808)
• that will provide them with a unique learner identity to be used by the provider;	Unique identifiers to aid learner analytics
• that protect learners and indicate their own electronic trail or digital persona.	Unique identifiers to aid learner analytics
4.3.7 Staff induction processes for staff employed to support or assess learners are in place. Staff are appropriately inducted and trained for their role in online learning.	Sec 4 - Staff recruitment, management and development
4.3.8 Moderation processes are in place to ensure consistency and share good practice where more than one associate is employed to support or assess more than one group of learners. Documentation of best practice examples and exchange of information among all staff is important where there is a growing knowledge base, a growing availability of additional open access resources and constant demands	6.2 assessment regulations

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
to update ICT skills. Provider support through structured networking is in place to facilitate this.	
5.1 Support available to learners	
Learners are supported to make informed choices about participating in a blended learning programme and to develop the necessary independent study skills to successfully progress towards becoming an autonomous learner. The level and nature of support available to learners is clear.	Learner Supports and Pastoral Care Policy and Procedures for Additional Support
5.1.1 The availability of appropriate information that adequately explains the online sections of the programme and assesses the suitability of a programme. This is available in advance of the programme commencing.	QuAD V.3.2; Student handbooks; Applicants' Days, Interviews and Presentations. Induction, workshops and on MyOTC + 9.2 Learner Information - Website, Brochure, Open Days etc.
5.1.2 Clear terms and conditions:	IMS - Ts&Cs
Prior to enrolment on a particular programme, the prospective learner is made aware of all terms and conditions relevant to that programme, either in the prospectus or similar material, by correspondence, or in discussion with the provider.	QuAD V.3.2; Student handbooks; Applicants' Days, Interviews and Presentations. Induction, workshops and on MyOTC + 9.2 Learner Information - Website, Brochure, Open Days etc.
5.1.3 Requirements for access, bandwidth and any prescribed hardware or software are appropriate and viable, are communicated well in advance to the learners and all requirements are published.	Applicants' Days, Interviews and Presentations. Induction, workshops and on MyOTC
5.1.4 Processes to ensure the delivery of any study materials direct to learners remotely through, for example, online methods or correspondence, are secure and reliable, and there is a means of confirming its safe receipt.	MyOTC - Learner Identification + Analytics + Helpdesk
5.1.5 Deliberate steps taken to assist every learner to understand their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided and to shape their own learning experience.	Induction - Tutorial system. Identifying of "learners at risk" - additional supports (Sec. 7)

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
5.1.6 Learner support for monitoring their own programmes. Every learner undertaking online learning is supported in monitoring their own progression and achievement through the provision of regular opportunities to test their knowledge and understanding, reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff and/or their peers.	Induction - Tutorial system. Identifying of "learners at risk" - additional supports (Sec. 7) Formative and summative feedback. MyOTC supports
5.1.7 Appropriate interventions and mechanisms to identify learners who may be struggling with online remote learning. Learners are encouraged to complete their programme. Progress is monitored, and learners are provided with prompt and helpful comments on their progress in relation to learning guidelines and goals.	Tutorial system. Course Director - E-learning support. Helpdesk
5.1.8 Learners have access to: • Descriptions of the online components of the blended learning programme, or aspect of study, to show the intended learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment methods of the unit or module. • A clear schedule for the delivery of their online learning study materials, learner support (local and/or remote) and for the submission and assessment of their work. This will include learner responsibilities in this regard. • Information on the ways in which their achievements will be judged, and the relative weighting of online and other remote parts of the programme in respect of assessment overall.	MyOTC + Student handbooks, online modules have module learning outcomes and learning objectives for each unit. Schedule is contained in course calendar that marks launch of module, individual tutorial day and assessment upload. If an online activity has a timeline it is clearly displayed on screen. All assessment activities are clearly marked online with percentages outlined in the assessment guidelines.
• Timely formative assessment on their academic performance in the online sections of the programme to provide a basis for constructive individual feedback and guidance.	Formative assessment and feedback as part of programme design and assessment strategy. Also provided by tutorials, peer discussions, online activities and modular activities where students can test their understanding of the topic being discussed.
• Information about the quality assurance processes in place to give confidence that the assessed work conducted through online activity is properly attributed to them.	MyOTC + Student handbooks

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
• Unique identifiers that will enable them to access learning resources in good time at the start of their programme and form part of the validation of their identity. Learners are made aware of all the mechanisms the provider has in place to test and confirm learner identity.	Induction - Tutorial system. Identifying of "learners at risk" - additional supports (Sec. 7) Formative and summative feedback. MyOTC supports. Use of learner pic, bio.
• Appropriate and sufficient learning resources to support online learning and remote study.	MyOTC supports available through the complete academic year plus elearning support team. Telephone support available for cases not being resolved through the online supports.
• Orientation to learning resources and other support to access them effectively and efficiently (including technical and academic support and guidance, as appropriate). Face-to-face induction includes an explanation of the concept of blended learning; where possible, staff who will deliver the online portion of the programme are present at this induction.	Pre online learning suitability survey available on website. Applicants' Days, Interviews and Presentations. Induction, workshops and on MyOTC
• Identified and available contacts (academic, administrative, technical).	Student Handbooks - Helpdesk. Tutorial support Dedicated e learning support team
• Information about the intended life-span of all online sections of their programme and the arrangements in place to phase in or out new online or other remote components without disadvantaging learners.	Course Calendar - Deadlines: Pre-reading, Workshops, Assessment Guidance, Podcasts. Each module distinct, with module timeline.
• Appropriate opportunities to give formal feedback on their experience of the programme, including the effectiveness of blended and online learning arrangements.	Module feedback, Class rep. & EoY surveys
• (Where appropriate) information about the respective responsibilities of the provider and any third parties – such as local study centres or administrative offices - that may be involved in supporting the provider's online learning.	Information on parent organisation - St. Michael's House in QuAD.
5.1.9 Information in advance of programme commencement on how personal data will be used, for instance, in relation to the monitoring of learner engagement with online platforms.	MyOTC + Student handbooks

BLENDED LEARNING - Gap analysis - 2020	RE. Section in Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) + Relevant Docs.
5.2 Equality of opportunity	Equality Policy (1702). Learner supports examples have included ensuring VDU is made accessible for user and supporting the student to use text to voice software.
Learning and teaching activities and associated resources provide every learner with an equitable, fair and realistic opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.	Section 5 - SOL model tutorial/elearning supports
5.2.1 Teaching and learning resources for online learning which meet the provider's specified expectations around equality of opportunity, interactivity and the empowerment of autonomous learning.	Section 5 - SOL model tutorial/elearning supports
5.2.2 Mechanisms that monitor and/or moderate standards (both in terms of learner outcomes and teachers and/or assessors' practice). Assessment arrangements conducted through online learning are valid, reliable, and secure and provide learners with appropriate confidential feedback on their progress.	Sec. 11- Self-evaluation, monitoring and review. Sec. 6 - assessment - formative and summative feedback all activities mapped onto MIMLOs
5.2.3 Arrangements that provide assurance that all those involved in teaching and learning or supporting learning are appropriately qualified, supported and developed to provide effective online learning. This will include the protocols for communication and facilitation of online discussions and other challenges of teaching with technology.	Sec. 4 - Staff recruitment, management and development
5.2.4 Mechanisms that facilitate a safe, accessible and reliable blended learning environment for all learners. These mechanisms promote dignity, courtesy and respect in their use and encourage gender sensitivity amongst both learners and teachers.	Section 8 - Information and data management + Equality policy (1702) + Additional support Procedures (Pr009) + Codes of conduct: Staff (C001) and Learners (C002) Introduction of netiquette for all learners in induction.
5.2.5 Arrangements that make reasonable effort to ensure blended learning experiences are accessible to all learners, including learners with disabilities.	Learner Supports and Pastoral Care Policy and Procedures for Additional Support E learning team work with a variety of diverse learners to improve access using software to increase accessibility text to voice, voice to text, written version of podcasts, virtual tutorial voice-overs

Appendix 2: *Explanation of Blended Learning*

The Open Training College's <u>Blended Learning</u> Supported Open Learning (SOL) Model.

The blended learning model utilised by the College ensures that students have optimum opportunity to enhance their learning through a targeted mix of materials, exercises, interaction, study, discussion, skills demonstrations and skills application/practice across the two main instructional platforms:

- **Online** (Module specific material, quizzes, readings, exercises, directed e-learning)
- **Face-to-face** (Presentations, lectures, workshop, skills demonstration, skills practice, discussion, group activities, feedback, guidance on assignment completion)

A hard-copy booklet of core materials is produced for each module and is fully available, in soft-copy, for students to download/print within the dedicated online environment for that particular module.

In brief, the student studies module reading materials before attending a face-to-face workshop, which allows for greater exploration of the learning outcomes attached to the target module and for a more practical approach to the acquisition of requisite skills, where appropriate. Formative feedback is a prominent part of the model across both platforms. The online environment allows for directed interaction with material and for the tracking of student progress, as well as for online discussions and development of points/questions raised. The workshop environment allows for greater application of skills and the opportunity to share the learning experience more directly with classmates, tutors and expert presenters, on the way to combining knowledge and skills in achieving full competency.

Ultimately, the learner is formed through the convergence of multiple elements, which include:

- Face-to-face presentations
- Workshops
- Online learning
- Assessment of learning outcomes
- Assessment as learning
- Peer interaction and feedback
- Formative and summative feedback on tasks/assignments from teaching staff
- The learning of theory
- The application of skills
- The building of competence and confidence
- Self-directed learning
- Directed e-learning
- Triad work
- Personal development and integration
- Tutorials
- Application of theory to work-based case studies
- Reflection
- Debate
- Awareness of professional standards, relevant policy and legislation
- Research skills and their application

- Partnership and collaborative approaches
- Supported Open Learning (SOL)

The student commences the programme by accessing the online area created specifically to support the identified MIMLOs for each module. The online area provides high quality open learning materials. The materials are structured to cater to the needs of adult learners, through the provision of separate sections that support each learning outcome. The materials are accompanied by a series of self-directed learning activities (to test the student's understanding of the materials). Also in the online module area, the student will have access to links to key documents, relevant videos (the College often uses Ted Talks), podcasts and other multi-media supports. The student will also have access to the assessment brief, rubric and assessment checklist.

The student will have access to a variety of online areas in order to undertake discussions within the community of learning with their peers, lecturers and associates. These discussion areas provide an opportunity to provide valuable formative feedback to the student and the student group. Facilitated online discussions are used primarily to build knowledge and contextualise issues; some online discussions are assessed.

In addition, the College has an online library and databases; online academic writing guide, online 'how to use MyOTC' guide and a study skills area that covers areas like referencing, plagiarism and writing skills.

The student attends for face-to-face presentations in a designated venue and this allows for a workshop style session where knowledge sharing and skill construction is carried out. Students will also complete a variety of small group seminar activities to build skills and explore topic and assessment issues.

Each student is supported in their studies through a tutor (maximum 15 students per tutor) who they can contact throughout their time of study via email or in group tutorials online. Tutorial supports are provided through a variety of media including, telephone, e-mail, online and face-to-face methods. Any or all of the following areas may be discussed during tutorials:

- The student's progress with the learning materials
- assignment preparation and feedback
- additional issues that may arise relevant to the learning process

The student also has access to the E-learning team to ask about any online learning or technical issues.

After the lecture/seminars/workshops, students continue studying within their online area using the open learning materials. There will be a point when the student can contact their tutor for a telephone tutorial to ensure they have grasped all the essential learning and they are on course for their assessment.

On deadline day the student must submit their assessment in the College style, through their Google Drive. There is a dedicated administrative coordinator who ensures that the assessments are submitted on time and in the correct format.

The College provides immediate office hour support on matters related to IT, academic or practice issues. In availing of this support students are provided with immediate access to an experienced member of the faculty who can provide support and guidance to deal with any difficulty they may be facing.

Appendix 3: Mapping to Part I. Internal Quality Assurance, ENQA (2018)

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"Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision;

Report from the ENQA Working Group VIII on quality assurance and e-learning."

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
	1.1. Policy for quality assurance **Standard: Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.**	
1	• E-learning is part of the overall strategy for the institution's development as well as the policy for quality assurance.	**The College has a Blended Learning strategy and an E-learning strategy which are integrated into the overall QA; current version QuAD V3.2, June 2020**
2	• The institution uses a clearly articulated policy framework and governance structure when deciding on the adoption of new technologies to ensure the expected quality of e-learning provision.	**Yes, this is clearly articulated and the College's QA policies and procedures were approved for Re-engagement by QQI in 2019**
3	• Institutional policies, structures, processes, and resources are in place to guarantee the successful teaching and learning process of students, including those with special educational needs.	**QuAD Section 5: Teaching and Learning and Section 7: Support for Learners**

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
4	• The institution has a policy and code of practice to ensure academic integrity and freedom and ethical behaviour.	**QuAD Section 6: Assessment of Learners** **Student Handbooks also contain clear codes of practice**
5	• Electronic security measures are considered by the institution's policy/code of practice.	**QuAD Section 8: Information and Data Management** **Student Handbooks also contain clear codes of practice**
6	• If external services or expertise are utilised, written agreements/contracts that define the roles and responsibilities exist.	**Yes, contracts are signed and stored, with direct oversight from the Head of E-learning and the Corporate Services Manager**
7	• Stakeholders (especially students) are involved in the internal quality assurance system, even if they are not on campus.	**Student feedback is collected through regular module, programme and end of year surveys** **QuAD Section 11: Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review**
	1.2. Design and approval of programmes **Standard: Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for**	

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
	higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.	
8	• The institution has a clear strategy for digital innovation, e-learning being a part of it. This strategy is known within the institution at all levels and is adopted by teachers in charge of designing the curriculum.	**The College has a Blended Learning strategy and an E-learning strategy which are integrated into the overall QA; current version QuAD V3.2, June 2020** **The strategy is disseminated through Programme Board and regular Programme team meetings**
9	• E-learning programmes are aligned with the institutional mission. • Curricula design reflects pedagogical practices and innovation, if applicable. • People involved in designing/developing/evaluating e-learning programmes have expertise in academic and technical aspects.	**Yes, QuAD Section 1, Mission and 1.2: Embedding a Quality Culture and Section 3.1: Programme Development and Approval** **The overall E-learning strategy, in conjunction with the Blended Learning strategy ensures all stakeholders are fully equipped in the areas of blended and e-learning**
10	• Teaching staff involved in designing/developing/evaluating programmes are familiar with the advantages/disadvantages of using e-learning in particular course contexts.	**QuAD Section 4: Staff Communication, Management and Development, including CPD Policy**
11	• Student needs are considered when developing the learning model and the curricula design.	**Section 3.1: Programme Development and Approval** **and**

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
		Section 11: Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review
	1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment **Standard: Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.**	
12	• Teaching methodologies and learning activities are chosen with the aim of achieving learning outcomes.	**All programmes are validated through QQI and are designed and mapped to meet learning outcomes at the appropriate level and to the relevant awards standards, with an assessment strategy presented for each programme**
13	• Learning materials fit the pedagogical model and facilitate student learning.	**All materials are designed to fit the model (blended or fully online/e-learning) and tested internally and externally through established procedures**
14	• Authors of learning materials are relevant for the subject. Learning materials are reviewed and updated periodically.	**Experts are engaged to write materials and have established expertise and a positive profile in the area for which they prepare pedagogical materials** **These are further tested, reviewed and edited internally before publication**

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
15	• The technical infrastructure is aligned with the teaching methodology, learning activities, and e-assessment methods, and it eases the teaching and learning process.	**The College's technical infrastructure has functioned successfully for blended learning since 1992, has been developed and externally reviewed over that timeframe and is fully fit for purpose with excellent reliability and response statistics** **This was further developed for fully online delivery in 2020, with no significant technical issues arising from this development**
16	• E-assessment methods are fit for purpose, allowing students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.	**Fully online assessment has been guided by QQI stipulations during the Public Health Emergency in 2020 and did not present an issue for the College, as the majority of College assessment has been submitted and carried out online for the previous 15 years** **Additional security checks are in place for fully online examinations, including the ability to track a student's drafting and timing through Google docs**
17	• Students are clearly informed about the e-assessment.	**Students are fully informed in Student Handbooks and through specific communications form the Programme Director/Tutor/Programme Team and Assessment Co-ordinator**
18	• Students are aware of plagiarism rules.	**QuAD Section 6.3: Academic Integrity in the Assessment Process (Plagiarism Policy) and**

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
		fully stated in all student programme handbooks
19	• Students are trained in how to appropriately paraphrase, cite, and reference, regarding both online and print sources.	**Students receive a full online induction programme, as well as their first-year programme containing a module in LDHE (Learning and Development in Higher Education)**
20	• The institution gives advice on appropriate online behaviour (netiquette rules).	**These are clearly published in student handbooks and within the online environment** **They are highlighted in the Online Induction and in the LDHE module**
	1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification **Standard: Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.**	
21	• Students/prospective students are informed about requirements concerning equipment, e-learning and digital skills, pre-knowledge and prerequisite subjects, and attendance.	**All students are interviewed for access and fully informed at Applicants' day on all these matters** **This is underlined in the Induction and LDHE modules, as well as throughout the delivery of modules and in the student handbook**
22	• Students are informed about the workload and pedagogical model of the e-learning programme.	**This is clearly outlined, with hours of e-learning and independent learning specifically stated on the Programme Schedule and repeated in the outline of**

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
		each module in the Module Booklet. All applicants experience the online model as part of the application process.
23	• The institution has a policy and procedure in place for recognition of prior learning.	Yes, Quad Section 3.2: Learner admission, progression and recognition (RPL/RPEL Policy and procedures)
	1.5. Teaching staff **Standard: Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.**	
24	• The institution has defined the structure, profile, and role of the teaching staff that is aligned with the pedagogical model.	**Yes, QuAD Section 4: Staff Recruitment, Management and Development**
25	• The institution uses appropriate instruments to guarantee that the profile of the teaching staff corresponds to their duties.	**Yes, QuAD Section 4: Staff Recruitment, Management and Development**
26	• The teaching staff is trained and proficient in the use of learning technologies and e-assessment methods. There are particular training activities for new staff.	**All new staff are fully inducted, have regular meetings with the Programme Director and Programme team, as well as engaging in ongoing CPD and sharing of learning**
27	• The institution has developed procedures to identify the support requirements of the teaching staff.	**In particular, QuAD Section 4.3: Staff Management and Section 4.5: Performance Management**
28	• Technological and pedagogical support services for teachers are adequate, accessible, and timely.	**Fully supported by E-learning and the Programme Director**

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
29	• The teaching staff-student ratio avoids excessive workload for teachers and tutors.	**Tutors have a maximum of 15 students, while lecture groups are a maximum of 30 students** **Ensuring the workload is appropriately distributed forms part of the programme development and validation considerations** **The Assessment strategy for the programme ensures the assessment workload is never over-burdened at any given time in the academic year**
30	• The institution has implemented appropriate procedures for recruiting and hiring teaching staff.	**Yes, QuAD Section 4: Staff Recruitment, Management and Development**
31	• The teaching staff is coordinated effectively.	**Yes, QuAD Section 4: Staff Recruitment, Management and Development**
	1.6. Learning resources and student support **Standard: Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.**	
32	• Learning resources: – The VLE supports a variety of methods and tools. – The technical infrastructure ensures the accessibility of the e-learning programme by students with special educational needs.	**The VLE (Moodle) can support a variety of online learning assets and activities.** **The VLE is built based on the standards WCAG 2.0 (allowing for accessibility) and ARIA 1.0 (Built to allow interaction with assistive technologies, e.g. screen readers).**

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
	– The institution defines the electronic security measures that guarantee standards of quality and information integrity and validity. – The VLE is based on non-proprietary web standards and is constantly updated to reflect technological changes. – The institution provides students with an adequate e-library and virtual labs.	**College provides individualised supports when required (e.g. podcast scripts for people with hearing impairment; content development to allow maximum readability, e.g. providing modules in a format that are translatable from text to voice for JAWS (software for people with visual impairment).** **Ensuring that resources are fully adequate forms part of the programme development and validation considerations.** **There is an online library area that contains sections for databases, ebooks, journal articles, study skills.** **The College works with the technology provider to ensure that the VLE functions up to the latest technological requirements and remains responsive on all devices.** **A dedicated email help line for e Learning is available to all students.** **A helpline is also in place for students and there is strong oversight from Tutors of each small (15 max) cohort for which they are responsible**
33	• Student support: – The institution has procedures in place that cover student support, including tutoring,	**QuAD Section 7: Support for Learners**

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
	pedagogical, technological, and administrative elements. – Student support is offered according to the student's profile and their specific needs. – The student support reflects characteristics of e-learning. – Support for the development of learning, as well as digital skills (students are guided towards reflection, developing time management skills, etc.), is provided. – Students receive guidelines/training in using e-learning resources (VLE, e-library, etc.). – Hours of support are transparent and suit the needs of students; for instance, periods of peak demand (evenings, weekends, holidays, etc.) are considered.	**A dedicated email help line for e Learning is available to all students.** **The College support all learners on an individual basis as issues arise.** **Digital skills are identified from the application process. Supports provided for in a comprehensive online induction. Ongoing supports provided for digital skills for the duration of the course.** **The first point of support for the student is their designated Tutor and the relevant Programme Director**
34	• Institutions provide opportunities for the virtual mobility of students and academics.	**OTC offers programmes on a national level only, with a specific target learner**
	1.7. Information management **Standard: Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.**	
35	• Collected data is used in order to evaluate e-learning programmes (e.g. comparative analysis of course design).	**Yes, QuAD Section 11: Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review**

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
36	• There is a strategy on the use and purpose of learning analytics within the institution (i.e. the aim is improving student support).	**The College responds to Student, Tutor and staff feedback in order to improve student support** **Learning analytics have been developed to identify students who may be at risk in all stages of their studies including those whose engagement changes through the course. The learning analytics is also used to develop content and learning assets and by identifying technical issues that may be affecting study outcomes.** **External Examiner reports are also of great significance in this area, as is regular interactions with the agencies where students are currently working**
37	• The information management system includes relevant, updated, and reliable information concerning the institution and its programmes.	**Feedback is gathered and analysed in a timely manner, according to the Academic Affairs schedule to ensure maximum relevance** **Procedural changes are managed through the Programme Board, with any policy implications or changes being referred to the Academic Council**
38	• The institution considers ethical norms and government policy with respect to data protection and the privacy of students.	**The College has a GDPR policy and has always being guided by the relevant Data Protection Acts up to and including the Data Protection Act, 2018**

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
	1.8. Public information **Standard: Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.**	
39	• The institution publishes reliable, complete, and up-to-date information on study programmes (i.e. recognition of qualifications, learning objectives, credits, requirements, assessment methods, timelines, dates relevant for the programme).	**The main conduits for this information are through the College's website and student handbooks** **The overall policy and procedures are contained in Section 8 of the QuAD: Information and Data Management**
40	• The institution publishes reliable, complete, and up-to-date information on institutional technical support.	**QuAD Section 9: Public Information and Communication** **Section 8 of the QuAD: Information and Data Management** **QuAD Section 11: Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review**
41	• Technical requirements to enable the full and effective use of the system are clearly identified and published.	**QuAD Section 9: Public Information and Communication**
42	• The institution publishes information on completion rates, pass rates, and dropout rates.	**This is published in Annual QA reports for each programme, as provided to and verified by External Examiners**
	1.9. Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes	

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
	Standard: Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.	
43	• E-learning programmes are reviewed, updated, and improved.	**The major review cycle is for revalidation under QQI processes, with annual reviews allowing for interim updating for currency and correctness** **Section 3.1: Programme Development and Approval** **QuAD Section 11: Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review**
44	• Pedagogical developments are aligned with the institutional strategy.	**Yes, QuAD Section 1: Governance and Quality of Management**
45	• ICT and pedagogy developments are analysed and implemented when appropriate.	**Programme Boards work with E-learning to ensure that this is the case**
46	• The internal quality assurance system includes feedback to stakeholders (especially to students).	**External Examiners have repeatedly praised the College's quality, timeliness and amount of feedback given to students** **It is implied that this is very much above the average provided at other institutions**
	1.10. Cyclical external quality assurance	

No.	Standard/Indicator	How OTC meets these considerations through fulfilment of indicators
	Standard: Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.	
47	Elements to consider: Nowadays it is the case that e-learning provision is included in the external quality assurance procedures in the same way as is provision provided through any other means. Institutions providing e-learning are encouraged to make contact with their relevant quality assurance body to exchange information and help both parties better understand the specificities of e-learning and its assessment.	**The College has engaged in ongoing discussions, proposals and submissions to its validating body, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)**