The Open Training College

(St. Michael's House)

Quality Assurance Document (QuAD):

Policies and Procedures

V.2.8

September 2016

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Date	September 2016
Version	2.8
File location	\\g-dc01\OTC\Quality Assurance\OTC QA Policies and Procedures \OTC QA Document V2.8 Sept 2016.doc

Document History		
Date	**Revised by:**	**Summary of amendments:**
October 2003		**V1** Originally drafted
May 2004		**V1.1** Agreed with HETAC
Sept 2008		**V1.2** All sections updated in preparation for Institutional Review
30 Sept 2009	MH	**V1.3** Section 4 (Assessment) updated with HETAC Assessment and Standards (2009) policy
19 April 2011	MH	**V2** Complete edit and re-draft to re-format QA manual in line with European Standards, & to fulfil the recommendation of Institutional Review 2009.
7 July 2011	MH	**V2.1** Sections 2.5.7, 4.4.6 & 4.2.9 updated with change to Examination Boards Terms of reference agreed by Academic Council
10 Oct 2011	MH	**V2.2** Sections 6.3 (Learner Supports), 7.1 (Data Collection & Management), 4.3.1 & 4.3.2 (Plagiarism Policy & Procedures) updated with amendments to policy agreed by Academic Council 28 Sept 2011.
3 July 2012	MH	**V2.3** Sections 4.3.2 (Plagiarism Procedures) and 5.2 (Staff Recruitment and Selection) updated with amendments agreed at Academic Council meeting of 26 June 2012.
19 Nov 2012	MH	**V 2.4** Section 3.2 (Procedures for the Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes) updated to reflect revised Student Evaluation Framework ratified by Academic Council in October 2012. Section 1.6 (Accreditation) updated to reflect new programmes accredited by HETAC and termination of accreditation relationship with NUIG.
12 Feb 2013	MH	**V 2.5** Section 1.7 (College Courses) updated to include new courses accredited by HETAC in 2012. Section 5.3 (5.3 Staff Induction, Training and Continuous Professional Development) updated to include new CPD policy ratified by Academic Council in January 2013. Section 5.4 (The Tutorial Function) added. Includes information gathered for report on the Tutorial Function, prepared in response to IR 2009 recommendation 13 and ratified by Academic Council in January 2013. Section 6 (Learner Resources and Student Supports) updated to include section 6.3 Equality Policy, ratified by Academic Council in January 2013.
April 2015	FC	**V 2.6 V2 *(V2.7)*** Complete edit of QA manual to reflect current transition relationship with QQI Section 8.1 (Public Information) updated to include procedures for providing information to learners in line with section 67 of

		HEA (2012) and QQI guidelines
		Section updated to reflect new dissemination of QA Reports. All QA reports will be made available via MyOtc and on request as agreed at Academic Council June 2014.
		Section 2.5.3. updated with change to Academic Council Terms of reference agreed by Academic Council in September 2014
		Section 1.8.7 Protection for Enrolled Learners updated to reflect compliance with new PEL policy requirements.
		Section Programmatic review changed to re-validation.
		Assessment Section changed to include upload to QBS for certification.
		Validation section updated to reflect changes in accordance with new QQI guidelines.
Sept 2016	RH	**V. 2.8** Inclusion of St. Michael's House Policy and Procedures 2016. Updating of relevant figures/information.
		Change of name from QA Manual to QA Document (QuAD).
		Updating of available OTC programmes.
		Updating of relevant QQI supporting documentation: Policies and Procedures, Core QA, Independent/Private providers, Validation policy etc.
		Inclusion of Programmatic Review, as well as Re-validation.
		Inclusion of new OTC Information Management System (IMS).
		Updating of relevant legislation.
		Change of ratification of results policy from Academic Council to Examination Boards (per AC minutes 7th October 2015).
		Inclusion of Student Rep. on AC (per AC minutes 24th June 2016).
		Updating of PEL information.
		Change of deferral to withdrawal policy (per AC minutes 24th June 2016).
		Updating of libraries and RPL information.
		Inclusion of: Appendix 1 – Quality Systems Summary Diagram.
		Inclusion of ESGs (2015) in preparation for Version 3.0 of this document.

Contents:

Section 1: Introduction

Supporting Documents:

1. St. Michael's House Human Resources Policies and Procedures Manual (2008-2016)
2. Open Training College Student Handbook
3. Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL): Protocols for the Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act (2013)

1.1 Open Training College Context and Background

The Open Training College (OTC) is a third level Institution offering education and training programmes to staff who work in the disability, non-profit, community and voluntary sectors nationally. The College is a division of St. Michael's House, the largest provider of services to people with intellectual disabilities, and their families, in the greater Dublin region.

In the early 1990s, St. Michael's House sought to formalise and accredit the extensive in-house training that was being provided to staff at that point in time, and to this end made an application for designation as a third level educational institution. On achieving designation St. Michael's House set up the Open Training College as the operational mechanism for the delivery of accredited training. St. Michael's House has an annual budget of circa 70 million euro (71+ million in 2015), employs over 1,100 staff (whole time equivalents, including 17 Open Training College staff) and provides direct service to approximately 1700 (1749 in 2015) children and adults with disabilities. St. Michael's House operates under the auspices of the Health Services Executive (HSE) and is directly funded by it.

As part of the original designation, St. Michael's House was required to offer the programmes and training it developed to staff in all disability services nationally. To achieve this objective the organisation was highly 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. More recently other educational providers and educational researchers have referred to this model as 'blended learning'.

1.2 College Mission Statement

The College's Mission Statement is as follows:

"*The Open Training College is committed to offering staff in the disability, non-profit, community and voluntary sectors, learning opportunities that are accredited, accessible and embody best practice*".

1.3 College Objectives

The objectives of the College are to:

- ❖ contribute to the development and delivery of quality services within the disability, non-profit, community and voluntary sectors through the provision of accredited education and training grounded in best practice and the most current thinking in relation to the provision of services;
- ❖ provide a strong social inclusion focus, drawing on the tremendous surge of developments which have taken place in relation to the disability, non-profit, community and voluntary sectors since the late 1970s;
- ❖ attend particularly to the needs of staff working in services (disability, non-profit, community and voluntary) with no formal third-level qualifications;
- ❖ maintain a strong applied bias in the context of a clear theoretical framework;
- ❖ ensure academic rigour in all work with students;
- ❖ challenge staff to evaluate present practices and to incorporate newer approaches into their work on an ongoing basis;
- ❖ ensure that courses are available nationally, equally accessible to staff in Donegal as in Dublin;
- ❖ ensure access, transfer and progression opportunities in line with national best practice;
- ❖ maintain and develop national and international links to encourage the development of new approaches and enhance the status of the College;
- ❖ impact on three levels in services: improved quality of life to service-users/customers; enhanced skills, knowledge and attitudes for staff; improved service quality, efficiency and effectiveness for the agency;
- ❖ support agencies, who have identified service deficits, to use accredited training as one strategy to address such deficits;
- ❖ provide high quality, effective and cost-effective training to students and agencies;
- ❖ provide students with a high quality learning experience grounded in academic rigour, but also encompassing an applied practical approach;
- ❖ continue to develop and embrace new technologies for learning and for training delivery in the disability, non-profit, community and voluntary sectors;
- ❖ continue to work in collaboration with representative agencies and relevant external bodies.

1.4 Distinctive Profile and Purpose

The Open Training College is a medium-sized, specialised college responding to the training needs of staff who work in the disability, non-profit, community and voluntary sectors nationally. It has a very distinctive profile and purpose, as outlined below.

1.4.1 National and Specialised Focus

The Open Training College is the only third level institution specifically focused on the disability, non-profit, community and voluntary sectors. The College make its courses available nationally by using a blended learning approach, called the Supported Open Learning Model.

1.4.2 All College Students are Mature Students

A second distinctive feature of the College is its student profile. The College does not provide courses for second-level school leavers; all students are adult learners, the majority of whom are in full-time employment.

1.4.3 All Open Training College Programmes are Applied

All programmes run by the College are designed to be applied directly to the relevant workplace of the students, at both local and organisational level. Assessment includes a strong focus on workplace application of learning. Part of the College's mission is to promote best practice in services. As part of this commitment, there is a strong focus on the transfer and application of learning to the everyday work of the student. This commitment is met in a number of ways:

- ❖ every course has a strong focus on application in the open learning materials and in the practical skills workshops;
- ❖ a significant portion of the marks for course assessment is allocated to work-based assignments;
- ❖ a personal reflection is completed for most modules in which students reflect on how their practice will change due to what they have learned in the module.

1.5 College Ethos and Values

The main focus of the work of the Open Training College is to develop the understanding and competencies of staff working in all human services, in line with the following values.

1.5.1 Valuing and Enhancing the Status of People in Receipt of Health and Personal Social Services

The College seeks in all of its courses to enhance the status of people in receipt of health and personal social services through the use of positive language and imagery, and by supporting their inclusion into mainstream services and activities.

1.5.2 Fundamental Principles

All College courses are underpinned by fundamental principles. These principles apply to all people involved with, or impacted on, by College activities. The principles of supporting empowerment, honouring rights and working in partnership apply to all work of the College. We aim to ensure that on completion of courses these principles have become key elements of the student's practice reflected in the way the student works with people in the future.

1.5.3 Valuing Students as Colleagues

The College views students as colleagues committed to the common cause of enhancing the lives of people in receipt of health and personal social services. Accordingly, the College values the often considerable experience that students bring to their studies.

1.5.4 Close Working Relationships

In line with its mission, the College sees itself interacting directly with service delivery organisations, working with existing experienced staff in developing and improving the quality of services provided by non-profit, community and voluntary organisations, including organisations for people with a disability.

1.5.5 Cost Effectiveness and Value for Money

The College is committed to offering high quality cost effective training. The Supported Open Learning Model is particularly cost effective for agencies as the amount of out-of-agency time for staff is limited. In addition to limiting financial cost the model also significantly reduces the impact on service-users of constantly adjusting to staff changes. Indeed agencies have reported to the College that supporting staff on our courses assists them with staff retention initiatives.

1.6 Accreditation

The Open Training College is a provider of programmes leading to QQI awards in accordance with the National Framework of Qualifications. The College works with QQI in providing QQI awards for the following programmes outlined in table 1 below (SP=Special Purpose):

Course Title	*Level of Award - + Type*
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies (Disability)	7 – Major
Honours Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies (Disability)	8 - Major
Certificate in Applied Management	6 - Minor
Higher Certificate in Arts in Applied Management	6 - Major
Bachelor of Arts in Applied Management	7 - Major
Certificate in the Management of a Positive Behavioural Culture	7 - SP
Certificate in Supported Employment	7 - SP
Certificate in Teaching and Learning Strategies for People with Disabilities	7 - Minor
Certificate in Training and Development	6 - SP
Certificate in Community Development and Leadership	6 - Major
Certificate in Community Development Practice	5 - Major
Certificate in Intellectual Disability Practice	5 - Major
Certificate in Health Service Skills	5 - Major
Bachelor of Arts in Professional Social Care (Disability) – *From 2016*	Level 7 - Major
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Professional Social Care (Disability) – *From 2017*	Level 8 - Major
Certificate in Exploring Disability	Level 6 - Minor
Certificate in Focus on the Individual	Level 6 - Minor
Certificate in Communication and Interpersonal Skills in Social Care	Level 6 - Minor
Certificate in Empowerment and Advocacy	Level 6 - Minor
Certificate in Social Care Practice and Ethics	Level 6 - Minor
Certificate in Active Inclusion	Level 7 - Minor
Certificate in Current Issues in Social Care: Mental Health, Elder Care and Children	Level 8 - Minor
Certificate in Supporting Individualised Living and Alternative Services	Level 8 - Minor
Certificate in Quality and Risk in Service Delivery	Level 6- SP
Certificate in Supporting and Working with Families	Level 7- SP
Certificate in Autism, Wellbeing and Positive Behaviour Supports	Level 7- SP

Table 1: *Open Training College Programmes*

The quality assurance policy and procedures outlined in this document apply to all programmes leading to QQI awards offered by the College.

1.7 College Courses

1.7.1 Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies (Disability) / B.A. Professional Social Care (Disability)

The Open Training College provides a three-year ordinary degree programme leading to a QQI Award Level 7 (higher education and training) on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The course is aimed at front-line staff and volunteers working in a range of disability settings. It addresses key issues in the delivery of disability services today. This includes empowerment, person-centred planning, quality in services, sexuality, challenging behaviour, community networking and the world of work. From 2016, this degree will be renamed as the B.A. in Professional Social Care (Disability), following revalidation of the programme by QQI.

1.7.2 Honours Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies (Disability) / B.A. (Hons.) Professional Social Care (Disability)

This Honours Bachelor of Arts programme is offered by the College and leads to a QQI Award Level 8 (higher education and training) award on the NFQ. The course is aimed at supporting participants to develop their practitioner skills in line with best practice, in order to provide an enabling and empowering service to people with disabilities within a range of situations. These situations include supporting people to live independently and enter mainstream work; providing supports for people labelled as challenging, people with mental health support needs and people within the autistic spectrum. Areas explored include leadership and management, social policy and research-based practice. From 2017, this degree will be renamed as the B.A. (Hons.) in Professional Social Care (Disability), following revalidation of the programme by QQI.

1.7.3 Certificate in Applied Management

The Certificate in Applied Management offers those who are, or who aspire to be, managers and deputy managers working in the non-profit, community and voluntary services sector the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to carry out the first-line management role effectively. This programme offered by the college leads to a QQI Award Level 6 (higher education and training) on the NFQ. The course consists of six modules. While grounded in generic management, there is a significant applied element, which is a major strength of this course. On successful completion of the course, graduates will be eligible to participate in the Higher Certificate in Arts in Applied Management.

1.7.4 Higher Certificate in Arts in Applied Management

This is a one-year add-on course for those who have completed either the Certificate in Applied Management or its equivalent. The programme is offered by the College and leads to a QQI Award Level 6 (higher education and training) on the NFQ. This course will be of interest to those managers and supervisors who wish to earn a nationally recognised award and deepen their understanding of management theory.

1.7.5 Bachelor of Arts in Applied Management

This degree is a further one-year add-on course to the Higher Certificate. This programme is offered by the college and leads to a QQI Award Level 6 (higher education and training) on the NFQ. This programme is made up of 6 modules which will further enhance the higher management and academic skills of critical analysis, research and effective thinking in order for managers, deputy managers or supervisors, to become influencers of developments and initiators of change leading to improved quality service provision.

1.7.6. Certificate in Supported Employment

This certificate is a two-module programme leading to a Special Purpose QQI Award Level 7 (higher education and training) on the NFQ. The programme provides the student with a comprehensive introduction to Supported Employment, and an overview of how policy and legislation developments have influenced thinking and disability service provision in Ireland and how this relates to the evolution of Supported Employment. Participants on this programme will develop the essential employment facilitator skills needed to place people in meaningful employment. This programme is delivered over a 3-month period.

1.7.7 Certificate in Teaching Strategies for People with Disabilities

This certificate is a single module programme leading to a QQI Level 7 Minor Award (higher education and training) on the NFQ. The objective of this programme is for the student to design, develop and implement an individual training plan to teach a service user a meaningful skill or task. Programme participants will be proficient in the use of Task Analysis and the instructional strategy of 'Systematic Instruction'.

1.7.8 Certificate in the Management of a Positive Behavioural Culture

This certificate is a two-module programme leading to a QQI Special Purpose Level 7 Award (higher education and training) on the NFQ. The first module aims to provide the participant with the knowledge, skills and capacity to generate a multi element behaviour support plan for an individual who has been labelled as challenging. The programme also

addresses the managerial skills and capacities required to implement a positive behavioural support plan that will produce clear quality of life outcomes for an individual. This requirement demands that the participant will be able, with the support of a periodic service review, to identify standards, monitor staff performance in pursuit of those standards and provide effective feedback for a staff team on their performance in regards to the standards.

1.8 Organisational Structure

Figure 1 outlines the organisational structure of St. Michael's House and indicates the College position and the governance relationship between the two entities.
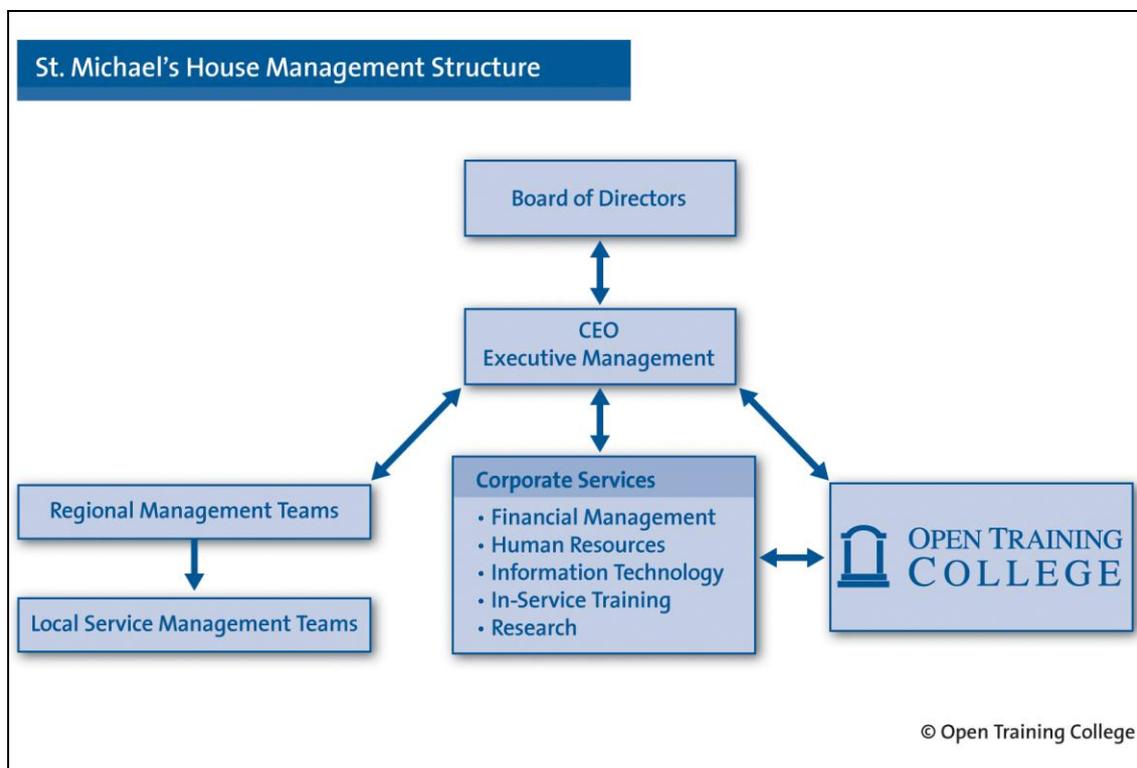
Figure 1: Organisational Structure

As can been seen from Figure 1 the organisation is governed by a Board of Directors. The current board consists of business and community figures, people with a disability, family and/or sibling representatives.

The day-to-day governance of the College is delegated by the Board of Directors to the College Director Dr. Karen Finnerty, via the Chief Executive Officer of St. Michael's House, Ms. Anna Shakespeare.

A range of services and supports are provided to the College through the corporate services section. These include:

- ❖ Human Resources
- ❖ Financial Management
- ❖ Learner Protection
- ❖ Health and Safety
- ❖ Maintenance

- ❖ Insurance
- ❖ IT support

In each of the above areas the College is governed by the organisational policies relating to that area.

1.8.1 Human Resources

St. Michael's House employs over 1,100 (WTE-1,192 in 2015) people and has a fully staffed Human Resources department (including HR Manager, Assistant HR Manager, Pensions Expert and Health & Safety Officer). In the recruitment and management of staff, the Open Training College operates under St. Michael's House Human Resources policy and procedures.

St. Michael's House published its Human Resources Policy and Procedures document in 2005. This was completely revised in 2008 and a second edition published. In addition to the 2008 2nd edition manual on the full policies and procedures being issued to all units within the organisation including the Open Training College, all staff were issued with an individual staff handbook detailing the key policies and procedures. Regular updates to all St. Michael's House (SMH) Policies and Procedures are now found on the SMH intranet at: http://policies/?q=policies/organisational .

1.8.2 Finance

The Financial Controller manages the finance department within the main organisation. The accounts department (including the salaries department) manages an annual budget of circa €70 million. Accounts are audited on an annual basis. The auditors for the organisation are Deloitte, Chartered Accountants and Statutory Audit Firm.

St. Michael's House is fully registered:

Company Registration No.:	27628
PAYE No.:	0060214i
PRSI No.:	0060214i
Charity Registration No.:	chy 5692
Vat Registration No.:	ie9255157n

The Open Training College works in conjunction with the accounts department in the management of all aspects of College finances:

1.8.2.1 College Budget Planning and Monitoring

The College budget is reviewed, adjusted and agreed on an annual basis in line with the budget planning procedures in all other parts of the organisation. This review and agreement process takes place in the autumn of each year in preparation for the following financial year. Budget Summary Expenditure Reports are provided to the College Director on a monthly basis for monitoring and adjustment purposes.

1.8.2.2 Staff Salaries

All staff members working in the Open Training College are employees of St. Michael's House and are paid through the main payroll. As employees, all staff members have access to the main pension scheme - the Nominated Health Agencies Superannuation Scheme. The organisation also operates AVC schemes with Marsh Financial Services, Hibernian Insurance and Cornmarket Group Financial Services.

1.8.2.3 Management of Student Fees

The annual fee for each course is decided in the spring prior to the commencement of marketing for the next intake. All fees are included as part of the marketing materials circulated by the College. When offered a place on a course, students are notified both verbally and in writing of the due dates by which fees must be paid and the consequences of falling into arrears. This information is also communicated to students in the Student Handbook and during the academic year by the Administration team.

Prior to the due date for fees, students are issued with an invoice. When the College receives a payment it is recorded on the student's account immediately. Student accounts are maintained electronically, and monitored by the Manager of Corporate Services and the relevant administrative assistant. The student is issued with a receipt within one working week. All payments are forwarded to the accounts department in head office, credited to the Open Training College's income budget and then lodged in the bank. Income statements are forwarded to the College on a regular basis.

1.8.2.4 Management of Invoices to the College

All invoices received by the College (creditors) are reviewed by the relevant Course Director and/or College Director and the Manager of Corporate Services. All invoices must be signed by the College Director to authorise payment. All invoices are logged, photocopied and forwarded to accounts for payment.

1.8.2.5 College Policies: Students and Payments

All College policies and procedures relating to students payment of fees and application for bursaries are detailed in the Student Handbook (Section 3: Money Matters). It is College policy to publish information on fees with the College brochure annually. The College also publishes any additional student costs with the College brochure and in the Student Handbook.

1.8.3 Health and Safety
St. Michael's House has a dedicated Health and Safety Officer. Each manager is responsible for the implementation and management of health and safety policies, procedures and practices within his/her area of responsibility. The organisation fully complies with all health and safety legislation.

The Open Training College is located in the St. Michael's House Southern Area Regional Headquarters. The following health and safety procedures are in operation in the building:

- ❖ Safety statement
- ❖ Hazard risks and assessments
- ❖ Fire drills
- ❖ Regular inspection of equipment; lift, fire alarm system etc.
- ❖ Health and safety consultant; regular inspections

Health and Safety issues pertaining to the use of off-site training venues are managed through the quality evaluation procedures relating to external training venues.

1.8.4 Maintenance
The St. Michael's House maintenance department provides maintenance to the Open Training College on request.

1.8.5 Insurance
The Open Training College is covered under the insurance for the main organisation. This includes Public Liability, Employers Liability and Professional Indemnity cover.

1.8.6 Information Technology Support
The St. Michael's House IT department provides ongoing support to the College in relation to IT systems. Support relating to formatting and layout of materials for publication and website maintenance is provided by independent contractors.

In addition, the College acquires the support of industry experts, external to the College to supplement internal resources related to a range of IT areas, including:

❖ Ongoing development, implementation and maintenance of the MyOTC web platform;

❖ Provision of training to staff in a range of IT related areas – using Moodle, web research, pod-casting etc.;

❖ Developing and delivering web based research related to quality assurance programme development, training needs analysis and student surveys;

❖ Development and maintenance of the College website;

❖ Accessibility of website;

❖ Provision of online training and assessment materials and tools.

1.8.7 Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL)

The College is fully compliant with all PEL legal requirements in accordance with Section 65 (4) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Education and Training Act 2012. The College have put in place acceptable arrangements in accordance with QQI PEL Protocols [1]. These protocols are applied to all Higher Education and Training college programmes of three months or longer in the case of:

• Programmes being submitted for validation [2];

• An existing validated programme being subject to review of validation by QQI.

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[1] Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL): Protocols for the Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act (2013)

[2] QQI – Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training (April 2016)

Section 2: Policy & Procedures for Quality Assurance

Supporting Documents:

1. QQI (2016) Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training

2. QQI (2016) Quality Assurance Guidelines

3. QQI [NQAI 2003, Restated 2015] Policy Restatement – Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training

4. QQI (2013) Assessments and Standards

5. NQAI (2005) Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training

6. ENQA (2015) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

7. QQI (2016) Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions

2.1 Purpose and Aims of the Quality System

This quality assurance document has been developed by the Open Training College for the purpose of clearly outlining the quality approach, policy and procedures operated by the College in compliance with Section 28 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

In developing its quality approach and systems the College aims to:

❖ clearly outline the quality ethos of the College and the mechanisms by which it embeds that ethos into all activities;

❖ provide an understanding of the distinctive role and mission of the College including clear information on the models of course delivery and of new course development;

❖ demonstrate how the College monitors its progress towards achieving quality goals and continually improving the effectiveness of its work;

❖ ensure that data and findings from all evaluation processes are formally reviewed and changes subsequently introduced which lead to an improved and enhanced learning experience for the student;

❖ outline the procedures by which all College support services are evaluated and improvements introduced;

❖ ensure that accurate data on the quality of College work is available and accessible to all stakeholders;

❖ identify areas in which the College is currently undertaking evaluations and/or introducing improvements.

2.1.1 Maintaining the Quality Assurance System

The College is committed to maintaining a quality assurance system which accurately reflects the current situation of the College, and which is compliant with all relevant and most recent accrediting body requirements. In order to ensure this, the Quality Assurance policies and procedures will be subject to regular review as demands arise, to be not less than once per calendar year. Any changes in policy will be ratified through the Academic Council and a thorough document control system will be maintained to allow changes and updates to the quality system to be tracked and monitored.

2.2 Quality Definitions and Terminology

In developing this document and supporting documentation the Open Training College first sought to establish a clear understanding of what 'quality' and its associated terms mean in the context of this particular institution.

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) outlined the following definition as having the necessary appropriateness and expansiveness required:

"Quality is the level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of awarding bodies and providers of education and training, their products and services, established through conformity with standards and the achievement of excellence demanded and contributed to by learners and other stakeholders".

In taking cognisance of the above definition and in seeking to develop clear, relevant and workable policies and procedures the Open Training College has developed a system which adheres to the concepts of 'quality control', 'quality assurance' and 'continuous quality improvement' defined as:

Quality Control - the operational techniques and activities that are used to regulate quality performance generally on an ongoing basis. In the context of the Open Training College it encompasses course-based evaluation activities employed to monitor and critically appraise the operation of courses in meeting stated aims, objectives and outcomes. Regular feedback from students and other stakeholders and the External Examination process are also included here.

Quality Assurance - achieved through the monitoring and review of all courses, including internal and external monitoring methodologies. These activities include the accreditation process for new programmes, external moderation of assessment, Re-validation (Programmatic Review) and Institutional Review.

Continuous Quality Improvement – the improvement of any aspect of a course, student experience or College activity arising from information and data generated from all monitoring and evaluation procedures.

2.3 Guiding Principles

In all of its work with stakeholders the Open Training College has operated under the influence and direction of a number of guiding principles:

Inclusiveness: Creating a culture where students feel valued and respected by the College and where the input of all stakeholders is actively sought and welcomed in relation to College activities.

Openness: Transparency in the purpose, work and methods of the College and in all information relating to College activities.

Relevance: Developing and delivering programmes of education and training that are directly relevant to the disability, non-profit, community and voluntary sectors and which are designed to impact at three levels: the student, the service-user and the agency.

Student Centredness: The student is viewed as the primary stakeholder and all College activities are designed with the student at the core.

Accountability: Ensuring that the College is using its resources effectively and with probity; conducting its work with integrity.

Accessibility: Ensuring that students have easy access to College personnel including management and ancillary staff as requested or required.

The College has sought to include these principles in all aspects of this quality system in addition to addressing the following key principles as outlined by QQI of an effective quality system. They are as follows[3]:

1. **The Learning Outcome Principle**: whereby all provision by the college is designed, implemented and evaluated with learning outcomes in mind.
2. **The Implementation Principle**: whereby all approved quality assurance procedures in this Quality Assurance document are fully implemented.

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[3] QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines and Criteria for Provider access to initial Validation of programmes leading to QQI Awards Higher Education and Training (2013)

3. **The Externality Principle**: this Quality assurance system makes appropriate use of external persons to ensure national and international comparisons are made.

Furthermore, this document has embedded the quality assurance principles as laid out by the ESG (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area) and the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN) and with which QQI have agreed and adopted such principles.

The following stakeholders were involved in the development of this document:

- ❖ the entire College team including management, course directors and tutors and administration personnel;
- ❖ representatives of graduates and current students;
- ❖ members of the Academic Council;
- ❖ executive management of St. Michael's House.

2.4 College Activities Subject to Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures

All College activities are subject to the quality assurance policies and procedures. This includes but is not limited to:

- ❖ the identification and development of new courses
- ❖ all elements of the Supported Open Learning Model
    - the open learning materials and readings
    - workshops and lectures
    - student supports
    - assessment procedures
    - Online Learning Environment (MyOTC)
- ❖ equipment and facilities
- ❖ management and administration
- ❖ partnership work with agencies and representative bodies
- ❖ stakeholder involvement
- ❖ ancillary College activities
- ❖ staff development and support

In the development and implementation of the quality policies and procedures the College is committed to:

- ❖ the involvement of stakeholders;
- ❖ publication of the outcomes of quality monitoring;
- ❖ regular review of the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures;
- ❖ on-going resourcing of the quality assurance function of the College.

2.5 Organisation of the Quality Assurance System of the Open Training College

2.5.1 Roles and responsibilities for Quality Assurance
Proper execution of the quality assurance policies and procedures within the College falls within the remit of the College Director supported by the Manager of Academic Affairs whose role incorporates Quality Assurance.

2.5.2 Academic Council and Subcommittees
All quality control and quality assurance functions are designed, implemented and monitored through a structure of committees, each with a clear responsibility for ensuring standards are maintained in a specific academic and/or operational remit. The findings of all quality control and quality assurance activities are considered by these committees, who make recommendations, agree and implement quality improvements. The work of all committees is monitored and reviewed by the Academic Council, as illustrated and described in the following pages of this document.

Figure 2: Academic Council and Subcommittees Structure
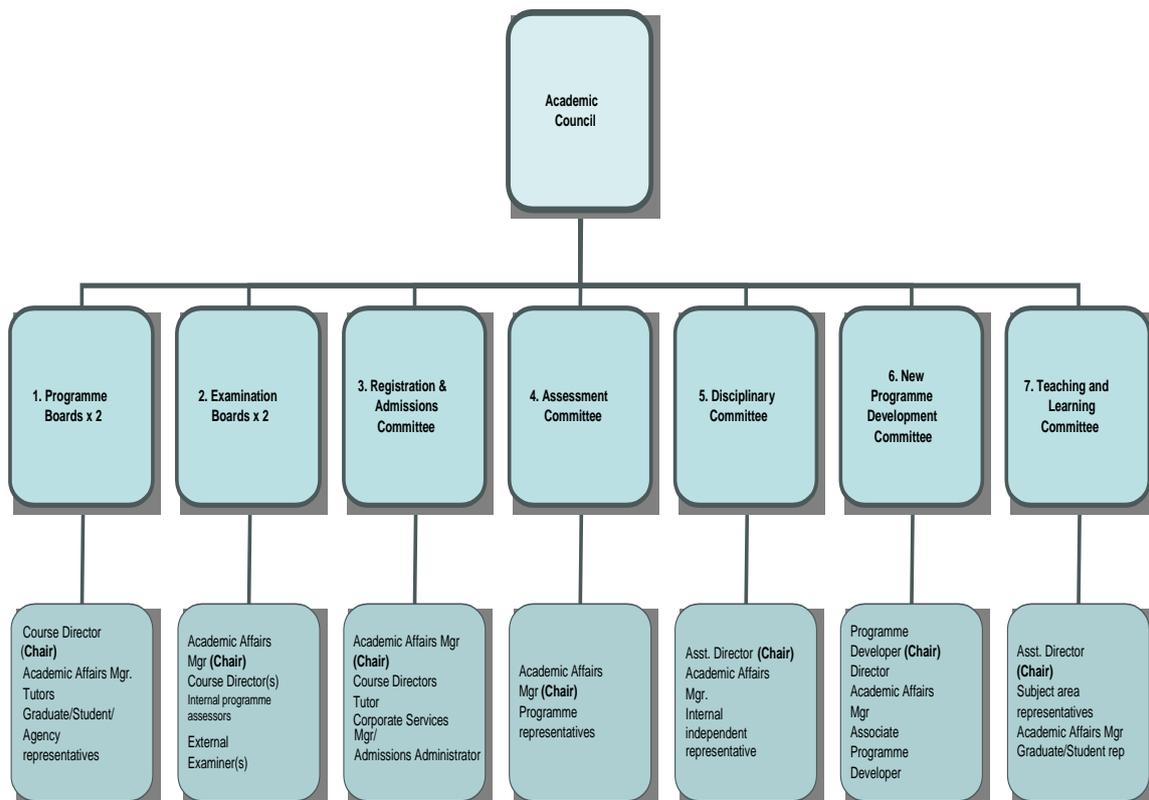
2.5.3 Academic Council

2.5.3.1 Terms of reference:

General

- ❖ Appoint, review and monitor functioning of subcommittees;
- ❖ Dissolution/modification of subcommittee(s) when and if required;
- ❖ Finalise and ratify decisions relating to the work of subcommittees;
- ❖ Consider appeals from any of the subcommittees, which have not been rectified at the level of that committee;
- ❖ Approve policy amendments of College pertaining to academic matters;
- ❖ Monitoring, review and ongoing improvement of QA policies and procedures;
- ❖ Appoint external members and approve appointments of internal members of Boards and sub-committees.

New Programmes

- ❖ To review and agree new programme proposals submitted by new programmes developments team(s);
- ❖ Review Research in support of new programmes proposed;
- ❖ Review and approve new programme submission documents prior to submission to QQI.

Assessment

- ❖ Review the application of penalties applied to assessment activities and approve policy and procedures for penalties;
- ❖ To review all broadsheets of assessment results being forwarded to QQI;
- ❖ To review and decide on student appeals relating to assessment outcomes (grades/marks);
- ❖ To review and decide on student complaints relating to assessment methodology and/or implementation;
- ❖ Review the operation of Examination Boards and sign-off on minutes of same;
- ❖ Review External Examiner Reports;
- ❖ Approve appointments of External Examiners;
- ❖ Monitor the implementation of QQI guidelines, policy and regulations pertaining to the assessment of learners.

Ongoing monitoring

❖ To review the findings and approve of changes generated by the ongoing monitoring procedures relating to academic matters, i.e., module content, readings, workshops, and assessment;

❖ To make final decisions on matters referred to Council by Programme Board(s);

❖ Review the operation of Programme Boards and sign-off on minutes of same;

❖ Approval of QA reports prior to publication;

❖ Approval & review of mechanisms for stakeholder consultation.

Periodic Evaluation

❖ To monitor the recommendations and implementation of improvements made by all review processes relating to programmes and academic functioning of the College including (but not limited to):

  o Re-validation (Programmatic Review)

  o Institutional Review

  o Strategic Review

❖ Ongoing review and enhancement of the procedures for periodic reviews.

2.5.3.2 Membership of the Academic Council:

Title	No	How appointed	Term	Notes
College Director (Chair)	1	Ex-officio	Ongoing	
Assistant College Director (Vice chairperson)	1	Ex-officio	Ongoing	
Course Directors (currently 3)	3	Ex-officio	Ongoing	Any new future CD posts will also sit on Council
Manager of Academic Affairs (Chairperson pro tempore)	1	Ex-officio	Ongoing	
Manager of Corporate Affairs	1	Ex-officio	Ongoing	
Student Representative*	1	Elected by student body	1 year	
External Academics	2	Invited by College management	3 years	In exceptional circumstances external board members may be invited to extend their term
Secretary	1	Ex-officio	Ongoing	In attendance Non-voting

Note: Student feedback will be facilitated at Programme Boards and brought to Academic Council by Programme Directors and the Manager of Academic Affairs.

2.5.3.3 Frequency of meetings: 3 times per year – September, January, June
(A minimum of one meeting per year is compulsory for all members)

2.5.3.4 Quorum for meetings: 6 representatives

2.5.3.5 Decision-making: By vote. Each member will have an equal vote. Chair will have casting vote.

2.5.3.6 Breath of responsibility: Accredited programmes run by College.

2.5.3.7 Meetings agenda: Prepared and circulated in advance by Chair or officer on behalf of the Chair.

2.5.3.8 Meetings minutes:
College Secretary will attend and produce minutes within 3 weeks of meeting. Minutes will be stored electronically on the College's shared folder. Items of a confidential nature (e.g. student matter) may be recorded separately and stored securely by the College Director.

2.5.4 Boards & Committees of the Academic Council
The Academic Council has the power to appoint subcommittees to advise it and to carry out the relevant functions of quality assurance and enhancement of the College. The following details the terms of reference, membership and frequency of meetings of the standing subcommittees and boards of the Academic Council. Each board/committee is required to provide written updates to the Academic Council or College Director, as required and requested, with reasonable notice given.

2.5.5 Principles of Practice of Academic Council & Committees
1.   The Academic Council and its sub committees will support the College's culture of innovation and responsiveness to student and programme needs.
2.   The sub committees will provide teaching staff with a reference framework to inform practice and decision-making at local level.
3.   The sub committees will provide an opportunity for reflection on practice and decision making, to inform College policy and procedures.
4.   The sub committees will provide an opportunity for the review of the operation and structure of all committees.
5.   The sub committees will provide open and transparent dissemination of decisions and information to all staff.

2.5.6   Programme Boards

2.5.6.1 Terms of Reference:

❖ QA monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of programme(s) under consideration;

❖ Monitor trends in assessment results and overall grades of programme(s) under consideration;

❖ Review and discuss results of ongoing evaluations of programme(s) under consideration;

❖ Plan for and conduct the periodic review of programme(s) under consideration;

❖ Action and monitor progress of Re-validation recommendations of programme(s) under consideration;

❖ Produce and implement assessment strategies for programme, stages and modules of programme(s) under consideration;

❖ Propose the appointment of external examiners;

❖ Induct and maintain communication with External Examiners;

❖ Review reports of External Examiners.

2.5.6.2 Membership of the Committee:

❖ Course Director (Chair): Ex-officio

❖ Manager of Academic Affairs: Ex-officio

❖ Internal programme tutors: Ex-officio

❖ Graduate/Student/Agency representative: By appointment

2.5.6.3 Meetings: 3 meetings per year: September: Post Exam Board review

January: Mid-year review

July: End of year review

2.5.6.4 Sub-groups: As deemed necessary by the Board.

2.5.6.5 Co-option of members: As deemed necessary by the Board and approved by Academic Council (prior to appointment in the case of external members).

2.5.6.6. Reporting arrangements: The Chair of the Programme Board reports on the activities of the Board to the Academic Council.

2.5.6.7 Recording procedures:

The Chair of the Programme Board is responsible for ensuring that minutes of all meetings are maintained and available to internal staff of the College and to the Academic Council. Minutes are forwarded to the Academic Council for approval.

2.5.7   Examination Boards

Note: These boards currently operate in accordance with QQI (2013) Revised Assessment & Standards, their operation and functioning will be reviewed and amended appropriately in accordance with any new directives provided by newly developed/updated QQI policies and procedures.

2.5.7.1 Terms of Reference:

- ❖ Review outcomes of external examiner moderation of programme(s) under consideration;
- ❖ QA monitoring of assessment techniques, consistency of assessment and comparison of standards of programme(s) under consideration with national norms and best practice;
- ❖ Agree and ratify assessment results for all learners of programme(s) under consideration, prior to forwarding to QQI;
- ❖ Consider learner appeals in relation to assessment results and procedures of programme(s) under consideration, and make recommendations to Academic Council;
- ❖ Consider learners for progression with missing credit, approve/decline progression as appropriate;
- ❖ Review of penalties applied to assessment activities of programme(s) under consideration;
- ❖ Review/monitor statistics/trends regarding assessment results of programme(s) under consideration.

2.5.7.2 Membership of the Committee:

- ❖ Manager of Academic Affairs (Chair): Ex-officio
- ❖ Course Director(s): Ex-officio
- ❖ Internal programme assessors: Ex-officio
- ❖ External Examiner(s): By appointment of the Academic Council

2.5.7.3 Meetings: Once per year immediately following external examiner moderation.

3.5.7.4 Sub-groups: N/A

2.5.7.5 Co-option of members: N/A

2.5.7.6 Reporting arrangements: The Chair of the Examination Board reports on the activities of the Board to the Academic Council.

2.5.7.7 Recording procedures:

The Chair of the Examination Board is responsible for ensuring that minutes of all meetings are maintained and available to internal staff of the College and to the Academic Council. Minutes are forwarded to the Academic Council for approval.

Note: Minutes of all Examination Board meetings are strictly confidential and are stored securely.

2.5.8 Registration & Admissions Committee

2.5.8.1 Terms of Reference:

❖ Review College admissions and registration policies and procedures annually;

❖ Develop strategy for marketing and recruitment;

❖ Develop and monitor policy and procedures relating to Advanced Entry and Recognition of Prior Learning;

❖ Process applications;

❖ Conduct applicants' days;

❖ Consider appeals from unsuccessful applicants;

❖ Review and consider trends in student body population statistics;

❖ Make arrangements for the conferring of student awards;

❖ Ongoing monitoring and development of student progression routes;

❖ Ensure detailed and accurate data regarding trends in student admissions and registration is collected and maintained;

❖ Implement, monitor and review exemptions.

2.5.8.2 Membership of the Committee:

❖ Manager of Academic Affairs (Chair): Ex-officio

❖ Course Director(s) of all programmes: Ex-officio

❖ Corporate Services Manager/Admissions Administrator: Ex-officio

❖ 1 x tutor: By appointment

2.5.8.3 Meetings: As deemed necessary by the committee.

2.5.8.4 Sub-groups: As deemed necessary by the committee.

2.5.8.5 Co-option of members:

As deemed necessary by the committee, and limited to internal College staff.

2.5.8.6 Reporting arrangements:

The Chair of the committee reports on the activities of the committee to the Academic Council.

2.5.8.7 Recording procedures:

The Chair of the committee is responsible for ensuring that minutes of all meetings are maintained and available to internal staff of the College and to the Academic Council.

2.5.9 Assessment Committee

2.5.9.1 Terms of Reference:

❖ Revise and discuss assessment techniques utilised by College programmes;

❖ Review/monitor College statistics/trends regarding assessment results;

❖ Review and approve of students sitting supplemental examinations;

❖ Approval of policy on penalties to be applied to assessment activities;

❖ Ensure compliance of OTC assessment policy and procedures with QQI regulations;

❖ Monitor the implementation of assessment strategies for College programmes and modules;

❖ Monitor the recording of penalties applied to assessment activities.

2.5.9.2 Membership of the Committee:

❖ Manager of Academic Affairs (Chair): Ex-officio

❖ Internal assessor representative of each programme/stage: By appointment

2.5.9.3 Meetings: As deemed necessary by the committee.

2.5.9.4 Sub-groups: As deemed necessary by the committee.

2.5.9.5 Co-option of members:

As deemed necessary by the committee, and approved by Academic Council (prior to appointment in the case of external members).

2.5.9.6 Reporting arrangements:

The Chair of the committee reports on the activities of the committee to the Academic Council.

2.5.9.7 Recording procedures:

The Chair of the committee is responsible for ensuring that minutes of all meetings are maintained and available to internal staff of the College and to the Academic Council.

2.5.10 Disciplinary Committee

2.5.10.1 Terms of Reference:
- ❖ Review issues arising in relation to student conduct e.g. plagiarism, conduct during workshops/seminars;
- ❖ Make recommendations for dealing with such issues;
- ❖ Consider appeals from students in relation to disciplinary matters;
- ❖ Develop policies and procedures to deter disciplinary issues from arising/developing;
- ❖ Consider cases of students found to be in breach of exam regulations;
- ❖ Review conduct of investigations into plagiarism and outcomes.

2.5.10.2 Membership of the Committee:
- ❖ Assistant College Director (Chair): Ex-officio
- ❖ Manager of Academic Affairs: Ex-officio
- ❖ Independent internal (or external) representative

2.5.10.3 Meetings:
As necessary to address student disciplinary issues, but at least annually to review policy and address any related issues.

2.5.10.4 Sub-groups: As deemed necessary by the committee.

2.5.10.5 Co-option of members:

As deemed necessary by the committee and approved by the Academic Council (prior to appointment in the case of external members).

Co-option of additional members shall not compromise the disciplinary procedure.

2.5.10.6 Reporting arrangements:

The Chair of the committee reports on the activities of the committee to the Academic Council.

2.5.10.7 Recording procedures:

The Chair of the committee is responsible for ensuring that minutes of all meetings are maintained and available to the Academic Council.

2.5.11 New Programmes Development Committee(s)

2.5.11.1 Terms of Reference:
- ❖ Development of programme(s) as per process agreed under QA;
- ❖ Development and submission of new programme proposals to Academic Council;
- ❖ Ongoing review and enhancement of process for the development of new programmes.

2.5.11.2 Membership of the Committee:
- ❖ Programme Developer (Chair): By appointment of the College Director
- ❖ College Director: Ex-officio
- ❖ Manager of Academic Affairs: Ex-officio
- ❖ Associate programme developer: By appointment

2.5.11.3 Meetings: As deemed necessary by the committee.

2.5.11.4 Sub-groups: As deemed necessary by the committee.

2.5.11.5 Co-option of members: As deemed necessary by the committee.

2.5.11.6 Reporting arrangements:

The Chair of the committee reports on the activities of the committee to the Academic Council.

2.5.11.7 Recording procedures:

The Chair of the committee is responsible for ensuring that minutes of all meetings are maintained and available to internal staff of the College and to the Academic Council.

2.5.12 Teaching and Learning Committee

2.5.12.1 Terms of Reference:

Learner Supports:

- ❖ Consider applications from learners for additional supports;
- ❖ Agree and monitor implementation of additional supports;
- ❖ Development of policy and procedures for the provision of learner supports;
- ❖ Ongoing review and enhancement of procedures for learner support.

Teaching and learning systems:

- ❖ Ongoing review and enhancement of teaching systems;
- ❖ Ongoing review and enhancement of teaching and learning resources.

Staff development:

- ❖ Identification of staff training and development needs and opportunities in specified areas, at the level of the team.

2.5.12.2 Membership of the Committee:

- ❖ Manager of Academic Affairs (Chair): Ex-officio
- ❖ Internal programme tutor representatives: By appointment
- ❖ Graduate/Student representatives: By appointment

2.5.12.3 Meetings: As deemed necessary by the committee.

2.5.12.4 Sub-groups: As deemed necessary by the committee.

2.5.12.5 Co-option of members:

As deemed necessary by the committee and approved by the Academic Council (prior to appointment in the case of external members).

2.5.12.6 Reporting arrangements:

The Chair of the committee reports on the activities of the committee to the Academic Council.

2.5.12.7 Recording procedures:

The Chair of the committee is responsible for ensuring that minutes of all meetings are maintained and available to internal staff of the College and to the Academic Council.

2.6 Procedures for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Procedures

2.6.1 Institutional Review
The College is committed to the process of Institutional Review, which includes a thorough review of the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements of the College:

"QQI publishes a 7-year review cycle for higher education. Sequence is determined by the following factors: previous review cycles; re-engagement; monitoring outcomes; system mergers and clusters."
Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions (April 2016).

The objectives of the Institutional Review are as follows:

1. To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made.
2. To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution.
3. To assess the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the institution.
4. To confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression.
5. To evaluate the operation and management of delegated authority where it has been granted.
6. To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution.

2.6.2 Quality Assurance Effectiveness Review
This objective is specifically present to address the effectiveness of the quality assurance systems and procedures of the College. This review is based on the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance[4]. Each of the following elements of Quality Assurance, defined by the standards are addressed in the review.

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[4] Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. (2015) ENQA

Standard 1. Overarching Policy for Quality Assurance
Standard 2. Programmes and Awards - Design of new Programmes
Standard 3.(a) Student-centred Learning and Teaching
Standard 3.(b) Student-centred Assessment
Standard 4. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification
Standard 5. Teaching Staff
Standard 6. Learning Resources and Student support
Standard 7. Information Management
Standard 8. Public Information
Standard 9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of Programmes
Standard 10. Cyclical External Quality Assurance - Institutional Review (Based on current QQI policy)

2.6.3 Process for conducting Institutional Review in the Open Training College

2.6.3.1 Agreement of the terms of reference for the review with QQI

Prior to commencing the review process the specific terms of reference will be discussed and agreed with QQI. The College will commit to the pre-defined terms of reference as well as any additional necessary areas as determined by current status or activity of the College, or as directed by QQI.

2.6.3.2 Formation of the internal audit team

An Internal Audit team will be formed. The membership of this team will be determined by the terms of reference for the review and the specific areas of responsibility and expertise of the relevant staff. A team leader will be appointed who will take on the responsibility of leading the team, agreeing time-bound plans, delegating tasks and actions, and monitoring the progress of the review.

2.6.3.3 Review of each objective area

A desk-based review of each area of the terms of reference will be conducted, with reference to the QQI Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions (2016). The findings of each review will be published in a separate report, which will also specify the process followed in conducting that review.

2.6.3.4 Stakeholder consultation

Consultation with relevant identified stakeholders to further investigate the topics and to confirm the findings of the desk-based reviews will be carried out. Details of groups/individuals consulted with, methodology and findings will be published.

2.6.3.5 Self-Evaluation Report

Findings of 3 and 4 above will be considered by the Internal Audit Team and will contribute to the Self-Evaluation Report. This report will also detail the recommendations that have arisen from the review process. The Self-Evaluation Report will be sent to QQI for consideration, and also published online.

2.6.3.6 External Peer Review

The entire process as described will be subject to the scrutiny of an external peer review panel, appointed by QQI, during a visit to the College. Following this visit the panel will produce a report detailing their findings and any additional recommendations they may have for the College.

Section 3: Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes and Awards

Supporting Documents:

1. QQI HET Core Validation Policy And Criteria 2010, Revised 2013
2. QQI (2013) Revised General Programme Validation Manual
3. QQI (2013) Quality Assurance Guidelines and criteria for provider access to initial validation of programmes leading to a QQI Awards Higher Education and Training
4. QQI (2014) Policy on Monitoring
5. QQI (2016) Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training
6. QQI (2016) Quality Assurance Guidelines

3.1 Procedures for the Design and Approval of New Programmes

Stage 1: Internal Development

❖ Identification of potential new programme(s)

❖ New programme(s) proposal presented to Academic Council

❖ Establishment of New Programme(s) Development Committee

❖ Formal research and market identification

❖ Development of application for validation

❖ Submission to QQI

Stage 2: External Assessment

❖ Acknowledgement and desk review

❖ Expert panel selection

❖ External assessment

❖ Expert panel report

❖ Provider response

❖ Final expert panel assessment

❖ QQI decision

Stage 3: Report Publication

Stage 4: Follow Up

Figure 3: Procedures for the design and approval of new programmes, subjects and modules

3.1.1 Stage 1: Internal Development

3.1.1.1 Identification of potential new programme(s)

The College identifies potential new programmes in a number of informal and formal ways. The informal avenues relate to the College's position in the sector and its close working relationship with agencies providing health and social care services.

❖ A unique position

The College is in a unique position in that it operates within the structure of a service agency, which keeps it very close to what is happening on the ground in the area of service provision.

❖ Close working relationship with agencies

As was outlined earlier the College works in collaboration with agencies and students. As part of the model of delivery, Course Directors and Tutors have regular contact with agencies. The College also undertakes consultancy work for disability and non-profit agencies. Such work usually relates to service development initiatives and brings the College into direct contact with service-users, executive and middle management, and frontline staff.

The College has direct links to representative bodies in the disability, non-profit and social care fields. Such bodies include, for example:

• The National Federation of Voluntary Bodies (NFVB)

• Social Care Ireland

❖ Students are employed in programme areas

Most students of the College are currently working in relevant disability, non-profit, community or voluntary services. Therefore, students are connected directly into the current thinking, practice and issues in their own agencies. This wealth of information is available to the College through workshops, tutorials and informal discussion.

❖ Workshop facilitators are practitioners

The presenters/lecturers employed by the College to lead workshops are almost all working as practitioners in their field and many are registered practitioners and members of professional bodies. Because of this they are well informed about current trends and issues in the areas of disability and non-profit service provision.

❖ Monitoring changing policy and legislation relevant to the area

The College stays up to date in relation to changing policy and legislation. It receives and reviews all relevant reports and papers and works closely with subject matter experts as module authors and editors to keep up to date with relevant changes and developments. In the development of new programmes the College is always cognisant of such policy developments.

3.1.1.2 New programme(s) proposal presented to Academic Council

When an idea for a new programme or module is identified the College Director/Assistant College Director/Course Director draws up a brief outline proposal. This is presented to the College team, St. Michael's House Management and the Academic Council. The initial proposal will generally outline:

- the rationale for the proposed new programme;
- a brief review of similar programmes in other institutions (if they exist);
- proposed target group and the potential size of market for the proposed course;
- initial costing for the development phase;
- potential funding sources;
- potential course content;
- proposed academic level;
- relationship of new course to existing courses;
- proposed action plan and timeframe.

3.1.1.3 Establishment of New Programme(s) Development Committee

A New Programme(s) Development Committee will be established by the Academic Council following formal approval of a proposal for new programme(s). This committee is tasked with the development of programme(s) as per process agreed under QA and the ongoing review and enhancement of the process for the development of new programmes.

Membership of the Committee will be determined by the nature and purpose of the new programme(s) proposed, supported by the College Director and Manager of Academic Affairs. This committee is a sub-committee of the Academic Council, and as such the Chair of the committee will report on the activities of the committee to the Academic Council. The Chair of the committee is responsible for ensuring that minutes of all meetings are maintained and available to internal staff of the College and to the Academic Council.

3.1.1.4 Formal research and market identification

The committee will develop a full rationale for the development of the programme including a detailed identification of the target market for the programme. Where relevant and appropriate this will include formal market research being undertaken by the committee. Such research is generally qualitative in nature and is conducted through focus groups, questionnaires and interviews. The main focus of the research is to ascertain the level of interest in the proposed programme; to determine whether agencies would purchase such an initiative and to what extent; to identify the training needs of the sector as identified by the research sample; and to attempt to predict the long term sustainability of the programme.

The research process concludes with the formulation of a research report and the recommendation to proceed or not. In addition, the research report will also make recommendations on content and other aspects of the programme. The completed research will be presented to Academic Council. Following approval of this report by Academic Council a complete development costing will be drawn up by the College Director and funding secured.

3.1.1.5 Development of application for validation

Development of the following documentation is required for submission of an application for validation:

- ❖ Proposed Programme Schedule[5]
- ❖ Programme Information supplied using the General Programme Validation Template[6], this includes:
    - o Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes
    - o Profile of the Proposed Programme's Target Learners
    - o Programme Assessment Strategy
    - o Module Assessment Strategies
- ❖ (Critical) Self Assessment Report against QQI/HET criteria for validation (see below)
- ❖ Consortium Agreement(s) (when applicable)
- ❖ Any additional/specific quality assurance procedures required for the programme

QQI/HET outline criteria for validation[7]:

Standards: The minimum intended programme learning outcomes must be consistent with the relevant awards standards and the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) award-type descriptors.

Access standard: The prerequisite learning for participation in the programme and any other assumptions relating to the programme's target learners must be explicit.

Learning: The programme must enable its target learners to attain the minimum intended programme learning outcomes reliably and efficiently (in terms of learner effort).

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[5] See Appendix 1 QQI HET (2013) General Programme Validation Manual, p.6

[6] See Appendix 3 QQI HET (2013) General Programme Validation Manual, p. 25

[7] Taken from QQI HET (2013) Core Validation Policy and Criteria. See section 3.2, pp.3-5 for elaborated validation criteria.

3.1.1.6 Submission to QQI

Following approval by Academic Council the submission document(s) are forwarded to QQI and proceed through the external assessment process. Applications will be accompanied by the appropriate fee[8].

3.1.2 Stage 2: External Assessment
Minimum timeframe for completion of this stage is 25 weeks.

3.1.2.1 Acknowledgement and desk review

Following receipt of an application the HET executive acknowledges the application in writing and then conducts a desk review to determine whether or not the application addresses the validation criteria, and the programme description accords with the guidelines in QQI HET General Programme Validation Manual.

3.1.2.2 Expert panel selection

Following acceptance of an application an Expert Panel is established to make an assessment of the application. Expert panels are formed by QQI under the direction of the Validation Manager. The expert panel is constituted on a case-by-case basis in accordance with QQI/HET's Core Validation Policy and Criteria and Participating in an Evaluation Panel as an Expert Assessor: Guidelines. QQI will provide secretarial support and induction/information briefing to the panel.

3.1.2.3 External assessment

The expert panel assesses the proposed programme against the validation criteria. The provider's self-assessment is a key part of the evidence considered by the expert panel. The expert panel will normally undertake a site visit as part of the assessment to establish if the programme meets the criteria and should be validated.

3.1.2.4 Expert panel report

Shortly after the site visit the expert panel agrees a report of its findings, conclusions, prerequisites for validation, conditions and recommendations. Recommendations may be optional. This report is known as the draft Expert Panel Report.

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[8] The current schedule of fees is available on the QQI website: www.qqi.ie

3.1.2.5 Provider response

The expert panel report is sent to the provider, who is invited to respond in writing (within a specified time) on the expert panel report's findings, conclusions, prerequisites for validation, conditions and recommendations.

3.1.2.6 Final expert panel assessment

Following consideration of the provider's response, the expert panel agrees a brief statement setting out its reaction and its final recommendations to QQI regarding validation. This statement will be included as an addendum to the report and included in the submission to QQI/Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC).

3.1.2.7 QQI decision

QQI has delegated the formal validation decision to the QQI Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC). This decision is based on QQI's validation policy and criteria and informed by the following evidence:

- ❖ The expert panel report;
- ❖ The provider's response;
- ❖ The expert panel's reaction to the provider's response if any;
- ❖ A memorandum from the QQI executive on the context for and conduct of the process noting any concerns or complaints expressed by the provider.

Following a formal validation decision QQI will issue an Order of Council, Approved Programme Schedule and Certificate of Programme Validation. All validated programmes will appear in QBS under validated Higher Education Programmes.

3.1.3 Stage 3: Report Publication
Following the validation decision, the expert panel report is published on the QQI website.

3.1.4 Stage 4: Follow Up
Validation by QQI is complemented by Quality Assurance Guidelines and criteria for provider access to initial validation of programmes leading to QQI awards, Policy on Monitoring and by its Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions. These policies, particularly the monitoring policy, address post-validation follow-up. The monitoring policy in particular ensures that the conditions of validation and any binding recommendations are met by providers and their programmes. The monitoring intensity is proportional to perceived risk. Monitoring instruments include, for example, review of programme validation. Monitoring findings may initiate processes which result in the withdrawal of programme validation or loss of registered QQI provider status.

3.2 Procedures for the Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes

3.2.1 Internal Monitoring and Evaluation
To facilitate the continuous monitoring of programmes the College operates a cycle of evaluations and reviews to seek feedback on all aspects of programmes, review that feedback, make and implement recommendations for continuous improvements. The following table illustrates the variety of evaluations conducted and the structures in place to review the outcomes of these.

Evaluation/Review Methodology	Programme element addressed	Stakeholders involved	Frequency of monitoring
Module Evaluation Surveys	❖ Open Learning Materials ❖ Workshops & Seminars ❖ Tutorial Supports ❖ MyOTC ❖ Assessment	❖ Students ❖ Academic Staff	All years Module One
Ad Hoc Student Evaluation Surveys	❖ Any element as determined necessary by Programme Boards	❖ Students	❖ Ad Hoc
End of Year College Evaluation Survey	❖ Open Learning Materials ❖ Workshops & Seminars ❖ Tutorial Supports ❖ MyOTC ❖ Assessment	❖ Students	❖ Annually
Programme Boards	❖ Open Learning Materials ❖ Workshops & Seminars ❖ Tutorial Supports ❖ MyOTC ❖ Assessment	❖ Academic Staff & student representative	❖ Three meetings per year
Teaching and Learning Committee	❖ Open Learning Materials ❖ Workshops & Seminars ❖ Tutorial Supports ❖ MyOTC	❖ Director(s) & Academic staff	❖ Meetings as deemed necessary by committee chair
Assessment Committee	❖ Assessment: reliability and validity	❖ Academic Manager & Academic Staff	❖ Meetings per module
Examination Boards	❖ Assessment: reliability & validity & consistency with national standards	❖ External Examiners ❖ Director(s) ❖ Academic Staff	❖ Annually

Table 2: *Internal Monitoring and Evaluation procedures*

3.2.1.1 Evaluation/Review Methodologies

Module Evaluation Surveys

Upon completion of the first modules of their programme First Year students are invited to participate in an online module evaluation survey, administered using Survey Monkey[9] online surveying tools. These surveys address the following areas of module delivery: The Module Content; Tutorial and Online Supports; Module Workshop and Module Workload. The purpose of these surveys is to engage with and build supportive relationships with the First Year student cohort and to identify any particular concerns or issues which need to be addressed with this group. At the discretion of the Programme Board an additional module evaluation survey may also be administered for the third module. Participation in these surveys is on a voluntary basis and the identities of respondents are protected in all publications of survey results, which are shared immediately on MyOTC following completion of the survey.

Ad Hoc Student Evaluations

At the discretion of and under the remit of the Programme Board a student evaluation survey may be designed and administered with relevant groups of students to meet a specified need identified by a committee and/or in response to a change or development in the delivery of a programme (eg. new workshop/seminar format or presenter, new content, move to online delivery, etc.).

End of Year College Evaluation Surveys

Upon completion of each academic year students are invited to participate in a detailed online evaluation survey of College programmes and services experienced by students over the course of the year. This survey addresses the following areas of College programmes and services: Overall College Experience; Learning Materials; Student Supports & Tutorials; Online Learning & Activities; Assessment & Feedback; Professional Development; College Administration. These surveys are also administered using Survey Monkey online surveying tools and participation is on a voluntary basis. The identities of respondents are protected in all publications of survey results, which are shared immediately on MyOTC following completion of the survey.

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[9] See www.surveymonkey.com for more information

Programme Board(s)

The mechanism within the Open Training College for the review of the data generated by the modular and annual evaluation and the ratification of decisions in relation to quality improvements is the Programme Board. Two boards are currently in operation by the College:

(i)   Applied Social Studies Programme Board

(ii)   Management Programme Board

Each Board meets three times per academic year as follows:

September: Post Exam Board Review

January: Mid Year Review

July: End of Year Review

In keeping with current developments in QQI policy, a new Programme Board, to oversee QQI validated Further Education and Training (FET) programmes will be established over the two academic years starting 2016-17.

The Programme Boards are subcommittees of the Academic Council. Further information on the membership, terms of reference, reporting and recording arrangements of the Programme Boards can be found in Section 2 of this QA document.

Teaching and Learning Committee & Assessment Committee

Each of these committees has a remit to review relevant results of evaluation surveys completed by the College as well as to analyse other relevant data. Both are sub-committees of the Academic Council. Further information on the membership, terms of reference, reporting and recording arrangements of these committees can be found in Section 2 of this QA document.

Examination Boards

Two Examination Boards are currently in operation in the College, these are:

(i)   Applied Social Studies/Professional Social Care

(ii)   Management

For FET courses, the examination board is referred to as the Results Approval Panel.

The Examination Boards are subcommittees of the Academic Council. Further information on the membership, terms of reference, reporting and recording arrangements of the Examination Boards can be found in Section 2 of this QA manual.

3.2.1.2 Publication of Evaluation & Review Results

The publication of evaluation and review results is done in a three-step process as follows:

Step 1: Sharing evaluation results on MyOTC

Each of the online evaluations remains open for a period of at least two weeks during which time respondents can participate in the survey and amend their feedback as they wish. Immediately following closure of the survey the results are reviewed by the Quality Assurance department for appropriate usage, and then the results are shared on the MyOTC platform.

Step 2: Review of evaluation results

As described above the feedback received through evaluation surveys is reviewed and discussed at the appropriate board or committee meeting. Recommendations for improvements are agreed at this stage, and plans made for their implementation and evaluation. Each of these boards and committees has guidelines in place for the recording of deliberations and decisions made, and the ratification of decisions through the Academic Council.

Step 3: The Quality Assurance Report

Upon completion of each academic year and the associated Quality Assurance cycle a Quality Assurance report is produced for each programme area. This report is made publicly available through the College's website and contains information under the following headings:

- o Programme Overview
- o Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures
- o Student retention and assessment results
- o Results of the QA evaluation procedures
- o Report on recommendations implemented
- o Recommendations to be implemented

3.2.2 External Monitoring and Evaluation

External monitoring of all accredited providers is carried out by QQI. This monitoring addresses the following areas:

- ❖ Programme quality and attainment of awards standards
- ❖ Follow-up on internal and/or external quality procedures, e.g. Re-validation
- ❖ Institutional Review
- ❖ Registered QQI provider status

- ❖ Tracking the implementation of policy
- ❖ Specified quality indicators, e.g. completion rates

To facilitate baseline monitoring by QQI the College will supply the following information to QQI as and when required:

- ❖ Findings (as agreed with QQI) arising from the application by a provider of its Quality Assurance Procedures
- ❖ Follow-up reports as required
- ❖ External examiner details and their reports
- ❖ Detail on change which may affect the status of a registered QQI provider
- ❖ Crisis notification (e.g. financial issues and capacity deficits, major impending media disclosures relating to academic quality)
- ❖ Annual completion rates report
- ❖ Annual First Destination Survey Data
- ❖ Arrangements for the protection of learners where appropriate

3.3 Procedures for the Re-validation of Programmes and Awards

3.3.1 Re-validation

Re-validation is the formal evaluation of QQI accredited programmes and related services, carried out at five-year intervals for related programmes. This review process has an internal and an external evaluation phase. In the absence of delegated authority all references to Re-validation can be read as Programmatic Review (PR).

Figure 4 below outlines the main components of the internal phase and external phase of the five-year evaluation.

The specific objectives of a re-validation are to[10] :

- ❖ Analyse the effectiveness and efficiency of each validated programme, including details of learner numbers, retention rates and success rates
- ❖ Review the development of the programme(s) in the context of the requirements of employers, industry, professional bodies, the Irish economy and international developments
- ❖ Evaluate the response of the provider/school/department to market requirements and educational developments

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[10] QQI HETAC (2010) Provider Monitoring Policy and Procedure: Part 2: Programmatic Review Guidelines, p. 12.

- ❖ Evaluate the feedback mechanisms for learners and the processes for acting on this feedback
- ❖ Evaluate the physical facilities and resources provided for the provision of the programme(s)
- ❖ Evaluate the formal links which have been established with industry, business and the wider community in order to maintain the relevance of its programmes
- ❖ Evaluate feedback from employers of the programmes' graduates and from those graduates
- ❖ Review any research activities in the field of learning under review and their impact on teaching and learning (notwithstanding that the reviews of the research degree programmes may be undertaken separately)
- ❖ Evaluate projections for the following five years in the programme(s)/field of learning under review

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Phase 1: Internal Evaluation

1. Formation of Course Review Team
2. Collation of 5-year QA Summary Report
3. Stakeholder consultation
4. Review of data and development of recommendations
5. Self Evaluation Report

Phase 2: External (Peer) Evaluation

6. Formation of the External Peer Review Panel
7. Review Panel to visit college
8. Panel Report

Phase 3: Adoption and Implementation of Recommendations

Figure 4: Re-validation Process

3.3.1.1 Phase 1: Internal Self-Evaluation

Step 1: Formation of the Course Review team

A Course Review Team is formed under the co-ordination and management of the relevant Programme Board. Members of the course review team can include:

- ❖ the relevant Course Director (Team Leader);
- ❖ a Course Tutor;
- ❖ a Course Director of another College course;
- ❖ The Manager of Academic Affairs
- ❖ Any other relevant person(s)

The Course Review Team will define the terms of reference for the re-validation and agree these with QQI.

Step 2: Collation of 5-year QA summary report

The course review team will conduct a review of the Quality Assurance data collected for the programme(s) during the 5-year period being addressed by the review. This data will be contained in the annual QA reports for the programme(s). A QA summary report will be compiled from this data, which details the recommendations for improvements made and the current status of each recommendation. This QA summary report will provide an accurate representation of the current state of the programme(s).

Step 3: Stakeholder Consultation

Consultation with relevant stakeholders will be conducted to gather feedback and opinions on the successes of the programme(s) and recommendations for future developments.

Relevant stakeholders will be defined by the Course Review Team and the focus of the re-validation. Stakeholder groups must include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ Current students
- ❖ Programme graduates
- ❖ Employers
- ❖ Academic Staff of the programme(s)

Appropriate methodology for consultation with each of the stakeholder groups will be identified and developed by the Course Review Team.

Step 4: Review of data and development of recommendations

The Course Review Team will convene meetings as necessary to review the data gathered through steps 2 and 3, and critically evaluate the programme(s) with reference to the (2016) validation criteria[11] and conduct a review of:

- ❖ Minimum intended programme learning outcomes and their compliance with the relevant awards standard(s) as determined by QQI
- ❖ The prerequisite learning for participation in the programme and any other assumptions relating to the programme's target learners
- ❖ Module learning outcomes and prerequisite requirements
- ❖ Programme and module assessment strategies
- ❖ Teaching and learning strategies employed

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[11] QQI (April 2016) - Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training

- ❖ The operation of access, transfer and progression
- ❖ Relevant research activities
- ❖ Links with relevant industry and/or professional bodies
- ❖ Profile and qualifications of teaching staff
- ❖ Level and appropriateness of resources available
- ❖ Benchmarking against other similar programmes

The Course Review Team will develop recommendations for developments and improvements to the programme as a result of this review and analysis.

Step 5: Self-Evaluation Report

Details of actions taken and results of each step of the internal phase, as well as the recommendations generated, will be presented in the Self-Evaluation Report. This report is sent to a panel of nominated peers for external review and scrutiny.

This is the final stage of the internal phase of the Re-validation.

3.3.1.2 Phase 2: External Peer Review

Phase 2 of the Re-validation is carried out by an External Peer Review Panel which is required to make an impartial judgement on the continued maintenance of the overall standard of the course and on its acceptability for the award in question, when compared with similar courses elsewhere in Ireland and / or internationally. There are three steps in this phase, as follows:

Step 1: Formation of the External Peer Review Panel

The External Peer Review Panel is comprised of external peers familiar with current practice and developments in the programme area. At a minimum it will comprise of the following:

- ❖ Chairperson – experienced in higher/further education and training; with training in re-validation through QQI
- ❖ Secretary
- ❖ Academics (minimum 2), experts in relevant field of learning
- ❖ Representatives from industry/relevant profession
- ❖ Learner representative
- ❖ QQI representative if appropriate

Panel members are selected with the aim of forming a balanced panel which has:

- ❖ an understanding of the relevant sector;
- ❖ experience of working in the sector;

- ❖ knowledge and expertise in relation to teaching and assessment;
- ❖ expertise in relation to national and international trends relevant to the programme;
- ❖ knowledge and expertise in relation to the management of third level education.

Each of the panel members will be supplied with the Self-Evaluation report and any necessary supporting documentation well in advance of the panel visit to the College.

Step 2: Review Panel visit

In order to complete its work, the review panel visits the College to review the relevant documentation including the self-evaluation report, discuss the programme with the Course Review Team, students and graduates of the programme(s) and review the facilities available for conducting the programme(s).

The chair of the Course Review Team is responsible for agreeing the agenda for the panel visit with the chair of the panel, ensuring all relevant personnel are available to meet with the panel as required and that all relevant documentation is available.

The general issues considered and evaluated by the External Peer Review Panel encompass all of the issues considered by an accreditation panel but with an emphasis on the following aspects of the self-evaluation:

- ❖ Quality and comprehensiveness of the self-study process;
- ❖ Principles and philosophy underpinning the self-study and their relevance to the course;
- ❖ Evidence of course improvements in the annual monitoring and quality outcomes;
- ❖ Logic of the detailed recommendations arising from the self-study;
- ❖ Appropriateness of the proposed changes to the course to fulfil these recommendations;
- ❖ Overall health of the course and the procedures for academic quality assurance within it.

On completion of the site visit, the Review Panel and Course Review Team meet and the chairperson of the Panel provides verbal feedback to the Course Review Team. Issues are discussed and clarifications are provided. The Panel and Review Team discuss recommendations in relation to developing and improving the programme(s).

Step 3: Panel Report

Following the panel visit the chairperson is responsible for producing a written panel report within one month of the site visit, which gives the panel's response to the self-

evaluation conducted by the College and their recommendations for developments and improvements to the programme. It should also include a recommendation, positive, negative or conditional, in respect of the continuing validation of the programme(s), which are the subject of the review. The report should specify the duration of revalidation recommended; not in excess of five years. The Course Review Team will have the opportunity to review the report before it is finalised, in order to check for factual accuracy.

3.2.1.3 Phase 3: Adoption and Implementation of Recommendations

This is the final stage in the Re-validation process. The panel report is circulated to the Academic Council and the Programme Board. The recommendations of the report are formally approved and adopted at the Academic Council meeting. Following this the recommendations are taken up by the relevant Programme Board, which will plan for and monitor their implementation.

3.2.1.4 Submission to QQI for revalidation of programme(s)

The Self- Evaluation Report, together with the Panel Report and the Implementation Plan, will be forwarded to QQI/HET for approval. These will be accompanied by a formal request for re-validation, or withdrawal of validation. All relevant reports arising from the re-validation process will be published on the College's website.

Section 4: Assessment of Students

Supporting Documents:

1.   QQI (2013) Assessment and Standards (Revised)
2.   QQI (2015) Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining (Revised)
3.   QQI (2013) Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers

4.1 Principles of Assessment in the Open Training College

4.1.1 Criterion-Referenced Assessment
The Open Training College operates a system of criterion-referenced assessment for all accredited programmes. Criterion-referenced assessment is assessment based on learning outcomes, established and agreed for all modules, stages and programmes accredited by QQI. This system ensures that assessment, in all instances is valid and reliable and applied in a fair and consistent manner, for all students, across all programmes and assessors.

4.1.2 Applied Assessment
The mission statement of the College indicates that our goal is to provide accredited learning opportunities for staff working in disability, non-profit, community and voluntary services. In line with this, all programme content and assessment activities of accredited College courses are applied to the occupational context of the subject area. Students work closely with supervisors and mentors in their workplace to analyse and understand the practical application of their learning, and carry out assessment tasks at work, under the guidance of their course tutor.

4.1.3 Fit-for-Purpose Assessment Techniques
Accredited Open Training College programmes are assessed by a combination of applied practical assignment, examination, projects, case studies, continuous assessment, group work and e-learning activities. Various approaches to examinations are employed including traditional closed book, open book and case study.

The assessment for each module is carefully designed by the course delivery team to address the key learning outcomes for the module, as well as the broader learning outcomes for the stage and overall programme. Details of assessment requirements for all modules are included on the programme schedule for all courses, and further detailed in the Assessment Strategies for each module, programme and stage.

4.1.4 Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects (ACCS)
The ACCS system in operation in the College is in place to facilitate learners who wish to work towards the achievement of a full award by studying the component modules at their own pace.

When a student has successfully completed a module or number of modules in any given stage those modules are assessed and graded by the College and submitted to the External Examiner and Examination Board (Results Approval Panel for FET). This ACCS system allows for students who may need to withdraw from their programme of study for a period of time, to retain credits for the modules they have completed and to return to the programme at the stage they were at before they withdrew. However, when a student wishes to return to the College to resume their programme, the College will review the student's work individually. The student may be required to attend a viva voce and/or resubmit work, depending on the length of time that has passed and the work experience of the student during that time. This is to ensure that students' knowledge and skills are sufficiently current and relevant for them to continue with their studies.

Students are advised (in the Student Handbook and Withdrawal Notification Form) that programmes may change as a result of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement processes, and as a result students returning to their studies after a period of withdrawal may be required to complete additional modules in order to meet the updated requirements of their chosen programme.

4.1.5 Provision of Information on Assessment to Students

Information on all policies, procedures and regulations pertaining to assessments are provided to students in the Student Handbook, which is made available to students on the e-learning centre for the duration of their studies with the College. The Student Handbook is reviewed and updated on an annual basis to reflect current practices, guidelines and regulations pertaining to student assessment on QQI accredited programmes.

Assignment due dates are provided to students on commencement of their course. These dates are clearly indicated on the Course Calendar. Students will also be given access to the Assessment Strategies relevant to their programme of study.

In recognition of the necessity for a two-way flow of information on assessment between the College and students, regular feedback is sought from students regarding their experiences of assessment on College programmes. Following completion of each module, and on completion of each academic year students are requested to participate in an online survey, in which the College requests feedback from students on all aspects of the programme including assessment.

4.1.6 Organisational Structures for the Management and Conduct of Assessment

Day to day operation of assessment within the Open Training College is managed by the course delivery team for each programme/stage; this team is generally made up of the Tutors/Assessors and the Course Director.

The role of the *Tutor/Assessor* in the assessment process is to:
- ❖ Communicate the requirements for assessment of each module to the student using the various communication methods available: Workshop, tutorials, e-mail and telephone tutorials.
- ❖ Provide support and guidance to students as they complete assessment activities.
- ❖ Track student progress through the assessment process and ensure assessment work is received from students by agreed deadlines.
- ❖ Consult with the Course Director regarding difficulties individual students may be facing and supports they require as a result.
- ❖ Grade student work in accordance with the assessment rubric for the module, and with the regulations outlined in QQI (2013) Assessment and Standards (Revised).
- ❖ Provide students with their provisional grade for that module and feedback regarding their performance on the assessment activities.
- ❖ Communicate the plagiarism process to students, including how they can avoid plagiarism and the benefit of using Turn-it-in prior to submission.
- ❖ Highlight and investigate possible instances of plagiarism in student assessment work, and bring findings to the attention of the Course Director.

The role of the *Course Director* in the assessment process is to:

- ❖ Draft the marking rubric for the module, in line with defined assessment activities and learning outcomes.
- ❖ Consult with individual students regarding difficulties they may be facing and supports they require as a result.
- ❖ Monitor and ensure fair and consistent implementation of assessment regulations across all assessors.
- ❖ Implement cross-marking procedures.
- ❖ Participate in investigations into possible instances of plagiarism.
- ❖ Oversee the proper conduct of assessments, including invigilation of examinations.
- ❖ Ensure security in all matters pertaining to assessment materials.

❖ Ensure that all assessment entries are notified to the Examination Board/QQI by the required date(s).

❖ Ensure that assessment results are communicated to the appropriate committees and Academic Council.

❖ Ensure that examination question papers and appropriate assessment rubrics are prepared by internal assessors, sent in good time for approval by External Examiner(s) and printed in good time.

❖ Ensure that appropriate examination accommodation arrangements are made for each student with an individual support need.

❖ Ensure that assignments and examination answer scripts are examined by Internal and External Examiner(s) and that results for each student are made available for meetings of the Examination Board for the programme.

❖ Ensure that accurate records with regard to continuous assessment are maintained and made available to External Examiner(s).

❖ Liaise with the Manager of Academic Affairs to ensure proper arrangements are made for holding meetings of the Examination Board.

❖ Ensure that students are provided with the information relevant to them with regard to the conduct and regulation of assessments, including access to the assessment strategies relevant to their programme of study.

❖ Ensure that students are provided with the information relevant to them with regard to plagiarism policies and procedures.

❖ Ensure that Assessment Strategies are in place for all modules, stages and programmes under their remit, and that these strategies are regularly reviewed.

❖ Approving the assessment rubric for each module, in line with defined assessment activities and learning outcomes.

❖ Communicate the individual assessment process for each module to the relevant tutors and ensure their understanding of the process and their responsibilities in that process.

❖ Communicating the plagiarism process to the tutors and ensuring they understand the process and their responsibilities in that process.

The day-to-day activities of the course delivery team, as described above, are supported at a quality assurance level by the Academic Council, and by several of its sub-committees:

The **Programme Boards** are responsible for producing and implementing the Assessment Strategies for each programme, module and stage. These strategies provide

guidance to the course delivery team in designing the assessment activities and rubric for the modules. The effectiveness of assessment strategies is discussed at programme boards, with reference to student feedback and to assessment results, and recommendations for improvement are made as a result.

The *Assessment Committee* monitors the implementation of the Assessment Strategies by the course delivery teams of the College, to ensure a fair and consistent approach to assessment across College programmes and subjects. The application of penalties to student assessment results is reviewed and monitored by this committee, as well as approving students to sit supplemental examinations. In addition, this committee is responsible for ensuring College activities pertaining to student assessment are compliant with the most recent QQI regulations.

The *Disciplinary Committee* oversees the application of the College policies and procedures regarding Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct in the assessment process.

The *Examination Boards* review the outcomes of external examiner moderation of programme(s) under consideration, conduct QA monitoring of assessment techniques, consistency of assessment and comparison of standards of programme(s) under consideration with national norms and best practice, agree assessment results for all learners of programme(s) under consideration, consider learner appeals in relation to assessment results and procedures of programme(s) under consideration, and make recommendations to Academic Council, review penalties applied to assessment activities of programme(s) under consideration and review/monitor statistics/trends regarding assessment results of programme(s) under consideration.

Finally the *Academic Council* makes final decisions on appeals made by students in relation to their assessment outcomes.

4.2 Assessment Regulations

4.2.1 Assessment Strategies

Programme Assessment Strategies are produced, implemented and reviewed by the Programme Boards (or Programme Development Committee in the case of new programmes) for each programme and their implementation monitored by the Programme Boards and Assessment Committee. Module and Stage Assessment Strategies will also be produced for each of programme's constituent parts.

Each programme assessment strategy will have the following functions/features:

❖ Link the programme's assessment instruments (summative and formative, including continuous assessment and repeat assessment) to the minimum (and any other) intended programme learning outcomes, as well as intended module and stage learning outcomes.

❖ Describe and provide a rationale for the choice of assessment tasks, criteria and procedures. It should also address their fairness and consistency, specifically their validity, reliability and authenticity.

❖ Describe any special regulations (e.g. learners may be required to pass some key modules outright and not rely on pass by compensation).

❖ Regulate, build upon and integrate the module assessment strategies and (where used) stage assessment strategies.

❖ Provide contingent strategy for cases where learners claim exemption from modules, including for recognition of prior learning.

❖ Match the programme's assessment instruments to the requirements of the institutional grading system, particularly concerning the recording and combination of module grades/marks (i.e. provide clear criteria for grading and marking).

❖ Ensure that the programme's continuous assessment workload is appropriately balanced.

❖ Relate to the programme's teaching and learning strategy.

QQI (2013) Assessment and Standards Revised

4.2.2 Marking & Grading

Marking and grading of student assessment work is carried out by trained, competent assessors, in accordance with standardised assessment rubrics specifically designed for each assessment task to ensure accurate criterion-referenced assessment against the relevant learning outcomes.

The Open Training College operates a percentage grading system for all its QQI accredited programmes.

The grading scheme used by the College in relation to QQI courses is as follows, this scheme also applies to award classifications for major programmes:

	Major Programmes at level 6 and 7	Major Programmes at level 8	Description
70% and over	Distinction	First Class Honours	Achievement includes that required for a pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
60% - 69%	Merit (Grade 1)	Second class honours (Grade 1)	Achievement includes that required for a pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
50% - 59%	Merit (Grade 2)	Second class honours (Grade 2)	Achievement includes that required for a pass and in some respects is significantly beyond this
40% - 49%	Pass	Pass	Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes
35% - 39%	Pass by Compensation	Pass by Compensation	Pass by compensation may only be applied in eligible cases
0% - 35%	Fail	Fail	

Table 3: *Grading Schemes and Major Award Classifications*

Note: Any QQI accredited minor, supplemental awards or special purpose awards of less than 60 credits, offered by the College will be unclassified.

4.2.3 Pass by Compensation
A student who fails to attain the required pass standard in one or two of the modules in a stage (not to exceed one-third of the total credit value for that year), may be eligible to pass the assessment by compensation.

Compensation may be applied on the following basis:
1.   Where the assessment consists of:
        (a)   five or more modules, compensation may apply in the case of a maximum of two (not to exceed one-third of the total credit value for that year);
        (b)   fewer than five modules, compensation may apply in the case of only one (not to exceed one-third of the total credit value for that year).
2.   The marks obtained in the modules(s) listed on the approved course schedule, being considered for compensation must not be lower than 35%, where the pass standard is 40%.
3.   The pass standard must be reached, on the first attempt in all the remaining Modules of that year.

4. Aggregate excess gross marks above the pass standard obtained in passed modules must be at least double the deficiency in the module(s) being considered for compensation.

5. Compensation cannot be applied to repeat assessments (i.e. modules which were failed on first attempt).

6. Compensation can only apply where all the modules as listed on the approved programme schedule for a stage are presented at the same sitting of the Examination Board. This means that students may not use exempted modules or modules completed in previous academic years for compensation purposes.

4.2.4 Late Submission of Assessments

On commencement of their course, assessment submission deadlines are provided to students on their course calendar. In normal circumstances all students are expected to honour these dates.

However, in adverse personal circumstances students can apply for an extension to the submission deadline. In the first instance the request must be discussed with the tutor, prior to the submission date. Following approval by the tutor in this discussion an e-mail request must be made to the Course Director, who will respond to confirm the extension and new submission date. If applying for an extension for reasons of ill health, a medical certificate will be requested. The normal period for an extension is two weeks. If a further two-week extension period is required, an application must be made directly to the Course Director, following the same procedures.

Where the above procedure is not adhered to the following penalties will be imposed on work submitted after the submission deadline has passed:

- ❖ Up to 1 week late a penalty of 5% of marks will be applied;
- ❖ 1-4 weeks a penalty of 10% of marks will apply;
- ❖ 4 weeks or more a fail grade will be awarded.

The College does not accept more than two late submissions (where penalties are imposed), from any student. Third and subsequent late submissions will not be accepted for assessment in that year. The student will be eligible to submit in subsequent years. Late submission of the final module of each year will not be accepted.

4.2.5 Failed Assessments

A student who achieves less than 40% is deemed to have failed in that particular subject (unless eligible to pass by compensation). Any student who fails an assessment is

permitted to resubmit, or re-sit, in the case of examination. One resubmission will be accepted, normally within a period of three weeks (this may be longer in the case of a project or other continuous assessment method).

While resubmissions/re-sits are graded in the same way as all other assessments students may not be awarded any grade higher than pass for a resubmission/re-sit (i.e. resubmission/re-sits are subject to a cap of 49%).

4.2.6 Examination Regulations

Examinations are a fundamental assessment component of all QQI higher education and training accredited courses run by the College. The procedure for the running of Examinations for each course is as follows:

1. Students are made aware upon commencement of a programme/stage which modules are assessed by examination. Examination dates are set. These are indicated on the course calendar.

2. Approximately two months prior to the scheduled date examination papers and assessment rubrics are drafted by the Tutor/Assessor.

3. On approval of the Course Director, draft papers are forwarded to the External Examiner(s) for review and comment (by registered post).

4. On receipt of External Examiner(s) comments, papers and assessment rubrics are finalised and approved by the Course Director.

5. Students undertake Examinations at designated venues.

6. The procedure for the marking and grading of exams is the same as that used for assignments.

4.2.6.1 Supplemental Examination(s)

The procedure in relation to supplemental examinations applies to two distinct groups:

Students who do not attend on the day:

Any student who is prevented, for a genuine reason, from sitting an examination is permitted to re-sit it at the supplemental examination date. Students who are unable to sit an examination must notify the College as soon as possible of the reasons for their absence. This must be followed by a written explanation within three days. The College accepts the following reasons for non-attendance at an examination:

- own illness or injury (confirmed by medical certificate);
- illness or injury of the candidate's child (confirmed by medical certificate);
- family bereavement;

- birth of a child;

- unforeseen event of a serious nature (the College reserves the right to determine the 'seriousness' of an event).

Students who re-sit at a supplemental examination for any of the reasons above will be considered a 'first attempt', and will not be subject to any cap on the grade they may achieve in that exam.

Students who fail to sit an examination for an insufficient reason may also sit the supplemental examination for that subject. Insufficient reasons include any event not covered by the list above, for example being on holiday outside the country. Such students will be considered 'second attempt' students and their work may not be awarded any grade higher than pass (i.e. subject to cap of 49%). These students will also be required to pay a repeat examination fee.

Students who attend and subsequently fail to achieve a pass grade.

Students who sit their examination but fail to achieve a pass grade are permitted to re-sit the examination at the supplemental examinations. Such students will be considered 'second attempt' students and their work may not be awarded any grade higher than pass (i.e. subject to cap of 49%). These students will also be required to pay a repeat examination fee.

4.2.7 Assessment Feedback

The College is committed to providing students with clear and comprehensive feedback on each assessment activity. Each student will receive his/her provisional mark and grade, and written feedback in the form of a completed assessment rubric, within six weeks of the assignment/examination submission date.

4.2.8 Appeals

Following assessment grades and feedback being issued to students, tutors will be available to discuss same with students who wish to query their assessment outcome or who require assistance with understanding their assessment outcome.

Where a student is dissatisfied with the application of the assessment process in relation to the assessment of their assignment or examination, the following appeals procedure applies.

Students may appeal to the College for their work to be re-checked and/or reviewed.

❖ RE-CHECK means the administrative operation of checking the recording and the calculation of marks (This is not considered a formal appeal).

❖ REVIEW means the re-consideration, in detail, of all or part of the existing assignment and/or examination material where feasible by the internal and/or external examiner(s).

Any request for a Review must be made in writing to the appropriate Course Director and signed by the student.

The written submission for an appeal must identify the elements of the assignment or examination for which the review is being sought. It must also specify the grounds on which the review is sought and must contain all the information that the student requires to have taken into account in the review.

The grounds for re-checking and reviewing must be specified under the following three headings:

1. The assessment/examination procedures of the College have not been properly implemented.
2. The procedures do not adequately cover the student's individual requirements.
3. Compassionate circumstances related to the candidate's personal situation were made known to the College by the candidate prior to or during the programme, of which the Board of Examiners were unaware.

The *appeals process* is as follows:

1. Having specified the details outlined above, the student may appeal in writing to his/her tutor within three weeks of receiving the grade/feedback and additional feedback will be given.
2. If, following discussion with his/her tutor, the issue has not been resolved to the student's satisfaction, he/she may request in writing to the Course Director that their work be further cross-marked by the Course Director and feedback will be given.
3. If, following steps one and two, the student wishes to make a further appeal, he/she may request in writing to the College Director (within a period of three weeks following feedback from the Course Director) that his/her work be reviewed by the External Examiners and the Assessment Committee and a recommendation made to the Academic Council. The Council will review the appeal and determine the final grade to be awarded.

Any student in an award year whose overall grade changes as a result of a decision made by an Examination Board, will be notified immediately of this change, by phone, by the Course Director or Tutor. In such instances the student may appeal this decision, in writing, to the College Director, within 5 days of being notified of the change. This appeal will be considered by the Academic Council.

4.2.9 Requirements for Progression

In normal circumstances only students who have:

• satisfactorily followed their course of study;

• met all course requirements, including satisfactory completion of all assessments to the required pass standard;

• complied with regulations pertaining to fees;

will be eligible for progression to award or to subsequent stages of their programme.

However, in extreme mitigating circumstances a student may be permitted to progress with missing credit. Missing credit may not exceed 16% of the credit for the stage, i.e. 10 credits per 60-credit stage. Progression under these circumstances must be approved by the appropriate Examination Board.

4.2.10 Exemptions & Recognition of Prior Learning

The College offers exemptions on a modular basis to applicants who have successfully completed comparable accredited learning in another institute. To apply for an exemption the applicant must provide the College with evidence of (a) the level of previous study on the National Framework of Qualifications (or equivalent) (b) the specific content covered and (c) their academic ability. In addition, students granted exemptions may also be required to complete bridging studies and assessment. The College reviews all applications for exemption on an individual basis. It is only when the College is completely satisfied that the applicant meets the stated criteria that an exemption will be granted. Exemptions may be granted against any stage of a programme.

Where the module that is being exempted counts towards the overall result for an award an exemption will result in the recommendation of an unclassified award to QQI, except in the case of the previous learning having been accredited by the Open Training College. In this instance the learner will be eligible to carry the grade previously achieved, and to count this towards their new award. The learner will also have the option to decline the offer of exemption and carry out the regular requirements of the module(s) and be awarded a grade based on their achievement in the module, which will be put forward for

the award to be classified. The credit value of exemptions awarded will not be greater than the credit value of the previous accredited learning.

Previous accredited learning to be considered for exemption purposes must be at the same or higher level than the module(s) for which the exemption is being sought. Where ECTS credits have been achieved by the learner additional credit will not be awarded through this exemptions process.

Exemptions will be awarded by the Open Training College in accordance with Sectoral Convention 5 (Post award achievement required for an additional major award at the same level) and Protocol 4.4.2 (Exemption from studying a module) of QQI (2013) Assessment and Standards Revised.

4.3 Academic Integrity in the Assessment Process

4.3.1 Plagiarism Policy

It is the policy of the Open Training College to provide students with a clear definition of what plagiarism is; give guidelines as to how it can be avoided; inform students about the steps that will be taken should they be suspected of, or found to have plagiarised material in their assessments; and the resulting sanctions and penalties that may be applied.

We believe that the procedures relating to suspected acts of plagiarism must be clearly understood by all stakeholders and must be applied consistently, taking into account the responsibility to be fair and equitable to all learners. Consistent with best academic practice, plagiarism is viewed seriously by the Open Training College and can, following a rigorous investigation process, result in expulsion of the student concerned. All investigations into suspected plagiarism, including initial discussions, are recorded and maintained on a student's permanent file. Students are informed that under Freedom of Information a student has the right to request access to all documentation and reports arising from investigation into suspected plagiarism in their work.

Plagiarism is the act of submitting another person's work as one's own. Plagiarism comes in many shapes and forms ranging from the copying, without acknowledging the source, of whole sections of published works, to the un-acknowledged use of text, diagrams, illustrations or formulae taken from unpublished works e.g. other students work. Plagiarism may also arise from cheating in exam situations, fabrication of evidence, collusion or collaboration. When a student submits any piece of work for academic assessment, that act makes the implicit statement that the work is his or her own and that

it is being presented specifically and uniquely for the purpose of credit towards their final result. When a student submits work as their own, without adequately acknowledging its source, they are in breach of professional and academic good practice and ethics.

Key steps in the prevention of plagiarism in Higher Education include providing students with a clear definition of what plagiarism entails, giving guidelines as to how it can be avoided and informing students about the penalties that will be applied should they be found to have plagiarised material in their assignments. Information on how to avoid plagiarism and how to reference correctly in assignments is covered with students during tutorials, in MyOTC learning materials and as a virtual tutorial in the online Study Skills module.

The increased inclusion of E-learning methodologies by the College and the consequential result of students using the Internet as a learning resource encourage students to access textual material in electronic format. This widens the potential for the plagiarism of electronic materials. 'Turnitin' is an online plagiarism detection resource utilised by both students and Colleges as a plagiarism prevention and detection resource. In order to highlight any unoriginal work, the software compares uploaded documents (i.e. student assessments) to:

1.   A database of journals/books
2.   A database of assignments submitted by other students
3.   Articles published directly on the Internet

All Open Training College students are required to submit their assessments through the turnitin website.

4.3.2 Procedures to be taken by the College if a students' work is suspected of plagiarism
The following diagram and explanatory notes illustrate the steps that the College will take if a student is suspected of plagiarism. It is anticipated that, where possible, the process be completed as quickly as possible and within the timeframe of eight weeks. Please note that incidents of plagiarism will be maintained on a student's permanent record, and that the process described below will apply for the full period of their registration, regardless of progression within a course or onto a new course.

The College sees the dialogue between the student and the tutor and the mentoring and coaching of the student to avoid plagiarism, as a Level 1 'Pre Plagiarism Learning Level'. At this stage, the tutor will identify any plagiarism that occurs due to lack of referencing skills and direct the student to the appropriate supports provided by the College to support

appropriate student behaviour around this area. Should the student disregard the need to develop these skills or demonstrate more serious plagiarism (e.g. copying directly from another student's work) the investigation will move to Level 2 or 3 as deemed appropriate. These procedures are outlined below.

Level	Process	Documentation
Level 1 **(Pre Plagiarism)**	**Tutor identifies lack of referencing skills** - Student notified - Initial exploratory discussion with student by telephone - Information Gathering	**Note** made on tutorial form and/ or rubric Student directed to appropriate Study Supports
	Tutor identifies possible case of plagiarism - Classify Offence - Refer to Course Director	**Letter to student** informing them of progression to level 2 investigation **Report A**
	Tutor concludes there is no case of plagiarism to be answered at this level	**Letter to student** informing them of finding of no case of plagiarism to be answered
Level 2	**Student case referred to Course Director** - Reviews Report A - Meets with investigating Tutor - Meets with student	**Report B**
	Course Director decision - Classify Offence - Determine sanction/penalty *or* - Refer back to Tutor *or* - Refer to College Director	**Letter to student** - Student accepts *or* - Appeals to Disciplinary Committee
Level 3	**Student case referred to College Director** - Reviews all documentation - Meets with Course Director and investigating Tutor - Forms Panel of Enquiry	**Report C**
	College Director decision - Classify Offence - Determine sanction/penalty and meet with the student *or* - Refer back to Course Director - Form Panel of Enquiry	**Letter to student** - Student accepts *or* - Appeals to Disciplinary Committee

Appeal	Student appeal received by Disciplinary Committee	Disciplinary Committee report
	- Reviews all documentation - Meets Tutor/Course Director/College Director as appropriate	- Appeal to Academic Council (AC)
	Disciplinary Committee decision	Letter to student
	- Classify Offence - Determine sanction/penalty	- AC decision is final - No appeal

LEVEL 1

At the 'Pre Plagiarism Learning Level' the tutor will identify any pre plagiarism errors due to lack of referencing skills and direct the student to the appropriate supports provided by the College to support appropriate student behaviour in this area. Should the student disregard the need to develop these skills or demonstrate more serious plagiarism (e.g. copying directly from another student's work) the investigation will move to Level 2 or 3 as deemed appropriate.

Reasons a tutor might suspect a possible case of plagiarism:

1. Specifically identified text by 'Turnitin' software as containing an unacceptable amount of material taken directly from identified sources.
2. Un-cited text copied from College materials.
3. Incongruity in style of writing e.g. deviation from students' own voice, use of advanced academic writing.
4. Inconsistency of fluency and spelling.
5. Change in formatting e.g. font, headings, margins; inconsistency of I.T. style e.g. very complicated table/chart having been inserted etc.
6. Lack of flow and/or development of topic. Paragraphs inserted that are inconsistent with previous points made – evidence of cutting and pasting.
7. Work that is very similar or the same as another students work[12] .
8. Work that is very similar or the same as the student's previously assessed work.
9. A piece of work written to a much higher standard than the student's previous work.
10. Suspicion that the student may have had assignment written for them by another person – 'ghost' writing.

This list is not exhaustive and the tutor may commence an investigation based on any reasonable suspicion. Following initial analysis the tutor may decide that there is no case of plagiarism to be answered. In this instance the student's attention will be drawn to the incident and feedback provided through the assessment rubric. If the tutor confirms that a possible case of plagiarism has occurred the investigation continues to the information gathering stage as follows.

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[12] In a situation where two current students have presented the same/similar work both students will be subject to the plagiarism policy and procedures and both may have penalties applied as appropriate. In the case of a current student presenting work which seriously overlaps with that of a previous student the current student will be dealt with through these procedures and the previous student will be informed of the situation. The current student in question however will not be identified in this communication. There will be no exceptions to this practice.

The tutor notifies the student of the situation and has an initial exploratory discussion by telephone. Following this, the tutor commences the information gathering process. Information gathering may include but is not limited to review of previous work, discussion with a previous tutor, and review of assignments of current or former students, and consideration of any explanation/comments offered by the student in the initial telephone conversation. Students are made aware that their previous work may be reviewed as part of an investigation to provide background information about their standard of work.

On completion of the information gathering stage the tutor compiles a written report (Report A) and based on the evidence makes a decision as to whether or not there is a case of plagiarism to be answered. In making his/her decision, in addition to the information gathered the tutor will also consider:

1. The Declaration of Authorship Form and the Student Handbook terms and conditions Statement that have been submitted by the student stating that they have understood the nature of plagiarism and its implications as outlined in the Student Handbook.
2. Was the information about plagiarism and its implications made sufficiently clear?
3. Has the student misunderstood the above?
4. Is this a first incident?
5. Previous performance and assessment results from completed assignments.
6. The student's participation in programme/attendance at workshops etc.
7. Extenuating personal circumstances?
8. Has the issue arisen due to any oversight by the College?

If the tutor decides that yes, there is a case to be answered they will notify the student of this outcome in writing and refer the case for consideration to the Course Director. The student may exercise their right to appeal to the Disciplinary Committee at this stage, and will be informed of this in the letter from the tutor.

If the tutor decides that there is no case of plagiarism to be answered they will also notify the student of this outcome in writing.

Level 1: Minor Offence Classification		
Criteria		*Penalties/Sanctions*
Amount/Extent	• Low percentage from individual source identified by Turnitin	1. Reflective grade: deduct marks for referencing portion of assignment and/ or
History	• Basic referencing error	2. Reflective grade: deduct marks for portion of assignment with referencing errors
Level/Stage	• Too many direct quotes	
Additional Characteristics	• No evidence of deliberate attempt by student	
	• Extenuating personal circumstances	

LEVEL 2

Student case is referred to the Course Director by Tutor who has completed investigation at Level 1. The student has received notification of this development by the tutor.

The Course Director commences the information gathering process, which will include but is not limited to a review of Report A, meeting with the investigating tutor and meeting with the student.

On completion of the information gathering stage the Course Director compiles a written report (Report B) and, based on the evidence, makes a decision as to whether or not there is a case of plagiarism to be answered at Level 2 or above.

If the Course Director decides that yes, there is a case to be answered they will classify the offence as Level 2 (major) or Level 3 (grave). In the case of a Level 2 offence the Course Director will determine a sanction/penalty (see below for sanctions/penalties available at Level 2) and will notify the student of this outcome in writing. In the case of a Level 3 offence the Course Director will refer the case to the Disciplinary Committee for further investigation at Level 3; the student will also be notified of this outcome in writing. The student may exercise their right to appeal to the Disciplinary Committee at this stage, and will be informed of this in the letter from the tutor.

If the Course Director decides that there is no case of plagiarism to be answered at Level 2 the case will be referred back to the investigating tutor for sanction/penalty at Level 1; the student will be notified of this outcome in writing.

Level 2: Major Offence Classification		
Criteria		*Penalties/Sanctions*
Amount/Extent	• High percentage from individual source identified by Turnitin	1. Viva voce
History	• Repeat offence	2. Fail grade awarded with opportunity to resubmit (cap of 49%)
Level/Stage	• Advanced stage of programme	3. Award bare pass mark (40%)
		4. Fail grade awarded without opportunity to resubmit (re-take module)
Additional Characteristics	• Deliberate attempt by student	
	• No evidence of formative engagement with supports and materials	

LEVEL 3

Student case is referred to the Disciplinary Committee by Course Director who has completed investigation at Level 2. The student has received notification of this development by the tutor and has not exercised their right to appeal to the Disciplinary Committee.

The Disciplinary Committee reviews all documentation relating to the investigation to date and meets with the investigating Course Director and Tutor to discuss the case, and based on the evidence available decides whether or not there is a case to be answered at Level 3.

If the Disciplinary Committee decides that yes, there is a case to be answered they will classify the offence as Level 3 (grave) and give a determination of an appropriate sanction/penalty (see below for sanctions/penalties available at Level 3). The Committee will arrange a meeting with the student to reiterate the plagiarism investigation process, findings and outcome to the student and inform them of the sanction/penalty to be applied,

and of their right to appeal any decision to the Academic Council. Following this meeting the Course Director will notify the student of this outcome in writing; the student may exercise their right to appeal to the Academic Council at this stage, and will be informed of this in the letter from the Course Director.

If the Course Director decides that there is no case of plagiarism to be answered at Level 3 the case will be referred back to the investigating tutor for sanction/penalty at Level 2; the student will be notified of this outcome in writing.

Level 3: Grave Offence Classification		
Criteria		*Penalties/Sanctions*
Amount/Extent	• High percentage from individual source identified by Turnitin	1. Fail grade awarded without opportunity to resubmit or proceed (defer year)
	• Multiple offences	2. Reduced award classification
History		3. Expel student with credits
	• Advanced stage of programme	4. Expel student without credits
Level/Stage		
Additional Characteristics	• Deliberate attempt by student	
	• Blatantly plagiarised material	
	• No evidence of formative engagement with supports and materials	

APPEALS:

At any stage of the Plagiarism process a student may appeal to the Disciplinary Committee for the handling of their case/sanctions imposed to be reviewed. Appeals must be made in writing to the chair of the committee within two weeks of correspondence regarding the plagiarism investigation.

The Disciplinary Committee is a subcommittee of the Academic Council, chaired by the Assistant College Director/Manager of Academic Affairs, and includes one independent external person and an internal person who has not been involved in the case.

The Disciplinary Committee will:

- Review all documentation and evidence arising from the investigation to date
- Review documentation and evidence arising from any previous plagiarism investigations relating to the student
- Meet with the investigating Tutor/Course Director as appropriate
- Meet with the student

Following this review the Committee will decide whether or not there is a case to be answered.

If the Disciplinary Committee decides that yes, there is a case to be answered they will classify the offence as Level 1 (minor), Level 2 (major) or Level 3 (grave), and will determine a sanction/penalty according to the level of the offence and will notify the student of this outcome in writing.

If the Disciplinary Committee decides that there is no case of plagiarism to be answered the student will be notified of this outcome in writing.

All decisions of the Disciplinary Committee are noted by Academic Council.

A final report comprising detailed notes on the review by the Committee and its decision will be maintained on the student's file indefinitely.

4.4 Quality Assuring the Assessment Process

4.4.1 The Assessment Committee
The Assessment committee is a subcommittee of the Academic Council, charged with overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the College's assessment regulations. Its terms of reference include:

- ❖ Revise and discuss assessment techniques utilised by College programmes;
- ❖ Review/monitor College statistics/trends regarding assessment results;
- ❖ Review and approve of students sitting supplemental examinations;
- ❖ Approval of policy on penalties to be applied to assessment activities;
- ❖ Ensure compliance of OTC assessment policy and procedures with QQI higher education and training regulations;
- ❖ Monitor the implementation of assessment strategies for College programmes and modules;
- ❖ Monitor the recording of penalties applied to assessment activities.

Membership of the Committee:
- ❖ Manager of Academic Affairs (Chair): Ex-officio
- ❖ Internal assessor representative of each programme/stage: By appointment

Meetings: As deemed necessary by the committee

Sub-groups: As deemed necessary by the committee

Co-option of members: As deemed necessary by the committee, and approved by Academic Council (prior to appointment in the case of external members).

Reporting arrangements: The Chair of the committee reports on the activities of the committee to the Academic Council.

Recording procedures: The Chair of the committee is responsible for ensuring that minutes of all meetings are maintained and available to internal staff of the College and to the Academic Council.

4.4.2 Cross-Marking Procedures
A percentage of all assignments and assessment scripts are cross-marked within the College as they are submitted by students for marking. In addition to reviewing the

standard of marking against the assessment rubric and the marks awarded to specific students, the cross-marking process also facilitates informal feedback between Course Directors and Tutors on their interpretation of the rubrics, their standard of marking and possible suggestions for improvement. This procedure requires College staff to be vigilant and transparent in their application of assessment standards.

Procedure:

1. Assignments/examination scripts are marked in the first instance by the individual tutor assigned to each student.

2. A sample of each batch of assignments (usually 10%) are then cross-marked by a second marker – usually the Course Director or a Tutor or Course Director of another course.

3. In instances where a student is failing an assignment, a second marking is always carried out.

4. In exceptional circumstances (for example where a significant discrepancy exists between a first and second marking) a third marking may be carried out. The Course Director normally undertakes this providing they were not involved in the original cross-marking. Alternatively, this is done by the Course Director of another course, or the College Director.

5. Following completion of the cross-marking process students are provided with a provisional mark and feedback on their assignment.

4.4.3 Procedures for Corrective Action

Corrective action can be defined as the need to amend a student's mark for an assessment due to a discrepancy in the manner in which an assessment has been carried out or a grade recorded.

The Open Training College implements the following procedures to ensure standards and consistency in the assessment process and to avoid where possible the need for corrective action to be taken in relation to learner assessments:

❖ Assessment Strategies

The Assessment Strategies outline the learning outcomes and associated assessment methods for all assessors to follow. These are complemented by the assessment rubrics, which further guide the assessor in making a decision regarding assessment grades.

❖ Cross-marking

It is the policy of the College to carry out a second marking of at least 10% of all assessments, including all assessments that have been allocated a percentage mark which falls on the cusp of a grade. This process will ensure all assessors mark consistently and will highlight any discrepancies in the marking of an assessment or in the administration of learners' work.

In the event of a discrepancy identified in the manner in which an assessment has been carried out or a grade recorded the following procedures for corrective action will apply:

1. The assessor within whose work the discrepancy was highlighted will be identified and all assessments returned by that assessor will be checked.
2. If the discrepancy is identified as being a once-off occurrence then the necessary edits will be made and the assessor informed of this. If further/repeated discrepancies are identified all assessments will be returned to the assessor with directions to re-check their work.
3. If the corrective action results in a change of grade for the student's work the Course Director will inform the student of this by letter.
4. Depending on the stage at which the corrective action is taken QQI and the External Examiner(s) may need to be notified of the change to the student's result.
5. The Course Director is responsible for ensuring the implementation of this procedure and recording the process and any outcomes.

4.4.4 Procedures for External Examination

External Examining is the quality assurance mechanism employed by the College to support public confidence in academic qualifications awarded to students, by introducing an independent, objective element into the procedures for the assessment of students. These procedures have been devised to ensure compliance with QQI (2013) Assessment and Standards (Revised) and QQI (2015) Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining (Revised).

The function of the External Examination process is to ensure adequacy and equity of marking procedures and standards. In particular, External Examiners ensure that appropriate standards with regard to Pass, Merit and Distinction are applied and that comparability of standards between institutions is achieved and maintained as far as is feasible.

4.4.4.1 Procedures for the Appointment of External Examiners

The External Examiner is an independent expert who is a member of the broader community of practice within the programme's field of learning and whose accomplishments attest to his/her likelihood of having the authority necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of the role.

External Examination of a programme may be carried out by an individual or team of External Examiners, depending on the number of learners involved and the range of specialisations within a programme, which may be difficult to find in any one individual. The number of examiners required for any particular programme will be determined by the size (in terms of stages and credits) and scope of that programme, and the range of experience and expertise of nominees.

❖ Competences of an External Examiner

The basic precept of External Examiner's competence has been outlined above. In addition to these basic competences, specific competences and requirements of External Examiners for a programme will be considered by the Programme Board.

❖ Process for appointing an External Examiner

Any member of teaching staff may make a nomination for the position of External Examiner. Nominees may come from the Higher Education community, or from other communities of practice including the world of work and professional practice. Nominations are brought to the attention of the Course Director, in their role as Chair of the Programme Board, for discussion at a meeting of the Programme Board. In discussing nominations the Programme Board will take into account the requirements of the programme, the need for independence and the need to avoid conflicts of interest. Following approval of an External Examiner nomination by the Programme Board this nomination is brought to the attention of the Academic Council for approval. The Academic Council ratifies the formal appointment of External Examiners.

4.4.4.2 Role and Responsibilities of the External Examiner

The main functions of the External Examiner (or External Examiner team) are:
   ❖ To review the appropriateness of the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and other programme objectives;
   ❖ To probe the actual attainment of learners by reviewing a representative sample of learner assessment during a visit to the College;

❖ To compare and contrast both the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and the actual attainment of learners with the relevant awards standards, the National Framework of Qualifications and with corresponding data from other programmes in the same discipline in Ireland and beyond, of which the examiners have knowledge and experience;

❖ To determine whether or not the applied procedures for assessment are valid, reliable, fair and consistent;

❖ To review the appropriateness of the programme assessment strategy and the assessment procedures and, flowing from this, to probe subsidiary stage and module assessment strategies;

❖ To review and provide feedback on examination formats and questions prior to their assignment in light of the programme and module assessment strategies and learners prerequisite learning. External Examiners have the right to make such suggestions, criticisms, deletions, additions and amendments as they deem appropriate;

❖ Report findings and recommendations to the College both verbally during their visit to the College and at the Examination Board meeting, and in writing using the report template provided by the College.

In addition, External Examiners of Open Training College accredited programmes are expected to:

❖ Provide support and feedback to the Course Director during the academic year with regard to the drafting of examination papers and associated marking rubrics;

❖ Visit the College at least once per academic year to conduct the review of student assessment work;

❖ Attend the meeting of the Examination Board (where feasible and possible);

❖ Complete External Examiner reports using the College template provided and return same to the Course Director within two weeks of conducting the external examination.

4.4.4.3 Induction and Ongoing Support for External Examiners

New external examiners to the College will be provided with all relevant information pertaining to the College and programme by the Manager of Academic Affairs, in the form of an Induction Pack. This pack will include:

❖ Relevant background information on the College, including Teaching and Learning Strategy

❖ Programme Aims and Objectives

- ❖ Programme Learning Outcomes
- ❖ Programme Assessment Strategies
- ❖ College Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures on the Assessment of Learners and External Examining, including guidelines for meetings of the Examination Board
- ❖ Sample assignment guidelines and marking rubric, in the College style
- ❖ Sample assessment feedback
- ❖ External Examiner's report template
- ❖ QQI Policy documents:
  - ○ QQI (2013) Assessment and Standards (Revised)
  - ○ QQI(2015) Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining (Revised)

The external examiners will receive support and guidance at induction stage, and throughout the period of their appointment with the College, from the relevant Course Director.

4.4.4.4 Formal Agreement with the External Examiner
The Course Director makes initial contact with the nominee to discuss his/her proposed appointment, the role and responsibilities of the External Examiner and the nature of the agreement between the College and the Examiner. Following verbal agreement between the nominee and Course Director, and ratification of the appointment by the Academic Council the position and responsibilities are confirmed in a formal letter from the Manager of Academic Affairs to the External Examiner.

The position of External Examiner is normally held for a period of three years, this however is subject to the continued interest and availability of the examiner and to the continued requirements of the College, and either party may amend arrangements each year. Appointment of External Examiners is communicated to QQI each academic year, and accompanied by the External Examiners' CVs.

4.4.4.5 The External Examiners' Visit to the College
The External Examiners' visit to the College normally takes place once per year per programme, on completion of the academic year, but may occur more frequently, or at any other stage of the year depending on the requirements of the College and/or the External Examiner(s). During the External Examiners' visit all assessment work undertaken by students is made available, in addition to all course materials, assessment

rubrics, examination papers etc. Programme staff will be available for the total duration of the visit for discussion where necessary and to answer any queries or questions.

In visiting the College, the duties of External Examiner(s) include:

- ❖ reviewing borderline cases and, if necessary, interviewing such students;
- ❖ reviewing the work of students who have requested a review through the appeals procedure and making a recommendation to the Examination Board on the mark to be awarded with respect to the appeal;
- ❖ agreeing with the respective internal assessor(s) the proposed final marks / grades for consideration by the appropriate Examination Board;
- ❖ attending meeting(s) of the Examination Board where possible and feasible;
- ❖ providing feedback to the College on the overall standard of marking and student academic achievement and making suggestions for improvements.

4.4.4.6 Communications Between College and External Examiner(s)

All communication between the College and External Examiners in relation to assessment of students is by registered mail, or other secure means of delivery. The College requires External Examiner(s) to acknowledge receipt of assessment material from the institution. This is normally completed by e-mail. The use of fax, telex or electronic messaging systems is not authorised by the College for sensitive communications. The use of telephones is restricted to logistics and operational matters.

4.4.4.7 Integration of External Examining with other Quality Assurance processes

Recommendations made by External Examiners during the course of their visit to the College, during the meeting of the Examination Board, and in their official report are brought to the Programme Board for consideration and, if deemed relevant and appropriate at that time, are actioned and included in the quality improvement recommendations for the programme in the forthcoming academic year, and published in the annual programme QA report. Actions taken on the feedback of External Examiners, and the resulting outcomes of these actions, are communicated to the examiners during their subsequent visit to the College.

The External Examiners report constitutes the official record of the External Examining process. These reports are presented to the Academic Council for consideration and adoption, as well as being published in the annual programme Quality Assurance reports along with the names and positions held by the examiners.

External Examiners will be surveyed/interviewed as part of the stakeholder consultation processes for Institutional Review and Re-validation (Programmatic Review).

4.4.4.8 Procedure for the Removal/Replacement of an External Examiner

Should an external examiner need to be replaced prior to the completion of their three-year appointment then the procedures for the appointment of an external examiner will apply.

4.4.5 The Examination Board

On completion of the External Examiners' visit the Examination Board meets. There are currently two Examination Boards in operation in the College, one for the suite of Applied Management programmes, and one for the Ordinary and Honours Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies/Professional Social Care (Disability). The Examination Board agrees all the marks/grades for all modules for all students submitted by the College at that time. It is during this process that a student's work can be graded up or graded down following discussion by the Board. Students who are 'borderline' are discussed in this forum and a decision made based on the cumulative evidence presented by College staff in consideration of the views of the External Examiner(s). The Examination Board also finalise a recommendation for forwarding to Academic Council in relation to student appeals.

Note: These boards currently operate in accordance with QQI (2013) Assessment and Standards (Revised) their operation and functioning will be reviewed and amended appropriately in accordance with any new directives provided by newly developed/updated QQI higher education and training policies and procedures.

Terms of Reference:

- ❖ Review outcomes of external examiner moderation of programme(s) under consideration;
- ❖ QA monitoring of assessment techniques, consistency of assessment and comparison of standards of programme(s) under consideration with national norms and best practice;
- ❖ Agree assessment results for all learners of programme(s) under consideration;
- ❖ Consider learner appeals in relation to assessment results and procedures of programme(s) under consideration, and make recommendations to Academic Council;
- ❖ Consider learners for progression with missing credit, approve/decline progression as appropriate;

- ❖ Review of penalties applied to assessment activities of programme(s) under consideration;
- ❖ Review/monitor statistics/trends regarding assessment results of programme(s) under consideration.

Membership of the Board:
- ❖ Manager of Academic Affairs (Chair): Ex-officio
- ❖ Course Director(s): Ex-officio
- ❖ Internal programme assessors: Ex-officio
- ❖ External Examiner(s): By appointment of the Academic Council

Meetings: Once per year immediately following external examiner moderation

Sub-groups: N/A

Co-option of members: N/A

Reporting arrangements: The Chair of the Examination Board reports on the activities of the Board to the Academic Council.

Recording procedures: The Chair of the Examination Board is responsible for ensuring that minutes of all meetings are maintained and available to internal staff of the College and to the Academic Council. Minutes are forwarded to the Academic Council for approval.
Note: Minutes of all Examination Board meetings are strictly confidential and are stored securely.

4.4.5.1 Decision Making Process of the Examination Board
The Examination Board will always strive to reach consensus in relation to final grades to be awarded to students. When negotiation is required the Manager of Academic Affairs, External Examiners and Course Directors present at the exam board are voting members and are charged with making final decisions regarding students grades. Voting members will consider information presented by tutors in making their decisions.
In instances where there are dissenting opinions between the external examiners and the relevant Course Director regarding a student's overall grade the Manager of Academic Affairs may place a casting vote, taking into consideration all information presented pertaining to the student in question.

4.4.5.2 Preparation for the Examination Board meeting

The date and time for the Examination Board meeting will be agreed well in advance with the External Examiner(s) and will be notified to all those involved and other relevant stakeholders, including QQI. The Course Director may conduct a pre-board meeting with the team of programme assessors to discuss their findings and outcomes of the assessment process, and to ensure adequate preparation of all documentation for the External Examiners. The minutes of such meetings will be made available to the Examination Board where appropriate.

4.4.5.3 Procedure for the Conduct of Examination Board meetings

1. Meeting opened by the Chair

2. Statement of due process by Chair

- Clarification of roles of board members

- Clarification of order of programmes and stages to be considered by board

- Statement of process for recording changes on original broadsheets

(Copies of broadsheets will be provided to all members on coloured paper,

One original broadsheet on white paper will be held by the Manager of Academic Affairs, who will check results and record changes as results are read out by each year/programme coordinator. This original broadsheet will be given immediately to the relevant administrative assistant to update results and produce final broadsheet ready to be signed)

3. Feedback from External Examiners

- This is followed by discussion and debate regarding individual student assessment results involving all board members as appropriate and relevant

4. Agreement of results

- At this stage all results are read out by each year/programme coordinator and changes are recorded on original broadsheet

5. Signing broadsheets: Nb. Final broadsheets are signed

4.4.6 Ratification of Assessment Results

On completion of the meeting of the Board of Examiners, broadsheets are internally ratified. Subsequently, Academic Council may also make final decisions in relation to student appeals. All finalised results are signed off by the QA Manager on the QQI QBS for awarding of certificates and to conclude the process. It is only on completion of all the above stages that a student can progress to Conferring of Award.

Section 5: Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff

Supporting Documents:

1.   St. Michael's House Human Resources Policies and Procedures Manual (2008-2016)

5.1 Introduction

This section outlines the College's approach to staff recruitment, selection and development. The full spectrum of HR policies and procedures operated by the College, under the governance of St. Michael's House is detailed in the supporting document: St. Michael's House Human Resources Policies and Procedures Manual (2008-2016).

5.2 Staff Recruitment and Selection

The College is fully committed to ensuring that sufficient, appropriately qualified staff members are employed to meet the academic, administrative and quality requirements of the College. Staff recruitment and selection is carried out in line with the St. Michael's House Recruitment and Selection Policy (HR Policies and Procedures Manual 2008; Section 2.1) and Equal Opportunities Policy (HR Policies and Procedures Manual 2008; Section 2.3).

All vacancies are advertised internally and externally in national newspapers and on appropriate recruitment websites. All applicants for a post are assessed based on their abilities and experience against key criteria for the post as outlined in a job specification and person profile. Suitable candidates are interviewed by senior staff trained in recruitment and selection techniques. All appointments made are subject to a minimum six month probationary period. During this probationary period job progress is closely monitored through frequent appraisal meetings between the line manager and new staff member. At least two formal probationary reports will be completed during this period.

Prior to commencing in the position, all new staff members are subject to an identity check by Human Resources. In the case of Irish nationals new recruits are required to provide a copy of their birth certificate and all non-Irish nationals recruited are required to submit copies of their birth certificates plus passport and immigration papers.

In addition to this, the qualifications of new staff members will be validated independently by the College. In all cases candidates will be required to provide an original or notarised copy of their parchment and transcript and/or Diploma Supplement. The College will contact the examinations office of the awarding institution to validate the authenticity of the documentation. If not clearly stated on the documentation provided by the candidate the level and recognition of the qualification(s) presented will be validated by reference to the Qualifax database. In the case of candidates who present with qualifications obtained

outside of Ireland they will be required to provide evidence of their equivalence and recognition by application to NARIC, the centre for academic recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland within QQI.

5.3 Staff Induction, Training and Continuous Professional Development

5.3.1 Staff Induction
Induction training for new staff is completed during their six-month probationary period, during which the staff member will be appropriately briefed on:
   ❖ College background, aims, ethos and values, structure and organisation;
   ❖ Roles and responsibilities of College staff;
   ❖ Academic and administrative procedures and regulations, including introductory training on College information systems;
   ❖ Specific roles, responsibilities and requirements of the role;
   ❖ General terms and conditions of employment;
   ❖ HR and staff development policies, procedures and regulations.

5.3.2 Staff Training
The Open Training College has an internal policy of supporting staff with a variety of training, educational and development opportunities. Staff development is any measure undertaken by individuals, teams or organisations to improve their skills, knowledge and abilities, particularly as they relate to the workplace and from which added value can be ascertained. These include:
   ❖ Pursuing formal qualifications using taught and/or research models;
   ❖ Attendance and participation in conferences and seminars both national and international;
   ❖ Participation in short courses relevant to their subject area/discipline or area of responsibility in the College;
   ❖ In-service training opportunities within the main organisation;
   ❖ Representing the College on relevant special interest and working groups;
   ❖ Regular staff monitoring.

A full record of staff training and development is maintained by the relevant Course Directors, who in conjunction with the College Director approve all staff training and development activities in advance and ensure such activity does not interfere with the core duties of any staff member or does not conflict with the core business of the College.

The Teaching and Learning Committee of the College, chaired by the Manager of Academic Affairs, works to identify ongoing staff training and development needs and opportunities at the level of the staff team, and is the forum at which learning from staff training and development activities is shared and disseminated among the wider staff team, and implemented into practice.

5.3.3 Continuous Professional Development

5.3.3.1 Purpose and Scope of the Policy

CPD is an ongoing process of learning and development that continues for the duration of a person's working life. The activities which lead to professional development may be formal or informal and a range of learning methods should be available to account for the different types of knowledge required and to enhance learning in different ways.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Open Training College's approach to supporting the continuing professional development of the staff team. The scope of this policy includes the identification of CPD requirements and the provision of training for the staff team as a whole in response to programme and service developments, and the provision of support to individuals to pursue self-defined CPD goals. This policy is not currently associated with any staff appraisal procedures, and should not be used as a tool for staff appraisal in the absence of an agreed procedure.

The College's Teaching and Learning Committee is responsible for the maintenance, review and implementation for this policy and will oversee the coordination of all CPD activities. The Teaching and Learning Committee will be supported and assisted by the Programme Boards in all relevant aspects of this policy. The CPD policy will be reviewed periodically by the Teaching and Learning Committee.

5.3.3.2 Principles, Values and Entitlements

The Open Training College is a "learning community" where all are involved in a continuous process of improvement and enrichment. The College is committed to fostering a positive climate for continuous learning. CPD is the means by which the College is able to motivate and develop its community. It does so at a variety of levels - individual, team, whole College and through wider networks with an emphasis on collaborative learning.

The College believes that effective staff should take ownership and give a high priority to professional development. We believe that a coherent and progressive opportunity to develop professionally and personally both improves standards and raises morale through personal and professional fulfilment, and also aids recruitment and retention.

All those involved in the College community shall have an entitlement to equality of access to high-quality induction and continuing support and development.

The central features of the CPD policy comprise effective auditing and identification of need and aspiration, in line with College strategic objectives; ensuring appropriate match of provision to learning needs of the individual, the team and the College as a whole; reliable and explicit evaluation of the impact of provision; effective dissemination of good and successful practice to ensure that such practice is embedded and reinforced.

The College's CPD provision will allow staff to develop skills and competencies progressively allowing them to build on and reinforce skills and expertise dealt with earlier, particularly across the key areas identified in College's Strategic Objectives.

The College will encourage professional recognition including accreditation of the CPD undertaken.

5.3.3.3 Procedures for Identifying CPD Needs

Identifying needs at the level of the team and College

The Teaching and Learning Committee, supported by Programme Boards, shall be responsible for identifying CPD requirements at the level of the staff team and the College. Such needs will be identified largely through existing mechanisms including but not limited to: Ongoing evaluations with staff, students and relevant third parties; National and local sectoral priorities and policy developments; Other internal and external monitoring and feedback evidence, and through informal and formal discussions with individuals and teams. Information gathered through these channels will be considered at meetings of the Teaching and Learning Committee and Programme Boards and will inform decisions to pursue CPD activities.

Recommendations for CPD activities identified by the Teaching and Learning Committee and Programme Boards will be brought to meetings of the Course Directors and Managers Forum and Academic Council for further discussion and ratification where appropriate. The Chairperson of the Teaching and Learning Committee will attend appropriate Academic Council and Course Directors and Managers meetings and, at least annually, present a report on the provision and impact of CPD.

The Teaching and Learning Committee, supported by the Programme Boards, will be responsible annually for discussing with the College Director the main CPD priorities and the likely budgetary implications of addressing these needs.

Identifying needs at the level of the individual

Currently individual staff members are responsible for their own continuing professional development and identifying their needs in this area. The needs of individuals are informed by all of the processes named above, and also by the individual's own interests and needs relating to their specific area(s) of responsibility in the College

Individual staff members are welcome and are encouraged to discuss their CPD needs with their Line Manager in the first instance, and may approach the Teaching and Learning Committee or Programme Boards to highlight their interest in pursuing CPD in an area of need identified by these committees. Where appropriate an individual may be approached by their Line Manager to pursue individual CPD activities to fulfil a requirement identified by the Teaching and Learning Committee or Programme Board.

5.3.3.4 CPD Provision

CPD Provision at the level of the staff team and the College
The Teaching and Learning Committee, supported by Programme Boards, shall provide and update details of the range of opportunities available and be responsible for communicating relevant opportunities to appropriate staff. The information will be kept updated and made accessible and available to the College community.

The Teaching and Learning Committee, supported by the Programme Boards, shall be responsible for ensuring that appropriate opportunities are provided for the following groups of the College community:

- Staff new to the College or role

- Staff specialising in teaching/supporting particular groups of learners
- Middle and senior managers
- Staff with special responsibilities i.e. social media, learning disabilities, open learning etc.
- Secretarial and administrative staff

The Teaching and Learning Committee, supported by the Programme Boards, will be responsible for ensuring that external providers are of sufficient quality.

The College will have systems and opportunities for teams and the whole College to discuss and feed to the Teaching and Learning Committee details of priorities and methods including the use of the College training days.

The Teaching and Learning Committee, supported by the Programme Boards, will be responsible for ensuring the efficient organising of opportunities, e.g. booking, confirmation and for providing appropriate support such as organising relevant resources, setting up appropriate meetings and organising membership of, and subscriptions to, appropriate bodies such as sector specific associations

The opportunities available will fully reflect the Open Training College Staff Code of Practice in that they will only be offered if they:
- meet identified needs
- are based on good practice - in development activity and in teaching and learning
- help raise standards of learners' achievements
- respect cultural diversity
- are provided by those with the necessary experience, expertise and skills
- are planned systematically and follow the agreed programme except when dealing with emerging issues
- are based, where appropriate, on relevant standards
- are based on current research and inspection evidence
- make effective use of resources, particularly ICT
- are provided in accommodation which is fit for purpose with appropriate equipment
- represent value for money

- have effective monitoring and evaluation systems including seeking out and acting on user feedback to inform the quality of provision.

The College will support a wide portfolio of CPD approaches identified according to "Best Value" principles and which reflect the learning effectiveness of the participants. These include:

- in-College training using the expertise available within the College and collaborative activity (eg collaborative teaching, planning and assessment, work with a learning team, workshop observation, existing expertise, peer based training, collaborative enquiry and problem-solving, modelling)
- coaching and mentoring and engaging in a learning conversation
- job enrichment/enlargement (eg a higher level of responsibility, job sharing, acting roles, job rotation, shadowing, leading meetings)
- producing documentation or resources such as curriculum/programme development, teaching materials, assessment, ICT or video programme
- accessing an external consultant/adviser or relevant expert as required
- master classes, model and demonstration lessons
- role play, simulations
- collecting and collating learner feedback, data and outcomes
- College visits to observe or participate in good and successful practice
- postgraduate professional development and other qualifications from higher educational institutions and other forms of professional recognition and qualifications
- research opportunities
- open learning (e.g. relevant resources such as educational journals and publications, training videos, reflection, simulations)
- practical experience (e.g. opportunities to present a paper, contribute to a training programme, co-ordinating or supporting a learning forum or network, involvement in local and national networks, involvement with a subject or specialist association)
- external partnerships (e.g. with a colleague, group, subject, phase, activity or College-based team meetings and activities such as joint planning, observation or standardisation, special project working group, involvement in a formal or informal partnership such as a Network Learning Community)

All those engaged with CPD will be encouraged to reflect on their CPD learning experience and seek professional recognition, including accreditation for the work undertaken. The Teaching and Learning Committee will provide directly or organise guidance to staff on how such recognition can be achieved.

CPD Provision at the level of the individual

The provision of, and support for CPD activities for individual members of staff will be subject to the same rigorous considerations regarding quality, relevance and best value as described above.

Requests from individuals to access CPD should be addressed to their Line Manager and/or College Director who will decide on the most effective means. Individual staff members will take responsibility for making their own arrangements for booking and attending at approved CPD activities.

5.3.3.5 Evaluating Impact and Disseminating Good Practice

Upon completion of any relevant CPD activity at the level of the College, team or individual, the participant(s) will discuss with their Line Manager the opportunities to disseminate learning to other staff. Relevant feedback about the provision and the ideas should be provided to their team at Programme Board or team meeting, and communicated to the Teaching and Learning committee as appropriate. Where it is agreed that there would be benefit in a wider circulation or follow up, the Teaching and Learning Committee, supported by Programme Boards, will be responsible for making appropriate arrangements, e.g. circulating relevant resources, a session at a staff or subject meeting, introducing a teaching or learning strategy, inclusion on the College websites. The Teaching and Learning Committee will be responsible for ensuring whether any follow up is needed to the provider, e.g. feedback, issues of access.

The Teaching and Learning Committee shall be responsible for assessing the value for money aspect of CPD through seeking to monitor and evaluate impact.

The Teaching and Learning Committee shall be committed to ensuring that CPD systems and procedures conform to current research findings. This will be undertaken at a variety of levels including:

- immediate/short term evaluation by participants

- longer term follow up for a sample of CPD undertaken usually at a period no less than 6 months following the provision
- informal discussion with colleagues about improved practice

Appropriate documentation will be maintained of all CPD activities of College staff in order to inform reviews and evaluations of CPD activity. The Teaching and Learning Committee shall provide an annual report to the College Director on the benefits of the CPD undertaken and future needs.

5.4 The Tutorial Function

The role of Tutor and the Tutorial function is key to the successful delivery of all Open Training College programmes. The following sections of this manual will detail the role, function and parameters of the Open Training College tutor as well as the monitoring procedures in operation in relation to ensuring the effectiveness of the tutorial function.

5.4.1 Definition of Tutorial Function

In the assessment and support of all students of Open Training College programmes the purpose of the Tutorial Function is to:

- ❖ Communicate, clarify and discuss the requirements for assessment of each module with the student using the various tutorial communication methods available: e-mail, telephone tutorials and face to face.
- ❖ Signpost the Student Support policy in the Student Handbook and provide support and guidance to students as they complete assessment activities.
- ❖ Track student progress through the assessment process and ensure assessment work is received from students by agreed deadlines.
- ❖ Consult with the Course Director regarding difficulties individual students may be facing and supports they require as a result.
- ❖ Grade student work in accordance with the assessment rubric for the module, and with the regulations outlined in QQI (2013) Assessment and Standards (Revised).
- ❖ Provide students with their provisional grade for that module and written feedback regarding their performance on the assessment activities.
- ❖ Signpost the Plagiarism policy in the Student Handbook and communicate the plagiarism process to students, including how they can avoid plagiarism and the benefit of using Turn-it-in prior to submission.
- ❖ Highlight and investigate possible instances of plagiarism in student assessment work, and bring findings to the attention of the Course Director.

Course Director engages with the Tutorial Function in the assessment process by:

❖ Monitoring and ensuring fair and consistent implementation of assessment regulations across all assessors

❖ Implementing cross-marking procedures

❖ Participating in investigations into possible instances of plagiarism

❖ Communicating the individual assessment process for each module to the relevant tutors and ensuring their understanding of the process and their responsibilities in that process

❖ Communicating the student conduct and plagiarism process to the tutors and ensuring they understand the process and their responsibilities in that process

❖ Communicating the student support process to the tutors and ensuring they understand the process and their responsibilities in that process

5.4.2 Monitoring the effectiveness of the Tutorial Function

The day-to-day tutorial function activities of the course delivery team, as described above, is supported at a quality assurance level by the Academic Council, and by several of its sub-committees:

The **Programme Boards** are responsible for producing and implementing the Assessment Strategies for each programme, module and stage. These strategies provide guidance to the course delivery team in designing the assessment activities and rubric for the modules. The effectiveness of assessment strategies is discussed at programme boards, with reference to student feedback and to assessment results, and recommendations for improvement are made as a result.

The **Assessment Committee** monitors the implementation of the Assessment Strategies by the course delivery teams of the College, to ensure a fair and consistent approach to assessment across College programmes and subjects. The application of penalties to student assessment results is reviewed and monitored by this committee, as well as approving students to sit supplemental examinations. In addition, this committee is responsible for ensuring College activities pertaining to student assessment are compliant with the most recent QQI higher education and training regulations.

The **Disciplinary Committee** oversees the application of the College policies and procedures regarding Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct in the assessment process.

The **Examination Boards** review the outcomes of external examiner moderation of programme(s) under consideration, conduct QA monitoring of assessment techniques, consistency of assessment and comparison of standards of programme(s) under consideration with national norms and best practice, agree assessment results for all learners of programme(s) under consideration, consider learner appeals in relation to assessment results and procedures of programme(s) under consideration, and make recommendations to Academic Council, review penalties applied to assessment activities of programme(s) under consideration and review/monitor statistics/trends regarding assessment results of programme(s) under consideration.

Finally the **Academic Council** makes final decisions on appeals made by students in relation to their assessment outcomes.

5.5 Supports for Poorly Performing Staff

Staff members who are not performing to the expected or required standards of their role will be notified of shortcomings through the application of the Disciplinary Policy and procedures (HR Policies and Procedures Manual 2008; Section 3). In general the staff member's immediate supervisor/manager will deal with deficiencies on an informal basis through discussion, counselling and appropriate assistance, rather than through the formal disciplinary procedure. If, following the informal counselling stage the staff member continues to fail to meet the required standards then the disciplinary procedure should be invoked. The purpose of the disciplinary procedure is to help the staff member achieve the necessary improvements and prevent any recurrence.

5.6 Removal of Poorly Performing Staff

Following application of the progressive stages of the Disciplinary Policy and procedures staff who consistently fail to meet the required standards of their role may be subject to dismissal at stage 4 of the application of the procedures (HR Policies and Procedures Manual 2008; Section 3.3).

Section 6: Learning Resources and Student Supports

6.1 The Supported Open Learning Model

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 Supported Open Learning Model is always evolving to ensure that the flexibility 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 diagram outlines the Supported Open Learning Model, as employed by the Open Training College.
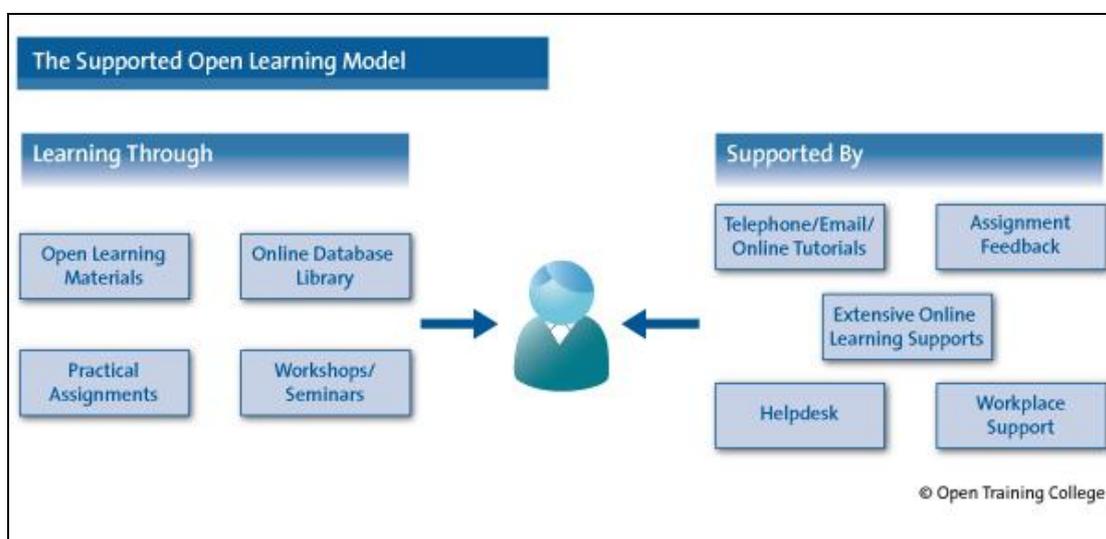
Figure 5: The Supported Open Learning Model

The student *learns through* the following key strategies:

Open learning materials

The College 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.

Online database library

The College provides access to a number of key information resources through the library area on My Learning Centre (Moodle platform). These resources include two online

journal libraries, a variety of online databases that support social care and management, and a section for resources that support study skills.

Practical assignments

A key component of the assessment of students' learning is their application of that learning to their place of work. This process is assessed using a variety of media, including written reflection, participation in group discussions and the completion of learning activities.

Workshops

Group workshops are offered (for each module) to provide students with the opportunity to collaborate with other students and develop their understanding and appreciation of the learning outcomes associated with the module. These opportunities for group learning also provide an excellent opportunity for students to network, make contacts, and discuss practical issues with their peers.

Students are *supported* in this learning through the following key support structures:

Tutorials

Students are allocated an individual tutor to support them with their studies. 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:

- ❖ Student's progress with the learning materials
- ❖ Assignment preparation and feedback
- ❖ Work-based support
- ❖ Revision of study topics
- ❖ Local study groups
- ❖ Additional issues that may arise relevant to the learning process

Feedback (Formative and Summative)

The College provides numerous opportunities for students to obtain feedback on their learning and understanding as they progress through each module. These opportunities include online learning activities, peer and tutor feedback through online discussion forums and tutorials. Following each module assessment the student is furnished with detailed written feedback, which clearly outlines the student's performance against the key learning outcomes of that module. Students can expect to receive this feedback via e-mail approximately 6 weeks after they have submitted their assessment.

Helpdesk Support

The College provides immediate office hour support on matters related to IT, academic or practice issues.

Workplace Support

Workplace support is usually provided by the student's line manager, or another supporting professional. S/he mainly provides practical support in organising applied assignments and supporting the student's professional development.

6.2 The Partnership Approach and Three-Way Collaboration

The College considers participation on its courses as a partnership between the student, their employing agency and the College. Through this collaborative approach the agency allows time for attendance at workshops and examinations (the number of days allowed varies between agencies), agrees the student may undertake work-based assignments as part of their regular duties, with support from a colleague or manager as appropriate, and may provide financial support to the student.

The student makes a commitment to complete course assessments, attend the workshops/seminars, undertake personal study in their own time and fulfil their financial obligation to pay course fees.

The College provides open learning materials, web-based supports (MyOTC), assigns a Tutor to the student, provides workshops, and co-ordinates the assessment and certification of programmes. Figure 6 provides an overview of this collaborative approach.

A Three-Way Collaborative Approach

The Open Training College commits to:

- Provide open learning materials
- Assign a tutor to the student
- Provide workshops, email support, virtual learning environment
- Coordinate the assessment and accreditation procedures
- Provide tutorial, online and helpdesk support
- Provide accreditation for the programme of study
- Assist the student in interpreting and complying with agency requirements in undertaking study and assignments
- Manage, confirm and evaluate application of learning on the ground

College

THREE WAY COLLABORATION

Agency

Student

The Agency commits to:

- Agree to the student undertaking the programme of study
- Agree to the student undertaking work based assignments as part of their regular duties
- Provide supports within the workplace
- Facilitate the student to attend workshops and examination days, where required
- Pay a percentage of the fee (where agreed)
- Liaise with College when difficulties or changes of circumstances arise

The Student commits to:

- Undertake to complete the programme to the best of their ability
- Undertake personal study in their own time
- Complete all course work in accordance with College policy and procedures
- Agree to abide by any consent/confidentiality process outlined by the agency
- Work in collaboration with the agency in undertaking studies
- To inform the College of any changes in workplace circumstances
- Pay the remaining percentage of all fees

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Figure 6: *The Collaborative Approach*

Change in student employment circumstances

At application and re-registration stages all students of Open Training College Social Studies programmes are notified of the requirement for each student to be employed in an appropriate position for at least 10 hours per week in order to meet the registration and assessment requirements of these programmes. Students of these programmes are therefore required to notify their Tutor immediately of any change in their employment circumstances, e.g. break in employment for any reason, including suspension from work, extended period of leave/absence, change of employer or supervisor etc. Following such notification from a student, the Tutor will review the student's current workload and course requirements and, if necessary and appropriate (as determined by the College) generate a timetable of extended deadlines to facilitate the student to continue to meet the course requirements during the period of disruption to their employment. Following resumption of normal employment circumstances the student will be required to provide updated information of their employment status, to be signed and stamped by their employer.

In the event that a change in an individual student's employment circumstances is disclosed to the College by a third party the Tutor will seek confirmation of their employment status directly with the student and/or employer.

Any action taken by the College in response to a change in a student's employment circumstances will be in accordance with the registration and assessment requirements of the programme only and the College will not become involved in any organisational investigations or procedures relating to the period of non-employment.

6.3 Equality Policy

6.3.1 Policy Statement
It is the policy of the Open Training College to ensure that staff, learners and stakeholders are aware of equality issues and have the capacity to promote equality and combat discrimination in the areas of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious beliefs and membership of the travelling community.

6.3.2 Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to promote equality of opportunity for all students of the Open Training College by ensuring that all administrative, academic and other practices operate on the basis of the appropriate merits, qualifications, abilities and potential of individuals,

and do not discriminate against any individual on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or membership of the travelling community.

The Open Training College also operates in accordance with the St. Michael's House *Dignity at Work* and *Equal Opportunities* policies, which have been designed to ensure compliance with the Employment Equality Act 1998 (as revised in 2016).

6.3.3 Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- To ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities as tutors, assessors, administrators, managers, and representatives of the College under the provisions of national legislation and the policies of the College

- To ensure that all applicants to the College are treated fairly and in accordance with published policies and procedures

- To ensure that the College affords all students an equal opportunity to develop their full potential; the policies, procedures and practices of the College in relation to teaching, learning and assessment will seek to ensure equality of opportunity for all students and, as far as is practicable, practices will conform with the published procedures of the College.

6.3.4 Equality of Access to programmes and services

Admissions Procedures

It is the policy of the College, as far as is practicable, to admit all applicants who fulfil the minimum academic requirements for its courses and programmes.

The Open Training College publishes detailed admissions criteria, procedures and regulations for entry to all its programmes on an annual basis. Additional guidelines are published on the entry requirements for International Students, those seeking advanced entry onto a programme, and for those seeking additional supports or accommodations for reason of a disability or medical condition. All documentation is published on the College website and in the College brochure, and is provided in hardcopy and electronic copy to all applicants upon request.

Where additional requirements are in place these procedures have been designed to ensure the best possible fit between student and programme is found and to ensure that the College can adequately and appropriately provide supports to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to succeed on their programme of choice.

The Registration and Admissions Committee is responsible for overseeing the annual review and fair application of the College admissions policy and procedures and for ensuring that appropriate record keeping is maintained for applicants.

Teaching and Learning Systems

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. All programmes are delivered using the Supported Open Learning Model which combines a variety of flexible and innovative course delivery strategies with a menu of supports that students can utilise in an individualised manner to meet their own learning and support needs. (Please refer to section 6.1 of this manual for more information about the Supported Open Learning Model).

Central to the Supported Open Learning Model is the allocation of a named tutor to all individual students. The tutor is the student's key contact person for all matters relating to their successful participation on the programme, and will assist students in identifying their learning and support needs and develop strategies to address these needs.

The College operates a rigourous approach to the fair and consistent assessment of all students which is detailed in section 4 of this document.

6.3.5 Complaints Procedures

Should any applicant or student believe they have been discriminated against by the College on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or membership of the travelling community, this may be officially pursued through the College Complaints Policy and Procedures (QA manual section 6.7).

6.4 Policy and Procedures for the Provision of Supports to Students with Disabilities and Specific Learning Difficulties

The Open Training College operates the principle of inclusive access to learning materials and opportunities for all students. This is achieved through the *Supported Open Learning Model* and the College's Virtual Learning environment *MyOTC* (please refer to section 6.1 of this manual for more information), which facilitates the presentation of learning materials in a variety of formats and provides multiple opportunities for students to dialogue with staff and collaborate with other students.

However, it is recognised that some students who present to the college with specific learning support requirements (e.g. medical condition, specific learning difficulty, physical disability, mental health issue etc.) may require additional individual consideration and accommodations to provide them with equal opportunity to succeed on their chosen programme.

The following procedure outlines the process, which will be undertaken by the College to identify and implement appropriate and reasonable supports for such students.

6.4.1 Procedure for Verifying and Designing Individualised Learner Supports

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1. Learning/medical support requirement is disclosed/discovered

- Initial discussion with tutor/member of academic course team (interview, in the case of applicants)

2. Verification of support requirement by nominated health professional

- Existing report conducted with regard to Third Level academic study

    OR

- OTC verification form completed by appropriate health professional

3. Learner supports agreed and implemented

- Learner Support meeting
- Learner Support Plan
- Regular review of supports

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1. <u>Disclosure/discovery of a learning or medical support requirement</u>

At the application stage, all applicants are requested to disclose details of any learning or medical support requirements they have and wish to make the College aware of, in their initial application form. The application form states that any student who discloses any requirement at this stage will receive advice and guidance from a member of the academic course team. The applicant is also directed to information on the College website about learner supports available.

Students will also have the opportunity to disclose any support requirement at any stage of their studies with the College through the tutorial process, which facilitates ongoing individual communication between tutor and student. Any student who discloses in this manner will be directed to the following procedure. This also applies to any student who develops/discovers a support requirement which they did not have or were not aware of at the time of application.

All information relating to a medical/disability diagnosis provided by applicants/students will be treated sensitively and as confidential information.

2. Verification of support requirement

Following disclosure/discovery by the student, verification of the indicated support requirement will need to be provided by an appropriate professional. This verification can be done through the provision of an existing evaluation report conducted with regard to Third Level academic study; where an appropriate evaluation has not been carried out to date, the student will be required to supply a completed report/form from an appropriate nominated professional from the list below.

Indicator	Accepted medical consultant/specialist report
Visual Impairment/Blindness	Ophthalmologist OR Ophthalmic surgeon
Hearing Impairment/Deafness	Professionally qualified Audiologist
Physical Disability	Orthopaedic OR other relevant Consultant such as a Rheumatologist or Paediatrician
Neurological Condition (incl. Brain injury, speech & language disabilities)	**Neurological Condition:** Neurologist OR other relevant consultant **Speech & language disabilities:** Speech and Language Therapist
General learning disability	Appropriately qualified Psychiatrist, Psychologist, OR Neurologist

Specific learning difficulty:
    Dyslexia
    Dyscalculia
    Dyspraxia
    ADD/ADHD
    Asperger's Syndrome/Autism
	Appropriately qualified Psychiatrist, Psychologist, OR Neurologist AND Occupational Therapist (in the case of Dyspraxia) who is a member of their respective professional or regulatory body

Mental Illness:
    Anxiety Disorders
    Mood Disorders
    Eating Disorders
    Impulse Control & Addiction Disorders
    Personality Disorders
	Psychiatrist

Significant Ongoing Illness	**Epilepsy:** Neurologist **Diabetes Type 1:** Endocrinologist **Cystic Fibrosis:** Consultant Respiratory Physician **Gastroenterology Conditions:** Gastroenterologist **Others:** Relevant consultant in area of condition or consultant registrar/Registrar

3. Support meeting

Following satisfactory verification of a support requirement, (and offer and acceptance of a place on the course in the case of applicants) a support meeting will be arranged between the student and a member of the College academic team. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the learner's requirements in detail and to ensure the College can provide adequate supports to learners to allow them equal opportunity to succeed on their programme of study. General supports available for learners are outlined below, and are communicated to learners on the College website and in the Student Handbook; these supports will be individually tailored and matched to the learner's needs as reasonable and appropriate. At this stage, and where available, the applicant/student will be asked to supply an academic reference from their most recent school or college placement, outlining supports they have previously received and their impact.

Following this meeting a *Learner Support Plan* will be devised for the individual. This plan constitutes the formal agreement between the College and learner and will have specified review dates (at least following first module, mid-year and end of year) attached to the plan to ensure the continued relevancy and appropriateness of the supports being provided.

6.4.2. Supports for students with a physical/sensory disability:
- Venue checks to ensure accessibility and appropriate facilities
- Physical modifications to the training and examination environment e.g. seating arrangements, sound amplification etc.
- Learning materials provided in accessible, modifiable electronic formats
- Learning materials developed using multimedia, including ScreenR and Articulate
- Additional time allocated to complete assessments
- Alternative assessment formats, e.g. Viva Voce
- Support of a scribe to complete examinations
- Access to open source assistive technology software, e.g. Screen Reader, Browse Aloud

6.4.3 Supports for students with a specific learning difficulty, e.g. Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia
- Alternative assessment formats, e.g. Viva Voce
- Support of a scribe to complete examinations
- Additional time allocated to complete assessments
- Spelling and/or grammar waiver for assessments
- Extended individual tutorial support
- Provision of lecture materials in advance of lectures/workshops

6.5 College Support Services

6.5.1 Administration
College objectives in relation to the provision of administration services are to:

- ❖ Support the effective and efficient operation of all College activities;
- ❖ Provide administrative back up to staff, which facilitates them in providing a quality service to students;
- ❖ Maintain filing and database systems, which provide up-to-date and accurate information on students and College activities;
- ❖ Ensure the effective operation of College systems;
- ❖ Ensure the effective management of the open learning materials;
- ❖ Ensure the effective management of the administrative supports for MyOTC;
- ❖ Ensure that workshops are properly organised, run and administered including booking of venues and presenters, notification of students and provision of workshop materials;
- ❖ Ensure the effective and accurate management of student and/or agency accounts;
- ❖ Provide a speedy response to students and/or agencies in relation to requests;
- ❖ Implement and manage effective systems in relation to assessment broadsheets;
- ❖ Take an active role in the management of customer care standards in the College;
- ❖ Assist in the planning and implementation of the course calendar for each course within the College;
- ❖ Manage an effective and efficient marketing and recruitment system;
- ❖ Partake in and contribute to team meetings;
- ❖ Partake in quality evaluations and review procedures as requested;
- ❖ Partake in professional development activities as requested;
- ❖ Liaise with St Michael's House corporate services in relation to accounts, human resources, and other services as necessary;
- ❖ Provide the administrative supports necessary for the operation of the College's QA systems.

6.5.2 Library and IT Supports
College objectives in relation to the provision of Library and IT services are to:

- ❖ Provide an online repository of reference materials to students, which is comprehensive and up to date;
- ❖ Continually build on the number and range of titles available in the online repository;

- ❖ Provide students with access to web-based information;
- ❖ Provide access to a comprehensive and up-to-date range of relevant online journals.

6.5.3 Training Venues

The Open Training College utilises external training venues in the delivery of programmes. Such venues are either conference facilities in hotels or other educational institutions. In using such venues the College has strict quality criteria, which the venue must meet. (A quality assurance checklist for external venues is in use and is revised and updated regularly).

In the provision of training venues College objectives are to:

- ❖ Only use venues, which are accessible to people with a disability;
- ❖ Use training facilities and examination venues suitable to the ethos and values of adult education;
- ❖ Facilitate students with a location that is accessible to them;
- ❖ Use venues outside the Dublin region when appropriate and practicable;
- ❖ Ensure access to good quality, reasonably priced accommodation if necessary;
- ❖ Provide venues that are comfortable, quiet, clean, safe and well serviced;
- ❖ Ensure students have access to high quality food and beverages;
- ❖ Listen to and act on feedback provided by students on training venues used;
- ❖ Use venues which can provide training equipment if needed such as TV and Video, etc;
- ❖ Secure value for money on behalf of students.

6.6 Procedures to Monitor, Review and Improve the Effectiveness of Resources and Support Services

6.6.1 Teaching and Learning Committee

The Teaching and Learning Committee monitors the implementation of learner supports and is responsible for the ongoing review and enhancement of such supports. This committee will also continually monitor the effectiveness of teaching systems and learning resources available from the College, and make recommendations for the enhancement of these, to ensure a service to students, which is consistent with current best practice.

6.7 Complaints Policy and Procedure

The Open Training College prides itself on the quality and standards of the programmes and services it delivers, and on its relationship with each individual student. As part of Quality Assurance procedures students are regularly asked for their feedback on all aspects of programme and service delivery, which informs the Programme Boards, and subsequently amendments and improvements to programmes and services. The allocation of a personal tutor to all students also provides a safe environment in which students can air any grievances they may have and discuss alternative supports that will work towards resolving their situation at a local level.

However, it is recognised that not all such complaints will be resolved satisfactorily at this level, thus the following procedure is presented to provide students with the opportunity to take any unresolved complaints to the management of the College for further consideration. It is the policy of the College to take all valid complaints seriously and to strive for a speedy, equitable, timely and courteous solution.

In making a complaint the complainant can expect:
- Listening: We will listen in a courteous and professional manner
- Responsiveness: We will respond in a timely and sensitive way
- Feedback: We will keep the complainant informed of how the complaint is being processed
- Learning: We will use the information generated to help us improve our service

All complaints that highlight gaps in College policy and procedures will be reviewed and utilised to develop policy and procedure for introduction in the following academic year. Policy and procedures relating to all College regulations are communicated to students annually through the Student Handbook and on the College website.

How to make an informal complaint

All students are encouraged to air their grievances in the first instance with their tutor and/or Course Director. To make an informal complaint students can raise an issue with their tutor through the tutorial process using telephone or e-mail communication, or face-to-face with a tutor at a workshop. The tutor will discuss the situation with the student and attempt to generate positive solutions in order to resolve the issue. In the event that a resolution cannot be satisfactorily met the formal complaints procedure, outlined below is available to all students.

What constitutes a formal complaint?

A formal complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction with service or treatment received while participating in any Open Training College programme, which impacts negatively on the success or wellbeing of the student in question, and which requires the involvement of College management to resolve. Formal complaints relate to matters that cannot be addressed through another procedure, e.g. the appeals procedure in relation to assessment or plagiarism.

Who can make a complaint?

Any student on any programme of the College can make a formal complaint, in the event that the issue being raised cannot be resolved satisfactorily at a local level.

How to make a formal complaint

A formal complaint must be made in writing to the Course Director. This can be sent via letter, e-mail or fax. The Course Director will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 days.

How will formal complaints be handled?

The nature of the complaint will determine how it is dealt with. The nature of the complaint and appropriate action(s) will be determined by the Course Director.

In the case that a complaint represents a situation involving (against) an OTC staff member and involves HR issues then the relevant HR policy and procedure will apply.

In the event that a complaint involves an academic matter (other than assessment) then the complaint may be reviewed by the appropriate sub-committee of the Academic Council (e.g., Registration and Admissions Committee, Assessment Committee).

In the event that the complaint refers to another aspect of College business the Course Director will review all relevant information, policy and procedures and make a decision.

The Course Director will communicate with the complainant regarding the avenue and action(s) being taken to address his/her complaint.

Appeals Process

If the student is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint or its handling s/he can appeal the decision to the Academic Council. The Director will review all relevant information and documentation, may meet with the complainant and/or other parties and seek external advice (if required and respecting any matters of confidentiality). The decision of the Academic Council will be communicated to the complainant in writing and is final.

The College recognises rights under the Freedom of Information Act.

Section 7: Information Systems

7.1 Data Collection and Management

7.1.1 Personal Data

Personal identifying information on all students is gathered and maintained for the purpose of providing an individually tailored service to each student, and for registering students for certification with accrediting bodies.

This information is collected for each individual student as part of the application process, and is updated each year through the re-registration process. All personal student information collected through these processes (i.e. name(s), addresses, email, contact telephone numbers, PPSN, gender, nationality, country of birth, occupational status.) is inputted into the College Information Management System (IMS), updated annually, and maintained indefinitely. A student will be facilitated to register a change in their personal details at any stage of their studies. To facilitate a name change students are required to submit suitable identification with the desired name (i.e. birth certificate/marriage certificate). This documentation will be forwarded to the relevant accrediting body and maintained on file by the College.

At the application/registration stage, students are also informed of the College's obligation to share this information with QQI/Other relevant bodies, in a case where the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) arrangements are invoked. Students are informed of any changes within 14 days of such change.

Additional hardcopy documentation gathered in the application process is maintained for the period of registration of the individual student. This can include:

- Application form
- Photographs
- Copy of ID (drivers license/ passport)
- Copy of visa (International students)
- Previous educational transcripts
- Volunteer declaration form
- Academic reference (Advanced Entry students)
- CV (Advanced Entry students)
- English proficiency evidence (International students)
- Interview record form

The tutorial support function generates significant records regarding individual students' progress with their studies. The College is committed to ensuring that sufficient data is gathered and stored to ensure the ongoing provision of a high standard of service and support to students, while respecting individual student needs for confidentiality.

The following records are maintained for the period of student registration on a programme to ensure continuity in the provision of tutorial supports, to facilitate any transition in tutors and to ensure consistency in the application of College policy and procedures:

- Individual student tutorial records;
- Assignment extension applications;
- Medical certificates;
- Records of all online activity of students, including assessment activities completed online.

Tutorial information which may be called upon after student graduation is maintained by the College indefinitely. This information may be relevant to students who progress to further education or who appeal assessment results to the accrediting bodies, for example. The following records are maintained indefinitely by the College:

- All formal written correspondence between tutors and students;
- All original documentation relating to additional supports or assessment accommodations implemented (e.g. for reasons of disability/medical condition/specific learning difficulty);
- Records of assessment appeals and outcomes;
- Records of disciplinary procedures and outcomes (including any plagiarism investigations).

7.1.2 Academic Performance and Achievement

Details of programmes, modules and assessments completed by students are recorded by the College and maintained indefinitely, to facilitate the certification of students' work through the accrediting bodies as well as facilitating access, transfer and progression for students.

All marks achieved by students in assessments are recorded and maintained in secure Excel files, on the College IMS and on the QBS, which are updated on completion of each module. Internal Broadsheets are produced and these are finalised and signed on conclusion of the Examination Board meeting. Following the meeting the agreed marks

are signed off by the Academic Manager on the QBS for issuing of certificates. Electronic copies of the broadsheets are maintained on computer file indefinitely, to facilitate the provision of transcripts and reprints of Diploma Supplements.

For each year of their studies with the College, each student is assigned a student box, which is maintained by their Tutor and in which the following are stored:

- All work submitted by the student for assessment;
- Completed rubric for each assessment;
- Copy of written feedback given to student on assignments;
- Copies of appropriate documentation regarding assessment supports and/or accommodations implemented;
- Records of assessment appeals and outcomes.

In addition to this hardcopy record all assignments (excluding appendices) submitted through Turnitin.com are maintained indefinitely as electronic files, and rubrics, with feedback to students, are filed and maintained indefinitely on the College's secure IT system.

On conclusion of the Appeals Process timeframe, hardcopies of all ratified assessment scripts and related materials will be destroyed (using a certified document destruction contractor) within 4 weeks. Students are advised to keep a copy of all work, which they submit to the College for assessment, as this cannot be returned.

Where a student has delayed completion of their studies, the following system applies to the storage of students' work:

- Students' work that has been assessed and ratified by the Examination Board will be destroyed within 4 weeks of the meeting, as the corresponding credits will have been awarded to the student by this time.
- Assignments and examinations, which have been completed but not ratified by the Examination Board, will be considered invalid after a two-year period.
- The work of any student, who wishes to return to the Open Training College more than two years following their withdrawal, will be reviewed individually by the Course Director, and the student may be required to attend a viva voce and/or resubmit work. This is to ensure that the student's knowledge and skills are sufficiently current and relevant for them to continue with their studies.

7.1.3 Student Feedback

Student satisfaction with and feedback on the programmes and services of the Open Training College is garnered through a series of module and end of year surveys administered online, with each individual student. In these surveys, students are invited to give their feedback on the module and programme content and delivery, the tutorial and other learning supports, and the subsidiary support services offered by the College.

This feedback is collected by e-mail invitation to each individual student. Responses to all surveys are treated as confidential and identifying information of respondents is not contained in any published material. However in the case of inappropriate use of the surveys individual responses may be altered or removed, as deemed appropriate by the College. The College also reserves the right to track responses to the individual user to be followed up as appropriate.

Inappropriate use of the surveys includes the identification of any staff member or student by using their name in a response, and the use of language that may be considered defamatory, obscene, threatening or offensive. Students are provided with appropriate usage guidelines before commencing any survey.

Responses to all e-mail surveys are maintained indefinitely in electronic format.

7.1.4 Progression Data

The College administers surveys with graduates at intervals of one, three and five years following their graduation, in accordance with the procedures described previously. The purpose of these surveys is to gather data on graduates academic and career progression routes and to assess continuing training and education needs of graduates.

7.2 Data Storage and Analysis

7.2.1 IMS

The key system for information collection and storage within the College is the Information Management System (IMS), which has been specifically designed and tailored to meet the needs of the College. Each new student registered with the College is assigned a unique student number on the system, which remains with them for the duration of their studies with the College. Access to the system is strictly limited to internal College staff, with varying levels of access for teaching and administration staff. Amendments to information held on the system may only be made by authorised personnel of the Administration Department following receipt of written confirmation of the required changes.

7.2.2 Survey Monkey

All staff, student, graduate and other stakeholder surveys are administered using Survey Monkey online surveying tools (www.surveymonkey.com). This system allows for the easy dissemination of surveys through e-mail or online channels. Data gathered is stored online in a private account, accessible only by authorised College staff. The system also facilitates basic analysis of the data or exporting of the data to other computer applications for more advanced analysis. Participation in these surveys is on a voluntary basis and the identities of respondents are protected in all publications of survey results.

7.2.3 Assessment Broadsheets

Broadsheets of assessment results are completed for each academic year and uploaded to QQI's QBS for certification of students' academic achievements. These electronic broadsheet files are stored indefinitely in the secure filing system of the college, accessible only to internal College staff and may only be amended by authorised personnel of the Administration Department. Any amendments required to broadsheets following their ratification by Examination Board will be notified, in writing by the Manager of Academic Affairs, to the External Examiner(s) and QQI.

7.3 Critical Quality Indicators

All of the data gathered by the College, as indicated throughout this Quality Assurance Document provides important information to the College about the success of its endeavours, areas requiring improvement and opportunities for further developments. All data which is considered to be a critical quality indicator is carefully considered by the Academic Council and/or the appropriate subcommittee of the Council, and forms the basis upon which recommendations are made to amend, develop and improve programmes and services. Data, which are considered to be critical quality indicators, includes:

- ❖ Student registration and re-registration numbers
- ❖ Withdrawal numbers
- ❖ Programme and stage completion rates
- ❖ Assessment results
- ❖ Staff and student feedback
- ❖ Survey response rates
- ❖ Quality assurance recommendations and follow-up

7.4 Data Protection

In accordance with its function the Open Training College (OTC) is required to collect, use and keep personal data and information for a variety of purposes about its staff, students and other individuals who come in contact with the College. The purposes of processing data about staff, students and other individuals with whom OTC has dealings include the organisation and administration of courses, evaluation activities, consultancy/project work, the recruitment and payment of staff, compliance with statutory obligations and compliance with legal obligations to funding bodies and government, etc.

Data Protection is the safeguarding of the privacy rights of individuals in relation to the processing of personal data. The Data Protection Act 1988 and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003 (the Data Protection Acts) confer rights on individuals as well as responsibilities on those persons processing personal data. Personal data, both automated and manual, are data relating to a living individual who is or can be identified, either from the data or from the data in conjunction with other information that is in, or is likely to come into, the possession of the Data Controller. The OTC, as an educational institution is exempt from registration with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as a Data Controller or Data Processor, however the principles and guidelines of the Data Protection Acts are used as good practice guidelines for the processing of information by the College.

7.4.1 Definitions used in the Data Protection Acts
The following definitions have been adapted from Section 1 of the Data Protection Acts:
   ❖ *Data* means automated and manual data. Automated data means any information on computer, or information recorded with the intention that it be processed by computer. Manual data means information that is recorded as part of a relevant filing system or with the intention that the data form part of a system.
   ❖ *Data Controller* means a body that, either alone or with others, controls the contents and use of personal data.
   ❖ *Data Processor* means a person who processes personal data on behalf of a data controller but does not include an employee of a data controller who processes such data in the course of his employment.
   ❖ *Data Subject* means an individual who is the subject of personal data.

- ❖ **Personal Data** means data relating to a living individual who is or can be identified either from the data or from the data in conjunction with other information that is in, or is likely to come into, the possession of the data controller.
- ❖ **Processing** means performing any operation or set of operations on the information or data, whether or not by automatic means, including:
  - o Obtaining, recording or keeping the information, or
  - o Collecting, recording organising, storing, altering or adapting the information or data,
  - o Retrieving, consulting or using the information or data
  - o Disclosing the information or data by transmitting, disseminating or otherwise making them available, or
  - o Aligning, combining, blocking, erasing or destroying the information or data.
- ❖ **Relevant Filing System** means any set of information relating to individuals to the extent that, while not computerised, is structured, either by reference to individuals or by reference to criteria relating to individuals, in such a way that specific information relating to a particular individual is readily accessible.
- ❖ **Sensitive Personal Data** means personal data which relate to specific categories defined as:
  - o The racial or ethnic origin, the political opinions or the religious or philosophical beliefs of the data subject
  - o Trade union membership
  - o The physical or mental health or sexual life of the data subject
  - o The commission or alleged commission of any offence by the data subject or
  - o Any proceedings for an offence committed or alleged to have been committed by the data subject, the disposal of such proceedings or the sentence of any court in such proceedings.

7.4.2 Data Protection Principles
Eight Data Protection Principles are set out in the Data Protection Acts, which the College recognises and adheres to as good practice principles:

(i) *Obtain and process information fairly*

OTC will obtain and process personal data fairly and in accordance with the fulfilment of its functions.

(ii) *Keep data only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes*

OTC will keep data for purposes that are specific, lawful and clearly stated and the data will only be processed in a manner compatible with these purposes.

(iii) *Use and disclose data only in ways compatible with these purposes*

OTC will only disclose personal data that are necessary for the purpose(s) or compatible with the purpose(s) for which it collects and keeps the data.

(iv) *Keep data safe and secure*

OTC will take appropriate security measures against unauthorised access to, or alteration, disclosure, destruction or unlawful processing of the data and against accidental loss or destruction.

(v) *Keep data accurate, complete and, where necessary, up-to-date*

OTC will have procedures that are adequate to ensure high levels of data accuracy and will put in place appropriate procedures to keep data up-to-date.

(vi) *Ensure that data are adequate, relevant and not excessive*

Personal data held by OTC will be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose(s) for which it is collected and kept.

(vii) *Retain data for no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes*

OTC will develop a policy on retention periods for personal data of students.

(viii) *Give a copy of his/her personal data to that individual, on request, and correct the data or, in certain cases as defined in the Data Protection Acts, block or erase the data where that individual so requests*

OTC will have procedures in place to ensure that data subjects can exercise their rights under the Data Protection legislation.

7.4.3 Responsibility

All employees of the College who collect and/or control the contents and use of personal data are responsible for compliance with the Data Protection principles. It will be the responsibility of the Directors and managers to develop and encourage good information handling practice within the College.

Each Course Director/Manager must ensure that the College Director is informed of any changes in uses of personal data that might affect OTC's compliance with the Data Protection principles.

7.4.4 Procedures and Guidelines

This policy supports the provision of a structure to assist in the College's compliance with the Data Protection principles, including the provision of best practice guidelines and procedures in relation to all aspects of Data Protection.

7.4.5 Status of this Policy
This Policy has been approved by the College's Management and applies to all staff and students of the College. Any breach of the Data Protection principles or this Policy will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary proceedings.

Any member of staff or student of the College who considers that the Policy has not been followed in respect of personal data about themselves should raise the matter with their Manager in the first instance.

7.4.6 Review
This Policy will be reviewed in light of any legislative or other relevant indicators.

Section 8: Information for Learners and General Public

8.1 Procedures for the Provision of Information to Learners

All information which is published, on programmes offered by the OTC include:

- ❖ Programme and Award Title
- ❖ Accrediting Body
- ❖ Level of the award on NFQ, and associated credits
- ❖ Programme content
- ❖ Student profile
- ❖ Application process and Entry requirements
- ❖ Teaching, learning and assessment procedures used
- ❖ Student Support structures
- ❖ Access, transfer and progression arrangements
- ❖ Information on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Enrolled learners will be notified in writing in accordance with section 67 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Education and Training Act (2012) of any changes to information within 14 days of the College becoming aware of any change.

All information and any changes to information will be made available to students, and other interested stakeholders in the following ways:

8.1.1 College Website
The Open Training College website (www.opentrainingcollege.com) is the primary vehicle for the provision of information about the programmes and services of the College to potential students and other interested stakeholders. The website presents detailed information about the background to the College, its staff, mission, aims and values. Any visitor to the website may view details of the programmes and services offered by the College, and be guided through the steps to apply to a programme, with appropriate direction to support and guidance from College staff as necessary.

8.1.2 Social Networking Sites
The College has the facilities to disseminate information and updates through relevant and appropriate social networking sites Facebook (www.facebook.com) and Twitter (www.twitter.com).

8.1.3 College Newsletter
A quarterly newsletter is e-mailed to all College contacts available through the database, this includes current and past students and staff, contacts in employer agencies and

relevant professional bodies and associations. The purpose of this newsletter is to maintain contact with all stakeholders and provide updates on College activities and achievements and developments in relation to programmes and services.

8.1.4 College Brochure and Marketing Materials

An Annual College Brochure is produced by the Promotions Committee, containing all marketing materials relevant to the recruitment of new students into programmes. This brochure contains details of the teaching, learning and assessment strategies of the College, information leaflets on all programmes and relevant application documentation. This brochure is posted to all College contacts available through the database.

8.1.5 College Open Days and Information Sessions

The College will facilitate open days and information sessions as relevant and feasible, in which potential students and other interested parties can meet with College staff, receive information about the programmes and services available and query relevant opportunities available through the College. These information sessions will be facilitated in accessible venues around the country.

8.1.6 Participation in Conferences, and Educational Recruitment Fairs

The College will participate in relevant conferences and educational recruitment fairs, as appropriate and feasible, to provide information to potential students and other interested parties about the programmes and services available, and to promote the College among relevant groups.

8.2 Procedures for the Publication of Reports and Results of Reviews

The College Quality Assurance Document and Re-validation Reports are published on the website: http://www.opentrainingcollege.com. Quality Assurance reports are produced annually for each programme of the College, upon completion of each academic year. All other reports can be produced on a periodical basis and or, relevant to the review cycle of the particular programme or activity, or once-off reports may be produced relevant to a particular project or activity.

8.2.1 Annual Programme Quality Assurance Reports

These reports detail the activities of the programme in the preceding academic year, this includes details relating to the delivery of the programme; staff and student feedback on all aspects of the programme; student recruitment and retention statistics; student

assessment results; External Examiner feedback; Programme Board meetings and Quality Improvement recommendations.

8.2.2 Graduate Destinations Survey Reports

All graduates of the Open Training College are invited to participate in a survey at intervals of one, three and five years following their graduation. The purpose of these surveys is:

- ❖ To maintain communication with the graduate population of the College;
- ❖ To evaluate the medium to long term impact of OTC programmes on graduates' careers;
- ❖ To remain up to date with developments in the sectors and challenges being faced by staff;
- ❖ To identify additional training and education needs and goals of graduates;
- ❖ To ensure continued relevance of OTC programmes in the workplace;
- ❖ To monitor progression routes of graduates, with regard to career and educational progression; to inform graduates of opportunities arising within the College for further study;
- ❖ To inform Quality Assurance review processes within the College including Institutional Review, Re-validation and Strategic Review and Planning.

All findings from these surveys are collated and presented in report format and made available on request.

8.2.3 College End of Year Evaluation Report

Upon completion of each academic year all current students of the College are invited to give their feedback on all aspects of programmes and services, as experienced by them. This feedback is categorised into eight areas, which are: Overall College Experience, Open Learning Materials, Student Supports and Tutorials, Online Learning and Activities, Assessment & Feedback, Professional Development, College Administration and Progression. All findings from these surveys are collated and presented in report format and available to all students through MyOTC.

8.2.4 Re-validation Review Reports

The Self-Evaluation Report, Peer Review Panel Report and Programme Improvement Plan arising from the completion of Re-validation will be published in full on the College Website.

8.2.5 Institutional Review Reports
The Self-Evaluation Report, Peer Review Panel Report and Quality Improvement Plan arising from the completion of Institutional Review will be published in full on the College Website.

8.2.6 Project Evaluation Reports
The College will produce reports as appropriate and relevant regarding ad hoc projects and pilot programmes when completed.

8.3 Freedom of Information

The OTC recognises its responsibility under the Freedom of Information Acts 1997, 2003 and 2014, and the right of students to gain access to information held on them by the College, and will comply with any reasonable requests made under the Acts.

Appendix 1 – Quality Systems Summary Diagram