

SECTION 1: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY

Supporting Documents:

1. **Certificate of Incorporation – St. Michael’s House (1968)**
2. **St. Michael’s House Memorandum and Articles of Association (1970)**
3. **Companies Act - Constitution (2014): Memorandum of Association**
4. **Certificate of Registration of Business Name – The Open Training College**
5. **Board Structures, Corporate Governance Manual and Competency Framework**
6. **St. Michael’s House Annual Reports**
7. **St. Michael’s House five-year Strategic Plan (2017-2021)**
8. **QQI Certificates of Validation – Programme Documentation**
9. **Safety Statement**

1.0 The Open Training College Background and Overview

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

St. Michael’s House has an annual budget of c96 million euro (96.565 million in 2019), employs c1700 staff (2020) and provides direct service to c1750 (2019) children and adults with disabilities incorporating an extensive range of services across 174 locations in the greater Dublin area and Navan, Co. Meath (residential and independent living supports; clinical services for children and adults; day supports and vocational training; respite services and special education schools). St. Michael’s House operates under the auspices of the Health Services Executive (HSE) and is directly funded by it through an annual service plan.

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

As part of the designation as a third level institute, St. Michael's House was required to offer the programmes and training it developed to staff in all staff employed in disability services nationally. To achieve this objective the organisation was innovative in developing a model of delivery based on a distance learning approach, but with significant adult-friendly supports built in. This model is known as the Supported Open Learning (SOL) Model and has been operated successfully by the College since 1992. More recently other educational providers and educational researchers have referred to this model as 'blended learning'.

The College administration offices are located in Goatstown, Dublin 14 and programme delivery is national (through online and regional locations). The College employs 14 core staff and 15 associate/contract teaching staff plus a range of workshop presenters, consultants, module/topic authors and specialist topic experts. The College budget is generated through student fees, project work, work for St. Michael's House and tender activity. College awards were initially validated by the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) 1992-2003, followed by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) 2004-2012 and then Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) 2012-to date. The QA arrangements with QQI (and its former iterations) pertains to St. Michael's House trading as (T/A) the Open Training College. St. Michael's House also has a separate structure which provides access to Awards at levels 1-3 on the NFQ to adult service users.

1.0.1 College Mission Statement

The College's Mission Statement is as follows:

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

1.0.2 College Objectives

The objectives of the College are to:

- contribute to the development and delivery of quality services within the disability, health-related, 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 justice and inclusion focus in programmes and activity;

- attend particularly to the education and training needs of staff working in disability, health-related, non-profit, community and voluntary services with no formal third-level qualifications or seeking to improve qualification/CPD profile;
- maintain a strong applied bias for learning 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 programmes are available nationally, equally accessible to staff in Donegal as in Dublin;
- ensure access, transfer and progression opportunities in line with national best practice and legal requirements;
- 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 programme delivery and assessment;
- develop, partnerships and collaborations and links to encourage the development of new approaches and enhance the status of the College.

1.0.3 Distinctive Profile and Purpose

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

1. National and Specialised Focus

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

College Students are Mature Students

Primarily the College works with adult learners and currently does not operate intake through the CAO process.

All Open Training College Programmes are Applied

All programmes run by the College are designed to be applied directly to the relevant workplace/potential workplace of the students, at both local and organisational level. Assessment includes a strong focus on 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:

1. every programme has a strong focus on application in the open learning materials and in the practical skills workshops;
2. a significant portion of the marks for programme assessment is allocated to work-based assignments;
3. 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;
4. work-based supervision is mandatory, where appropriate.

1.0.4 Current 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):

No.	Programme Title	Level of Award – and Type
1	Bachelor of Arts in Social Care	Level 7 - Major
2	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Contemporary Disability Studies	Level 8 - Major
3	Certificate in Applied Management (Human Services)	6 - Minor
4	Higher Certificate in Arts in Applied Management (Human Services)	6 - Major
5	Bachelor of Arts in Applied Management (Human Services)	7 - Major
6	Certificate in Managing for a Positive Behavioural Culture	7 - SP
7	Certificate in Supported Employment	7 - SP
8	Certificate in Facilitated Learning	6 – Minor (HE)
9	Certificate in Training and Development	6 – SP (FE)
10	Certificate in Community Development and Leadership	6 – Major (FE)
11	Certificate in Community Development Practice	5 – Major (FE)

12	Certificate in Intellectual Disability Practice	5 – Major (FE)
13	Certificate in Health Service Skills	5 – Major (FE)
14	Certificate in Exploring Disability	Level 6 - Minor
15	Certificate in Focus on the Individual	Level 6 - Minor
16	Certificate in Empowerment and Advocacy	Level 6 - Minor
17	Certificate in Active Inclusion	Level 7 - Minor
18	Certificate in Current Issues in Social Care: Mental Health, Elder Care and Children	Level 8 - Minor
19	Certificate in Supporting Individualised Living and Alternative Services	Level 8 - Minor
20	Certificate in Quality and Risk in Service Delivery	Level 6- SP
21	Certificate in Supporting and Working with Families	Level 7- SP
22	Certificate in Autism, Wellbeing and Positive Behaviour Supports	Level 7- SP
23	Certificate in Essential Employment Law	Level 6 - Minor
24	Certificate in Key Management Skills	Level 6 - Minor
25	Certificate in Managing Service Quality and Safeguarding	Level 6 - Minor
26	Certificate in Managing for Regulation and Inspection	Level 6 - Minor
27	Certificate in Human Resource Management and Supervision	Level 6 - Minor
28	Certificate in Leadership and the Learning Organisation	Level 7 - Minor
29	Certificate in the Manager as Coach and Mentor	Level 7 - Minor
30	Certificate in Patient Safety Complaints Advocacy	Level 7- SP

Table 1: Open Training College Programmes (Validated by QQI)

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

1.0.5 College Core Programmes

B.A. Social Care

The Open Training College provides a three-year ordinary degree programme leading to a major QQI award; Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The programme is aimed at front-line staff working in a range of social care settings. It addresses key issues in the delivery of social care services today. This includes empowerment, person-centred planning, quality in services, sexuality, challenging behaviour, community networking and the world of work. This programme has been put forward to CORU for approval in relation to future student registration with the Social Care Workers' registration board.

B.A. Contemporary Disability Studies

First approved in 2019, this programme follows on from the former B.A. Professional Social Care (Disability). It is a Level 7 programme with a particular focus on disability. It is aimed particularly at

those students already working in services who may wish to have a formal qualification in this specialised area.

B.A. (Hons.) Contemporary Disability Studies

First approved in 2019, this programme follows on from the former B.A. (Hons.) Professional Social Care (Disability). It is aimed particularly at those students already working in services who may wish to progress to a service management role within this specialised area. 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 programme 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.

Certificate in Applied Management (Human Services)

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 minor QQI Award; Level 6 (higher education and training) on the NFQ. The programme consists of six modules. While grounded in generic management, there is a significant applied element, which is a major strength of this programme. On successful completion of the programme, graduates will be eligible to participate in the Higher Certificate in Arts in Applied Management.

Higher Certificate in Arts in Applied Management (Human Services)

This is a one-year add-on programme 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 major QQI award; Level 6 (higher education and training) on the NFQ. This programme will be of interest to those managers and supervisors who wish to earn a nationally recognised award and deepen their understanding of management theory.

Bachelor of Arts in Applied Management (Human Services)

This degree is a further one-year add-on programme to the Higher Certificate. This programme is offered by the college and leads to a major QQI Award; Level 7 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.

Certificate in Supported Employment

This certificate is a one-module (20 ECTS credit) 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 12-week period.

Certificate in Managing for 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.

Certificate in Intellectual Disability Practice

This programme has been designed to address the needs of front line staff (Care Worker, Healthcare Assistant, Family Support Worker, Home Support Worker, Personal Assistant and Community Support Worker) working in services for people with Intellectual Disability in Ireland.

The programme places current service provision clearly within a historical context and, as it progresses, will introduce the learner to best practice in key areas of service delivery, including person centredness, empowerment, advocacy, teaching and learning and community inclusion.

The personal and professional skills and development of the individual learner is a key feature of all programme modules, and learners are offered the opportunity to develop specific knowledge and skills in an area relevant to their individual job role through a choice of carefully considered and designed elective options.

The programme consists of 8 programme modules (6 mandatory and 2 electives) which meet the learning outcomes of the Major Level 5 award of Certificate in Intellectual Disability Practice.

1.1 Governance

1.1.1 Organisational Structure

OTC Governance and Organisational Structure

St. Michael's House has a group structure called the 'St. Michael's House Group' (SMHG) comprising 5 companies as detailed in Figure 1 below. The Group and each Company in the group has its own Board of Directors. The Open Training College is a section of one company in the group - the first company - called St. Michael's House (SMH) identified below. This company (SMH) was the original organisation established in 1955. The SMH Board is responsible for the direction and control of the SMH Company which includes the College. Board members are selected to represent a sufficiently wide and relevant mix of backgrounds, skills and experience and are elected by members at an Annual General Meeting. A code of conduct for Directors outlines their responsibilities to the organisation. Directors are non-executive and offer their services on a voluntary basis.

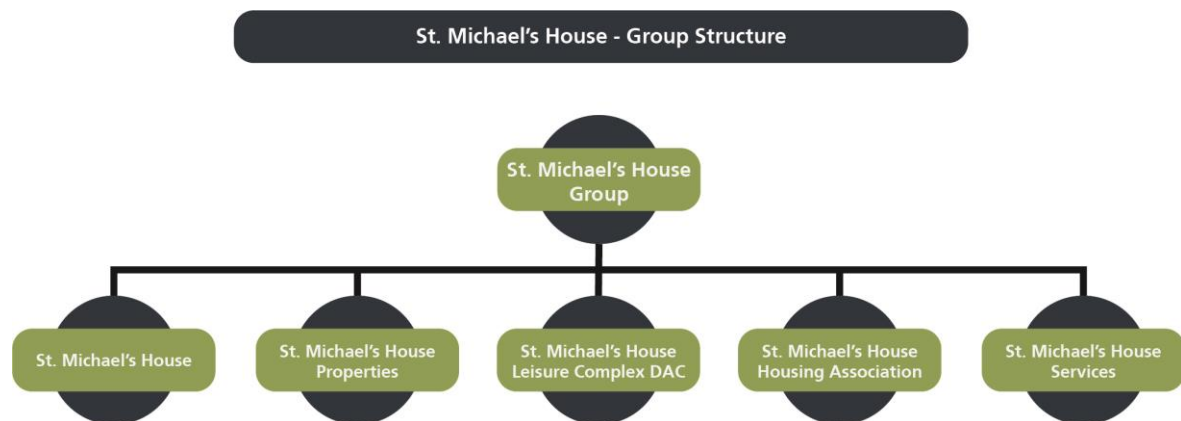


Figure 1: St. Michael's House Group Structure

The OTC is managed on a day-to-day basis by the College Director who reports to the Director of Operations/CEO of SMH. Figure 2 below outlines the relationship between the OTC and the SMH company.

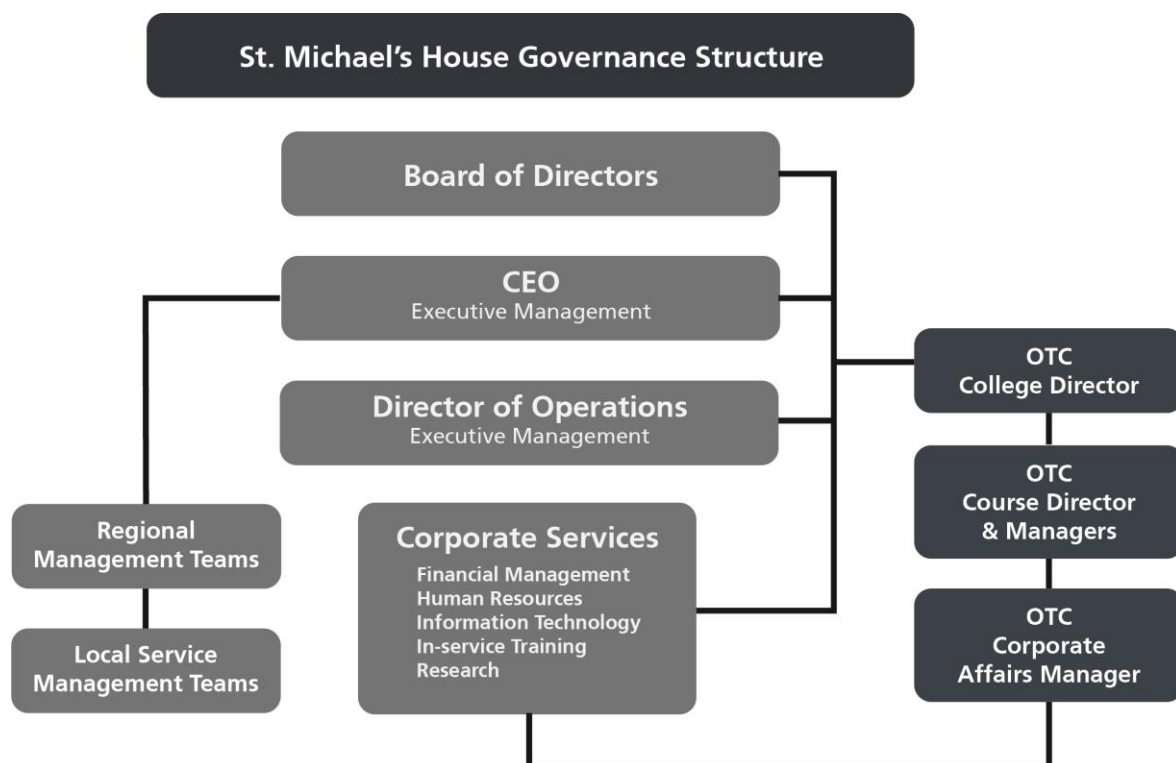


Figure 2: St. Michael's House (SMH) Company Governance Structure

The College Director has a monthly operations meeting with the Director of Operations, a 6-weekly strategic and performance review meeting with the CEO, regular meetings with the Finance Director and Management Accountant. The College Director or Managers also meet with HR, IT, Procurement, and the Facilities Manager as required.

A written report on College activity is presented to the SMH Company Board three times per year and the College Director is required to present to the SMH Board and Group Board at least once annually. College activity is also monitored through the sub-committees of the Board - finance committee, audit and risk committee, and governance committee.

The executive management of the College is led by Dr Karen Finnerty, College Director and Raymond Watson, Assistant College Director supported by 6 Programme Directors/Managers.

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

- Human Resources; including Garda vetting and safeguarding compliance
- Financial Management
- Health and Safety of administration building and for employees
- Premises maintenance

- Insurance - Public and Employers Liability (The OTC provides its own professional indemnity insurance)
- IT support (premises hardware/software systems). The online learning environment and College IMS is additionally supported by specialist companies under contract

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

1.1.2 Human Resources

St. Michael's House employs over 1,700 WTE staff and has a fully staffed Human Resources department (including HR Director, 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. All College core staff are SMH employees subject to the terms and conditions applicable to public sector Section 38 employees.

Section 4 of this document details the human resources policies and procedures that apply to staff employed in the Open Training College.

1.1.3 Finance

The Finance Director manages the finance department within SMH. The accounts department (including the salaries department) manages an annual budget of circa €96 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:

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 summer 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.

Staff Salaries

All core 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 or the Single Public Service Pension. The organisation also operates AVC (Additional Voluntary Contribution) schemes with New Ireland Assurance and Cornmarket Group Financial Services.

Management of Student Fees

The annual fee for each programme is decided in the winter/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 programme, 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 in line with the OTC Fees Policy, please see page 206, and 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 (cash not accepted) 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 audited by the College and the accounts department on a regular basis. Since 2016, the College IMS system facilitates payments online.

Management of Invoices to the College

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

Information: Students and Payments

In addition, all College policies and procedures relating to fees are detailed in the Student Handbook (Section 3: Money Matters). The College publishes information on fees and any additional student costs in the College brochure and on the website. These information sources are updated annually.

1.1.4 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 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.

1.1.5 Maintenance

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

1.1.6 Insurance

The Open Training College is covered under the insurance for the main organisation with regard to Public Liability and Employers Liability. Professional Indemnity cover is provided by the College for its staff and associate staff.

1.1.7 Information Technology Support

The St. Michael's House IT department provides ongoing support to the College in relation to internal IT systems. In addition, the College acquires the support of industry experts on contract 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;
- The student information management System (IMS)
- Production of open learning materials.

1.1.8 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 validation²;
- An existing validated programme being subject to review of validation by QQI.

Further details on PEL Policy and Procedures are contained in Section 3.5 of this document.

1.2 Embedding a Quality Culture

Policy Context, Definition and Objectives of the College Quality System

Section 28 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 requires that providers have systems of Quality Assurance. QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016) informed the OTC review and enhancement of its QA system, documentation, policies and procedures (2018).

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)

"Quality and its assurance is the primary responsibility of the provider. quality assurance refers to the mechanisms and procedures developed and adopted by providers to achieve and maintain a desired level of quality in educational provision, research and related services. The desired level of quality and complexity of related procedures will be influenced by a provider's context, including its scope.... Internal quality assurance procedures normally have an external dimension also, for example, external review panels or examiners. A provider's quality (assurance) system refers to all of the provider's internal QA policies and procedures working in concert to form an integrated whole." (QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016/QG1-V p. 2)

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

- outline the quality ethos of the College and the mechanisms by which quality is assured in College activity;
- 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 stakeholders;
- identify areas in which the College is currently undertaking evaluations and/or introducing improvements.

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 programme-based evaluation activities employed to monitor and critically appraise the operation of programmes 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 programmes, including internal and external monitoring methodologies. These activities include the accreditation process

for new programmes, external moderation of assessment, Re-validation (Programme Review) and Institutional Review.

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

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 social care, disability, health-related, 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 follows³:

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

- **The Learning Outcome Principle:** whereby all provision by the college is designed, implemented and evaluated with learning outcomes in mind.
- **The Implementation Principle:** whereby all approved quality assurance procedures in this Quality Assurance document are fully implemented.
- **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, programme directors, tutors and administration personnel;
- representatives of graduates and current students;
- members of the Academic Council;
- executive management of St. Michael's House.

OTC Quality Assurance Map

The OTC QA system is therefore embedded in the Policy context of European and National guidelines on QA in education. This forms the context within which strategic and operational planning occurs. This feeds management processes, evaluation, monitoring and feedback into the system to generate improvements. In summary, a continuous process of plan, do, check and review/action.

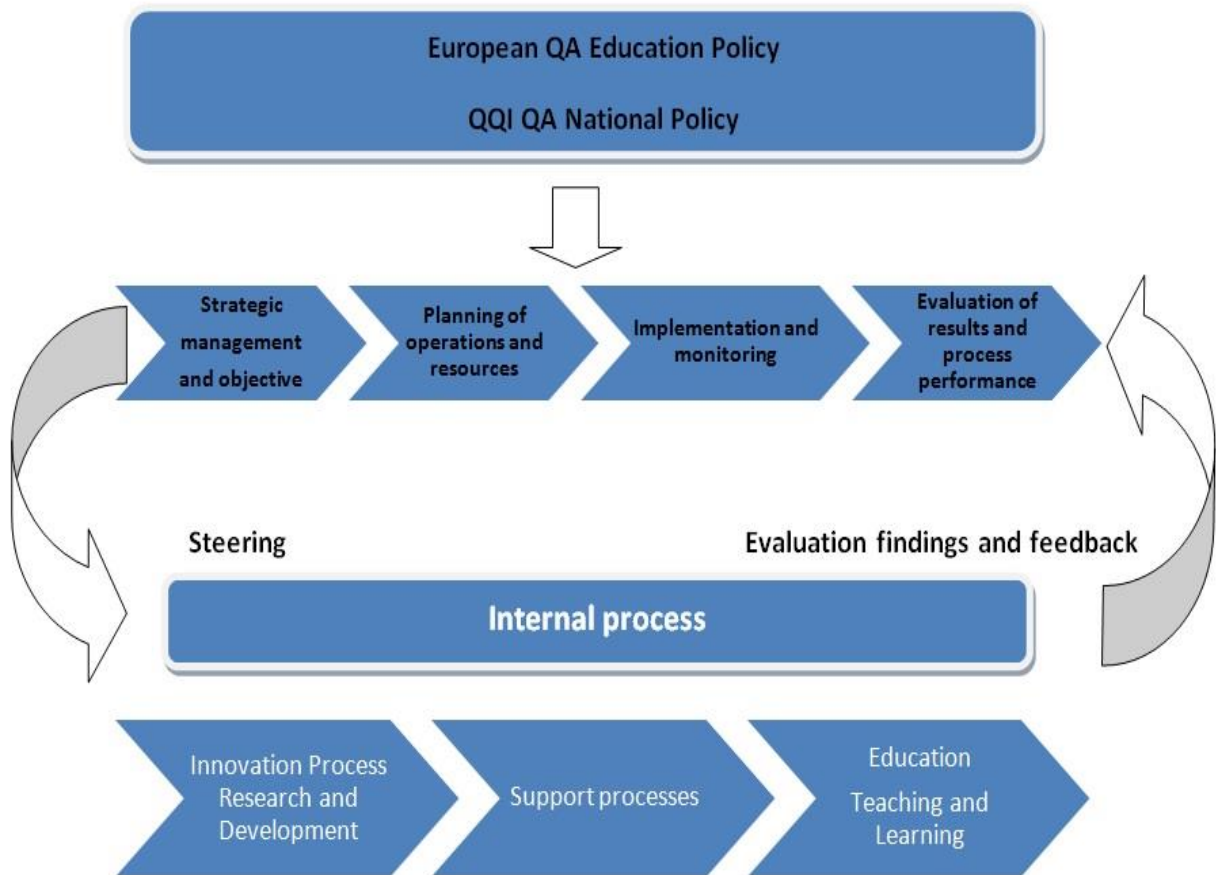


Figure 3: OTC Quality Assurance Map of the Management Information System

(Adapted from Kaplan and Norton 2004)

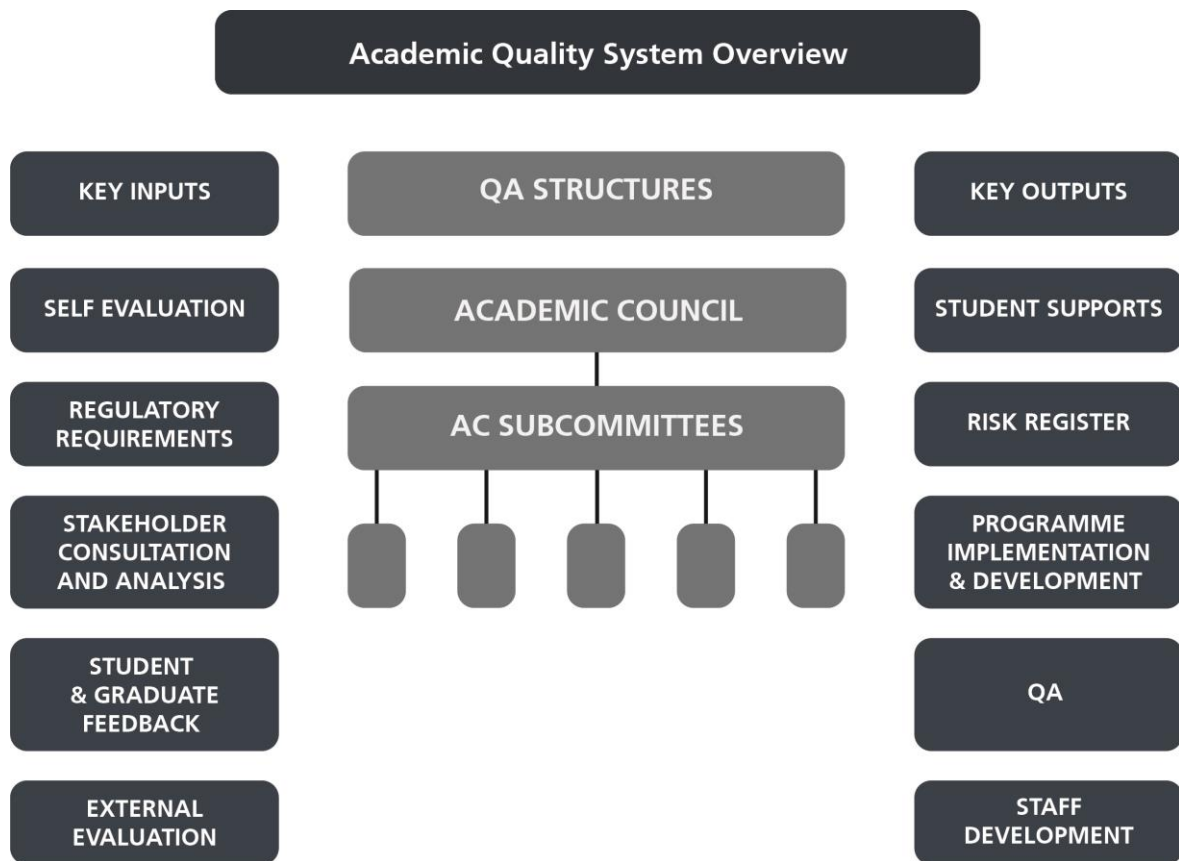


Figure 4: Academic Quality System Overview

Academic Quality System Overview

KEY INPUTS:

SELF EVALUATION

- QA administrative function review
- Risk identification and assessment
- Review & development of policies and procedures
- eLearning review
- Benchmarking
- Review of teaching and learning needs
- Tutor feedback
- Workshop presenter feedback
- Supervision feedback
- Review of academic results
- Annual QA reports
- Programme gap analysis
- Programme development

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- QQI, CORU, HIQA, Charities Act

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION AND ANALYSIS

- Consultation and research with agencies, HSE, and non-profit organisations
- Collaborative partners
- Programme development (sector needs assessment)
- HECA board member
- Membership of relevant national bodies, NFVB, IASCE, IASE etc.
- Membership on academic boards, panels etc.

STUDENT & GRADUATE FEEDBACK

- 1,3,5-year graduate survey process
- Module, programme and end of year surveys
- Focus groups and surveys on new programme development
- Focus groups and surveys on programme review

EXTERNAL EVALUATION

- International eLearning review and benchmarking
- Academic awards for excellence
- QQI external institutional and programme reviews
- Reengagement

KEY OUTPUTS:

STUDENT SUPPORTS

- Improved student supports
- Student representation on boards

RISK REGISTER

- College risk register

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION & DEVELOPMENT

- Internal programme review reports
- External Examiners' reports
- Self-Evaluation Reports
- QIPs
- New validated programmes
- New non accredited programmes
- Revalidated programmes
- In-depth understanding of sector needs
- Collaborative partnership

QA

- Updated QA administrative function
- Published QuAD (Quality Assurance Document)
- Revised and newly developed policies and procedures
- QA procedures and processes for collaborative provision
- Published QA reports
- External review reports
- Academic affairs annual schedule

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- Staff CPD Record
- Annual CPD activity report

1.3 Management of Quality Assurance

Organisation of the Quality Assurance System of the Open Training College

1.3.1 Roles and responsibilities for Quality Assurance

Proper execution of the management structure of academic quality assurance within the College falls within the remit of the College Director supported by the Head of Quality & Academic Affairs, whose role incorporates Quality Assurance (QA). The Governance of Academic QA structure is represented in the diagramme below:

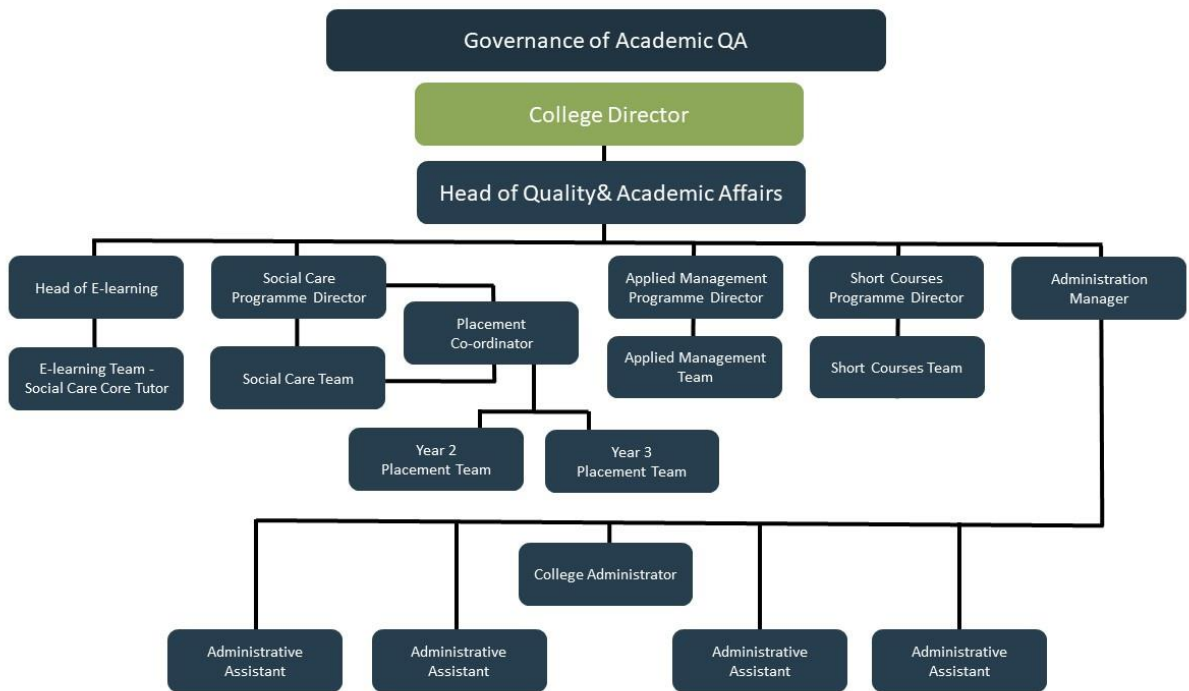


Figure 5: Governance of Academic QA

1.3.2 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.

Academic Council and Subcommittees

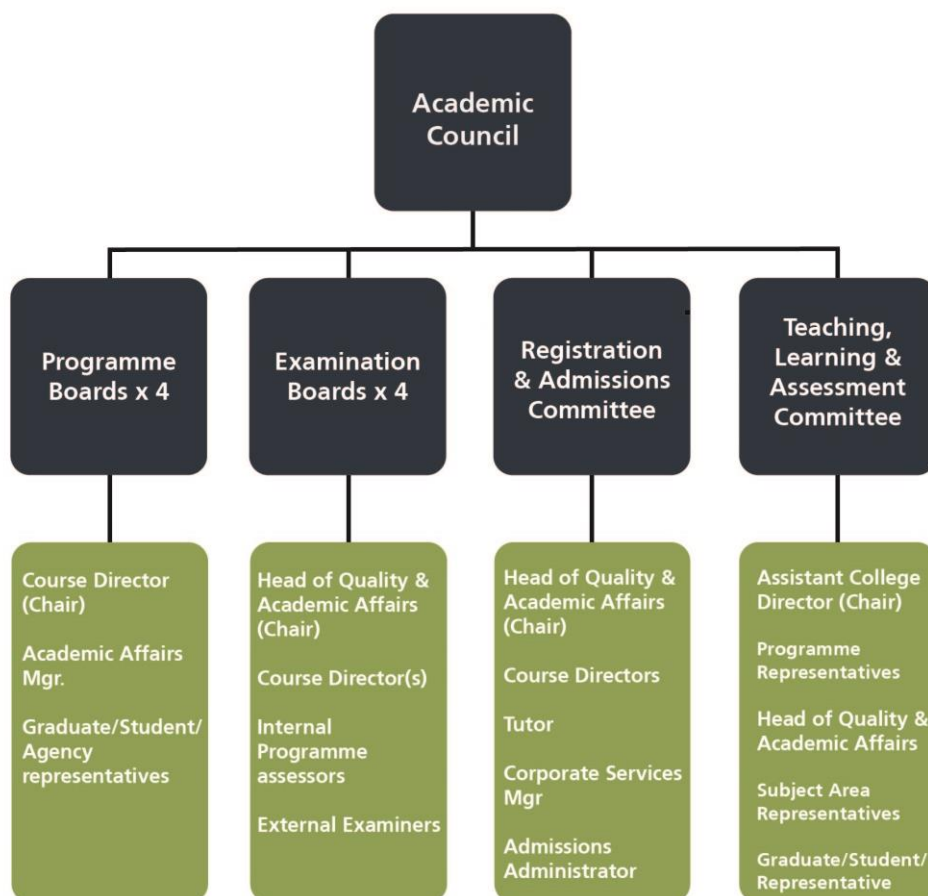


Figure 6: Academic Council and Subcommittees Structure

1.3.3 Academic Council

Terms of reference:

“In foreseen circumstances when the Academic Council cannot be convened for approval of timebound matters/issues, authority be delegated in advance to the Executive on a case-by-case basis.” (Approved by AC, 24th June 2021)

General

- Governance of all Academic Matters
- Monitoring, review and ongoing improvement of all QA policies and procedures;
- Approve policy amendments of College pertaining to academic matters;
- Appoint, review and monitor functioning of academic 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;

- 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 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):
 - Re-validation (Programme Review)
 - Institutional Review

- Strategic Review

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

Membership of the Academic Council:

Title	No	How appointed	Term	Notes
Chair	1 of 4	Rotated amongst the External Members and the Head of Quality & Academic Affairs	Ongoing	External Members will usually step down following 3 years on the Academic Council but may be asked to extend for a year. The Head of Quality & Academic Affairs is Ex-officio.
College Director	1	Ex-officio	Ongoing	
Assistant College Director (Vice chairperson)	1	Ex-officio	Ongoing	
Programme Directors	4	Ex-officio	Ongoing	Any new future PD posts will also sit on Council
Head of Quality & Academic Affairs	1	Ex-officio	Ongoing	
Tutor Representative	1	Elected by fellow tutors	2 years	
Student Representative	1	Elected by student body	2 years	
External Academics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Profile • QA profile • HE profile • FE profile 	4	By nomination and approval of AC	3 years	In exceptional circumstances external board members may be invited to extend their term
Secretary	1	Ex-officio	Ongoing	In attendance Non-voting

Table 2: Membership of Academic Council

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

Chairing of meetings: Each Chairperson will hold the seat for a six month period which will include overseeing two corporeal meetings of the Academic Council. The Chair will rotate amongst the External Members and the Head of Quality & Academic Affairs.

Frequency of meetings: 3 times per year – October, January, June (A minimum of one meeting per year is compulsory for all members). Incorporal meetings are convened on occasion for specific matters requiring overview/ratification prior to the next meeting.

Quorum for meetings: 7 representatives; must include a minimum of two external members.

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

Breath of responsibility: Accredited programmes run by College.

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

Meetings' minutes: The recording 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. specific student matters) may be recorded separately and stored securely.

1.3.4 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 sub-sections outline 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.

The Academic Council also oversees the functioning of Ad Hoc committees. The Terms of Reference for any such committees are presented following the standing committees below.

Principles of Practice of Academic Council & Committees

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

STANDING COMMITTEES:

1.3.5 Programme Boards

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.

Membership of the Committee:

- Programme Director (Chair): Ex-officio
- Head of Quality & Academic Affairs: Ex-officio
- Internal programme tutors: Ex-officio
- Graduate/Student/Agency representative: By appointment

Meetings: 2 meetings per year: September: Post Exam Board review

July: End of year review

Sub-groups: As deemed necessary by the Board.

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

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

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.

1.3.6 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.

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.

Membership of the Committee:

- Head of Quality & Academic Affairs (Chair): Ex-officio
- Programme Director(s): Ex-officio
- Internal programme assessors: Ex-officio
- External Examiner(s): By appointment of the Academic Council

Meetings: As necessary – prior to submission for certification and 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.

1.3.7 Registration & Admissions Committee

Terms of Reference:

- Review College admissions and registration policies and procedures annually;
- 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.

Membership of the Committee:

- Head of Quality & Academic Affairs (Chair): Ex-officio
- Programme Director(s) of all programmes: Ex-officio
- Corporate Services Manager/Admissions Administrator: Ex-officio
- 1 x tutor: 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 limited to internal College staff.

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.

1.3.8 Teaching, Learning & Assessment Committee

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.

Information storage:

- Retention and deletion periods.
- GDPR policy compliance.

Assessment:

- 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.

Membership of the Committee:

- Assistant College Director (Chair): Ex-officio
- Head of Quality & Academic Affairs: Ex-officio
- Internal programme tutor representatives: By appointment
- Programme Directors.

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 the 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.

AD HOC COMMITTEES:

1.3.9 New Programmes Development Committee(s)

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.

Membership of the Committee:

- Programme Developer (Chair): By appointment of the College Director
- College Director: Ex-officio
- Head of Quality & Academic Affairs: Ex-officio
- Associate programme developer: 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.

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.

1.3.10 Disciplinary Committee

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.

Membership of the Committee:

- Assistant College Director (Chair): Ex-officio
- Head of Quality & Academic Affairs: Ex-officio
- Independent internal (or external) representative

Meetings:

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

Sub-groups: As deemed necessary by the committee.

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.

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 the Academic Council.

1.3.12 Maintaining the Quality Assurance System

The OTC 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, and as indicated in the policy summary from first date of implementation. 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.

For the most recent review (QQI Re-Engagement 2018) the following review process was implemented.

Re-Engagement process

2009

- Most recent Institutional Review (IR) for OTC

2009-2011

- Complete edit and re-draft to re-format the QA manual in line with European Standards and Guidelines (ESGs)
- Monitored Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) resulting from the Institutional Review

2012 – 2015

- Updating of the manual on an annual or bi-annual basis; with all changes approved by Academic Council
- Updating of documentation to reflect transition from HETAC/FETAC to QQI

2015-16

- Revalidation of Social Care programmes
- External evaluation of the online/blended model – *Pilgrim Report*
- Administration review – Specification of procedures, responsibility and back-up
- QA Review – Gap Analysis against new QQI Policies and Criteria; including QA for HET/FET providers and Independent/Private Providers

Stage 1: Adoption of Policies relevant to Re-engagement – Academic Council

Agreement of Collaborative Provision Policy with QQI

2017

- Additional QA review: Collaborative Provision
- Initial GDPR review
- Applied Management and Certificate Programmes – Re/validation
- Updates to include newly developed St. Michael's House policies
- Updating of PEL, relevant legislation and PR and Re/Validation policies and procedures

Stage 2: Adoption of Policies relevant to Re-engagement – Academic Council

2018

- GDPR review – Action Plan and new policy
- Additional QA review: Blended Learning
- FET QA Review – Allowing for Combined QA Document (QuAD)

Stage 3: Adoption of Policies relevant to Re-engagement – Academic Council

- Website Review – Ongoing
- Complete update to Quality Assurance Document (QuAD 3.0) – to accord with layout of Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI) and Guidelines for Re-Engagement (QQI)

Stage 4: Adoption of Policies relevant to Re-engagement – Academic Council

1.3.13 Process for review and adoption for Re-Engagement

2015-16: Initial Gap analysis (Stage 1)

- Development of new policies (Individual/Group)
- Circulation of draft policies to critical readers
- Feedback and policy update
- Submission to Academic Council members pre-meeting
- Feedback and final draft
- Adoption of new/updated policies at Academic Council meeting
- Specification of Administration procedures

2017: Additional QA review and Gap analysis (Stage 2)

- Development of new policies (Individual/Group)
- Circulation of draft policies to critical readers
- Feedback and policy update
- Submission to Academic Council members pre-meeting
- Feedback and final draft
- Adoption of new/updated policies at Academic Council meeting
- Quality Improvement tracking of Online provision following external Pilgrim Report
- Preparation for GDPR
- Updating of PEL
- Initial redrafting of QA Document

2018: Additional QA review and Gap analysis (Stage 3)

- Inclusion of Blended Learning guidelines
- HET/FET review
- Development of new policies (Individual/Group)
- Circulation of draft policies to critical readers
- Feedback and policy update
- Submission to Academic Council members pre-meeting
- Feedback and final draft
- Adoption of new/updated policies at Academic Council meeting
- Liaison with St. Michael's House to ensure reference to most relevant and updated policies
- Provision of evidentiary documentation from St. Michael's House and OTC Corporate Services

2018: Final Review against new Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.0) and Layout/Re-Engagement guidelines (Stage 4)

- Remaining gap analysis and final policy development
- Development of new policies (Individual/Group)
- Circulation of draft policies to critical readers
- Feedback and policy update
- Submission to Academic Council members pre-meeting
- Feedback and final draft
- Critical readers of Quality Assurance Document and Re-Engagement documentation
- Feedback and update
- Submission of draft Re-engagement documentation to AC for feedback: Application Form and Self-Assessment Report (SAR)
- Adoption of new/updated policies and Re-Engagement Documentation at Academic Council meeting
- Expansion of Academic Council external membership
- Final cross-referencing of SAR to QuAD V. 3.0

Key Documents Relevant to the Process

A. Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines – QQI, April 2016.

B. Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers – QQI, April 2016.

C. Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Independent/Private Providers coming to QQI on a Voluntary Basis – QQI, April 2016.

D. Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes – QQI, March 2018.

E. Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards (QQI, Revised 2012)

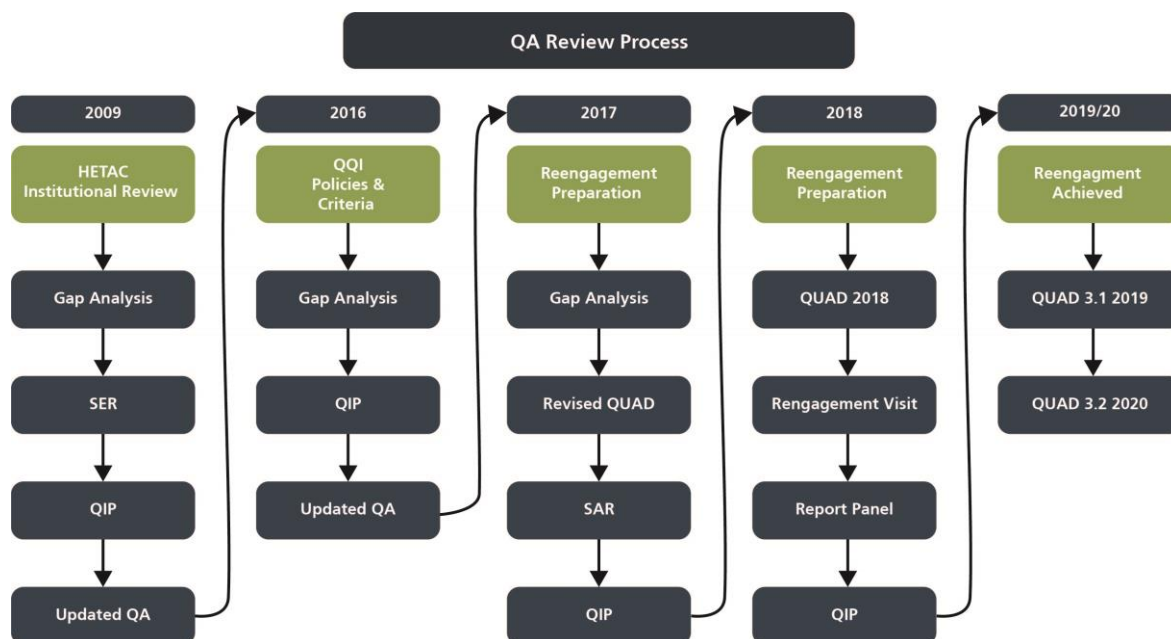


Figure 7: Quality Review Process

The Re-engagement process and report led to the further publication of Version 3.1 and Version 3.2 of this Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) in April 2019 and April 2020, respectively.

1.4 Integration with Blended Learning and Online Learning Strategy

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

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

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

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

- ii. Online developments that are subject to business case approval for viability and sustainability.
- iii. Appeals and complaints policies and processes which accommodate remote learning.
- iv. Regulations and arrangements for Boards of Examiners and external examiners which include any additional consideration of online learning experiences.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:

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

INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-learning is part of the overall strategy for the institution’s development as well as the policy for quality assurance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The institution uses a clearly articulated policy framework and governance structure when deciding on the adoption of new technologies to ensure the expected quality of e-learning provision.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The institution has a clear strategy for digital innovation, e-learning being a part of it. This strategy is known within the institution at all levels and is adopted by teachers in charge of designing the curriculum.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-learning programmes are aligned with the institutional mission.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The institution takes into account the European, national, and local policies, as well as ethical and legal considerations when designing its policy for quality assurance and its internal quality assurance system.