Annual Quality Report (Open Training
Reporting Period 2020-2021

Annual Quality Report (Open Training

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2020-2021

[Open Training College]

2022

PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report (AQR;** formerly AIQR) forms part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) quality assurance (QA) framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The AQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's internal quality system. It provides QQI with assurance that internal QA procedures have been established and are being implemented consistent with regulatory requirements.

The AQR, particularly part A, should assist with **document management** in the institutional review process and will facilitate institutions in providing review teams with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. It is an important part of the evidence base considered by external **review teams** as part of QQI's CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

Each AQR is **published in full on QQI's website**, providing transparency on the HEIs' assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders. (As such, institutions should ensure that their submissions do not contain any data that they consider to be commercially sensitive.) Collectively, the AQRs comprise a single national repository of quality assurance practice in Irish higher education institutions.

Each year, QQI produces a synthesis report of the key themes highlighted across the AQRs, primarily arising from Part B of the reports.

CONTENTS

Guidelines on Completing the Report

The AQR is aligned with QQI's Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and with the ESG (2015). A mapping of the ESG to QQI Core QA Guidelines is included in Table 1 below; the structure of Part A of this report template aligns with the first column of the table. Additional guidance on completing this template and reference material is included in each section. Institutions should adhere to this guidance and have regard to QQI Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. **The guide text within each section should be deleted before submission of the report.**

Submission Process and Timeline

The deadline for submission of the AQR each year is in February of the relevant year, with the call for submission sent to institutions in November of the preceding year. Once the call for submission has been made, QQI will provide access to QQI's provider portal, QHub, to the designated institution contact(s) to facilitate submission of the report. Through QHub, each institution will have access to an editable version of its AQR for the previous reporting period. This document can then be amended/updated to reflect any changes or developments that occurred during the current reporting period before submitting the final report to QQI.

Completing the AQR

- When completing the AQR template, all relevant colleagues in the institution should be consulted.
- Consider whether external audiences will be able to understand the terminology used (particularly local abbreviations and acronyms); it may be helpful to include a glossary.
- Aim to avoid duplication in the report - where information is relevant to more than one section, the first mention may be referenced in subsequent sections.
- Provide reflections on what worked well, but also what may have been tried but did not work.

Report Structure

Part A: Internal QA System

Part A of the AQR comprises a record of each institution's current QA policies and procedures and should provide links to those policies and procedures. Private HEIs may provide links to the policies and procedures approved by QQI during initial access to validation (IAV) or reengagement. It is the responsibility of each HEI to ensure before submission of the AQR that all links are correct and functional, and that the policies and procedures referred to are the most up-to-date versions available. Given that the AQR is submitted in respect of a discrete reporting period, it may be helpful for institutions to establish a SharePoint/OneDrive folder (or similar) for each reporting period that contains the current versions of their policies and procedures, and that hyperlinks to these versions of the documents be provided in the AQR

Part A is to be completed only if there have been **material** changes to QA policies and procedures during the reporting period. Such changes may include the approval and implementation of new polices or procedures, or significant amendments to existing ones.

Part B: Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE)

Part B of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**. Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period - these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

Case Studies

In each reporting period, QQI may request updates on specific thematic areas or may invite the institution to submit case studies in response to specific topics. Further, institutions may include case studies to share good practice on topics of their choosing, demonstrating QA and QE in action. In formulating case studies, institutions are encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination. Further guidance is provided in Part B.

Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template[1]

Legislation

- [Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012](#) (as amended)
- [Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992](#) (as amended)
- [Technological Universities Act 2018](#)
- [Universities Act 1997](#)

QQI Documents

Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

- [Core QAG](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Independent/Private Providers](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Designated Awarding Bodies](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Institutes of Technology](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Blended Learning](#)

Other QQI Policy Documents

- [QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012](#)
- [QQI's Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015](#)
- [QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression, 2015](#)

Other National/International References

- [European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)](#)
- [IHEQN Guidelines on Collaborative Provision](#)
- [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#)
- [Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019](#)
- [HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education](#)
- [The Salzburg Principles](#)
- [The Salzburg II Recommendations](#)
- [SOLAS Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices](#)
- [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

---

[1] These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	**QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.**	**QAG Core Sub-section Title**	**ESG Standard No.**	**ESG Standard Title**
1.0 - *Internal QA Framework*	**2.1**	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	**2.3**	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*				
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
5.0 - *Staff Recruitment, Development and Support*	**2.4**	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - *Teaching, Learning and Assessment*	**2.5**	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - *Learner Resources and Supports*	**2.7**	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - *Information and Data Management*	**2.8**	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - *Public Information and Communication*	**2.9**	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - *Programme Delivery and Development*	**2.10**	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*				
9.0 - *Details of Arrangements with Third Parties*			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	**2.11**	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for the Open Training College - OTC for the reporting period 1 September 2020 – 31 August 2021. It is to be submitted by Friday, 25th February 2022.

The AQR has been approved by OTC's Academic Council (AC) and is submitted by Ronnie Harrison, Head of Quality & Academic Affairs.

Overview of Institution

The Open Training College (OTC) is a section of St. Michaels' 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. Michaels' 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 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. Michaels' 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. Michaels' 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.

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".

Process for Development and approval of AQR

The feedback mechanisms identified in the academic governance and corporate governance structures ensure timely information is gathered and acted upon, in order to deal with arising issues and/or invoke enhancements. These include:

- Regular student and tutor surveys;
- The sub-committee structure under the Academic Council (AC);
- A separate corporate management structure;
- End-of-year and graduate surveys;
- National and international benchmarking against similar programmes/providers as part of new programme development and programme re/validation;
- Continual Student/Personal Tutor contact;
- The organisational structure and reporting lines therein;
- Regular, recorded staff and project team meetings;
- -External monitoring and review by QQI and its representative panels.

The College's Information Management System (IMS) offers ease of access for users, including student online registration. Many processes, including results processing for QQI's QBS, have been streamlined. This allows for easier access to information such as real-time analysis of student progression and results. External Examiner reports provide vital feedback in the area of the most important impacts of enhancements and their findings are recorded in the annual QA reports for the relevant suite of programmes (e.g., Applied Management/Social Care), along with end-of-year student feedback and the improvement plans of the programme board. Therefore, these improvements can be effectively tracked by the boards using the QA reports as a central reference point, which intersects with the real time reports which are generated by the College's IMS.

OTC offers the Supported Open Learning (SOL) model as the basis of its blended learning for students. In recent years, there has been continued enhancement of this model, including immediate feedback on workshops and strengthened resources (including library resources) and increased conditionality within the online delivery of programmes.

All of these inputs are gathered through the "Governance of Academic QA" (outlined at Figure 3 below) and the Annual Quality Report is compiled by the Head of Quality and Academic Affairs. The draft report is circulated to the Academic Council (AC) for final feedback before that body approves a final version for submission to QQI.

Following submission, the AQR is published on the College's website and a dialogue meeting is subsequently arranged with QQI to garner feedback and recommendations for future reporting.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

For ease of access for all stakeholders, the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) is published in full on the College's website (https://opentrainingcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/QuAD-4.0-V1-180122.pdf).

It is also published in individual sections, which correspond to the Core QAG sub-section titles, and individual policies are also published and presented, at the following respective links:

https://opentrainingcollege.com/quality-assurance-sections/
and
https://opentrainingcollege.com/quality-assurance-policies/

The individual sections of the QuAD can be navigated to directly through the following links:

OTC – Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) – Policies and Procedures Version 4.0 (Jan 2022)
Individual Sections:

Section 1 - Governance and Management of Quality

Section 2 - Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

Section 3 - Programmes of Education and Training

Section 4 - Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

Section 5 - Teaching and Learning

Section 6 - Assessment of Learners

Section 7 - Support for Learners

Section 8 - Information and Data Management

Section 9 - Public Information and Communication

Section 10 - Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

Section 11 - Self Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Academic Quality Overview

The following diagram gives an overview of the Academic Quality system at OTC:

Academic Quality System Overview

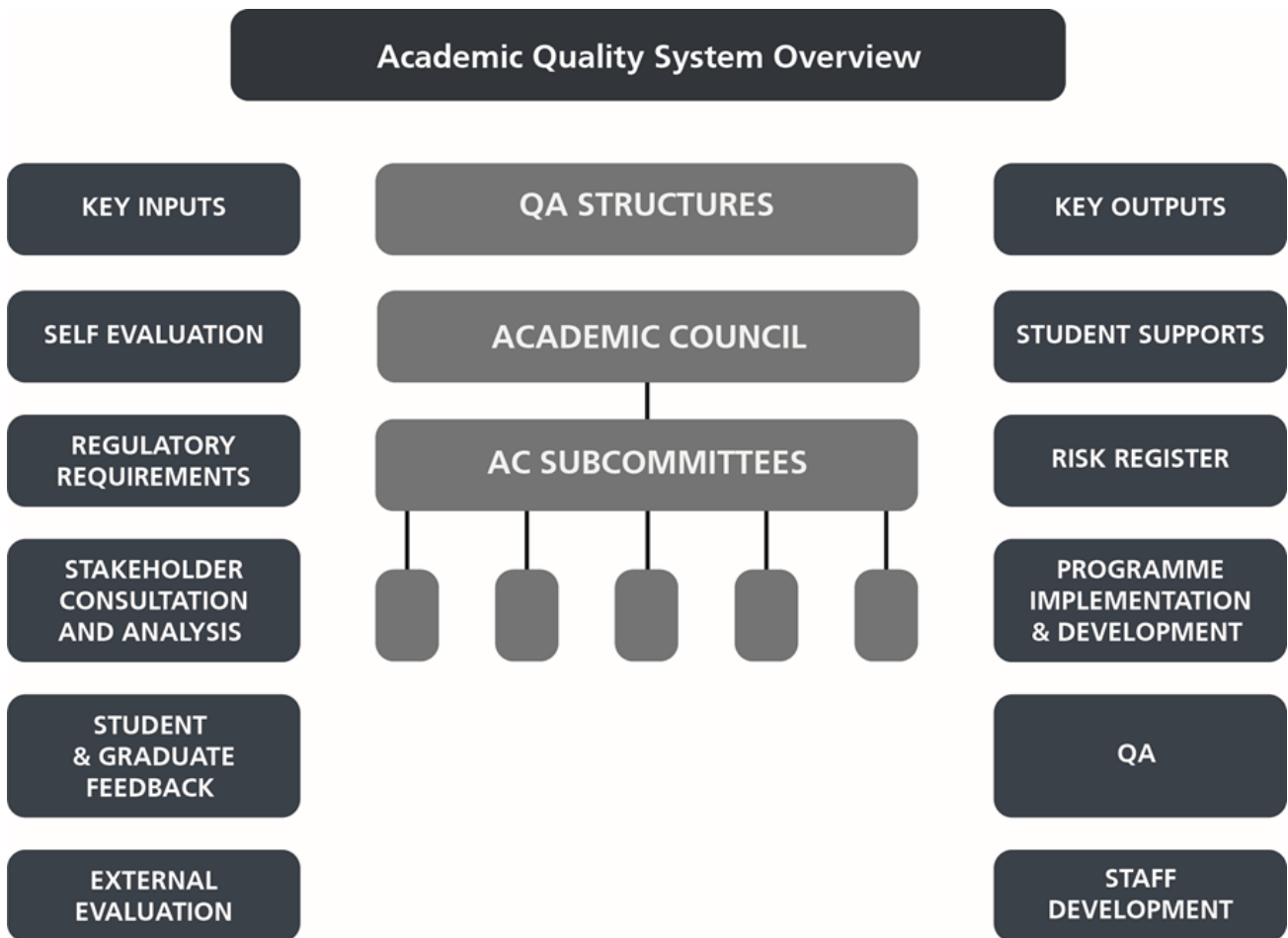| KEY INPUTS	QA STRUCTURES	KEY OUTPUTS
SELF EVALUATION	ACADEMIC COUNCIL	STUDENT SUPPORTS
REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS	AC SUBCOMMITTEES	RISK REGISTER
STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION AND ANALYSIS		PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION & DEVELOPMENT
STUDENT & GRADUATE FEEDBACK		QA
EXTERNAL EVALUATION		STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Figure 1: Academic Quality System Overview

The Academic Council and Sub-committee structure is further represented as follows:

Academic Council and Subcommittees

Academic Council

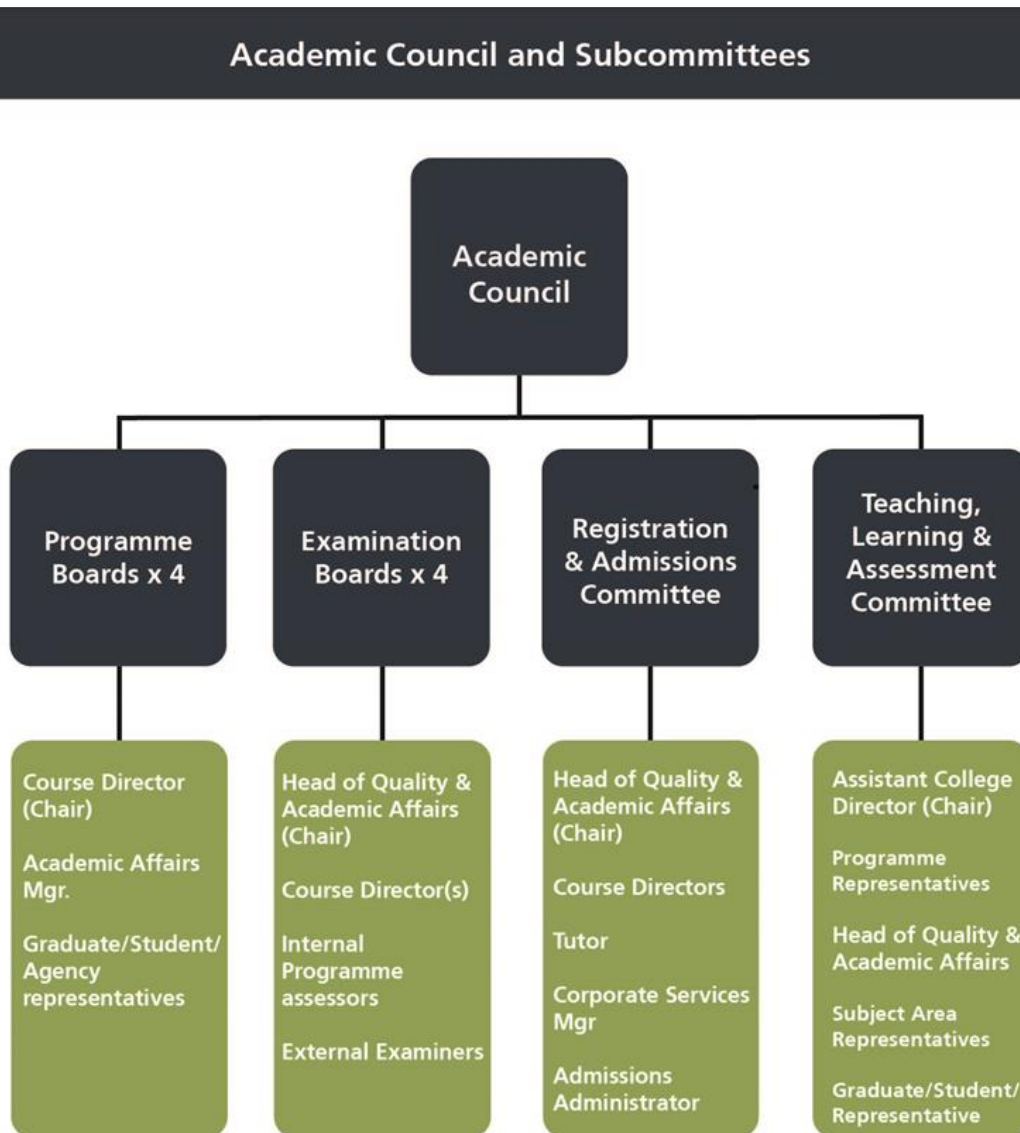| Programme Boards x 4	Examination Boards x 4	Registration & Admissions Committee	Teaching, Learning & Assessment Committee
Course Director (Chair) Academic Affairs Mgr. Graduate/Student/Agency representatives	Head of Quality & Academic Affairs (Chair) Course Director(s) Internal Programme assessors External Examiners	Head of Quality & Academic Affairs (Chair) Course Directors Tutor Corporate Services Mgr Admissions Administrator	Assistant College Director (Chair) Programme Representatives Head of Quality & Academic Affairs Subject Area Representatives Graduate/Student/Representative

Figure 2: Academic Council and Subcommittees Structure

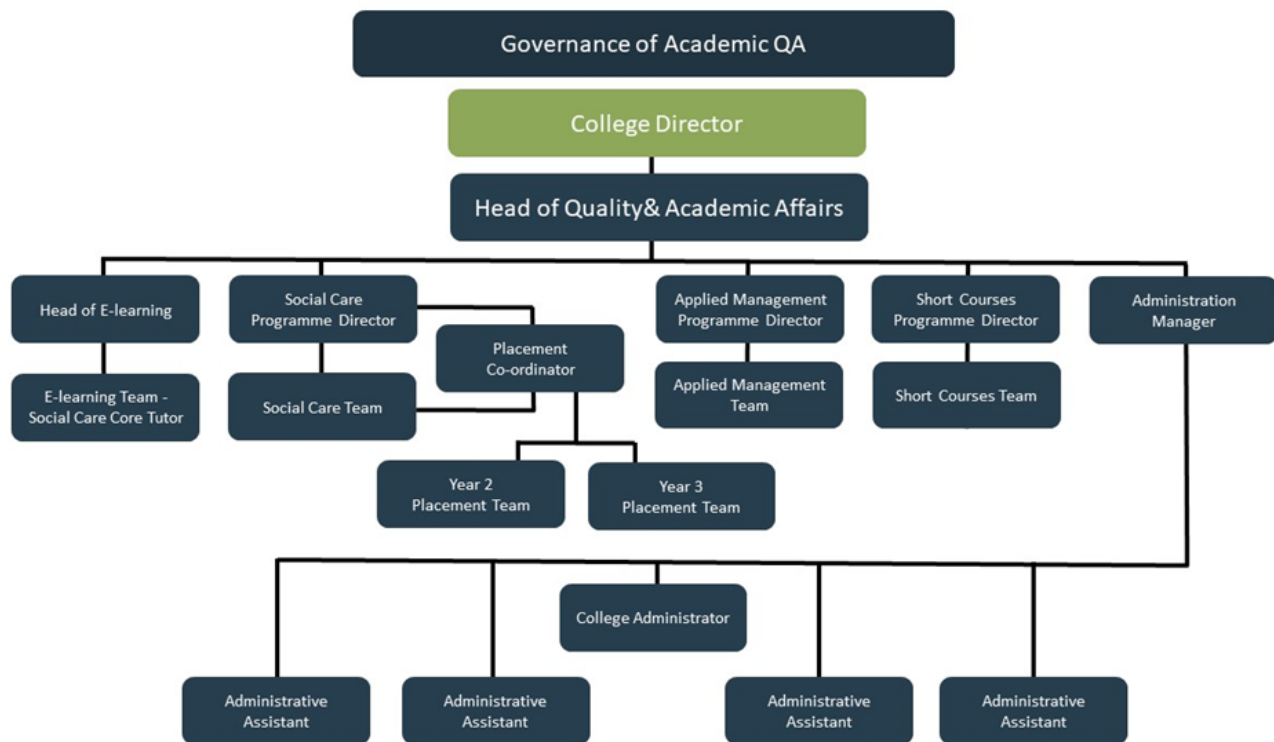Governance of Academic QA is shown in the following diagram:

Figure 3: Governance of Academic QA

[Source: QuAD V 4.0, January 2022]

This structure was updated in 2020/21, in advance of the academic year 2021/22, in order to fully represent the addition of the Placement Co-Ordinator and Placement Teams, which come under the Social Care Programme Director's and Social Care Team's remit, which all ultimately convene at the Social Care Programme Board.

Representation of learners and external stakeholders

Learners are represented at all stages and levels of decision-making processes within the College, including as follows:

- Class representatives;
- Stakeholders consulted in programme design;
- Student and Graduate representatives on Programme Boards;
- Student representative on Academic Council.

Additional external stakeholders consulted on areas such as programme design or strategic decisions include Employers, Placement Agencies, Graduates, St. Michael's House (parent organisation), QQI, the National Forum, IASCE, Peer Colleges, Peers, HECA and HECA's Academic Enhancement Forum (HAQEF).

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

OTC has a Collaborative Provision Policy in place, agreed with QQI and previously used. However, there was no delivery of programmes through collaborative provision during the reporting period. Transnational Provision is also not currently relevant to the OTC.

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

The following sub-headings correspond to SECTION 3: "Programmes of Education and Training" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document:

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

The following sub-heading correspond to SECTION 5: "Teaching and Learning" and SECTION 6: "Assessment of Learners" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document.

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

This heading corresponds to SECTION 7: "Support for Learners" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

OTC does not currently provide Research Degree Programmes.

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

This heading corresponds to SECTION 4: "Staff Recruitment, Management and Development" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document.

6.0 Information and Data Management

This heading corresponds to SECTION 8: "Information and Data Management" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document.

7.0 Public Information and Communication

This heading corresponds to SECTION 9: "Public Information and Communication" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document.

Communication of Contingency Planning

This reporting period also saw the ongoing need to communicate underlined contingency plans to all stakeholders in relation to the Public Health Emergency; including QQI, staff and students. QQI were updated with College contingency plans throughout the academic year and a link to current and updated plans could be found here:

https://opentrainingcollege.com/covid-19-otc-contingency-arrangements/

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

This heading corresponds to SECTION 11: "Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document.

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

OTC has a Collaborative Provision Policy in place, agreed with QQI. However, there was no delivery of programmes through collaborative provision during the reporting period or previously. Articulation agreements are also not currently relevant to the OTC.

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	1
Awarding bodies	1
QA bodies	1

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	CORU
Programme titles and links to publications	B.A. Social Care (L7): https://opentrainingcollege.com/courseitems/ba-in-social-care/
Date of accreditation or last review	First approval applied for in 2019/20, with an updated resubmission (due to pandemic-related system delays) invited for January 2022. This reporting period saw the preparation for the resubmission re. Education Provider for the Social Care Workers' Registration Board
Date of next review	Panel visit currently scheduled for June 2022

2. **Type of arrangement** (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	**Awarding Body/QA Body**
Name of body:	QQI
Programme titles and links to publications	https://opentrainingcollege.com/courses/ https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProviderDetails?providerCode=PG00253
Date of accreditation or last review	QA Approval Report (Re-engagement), 2019: https://qsdocs.qqi.ie//sites/docs/ProviderDocumentsLibrary/PG00253/PRID-253-ApprovalReport-20190613.pdf
Date of next review	Annual (AQR/Cinnte cycle)

9.2   Collaborative Provision

Not applicable.

9.3   Articulation Agreements

Not applicable.

Annual Quality Report (Open Training College)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2020-2021

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Guidelines on Completing Part B

As outlined in the general guidelines for this template (p.5), **Part B** of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**.

Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR submission were progressed during the reporting period - these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

Part B of the AQR is an opportunity for self-reflection and critical evaluation of the effectiveness of QA activities over the reporting period. Institutions are encouraged to reflect both on what worked well and what did not work well, and to consider impact measures, using both quantitative and qualitative evidence (metrics, benchmarks and feedback/judgement) in how they led to specific QA improvements and enhancement.

Part B provides evidence of quality improvement and enhancement and impact[2] of QA activities within the totality of an institution's QA system.

Section 1 pertains to internal quality assurance implementation and developments since the previous reporting period.

Section 2 deals with institutional analysis of IQA enhancements and impacts including activities undertaken in respect of academic integrity, and the enhancements and impacts resulting from same.

Section 3 relates to IQA developments and plans for the next reporting period.

Section 4 provides an opportunity for institutions to illustrate IQA in action through case studies in relevant thematic areas.

Institutions are invited, if they wish to do so, to use case studies to demonstrate quality in action and to highlight areas of practice for dissemination at any point in this part of the report.

Case Studies

QQI recommends that written case studies should:
- Be between half a page and two pages in length;
- Relate to a specific time- and subject-bound issue;
- Include an introduction that sets out a brief overview of contextual matters;
- Include any relevant supporting data and data analysis;
- Include links to any sources cited;
- Include a clear concluding paragraph with overview of key outcomes/learning.

Although case studies will generally be in written form, institutions may also provide links to audio-visual/multimedia case studies. QQI does not prescribe a format for case studies.

---

[2] The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education have considered impact and measures leading to development and improvement specifically in terms of teaching and learning. See: https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/NF-2020-Insights-from-Practice-About-Impact-in-Teaching-and-Learning-web-ready.pdf. This is a very useful reference, though impact in the context of this report should be considered

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

Strategic objectives

Relevant College strategic objectives for the reporting period included:

- Currency and transparency of College policies;
- Development of placement model for the proposed CORU B.A. in Social Care (Level 7);
- Development of the Online learning environment (MyOTC);
- Development of fully online Applied Management programmes for validation.

Improvements and enhancements arising from internal quality improvement

This reporting period marked three years since Re-engagement with QQI. In the interim, some core policies had been updated on an annual basis, or on an ad hoc basis as dictated by external factors such as changes in legislation. The majority of policies were signalled for review following this three-year period. Therefore, a full review of all core policies was undertaken during this time.

The table below shows all policies which were updated through the process of identification, consultation with internal and external stakeholders, final review and Academic Council (AC) approval. Internal stakeholders included programme boards, sub-committees of the AC, staff and students; while external stakeholders included employers, graduates, professional associations, regulatory bodies, placement agencies and service users.

Policy	Updated/Approved/To be approved
1702 - Equality Policy	Updated/Approved/
1703 - Complaints Policy	Updated/Approved/
1705 - CPD Policy	Updated/Approved/
1706 - Collaborative Policy	Updated/Approved/
1708 - Acceptable Usage of Elearning Environment Policy	Updated/Approved/
1710 - Student Fees Policy	Updated/Approved/
1712 - Supervision Policy	Updated/Approved/
1801 - Policy on Policy Development	Updated/Approved/
1802 - Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) Policy	Updated/Approved/
1803 - Social Media Policy	Updated/Approved/
1804 - Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy	Updated/Approved/
1805 - Exit Awards Policy	Updated/Approved/
1807 - Student Support Policy	Updated/Approved/
1808 - General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Policy	Updated/Approved/
1809 - Risk Management Policy	Updated/Approved/
1901 - Practice Placement Policy	Updated/Approved/
1902 - Fitness to Practise Policy	Updated/Approved/
2101 – Attendance Policy – B.A. Social Care	To be approved
2102 - Academic Integrity Policy	To be approved

The ongoing development of the placement model for the B.A. in Social Care (pending CORU approval) continued; in particular with a full external legal review of the Fitness to Practise policy. Recommended updates were approved by the AC, as were the corresponding changes to the overarching Placement policy. The resulting changes to the management structure of the Social Care department and team is represented at 1.3.2 below, which shows how the Programme Director, Placement Co-Ordinator, Social Care team and Placement teams interact in terms of the overall management of QA.

Additional staff training continued to be provided for all subject areas across the College, in terms of developing contingency plans and programme delivery, as reported in the previous AQR (2019/20) and in relation to the continuing impact of the Public Health Emergency. In parallel, there was significant development of the College's virtual learning environment (VLE), MyOTC, with a particular focus on resource improvement and updating; including a significant upgrading of the Library resources. Student supports also continued to be a primary focus, captured in the updating of the Student Support policy, which shows a new clinical partner being put in place to aid student counselling if required and the appointment of a Student Support Officer.

Resources to support student health and wellbeing were highlighted on MyOTC and during course delivery, with students being directed to the existing and new student supports in place. Concurrently, there was development of similar resources for staff on the College's internal VLE, YourOTC. While initial feedback has shown a very positive reaction from both students and staff in terms of the improved supports which have been put in place, a fuller review of the impact of these supports will be undertaken in the next reporting period.

The College continued to interact with QQI's pilot project for the validation of fully online programmes in relation to the suite of Applied Management programmes. New specifications for the pilot limited the number of ECTS credits to 60 for target programmes, meaning that the College was required to adapt its application from the previous full B.A. in Applied Management (Human Services) to one of its constituent parts, the Certificate in Applied Management (Human Services). The adapted application was prepared for during this reporting period and will be submitted to QQI in the next reporting period (2021/22).

Specific changes to QA system during the reporting period arising

While all policies were updated or reviewed for update during this period, there were significant changes to the following policies in particular:

- RPL Policy (distinction for B.A. in Social Care)
- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy (First iteration - replaces previous 'Plagiarism Policy')
- Student Support Policy (incl. introduction of Student Support Officer and agreement for additional support and counselling services through Spectrum Life)
- GDPR Policy

The next reporting period will see an updating of the College's Communication protocols to ensure that all updates to policies and procedures are communicated to maximum effect with all relevant stakeholders.

Updating of Academic Council ToR:

An edit to the AC Terms of Reference has been made so that in foreseen circumstances when AC cannot be convened for approval of timebound matters/issues that authority be delegated in advance to the Executive on a case-by-case basis.
(Approved by AC, 24th June 2021)

Contextual factors which impacted on QA system implementation, developments and enhancements

From March 2020 there was a focus on contingency planning in light of the ongoing PHE, which also necessitated some specific policy changes as outlined in the previous sub-section. Given the extension to scope of provision allowed by QQI from that time, all programmes were delivered in a fully online format to the end of the academic year 2019/20. This scope of provision was further extended to August 31st 2022, meaning that all College programmes continued to be delivered in a fully online mode (with live synchronous workshops delivered by Zoom) for the interim reporting period, 2020/21.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Relevant objectives	Planned actions and indicators *(2019-20)*	Outcomes *(2020/21)*
1.	The development of fully online provision.	Library review; ongoing development of written procedures and protocols in the online area; mapping against statutory guidelines when published; full monitoring review of implementation of blended learning guidelines and fully online indicators. This objective will also include a full review of all technical infrastructure used in the delivery of fully online and blended learning/teaching.	Fully reviewed and updated. Recommendation to develop a user-friendly 'Online Learning – Learner Guide' in 2021/22 New technical specification included in programme application documents for 2021/22
2.	The implementation of the GDPR action plan.	A full audit of the GDPR action plan to date and recommendations for future implementation.	Fully implemented, with ongoing destruction of obsolete materials and records during the reporting period
3.	The provision of contemporary and accredited Disability Studies qualifications.	A full review of the existing B.A. and Honours B.A. in Contemporary Disability Studies programmes. Application for re/validation in 2021.	Preparation of a level 8 – *B.A. (Hons.) Applied Social Studies (Disability Service Management)* – programme; reviewed and prepared in 20/21, for submission for validation in 21/22
4.	The ongoing development of the College's core QA.	Policy review of all policies which have not been updated since re-engagement in 2018-19.	As above, all core policies updated, with two outstanding for approval in 21/22

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Academic Council (AC)	19th June 2020 16th November 2020 (Incorporeal) 11th December 2020 18th March 2021 (Incorporeal) 24th June 2021
College Executive Committee (CEC)	9th September 2020 14th October 2020 18th November 2020 17th December 2020 13th January 2021 10th February 2021 10th March 2021 14th April 2021 13th May 2021 9th June 2021 14th July 2021 8th September 2021

## 1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

During this reporting period, the College Director (Dr Karen Finnerty) was seconded to work with the St. Michael's House Board and EMT (Executive Management Team). The position was filled by Raymond Watson as Acting College Director during this time. Dr Finnerty will return from secondment in the academic year 2021/22.

In relation to structural developments, as noted in Part 1 of this report, in relation to the Governance of Academic QA:

"This structure was updated in 2020/21, in advance of the academic year 2021/22, in order to fully represent the addition of the Placement Co-Ordinator and Placement Teams, which come under the Social Care Programme Director's and Social Care Team's remit, which all ultimately convene at the Social Care Programme Board."

So that, the structure is now represented as follows:
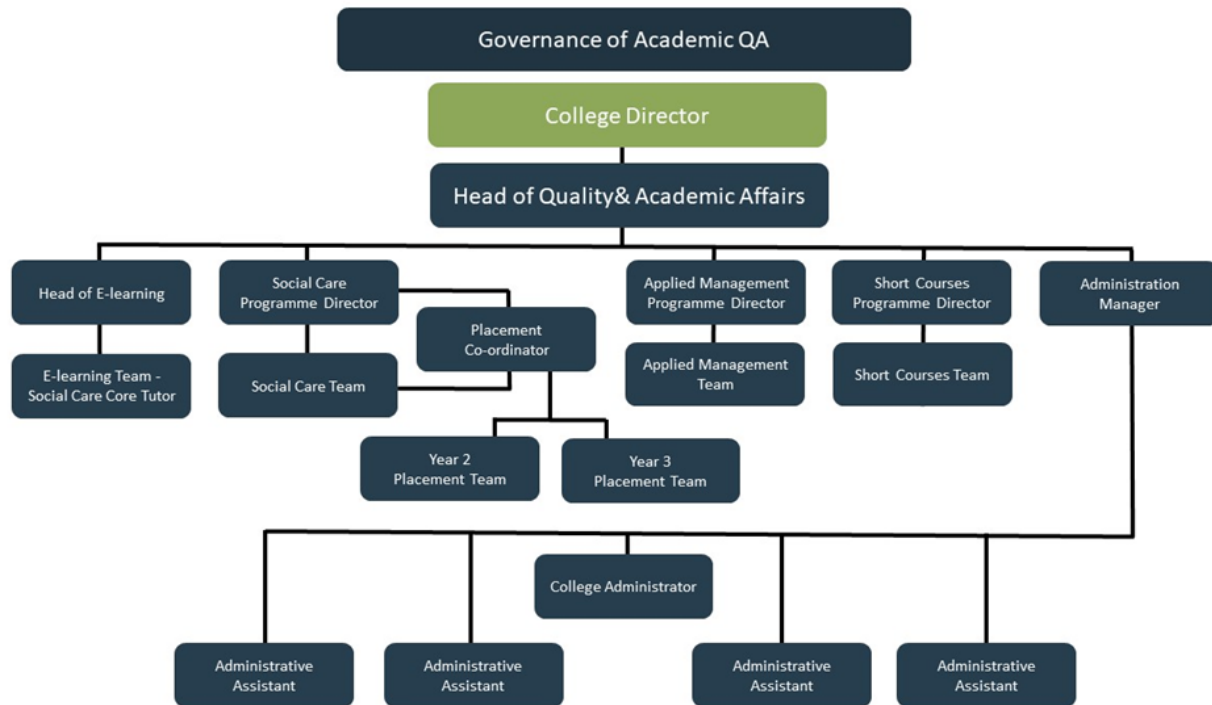
[Source: QuAD V 4.0, January 2022]

1.4   Internal Monitoring and Review
1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

There were no periodic reviews in this period, apart from normal annual reviews of programmes.

The review of the VLE in preparation for submission for differential validation of the Certificate in Applied Management (Human Services) as a 'fully online' programme has already been outlined in this report, as has the external legal review of the Placement Policy in relation to the B.A. in Social Care.

The College participated in the validation of a Micro-credential programme, under QQI's pilot scheme, during this period. This resulted in the validation of a *Certificate in Creative Problem Solving and Action Learning*, a 10-credit Special Purpose award at level 6, which is part of the Applied Management suite of programmes.

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels[1] involved in IQA

Not applicable; see 1.4.1 above.

---

[1] QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

In terms of the overall impact on programme delivery, as monitored through student feedback in end-of-year surveys (EOYs) the following was reported from the EOYs 2020/21:

"135 students completed the survey (125 last year).

The demographics of the responders (in comparison to last year) are slightly more female, slightly younger, less experienced in services, and funded/ self-funded in nearly exactly the same way (slight reduction in complete funding from employers).

Overall, 80% of students stated their experience was excellent or very good.

Scores for learning materials are up (94% stating they were very satisfied or satisfied, in comparison to 88% last year) but the indication on whether the student will purchase hard copies is down again. Workshops are slightly down (66% said excellent or very good last year; 58% this year) but attendance is up from 93% to 99%.

While satisfaction with facilitation of workshops is up (69% said excellent or very good last year, 77% this year). Telephone tutorials satisfaction fell from 71 to 58% and the same for email tutorials; 91% to 74%. Interestingly the results were very similar to the results 2 years ago. Worth noting that the group tutorials (measured for the first time) were rated excellent or very good by 70% of all students.

Podcasts and narrated podcasts while their ratings are down are still very popular and are well represented in the open-ended questions on online support. Google Drive's use rating fell slightly but is still very positive (94% said it is very easy or easy to use last year to 92% this year with only 6 % saying it was difficult or very difficult).

The results around the applicability of the courses stayed stable (around 85% rated the courses material totally applicable or nearly all applicable).

Administration maintained the rating of 94% saying the service was excellent or very good, the same as last year.

So, overall the results are a testament to the team's continued resilience, innovation, student-centred actions and hard work. The results were more similar to 18/19 than 19/20. They are still high with most positive views being 75% or over. The message about a return to face to face is mixed; some students want it back now, while others feel that zoom gives them flexibility."

Based on the above, a review of tutorial effectiveness and impact has been added to the Quality Enhancement plans for 2021/22.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

The Academic Integrity (AI) policy was reviewed for update in line with the ongoing work of NAIN (National Academic Integrity Network) during this period, with a particular focus on student and staff awareness-raising, better understanding of different types of plagiarism and a focus on the illegality of the use of essay/cheating sites/mills under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019. Final guidelines to be published at the end of this reporting period will inform the final policy review before AC approval is sought for the updated policy in 2021/22.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	Relevant objectives	Planned actions and indicators
1.	The continuing development of fully online provision.	Additional recruitment of specialised staff, e.g., Learning Technologist, Content Developer Development of a short and easy-access "Online Learning – Learner Guide" for students on fully online programmes To include review of tutorial effectiveness and impact
2.	The continuing development of the Placement model and the B.A. in Social Care for CORU approval	Increase in Placement network Increased interaction with Practice Educators and Service Users Preparation for updated submission to CORU in 2021/22
3.	The provision of contemporary and accredited 'Disability Studies' qualifications.	Application for a Level 8 programme in 2021/22
4.	The ongoing development of the College's core QA.	Approval of outstanding policies in 2021/22 Development of updated Communication protocols (College-wide and discipline-specific) Publication of V4.0 of the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) in 2021/22

3.2   Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1   Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Policy review	Q4 2021	Approval of outstanding policies
Review of the level 7 programme – BA Contemporary Disability Studies	Q2 2022	Full: 2016; with annual reviews to date.
Review of Student Support policy implemented from Sept. 2021, to include review of tutorial effectiveness and impact	Q1 2022	First full review re. online and blended learning
Review of Blended Learning and Online Learning Strategy	Q4 2021 – Q3 2022	In preparation for next iteration; last full iteration April 2020
Review of BA Applied Management programmes, for possible revalidation in 2022/23	Q1 2022	2018 (with interim reviews re. Online Learning)

3.2.2   Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Depending on the outcome of the last stated review above, a full revalidation of the Applied Management suite of programmes may take place in the academic year 2022/23.

4.0   Additional Themes and Case Studies

N/A