Quality Assurance Policies & Procedures
ICHAS
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1. Introduction

Since the Bologna Declaration (1999[1]) there has been an increasing momentum across most European countries to ensure a common understanding and framework for assuring quality in Educational systems . The publication of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* in May, 2015[2] was an important milestone in the journey towards the development of consensus and a robust quality system within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In an Irish context, the key responsibility for ensuring that robust Quality Assured systems within Higher Education both exists and are monitored externally with Quality and Qualifications Ireland. The Quality and Qualifications Act (2012) requires QQI to establish and outline both Core Statutory and Sector Specific Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines for providers of Higher, Further and English Language education and training. The 2012 Act also requires individual Colleges or education providers to "have regard to" QQI's quality assurance (QA) guidelines when establishing their own quality assurance procedures.

Therefore, the Act[3] is quite clear that the primary responsibility *for* quality assurance in higher education rests with all providers or linked providers of Higher or Further Education, as well as English Language providers, who are all mandated to establish written procedures for quality assurance for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of education, training, research and related services which each provider provides.

1.1. QQI Quality Assurance Criteria

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) published statutory guidelines underpinning their *Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines* in April 2016[4]. These Guidelines draw upon and reflect the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).

The fundamental purpose of QA guidelines is that they contribute to the overall assurance available to prospective learners, students and other key stakeholders that the procedures underpinning educational services provide a well-supported learning experience within the scope of the provider's provision and ultimately that the quality of the award meets best national and international standards.

When developing and delivering programmes of education, ICHAS relies upon the statutory quality assurance guidelines issued by QQI as it does when designing, establishing, evaluating, maintaining, renewing, and reviewing its internal quality assurance policies and procedures. This is essentially what forms the basis for the approval by QQI of the College's quality assurance policies and procedures.

Within the context of Higher Education programmes, Quality Assurance policies were first agreed with HETAC in 2006, when the first HETAC degrees were validated in the College. Following that, the College published a Quality Assurance Manual in 2011. This was formally revised and approved by QQI in 2015 with the addition of an enhanced section on Blended Learning and a policy to facilitate Collaborative Provision. The Re-engagement process with QQI

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[1] *Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education* (Bologna: Ministerial Conference, 19 June 1999)
[2] *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* (Yerevan: Ministerial Conference, May 2015), p. 4.
[3] *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*, Section 3, 28 (1).
[4] *Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines* (Dublin: QQI, April 2016).

provides a timely opportunity to review and update the QA processes and procedures of the College. In that process, a Self-Evaluation process was completed; wherein the existing QA Manual (2015) was benchmarked against the Core Statutory QA guidelines (2016) from QQI as well as the Sector Specific Criteria (2016) and other relevant QQI policies and guidelines.

The Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences is committed to embracing an inclusive Quality Assurance (QA) culture. While, the College's Director of Academic Affairs has overall accountability for QA matters, quality is an integral element of and is the responsibility of everyone in the college community whilst assuring and ensuring quality effects and impacts on all facets of College life. The College has established Quality Enhancement posts (both a manager and co-ordinator) with responsibility for co-ordinating and providing support to internal and external academic quality assurance activities.

All of the College's academic, support, and administrative functions contribute to the quality of the overall learner experience. This QA manual details systematic quality assurance procedures and identifies the appropriate fora for monitoring the data and mechanisms for the review of the effectiveness of QA processes and procedures. The College has developed rigorous procedures to ensure that the quality of its programmes is maintained and enhanced. These processes are monitored, reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis in accordance with decisions by the College's Academic Council and requirements of QQI.

QQI's Core and Sector Specific QA guidelines provide the framework for the *Quality Assurance Policies & Procedures* (2018) at ICHAS. The College is committed to creating a 'quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels'[5]. These Policies and Procedures and associated documentation supersedes the *Quality Assurance Handbook* (2011, as amended 2015).

These Policies and Procedures will be available to all Staff Members and students on the ICHAS Learning Management System (LMS). Members of the public and external agencies can access these policies and procedures on the ICHAS website[6]. The following Sections will address the Sector Specific Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers as well as the Core Guidelines on Quality Assurance for all providers.

1.2. QQI Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers Coming To QQI On A Voluntary Basis

QQI published Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers coming to QQI on a voluntary basis in 2016, which address the responsibilities of independent, private providers of Higher, Further and English Language education and training (hereafter referred to as voluntary providers) in the context of accessing the statutory and regulatory functions of QQI. In particular, they set out additional, statutory quality assurance (QA) guidelines specific to voluntary providers that come to QQI for the purpose of:

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[5] *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* (Yerevan: Ministerial Conference, May 2015), p. 8.

[6] Insert link to section of website on completion.

- Gaining access to programme validation; and
- Authorisation to use the International Education Mark (IEM)

QQI approval of the quality assurance procedures of voluntary providers pertains to those programmes leading to QQI awards and related services. This extends to the overall governance and management structures in place in the provider to support the delivery of such programmes.

The scope and complexity of the quality assurance procedures to be established by voluntary providers is typically linked to, and influenced by, the provider's context, overall goals and scope of provision. This includes but is not limited to:

- The levels and award types in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to which the programme for which QQI validation leads.
- The programme's field of learning and/or professional domain.
- The teaching and learning modalities used.

Additional QA procedures will be required if a voluntary provider wishes to change the scope of its approved quality assurance.

These additional QA guidelines set out additional, statutory, quality assurance guidelines specific to Independent/Private providers and address the responsibilities of Independent/Private providers to ensure that governance is robust and in particular to ensure that they have fit-for- purpose governance, management and decision-making structures and that academic decision-making (matters relating to education and training) is independent of commercial considerations or the undue in influence of business owners.

1.3. Areas Specific to Independent/Private (Voluntary) Providers

The Sector Specific guidelines specifically require Independent/Private Providers to have QA procedures to:

- Maintain its status as an established legal entity, which is a clearly identified legal person, having rights and responsibilities under law.
- Support and manage a resource base sufficient to sustainably support the quality assurance system and programmes of education and training, research and related services offered.
- Manage risk.
- Ensure it is stable and in good financial standing, with a reasonable business case for sustainable provision.
- Demonstrate how it complies with applicable regulations and legislation in all jurisdictions in which it operates; its general good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in any jurisdictions in which it operates (or in which its parents or subsidiaries operate) or enrols learners, or in which it has arrangements with awarding bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators.
- Identify dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries and other stakeholder obligations that impact upon the capacity of the provider in any way.
- Provide required information to QQI.

- Ensure that where its capacity is in any way reduced (for example reductions in staff, resources, other education and training aspects; capacity to uphold the conditions and standards of validation or any other significant matters) QQI will be notified.

Each of these issues is discussed under the Governance and Management of Quality Section

2. Programmes of Education and Training

In relation to programmes of education and training, Voluntary providers must have quality assurance procedures in place to:

- Establish and manage the arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to comply with statutory obligations which are set out in *Protection of Enrolled Learners: Protocols for Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act.*
- Have access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval.
- Support the programme design, development, approval and delivery process as set out in the *QQI Core Validation Policy and Criteria for education and training programmes.*
- Monitor and review programmes and arrange for the revalidation of continuing programmes, normally every 5 years or in accordance with the expiry of the duration of the validation.

The Sector specific QA guidelines require that additional QA procedures will be in place if a voluntary provider wishes to change the scope of its approved quality assurance. Examples of where substantial changes may require additional QA procedures include:

- Where proposed programme provision is moving to a different level in the NFQ or from one field (ISCED) of learning to another.
- In the case of a further education and training provider, it is proposing to develop a Programme for validation outside the Common Awards System (CAS).

2.1. Staff recruitment, management and development

In relation to staff recruitment, management and development, the Sector Specific Guidelines require that "the provider's quality assurance procedures for the recruitment, management and development of staff will be developed in the context of **all** the education and training activities and related services provided by the provider. This includes those education and training activities leading to awards of awarding bodies other than QQI, such as professional bodies and local provider provision, so that the overall commitments of staff are taken into account by the provider".

2.2. Assessment Issues

Providers are mandated to have quality assurance procedures, structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners that comply with QQI policy protocols, conventions and guidelines on Assessment. These refer to:

Assessment and Standards (Revised 2013)
Common Awards System Restatement of Policy and guidelines (2014)
Green paper on Assessment of Learners and Learning (Draft 2018)

2.3. Collaborative Provision

In terms of Collaborative Provision in the Independent /Private Sector, QQI's Quality Assurance Sector specific Guidelines require that the provider's quality assurance arrangements in respect of any collaborative provision must comply with the quality assurance requirements underpinning the QQI Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Provision and Joint Awards 2012.

The section on Collaborative Provision refers to other parties with which a voluntary provider is involved. The quality assurance procedures established by voluntary providers in respect of collaboration with other providers or parties should have regard to the overall suite of education and training provision offered by those other partners or providers and any other parties with whom the voluntary provider is engaged.

Where a voluntary provider organises or procures a programme which is provided in whole or in part by another provider, the voluntary provider must establish and agree appropriate QA procedures with that provider.

This section refers to the quality assurance of collaborations with other providers. Voluntary providers must have procedures in place to approve collaboration arrangements with other providers and to monitor and review the effectiveness of those arrangements. Providers should apply due diligence and be aware of any reputational risk to themselves and the sector and /or the national qualifications system associated with particular prospective providers, awarding bodies and other third parties with whom they are considering entering into collaboration arrangements.

2.4. European Standards, Guidelines, Directives or Policies

QQI's core and sector specific QA guidelines are underpinned by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), May 2015. Specifically, the quality assurance procedures of voluntary higher education and training providers must have regard to:

- Any European standards, guidelines, directives or policies adopted nationally
- The *European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes*, October 2014 (approved by EHEA ministers in May 2015), as appropriate (in addition to the QQI Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards [Revised 2012])

2.5. Certification

In terms of Certification, Voluntary providers must establish quality assurance procedures to support the management and integrity of learner results data which provides the basis for making and certifying QQI awards. Voluntary providers must also have procedures for the maintenance of records in this regard.

The following table identifies the Sections of the Document where the Sector Specific Requirements and the Core QA Guidelines are addressed:

Sector Specific Criteria/Requirements	Addressed in Section
Establish and manage the arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to comply with statutory obligations which are set out in *Protection of Enrolled Learners: Protocols for Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act*	Section 6
Have access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval	Section 7
Support the programme design, development, approval and delivery process as set out in the *QQI Core Validation Policy and Criteria for education and training programmes.*	Section 6
Monitor and review programmes and arrange for the revalidation of continuing programmes, normally every 5 years or in accordance with the expiry of the duration of the validation.	Section 6
Staff recruitment, management and development	Section 8
Assessment of learners	Section 11
Collaborative Provision	Section 15
Certification	Section 7
Core QA Criteria/Requirements	Addressed in Section
Governance and management of quality	Section 4
Documented approach to quality assurance	Section 5
Programmes of education and training	Section 6
Staff recruitment, management and development	Section 8
Teaching and learning	Section 9
Assessment of learners	Section 11
Supports for learners	Section 12
Information and data management	Section 13
Public information and communication	Section 14
Other parties involved in education and training	Section 15
Self-evaluation, monitoring and review	Section 16

Figure 1 - Overview of QA Document with References

Governing Authority have agreed that the QA manual should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure that the policies and practices are current and fit for purpose.

3. College Profile

3.1. Contextual information ICHAS

The Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences (ICHAS) is an independent (voluntary) education provider, specialising in the delivery of higher education programmes. It also offers a range of continuing professional development opportunities.   Building on its experience gained in the specialised fields of Counselling & Psychotherapy, ICHAS extended its sphere of activity into further academic disciplines in 2012/13, developing Level 8 degrees and related awards in the fields of Childhood and Adolescent Care, Business, and in particular Business Psychology adding to its existing master's Programmes in Leadership and Management as well as Childhood & Adolescence Studies.

All programmes at ICHAS are designed to be relevant and contemporary, ensuring both academic and occupational value, both nationally and internationally. Maximising opportunities to ensure greater accessibility to higher education is a central value of the College, and it is committed to ensuring that all potential learners can identify and avail of a route for direct and easy access to leading academics and a supportive learning environment for their educational journey.

Programmes are designed to meet the flexible needs of a modern student body, accommodating learners who wish to study on a part-time or full-time basis, with 'blended learning' options incorporated into many programmes, combining face-to-face lectures with technologically supported and enabled opportunities for study. The academic staff of ICHAS have a wide and varied level of national and international expertise and the College prides itself on the fact that many academics maintain an active practice base while engaged in teaching, adding to their credibility and enhancing the overall value of the learner experience.

3.2. Institutional Vision, Mission and Strategic Aims

The following sub sections set out the College's Mission, Vision and Strategic Aims.

Mission

The ICHAS mission is to facilitate and enable adult learners to achieve qualifications that are accessible, affordable, relevant to the needs of business, industry and the professions, and that are nationally and internationally recognised. This will be secured through by a learner centred focus, excellence in our programmes, and innovative delivery.

Vision

The Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences will become a national and international centre of excellence in the fields of higher education, further education and continuing professional development.

Values

The College commits itself to underpin its activities through the values it espouses, namely to encourage social awareness and responsibility as well as promoting flexibility, maximising opportunities for social inclusivity and accessibility in Higher Education.

Operational Principles

Within this context, the College ensures as far as is practicable that it:
- Recognises and supports the right of students, faculty and staff to enjoy and express freedom of thought and to operate within an ethos of respect and dignity which is free from any form of discrimination;
- Understands education as a fundamental right with associated responsibilities;
- Promotes scholarly and educational activities that are aimed at producing 'thinking practitioners' or knowledgeable 'doers' within the domains of applied sciences and the humanities.

The College seeks to ensure that it:
- Provides the widest possible access to students across all strata of society in a non - discriminatory way;
- Works with other agencies and communities in relevant partnerships for the benefit of society within the domains of applied science and the humanities;
- Develops appropriate partnerships within the academic, social, political and other communities to further the mission of the College and the opportunities for its students;
- Remains committed to the enhancement of society and the optimisation of sustainable development with due cognisance to the environment.

Strategic Aims from 2018 to 2022

During the period of the Strategic Plan from 2012 – 2017, the College and its activities were significantly influenced by rapid and continuous changes in the economic, technological and political environment, as well as the changes underway in the Irish higher education. The strategy had 6 overall strategic aims, building on the previous strategy, as follows:

1. To achieve a more diverse learner community and growth in learner numbers
2. To develop a suite of relevant academic programmes and career-focused life-long learning
3. To enrich the teaching and learning experience for all learners and staff
4. To employ innovative approaches to programme support and delivery
5. To strengthen external engagement and public confidence in the College
6. To advance the governance structure and systems within the College

The College has certainly achieved a more diverse learning community since 2011, having introduced programmes in childhood and adolescent studies in the reference period at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. However, it had originally projected growth in student numbers, but given the economic climate, it was revised, and a strategic decision was made to modify this aim and to achieve diversity through consolidation and collaboration. Therefore, the college has not substantially grown learner numbers and, as indicated, has decided to consolidate student numbers in the region of between 600 – 700 in total and it is expected that the College will not exceed those numbers in the next five years.

Therefore, the revised strategic aims for the period from 2018 to 2022 are as follows;

1. To consolidate the diversity of learners and growth in learner numbers within a student population of between 600 – 700 students.
2. To continue to develop a suite of relevant academic programmes and career-focused life-long learning alone and in partnership with other HECA Colleges.
3. To enrich the teaching and learning experience for all learners and staff.
4. To employ innovative approaches to programme support and delivery.
5. To strengthen external engagement and public confidence in the College.
6. To advance the governance structure and systems within the College.

3.3. ICHAS Programme Provision

The College has operated under three distinct names since its inception in 1999. For clarity purposes and ease of reference, these are listed here:

1999-2009	*National Counselling Institute of Ireland*	*NCII*
2009-2011	*National Counselling and Psychotherapy Institute of Ireland*	*NCPII*
2011- Date	*Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences*	*ICHAS*

Figure 2 – College Evolution

Comprehensive statistics from 1999 to 2002 are not available but Table 4 represents the overall student intake for each year from 2003 to 2017 inclusive, as follows:
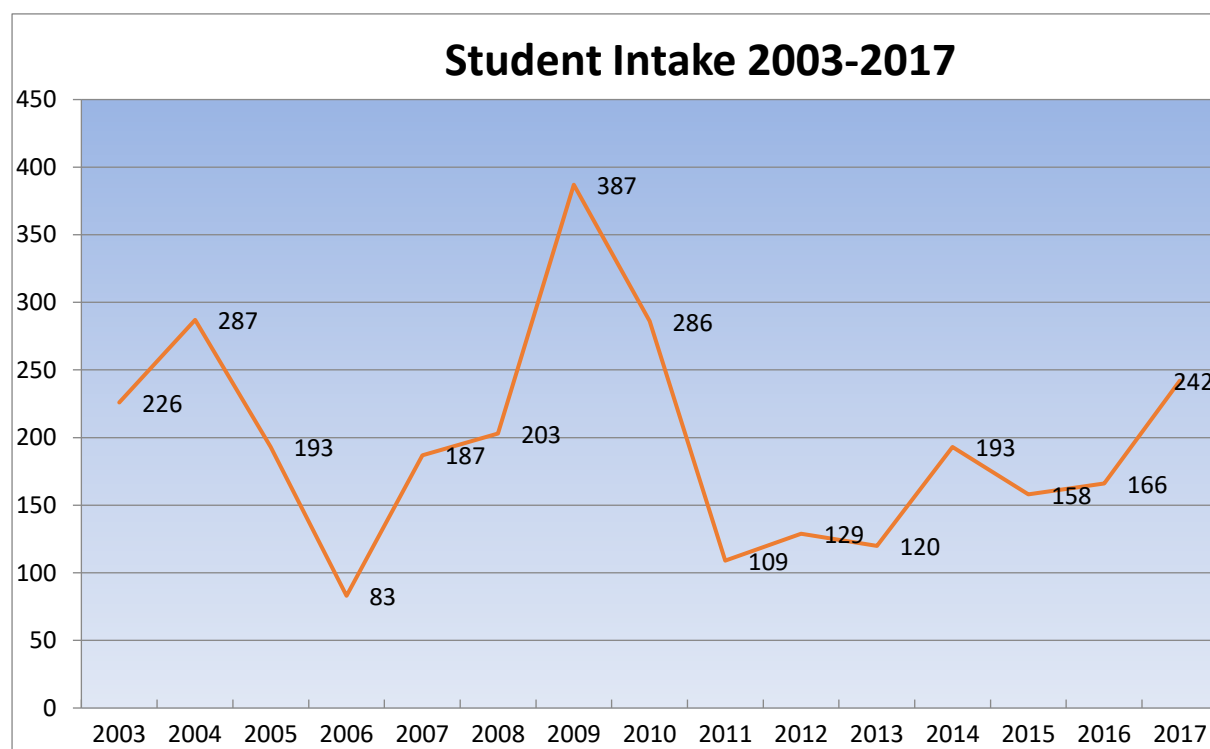
Figure 3 - Learner Intake 2003- 2017

A brief explanation of this chart is warranted and follows in the following sub -sections.

NCII/NCPII (1999-2011)

The National Counselling Institute of Ireland (NCII) was established in 1999 based on an identified need to develop and establish educational initiatives to support individuals in Community settings to respond to health and social care needs in socio-economically deprived areas. Its vision was based on an ethos of health promotion and supportive interventions as well as on the principles of personal and community empowerment. The initial focus was on developing programmes that would allow students develop and practice the skills of counselling for application to relevant fields of practice. By default, this represented an attempt to re-position the education and training of counsellors in Ireland. NCII (and later NCPII and ICHAS) became a respected 'niche' educational provider within the caring professions.

Up until 2006, the College offered a range of college-awarded programmes, gradually adding programmes and outreach centres each year, which led to the steady growth in student numbers from 1999 up until 2004. In 2005, enrolment figures fell by a little over 30%, which was attributed to a simple slowing in demand in that year. By 2006, the College had agreed its quality assurance procedures with HETAC and its first undergraduate programme had been validated.

At this point, a strategic decision was taken to only offer programmes that were nationally accredited and on the National Framework of Qualifications. The significant drop in intake in that year reflects the fact that only one programme was on offer, the BA in Counselling Studies and Psychometric Testing. Student enrolment numbers grew steadily from 2006 in line with new programme development, peaking in 2009 at 387 new enrolments. 2009 saw the first intake on the College's graduate programmes, while there were also two intakes in that year on the undergraduate programmes (Autumn and Spring). The decline in student intakes between 2010 to 2013 is attributed to the general economic downturn and the fact that there was only one undergraduate intake. But since 2014, the College has seen a steady increase in learner intake and this can be attributed to a number of factors. The improved economic conditions and availability of income for further education has played an important part in this increase. The publication of new awards standards for Counselling and Psychotherapy by QQI and the clearer indictors of requirements for statutory regulation and the impact those developments will have on the professions has, we believe, also positively contributed to this increase.

Following its establishment, NCII acted as both an educational provider in the fields of counselling and psychotherapy and also as a professional membership body for counsellors in Ireland. However, two distinct discourses led to a separation of these two functions in 2010. The first was the discourse relating to the distinctions between the fields of Counselling and Psychotherapy. The second related to the debate surrounding the desired separation of training and professional functions.

This resulted in a need to redefine the College's function, purpose and role; which in turn, led to the emergence of an academic organization, the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Institute of Ireland, and a professional membership association, the Association of Professional Counsellors and Psychotherapists. NCPII's remit was the provision of academically accredited

educational programmes within the fields of Counselling, Psychotherapy and related areas.   By mid-2010, NCPII had increased its range of higher education programmes as outlined in the following table:

	NCII				NCPII	
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Level 6						1
Level 7 (Minor)					3	3
Level 7 (Major)	1	3	3	3	3	3
Level 8			1	1	1	2
Level 9				1	6	6
TOTAL	**1**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**13**	**15**

Figure 4 - Programme Development 2006-2011

The expansion of its suite of programmes led to a commensurate growth in learner numbers, as well as academic, administrative and support staff.   Programme development was largely driven by identified student need and demand, resulting in an expansion beyond the confines of the specific fields of counselling and psychotherapy as well as a strategic wish to diversify the student population. It became increasingly evident that the existing structure and College name was limited and restrictive when measured against future plans and strategic intent. Following an internal and external review, the Governing Authority recommended the adoption of the name The Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences (ICHAS) in April 2011. This was agreed with HETAC and took effect from 1st August 2011.

Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences (ICHAS)

On 1st August 2011, the College changed its name from the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Institute of Ireland (NCPII) to the Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences (ICHAS), reflecting a reconstitution of its mission statement, vision and strategic direction. While the personnel, programmes and physical facilities of NCPII were collectively renamed as the Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences, the transition reflected more than just a name change.

The internal departmental and management structures were also reconstituted to allow the College to expand into ever wider fields of academic activity. Based on pre-existing HETAC and FETAC programmes (i.e. developed by NCPII), three of the institutes were automatically set up when effecting the College's name change, and these continue to be managed and administered by the same core team, (with additional expertise recruited for new programmes). The existing Institute and the three additional institutes were the:
- National Counselling and Psychotherapy Institute of Ireland
- National Institute of Childcare and Humanities
- Institute of Open Learning
- The National Institute of Business and Management

The Institutes within the collegial structure of the Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences (ICHAS) are comparable to the traditional departments within Universities and Institutes of Technology. This structure provides the framework for the future development of the College. While all Institutes are managed by a core management and administrative team, it is envisaged that greater specialization and departmentalization will take place as the suite of programmes expands and resources allow.

Institute	Programme	NFQ Level
National Counselling and Psychotherapy Institute		
	Certificate in Arts in Counselling Studies (Exit Award)	6
	Higher Certificate in Arts in Counselling Studies (Exit Award)	6
	BA in Counselling Skills & Psychotherapy Studies	7
	BA in Counselling Skills & Youth Studies	7
	BA in Counselling Skills & Addiction Studies	7
	BA (Hons) in Counselling & Psychotherapy (1-year add-on)	8
	BA (Hons) in Counselling & Youth Studies (1-year add-on)	8
	BA (Hons) in Counselling & Addiction Studies (1-year add-on)	8
	MA in Counselling & Psychotherapy	9
	MA in Counselling & Pastoral Care	9
	MA in Clinical Supervision in Professional Practice	9
	MA in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy	9
	MA in Addiction Counselling	9
National Institute of Childcare and Humanities		
	MA in Childhood & Adolescent Studies	9
Institute of Open Learning	Continuing Professional Development Workshops	
The National Institute of Business and Management	MA in Leadership & Management	9

Figure 5 – Programmes associated with each College Institute

ICHAS programmes are designed to be relevant and contemporary, ensuring both academic and occupational value nationally and internationally. The College is committed to ensuring that all students have direct and easy access to leading academics and a supportive learning environment during their educational journey. Programmes are designed to meet the needs of a modern student body, accommodating learners who wish to study on part-time or full-time basis, with flexible study options incorporated into its programmes.

The development of a strong blended learning platform has been central to the overall programme delivery strategy. ICHAS is located within the National Technological Park in Limerick, where its main campus is based in Walton House. All administration and management functions are located in Limerick, which also is the central repository for teaching and learning facilities and resources to service full-time and part-time learners across the learner body nationally.

ICHAS is approved by QQI to offer programmes in 17 off-campus centres at undergraduate level and 5 centres for master's programmes. However, the system of blended learning employed has meant that in the past few years only one external centre has been used in Dublin, thus giving greater central control over quality management and enhancement, while simultaneously providing accessibility to students from remote areas.

3.4. Educational Philosophy of ICHAS

As set out above, the mission of the college is to facilitate and enable adult learners to achieve qualifications that are accessible, affordable, relevant to the needs of business, industry and the professions, and which are recognised nationally and internationally. Within that context, the college prides itself in its commitment to academic excellence and Quality Assured programmes. It designs, delivers and monitors its programmes within 'best-practice' guidelines in order to prepare students to emerge from its programmes as more informed, fully rounded and competent graduates who are ready to take their place in professional practice or industry as well as members of society who can actively contribute to the wider social milieu.

In that context the College fully recognises the importance of stakeholder involvement and engagement and the value of collaborative engagement in terms of programme development, design and monitoring. The College is fortunate that many of its faculty are active practitioners in their fields of teaching and through them, we have been able to draw on the experience of practitioners who give generously of their expertise and knowledge.

The College is committed to providing programmes that are aligned to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and which are QQI validated and awarded. In that regard, all programmes offered by the College adhere to QQI award standards and are structured within a Modular structure and a Learner-Centred Curriculum design. However, in essence because all programmes are designed for adult learners, this curricular approach has been advocated by Davis (2011)[7], who argued that this type of curricular design focuses primarily on student learning with a goal-based emphasis and the evaluation of learning based on the achievement of predetermined criteria for course and programme outcomes (Billings & Halstead, 2009[8]; O'Banion, 1997[9]). Therefore, both the Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes as well as Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes are always established and mapped for consistency purposes against the relevant Award Standards as set out by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

The College offers Higher Education programmes between Level 6 and Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications and only offers academic programmes that are validated and awarded by QQI. Its programmes have been primarily in the fields of counselling and psychotherapy, but also in areas related such as Addiction Studies and Youth Studies and Childhood Studies as well as Leadership & Management. It has a well-established expertise in practice-based learning/clinical supervision and evidence-based research and practice as well as 'blended learning'.

ICHAS is strongly committed to ensuring the quality, values and standards required by QQI in

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[7] Davis, B. (2011). A conceptual model to support curriculum review, revision, and design in an associate degree nursing program. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 32*(6), 389-94.

[8] Billings D.; Halstead J.(2009) Teaching in nursing: A guide for faculty; St. Louis : Saunders.

[9] O'Banion, T. (1997) A Learning College for the 21st Century, Washington, D.C. : American Council on Education and Oryx Press.

the validation processes, monitoring and awarding of academic qualifications by QQI. The College is committed to ensuring the greatest level of access to education possible and in that regard, it seeks to optimise the use of technology enhanced learning to support teaching and learning on both full time and part time programmes using Blended Learning approaches. Therefore, to ensure academic standards are met and exceeded, the College has a dedicated Teaching & Learning Excellence team which is led by the Director of Academic Affairs (Dr. Jane Alexander) and supported by the College Registrar (Joseph Forde), its Educational Technologist (Jonathan Flynn); its Quality Enhancement Manager (Tony O'Brien) and Programme Directors and Co-ordinators. The College seeks to ensure, as far as is practicable to proactively design programmes that are fit for purpose and which can simultaneously be adequately responsive to evidence informed advances in pedagogy and student learning needs, within a student focussed and adult learning approach.

Since September 2010 ICHAS has provided partial scholarships to various organisations and individuals and the College provides flexible payment options in order to widen access to its programmes and a continuation of this policy forms part of the College's most recent strategic development plan.

The bulk of the undergraduate and postgraduate learner population at ICHAS is drawn from what are commonly referred to as 'non-traditional' learner's i.e. mature learners undertaking programmes on a part-time basis. In that regard, ICHAS has developed a programme delivery model that significantly enhances access to higher education programmes for such learners. This was initially achieved through offering the programmes in a number of centres around the country and providing strong administrative and learner support to lecturers and learners. In more recent years, the College has recognized the potential for the increased use of technology to enhance the student experience and opportunities and has moved to develop its blended learning capacity, especially on part time programmes.

There are a variety of definitions of 'blended learning' in the literature, thus it is important to stipulate the College's understanding and use of Blended Learning approaches. One perspective, which is the essential philosophy of the approach taken within ICHAS, argues that Blended Learning is a formal student-centred educational approach that combines the best practices of traditional education and modern online approaches, where the online learning sessions and traditional classroom arrangements are connected within a course as complementary modality, providing an integrated learning experience for students. This approach promotes the use of technology as a discovery-based tool in education, taking due cognisance of the learning needs of modern students. The students are encouraged to take an active role in the educational process through carefully planned activities such as collaborative work on certain tasks, participation in the evaluation process, self-directed guides, and synchronous and asynchronous delivery of learning material (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003[10]).

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[10] Osguthorpe, R. T.; Graham, C. R. (2003) Blended learning environments: Definitions and directions; Quarterly Review of Distance Education); Vol. 4 Issue 3, p227-233,

Blended learning has been reported to be beneficial at a range of levels; specifically, it has been reported that it "produces multiple benefits regarding the academic performance, as well as behavioural gains such as student retention in the education, responsibility, and development of transferable skills like collaboration, communication, and problem solving" (Vasileva-Stojanovska et al, 2015:127[11])

This supports the findings of comprehensive review and meta-analysis of online learning studies in North America undertaken by Means, Yoyama, Murphy, Bakia, and Jones (2009), which found that on average students perform better when part or all of their learning occurs in an online environment compared with students who are in traditional face-to-face conditions.

Perhaps this is related to the fact that online interactions have been evidenced as a significant component of pedagogy attaining intended learning outcomes in online learning contexts (Ravenna, Foster, & Bishop, 2012). Indeed, the ability for students (especially those geographically distanced from educational centres) to communicate synchronously with lecturers or peers in real time (as well as asynchronously) may partly explain the fact that there is reasonably consistent evidence that within blended learning approaches, the use of synchronous delivery methods are more valued by students (Francescucci & Foster, 2013).

Such 'real time' interactions have been found to facilitate peer rapport between online and face-to-face students in a blended synchronous learning mode (Szeto and Cheng, 2014). One of the key reasons for combining asynchronous and synchronous learning within blended learning approaches is that there are acknowledged challenges in asynchronous approaches when they are used alone.

For example, it is often difficult to engage remote learners, who may have chosen online study because of work and family obligations (James, Krause & Jennings, 2010), meaning they have less time for their studies. Likewise, in the case of the use of asynchronous methodologies alone, Cunningham (2014) noted that there is a reported reluctance of some online students to participate actively in asynchronous discussion forums such as Moodle-based learning platforms. This apparent lack of engagement in the course meant that these students were not interacting and thus there was little rapport between the teacher and the online students and none at all between the students.

Within that context, the use of a VIRI (a Virtual, Interactive, Real-time, Instructor- led) classroom provides opportunities to maximize learning opportunities for real-time support and engagement and optimise the benefits of both face to face and virtual learning in a 'real time' context. A VIRI class can be characterized as a teaching and learning experience that is led by an instructor, that takes place in an online space (over the internet) but with traditional classroom environment opportunities provided to facilitate the choice for students to attend a

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[11] Vasileva-Stojanovska, T., Malinovski, T., Vasileva, M., Jovevski, D., & Trajkovik, V. (2015). Impact of satisfaction, personality and learning style on educational outcomes in a blended learning environment. *Learning and Individual Differences*, *38*(2015), 127–135.

traditional classroom or participate in real time through a web based VIRI classroom, but essentially where all students taking the same classes participate in the experience at the same time. The experience involves two-way synchronous engagement between student and student as well as student and instructor. Students may attend a traditional (face-to-face) classroom or participate in the class in a virtual space but they do so simultaneously. The VIRI facility approach thus simulates a traditional classroom environment for both students attending offline and those attending online through the synchronous digital classroom.

Power and Vaughan (2010) suggested that students will get more out of a course if there is real-time contact between students, and further claimed that synchronous online interaction between students will "reduce learner isolation through real-time dialog and co-construction team activities (p. 23)". Student isolation and failure to engage with the course materials and activities may mean that the flexibility offered by online studies is sometimes countered by a lower completion rate (Power & Vaughan, 2010). In addition, it is considered important that appropriate learning and engagement opportunities are facilitated in this programme especially, where work-based learning is an integral feature of learning.

It is interesting to note that research clearly indicates that when teachers provide **direct instruction** to students using synchronous cyber based face-to-face technologies, the learning outcomes for the students have been found to outperform all other modes of instruction, including face-to-face instruction in the traditional classroom (Chen & Wang, 2008).

Much research focuses on the positive impact of this type of interaction on learning outcomes (Bolliger & Martindale, 2004; Kelly, 2004), especially when it involves real time interaction between instructor and students (Jiang & Ting, 2000). This may be because students value synchronous approaches because questions are answered immediately and feedback is instantaneous (Park & Bonk, 2007; Sparks & Mentz, 2006). Cao, Griffin, and Bai (2009) reported that effective synchronous communication leads directly to increased satisfaction with the course.

Within that context, the College has invested heavily in technology to facilitate the appropriate use of this type of Blended Learning – utilizing both asynchronous and synchronous models, on the basis that this is a more appropriate model to facilitate greater access and opportunities for students in these fields of study in particular. This initiative has led to the development of an integrated blended learning model that we believe significantly enhances the learning opportunities and experience of learners, especially those studying on a part-time basis at a physical remove from the main campus.

The commendation of the College's last Institutional Review Panel in 2011 is noteworthy. Is specifically found that;
"The opportunities that are presented to students at ICHAS make it possible for them to undertake studies in professional practice areas that would otherwise not be available due to location or access through Higher Education. In particular, the panel commends the highly vocational nature of programmes that build practice skills in the psychotherapy disciplines.

Students are positive and enthusiastic about the quality of their learning experiences that provide opportunities that otherwise would be unavailable to them".

Additionally, it should be noted that such an approach enables all students to develop meta-competencies in their use of online platforms and their digital skills more generally, with the support of the College's information services team. In their Digital Roadmap (2015-17), the National Forum for Teaching and Learning identifies the necessity for students at higher level in Ireland to develop digital literacy and digital skills throughout their programmes of learning; that allow them to become competent and capable operators in an increasingly digital world (Dore, Geraghty, & O'Riordan, 2015).

In order to achieve its strategic aims for greater diversity, the College has a number of Masters level programmes which it plans to present to QQI for validation out over the next few years in anticipation of the statutory regulation of Counselling and Psychotherapy. It also plans to develop programmes in related areas on a phased basis. It is envisaged that some of these new programmes may replace some existing ones. We are also actively seeking to develop collaborative provision arrangements and have an ambitious plan to offer more diverse programmes but to simultaneously proactively manage the growth of student numbers in sustainable ways. As indicated, we do not envisage growing student numbers in the areas of Counselling and Psychotherapy significantly beyond what they currently are over the next five years but aim to develop sustainable programmes in 'psychology' or 'developmental' related areas, where we have developed some expertise over the years.

The organisational and academic governance structures, which are presented in the next section are designed to ensure quality assured programme delivery in all operations which is designed to facilitate students to develop and advance their knowledge, skills and competencies within the programmes offered.

4. Governance and Management

The current organizational and governance structures are detailed graphically in Figure 6 & 7. The following sections present a narrative description of the Governance Structures as well as addressing how Quality is managed and assured within the College.

4.1. Organisational & Governance Structures

The College is managed by the College President, who acts as a central point between a Governing Authority on one hand and a broad-based management team (Board of Management) and Academic Council on the other. Within this structure, Academic Affairs are managed autonomously by Academic Council. This structure is diagrammatically presented on figure 6. Therefore, the key organs of governance are:

- Governing Authority
- Board of Management
- Academic Council

4.2. Governing Authority

The Governing Authority has overall accountability for the governance of the College. The identification and selection of the members of the Governing Authority was guided by the considerations around composition and size of Governing Authorities in Higher Education contained in the National Strategy for Higher Education Report (p. 92-93). The key objective was to assemble a group of members, whose combined expertise and experience would be of sufficient depth and breadth as to allow the authority to tangibly and practically contribute to the overall governance of the College and also, importantly, to contribute to enhancing public and stakeholder confidence in the quality of education at the College. The inclusion of a public interest representative is notable in this regard. The current composition of the Governing Authority is as follows, though it is planned to include a student and lecturer representative:

- Mr. Gerry Kearney, Former Secretary General, Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Chair).

- Dr. Noel Colleran, Co. Tipperary VEC.

- Dr. John Gaffney, Senior Lecturer, IT Sligo (Psychology) (Retired).

- Mr. John Lonergan, Former Governor of Mountjoy Prison.

- Mr. Declan Carey, Founder of ICHAS.

- Ms. Marie Mulcahy, Chief Executive Officer.

- Professor Denis Ryan, College President, ICHAS.

- Dr. Jane Alexander, Director of Academic Affairs, ICHAS.
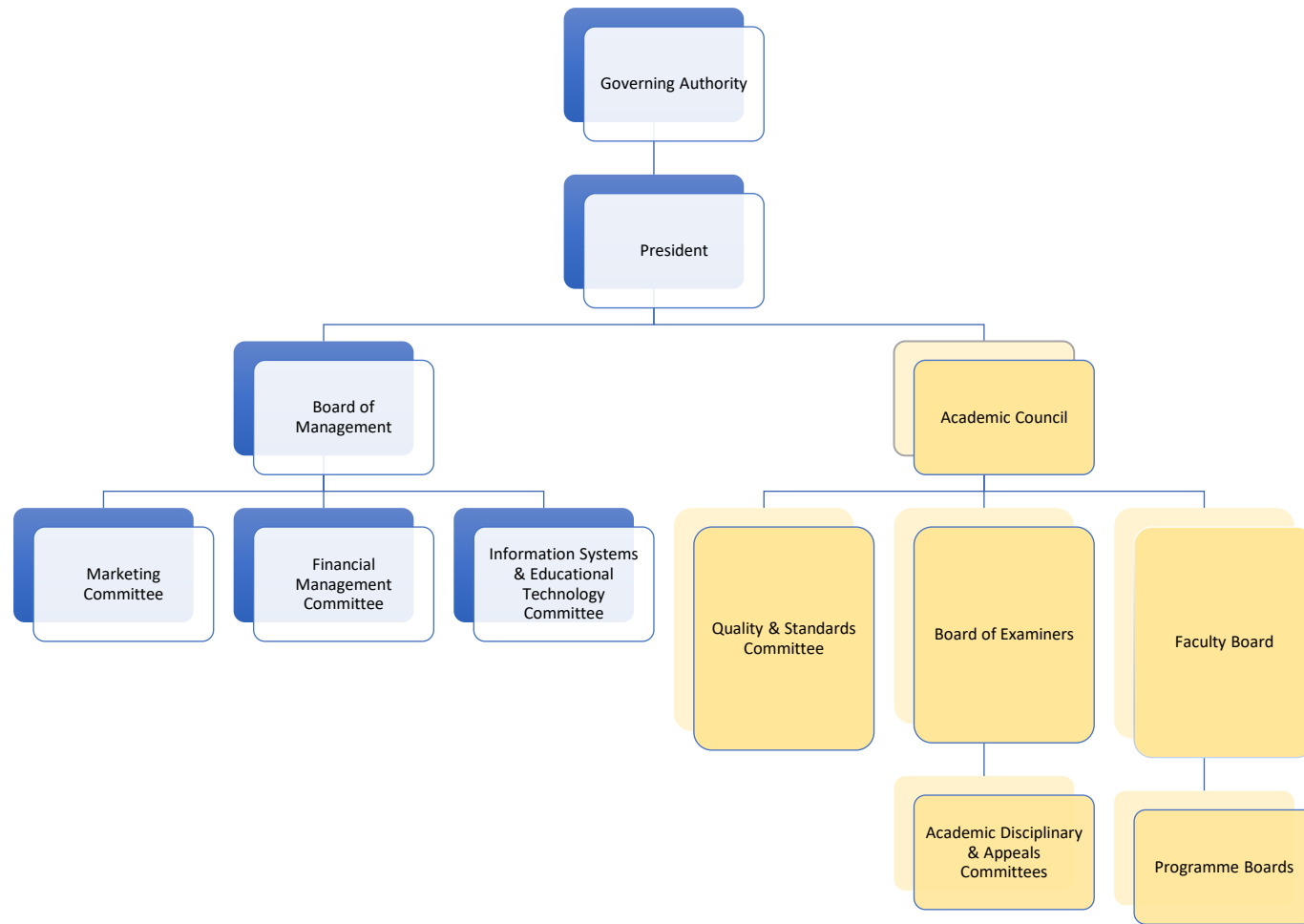
Figure 6 ICHAS Governance Structure

The *Quality Assurance Policy and related procedures applies* to anyone involved in the provision of third level education at ICHAS, including, but not limited to: members of the Governing Authority; the Board of Management, Academic Council, Members of Faculty & staff, learners and external stakeholders.

The Sector Specific Guidelines (QQI, 2016) require that the Governance structures are sufficiently robust so as to support and manage a resource base sufficient to sustainably support the quality assurance system and programmes of education and training, research and related services offered and to manage risk.

In that regard, the Governance of ICHAS is the ultimate responsibility of the Governing Authority. The role of Governing Authority is to provide strategic guidance and to monitor the activities and effectiveness of the management of the college. The Governing Authority supports the College President in ensuring that it is stable and in good financial standing, with a reasonable business case for sustainable provision. In that context, The College President and the CEO report routinely to Governing Authority in terms of financial and organisational sustainability. Likewise, the Director of Academic Affairs reports to GA on issues relating to Academic Affairs, performance and quality.

The Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences is committed to embracing an inclusive Quality Enhancing and assured culture. Within that context, The College prides itself on the autonomy of its academic functioning and therefore, while there is organisational coordination and reporting to the President, the Corporate Affairs and Academic Affairs structures are distinctive, with delegated responsibility and accountability for all Academic Governance issues as well as QAE functions resting with the College's Director of Academic Affairs, who has a direct accountability for Academic Matters to Governing Authority. In that regard, The Director of Academic Affairs is also supported by an Independent Chair of Academic Council and both the Director of Academic Affairs and the Chair of Academic Council sit on Governing Authority.

While quality is an integral element of and is the responsibility of everyone in the college community and assuring and ensuring quality effects and impacts on all facets of the College, the College has established a Quality Enhancement post with responsibility for co-ordinating and providing support to internal and external academic quality assurance activities. The following chart provides an illustration of the key personnel concerned with Quality Assurance and Enhancement in the college.
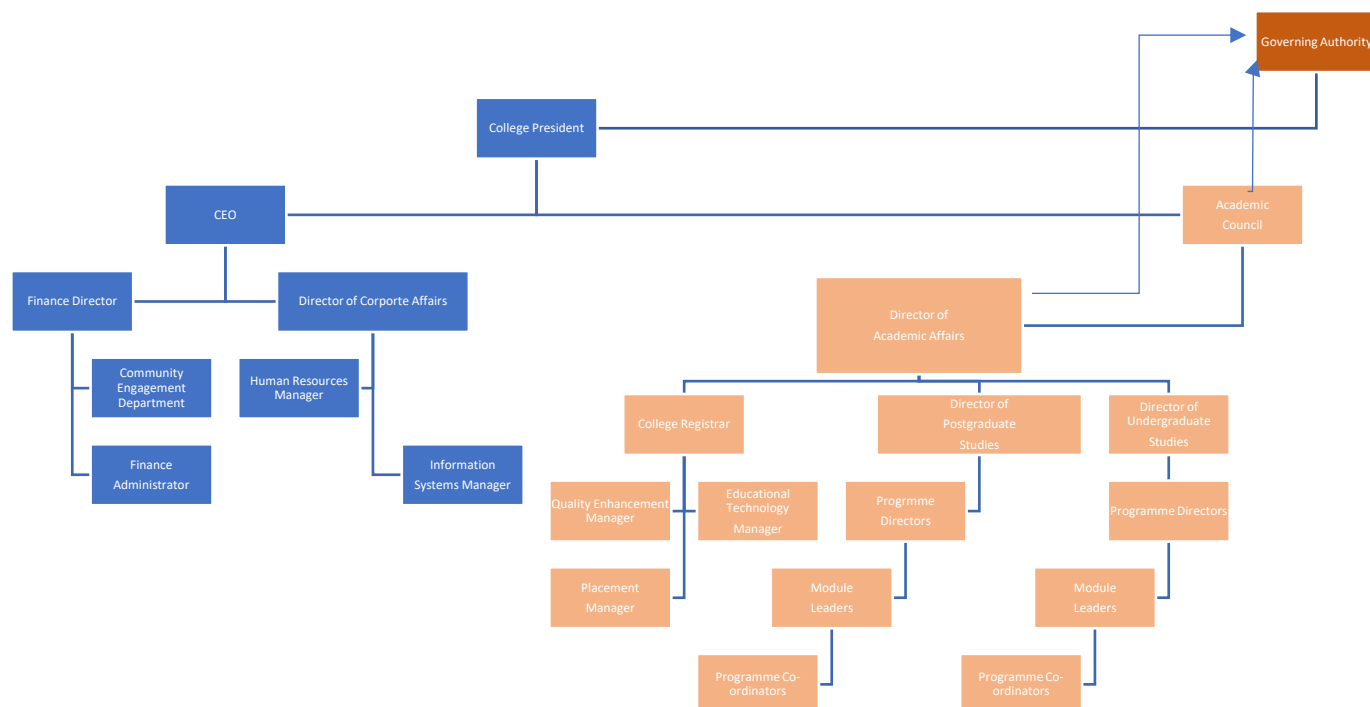
Figure 7 – Academic and Corporate Governance Structures

The Governing Authority, Management Board as well as the Academic Council are the three principal decision-making bodies within the College. The Chief Executive Officer as well as the Director of Academic Affairs along with the External Chair of Academic Council are members of Governing Authority. Both the Board of Management and the Academic Council, in turn, have committees reporting to them, which have defined responsibilities that are published in their terms of references, as have all committees in the College in relation to Quality issues.

As set out above, the College's academic, support, and administrative functions contribute to the quality of the overall learner experience. This QA manual details systematic quality assurance procedures and identifies the appropriate fora for monitoring the data, and mechanisms for the review of the effectiveness of the ICHAS QA policies. The College has developed rigorous procedures to ensure that the quality of its programmes is maintained and enhanced. These procedures are monitored, reviewed, and updated on an ongoing basis in accordance with decisions by the College's academic council, and in accordance with the requirements of QQI.

These guidelines provide the framework for the *Quality Assurance Policies & Procedures* (2018) at ICHAS. The College is committed to creating a 'quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels'[12]. These policies and procedures and associated documentation supersede the *Quality Assurance Handbook* (2011 as amended 2015).

QQI published Core Quality Assurance Guidelines for all providers in 2016. These Guidelines draw upon and reflect the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).

The Core as well as sector specific QA guidelines address the responsibilities of Independent/Private providers to ensure that governance is robust and in particular to ensure that they have fit-for- purpose governance, management and decision-making structures and that academic decision-making (matters relating to education and training) is independent of commercial considerations or the undue in influence of business owners. As indicated in Section 1, they specifically require Independent/Private Providers to have QA procedures to:

- Maintain its status as an established legal entity, which is a clearly identified legal person, having rights and responsibilities under law.

- Support and manage a resource base sufficient to sustainably support the quality assurance system and programmes of education and training, research and related services offered.

- Manage risk.

- Ensure that the College is stable and in good financial standing, with a reasonable business case for sustainable provision.

- Demonstrate how it complies with applicable regulations and legislation in all jurisdictions in which it operates; its general good standing in the qualifications. systems and education and training systems in any jurisdictions in which it operates (or in which its parents or subsidiaries operate) or enrols learners, or in which it has arrangements with awarding bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators.

- Identify dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries and other stakeholder obligations that impact upon the capacity of the provider in any way.

- Provide required information to QQI.

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[12] *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* (Yerevan: Ministerial Conference, May 2015), p. 8.

- Ensure that where its capacity is in any way reduced (for example reductions in staff, resources, other education and training aspects; capacity to uphold the conditions and standards of validation or any other significant matters) QQI will be notified.

The following sub sections addresses these key points.

4.3. The Legal Status of ICHAS

In relation to its legal status, ICHAS is a Private Limited Company, registered in Ireland (Company Registration Number - 330191) and its owned by Mr Declan Carey and Prof Denis Ryan both of whom own 50% shareholding.

4.4. Corporate Governance and Risk Management

The Board of Management supports the College President in the strategic and operational management of the College. The Board of Management makes decisions on all corporate matters of fundamental importance with due cognisance to relevant Irish and European legislation, and in alignment with policies and procedures as outlined by the Department of Education and Skills, QQI and other relevant State agencies. The Board of Management is also responsible for managing risks and reporting to the President and Governing Authority. This is normally through the Chief Executive Officer.

It is arguable that the overarching single biggest risk associated with privately funded (independent/voluntary) higher education relates to viability. Viability, in this context has two major subsets, namely financial and academic viability. Both, are of course inter-related, but for the purposes of clarity and good governance, need to be distinctly addressed. Within that context, the overall governance structures are set out in this document and outline managerial and governance structures which take due cognisance of both commercial and academic governance. The Board of Management and Governing Authority are especially anxious to protect Academic autonomy while ensuring the financial viability of the College. This imperative applies to all Colleges, whether in the Voluntary or indeed State Funded Sectors. The Governing Authority and Board of Management are structured to ensure that the voice of both Corporate and Academic Management is heard and are equally satisfied that there are appropriate and adequate 'checks and balances' in place to ensure that on the one hand that the commercial viability of the college is managed appropriately, but likewise that arrangements are in place to mitigate any possibility of any undue influence of commercial interests in relation to academic decision making and governance.

Outside of those key principles of Academic Autonomy, perhaps the most obvious risk associated with Independent/Private Voluntary providers is the potential for such Colleges to cease trading with attendant risks to the seamless continuation of learners' studies. The Qualifications & Quality

Assurance (Education & Training) Act (2012) stipulates that a provider should put appropriate arrangements in place for the protection of enrolled learners on programmes of three months duration or more - where moneys have been paid by, or on behalf of the learner, to the provider for a programme of education and training.

This legal requirement is made of all independent/voluntary providers, and each provider is expected to have a PEL policy and set of procedures in place. Within that context, ICHAS has learner protection arrangements in place with respect to enrolled learners on all relevant QQI validated courses, ensuring learners educational journey at ICHAS is protected, and in accordance with the requirements set out in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012). The current arrangements are with two other providers from the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA) in respect of each QQI course, which is longer than 12 weeks in duration, whereby learners will either transfer to similar courses provided by the other providers or preferably, will continue their existing course, with responsibility for its completion transferred to one of the other providers in the unlikely instance of a trigger event. This is facilitated through membership of the HECA PEL Scheme.

The second obvious potential risk relates to the autonomy of academic decision making. Academic decision making should not be influenced by commercial considerations and in that regard, it is important that Academic and governance structures take due account of this imperative. As set out above in figures 6 & 7, the College has robust and intricate structures in place which ensure the autonomy of Academic decision making.

4.5. Risk Management

ICHAS has taken a systematic approach to risk management and this has allowed for the development of a system to establish and maintain an internal system which identifies, assesses and manages areas of risk in relation to potential events or situations so that reasonable assurance can be used to manage all risks associated with the achievement of the College's objectives and activities.

Policy Statement on Risk Management

Governing Authority holds ultimate accountability for reviewing the system of risk management that the College has in place. The Governing Authority will advise, review and provide direction to senior management on the importance of risk management and risk culture. This Policy supports the Governing Authority in meeting its responsibilities in this regard.

The purpose of this risk management policy is to provide direction regarding the management of risk at the College so that strategic objectives can be supported; staff, students and other parties can be protected, future financial sustainability and to comply with Irish regulation. The risk management policy supports the Governing Authority in meeting its responsibilities. This policy applies to all operations within the College.

Defining Risk

Risk is an inherent part of life but it may vary in terms of potential level, impact and magnitude . Risks can be either positive (i.e. opportunities) or negative and may be either 'Current' and 'Emerging' Risks. A 'Current' risk may include a single issue, or combination of risks, that can seriously affect the performance, future prospects or reputation of the College. An 'Emerging' risk is a type of risk which has not been experienced or one which did exist before or perhaps has not been encountered for a number of years.

Positive risks or opportunities are uncertain but favourable events which, if they occur, would positively impact upon the strategic objectives of the College. A negative risk is defined as an uncertainty which gives rise to potential events which, were they to occur, would impact negatively on the College by not allowing for strategic objectives to be obtained or by doing reputational damage to the College. The College risk management policy tries to manage both positive and negative risks in addition to current and emerging risks.

Risk Management Function

The Risk Management Function is the combined responsibility of everyone in the College, but in terms of management, it is primarily a function of the Board of Management to put in place policies, processes and procedures that appropriately identify, measure, monitor and manage risk. As indicated earlier, it is one of the key functions of Governing Authority to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms in place for reviewing the system of risk management within the College.

The Board of Management team are responsible for the development and maintenance of the risk management process. This allows for continuous monitoring of the methods used to identity and address items or areas of risk. The senior management team will advise Governing Authority on risk management strategies that are in place and provide reports and analysis of risk findings. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the ongoing development and day-to-day maintenance of the college risk management function. The Chief Executive Officer is ultimately responsible for the effective communication of this policy to all staff, students and related third parties.

College Risk Register

The College Risk Register is the highest-level risk register prepared by the College and published following approval by Governing Authority. A College Risk Register will be maintained that contains information on potential risks which could affect the College as a whole or be of a significantly high level to merit their inclusion in the risk register. Potential risks for inclusion in the risk register will be decided by the senior management team and brought to the Governing Authority for consideration. Final approval of the risk register is the responsibility of the Governing Authority.

The College will seek to continuously improve its risk management performance by integrating risk management into its management and reporting arrangements and heads of department are responsible for the day-to-day identification and management of risks in areas of operation under their control. Individual risk registers will be maintained at department level and these will be collated annually into an overall College Risk Register. The risk management framework also incorporates an emergency plan so that appropriate arrangements are in place to deal with crises or major disruptions to the College's normal operations. It is important to note that risk management is a College wide responsibility that requires the active involvement and co-operation of all management and staff for it to be an effective process.

Risk Management Process

The Risk Register will be developed and/or updated as part of an annual risk management cycle. Each cycle begins with a bottom up approach from each Department/ functional area within the College. Individual departments update their individual unit level risk registers at this phase of the process and it is thus important that they identify and document both current and emerging risks which may impact upon them directly as well as those which may have an impact at a College level. This initial scoping develops Draft Risk Registers at Departmental level.

Draft Department level risk registers are submitted to the Chief Executive Officer who reviews and collates the Draft risks into an overall documented risk register which is then brought to the Board of Management and ultimately following review to Governing Authority for consideration. This collation process allows for an inductive approach. Following consideration by Governing Authority decisions are made regarding potential risks as well as risk management of actual risks. Once approved, the risk register and any action plans are developed. Updates on any significant changes in risks listed in the Risk Register are given at subsequent meetings of the Governing Authority and updated accordingly.

Risk Reporting

Assurance has to be given to the Governing Authority by the Board of Management, through the CEO that significant risks are identified, monitored and managed appropriately on an ongoing basis and that any significant changes to the risk profile are identified in a timely manner. Governing Authority are responsible for ensuring that this risk reporting and management is effective.

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┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│ Risk Identification │ ─► │ Draft Unit Level Risk │ ─► │ Consideration by the │
│ (Departmental/Unit │     │    Register     │     │    Board of     │
│     Level)      │     │                 │     │   Management    │
└─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘
                                                          │
                                                          ▼
┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│  Submission to  │ ◄─ │  Action Plans   │ ◄─ │  Compilation of │
│ Governing Authority │     │    Proposed     │     │ College Risk Register │
└─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘
         │
         ▼
┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│ Implementation Plan │ ─► │ Risk Minimisation, │ ─► │ Review by Governing │
│                 │     │ Prevention &    │     │    Authority    │
│                 │     │ Management Actions │     │                 │
└─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘
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Figure 8 - Risk Management Cycle

4.6. Mitigating Risks and Ensuring the Autonomy of Academic Decision Making

Academic Council is responsible for the governance and management of academic affairs and advises the College President on academic matters relating to the College, but more importantly reports directly on Academic Matters to the Governing Authority.

Academic Council is responsible for the implementation of the academic governance framework and oversees the establishment, maintenance and development of quality assurance policies and procedures for all educational programmes within the College. The primary role of the Academic Council is to uphold academic standards. The Director of Academic Affairs leads the Academic Affairs functions within the College and supports the work of the Independent External Chair of Academic Council. Academic Council reports directly on Academic Affairs to the Governing Authority. All areas of programme development, review and re-validation fall under the remit of Academic Council with specific leadership responsibilities being delegated to the Director of Academic Affairs, the Registrar and the Directors of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies. These governance structures and in particular the presence and contribution of the external Chair of Academic Council are designed to ensure that academic decision-making is independent of any commercial considerations or the undue influence of the college owners.

4.7. Governance and Management of Quality at ICHAS

All activities within the College are subject to the College's Quality Assurance procedures. All staff undertake a key role in the management and implementation of quality assurance procedures and a collective responsibility for same is distributed across a range of boards and committees. The management of quality assurance and enhancement is designed to ensure the organisational and corporate effectiveness of the College's operations as well as the academic quality of programmes

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which are deemed to be inter-dependent. Within academic matters quality assurance and enhancement activities apply at a modular, programme and faculty level. Ultimate responsibility for the approval and monitoring of all quality assurance procedures rests with the ICHAS Academic Council. Quality Assurance procedures are reviewed periodically, and an annual Quality Assurance Report is produced by the Quality Manager along with the Registrar and submitted to Academic Council. The Director of Academic Affairs has overall responsibility for academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement, and in that function, is supported by members of the Board of Management and the external Independent Chair of Academic Council. The Director of Academic Affairs may convene, as necessary, other groups to address issues concerned with quality assurance and enhancement.

At the level of the individual academic Programmes, Programme Directors monitor academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement supported by Module Leaders/lecturers. Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes, as collectives are the responsibility of the Directors of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Affairs respectively.

The principal committee at programme level is the Programme Board, at which a programme or a cognate group of programmes are managed. The Registrar in conjunction with the Programme Directors arrange for Programme Boards, which have student members, to meet at least twice each Semester.

At module level, the Module Leader oversees academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement, convening meetings of module leaders/ lecturer at times whereby they can feed into Programme Boards, supported by the Programme Co-ordinators.

Figure 9 – Academic Governance Structures
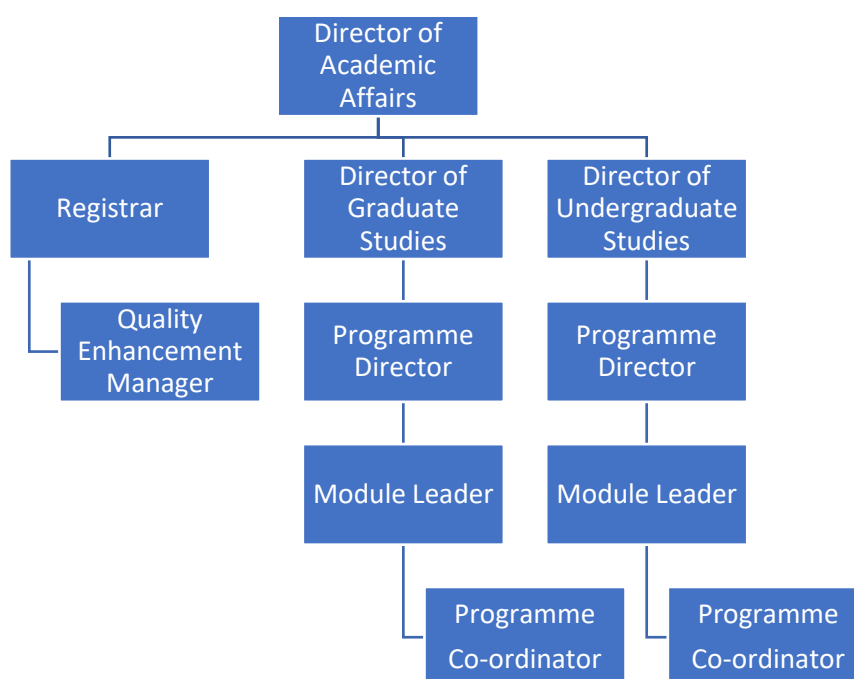
4.8. The Quality Assurance Framework at ICHAS

One perspective on Quality Assurance within Higher Educational Institutes is that it "refers to review procedures undertaken by higher education institutions that are designed to safeguard academic standards and promote learning opportunities of acceptable quality for students" (El Hassan, 2013) [13].

ICHAS recognises that the effective and transparent operation of quality assurance is essential to student and public confidence in the College, and that it is critical to achieving its long-term vision. The regulatory and statutory framework for the operation of quality assurance procedures as described in this edition are derived from QQI quality assurance policies and from the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurances in the European Higher Education Area. It is further informed by exposure to and collaboration with a network of reputable higher education providers nationally and internationally.

The following principles underpin the development, implementation and continuous improvement of quality assurance procedures at ICHAS and are designed to protects the integrity of academic processes and standards at the College;

- Transparency

  The work, policies and procedures that underpin educational activities at the College will be transparent and available to interested stakeholders.

- Inclusivity

  The development and review of the quality assurance procedures should be based on input by all key stakeholders: learners, teaching staff, support staff, employers, professional bodies and external agencies.

- Relevance

  The quality assurance procedures should be relevant and applicable to the specific requirements and resources of the College.

- Accessibility

  The procedures should be written in clear, concise language that is readily understood in the context of higher education; the procedures should be easily available to any stakeholder.

- Accountability

  Accountability for implementation and review of specific procedures should be clearly identified within the procedures themselves.

Within that context, it is appropriate that Quality Assurance within the College is managed by the Director of Academic Affairs, with the support of the Quality & Standards Committee. The College publishes a Quality Assurance Manual which is publicly available on the College Website and the ICHAS Learning Management System and is formally highlighted to students and lecturers. Individual staff members receive induction on the manual. All quality assurance procedures are reviewed on a regular basis and the findings of such reviews (including proposals for changes to policy and procedures) are presented to Academic Council for review and subject to any changes or amendments are subsequently presented to Governing Authority for consideration and approval as appropriate. Any amendments

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[13] El Hassan, K. (2013). Quality Assurance in Higher Education in 20 MENA Economies. *Higher Education Management and Policy, 24*(2), 73-84.

to the Quality Assurance Manual should be documented in the QA manual and a summary of changes and updates appended to the revised version and these should also be communicated to and agreed by QQI.

4.9. The Management Structures & Roles to ensure Quality Assurance at ICHAS

The system of management and academic governance at ICHAS is central to the implementation of the College's quality assurance system.

The academic units and groupings that comprise the overall management and governance structures have ongoing responsibility and accountability for continuous quality assurance. The College complies with all relevant legislation, including Freedom of Information, Data Protection, Safety, Health and Welfare, Employment and Equality Legislation. For ease of overview and reference, the governance structures are diagrammatically represented above, while the membership and function of the different boards and committees within the College are detailed in the following Figure 10 & 11.

The functional and operational responsibilities of the members of the Board of Management, the Office of the Director of Academic Affairs, and the Office of Registrar and other key roles are set out in summary form in the following tables.

BODY	MEMBERSHIP	FUNCTION	MEETING FREQUENCY
Governing Authority	**External Chair** 2 x External Advisors (Academic) 1 x Public Interest Representative College Chief Executive Officer Director of Corporate Affairs College President Director of Academic Affairs	Overseeing strategic development. Advising on strategic planning. Overseeing compliance with quality assurance procedures. Guardianship of corporate and academic governance best practice.	Three times per year.
Board of Management	**Chief Executive Officer (Chair)** Director of Academic Affairs Director of Corporate Affairs Registrar Head of Finance Educational technologist Information Systems Manager	Development and implementation of the Strategic Plan. Overseeing the operational management of ICHAS. Compliance with Quality Assurance Procedures Consideration of HRM requirements. Overseeing marketing and PR initiatives. Overseeing programme development and review.	For period covering transition from NCPII to ICHAS, Management Team will meet weekly. Over time, this will move to fortnightly.
Academic Council	**Independent External Chair** Director of Academic Affairs Quality Enhancement Manager Director of Undergraduate Studies Director of Postgraduate Studies Registrar Programme Directors Student Representatives x 2	Academic planning and development. Academic monitoring and review. Coherence of academic policies with strategic plan. New Programme review and approval. Management of sub-groups and review of same as appropriate.	Three times per academic year – Semester 1 and post Summer and Autumn Exam Boards. More frequently if required for reasons of five-year reviews or programme development submissions.
Undergraduate Programme Boards	**Director of Undergraduate Studies (Chair)** Programme Directors Module leaders/Lecturers Registrar Educational technologist Level 7 & 8 Programme Co-ordinators Student Representatives	Content Development & Review Examinations & Assessment Technology Programmatic Review Student Performance & Feedback	Twice per semester
Postgraduate Programme Boards	**Director of Graduate Studies (Chair)** Programme Directors Module leaders/Lecturers Registrar Educational technologist Level 9 Programme Co-ordinator Student Representatives	Content Development & Review Examinations & Assessment Technology Programmatic Review Student Performance and Feedback	Twice per Semester

Committee	Membership	Role/Function	Frequency
Quality & Standards Committee	**Quality Enhancement Manager (Chair)** Chief Executive Officer Registrar Educational technologist Information Systems Manager Director of Undergraduate Studies Director of Graduate Studies Programme Co-ordinators Student Representative	Review, evaluation and revision of QA procedures. QA Audit & Reporting Monitoring of all systems and polices across the college and their impact on the student experience and academic standards. Knowledge dissemination, Monitoring adherence to QA policies and procedures. Informal staff training.	Quarterly. More frequently if required for cyclical quality reviews.
Board of Examiners	**Director of Academic Affairs (Chair)** Director of Graduate Studies Director of Undergraduate Studies Quality Enhancement Manager Registrar Programme Co-ordinators Programme Directors Module Leaders/Lecturers External Examiners QQI Representative	Consideration of Assessment Findings Determination of Assessment results Progression Eligibility Classifications of awards	Three Per year
Appeals Committee	**Registrar (Chair)** *Board to be convened by Registrar as necessary; Membership decided by Registrar based on nature of Appeal (stage, level, module). Minimum 3 independent members of the Board of Examiners to be included.*	Review appeals of examination and assessment grades or against the decisions of the academic committees.	As required.
Internal Moderation Committee	**Director of Academic Affairs** Programme Directors Registrar	Assessing the reliability and validity of the assessment process Ensuring consistency of marking between internal examiners Ensuring consistency with national standards for each level	Following terminal examinations and in advance of the meeting of the Board of Examiners
Pre Exam Board	**Director of Academic Affairs** Programme Directors Registrar	Ensure consistency of marking between internal examiners. Ensure consistency with national standards for that level. Discuss the outcome of marking discrepancies.	

		Identify students whose grades are on the borderline in relation to award classification and forwarded for discussion at the Examination board. All findings of the Pre- Exam are formally reported at the Board of Examiners.	
Financial Management Group	**Chief Executive Officer (Chair)** College President Head of Finance Director of Corporate Affairs	Annual Returns and Annual Reports. Financial Stewardship. Capital Expenditure. Monitoring & Review of budgets, accounts, revenue and expenditure on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Determining budget allocations Financial monitoring and compliance.	Monthly
Disciplinary Committee	**Registrar (Chair)** Quality Enhancement Manager Director of Academic Affairs *Committee to be convened by Registrar as necessary; membership based on nature of alleged disciplinary offence. Minimum 3 persons to be included who may be drawn from across the organisation according to relevance to disciplinary issue under consideration.*	Hear unresolved cases of alleged misconduct and academic impropriety.	Ad hoc as required.
Programme Directors Group	**Director of Academic Affairs (Chair)** Individual Programme Directors Programme Co-ordinators	Assessment (Setting, marking, moderation, feedback) Consistency (delivery, assessment, marking and feedback)	Once per semester and on an ad hoc basis as requested by the Director of Academic Affairs.
Marketing Committee	**Communications & Public Engagement Manager (Chair)** Director of Corporate Affairs Marketing Administrator IS Manager Social Media Manager	Develop annual marketing plans in line with the strategic plan, college mission and allocated marketing budget. Obtain sign-off of management team on marketing plan Implement marketing and PR initiatives as per plan, liaising with key personnel across the organisation to ensure optimal involvement.	As required.

| Admissions Committee | Director of Academic Affairs (chair)
Registrar
Programme Directors
Programme Co-ordinators | Monitoring review and development of selection systems of student's intake including admission based on prior learning, transfer policy, and advanced entry policy.
Oversight over admission's interview procedure including review of interview data
Evaluation and review of entry requirements as per the agreed Validation documentation
Production of statistical data on admission trends in continuous broad sheet and compiled as an Annual Admission's Report as a core QA mechanism which will normally be complied by the Registrar's Office. | |

Figure 10 - Governance: Boards & Committees

Title	Chief Executive Officer	Director of Corporate Affairs	Head of Finance	Director of Academic Affairs	Registrar	Information Systems Manager	Educational technologist
Accountabilities	Strategic Planning Operational Management Quality Assurance	External Relations Strategic Alliances Human Resources Marketing & Public Relations	Financial Planning Budgetary Control Allocation of Financial Resources	Academic Strategy Programme Monitoring & Review New Programme Development Academic Leadership & Stewardship	Academic Standards Quality Assurance Strategy, Implementation & Review Academic Administration & Student Affairs Programme validation, monitoring and review	IT Strategic Development Information Systems & Platforms On-line Library Resources	E- Learning & Teaching Strategy Learning Management System Blended Learning Strategy
Board & Committee Membership	Board of Management Governing Authority Quality & Standards Committee	Board of Management Governing Authority Financial Management Group Marketing Committee	Board of Management Financial Management Group	Board of Management Governing Authority Academic Council Board of Examiners Internal Moderation Committee Programme Directors Group	Board of Management Academic Council Programme Boards Quality & Standards Committee Board of Examiners Appeals Committee Internal Moderation Committee Disciplinary Committee	Board of Management Quality & Standards Committee Marketing Committee	Board of Management Programme Boards Quality & Standards Committee
Direct Reports	Director of Corporate Affairs Head of Finance	Human Resources Manager Quality Manager	Head of Community Engagement	Quality Enhancement Manager Educational technologist Director of Graduate Studies Director of Undergraduate Studies Programme Directors Module Leaders/ Lecturers	Programme Co-ordinators Practice Placement Officer Office Administrators		
Performance Review	College President /Director of Academic Affairs	Chief Executive Officer/ College President	Chief Executive Officer/ College President	Dir of Corporate Affairs/ College President	College President /Director of Academic Affairs	College President /Director of Corporate Affairs	College President/ Director of Academic Affairs

Figure 11 - Accountabilities of the Board of Management

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Title	Registrar	Programme Co-ordinators	Practice Placement Manager	Educational Technologist
Accountabilities	Admissions Examinations Office Supervision of Academic Co-ordinator Activities Academic Calendars, Programme Timetables & Scheduling Implementation of Quality Assurance Procedures Provision of information to lecturers Student Registration Information Provision to Learners	Programme Co-ordination & Primary Point of Contact for current and prospective learners at each level Learner Support & Response Administrative support for admissions, examinations and assessments. Administrative support to Directors of Studies & Lecturing/Tutor Team Scheduling Support to Registrar Implementation of Quality Assurance	Primary Point of contact for practice placement students (before, during and after a period of placement) All dealings with placement providers Implementation of Quality Assurance Administrative Support to Director of Academic Affairs and Director and Graduate and undergraduate Studies in matters relating to Practice Placement.	Induction and ongoing support for to all Blended learning technologies utilised by the college to all students and staff via scheduled workshops and training sessions. Design, develop and integrate high quality online learning materials To gather feedback from the student experience and report back to the Director of Academic Affairs. Consult, collaborate, develop and implement educational technology facilities for all staff.
Board & Committee Membership	Academic Council Quality & Standards Committee Programme Boards Board of Examiners Appeals Committee	Programme Boards Quality & Standards Committee Board of Examiners Marketing/HR Committee		
Performance Review	College President /Director of Academic Affairs	Director of Corporate Affairs/Registrar	Director of Academic Affairs/ Director of Corporate Affairs	Director of Academic Affairs/ Chief Executive Officer

Figure 12 - Accountabilities of the Office of the Director of Academic Affairs

4.10. Embedding a Quality Culture

It is perhaps important to distinguish between the notion of organisational culture and the process or aim of embedding a quality culture within an organisational framework. Malhi (2013:1)[14] argues that there are three essential components that contribute to the culture of an organisation, namely the shared values, norms and beliefs, which in combination, can be characterised as the "social glue" that binds an organization's members together and maybe considered to be the personality of the organization, describing it as "a set of shared values and beliefs which interact with an organization's people, structure and systems to produce behavioral norms". Equally, according to Crosby (1990), "Quality is the result of a carefully constructed culture; it has to be the fabric of the organization." That suggests that quality is a constructed or facilitated entity within an organisation, which requires nurturing, structures and support.

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[14] Malhi RS (2013) Creating and Sustaining: A Quality Culture. J Def Manag S3: 002. doi:10.4172/2167-0374.S3-002

More recently it has been argued that Quality must be facilitated, and the types of factors reported as important in creating and enhancing quality include an overt commitment to quality from senior managers, the creation of clear objectives and performance criteria and the institutionalisation of an ethos of continuing quality enhancement in everything the organisation does (Davis et 2014)[15].

Within that context, the Governing Authority, Academic Council and Board of Management of ICHAS College are committed to developing and embedding a quality culture in all its endeavours: a culture that embodies preparation, encouraging, assessing and improving practices associated with the student experience as well as the overall activities of the College. As such, the College is committed to empowering all parties to participate in the development, maintenance and improvement of a robust and fit-for-purpose quality assurance system. Learners, staff and third parties of the College are extremely important in the overall process of embedding a quality culture to ensure that the quality assurance and enhancement activities of the College meet the expectation that the College will manifest optimal performance consistent with best national and international practice.

ICHAS recognises that engagement by staff is vital in providing input and feedback on strategic developments. To assist with embedding a quality culture, there are staff development days held at the beginning and end of the academic year to inform, review and consult with staff to determine areas for improvement and build on strengths. These days are workshop based and provide the basis for short and long-term strategic development.

In particular, ICHAS is also conscious of the invaluable contribution students have in terms of assuring and enhancing quality and provide invaluable insights into the quality of teaching and more particularly into the student learning experience. Within that context, there are a series of formal and informal routes for capturing the student experience. Students are invited to complete formal modular and stage level as well as programme feedback evaluations at the end of Modules, Semesters and programme stages as relevant. Likewise, all Classes have Class Representatives and there are regular meetings held with Class representatives both at a stage and College wide level. These are held at least three times each year.

ICHAS is equally committed to involving external stakeholders to enhance the quality of its programmes and to support the quality assurance process. Principally, this is facilitated through community engagement with services providers to the wider community and the College considers informal feedback from external stakeholders to be an extremely vital part of the quality assurance process. Many of these stakeholders are intimately involved in

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[15] Davis MV, Mahanna E, Joly B, et al. Creating Quality Improvement Culture in Public Health Agencies. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2014;104(1)

programme development, design, review and cyclical reviews. There is also ongoing communication with employers of graduates to ascertain the benefits of having our graduates in their workforce. Collectively, those feedback processes inform key elements of programme design, delivery and review and ultimately enhance the experience, competence and/or professional skills of our graduates.

5. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

ICHAS's mission is to facilitate and enable adult learners to achieve qualifications that are accessible, affordable, relevant to the needs of the wider community (including, but not limited to business, industry and the professions), and which are recognised nationally and internationally. Its programmes are supported by quality assurance policies and procedures that are independently agreed and monitored. It is committed to promoting the discovery, synthesis and dissemination of academic and applied knowledge in the contexts of higher education and continued professional development. In documenting the approach that ICHAS has taken to the College Quality assurance and in line with the requirements from Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) & the Sector Specific Guidelines on Quality Assurance (2016) from QQI, the College have also referred to the ESG for guidance to develop and maintain the Quality assurance processes in the College. The ESG offers a model on which to base the commitment of the College to the learner experience.

Standard 1.1 of the ESG states that:
"Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders."

In line with the ESG statement above and the guidance it offers, the College is committed to the development and implementation of effective governance and control arrangements with the requirements as agreed with QQI under Section 28.

By recognising that accessibility to College policies and associated documents is an important factor of the Quality Framework at ICHAS, the college has undertaken to make these as easily accessible to both internal and / or external parties as possible and therefore the College publishes policies and documents which can be found are found under the Quality Assurance webpage on www.ichas.ie all staff and learners can access all policies and associated documents via the Learning Management System.

The next part of this chapter documents the ICHAS policy for quality assurance and the approach the College takes to building and enhancing quality throughout the College.

5.1. Quality Assurance at ICHAS

The College established procedures for Quality Assurance under Section 28 which were agreed originally in 2006 with HETAC, subsequently reviewed in 2011 and the most recent revision of elements of the College Quality Assurance policies and process (relating to Collaborative Provision) was undertaken with QQI in 2015. The College has undergone two cycles of Programmatic Reviews as well as Institutional Review with QQI and the College has been deemed an appropriate institution for the delivery of Higher Education Programmes through those processes. The system of management and academic governance at ICHAS is central to the implementation of the College's quality assurance system as well as ensuring its Mission and Vision are actualised.   The academic units and groupings that comprise the overall management and governance structures have ongoing responsibility and accountability for quality assurance and enhancement.

The delivery of the all programmes at ICHAS is guided by ICHAS' Quality Assurance Policies, Procedures, Practices and Guidelines (2018) which is available on www.ichas.ie and these policies and procedures relate to all aspects of programme delivery and the student experience following the guidelines below;

- Establishment and management of the arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to comply with statutory obligations which are set out in *Protection of Enrolled Learners: Protocols for Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act.*
- Ensuring access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval.
- Ensuring appropriate Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies.
- Supporting programme design, development, approval and delivery process as set out in the Policy and Criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training. (QQI, 2017)
- Monitoring and reviewing programmes and arranging for the revalidation of programmes.
- Ensuring appropriate mechanisms for staff recruitment, management and development.

The ICHAS Quality Assurance policies clearly outline the procedures for the management of all programmes including ensuring that all the programmes are periodically reviewed and updated. This includes annual internal and external evaluation of the programmes, by means of a structure of Programme Boards (to include all lecturers, programme administrators and learner representatives) and an external examiner structure which offers expert peer review. In addition, learner progression is tracked to ascertain where graduates of each programme find employment or academic progression whilst taking account of the General Data Protection Act (2018). Feedback from the Programme boards informs the delivery of the

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programmes annually and the programmes are reviewed as part of the overall programmatic and the cyclical review process.

The following are the main policies and procedures for Quality Assurance that the College operates within and this outlines the strategy for assuring and ensuring a Quality environment within ICHAS.

Figure 13 - Ensuring a Quality Environment within ICHAS

5.2. Policy Relating to Quality Assurance

ICHAS promotes a culture of quality which is supported by a documented quality framework and a published procedure manual. This allows for the continuous review and enhancement of quality procedures and gives an overview of the governance and management of quality as well as the documented approach to Quality Assurance. The Quality Framework enables ICHAS to meet best national and international guidelines, standards and statutory regulations and is supported by a set of procedures as set out below.

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5.3. Procedures for Measuring the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Procedures

The effectiveness of quality assurance procedures at ICHAS is measured in a number of different ways. It is proposed that a schedule of review activity will be devised for the current academic year and each subsequent year. The main reviews include;

- Periodic Quality Audits,
- Annual Quality Assurance Report,
- Programmatic Review
- Cyclical Reviews

All of these allow for the internal and external evaluation of the Quality Assurance system.

Periodic Quality Audit

The Quality & Standards Committee is charged with the review, evaluation and revision of quality assurance procedures. The Committee is responsible for monitoring all systems and polices across the College and their impact on the student experience and academic standards. In addition, the Committee monitors adherence to quality assurance policies and procedures. On a quarterly basis, the Committee members undertake an audit of the implementation of quality assurance procedures, based on a defined cycle, with all procedures reviewed within a twelve-month period. The practice of the review involves consultation with relevant staff through which knowledge of quality assurance procedures is disseminated and understanding enhanced. Each quarter, a brief Audit Report is prepared and retained by the Quality Enhancement Manager.

Annual Quality Assurance Report

The Quality Enhancement Manager produces an Annual Quality Assurance Report. The Annual Quality Assurance Report is for internal use only and takes the format of a self-study, identifying existing strengths and areas for improvement. The desired outcome of this report is an annual action plan aimed at ensuring the achievement of ongoing quality enhancement. The Report and a proposed Quality Enhancement Plan is submitted to Academic Council for review, discussion and ratification.

The Report considers the implementation and effectiveness of each quality assurance policy and associated procedures, deriving information from the periodic QA audits, consultation with staff, stakeholder feedback and evolving best practice guidelines from QQI and other relevant bodies.

For each five year cycle a Cyclical Review of the full manual has to be undertaken and changes are submitted to and reviewed by the Quality and Standards Committee who in turn formulates recommendations. The committee presents Academic Council with its recommendations which are reviewed. Academic Council are authorised to initiate changes

or seek clarification on points and the final QA document is submitted to QQI for approval. In instances where polices are updated, archived copies of previous QA's are maintained in a secure location.

6. Policies related to Programmes of Education and Training

In relation to Programmes of Education and Training, Voluntary providers must have quality assurance procedures in place for;

- Protection of Enrolled Learners to comply with statutory obligations which are set out in *Protection of Enrolled Learners: Protocols for Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act.*
- Access, Transfer and Progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval
- Documented procedures for Programme Design, Development, Approval and Delivery as set out in the *QQI Core Validation Policy and Criteria for education and training programmes.*

The Sector specific QA guidelines require that additional QA procedures will be in place if a voluntary provider wishes to change the scope of its approved quality assurance. Examples of where substantial changes may require additional QA procedures include:

- Where proposed programme provision is moving to a different level in the NFQ or from one field (ISCED) of learning to another.
- A further education and training provider is proposing to develop a Programme leading to validation outside the Common Awards System (CAS).

Within that context, ICHAS currently offers programmes in the following ISCED Fields of Education:

- Health and Welfare (091) and (092)
- Business and Administration (041)

The College does not currently offer programmes within the FET sector.

As indicated earlier, ICHAS is committed to the design, development and delivery of programmes that are well-structured, relevant to the needs of students, industry and the professions, and that reflect the standards set out by the National Framework of Qualifications. Therefore, as a clear statement of purpose, the College will maintain and implement formal, documented mechanisms for the design, development, delivery and ongoing monitoring and review of all programmes relevant to the needs of students, industry and the professions, and that reflect the standards set out by the National Framework of Qualifications. The College will also maintain and implement formal, documented mechanisms for the ongoing monitoring and review of all programmes. The sources which informed the development of these policy and procedures included the following;

- European Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA, 2015)
- Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI, 2014)

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- Quality Assurance Guidelines for Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes leading to QQI Awards - Higher Education and Training (QQI,2013)
- Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)
- Assessment and Standards (QQI, 2013)
- Awards Standards (QQI, various)
- National Framework of Qualifications Guidelines
- Core Policies and Criteria for the Validation by QQI of Programmes of Education and Training (first published in 2016)

6.1. Policy on New Programme Design & Development

This section sets out the QA Policy and Procedures in relation to programme development, design, approval and delivery process. The College will develop Higher Education Programmes designed to address the requirements and guidance as set out in the QQI Core Validation Policy and Sector Specific Criteria for education and training programmes in the Independent/Private Voluntary Sector (2016). The policy is to set out to provide clarity for all stakeholders in relation to the procedures involved in the proposal, development and validation of new programmes at the College. This policy has been designed to ensure that risks associated with the development of new programmes have been considered and that the programmes being considered for development align with the mission, vision and values of the College.

The development of new programmes is vital to the overall success of the College which allows for future growth and development. It is important that the College has the capacity to respond to the needs of society by providing Higher Education programmes that are fit for purpose and ensures that it there is both a legitimate educational need and demand for proposed programmes, that they are educationally and commercially viable and that the College has the resources to allow for the development and delivery of programmes in line with the Quality Assurance Framework. The procedures set out below applies to all new programme developments at the College and is set out here in graphic form and following that, the phases are explained.

Phase 1 Preliminary Phase of Programme Development
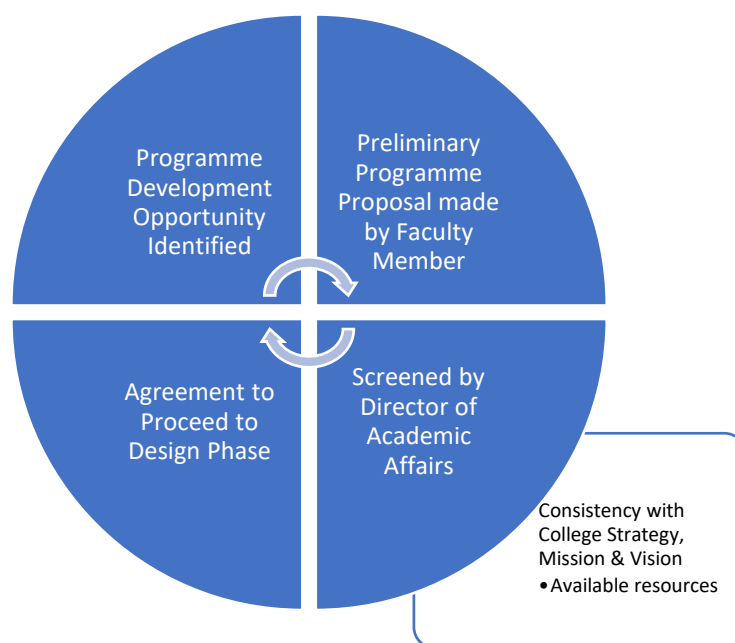
Figure 14 - Preliminary Phase of Programme Development

The first phase of the New Programme Development procedure comprises of the preliminary programme proposal and approval to proceed stages. A preliminary proposal may be made by any member of staff who identifies a programme need and consequently a programme development opportunity. The preliminary proposal is directed to the Director of Academic Affairs, who will discuss the idea with the proposer and/or the Programme Directors where the proposal may eventually be situated. The Director of Academic Affairs assesses the proposal to establish its consistency with the College's strategic plan and mission, and the likely resource implications. If satisfied that the proposal represents a genuine opportunity that is worthy of further development, preliminary agreement to proceed is granted.

Phase 2 – Preparation and Evaluation of Detailed Proposal for Programme Development
The following figure sets out the second phase of programme proposal and consideration

Figure 15 - Preparation and Evaluation of Detailed Proposal for Programme Development

Role of Programme Champion and Programme Director
The proposer in collaboration with the relevant Programme Director (as identified by the Director of Academic Affairs) then develops a detailed programme proposal, which would address (at a minimum) the following key areas;

- Rationale for the development of the programme
- Coherence of the programme proposal with the ICHAS Strategic Plan and mission
- Relationship of the proposed programme to the existing programmes within ICHAS and progression routes.
- Market demand and a profile of the proposed target market
- Programme level, potential course content, including module titles and outline content
- Resource implications – facilities, equipment
- Lecturing Expertise required
- Proposed assessment methodologies.
- Compliance with internal and other regulatory requirements
- Incorporate practicum components and criteria
- Mode of delivery and learning environments
- Proposed timeframe for development

Phase 3 - Academic Council Evaluation

This detailed proposal is submitted to and considered by Academic Council.   In addition to considering all of the above areas, the Academic Council evaluation process specifically considers:

- The 'fit' of the programme with the College's objectives and strategic plan
- The evidence of market demand, the expected course fees and the ability of the target market to pay
- Academic expertise and leadership required (if not currently available within the College, where it might be sourced)

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- Potential and desirable collaborations with employers, practice placement host organisations (where relevant) and/or professional bodies
- The implications for quality assurance and how these can be addressed

The Academic Council notifies the Director of Academic Affairs of the outcomes of its evaluation who in turn notifies the programme champion and the programme director. Where approval is withheld, reasons and/or recommendations will be provided to the proposer. Where approval is granted, the relevant Director of Studies is tasked with initiating and managing the programme development process.

Phase 4 - Programme Design & Development Phase
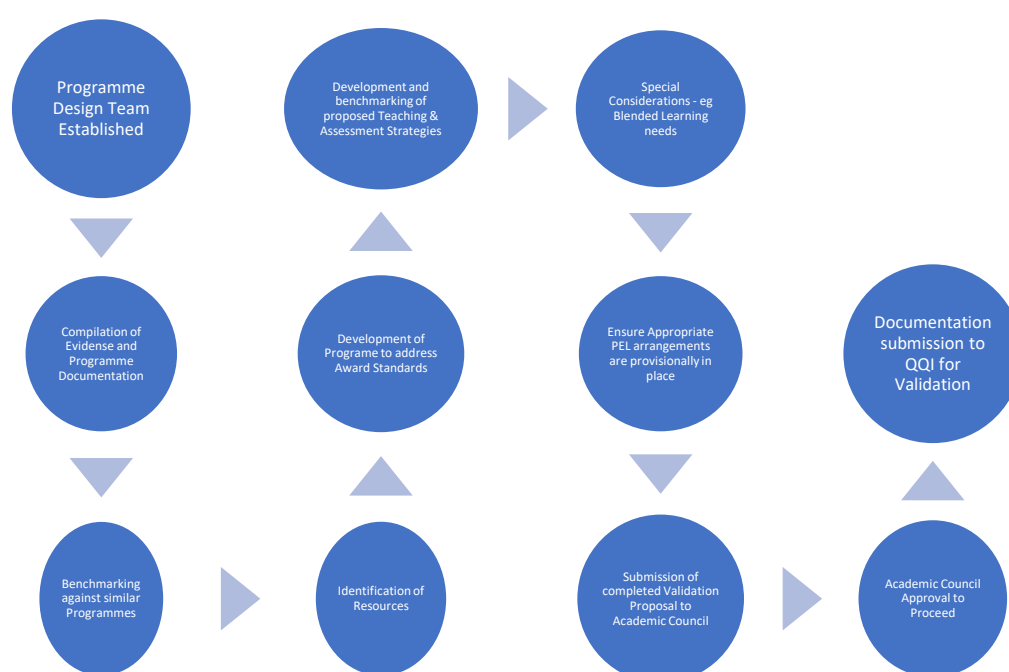
Figure 16 - Programme Design & Development Phase

The Director of Studies commences the process of assembling a programme design team including relevant personnel, lecturers, and external expertise where necessary. The exact membership of the programme development team will be determined by the nature and purpose of the new programme proposed, with the advice of and in consultation with the Director of Academic Affairs. To support the development process, the Director of Studies may appoint external expert(s) to provide guidance and direction at critical stages in a programme's development. The role of the programme development team is to manage the creation of a relevant, high-quality curriculum (on the basis of independent research and consultation with appropriate academic, professional and/or industry experts and bodies) and to identify suitably experienced and qualified staff for the programme. The Chairperson of the programme development team (commonly the Director of Studies) is responsible for

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updating the Academic Council on the group's activities. They are also responsible for ensuring that minutes of all meetings are maintained and available for review by any relevant group or staff member.

The Director of Studies is tasked with co-ordinating the compilation the programme validation documentation, in collaboration with the Registrar and Programme Design Team, based on the General Programme Validation Template supplied by QQI. Particular attention must be given to the development of the programme assessment strategy, with specific reference to *Assessment and Standards (QQI, 2013),* and its application to the programme. In addition, the validation document must reflect the appropriate QQI awards standards and NFQ level indicators. The development of a programme to be offered using blended learning technologies should specifically address the quality of:

- The student and learning experience, including induction and assessment
- The delivery, management and resourcing of each element of the programme, identifying specifically the blended learning technologies being applied for each module and/or stage

For all programmes, the minimum intended learning outcomes of the programmes (MIPLO's) and its constituent modules must be clearly articulated with a demonstrable alignment of assessment criteria with the minimum intended module learning outcomes (MIMLO's). The Director of Studies submits the validation document to Academic Council for final approval. Academic Council considers the final document against the same criteria as outlined above, notably the precise implications for physical and human resources, as well as existing support facilities.   If approved, the programme documentation is submitted to QQI for validation.

6.2. Distinguishing between Validation, Programmatic Review & Re-validation

Validation has been defined as "a regulatory process that in essence determines whether or not a particular QQI award can be offered in respect of a provider's programme of education and training." (QQI, 2016). In addition to ongoing reviews of programmes, ICHAS is committed to undertake a major evaluation of each programme or a suite of related programmes, usually at five-yearly intervals, termed Programmatic Review. Following Programmatic Review, programmes may be re-submitted to QQI for consideration for revalidation.

Revalidation is defined as "validation by QQI of a programme that has evolved from a programme that had been previously validated by QQI. Revalidation is required for any programme that is to continue to enrol learners following expiry of the duration of enrolment." The statutory basis for Validation and revalidation is outlined in sections 44-47 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. The outcome of validation in the form of the independent evaluation report, QQI determination on the Validation Process and QQI's Certificate of Validation will be published.

In relation to the validation of a new programme, the following graphic outlines the processes involved following consideration internally by Academic Council. When Academic Council approves – following Programme Development, the College may proceed to the Application Phase. This is followed by formal independent evaluation and subject to meeting the Validation Criteria as set out by QQI and approval by QQI may proceed to Deliver.
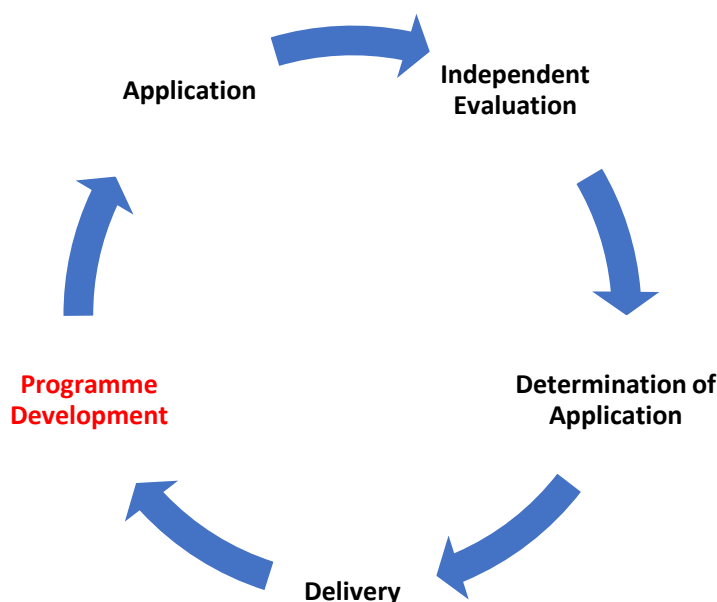
Figure 17 - Validation Process

In the case of revalidation, existing programmes are subjected to a cyclical review and a formal 'Self Evaluation' during which Programmes are formally reviewed. Programmatic Review is primarily the responsibility of the provider (ICHAS) following agreement on appropriate Terms of Reference with QQI. Following that the Reviewed Programme may be formally submitted to QQI for Revalidation. ICHAs will ensure that the requirements of Programmatic Review and applications for Re-validation are rigorously undertaken.
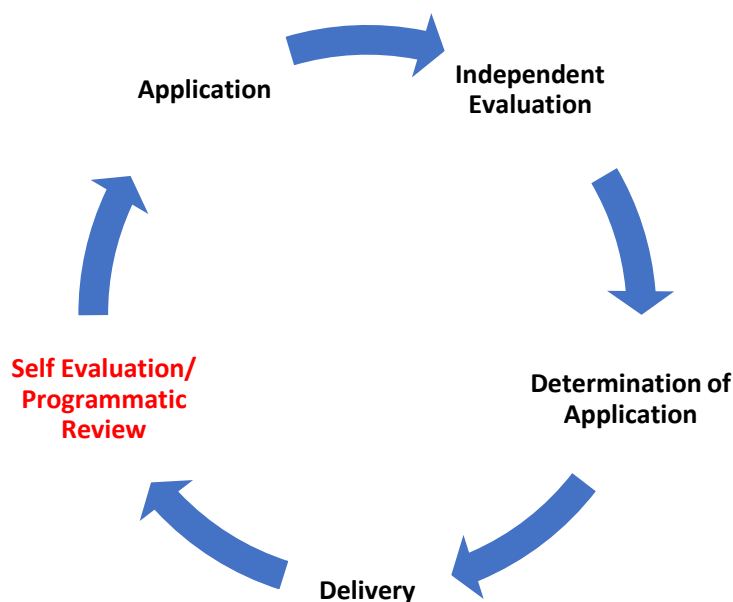
Figure 18 - The Validation Cycle

6.3. Policies and Procedures for Validation

The College will ensure that;

Its existing QA procedures are fully compatible with the capacity to develop and deliver the proposed programme

Comprehensive procedures for access, transfer and progression are in place as per "Policies, actions and procedures for the promotion of access, transfer and progression" (QQI Policy restatement, 2015).

- The College possess necessary capacities to protect enrolled learners as per *Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL): Protocols for the Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act Guidelines for Providers* (QQI 2013)

Preparatory Procedures

Initiation of the Validation process are described above, but the preparatory phase must address the following :

- The production of internal evaluation report against QQI approved QA policies and procedures
- The development of 5 year cyclical plan for the programme
- The production of a draft programme document including comprehensive detail on:
  - Managerial, administrative and operational strategies
  - Teaching and learning strategies
  - Assessment strategies
  - Resource requirements and availability (staffing and physical)

Independent Evaluation

All programmes proposed for validation must undergo external independent review. The process will:

- Be conducted according to QQI programme evaluation criteria policies and procedures
- Decisions on the validity of any proposed programme will attend to "The Core Validation Criteria" as outlined in unit 17 of *Core Policies and Criteria for the Validation by QQI of Programmes of Education and Training*" (2016). Copies of same will be furnished to the review panel
- Be undertaken by independent evaluators.
- Involve a site visit.
- Involve interviews with leadership, the programme personnel and other relevant stakeholders including any relevant learners
- Produce an independent evaluation report outlining satisfaction, satisfaction subject to special conditions, non-satisfaction.

Selection Criteria for Evaluators

Whether QQI retains responsibility or the College is provided with devolved responsibility to appoint the independent panel by QQI, evaluators will:

- Be entirely independent of ICHAS.
- Be required to state any conflict of interest.
- Comprise at least three members.
- Have sufficient competence to evaluate the programmes as proposed.
- Normally possess special expertise in the programme or aspects of operation of the programme.
- Include a student representative.
- Be sufficiently trained where required.

Conditions of Validation

ICHAS accepts that successful validation is based on the following conditions;

- Statutory prerequisites as outlined above are adhered to.
- Should QQI alter award title, specification or standard that the validated programme depends upon then ICHAS will not enrol any further learners that the programme
- ICHAS will not enrol any learners past the agreed enrolment interval (typically five years) unless an extension of the agreed interval has been confirmed.
- The integrity of the validated programme is maintained during delivery and that no significant changes are made without prior approval from QQI.

- That staff and physical resourcing is maintained to the approved standard.
- That enrolment on the programme commences no later than 18 months after Certification of Validation is received.
- That all underpinning QA policies and procedures are monitored and maintained throughout the programmatic cycle.
- Only the validated title of the programme and the appropriate QQI award title(s), type(s) and class(es) is applied and advertised and that all procedures for certification are adhered to.

ICHAS agrees to immediately engage with QQI on any query that might be made regarding a validated programme and undertakes to inform/report to QQI on matters relating to:
- any material changes to the programme;
- any concern relating to the integrity or reputation of the programme or the corresponding QQI awards.
- Any infringement of the stated conditions of validation; or anything that ICHAS believes might require QQI to review validation
- Any plan to amalgamate with another entity

Differential Validation - Changes to a validated programme

As outlined in *Core Policies and Criteria for the Validation by QQI of Programmes of Education and Training*" (2016) it is anticipated that validated programmes will require "enhancements and adaptations" over the five year cycle but that any changes should not be extensive, be subject to internal collaborative expert review and be within the scope of existing QA boundaries. Any change made to core validation criteria, stated learning outcomes or requirements will not be countenanced. Any "significant" changes will be subject to Differential Validation. The policy on differential validation is as follows:

- Differential validation is undertaken with comparable rigor to all other forms of validation.
- If the proposed changes are deemed "significant" then a new validation process should be undertaken.
- Internal collaborative review leading to Differential Validation must consider and record considerations on:
  o The differences between the proposed programme and the validated programme
  o A detailed rationale for the changes being proposed.
  o An analysis of the changes with reference to impact on the original programme and/or QA policies.
- The implication of differential validation is explored through self-assessed piloting

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6.4. Programmatic Review & Revalidation

The programme review process provides the Programme Board with an opportunity to conduct a critical evaluation of the programme and to propose significant amendments, where appropriate. The programme review is conducted in line with guidelines and criteria contained in the *Core Policies and Criteria for the Validation by QQI of Programmes of Education and Training* (2016) and the *Programme Review Manual* (2018). According to QQI, the aim of a programmatic review is to conduct an external peer review of programmes and to ensure quality of the programmes being offered. It is a College led and "provider owned" process, working in conjunction with the requirements of QQI. It is the responsibility of the College to plan, initiate and respond to the programmatic review.

Programme Review Objectives

The specific objectives for programmatic review include review, evaluation and analysis of:

- The effectiveness and efficiency of each validated programme in delivering minimum intended learning outcomes (MIMLO's) and meeting educational needs of learners with reference to capacity and capabilities to deliver the programme as validated in the context of adherence to educational standards and the range of other organisational commitments. In short it is analysis of "what has been learned about the programme" (QQI 2018) during its lifetime.
- The quantitative data accumulated on the programme including details of student numbers, retention, attrition and success rates
- The feedback mechanisms for students and the processes for acting on this feedback
- The physical facilities and resources provided for the provision of the programme(s)
- The formal links which have been established with industry, business and the wider community in order to maintain the relevance of its programmes
- Research activities in the field of learning under review and their impact on teaching and learning (notwithstanding that the reviews of the research degree programmes may be undertaken separately)
- The development of the programmes in the context of the requirements of employers, industry, professional bodies, national and international socio-economic and regulatory contexts and the response of the provider/school/department to market requirements and educational developments
- Stakeholder feedback with reference to the reputation of the programme and College as a provider of the programme
- The continued justification of the programme based on the QQI validated criteria including a justification of any proposed modifications
- The implications of any modifications for any related policies, procedures or criteria including QA implications

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- SWOT informed projections for the following five years in the programme(s)/field of learning under review.

Proposals and decisions in relation to updating programmes and modules, discontinuing programmes or parts of programmes, together with proposals to develop new programmes, should be part of such a review process. Furthermore, programmatic review confirms that the promise evidenced at validation has been realised. Alternatively, the review recognises whether or not a programme has adapted appropriately to circumstances unforeseen at validation.

The programmatic review process is project-managed by the Registrar, in close collaboration with the Director of Academic Affairs and the relevant Programme Board. The review process should be initiated with sufficient time in advance of the proposed starting date of the revised programme to allow for the review procedures to be carried out in a timely manner and in accordance with the QQI guidelines on programme monitoring (2014). The process comprises an internal phase and an external phase as follows:

Internal Phase

Programme Review Initial Planning
1. Development of timetable for review and agreement of Terms of Reference with QQI
   - The cycle of programmatic review for all programmes within ICHAS is held and co-ordinated by the Registrar.
   - When a programme or suite of programmes is due for a five-yearly review, the Registrar agrees the Terms of Reference with QQI. The review will not proceed until such time as QQI formally agrees in writing to the Terms of Reference
   - A detailed project plan which identifies timelines and responsibilities is completed and circulated to the Director of Academic Affairs and the members of the relevant programme Board and will include:
     o Identification of the programme to be reviewed
     o A statement of the roles and responsibilities of the review leader and team.
     o An overall timetable for the process addressing details of the programme under review and a mile-stoned plan of the review
     o Details of the external consultation process.
     o Detail the objectives and strategy (including membership) for the generation of the self-evaluation process and the independent review panel.

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    o An overview of all quantitative and qualitative sources that will inform the review process including all necessary programme documentation.

   • The Registrar consults with individual members as appropriate to allocated specific tasks and duties to individual programme board members or groups of members, as appropriate.

Programme Review - Advance Planning

Planning will include:

   • Identification of the programme to be reviewed
   • Establishment of roles and responsibilities of review leader and team
   • Construct plan incorporating the following milestones:
    o Agree Terms of Reference with QQI
    o Stakeholder Consultation
    o Provider's Evaluation Report
    o Appointment of Independent Panel
    o Independent Panel Site Visit
    o Independent Programme Review Report
    o Revalidation Application

Stakeholder Consultation

The feedback and opinions of relevant stakeholders will be gathered in order the evaluate the success of the programmes and receive suggestions for continuous improvement. The appropriate methodology for consultation will be identified by the Registrar, and a wide selection of stakeholders should be consulted, including at a minimum:

• Students
• Lecturers and Staff
• Practice Placement Providers
• Communities of practice (including other training and education providers)
• Professional Body Representatives
• Regulatory bodies
• Relevant External Agencies
• Graduates
• Employers
• Funding agencies
• Community Interest Groups

Stakeholder consultation should inform a SWOT appraisal of the programme and its continuing viability.

Review of data and development of recommendations

The main source of data for the self-study is derived from:
- the consultation with external stakeholders
- the annual Programme Quality Reports
- considerations of the relevant programme board over the five-year period.

The data is critically analysed to establish the extent to which the programme continues to meet the core QQI validation criteria, and the ability of the programme to respond to internal and external events that arose in the five-year period. Through internal dialogue and consultation, with recourse to external opinion where necessary, a set of defined recommendations for programme enhancement is developed and is presented to the Programme Board for finalisation.

Production of a Self Evaluation Report

The Self Evaluation Report is jointly compiled by the relevant Director of Studies and the Registrar. The role and function of each participant is expressed and communicated. It focuses on qualitative analysis, referring to quantitative analysis and statistical evidence to support conclusions reached. It is designed to provide the External Peer Review Group with an overview of developments over the 5-year period under review and to provide all information.

The report includes;
- A clear statement of Terms of Reference, strategies and objectives of the review process
- All baseline quantitative and qualitative on the outgoing programme
- Review of programme management and evolution over the fives year cycle
- Current evaluation of the programme incorporating all stakeholder feedback
- Analysis based on review findings
- Modifications and revision of programme incorporating compatibility analysis with existing QA and QQI validation criteria
- A SWOT analysis
- A description of the approach to review
- the findings of the internal self-study and the recommendations being made for programme enhancement.
- Confirmation of the proposed programme schedules, module descriptors, learning outcomes and assessment strategy for the programme for the subsequent five-year period.

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- The final Self Evaluation Report is presented to Academic Council for endorsement prior to submission to the Peer Review Group.

External Phase

Formation of an External Peer Review Group

The External Peer Review Group is compiled by ICHAS. Its membership includes external peers familiar with current practice and developments in the areas of quality assurance in higher education and the academic programme area. It will include at a minimum;
a suitably-qualified Chairperson,
a minimum of two academic experts in the field of learning,
a student representative and
a representative of the industry or profession.

Where acceptable to the Chairperson, the Registrar will act as secretary to the Peer Review Group. Where preferred by the Chairperson, he/she will appoint a secretary to the Group. The panel is selected on the basis of its composite ability to form a balanced opinion and arrive at a set of relevant recommendations, based on their combined understanding of the programmatic review process, developments in higher education and quality assurance, experience of the industry/professional sector, expertise in relation to teaching and assessment, and national and international trends relevant to the programme.

External Peer Review Group Panel Visit

The External Peer Review Group will normally visit the College to review the relevant documentation and meet with College representatives. A detailed agenda for the visit will be agreed between the Chairperson and the Registrar in advance, and will usually allow for meetings with faculty, support staff, students, graduates and employers.
It will also allow for private discussions of the panel and for review of further documentation and evidence not included in the Self Evaluation Report. The Chairperson of the Group will normally provide verbal feedback to College representatives at the end of the visit, indicating overall conclusions, whether the Group will be recommending the programme(s) for further validation, and conditions and recommendations associated with same.

Panel Report

The formal Report referred to as Independent Programme Review Report of the Peer Review Group is compiled by the Chairperson of the Group and is based on their combined review and evaluation of the Self Evaluation Report and the Panel Visit. It will make a recommendation in respect of the continuing validation of the programme, including the duration of the revalidation recommended (not exceeding 5 years)

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The report includes proposed programme schedules and any conditions and recommendations associated with the continuing validation of the programme. It should provide full details of all panel members with attention to qualifications, experience and any potential conflicts of interest. The Report should also include feedback on:

- Fitness for purpose of the programme
- On the data and evidence provided by the provider on the existing programme
- The Achievement of the existing programme based on stated objectives
- Learner profiling and suitability of the programme to these learners needs
- Learner performance/attainment (grades, attrition, completion, benchmarking)
- Appropriateness and sustainability of modular and programmatic workload
- learner assessment strategy
- QA arrangements for the programme
- Proposed modifications
- Connectivity with QQI validation criteria

The College receives a copy of the Panel Report and has the opportunity to check the factually accuracy of same before being finalised by the Chairperson.

Provider Response to Panel Report

The Final Report is considered by the College Programme Board and Academic Council. Academic Council decides whether to request re-validation from QQI for the programme. A formal response to the report is then prepared and this must include an implementation plan which addresses the internal findings and the report of the Peer Review Group (including accountabilities and timelines).

Submission to QQI for re-validation

The Report of the Peer Review Group and the Provider Response is submitted to QQI for consideration by the PEAC, accompanied by a formal request for validation or withdrawal of validation.

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Decision by QQI's Programme Evaluation Academic Committee

QQI is responsible for informing the College of the decision of the QQI Academic Committee. The reports submitted to QQI are published on the Learning management system following the decision of the <u>Programme Evaluation Academic Committee</u>.

6.5. Policy and procedures for the Protection of Enrolled Learners

ICHAS PEL policy in relation to the Protection of Enrolled learners is to be fully compliant with Section 65 of the 2012 Act in respect of arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners. The College is and will be fully compliant with the requirements and recommendations set out in the QQI document Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL): Protocols for the Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act Guidelines for Providers. Essentially, a provider of a programme subject to Section 65(1) of the 2012 Act is required to submit details, in writing, of the arrangements the provider has in place with section 65(4) of the 2012 Act to QQI when making an application for validation. If the programme is validated, the written record of the details of the arrangements must be published.

within that context, protection of enrolled learner (PEL) arrangements have been put in place with alternative providers to teach out programmes of study in the unlikely event of needing to effect Learner Protection Arrangements. Currently, such agreements are in place with the National College of Ireland, Dublin, IICP Education Ltd., Killenarden, Tallaght, Dublin for all Counselling and Psychotherapy as well as Childcare programmes and all Masters Programmes.

7. Policy for Access, Transfer, Progression and Recognition.

7.1. Policy for Access

Access policy at ICHAS is based on the principle of ensuring equitable access, inclusivity and fairness delivered through adherence to consistent and transparent admission, transfer, progression and completion policies. Moreover, application policies are influenced by the need to provide applicants with all the information necessary to allow them to make informed decisions regarding their preferred programme of study. Applicants are selected on the basis of ability, achievement, merit and identifiable potential and suitability. In keeping with those principles, ICHAS will ensure that information made available to applicants through digital or print media or other means will be accurate and comprehensive, facilitating applicant decision making which is as fully informed as possible. In terms of Application, the College commits to;

- Fair and equitable access to all applicants.
- Provision of fair and balanced guidance to applicants and new learners to assist them to make informed choices in programme selection.
- Clearly communicated admissions procedures.
- Details on learning support.
- Transfer and progression opportunities that facilitate learner mobility across HE.
- Timely communication of application status.
- Supporting inclusivity by ensuring accessibility for all students.
- Providing access to an appeals mechanism for applicants who do not gain access to programmes

Access transfer and progression policies at ICHAS are informed by QQI's Policy and Criteria Restatement for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training (2015) as well as the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, as well as the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (National Access Plan). The knowledge, skills and competence required to successfully participate in and complete a programme at the College are set out in the entry requirements section in each Programme Validation Document. This information is also published on the College Website under the entry requirements for each programme. Access, transfer and progression policies are also interlinked with and supported by other policies and procedures including:

- Learner Disability and Learning Support Policy.
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy.
- Admission Policy.
- Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.
- Policies and Procedure for Teaching and Learning.

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- Fitness to Practice/Study Policies and Procedures.

Admissions Committee & Quality Assurance

The quality of the admissions policy and procedures is assured by the Admissions Committee who report directly the Director of Academic Affairs. The Admissions Committee also issues a report annually to the Academic Board. The function of the committee is to oversee admission standards and procedures with specific responsibility of all managerial processes associated with admissions. Specifically, the committee has responsibility for

- Monitoring review and development of selection systems of student's intake including admission based on prior learning, transfer policy, and advanced entry policy.
- Oversight over admission's interview procedure including review of interview data
- Evaluation and review of entry requirements as per the agreed Validation documentation
- Production of statistical data on admission trends are compiled as an Annual Admission's Report as a core QA mechanism which will normally be complied by the Registrar's Office.

The committee meets at least bi-annually to plan for anticipated admission and review admission policies post-intake. The committee is comprised of:

- Director of Academic Affairs
- Registrar
- Programme Co-ordinators
- Programme Directors

Entry requirements

Entry requirements for each programme are specified in and based upon the approved programmatic document. They normally specify:

- The minimum academic standard/qualifications requirements
- Professional qualifications which may be accepted as an equivalent
- English language entry requirements (where relevant)
- Requirements for entry via RPL

Admission to programmes will be exclusively based on stated entry requirements. Application forms will initially be screened to determine if applicants meet the specified Entry requirements for the relevant programme. Applications involving Advanced Entry and RPL candidates will be processed according to the stated procedures below. Entrants will be referred to an admission interview process as appropriate. The interview process will normally determine eligibility in these instances.

7.2. Policy on Enquiries

To ensure clarity and transparency all potential applicants will be offered comprehensive information on the relevant programme prior to application. Enquiries are normally handled by the relevant programme coordinator via telephone, email or face-to-face contact. Enquiries will normally be responded to within 48 hours (working Hours) and will be provided with relevant programme information, which will normally include:

- Positioning of the award in the National Framework of Qualifications including details of the Awarding Body and all other necessary designations and award placement.
- Eligibility criteria.
- Selection process.
- RPL policy.
- Language competencies policy.
- Accessibility arrangements (with reference to facilities for learners with special learning needs or disabilities).
- Opportunities for Transfer and/or Progression.
- Information of applicable fees

In addition, they may be provided with exemplar timetables and other relevant application information.

Application Procedures
- If the enquirer decides to pursue an application then they must submit a completed application form online along with application fees and supplementary material if relevant.
- Upon receipt of application, the relevant Programme Coordinator processes the application.
- The Programme Coordinator will arrange for an interview to ascertain suitability for the programme applied for.
- This interview will take place with a senior member of the academic team.

Applications from International Learners
International learners are required to present evidence of entry qualifications, which are equivalent to the required entry qualifications. Where appropriate, consultation on international equivalency levels will be sought by ICHAS's programme co-ordinator.

English language competency must be evidenced in accordance with the requirements of the validated programme. ICHAS accept the following:

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- IELTS (International English Language Testing System), or equivalent score of TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) normally IELTS 6 at undergraduate level and IELTS 6.5 at postgraduate level, except where otherwise stated in validation documents.
- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) or equivalent of C in the case of undergraduate applicants. In the case of postgraduate programme applicants are required to indicate a minimum score of to B2+.
- The College is also committed to ensuring that all GNIB and/or INIS or other statutory requirements are complied with as published.
- Successful completion of major award at level 5 or higher mapped to the NFQ completed through English.
- A comprehensive overview of all specific requirements with respect to international applicants is issued by the Programme Co-ordinator on application and additionally is available on the ICHAS website (see www.ichas/prospective-students/interntional-students/).

Admission Interview

Upon completion of the interview, where selection interviews form a feature of the Application process, the Programme Coordinator will contact the applicant to confirm the outcome. All interviews are conducted using the ICHAS Admission Interviews Selection Form (available on the LMS).

The steps are outlined in detail below.

Interview

1. Interview and selection is overseen by the Programme Director or nominated academic staff member. In the case of RPL/APL, see RPL/ APL policy in Section 7.2.
2. The interviewer will grade the applicant's responses according to the ICHAS Admission Interviews Selection Form.
3. Potential interview outcomes are as follows:
   a. Offer Recommended
   b. Conditional Offer Recommended
   c. No Offer

Interview Outcome: Conditional Offer

1. In the event of a Conditional Offer; the interviewer will detail the conditions required. The Programme Coordinator will confirm the conditional offer in writing to the applicant.
2. The offer may specify a condition that relates to a body of work, for example, a language development course, IT skills development, or additional upskilling is completed within a specified timeframe.

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3. On satisfaction of the condition, the applicant will only be required to submit evidence that the condition has been met. After this, this process continues as per the procedures outlined below.

Interview Outcome: Offer Recommended

1. All application outcomes are forwarded to the Programme Coordinator by the interviewer.
2. The Programme Coordinator sends successful applicants an offer by e-mail. The offer letter includes detailed information about the programme, including commencement date, induction day and other important dates regarding the programme and further necessary information on tuitions fees, Protection of Enrolled Learners and payment options for their programme.
3. In the event of successful applications outnumbering places available, applications received after the quota of places have been offered will be placed on a reserve listing or offered a place in the subsequent cohort intake.
4. Offered places will be retained for the applicant on receipt of the required deposit, if received by the date specified in the offer letter.
5. Failure to return the registration form with the deposit by the date specified will be deemed a refusal of the offer on behalf of the applicant and the admissions process for this applicant may terminate at this stage.
6. The College reserves the right to refuse access to a programme until such a time as programme deposits are paid and the power to withdraw the offer of a place where deposits are not paid by the due date.
7. A successful applicant can defer their place for a maximum of one academic year and subject to the continuing validation of the programme and there being a sufficient cohort in the following year to ensure a viable cohort.

Interview Outcome: No Offer

1. Where an applicant does not meet the programme entry requirements or at interview they are awarded less than the recommended marks on the Interview Admission Selection form (available on the LMS) (Minimum of 60 marks) then no offer is made. When the Admissions team is advised of the decision, unsuccessful applicants are notified of the decision by e-mail.

Feedback and Appeal of Admissions Decisions

Feedback for unsuccessful applicants is available on request. Where an applicant disagrees with an admissions decision, they must communicate this in writing to the Programme Coordinator who will bring it to the attention of the Programme Director with a view to providing additional feedback to outline the decision reached. Applicants can seek additional feedback but there is no right of appeal against an admissions decision.

Monitoring and Review of the Admissions Process

The Director of Academic Affairs is responsible for monitoring compliance with the admissions process. This includes monitoring the effectiveness of the process in the selection of appropriate students for the programme and their ability to successfully complete the programme depending on the programme entry criteria.

7.3. Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning

The College is committed to ensuring relevant access to study and in that regard recognises that learning can be achieved in formal (e.g. certified qualifications), non-formal (e.g. workplace training) and informal (experiential) ways and is open to considering applications for Recognition of Prior Learning for entry to programmes. The policy in relation to RPL (in its broadest sense) is designed to communicate the College's commitment to RPL and APL but as importantly to convey a clear and consistent process that facilitates learner mobility both from domains of professional practice and prior educational and training engagement.

Prior Learning may be recognised either to facilitate access to a higher education programme or to allow an award of credit as in the case of allowing exemption from a module. The policy in operation for both certified and uncertified learning is as follows;

Certified Learning

Where a learner has obtained an award from QQI or another equivalent designated educational awarding body, an applicant may gain access to the programme on the basis that he/she has already attained the prerequisite learning as part of another award. It is the responsibility of the learner, to make a formal written application to the College requesting an exemption and/or advanced entry by supplying all appropriate supporting evidence i.e. transcript of results and module descriptor/syllabus including intended learning outcomes. The request for exemptions or advanced entry will then be considered jointly by the Director of Graduate or Undergraduate Studies, the relevant Programme Director, the Registrar and the Director of Academic Affairs and the applicant will receive written confirmation of their decision.

Uncertified Learning

A learner may be allowed access to a programme if he/she has already achieved the prerequisite learning (in terms of knowledge, skill and competence) that has been specified in the validation documentation. It is the responsibility of such learners to make a formal written application to the College, outlining the prior learning. The request for access will then be considered by the Director of Graduate or Undergraduate Studies (as relevant), the relevant Programme Director and the Registrar in conjunction with the Director of Academic Affairs. Each case will be assessed individually and the means of demonstrating and measuring the prerequisite learning will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Decisions to grant access (or otherwise) represent an academic judgment based on available evidence. The following guidelines will apply in all instances

- Recognition of prior learning will align with the NFQ and its award system
- RPL may be sought for admission to a programme, advanced entry to a programme or for exemptions from a part of a programme.

- Procedures and processes associated with RPL/APL are incorporated into QA strategies and are accessible, credible and transparent to all stakeholders
- RPL will only be considered in circumstances where it does not negatively impact on the overall programme learning experience for the learner or the cohesion of the programme.
- Applicants will be informed of their personal obligations in engaging in an RPL process and will be informed of time limits or any other restrictions associate with submitting a claim.

Submission procedure for RPL

The applicant must indicate in detail the types and nature of experiences they believe to have equivalence and will be advised that the will be assessed on learning acquired from experience as opposed to the experience itself. Persons involved in the recognition process will be suitably qualified or trained to assess such applications.

The primary responsibility to address competencies and equivalencies of learning rests with the applicant but the College offers advice and relevant support to applicants when making applications. Students are advised that the means of assessing prior learning is through a submission of a portfolio of prior learning which accompanies a completed RPL/APL Form. Prior learning portfolios will contain some/all of the following;
  o Formal transcripts or certification (including certificates of achievement/attendance).
  o References and/or testimonials from employers with emphasis on relevant knowledge, skill or competence in his/her employment.
  o Evidence of completed projects or artefacts.

Applicants who have completed other relevant education programmes or have relevant professional experience are required to provide details of the programme content, qualification and assignments for which they are seeking recognition.

If an applicant is submitting an application relating to recognition of prior learning clear guidelines on RPL/APL criteria are provided - more specifically, applicants will be advised of;
- The precise means recognition affects modular workload is indicated (e.g. The fact that exemptions can only be granted for full modules, not components)
- The precise nature of any assessment mechanisms that might be applied in the recognition process is clarified.
- The potential implications for award classification where it is not possible to assign a mark for the exemption.

Determination and Assessment Procedure for RPL

Applications will be assessed against the evidence presented and determination will be made taking due cognisance of the relevant QQI award standards. Applicants will be expected to map the evidence presented in preparation for assessment of the submission. All applicants who present relevant evidence will be invited for interview by the Head of Academic Affairs and the Registrar where their applications will be considered and benchmarked against appropriate Award Standards. Assessment for RPL is determined on a Pass or Fail basis. The outcome of the interview is communicated to the applicant in a timely manner.

Monitoring RPL

- All RPL data will be incorporated into the Admissions Audit conducted by the Quality Enhancement Manager on behalf of the Admissions Committee.
- Exam Board and External Examiner records will be used to inform appropriateness of RPL admissions in the context of student achievement.
- RPL candidate data will be highlighted in retention and progression review and reportage with specific patterns associated with RPL highlighted.

Submission
Availability publicised
Criteria clarified
RPL Form & RPL Portfolio Submitted
Submission mapped and processed

Assessment
RPL interview
Internal review
Outcome communicated
Implications specified

Monitoring
Quality enhancement auditing
Examination Board monitoring
Retention and progression data
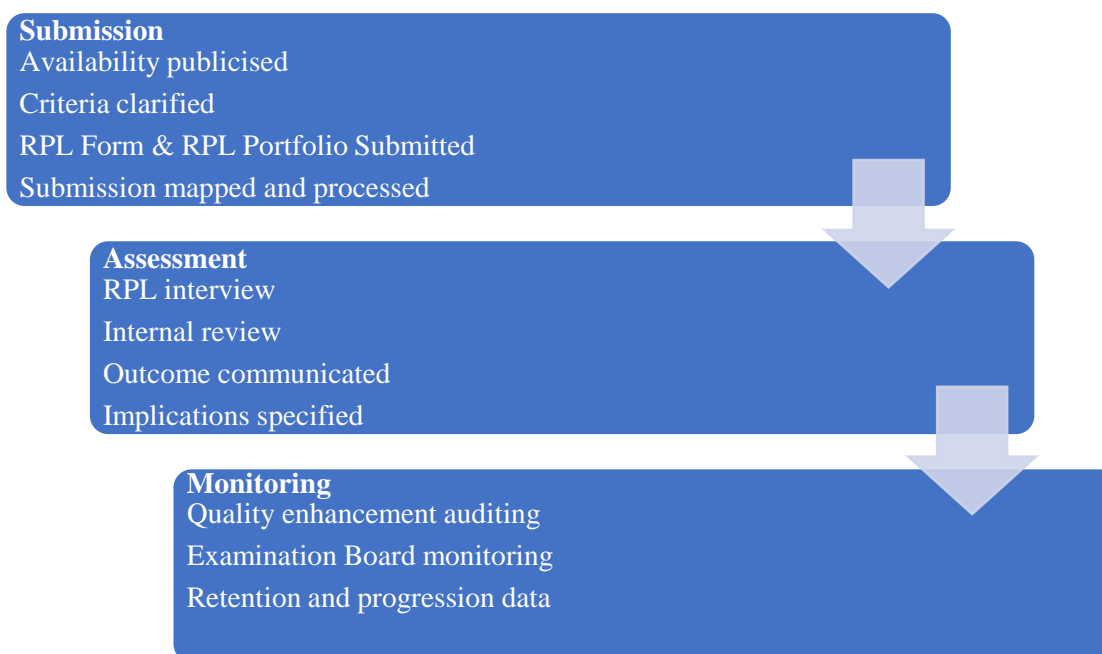
Figure 19 - Procedure for Recognition of Uncertified Prior Learning

Minimum criteria for passing the access interview (if applicable)

Applicants will be assessed at interview based on qualifications (max 40 marks), experience and achievements (max 30 marks), and attributes (max 30 marks). Applicants will be required to achieve a minimum of 60 marks in total to be accepted on the programme and with a pro

rata score in each of the areas indicated above. All interviews are conducted using the ICHAS Admission Interview Selection Form.

Detail any other criteria for selecting learners

Where necessary, applicants will be required to complete the Garda vetting procedure for working with children and vulnerable adults all applicants and will be subject to the College's 'Fitness to Practice' policy, which is set out in detail in each Programme Handbook and on the learning management system.

7.4. Policy on Learner induction

ICHAS requires that all students attend for induction for orientation, wherein they are provided with programme documentation, a programme overview, introduced to important points of contact, encouraged to elect class representatives, and introduced to the learning management system. The student handbook is provided at induction. It provides programme information; outlines regulations on assessment, governance and student conduct; and outlines the services and facilities available as supports.

Additionally, students are provided with opportunities to engage with the learning management system, online libraries, and virtual classroom during the first 6 weeks of their programme, through a structured induction programme developed by the Educational technologist.

A general student induction takes place at the start of each academic year. All programme-specific information is available in print copy and on the ICHAS learning management system in advance of the academic year, which includes timetables, academic calendar, assessment schedule, marking guidelines, practice placement requirements, student handbook and programme handbook. This ensures consistency and clarity of information across all centres.

7.5. Policies on Stage Progression

The college's policies in relation to stage progression comply with the QQI guidelines in relation to progression criteria. Therefore:

- In stage-based programmes, once a learner successfully demonstrates a pass - which can be construed as a positive statement of achievement of the minimum intended learning outcomes of all the preceding stages according to the assessment strategies employed - they are eligible for progression to the next stage.
- The following assumptions around eligibility are noteworthy:
- In order to progress from a stage a learner is normally required to pass all the mandatory modules and all the required elective modules
- The mark for a module is the total, or average of, marks awarded for the individual assessment components.
- Individual modular assessment components that have been passed cannot be retaken for the purpose of improving the overall performance in the module.

The validated programme document summarises the allocation of credits and grades, as well as any special progression requirements. In line with *Assessment and Standards* (QQI, 2013), exceptions to this denotation of eligibility only include;

1. Pass by compensation

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2. Exemption from part of the programme (with or without the allocation of a grade and credit).
3. Eligibility to progress carrying the failed modules to be passed during the subsequent stage.

7.6. Policy on Pass by Compensation

A learner who fails to achieve a pass mark in a module may be awarded a pass by compensation, provided that a pass by compensation is not precluded in the validated programme document.

Pass by compensation is moderated through the following policy:

Performance at the first attempt in modules in a given stage (of at least 30 credits) may be used to compensate in the same stage, provided no other module in the stage has been failed outright. A pass earned in this way is referred to as a pass by compensation and is credit bearing.

Compensation can only be applied in the following circumstances (QQI, 2013)

- The student has been assessed for all stage modules and no other module in the stage has been failed outright (below 35%).
- The marks obtained in the examination subject(s) listed on the approved course schedule, being considered for compensation, must not be lower than 35% where the pass standard is 40% (equivalent of a pass grade) or 5% below the designated pass mark if other than 40%.
- The results of all modules in the stage are from first attempts.
- In the case of full-time students, the results are from the same sitting (session) i.e. candidates may not pass repeat examinations by compensation unless repeating all examination subjects.
- The learner has attained an excess equivalency of the deficient grade in another module.
- The potentially compensated results account for no more than one-third of the credit for the stage and then only if the student has taken all modules at that stage, i.e. the Examinations Board may consider a learner to pass by compensation to the amount of 20 credits in a 60-credit stage or 10 credits in a 30 - credit stage, provided that no fail mark is more than 5% below the pass mark indicated.
- Where pass by compensation is not specifically precluded in the programme assessment strategy and approved programme schedule.
- Where the stage is of at least 30 credits.

In the interests of clarity, the following should be noted:

- Compensation may be applied only to enable a learner to pass a stage.

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- At the award stage, a learner who passes by compensation remains eligible for honours.
- Compensation does not change the result of the modules passed in any way.
- When reporting module passes by compensation (on the Europass Diploma Supplement), the actual result is returned, e.g. 37% or D, along with an indication that the module pass has been granted by compensation.
- Grades which are greater than or equal to 35% but less than 40% in the percentage system are awarded when a learner has nearly (but not quite) demonstrated attainment of the relevant minimum intended learning outcomes for an assessment task (QQI 2013).
- In the case of Examination Subjects where the approved course schedule provides for a pass standard other than 40%, the minimum compensation level shall be as specified in the approved course schedule and shall normally be at a level which is 5% (of the maximum marks) below the pass standard.

7.7. Policy on Exemptions and Recognition of Prior Learning

ICHAS offers module exemptions to applicants who have successfully completed comparable accredited learning in another higher education institute. For a detailed outline of the College's exemptions policy and Recognised Prior Learning Policy - see Section 7.3.

7.8. Policy on Progression with a Credit Deficit

Before progressing to the next substantial stage (30 credits or more) of a major award, learners are required to pass all modules identified as essential prerequisites for progression, as specified by the programme assessment strategy and programme validation documents. The College may, however, allow learners to be permitted, on a case-by-case basis and under exceptional circumstances, to carry a failed module while progressing to the next stage, provided the module is not a prerequisite for any module in this stage and provided this is consistent with the requirements of the relevant programme assessment strategy.   The following conditions apply:

- Progression with a credit deficit will only occur in exceptional circumstances and must be sanctioned by the Board of Examiners
- The failed module to be carried is not a capstone module or its attainment is not deemed a prerequisite in the programme validation schedule.
- Students who carry a failed module are required to pass a carried module in the stage into which it is carried.
- The normal maximum missing credit should be 16% of the credit for the stage, e.g. 10 credits per 60-credit stage.

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7.9. Policy on Notification of Results to QQI

On closure of the Board of Examiners the original (signed) broadsheet of results is maintained by the Registrar and all results are recorded subsequently on the QBS (QQI Business system) which is an on-line system which allows for the recording of awards by a provider to enable them to be made by QQI and sent to the College for presentation to graduands.

7.10. Policy on Notifications of Results to Learners

Following the Board of Examiners' meeting, the College will publish the list of results. Results that have not demonstrated fulfilment of the assessment requirements, as notified to all learners at the start of their programme or stage, may be withheld.

7.11. Policy on Discussing Scripts and Results with Learners

The primary method of feedback at ICHAS for continuous assessment is in written or audio form and is issued as part of the results dissemination process managed through the LMS via Gradebook. In addition to written feedback and for modes of assessment other than continuous assessment, module leaders/ lecturers/ examiners are available to the students to review scripts through a pre- arranged consultation session.

The consultation process:

- Provides formative feedback to learners, especially to those who have not passed the assessment.
- Explains the basis of the learner's grade/mark against the assessment criteria, especially where the learner believes that the assessor may have made an error in grading the work.

It should be noted however that post assessment consultation is distinct from a formal re-check or review of the results as outlined in the section on recheck, review and appeals above.

7.12. Policy on The Granting of Awards

QQI is the nationally approved awarding body for programmes studied at the Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences. Within that context, ICHAS does not have the authority to grant awards. That authority is vested by Statute in QQI and the examinations boards at ICHAS will make recommendations regarding the granting of awards to QQI. It should be noted, however, that:

- QQI accepts the recommendations of a legitimately constituted board of examiners meeting and it grants appropriate awards.
- Acceptance of recommendations is automatic, assuming that the provider has followed agreed quality assurance procedures. Specifically, the recommendations should be consistent with the requirements of the provider's validated programme

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and QQI's requirements concerning award titles and award classifications (QQI, 2013).

8. Policy on Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

In relation to staff recruitment, management and development, the Sector Specific Guidelines from QQI require that "the provider's quality assurance procedures for the recruitment, management and development of staff will be developed in the context of all the education and training activities and related services provided by the provider. This includes those education and training activities leading to awards of awarding bodies other than QQI, such as professional bodies and local provider provision, so that the overall commitments of staff are taken into account by the provider should the college engage with other awarding bodies other than QQI in the future". ICHAs does not engage with other Awarding Bodies.

However, ICHAS is committed to ensuring that its procedures for recruitment and selection of staff will lead to the employment of suitably qualified and skilled individuals. In terms of ongoing staff support, and as part of its commitment to staff retention, the College will engage in an open and constructive process of providing feedback to staff and will further engage in formal appraisal processes with a view to ensuring ongoing training and professional development and will support appropriate identified staff development needs.

8.1. Staff Recruitment and Selection

The effective recruitment and selection of staff is critical to the College's ability to achieve its stated strategic aims. For administration, technical and support staff, a detailed job specification is presented to the Board of Management which signs off on the new staff appointment. This detailed job specification is used during the interview process to assess the capabilities of the candidates and new appointments are made based on specific selection criteria.

With regard to lecturing staff specifically, the purpose of the ICHAS recruitment and selection procedures is to ensure that ICHAS identifies and appoints academic staff who;

- Have the necessary level of academic and professional competence, as described in the job specification;
- Can effectively teach on or provide support to its programmes of study and
- Who can enhance the overall teaching and learning experience within the College
- Who can contribute to the research and discovery agenda of the College in appropriate ways.

The College recognises that the effective recruitment and selection of the appropriate staff is important so that strategic aims can be achieved, and a range of selection activities can be used to establish a candidate's suitability for a post. Normally, the need to recruit academic staff is identified by the Director of Studies or Programme Director of a particular programme and is brought to the attention of the Director of Academic Affairs and thus Academic Council which will recommend the necessity for an appointment to the Board of Management, whose function it is to commence recruitment through the Human Resource Manager. The following procedures relates to the recruitment and selection of academic staff.

- Minimum requirements for academic appointments are normally identified within the validation documentation and these minimum requirements are dictated by the programme needs, the modules associated with the associated programme and the framework level (NFQ) of the awards for which the new appointment will be required.
- If the position is a new role or an existing role is modified, then an appropriate job description along with person specifications have to be designed and agreed by the Director of Academic Affairs with clear guidelines on the qualifications and experience required for the role.
- Academic Council has laid out certain minimum requirements for academic appointments in relation to the following:

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- Evidence of suitable subject matter knowledge is critical, evidenced through academic and/or professional qualifications, and advanced professional, technical or research activity in a relevant field.
- Normally, candidates should have a qualification at the NFQ level above the programme on which they will be teaching.
- In the case of Level 9 programmes, a master's or equivalent professional qualification is a minimum requirement for academic appointment to teach at Level 9 and Doctoral level qualifications as appropriate.

- Subject matter expertise should be evidenced through such areas as demonstrating a relevant level of teaching experience as well as research, publication and dissemination activities and engagement in ongoing professional development activity including training and practice .

- Training in pedagogy or experience in teaching and assessing is also desirable but not essential. Successful candidates will be encouraged to commit to engaging in appropriate activities to develop their experience in pedagogy.

- There may be specific requirements for certain modules and this has to be taken into account during the recruitment process. These requirements would normally be laid out in the programme validation documentation.

- All vacancies are advertised bith internally and externally using the ICHAS Learning Management System, the ICHAS website and, where necessary, regional or national newspapers or online recruitment websites as appropriate.

- A screening process is in place which allows for applicants to be considered based on their application data and candidates are shortlisted for the interview stage.

- All applicants for an academic post are assessed at interview against criteria for the position as outlined in the job and person specification.

- The interview is carried out by a selection panel normally comprising a senior staff member of the Academic team   (Normally the Director of Academic Affairs) an external topic related expert (or more where appropriate) and the HR manager or nominee.

- Candidates for academic positions will normally be required to deliver a presentation relating to their area of expertise and or how their expertise may align with the Specific needs of the post and or the Mission or Vision of the College and may include

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requirements for the presentation of a sample lesson plan as part of the interview process.

- Each interviewer will independently rate the applicants on the selection criteria and an agreement will be reached following the interview to ascertain the overall collective view of the panel for each candidate.

- The interview process shall be strictly confidential and will not be shared with anybody outside the interview panel.

- All interview candidates are requested to provide evidence of qualification certificates, copies of which are kept on file together with the candidate's curriculum vitae.

- ICHAS recognises that references and qualifications verification are a necessary part of the selection process and in this respect, checks have to be completed in advance of an offer being issued.

- Offers of positions have to include a draft contract which will include the commencement date, starting salary, length of contract (where appropriate), probationary period (which would normally be 3 or 6 months) and other necessary contractual issues and will only be made subject to satisfactory Garda vetting.

- On acceptance of their offer, the successful candidates are issued with a relevant contract and a formal letter of appointment.

- ICHAS will not discriminate in relation to any aspect of recruitment or employment and is especially cogniscant of trying to ensure equity and ensure, as far as is practable that its policies and procedures guard against any form of ethnic, gender, age and minority bias. Therefore, there should be no ambiguity in the job specification in relation to position title, experience required, location of the position, objectives of the position, and a summary of the work activities and the nature of the contract being recruited to.

- Relevant training and induction procedures are then put in place in advance of the commencement of employment by the successful candidate.

Following on from the acceptance of their position as an academic member of Faculty at the College, new academic staff as well asthose in Administrative or support roles have to participate in an induction process relevant to their role. All procedures in relation to the

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recruitment and selection process will be processed in accordance with the ICHAS policy for data protection.

8.2. Equality of Opportunity in Recruitment and Selection

It is the policy of the College that all applicants for employment are afforded equality of opportunity where possible. In this respect, equal opportunity refers to the recruitment, selection and appointment of staff based on merit, but it is important that the best candidate for the role is recruited in line with the requirements of the person and job specification. As mentioned above, it is important that candidates are made aware of the qualifications and experience that deem them suitably qualified for the role being recruited for and outlined in the job specification. Where a potential candidate highlights disability, the College will make all reasonable arrangements to facilitate their inclusion in the recruitment process.

8.3. Policy on Staff Communication.

Staff Induction

The college recognises the importance of supporting new staff members to allow them to familiarise themselves with their new colleagues, the values end ethos of the College as well as their role. Therefore, all new staff recruited at the College participate in an induction process which is organised and facilitated by both the Director of Corporate Affairs and the Director of Academic Affairs as well as the relevant Department/line manager. All new staff are familiarised with the ICHAS staff and the learning environment, college policies, procedures and operating practices.

to that end, all new staff:

- Are provided with a lecturer and staff handbook (as appropriate) along with relevant manuals which detail work practices.
- Will be given access and one to one tutorials on the key aspects of their role and any associated systems that they will be using.
- will normally serve a probationary period of 3 months which allows the new staff member adequate time to familiarise themselves with relevant policies, procedures and specific role requirements.
- Are mentored taken through the relevant programme documentation and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manuals and it is the responsibility of the relevant Managers, and in the case of academic staff, the Director of Academic Affairs to ensure that the new recruit has sufficient support in order to prepare them for the fulfilment of their new role.

- Provided with formal induction and support by the Educational Technology department on issues relating to the Blended Learning Platforms and facilities and in the case of academic staff, the new faculty member also has an initial meeting with the Programme Director in which they are formally inducted to the policies and procedures associated with the delivery of the particular programme along with the support and assessment criteria they will have to offer students.

Procedures for Ongoing Communication to Staff and Faculty

ICHAS recognises the importance of supporting all employees by providing them with key information which allows them to gain an understanding of the College ethos and operations and processes and to assist them in the development of peer relationships which are considered to be extremely important in staff development.

ICHAS provides programmes at the main Limerick campus as well off-campus centres and all part time programmes are delivered using a blended learning model, using both traditional face-to-face and newer online methodologies. This means that lecturers and administrative staff can be geographically dispersed. The College recognises that there has to be consistency of communication, and therefore understanding and sharing of knowledge between those lecturers who are based at the main campus and those who are based in off-campus centres is important. To this end, the following elements form part of the ongoing communication procedures for new and existing staff:

- There are regular In Service Days. These days are designed to maximise peer interaction, relationship-building and idea-sharing. They also ensure that information is presented simultaneously and in a uniform fashion to all teaching staff. The ICHAS learning management system incorporates discussion fora as necessary, to encourage peer interaction and exchange of views/ideas.
- All programme-specific information is available in hard copy and digital format in advance of the academic year, which includes timetables, academic calendar, assessment schedule, marking guidelines, practice placement requirements, student handbook. This ensures consistency and clarity of information across all centres and lecturers. Teaching staff receive a specific calendar of Academic Meetings for each academic year prior to commencement of each Academic year and at induction for new members of Faculty.
- The Programme Board meetings and Board of Examiners meetings are an important element of faculty communication. Lecturers may attend in person or through the use of AdobeConnect technology so as to maximise participation by lecturers in off-campus centres.

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- The relevant Director of Studies visits off-campus centres on a planned basis over the course of each academic year and also participates in online discussions with teaching staff.
- A high level of personal contact (in person, by telephone or through email) is maintained by the Programme Co-ordinators with all teaching staff.

On an ongoing basis, the Programme Directors, Programme Co-ordinators, Directors of Studies , Director of Academic Affairs and the Registrar are primarily responsible for day-to-day communication with lecturers and are tasked that all general communications are issued to all lecturers, selecting appropriate methods according to geographic location and programme mode.

8.4. Policy for Staff Development

ICHAS seeks to ensure that staff, both academic and administrative members of Faculty are given opportunities to develop and extend their skills and allows all staff an opportunity to improve their skills.

The Procedures for Staff Development
- An In-service Day is held after the second semester which all administration staff and lecturers attend.
- An agenda for same is developed and circulated in advance and all staff are invited to make suggestions for items to be included on the agenda.
- Specific training and information are given at this session reflecting developments in programmes, programme delivery methods or any other item related to the programmes of study. A large proportion of the day is allocated to workshops and discussion on items of particular interest to the team at that point in time.

The College organises professional conferences and CPD workshops and all faculty are encouraged to attend such conferences and workshops which are available to them free of charge. Lecturers and staff can also partake in modules or programmes offered by the College free of Tuition fees.

Specific training for staff to support programme or College developments are organised as needed. All Academic staff receive training in teaching through a blended learning medium. All staff are supported by the relevant Programme or Director of Studies in developing skills in assessment and teaching.

Faculty are encouraged and supported to attend seminars of pedagogical interest organised by HECA or the National Forum on Teaching & Learning or similar CPD events.

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In order for the College to promote learning and especially when dealing with e-learning technologies, resources have to be allocated to technical infrastructures, support organisations and staff development. The cultural change involved in the adoption of the blended learning ethos that the College has committed to, is also taken into account and staff are encouraged to be innovative in terms of their teaching approaches and the use of the new technologies. Academic staff receive training sessions and detailed instruction manuals and videos to support their engagement with such technologies and allow them to maximise the potential that these technologies can bring.

In the context of staff development, the College is fortunate that many of its faculty are active practitioners in their fields of teaching and it affords them the time and resources to enhance these practices and in turn through these activities the College has been able to draw on the experience of practitioners who give generously of their expertise and knowledge.

ICHAS Code of Conduct
Policy
The College operates on the values of collegiality, responsiveness, person–centeredness, reliability and inclusivity. Within this framework, the College ensures as far as is practicable that it:

- Recognises and supports the right of students, faculty and staff to enjoy and express freedom of thought and to operate within an ethos of respect and dignity which is free from any form of discrimination;
- Understands education as a fundamental right with associated responsibilities;
- Promotes scholarly and educational activities that are aimed at producing 'thinking practitioners' or knowledgeable 'doers' within the domains of applied sciences and the humanities.

The ICHAS code of conduct has been developed to prevent the development or acceptance of unethical practices and to enhance the working of all activities of the college in relation to the management, legal and ethical standards that are in operation. The ICHAS College Code of Conduct has been designed to take account of best practice in relation to corporate governance and management practices and the legal requirements under the following acts:

- Standards in Public Office Act 2001
- Ethics in Public Office Act 2001
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- Safety, Health and Welfare at work Acts 1989 & 2005.

The College seeks to ensure that it:

- Provides the widest possible access to students across all strata of society in a non - discriminatory way.
- Works with other agencies and communities in relevant partnerships for the benefit of society within the domains of applied science and the humanities;
- Develops appropriate partnerships within the academic, social, political and other communities to further the mission of the College and the opportunities for its students;
- Remains committed to the enhancement of society and the optimisation of sustainable development with due cognisance to the environment.

All faculty and staff members are issued with the ICHAS Code of Conduct on commencement of their roles at induction and a framework for all staff has been laid out below to allow them to conduct their roles in accordance with the values of the College. All staff members are expected to comply with ICHAS policies and refer any questions back to the Human Resource Department.

The College may have to take disciplinary action against staff members who repeatedly or intentionally fail to follow the code of conduct. Disciplinary actions will vary depending on the violation.

Compliance with law

All staff should comply with all relevant environmental, safety and fair dealing laws. The College expects all parties to be ethical and responsible when dealing with Colleges finances, products, partnerships and public image as necessary.

Professionalism, Dignity & Respect in the College

All parties should respect their colleagues. There is no acceptance of any kind of discriminatory behaviour, harassment or victimisation. Employees and students should abide by the College's equal opportunity policy in all aspects of their work, from recruitment and performance evaluation to interpersonal relations. All staff must show integrity and professionalism in the workplace.

Utilisation of College Property

All staff members should treat College property, whether material or intangible, with respect and care. College property shouldn't be misused. All staff are expected to respect all kinds of **intangible property**. This includes trademarks, copyright and other property (information, reports etc.). Staff should use them only to complete their role and duties. Staff should protect company facilities and other material property

Work Requirements and Authority

- All employees should fulfil their duties with integrity and respect toward students, stakeholders and the community.

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- Supervisors and managers mustn't abuse their authority.
- Duties are expected to be delegated to team members taking into account their competences and workload.
- Team members are expected to cooperate with organisational expectations
- Mentoring is encouraged throughout the College

Absenteeism
Staff are expected to adhere to agreed schedules. Reasonable accommodation will be afforded in circumstances that require unscheduled absence including unforeseen circumstances or illness etc. These accommodations should be agreed with and approved by Line Managers.

Conflict of interest
Staff members are expected to avoid any personal, financial or other interests that might hinder their capability or willingness to perform their job duties.

Collaboration
Staff members are expected to be collaborative and open to communication with their colleagues, supervisors or team members.

8.5. Policy on Staff Performance Appraisal & Monitoring
The college recognises the importance of the review and monitoring process of staff in order to enhance and develop staff members. The College will engage in an ongoing process of performance appraisal and monitoring but will do so in a supportive ethos. It normally occurs informal between the close interactions of staff members, but the college also utilises a series of appraisal mechanisms which allows for periodic feedback and opportunities for development and performance enhancement.

Procedures for Appraising and Monitoring staff Performance
- Each staff member is required to complete a probationary period which would normally be 3-6 months depending on their contract.
- During this time, the relevant line managers meet with the new staff members on a periodic basis (normally once at the commencement and once during the period of probation) to assess their progress and ability to meet the objectives of their job specification. Any areas that are highlighted for improvement at that time should be mutually addressed.
- Following on from this the probationary review is completed at the 3- or 6-month stage, and the manager will confirm whether or not the probationary period has been successful, and a decision is taken on whether or not to retain the services of the staff member. If the staff member has successfully passed the probationary period, then their contract will be extended and regularised.

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- Where a successful probationary period has been completed, employees will participate in an annual appraisal of their performance with their manager. This appraisal is intended as a two-way process and incorporates a self-assessment and affords the opportunity to highlight any areas of concern.
- This process has also been designed to allow any areas that are deemed to be of concern by the staff member to be addressed so that training or other resources can be arranged and to alleviate any unnecessary worry that these areas of concern might have brought about.
- Where concerns in relation to a staff member are raised by another member of staff, the manager carrying out the review would normally raise these with the employee in the first instance and decide with the employee where (if appropriate) improvements can be made to alleviate these concerns. Where the required standard is not attained or in instances of serious misconduct, this will be addressed through the formal performance monitoring procedure and disciplinary procedures where or if necessary.

Performance Appraisal processes are expected to address (but not limited) to the items below.
- Performance Enhancement
- Job satisfaction
- Benchmarking of performance to organisational vision and values
- Clarity of roles and position within the organisation/change in role/ responsibility.
- Self-awareness and self esteem
- Role Clarity and or Ambiguity
- Communication issues.

In line with the objectives above the feedback for teaching staff in relation to their teaching performance is listed below

Procedure for Feedback for Academic Staff

The College applies numerous feedback loops in relation to the experience of teaching, with module and stage evaluations at each Semester and Programme Evaluation being some of the mechanisms in place. The main purpose of providing feedback to Academic Staff is to ensure that they receive constructive feedback on teaching performance, to allow them to identify key strengths and areas for improvement, and to agree action plans around same.

In relation to academic staff, Performance Review draws on a number of different feedback and evaluation techniques:
- Student Module and Programme Evaluations
- Lecturer Self-Review
- Feedback from Programme Director and Director of Studies

Based on the composite feedback and evaluation from these sources, a Performance Review Report is collated and given to the relevant lecturer. A performance review discussion takes place once the lecturer has had an opportunity to review the evaluation.

- The review will normally be conducted in person but can take place via Adobe Connect or Skype, as necessitated by the overall conclusions of the Performance Review Report.   During this discussion, development needs are identified and appropriate actions to be taken to support this development are agreed. A record of this discussion is retained by the Director of Studies.
- Academic Staff who are not performing to the standard required by the role are notified of same through the Performance Review Discussion or at any relevant point during the academic year by the Programme Director or Director of Studies.   The latter will seek to deal with any areas for development on an informal basis, through discussion, counselling and appropriate developmental assistance.
- Where a subsequent improvement in performance is not evident, the disciplinary procedure in Section 12.23 be invoked, with a view to assisting the member of staff achieve the necessary improvements.   Records of all informal and formal interventions are retained by the Programme Director and/or Director of Studies.
- Any staff member who fails to meet the required standards for the position following application of formal and informal interventions (within the full scope of the ICHAS Disciplinary Procedure) may be subject ultimately to dismissal. Please refer to section 12.23 for further information on for the College Disciplinary procedures.

8.6. Policy on Learning, Research and Innovation.

The College aims to encourage lecturers to explore new facilities, resources and activities that complement pedagogical activities through synchronous and asynchronous modes of delivery. Innovative ideas are nurtured and developed by working with the Educational Technologist at the College and staff are encouraged to seek appropriate and innovative modes of delivery to make the student experience as interactive and positive as possible. Staff members are encouraged to participate in further research and CPD modules and other opportunities. By recognising the importance of professional and personal development as an important factor in the development of key staff, the College encourages staff members as much as reasonably possible in research activities. Staff members are encouraged to participate in regulatory body discussions in the sector and their participation in forums as part of the HECA groups are also encouraged and facilitated. An example of this is participation in the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

Academic supervisors support and engage in research activities at Masters level and adds to the repository of research that the College is building.

8.7. Equal Opportunities Policy

ICHAS is committed to equal opportunities and the support of staff by providing a work environment and access to resources that promotes dignity, and respect for, and from all individuals and groups. The College aims to prevent and remove any type of discrimination by individuals or as a result of College policy and procedures on the basis of gender, marital or family status, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, age, disability, race or membership of the travelling community. The College expects all members of Faculty and staff to treat all people within the College community equitably and within the principles of appreciating diversity and inclusivity. The College continually reviews its policies and procedures to ensure continued compliance with relevant legislation. Staff and students with disabilities are and have always been welcome and reasonable accommodation will be made where practicable. However, it must be noted that staff or students must have reasonable ability to perform skilled tasks safely, smoothly and appropriately. Where additional support is necessary, it must be practicable within the current sphere of professional practice. It is therefore possible that, regrettably, some persons otherwise qualified to teach or undertake a role at the College may be unable to do so for reasons of health or ability.

9. Policy on Teaching and Learning

9.1. Introduction to Teaching and Learning at ICHAS

Teaching and learning is the core activity of ICHAS and it involves all activities – both formal and informal – that support or influence students' development of knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes, values and practices. It extends beyond academic activities to the communication processes that take place between the lecturer and the students, and the support processes which have been put in place within the College.

Consequently, the mission, vision and values, encapsulating the overall ethos of the college, facilitates and enables adult learners to achieve nationally and internationally recognised qualifications that are accessible, affordable, relevant to the needs of business, industry and the professions conducted in an educational environment based on collegiality, responsiveness, person–centeredness, reliability and inclusivity. In developing the Teaching and Learning Strategy the College has paid attention to the recommendations contained in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* which focused on providing or ensuring:

- An excellent teaching and learning experience, informed by up-to-date research and facilitated by a high-quality learning environment, with state-of-the-art learning resources, such as libraries, laboratories, and e-learning facilities
- An environment that is informed by research, scholarship and up-to-date practice and knowledge
- All teaching staff are both qualified and competent in teaching and learning, and should support ongoing development and improvement of their skills
- Clear routes of progression and transfer, as well as non-traditional entry routes
- Undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes that develop the generic skills needed for effective engagement in society and in the workplace.
- Systems to capture feedback from students and use this feedback to inform institutional and programme management, as well as national policy.
- Comprehensive induction processes to prepare students better for their learning experience, so that they can engage with it more successfully

In developing a Teaching and Learning Strategy, ICHAS's objective is to continuously monitor and improve engagement, retention and achievement of students at the College by researching, promoting, and providing development and support through the effective use of both traditional and innovative educational methods, tools, and technologies. The College aims to enable students to reach their full potential through the provision of a supportive, vibrant and challenging learning environment and student experiences.

Curricular design is fundamental to delivering these objectives and the college prides itself in its commitment to academic excellence and Quality Assured programmes. It designs, delivers

and monitors its programmes within 'best-practice' guidelines in order to prepare students to emerge from its programmes as more informed, fully rounded and competent graduates who are ready to take their place in professional practice or industry as well as members of society who can actively contribute to the wider social milieu.

In that context the College fully recognises the importance of stakeholder involvement and engagement and the value of collaborative engagement in terms of programme development, design and monitoring. The College is fortunate that many of its faculty are active practitioners in their fields of teaching and through them, we have been able to draw on the experience of practitioners who give generously of their expertise and knowledge.

Teaching and learning are supported by quality assurance policies and procedures that are independently agreed and monitored. That teaching and learning is designed to promote the discovery, synthesis and dissemination of academic and applied knowledge in the contexts of higher education, further education and continued professional development entirely informs the ethos and is critical to the overall vision of the College.

In practical terms, the College offers both full time and part time programmes using a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning techniques to accommodate the different modes of learning that is provided and includes classroom-based teaching, tutorials, workshops, work-based learning, experiential learning. All modules have specific components of learning techniques depending on whether it is taken on a full time or part time basis.

The full-time programmes normally incorporate classroom-based teaching with workshops for skills-based components supported through the Learning Management System. The part time programmes focus on blended learning and the availability of flexible, accessible lectures for participants whilst also having a mixture of workshops and tutorials for skills-based components of modules. ICHAS is committed to its blended learning strategy which optimises and expands the College's current online student learning management system as a platform for the delivery of its part-time programmes.

The strategy is largely informed by current national and international best practice and is managed by the Head of Learning and Innovation. Policies and procedures pertaining to Blended Learning are comprehensively outlined in Section 10. However, this chapter is organised around the four pillars of teaching and learning at ICHAS.
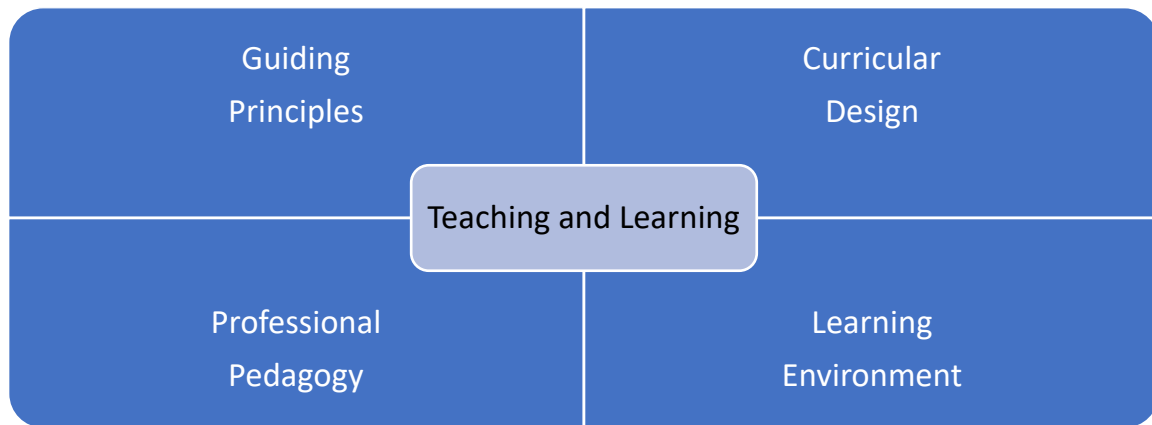
Figure 20 - Four Pillars of Teaching and Learning at ICHAS

9.2. Teaching and Learning – Guiding Principles

ICHAS perceives education as a transformative process. Teaching and learning at ICHAS involves a parallel process where the attainment of learning through the acquisition of knowledge, competencies, and skills is facilitated through programmes of education and experiential preparation for professional practice where relevant.

The transformative process reaches a crucial stage when learners perceive that learning requires conceptual understanding through the connection of previous knowledge and experiences at which point information becomes personally meaningful (Marton and Tsui, 2004). Consequently, the learner may realise that learning may have initiated a fundamental change in the self and his or her world view. This is facilitated by a constructivist and critical pedagogy – where knowledge is co-created and where theoretical modelling is subjected to the critique of real life fit and application. The facilitation of this process requires a shift from the provision of teaching to the production of student learning and the formation of an authentic learning centred college. In turn, the creation of a learner centred college requires knowledge of students' learning styles, the identification of obstacles to learning, and the development of teaching processes that foster personally meaningful learning, as outlined below (Stage et al, 1998).

According to Lea et al (2003), the learner centred approach to education as expressed in the literature may be précised into the following domains (Lea et al, 2003):
- o   The reliance on active rather than passive learning;
- o   An emphasis on deep learning and understanding;
- o   Increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student;
- o   An increased sense of autonomy in the learner;
- o   An interdependence between teacher and learner;
- o   Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship;

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- A reflexive approach to the teaching and learning process on the part of both the teacher and the learner.

Research findings also suggested that learner centred education could be integrated into an overlying theoretical context encompassing, humanist, agentic and cognitive elements. The humanist element involves gaining knowledge of the student as a unique individual, the agentic dimension focuses on student empowerment and the cognitive element focuses on each student in terms of their learning. Arguably, when these three combined elements are implemented then educational outcomes for students including those of disadvantaged groups might improve (Starkey, 2017).

Consideration of the theoretical and evidential base underpins student-centred learning at ICHAS where teaching and learning is envisaged through a matrix of guiding principles (see Figure 21). The responsibility for learning is authentically shared by both the learner and the teacher through the engenderment of genuine autonomy and relationships based on mutual respect.

The college endeavours to create a supportive, inclusive and innovative teaching and learning environment where the learner is empowered to engage with curricular content with critical and analytical depth and to approach experiential opportunities in an integrative and reflective manner. To this end, the focus is on learning outcomes that are tailored collaboratively to the needs of the learner while firmly rooted in the broader social, economic and professional context.
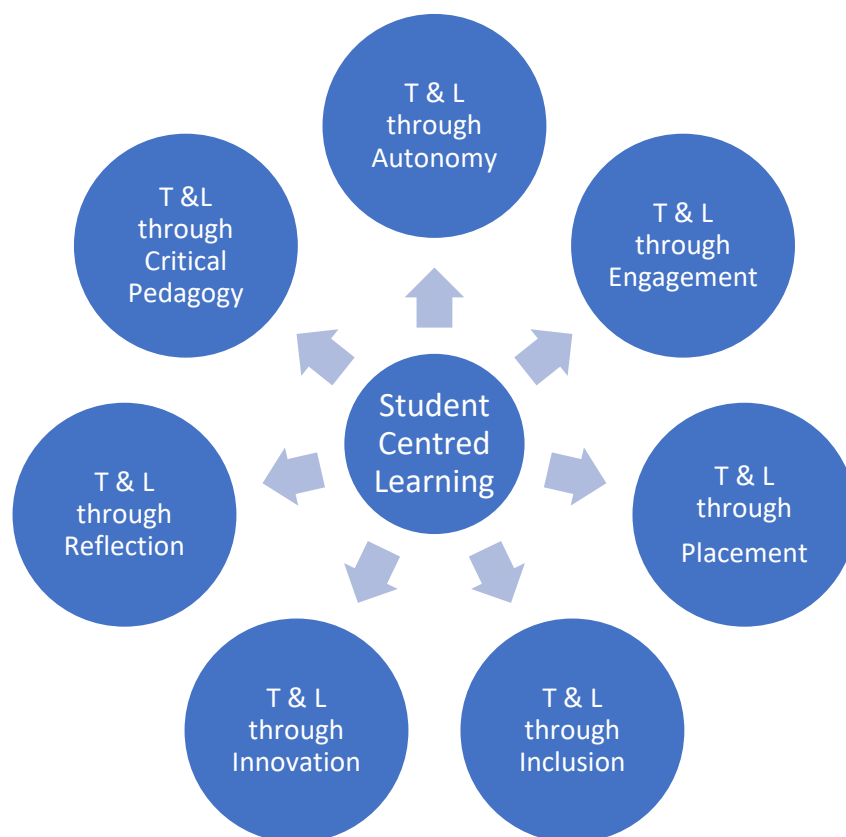
Figure 21- Teaching and Learning at ICHAS – Guiding Principles

ICHAS therefore seeks to overcome issues arising from traditional modes of teaching by balancing the learner and his or her needs with the lecturer's role. This approach has consequences for the design and adaptability of programmes, programme content and the reciprocal nature of the learning process. The formulation and design of learning outcomes is central to this process, establishing an alignment with programmatic content and assessment to what the learner knows, needs to know and can do on completion of the programme.   There is also a need for consistency in the learning environment so that students comprehend the purposes of the course of study and the develop the kind of responses to learning as outlined by Lea et al. (2003). Consistency between the learning environment and the attitudes and values that characterise professional standards and regulatory environments is also of crucial importance in the creation of a learner centred approach to education at ICHAS.

9.3. Delivering on a Principled Approach to Teaching and Learning

The following section expresses the College's policy position based on the previously stated pillars of teaching and learning at ICHAS. Because teaching and learning is the core activity in the College detailed procedural and documentary content is dispersed throughout the various topic sections. The following table maps the pertinent sectional linkages throughout the document at large.

Curricular Design	Section 9.13
Professional Development	Section 9.11
Learning Environment	Section 9.15

9.4. Policy guidelines on Teaching and Learning

ICHAS will ensure as far as is practicable;

- Teaching strategies are aligned with the defined learner-centred ethos and, more specifically, that teaching strategies engender learner engagement and empowerment.
- Deep understanding incorporating a critical, enquiring orientation
- Independent and autonomous modes of learning including opportunity for self-evaluation
- Appropriate reflexive strategies
- Experiential insight with emphasis on the translation of theory to practice supported by internal (e.g. Workshops) and external (e.g. Placement) practice-based learning
- Evidence informed approach to pedagogy, subject area and practice
- Inclusivity with emphasis on tolerance, cultural diversity, learning diversity and appropriate accommodation
- An acknowledgment and recognition of prior learning through academic and experiential achievement
- Fair effective, transparent consistent and dynamic assessment structures
- A commitment to continuous personal, educational and professional development where learning is viewed as a life-long activity
- Skill sets that support employment transferability including Critical thinking, Personal Planning and Organising, Analysing and Solving Problems, Team Work and Interpersonal Skills, Oral and Written Communication, Initiative and Creativity, Information and Communication Technology
- The development NFQ-aligned programmes that are responsive to local, national and international, social, economic, educational and professional context
- Aligned with a competency-based model
- Teaching and learning practices are anchored in the evidence base
- Teaching is dynamic, flexible and innovative with a broad a range of strategies such as lecture, workshop, tutorial, mentorship, seminars, podcasts, practice placement, field trips and other instructional practices including inquiry-based learning, personal development case-based learning, project-based learning, observational learning, simulating learning, collaborative and cooperative learning through group work and assessment, independent and discovery learning and problem-based and problem solving learning

- The provision of an academic, pastoral and technological support infrastructure and environment
- All modules will have an associated set of Learning Outcomes, which will describe by accessible means what the learner will have learnt on completion of modular, and extensionally, of programmatic content.
- Learning outcomes are compatible with, and inform decision making on, the stated teaching and learning strategy
- A scaffolded approach is taken to programmatic development where students reach their potential and express attainment through stage-appropriate learning outcomes
- Learners are actively involved in their learning including input into programmatic development through procedures of programmatic review
- That's teaching staff are qualified and have expertise both in pedagogy and subject areas
- That teaching staff are sufficiently trained and informed on the design and delivery of modular and programmatic outcomes and that teaching is at the core of policies pertaining to appointments, tenure and promotion
- That academic staff are constructively afforded the opportunity to enhance and develop their expertise in teaching and learning through continuous academic professional development and accredited programmes in teaching and learning
- That learning outcomes undergo a robust cyclical programmatic review process
- Curricula are designed to support employability and/or progression to further study supporting learner commitment to life-long learning
- Innovative use of technology to further enhance the teaching and learning environment
- Curricular and Pedagogical activity will be enhanced by participating activities such as those organised by QQI, HEA, HECA Academic & Quality Enhancement Forum and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in relation to pedagogy and teaching and learning strategies.

9.5. Assuring Quality on Teaching and Learning.

The following structural mechanisms are designed to assure quality in teaching and learning:

- Annual College Academic Review (Chaired by the Director of Academic Affairs attended by Programme Directors and the Registrar)

- Programmatic Review Process and Report (see Chapter X)

- Module review Procedure (see Chapter X)

- External Examiner reports (See Chapter X)

- Annual student feedback surveys

- Class representative system

- Staff Feedback Reports

- Staff development initiatives and requirements

9.6. Professional Pedagogy – Academic, Administration & Learner Roles Responsibilities & Services

While teaching and learning relies on a wide spectrum of resources the College acknowledges that the primary resource relies on effective interpersonal relationship defined by professionalism, supportiveness, decency, fairness and consistency bound by the universal mission of pedagogical practice. The following policies outline the varying roles and responsibilities envisioning teaching and learning as a collective and integrative endeavour.

9.7. Collegial Roles and Responsibilities for Teaching and Learning

The College will ensure:

- The development and preservation of the standards and reputation for teaching and learning .

- Adequate resourcing for all teaching and learning activities.

- The translation of stated pedagogical principles into practice through effective appointment, probation, promotion and award policies and practices.

The College, through the Director of Academic Affairs supported by the Registrar, Quality Enhancement Manager and the Programme Directors will ensure;

- College wide responsibility and oversight for the teaching and learning function.
- The seamless interaction between support services and academic management.
- Support (as appropriate) for students and staff with diverse needs.
- Fair and transparent feedback, reflection and corrective processes.
- Fair and equitable support for those experiencing learning issues arising from financial difficulty as far as resources allow.

The Director of Academic Affairs, through the Office of the Registrar supported by the Quality Enhancement Manager will ensure;

- Oversight and co-ordination of all support services required for efficient teaching and learning.

Directors of Studies along with Programme Directors supported by all academic staff will, through collective forum:

- Work with colleagues, relevant external agencies and students to maintain and enhance professional standards and academic excellence with particular emphasis on commitment to and enthusiasm for pedagogical and research practice.

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- Engage with review and monitoring mechanisms and forums designed to maintain and enhance course design, delivery and assessment.
- Contribute to programme design and commit to the delivery of agreed learning outcomes.
- Commit to continuous and extra-curricular development of professional expertise, skills and networks, giving attention to innovations in teaching and learning and any relevant national and international developments.
- To cooperate with College performance management mechanisms including self-reflective evaluation and peer review.
- Commit to the delivery of coursework in accordance with validated programmatic, curricular and modular guidelines and in adherence to agreed academic scheduling and timetabling.
- Engage in ethical and professional relationships, behaviours and boundaries with colleagues and students.
- To preserve confidentiality across all domains of professional practice.
- To adhere to fair and consistent assessment procedures including instructive and informative feedback.

The individual Learner will take responsibility for and participate in their own learning and engage in a broad range of learning opportunities such as;
- Autonomous (self-directed, self-reflective self-assessment).
- Cognitive (problem solving, analytical thinking. critical thinking, decision making).
- Skills enhancement (written and numerical, oral presentation, ICT).
- Organisational (project planning and implementation, time and schedule management).
- Personal (knowing self, personal development, reflexivity).
- Collaborative (group work, team work).
- Undertake to meet all course requirements to the best of their ability - especially requirements pertaining to attendance, class participation and assessment.
- To adhere to all college regulations and codes of conduct including those pertaining to practice placement.
- To participate in a fair, responsible and evaluative manner in quality enhancement procedures.

9.8. The Office of Registrar

The Office of the Registrar is responsible for the co-ordination of all learner support. While learners will normally engage directly with lecturers relating to module-specific academic

queries, all other queries are dealt with by this office. The Registrar's Office manages the following functions;

- Admissions.
- Registration.
- Learner induction.
- Advice on academic procedures.
- Timetables monitoring and maintenance.
- Assessment and examinations.
- Complaints and compliments.
- Learner records.
- Progression and Graduation.

Learners are encouraged to direct all queries to the relevant programme co-ordinator, who will either deal with the query personally or forward the query to the relevant internal staff member. The Programme Co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that the query is dealt with and that the learner receives a reply and any supporting documentation that may be needed, liaising with other team members and academic staff as appropriate.

9.9. Information Systems & Educational Technology Departments

All students and lecturers are supported by the ICHAS Information Systems Department and by the College's Educational Technology Department with full support available directly through either Department within the College or the Learning Management System. The College ensures comprehensive support through:

- The active involvement of Information Systems support team in student training /support from induction through to programme completion.
- Regular scheduled staff Information Systems training
- Availability of Information Systems support staff on site during the academic year.
- Availability of at least one trained technician during all Adobe Live Lectures.

9.10. Personalised Learning Support

Delivering on a commitment to learning diversity, ICHAS has developed a number of referral facilities for learner support. Students can avail of the following;

- Access to academic writing supports including an academic support lecturer.
- Appropriate accommodation is granted to students on the basis of identified needs.
- Students are provided with feedback and guidance on how to address performance issues

Personalised learning support is designed to provide guidance on:

- Programmatic and Modular content (including advice on navigating module guides, assessment schedules, reading lists, past examination papers etc.)
- The conventions of academic writing

- Approaches to reading and analysing academic documents (text books, peer reviewed journals etc.)
- Critical approaches to Academic Research
- Studying, planning and completing assessment tasks
- How to ensure originality of academic work and the avoidance of plagiarism.

9.11.   Guideline Policy on Professional Development

ICHAS will ensure

- Recognition of excellence in teaching
- Professional development of Academic Staff and recruitment is a clearly expressed, fair and transparent processes that recognises the centrality of teaching and learning to the College's ethos.
- All academic staff formally meet with the Director of Academic Affairs at least annually to discuss feedback sources and arrange for professional development opportunities
- The provision of regular and accessible opportunities for professional development of academic staff.
- Opportunities for evaluator feedback on professional development activities are provided.
- The provision of opportunities and active encouragement for external peer interaction such as access to academic forums and conferences.
- Access to innovatory teaching methods and the use of new technologies and provide sufficient training to adopted technologies.
- New/less experienced members of Academic staff are formally supported through an initial mentored period of teaching practice.
- Academic staff are encouraged to take an active role in developing innovations in their teaching.

9.12.   Policy guidelines on Teaching, Learning and Technological Innovation

Through its programmatic review process, the College has recognized the demand and potential for the increased use of technology to enhance the student experience and opportunities and has moved to develop its blended learning capacity, especially on Part time programmes. The commendation of the College's last Institutional Review Panel in 2011 is noteworthy:

"The opportunities that are presented to students at ICHAS make it possible for them to undertake studies in professional practice areas that would otherwise not be available due to location or access through Higher Education. In particular, the panel commends the highly vocational nature of programmes that build practice skills in the psychotherapy disciplines. Students are positive and enthusiastic about the quality of their learning experiences that provide opportunities that otherwise would be unavailable to them".

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Perhaps the most important challenge arising from advancements in education technology is the alignment of the policy for blended learning with the overall teaching and learning vision of the College. Organisational leadership is explicit about who it is attempting to serve, how and why) and how blended learning fits into that vision. The adaptability of policy and planning must also keep pace with an increasing rate of change in pedagogical possibilities.

Additionally, it should be noted that such an approach enables all students to develop meta-competencies in their use of online platforms and their digital skills more generally, with the support of the College's information services team. In their Digital Roadmap (2015-17), the National Forum for Teaching and Learning identifies the necessity for students at higher level in Ireland to develop digital literacy and digital skills throughout their programmes of learning; that allow them to become competent and capable operators in an increasingly digital world (Dore, Geraghty, & O'Riordan, 2015).

To encourage innovation, it is also important that ICHAS has both earmarked resources and a clear strategy for research, quality assurance and development in Blended Learning. The application of technological innovation in the teaching and learning environment should:

- Enhance the quality of the student learning experience
- Support and ensure the quality and consistency of programme content and delivery from both a modular and holistic (programme) viewpoint
- Facilitating leading practice and innovative approaches to teaching and learning
- Providing flexibility of provision and broadening access to support a diverse and geographically disperse student population
- Enriching the student support experience, particularly for learners based off campus
- Respects and supports the diversity of learners and their need providing flexible learning modes and pathways for learners.
- Ensure sufficient financial investment to support the efficient reallocation from physical locations to technical infrastructures and staff development.
- Plan for and support changing workloads and shifts in working conditions and hours for staff
- Ensure sufficient financial and legal consideration to changes arising from development of interactive content (including attention to copyright regulations).
- Increasing broader student access and institutional competitiveness in building new student markets enabled by flexible and innovative program delivery
- Makes necessary allowance for the Holistic and unique process aspect of e-learning and blended learning e.g. learning material, learn-ing software, academic and technical support, presentation of content and interaction.
- Establish procedures to ensure all components work efficiently.

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- Acknowledge and plan for a holistic perspective which implies that all quality aspects together constitute a functional system. Therefore, a change in one quality aspect, due to new technology, changed behaviour etc., usually requires adjustments of one or more of the others

9.13.   Policy guidelines on Curricular Design

Policy and procedures pertaining to curricular design, monitoring and review are outlined in depth in Chapter 6 - Policies Related to Programmes of Education and Training. The following policy statement contextualises Curricular Design as a function of teaching and learning.

Programmes are designed with overall objectives aligned to
- QQI policies and standards
- Statutory and regulatory requirements
- Learner needs informed by local, national and international trends and evidential sources.

The College is committed to ensure that programmatic and modular content is matched to explicit minimum intended programme learning outcomes. Likewise, it will ensure that modular structure and content is strategically interlinked and coalescent with programmatic directionality with clear progression pathways between stages and levels. Equally, the College will ensure that curricular design is fit for purpose with particular programmes and is nationally and internationally relevant and specifies qualifications referencing against the National Framework of Qualifications for Higher education and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

The College will ensure that;
- Learners participate in curricular design of all programmes through involvement in the Programmatic Validation, Review and Revalidation procedures and their representation on Programmes Boards and Academic Council and its Committees that approve all aspects of programme design.
- Curricular design is evidence based, informed by external subject-area expertise and is represented both in the pre-validation/validation, review and revalidation processes.
- Programmes incorporate relevant modes of teaching and learning.
- Curriculum is both holistic and inclusive.
- Curricular design takes equitable account of learner workload which is clearly defined and communicated to the student population.
- All award-based programmes offered by the College will be validated by QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland).

9.14.   Policies and Procedures on Work Based Learning (Practice Placement)

Work Based Learning through engagement in Professional Placement is an integral part of some of the undergraduate and post-graduate degree programmes offered by the College. The core purpose of professional placement is to facilitate the translation of theory to practice offering students the opportunity to acquire quality experiential learning in a professionally mentored environment. There is a strong tradition of practice-based training in third level studies and this been evidenced as an essential component of academic training both at undergraduate and postgraduate level (Lee et al 2013).

The College recognises that having students engage in practice-based learning may be both challenging and complex (Graham 1994). The preparation of learners for many areas of professional practice, through academic learning programmes must accommodate the learner with opportunities to both learn from practice and apply academic learning in practice environments.

This is especially true in health and welfare areas of practice, which pride themselves on the development of an ethos of ongoing and evolving competence in reflective practice and learning. One of the key theorists in the field of Reflective Practice (Schon, 1983) argues that reflection enhances the capacity to cope with change and challenge and respond professionally and appropriately to unpredictable and demanding situations. Benner (1984) described the development of 'phases' of learning from Novice practitioner through sequential stages to the level of Expert Practitioner. A central unifying theme in most areas of professional caring practice is that the level of expertise becomes evident in the evolving capacity of practitioners to reflect on practice and to think critically about issues that arise in the workplace at advanced practice levels.

Quality assurance for placement is designed around a system of inter-locking checks designed to ensure consistency of learning opportunities and requirements on students and ensure equitable standards for student learning in practice. Outcomes of Learning are assessed through a combination of assessment of core competencies by the Module Leader supported by direct consultation with the Clinical Supervisor and assessed within the completion of the continuous Assignments. Issues relating to the assessment of Core Competencies and Reflective Learning are set out in the following sections.

Pre-Clinical Practice Interview - Fitness to Practice Assurance

The Pre-clinical practice interview is envisaged as a fundamental gate-keeping mechanism that approaches Fitness to Practice through a qualitative but structured process. The policy is as follows:

- As part of the formal placement approval process every student will be required to participate in interview prior to the commencement of placement.
- Any clinical hours accrued without this interview having been completed will be discounted.

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- The interview board will consist of the Director of Academic Affairs, the Placement Co-ordinator and the Module Leader.
- Interviewees will be expected to provide evidence of competency across the specified range of competency domains for professional readiness.
- The interview will be documented as a completed matrix as per document titled Pre-Clinical Practice Interview.
- All students will be provided with detailed feedback post interview.
- Should a student not reach the required standard the normal procedures around appeal applies as outlined in the student handbook and QA documentation.
- Students will be afforded the opportunity and latitude to address any competencies that were deemed to be inadequate.
- Should students fail to reach the required readiness at that point they may be offered an exit opportunity through the embedded award.

Matrix for pre-Clinical Practice Interview

The Interview will assess readiness for practice and will focus on the following domains:

Knowledge and Skills
- Understand the obligation of the student to participate in competence-based activities associated with the relevant domain of practice.
- Understands the theoretical and etiological foundation of the area of practice
- Understand the evidence-base for the domain of practice
- Understand and apply setting-specific policies and procedures for handling crisis or dangerous situations, including safety measures for clients and staff
- Understand the obligations to adhere to ethical and behavioural standards of conduct in the helping relationship.
- Understand the importance of ongoing supervision and continuing education in the delivery of client services.

Attitude and Self Awareness
- Understand diverse cultures, and incorporate the relevant needs of culturally diverse groups, as well as people with disabilities, into clinical practice.
- Understand the importance of self-awareness in one's personal, professional, and cultural life.

Policies and Procedures for Placement Approval

Work based learning opportunities may occur at any level of primary, secondary or tertiary care, and may include employment or volunteer work at an individual, community or population health level through various employers or industries where the required field is

practiced. In all situations, placements must be agreed with the Module Leader and the Practice Placement Co-ordinator in advance of placements commencing.

- Students must be enrolled in the semester during which the Placement Learning Contract (PLC) is undertaken.
- Students cannot commence a new placement until all aspects of the previous experience are complete.
- All practice placements are evaluated and approved by the Placement Review Committee (Director of Academic Affairs, Module Leader, Placement Co-ordinator) to ensure that the learning opportunities afforded by the placements are appropriate to the programme as well as the stage of learning and the individual learning needs of the student.
- Prior to commencement of the experience the student must consult with the Placement Supervisor. Contacts should be made via email or telephone for an appointment.
- Placements will normally only be approved in placements which are not in private practice settings of such professionally trained practitioners.
- Placements in other work contexts will be considered but must be engaged with following the approval of the placement provider and where such placements are deemed to meet the placement standards set out below.

Students are required to have all the following arrangements and documentation proving same prior to commencement of placement:

- Professional indemnity insurance for the entire period of placement
- Current Garda Vetting
- Details and contact information for Placement Supervisor
- Details qualifications and contact information of clinical supervisor

Once approval has been granted by the Placement Review Committee, the student should identify and formulate specific aims and means by which the learning experiences will be achieved.

- The learning contract form must be submitted electronically via the Learning Management System on the web site. Students should ensure that all details are completed and are correct before submitting this information.
- Students must allow at least four working days for the approval and return of the contract.
- Students will also be required to circulate a copy of a Memorandum of Understanding (available on the LMS) for tri-partite signature
- When the contract has been approved, it will be returned to the student via email. The student must print out the contract.

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- Each placement must be supported by a Placement Learning contract agreed between the Student, the clinical supervisor and the Placement Co-ordinator.
- Each clinical placement must be supported by qualified clinical supervision at the following ratios:
  - Level 7 - 1:5 (for every 5 hours completed 1 hour of supervision is required).
  - Level 8 – 1:8 (for every 8 hours completed 1 hour of supervision is required).
  - Level 9 – 1:8 (for every 8 hours completed 1 hour of supervision is required).
- All students are required to submit a valid proposal to ICHAS via the Learning Management System outlining how they intend to complete all professional practice placement hours.
- The student must submit a completed student placement form, prior to commencing their placement via the student portal.
- Any hours that have been completed by students prior to returning this form for official approval will not be counted towards meeting the Module Requirements.

Practice Placement and Practice Completion Procedures
- Student Placements must only be undertaken where a clear Learning Contract and signed Memorandum of Understanding exists between the student, the College and the organization providing the placement.
- Both must be submitted to the Module Leader before being sent out to/ or agreed with the Placement Organisations and these organisations must be approved by the College in advance of any placement.
- Learners on placement are asked to complete regular feedback forms, submitted online, and reviewed by the Practice Placement Manager in conjunction with the Director of Undergraduate Studies.
- Students must record all placement hours in a series of Professional Placement logbooks.
- These hours of attendance must be verified by the Placement Provider and the student -
- Students are required to submit all reflective assignments through student portal - Student assessment in this module will be based on a project (reflective) strategy which is weighted at 40% of the module assessment weighting as well as an assessment of competencies which is weighted at 60%.
- On completion of module students are required to submit by the due date the supporting evidence of supervision and evidence of completion of the relevant hours as outlined in the following table

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Site Visit – Practice Placement

The site visit is considered an integral element in placement practice in establishing, maintaining and developing the clinical teaching partnership between staff and students, to ensure safe practice and to ensure adequate psycho-social support for students whilst on placement. The objectives of the visit are to gain a greater insight into operational practices within the service

- The placement co-ordinator will contact the placement provider on two occasions at least, ideally toward the start and three quarter point.
- The co-ordinator makes an initial evaluation of the Student's performance in work placement, review the placement activity being undertaken by the Student and address any difficulties or issues associated with the placement from the Student's or the placement providers perceptive.
- The site visit should include a meeting with placement provider co-ordinator to discuss the student's progress and a further meeting with the student to discuss their perspective on their placement experience.
- The placement co-ordinator will maintain a site visit log and will provide feedback on the placement to-date, together with recommendations, if required.
- Any concerns or issues that might have been raised will be relayed to the Module Lead, Student Support or Liaison Officer or the Director of Undergradfuate/Graduate Studies and/or the Director of Academic Affairs should it be deemed necessary on return from the site visit.

Digest of all placement documentation (available on the LMS)

Document:	Who fills:	When to fill:	When to Submit:
Professional Placement Proposal Form	Student	Prior to Commencement	Prior to Commencement
Placement Provider Obligations Form	Student and Provider	Prior to Commencement	Prior to Commencement
Memorandum of Understanding	Student, Provider and College	Prior to Commencement	Prior to Commencement
Learning Contract	Student, Provider and College	Prior to Commencement	Prior to Commencement
Clinical Supervisor Nomination Form	Proposed Clinical Supervisor	Prior to Commencement	Prior to Commencement
Student Record of Clinical Case Contact Hours	Student, Clinical Supervisor	During Placement	End of Placement
Clinical Supervision Log Sheet	Student, Clinical Supervisor	During Placement	End of Placement

Placement Provider Appraisal Form	Placement Provider (representative)	End of Placement	End of Placement
Clinical Supervision Review	Student Clinical Supervisor	End of Placement	End of Placement

Figure 22 - Digest of all placement documentation

Clinical Supervision

The role of the supervisor in supporting learners to achieve and engage with structured reflection is considered essential. Both the principles of supervision and the guidelines relating to the nature of the supervisor/supervisee relationship are essential components of the role. It is envisaged that supervisors will be involved at both a formative and summative level of assessment of Practical work and the placement-based learning.

- The learner makes contact with a clinical supervisor and the clinical supervisor accepts the terms and conditions of the supervision through the on-line system.
- All Practice supervisors will be required to undertake induction and training in the Supervision of Professional Practice which will be provided by the College and they will be supported through a mentoring process by members of the Academic staff of the College.
- Clinical supervision must be provided by a professionally accredited supervisor.
- The supervisor's credentials are verified by ICHAS prior to the commencement of the learner's placement.
- The supervisor maintains a record of supervision, which is verified by the Director of Academic Affairs.
- Clinical supervisors will hold a relevant degree as well as post-graduate qualification Clinical Supervision level degree and have relevant Practice Supervision experience.
- They will have a maturity of purpose in terms of supporting learners to integrate their learning and embed it in practice.
- They will have demonstrable integrity and agree to adhere to the standards of marking and assessment as laid down by the ICHAS.
- They will demonstrate a commitment to ensuring safe working practices and will satisfy the college that they have a clear understanding of the Quality Assurance procedures in place at the College.
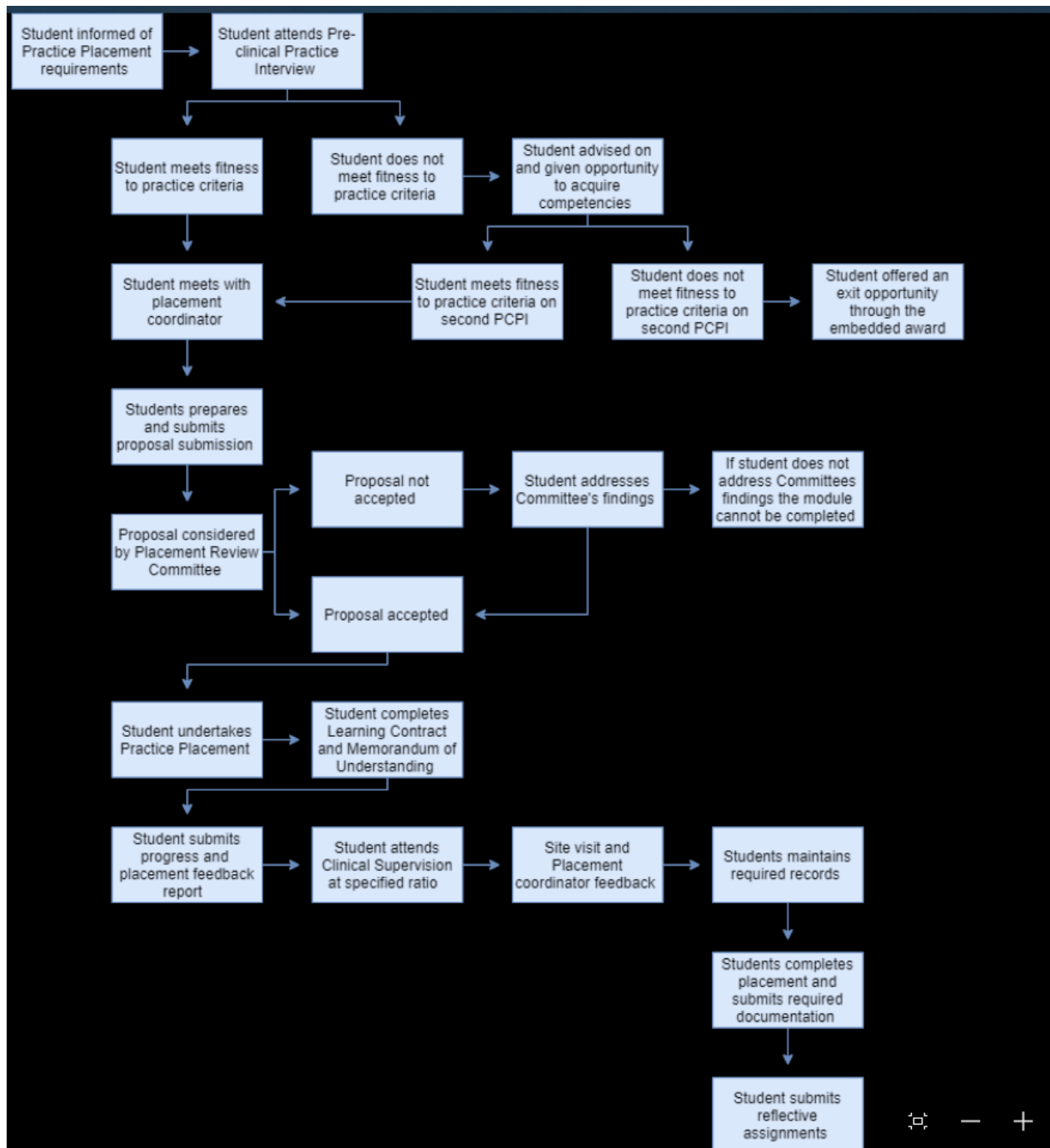
Figure 23 - Practice Placement Process

9.15. Policy Guidelines on the College's Teaching and Learning Environment

The bulk of the undergraduate and postgraduate learner population at ICHAS is drawn from what are commonly referred to as 'non-traditional' students i.e. mature students undertaking programmes on a part-time basis. In that regard, ICHAS has developed a programme delivery model that significantly enhances access to higher education programmes for such learners and in this collaborative programme, this experience is considered useful. While ICHAS initially achieved greater accessibility and flexibility through offering their programmes in a

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number of physical centres around the country and providing strong administrative and learner support to lecturers and learners. In more recent years, the College has recognized the potential for the increased use of technology to enhance the student experience and opportunities and has moved to develop its blended learning capacity, especially on part-time programmes.

ICHAS commits to the
- Provision, support and maintenance of an infrastructure and environment designed to ensure the highest standards in teaching and learning.
- Provision of the required physical learning resources and student supports services and ensure that all resources and services are fit for purpose, efficiently communicated and inclusively accessible.
- Establishment, implementation and continued monitoring of a quality review system for teaching and learning.
- Management and continued activation of academic governance structures and units with the primary purpose of supporting, developing and guiding academic departments, lecturers and learners.
- Constant periodic review and monitoring of all resources and services.

Teaching and Learning Infrastructure – Physical Premises
ICHAS's main premises is located at Walton House, Lonsdale Rd., National Technology Park, Castletroy, Limerick in a single physical structure comprising approximately 8,000 square feet with the following facilities:
- Fully equipped for face-to-face lectures with 9 Classrooms with appropriate lecturing facilities (e.g. Flipcharts, Whiteboards, PC's, LCD Projectors) and designed to be able to be used for both didactic lectures as well as interactive workshops and tutorials.
- All classrooms are resourced for VIRI Classroom.
- Library
- Student Lounge/Canteen
- Computer Room
- Administration suites accommodate the offices of the Academic Administration Team and Lecturers and College management
- The Limerick campus is monitored daily by the programme co-ordinators and also periodically by the Health & Safety Officer.

Teaching and Learning Infrastructure - Learning Management System
The ICHAS Learning management system is an essential online source of information for ICHAS learners and lecturers. The ICHAS Learning management system was developed in

2010 primarily to improve communication between learners, lecturers and administration staff, while also helping to increase administrative efficiency. In 2017, the ICHAS learning management system underwent a significant upgrade, and has been relaunched as the Learning Management System. The new learning management system has provided both lecturers and students with a virtual learning environment to complement, enrich and support the more traditional learning environment. It has also offered greater security, flexibility and efficiency; and enables more innovative teaching and assessment opportunities. Because it is highly integrative it also simplifies and enhances communication between the College and the student body. Facilities include:

- Access to detailed outlines of learning outcomes for all modular and programmatic content.
- Academic Calendar including Class and Assessment Timetables, Graduation and Certification milestones – all of include regular periodic alerting systems to remind students of significant deadlines.
- Teaching and learning resources including several innovative teaching resources. (e.g. lecture notes, recorded lectures, adobe sessions, podcasts quizzes, group forums, chat forums, databases, glossaries, attendance monitoring etc.)
- Assignment submission portal with assignment grading and feedback (including grade and feedback history)
- Procedural guidance across all domains of teaching, learning and assessment including placement services.
- Access to student support services (e.g. information on Student Liaison and Counselling, Class representation system, reasonable accommodation mechanisms.
- Administrative resources including all documents and forms (including Garda Vetting application forms.
- Quality Assurance documentation.
- Advanced communication resources including student news, announcements events
- All fully integrated with MS Office 365, allowing students to access their Office suite, Student Email and cloud storage accounts using the same interface.

Teaching and Learning Infrastructure - Online Library Resources

The College is committed to the use of on-line library resources to ensure consistency of access to current library resources for both members of faculty and learners, irrespective of location. To this end, ICHAS uses online libraries to enable all students to access high quality research and journal articles. Multimedia tutorials are available to assist in the use of the online libraries. The college currently provides access to three comprehensive e-libraries; namely Elsevier Science Direct, the American Psychological Association's PsycArticles, and DawsonEra eBook Repository.

The College currently subscribes to Science Direct's Life Sciences Collection. Science Direct is one of the largest online collections of published scientific research in the world. It is operated by the publisher Elsevier and contains nearly 10 million articles from over 2,500 journals and over 6,000 e-books, reference works, book series and handbooks across various disciplines including the Social Sciences, the Humanities and Health Sciences.

PsycArticles is a database of over 200,000 peer-reviewed full-text articles from over 120 journals maintained by the American Psychological Association. It provides access to the full spectrum of research in the field of psychology and psychology-related disciplines – from cutting-edge contemporary research by preeminent scholars, to the historical underpinnings of the behavioural and social sciences.

DawsonEra is an eBook library service offering tailored eBook collections from 500 of the world's leading publisher imprints, including Oxford University Press and Taylor & Francis. The platform provides unlimited, multi-user remote access to ebooks that can be read online or downloaded to the user's PC or mobile devices. With access to a collection of over 250,000 titles, DawsonEra offers easy and regularly updated access to both class and contemporary research.

Teaching and Learning Infrastructure - IT Facilities

ICHAS has invested significantly both in the acquisition of equipment as well as the development of information and communications technology. This investment was made in order to support the learning experience offered at ICHAS and to facilitate its further expansion and growth. The main elements of the ICHAS Information Systems are outlined in the following sections.

The following equipment and infrastructure are currently available on-campus, pertinent to the College's programmes:

- Video Conferencing - ICHAS uses Adobe Connect to facilitate meetings and interaction with lecturers as well as synchronous teaching. Adobe Connect has been integrated into the ICHAS Learning Management System, enabling students to launch their VIRI classrooms easily.
- Two separate Networks setup for use by Students and Staff. Both networks are fully secured and only accessible by authorised personnel.
- All classrooms are equipped with Projectors and Laptops for use by the Lecturers during Lectures and Tutorials.
- Photocopying, Printing and Internet facilities are available for all Lecturers during College Hours.
- Laptops are available if required by Students when sitting Examinations.
- Remote access to email and IT systems for Administration and Lecturing Staff.

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- Computer Room equipped with internet-enabled networked PCs, with Internet access and a network printer is available for Students during College Hours

Teaching and Learning Infrastructure – Off Campus Centre Standards

As part of the selection criteria and inspection of off-campus centres, all equipment necessary for the effective delivery of the programme is in place in each individual location. Off-campus centres are required to adhere to a set of strict guidelines determining suitability. Off-campus centres must adhere to the following guidelines:

- The room must be of a size capable of taking the number of participants required.
- The room must be well ventilated and/or heated as required.
- The room must have access for those with disabilities.
- There must be toilet facilities, including toilet facilities for those with disabilities.
- The facilities must have access to the required number of electrical sockets for any IT elements of the programme.
- There should be consistency in regard to the room used for the duration of the programme.
- Where not supplied by ICHAS, there must be access to projectors and other IT equipment as required.
- Where not supplied by the ICHAS, there must flip chart stands supplied.
- Chairs must be of a suitable standard and, where requests are made for specific chair types, these must be addressed.
- There must be access to tea/coffee/canteen facilities.
- All unnecessary interruptions and noise disruptions should be kept to a minimum.

Adherence to these guidelines will be monitored as follows

- The facilities and classroom environment are assessed by the programme co-ordinator and by the Health & Safety Officer prior to use.
- Formal agreements are in place with the centres, and centre managers are made aware of the importance of ongoing adherence to the quality standards.
- Students are instructed to provide feedback about their centre and lecturers are formally advised that any deviation from standard must be reported to the Programme Co-ordinator at the earliest opportunity.
- The quality of standards in place at off-campus centres is also monitored by the relevant Director of Studies when visiting off-campus centres over the course of the academic year

Teaching and Learning Infrastructure - Management Information System

The ICHAS Management Information system is used by the administration staff of ICHAS for maintaining all learner records and for handling such tasks as generating class schedules, recording attendance, setting course groups and structures and invoicing. This is a bespoke management system which is dynamic and currently meets the needs of the College

administration team. There is also a reporting tool which works off the MIS and is used for analysis and management reports.

10   Assuring Quality in Blended Learning

10.1.   Overview and Guiding Principles

ICHAS is committed to a blended learning strategy that optimises effective pedagogical approaches to technologically enabled learning; that enhances the flexibility for leaners, in line with the recommendations of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (DES, 2011) and the Higher Education System Performance Frameworks (HEA, 2016, 2018) and promotes digital literacy and skills in line with the National Forum's roadmap for digital skills (2015).

ICHAS uses its virtual learning environment (hereafter referred to as "The LMS", based on Moodle 3.4) as a platform from which to deliver content, promote communication and deliver both asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities. It is a blended learning approach that combines face-to-face teaching with online learning opportunities. Synchronous blended learning at ICHAS uses Adobe Connect video conferencing software to deliver virtual classrooms through a "Virtual Real Time Instructor-Led" (VIRI) approach. Access to Adobe Connect classes is mediated via a plugin integrated to the LMS. As such, the LMS is therefore the principal medium through which blended learning is delivered. It is important that both it and the wider blended learning approach are underpinned by robust QA procedures that:

- Enhance the quality of the student learning experience
- Ensure the quality and consistency of programme content and delivery from both a modular and holistic (programme) viewpoint
- Facilitate leading practice and innovative approaches to teaching and learning
- Provide flexibility of provision and broaden access
- Support a diverse and geographically disperse student population
- Enrich the student support experience, particularly for learners based off campus
- Increase competitiveness in building new student markets enabled by flexible and innovative program delivery

10.2.   The Blended and Online Learning Quality Model

The QA framework for Blended learning was developed and agreed with QQI in 2014/15, prior to the publication of *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes.* Originally, this was a 10-point model adapted from the "The E-Learning Quality Framework", developed by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (Hanson, 2008). The publication of QQI approved guidelines in 2018 presented an opportunity to evaluate and improve the existing framework. The framework in use to manage the quality of blended learning at ICHAS has therefore been revised in this light incorporating the quality contexts developed by QQI's guidelines. It comprises several quality aspects crucial in the delivery of quality blended and online learning, as described below:

The Organisational Context

1. Infrastructure and Learning Management System
2. Staff qualifications and experience
3. Institutional leadership & Resource Allocation

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The Programme Context

1.   Programme Outcomes and Material / Content

2.   Student Assessment

3.   Programme Validation and Development

4.   Assuring Quality in the Blended Learning Approach

The Learner Experience Context

1.   Support for Student and Staff

2.   Communication, Flexibility and adaptability

The following sections elaborate on these categories.

10.3.   The Organisational Context

The organisational context includes strategic and institution-wide aspects of managing quality for blended learning, such infrastructure, resourcing, qualifications and training.

Blended learning has been a key part of ICHAS's strategy since 2011. Since then, the organisational context has evolved significantly to ensure that blended learning can be delivered effectively.

ICHAS is keenly aware of its responsibilities in providing a high-quality Blended Learning experience. To this end, we ensure that:

- The infrastructure for blended learning is appropriate
- Staff are appropriately qualified to deliver Blended Learning
- Staff are competent to teach using blended learning approaches

Infrastructure and Learning Management System

The choice of virtual learning environments should be based on pedagogical considerations and the institution's technical environment. The technical infrastructure enabling blended learning must be robust, reliable, intuitive, scalable, accessible, and user-friendly. The virtual learning environment is one of the most dynamic and rapidly changing features of Blended Learning environments; therefore, systematic improvement and updating are needed on a continuous basis. Contingency arrangements should be in place in the event of technical challenges.

Additional considerations concerning platform selection and retention include:

- Ease of use and operation by students and lecturers
- Ease of access and operation through computer and mobile device
- Security and data protection capabilities
- Upgradability and potential for enhancement

The platform must support and enable learning and assessment as outlined in Chapter 11 – Assessment of Learners at ICHAS.

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Key Roles:
- The IS Manager has overall responsibility for the design, implementation, maintenance, security, delivery, and quality assurance of the LMS structurally.
- The Educational technologist has overall responsibility for the pedagogical support of teaching and learning; and the development of online learning resources.

The following procedures are used to ensure that the LMS continues to meet the needs of students and faculty:
- Annual reviews are undertaken of all ICHAS technology including the LMS and VIRI delivery software including:
  - Annual Quality Review of LMS and associated systems
  - Analytics from LMS usage
- The Educational technologist closely monitors new developments in technologically enabled learning to assess whether and how these applications might enhance the student, faculty and administrator experience.
- Student & Lecturer Feedback from end of module evaluations, Programme Boards and Exam Boards

Key Related Procedures:
- 10.6.4 Procedures on Ensuring Quality of the VIRI Session
- 10.6.5 Procedures on Ensuring Quality of the Learning Management System
- 10.6.6 Procedures for Delivering a Virtual Classroom
- 10.6.8 Procedures for Developing Online Learning Resources and Activities

Staff Qualifications and Experience

An educational technologist is employed to support lecturers in developing the confidence and skills to deliver blended learning, and to advise on appropriate digital pedagogical approaches and skills' requirements. Annual in-service training is provided to lecturers, with a dedicated blended learning session, in addition to normal professional development, that aims to:

- Increase awareness of innovative approaches to teaching and learning using educational technology
- Discuss how students learn through different media
- Improve staff digital literacy, confidence, and competency

Key Roles:

- HRM ensures that staff are appropriately qualified
- Educational technologist works with staff to provide additional training and induction to educational technologies.

The following indicators are used to ensure staff are appropriately qualified and have opportunities to develop further skills.

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- Monitoring and review of virtual classroom sessions for pedagogical quality and student engagement
- Lecturer Feedback from end of module evaluations, Programme Boards and Exam Boards
- Lecturer In-Service Training Day feedback

Key Related Procedures:
- 10.6.2 Procedures on Staff Digital Literacy and Skills Enhancement
- 10.6.6 Procedures for Delivering a Virtual Classroom
- 10.6.8 Procedures for Developing Online Learning Resources and Activities
- 10.6.4 Procedures on Ensuring Quality of the VIRI Session

Institutional Leadership & Resource Allocation

Organisational leadership must be explicit about who it is attempting to serve and how blended learning fits into that vision. The adaptability of policy and planning must also keep pace with the evolving pedagogical possibilities provided by technological changes. To encourage innovation, it is also important that ICHAS has both earmarked resources and a clear strategy for research, quality assurance and development in e-learning.

When dealing with educational technology, resources must be reallocated from physical locations to technical infrastructures, support organisations and staff development. In blended education, both the technical infrastructure and physical localities need to be financed. Workloads and a shift in working hours for staff also must be considered. The development of interactive content and online lectures may require special financial resources and copyright considerations. A new financial strategy will be needed for marketing blended learning to reach new target groups

Key Roles:
- College President
- Head of Finance
- Information Systems Manager
- Educational technologist

The following indicators are used to align the vision for blended learning at ICHAS with the overall vision and strategy of the College:
- A strategic plan for Blended Learning with a visionary perspective, including research, quality assurance and development activities
- Feedback, follow-up, and monitoring of national as well as international trends, and strategic management from the institutional administration
- A strategy for the reallocation of existing resources and the generation of new resources based on the specific programme and modules needs
- A strategy and plan for dealing with changes in workload and working hours as well as with ownership of virtual lectures, class recordings and other digital material

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10.4. The Programme Context

The programme context emphasises principles for assuring quality in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of programmes and modules that include blended learning. Procedures supporting the development and delivery of a blended programme of study partly by online learning will need to ensure that the value of online learning in enabling learners to meet intended learning outcomes is clearly demonstrated.

Assuring quality in the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of blended learning modules is a multifaceted approach. Static and asynchronous learning resources accessible from the LMS must be produced, reviewed, and signed off on before becoming accessible to learners. Synchronous sessions must be supported adequately to enable all learners to take part. Such support takes many forms – induction activities at the commencement of a programme teach learners how to use appropriate educational technology, while support staff are available online during synchronous classes to ensure technical issues can be resolved. A dedicated educational technologist is available to provide pedagogical and technical support to teaching staff and programme leads.

Programme Outcomes and Material/Content

Blended and online learning approaches must be integrated into the programme with care and consideration, taking account of programme learning outcomes and best practice in the design of teaching and learning online.

The main quality issues that concern material and content are the selection, production and sequencing of material that meets learning outcomes, and the periodic review of this material. Copyright issues must be considered and a data use, protection and privacy policy published and clearly communicated.

Key Roles:
- Educational technologist
- Programme Directors
- Lecturing Staff
- Programme development teams

The following resources and indicators are used to inform programme development, ensure the technology enhanced learning elements of existing programmes are delivered to a high standard:

- Peer review of learning resources and multimedia produced as part of a module
- Data usage / Privacy policy consent
- Guidelines and support for the selection and production of online learning resources and activities, including explicit pedagogical and technical support
- Policy and guidelines for copyright issues and data protection/usage

Key Related Procedures:

- 10.6.2 Procedures on Staff Digital Literacy and Skills Enhancement
- 10.6.6 Procedures for Delivering a Virtual Classroom
- 10.6.8 Procedures for Developing Online Learning Resources and Activities
- 10.6.4 Procedures on Ensuring Quality of the VIRI Session
- 10.6.5 Procedures on Ensuring Quality of the Learning Management System

Student Assessment

ICHAS will ensure that there is consistency of approach between the assessment of learning outcomes of full face-to-face modules and modules which are delivered through blended learning. Technology will never supersede pedagogy; rather it will be used in service of learning.

A blended learning approach provides opportunities for diversifying assessment methods, using simulations and roleplays, virtual seminars, asynchronous group work and innovative remote presentation approaches. There is also enhanced scope for formative assessment strategies using discussion forums, quizzes, polling to check learning and respond to learners' needs. These opportunities also necessitate changes in how learning processes are designed and hence in how student assessment is performed. Assessment methods should encourage creativity, critical thinking and in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. Flexibility in terms of time and location offer the possibility of enhancing these aspects. However, it is recognised that extending such flexibility entails challenges of security and authentication. Procedures and regulations are in place to certify accessibility, student identity and the authenticity of each individual student's contribution as far as practicable.

Key Roles
- Exam Board
- Programmes Directors and Lecturing Staff
- Educational technologist

The following indicators and resources are used to ensure high quality blended learning assessment policies and procedures:

- Exam Board and Programme Board meetings
- Analytics and statistical data on assessment completion, grades achieved, and award received
- Robust data security and management process

Programme Validation and Development

Blended and online learning approaches consist of multiple components, e.g. learning material, learning software, academic and technical support, presentation of content and interaction. All quality aspects together constitutes a functional system. All components must work together in an efficient manner. This is best considered at the development and programme validation stage and reviewed regularly through feedback mechanisms across the cycle of the programme. The approval and validation processes in place for programmes including Blended Learning must be appropriate. They must include mechanisms to ensure that staff are appropriately qualified or supported through training and/or CPD opportunities to deliver blended learning. Programme development should also incorporate opportunities to enhance feedback.

Key Roles
-    Programme Development Team

The following criteria and indicators are used to ensure that there is appropriate consideration of quality blended learning approaches in the programme validation and development context:
- A functional and systematic approach for blended learning encompassing all quality aspects.
- Integrated and robust consideration of the demands and opportunities of blended learning at the programme development and validation stage
- Review of blended learning in existing approaches
- Incorporation of lessons learned and best practices in new programme development

Key Related Procedures
- Programme development and approval procedures

Assuring Quality in the Blended Learning Approach

The Virtual, Interactive, Real-Time, Instructor-Led classroom is the name given to the core aspect of blended learning at ICHAS wherein a percentage of classes on most programmes are delivered simultaneously both online *and* in the traditional person-to-person didactic manner, as set out in programme validation documentation. This approach enables real-time teaching with full audio and video capability for students and lecturers. This is delivered through video-conferencing software accessible via the LMS and affords students the flexibility to attend many of their classes remotely.

Classes and subject matter delivered in this mode tend to be of a more theoretical nature. ICHAS recognises the importance of practical skills development. As such, students must physically attend non-VIRI sessions as part of their blend of face-to-face and online learning.

Key Roles:
- Educational technologist
- Lecturing Staff
- Information Systems Manager

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The following indicators and supports are used to assure quality in the Blended Learning approach:

- Virtual learning environment is reviewed annually as outlined in 15.3.1
- Virtual classroom is reviewed annually and benchmarked against a requirement that it:
    - Uses a simple user interface for student navigation & interaction
    - Supports high quality audio and video capabilities to enable interaction among users in virtual classrooms
    - Supports single sign in capabilities to reduce need for student password management
    - Enables recording of lectures for later student review
- Real-time support from ICHAS Information Services and Educational technologist
- Regular quality reviews of VIRI classrooms,
- Monitoring active sessions or reviewing class recordings which enables peer review of the virtual classroom.

Key Related Procedures:
- 10.6.2 Procedures on Staff Digital Literacy and Skills Enhancement
- 10.6.6 Procedures for Delivering a Virtual Classroom
- 10.6.8 Procedures for Developing Online Learning Resources and Activities
- 10.6.4 Procedures on Ensuring Quality of the VIRI Session
- 10.6.5 Procedures on Ensuring Quality of the Learning Management System

10.5. The Learner Experience Context

The learner experience context relates to key issues and principles in provider responsibility for supporting students, as groups and as individuals. The benefits of flexibility offered for learners by blended learning in general and online learning in particular is balanced by its demands for autonomy, commitment and self-regulation. Procedures are in place to highlight to learners that online learning may differ from their previous learning experience; that they are appropriately prepared for it; and that their progress and engagement is monitored, encouraged and supported. Learners are enabled to pre-assess their own readiness to engage with online/blended learning programme.

Supports for Students and Staff

ICHAS Students are supported at pre-enrolment, enrolment and on an ongoing basis throughout their programmes. Mensch (2009) argues orientation must take place online and involve the actual technologies and tools students will use. Supports are in place to address administrative issues; issues of social interaction and online isolation; academic skills; technical skills; learner motivation; and dealing with technical problems.

- Pre-Enrolment: The technical requirements and terms related to blended learning are clearly communicated to students. Published guidelines on the requirements for a successful blended learning experience are available on the ICHAS website, and clearly explained throughout the application process to potential students. Learner responsibilities are outlined and the scope of ICHAS support clearly communicated.

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- Enrolment: Support during induction and orientation is crucial. Opportunities to utilise and learn how to use the educational technologies mediating access to online learning are particularly important during the orientation and induction phase. ICHAS utilises a robust online induction process taking in all key blended learning tools to teach students about blended learning and improve digital skills.
- Ongoing: The Educational Technologist and IT Assistant are available to provide support during VIRI sessions. Opportunities exist for learners to practice using assignment submission digital tools and plagiarism software.

All modules are scheduled such that there are several compulsory face-to-face sessions for all students. This requirement mitigates the potential for social isolation and enhances engagement with lecturers and classmates

Staff supports are in place in the form of in-service training days, ongoing support from the Educational Technologist and/or IT Assistant. Supports emphasise solving technical problems during synchronous learning sessions through IT support, ensuring the lecturer can focus on teaching activities; ensuring staff have or develop the technical and pedagogical skills needed to provide effective blended learning both synchronously and asynchronously; and providing pedagogical advice and support in the development of online resources.

Key Roles
- Information Systems Manager
- Educational technologist

The following indicators are used to enhance supports for students and staff:
- Participation in and feedback from Induction and Student and Staff Orientation and training in technologies supporting learning
- Student feedback
- Staff feedback
- Analytics and statistics on engagement with Learning Management System

Communication, Flexibility and Adaptability

Communication, cooperation, and interaction are at the core of learning. Compared to full face-to-face programmes, more planning is required to facilitate communication in blended learning programmes.

The communication structure chosen for a blended learning module depends on the infrastructure, level of lecturer and student proficiency and the objectives of the course. Online communication, as part of a blended learning module can be organised within four dimensions of time and space (Table 1).

	Same Place	Different Place
Same time	**1. Technology–supported teaching**–Demonstration programs– Visual presentation programs	**3. Synchronous communication**–Video conference: Chat/Instant messaging, IP telephone, Whiteboard, Audio chat
Different time	**2. Technology–supported learning**–Self-studies (simulations, animations etc…)	**4. Asynchronous communication:** E–mail, E–forum, Audio forum, online video lectures, Text messaging

Figure 24 - Information and Communication Technology in on Line Learning Environments

ICHAS emphasis each of these quadrants according to programme need and achievement of learning outcomes. Learning and teaching activities and associated resources provide every learner with an equitable, fair and realistic opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Key Roles

- Information Systems Manager
- Educational technologist

10.6. Procedures underpinning the Policies for Assuring Quality in Blended Learning

This procedures in this document outline the steps taken at ICHAS, and by whom, to apply and support the policies assuring quality in Blended Learning.

10.6.1 Procedures in Event of Disaster

Data from the Learning Management System is backed up every 48 hours from the Virtual Private Server (VPS) to Amazon Web Services. This is a mirror image of the LMS and can be restored within 2 hours in the event of catastrophic failure. VPS failsafe mean that ICHAS's providers facilitate a redundancy contingency that means that the servers can be rapidly restored.

10.6.2 Procedures on Staff Digital Literacy and Skills Enhancement

ICHAS is aware of the requirement for staff to remain up to date with technological advances as well as developments specific to their area of work. Teaching staff responsible for the delivery of ICHAS programmes and assessment of students are required to complete a technical skills induction upon commencement at ICHAS and attend twice-annual in-service training days. Training in digital pedagogy and digital skills enhancement opportunities are offered in a structured manner at both. In addition, Educational Technology training can be arranged at any time with the agreement of the Educational technologist.

Training at New Lecturer Induction

LMS Overview and Orientation → Virtual Classroom Demonstration & Simulated Session → Best Practice in Digital Pedagogies
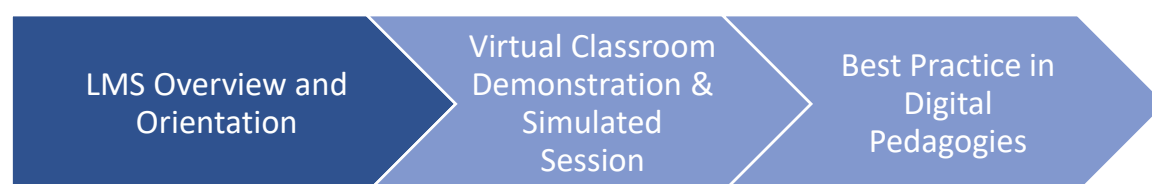
Figure 25 Overview of New Lecturer Induction Topics and Procedure

Procedures for training lecturers in the ICHAS suite of educational technologies supporting teaching and learning are in place to ensure that all new lecturers can use these technologies effectively and in a manner that maximises quality learning for students. These procedures are outlined as follows:

1. Training will normally take place at a designated day for new lecturer induction and orientation. However, training can be arranged separately for lecturers depending on need and necessity.
2. A detailed overview is provided of the ICHAS Learning Management System. New lecturers will be shown how to log in to the ICHAS LMS, and how to recover their account in event of a forgotten password.
3. The facilitator will demonstrate the Dashboard page of the LMS and show lecturers how to navigate the LMS from this page. This includes how to access their ICHAS email account, and how to confirm that they are enrolled on their modules.
4. The facilitator will then demonstrate how to add content to a module page, how to edit a module page and introduce best practice principles in digital pedagogical approaches and blended learning.
5. Lecturers will then be shown how to launch a synchronous VIRI classroom session.
6. A simulated VIRI session takes place, during which lecturers will gain familiarity with the student perspective on using live lecture software.
7. The capabilities of the system from the lecturer user perspective will then be outlined (polling, group/individual chat, sharing web links, etc) and demonstrated. Teaching scenarios in which these may be appropriate are discussed.
8. The technical supports available during each VIRI session are outlined, and support contact information provided.
9. Finally, the facilitator will return to the LMS to show lecturers how to access helpful resources and information on online learning and best practice in blended learning.

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Training at In-Service Training Days
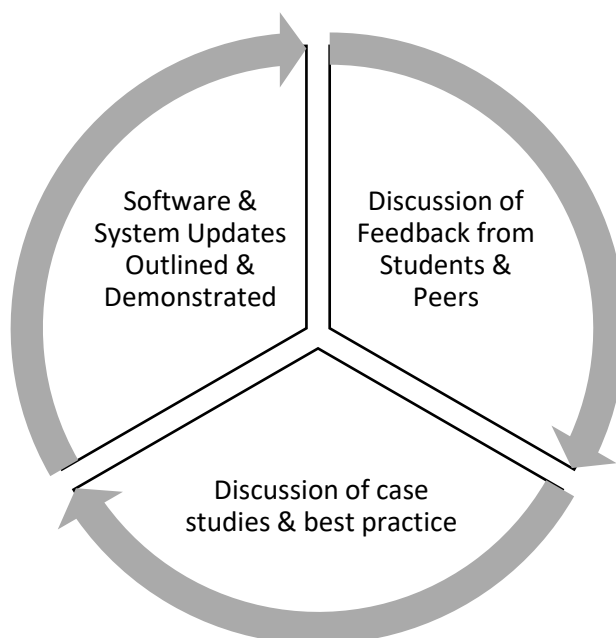
Figure 26 Overview of In-Service Training Day Cycle

Digital skills training for teaching and learning at in-service training days focuses on bringing lecturers up to speed with recent developments in educational technology. This primarily focuses on outlining the impact of any recent updates to software used in the delivery of blended learning and virtual classes at ICHAS, and then moves on to involves the discussion of feedback and effective teaching strategies. These procedures are outlined as follows:

1. The educational technologist will outline changes to technologies used in the delivery of blended learning at ICHAS, if any. Changes may be because of:
   - Version updates to learning technologies that have resulted in changes in their appearance, operation or capabilities.
   - Switching from one technology or service provider to a new one.
2. If changes are so significant as to require it, additional time will be allocated to demonstrate how such changes have affected operation and workflow.
3. Student and lecturer feedback on blended learning experiences in the preceding academic year will be discussed.
4. Feedback will be discussed in the context of responding to identified challenges, if any, and agreeing upon effective solutions.
5. Existing good practice, innovative ideas for teaching and learning and/or enhancements to assessment approaches will be discussed.
6. Training, feedback and discussion feed into the teaching and learning approach for the forthcoming semester.

Ad-hoc Training:

Ad-hoc training can be arranged at any point by appointment with the educational technologist, regardless of the campus the lecturer teaches in. Training can be provided either online or face-to-face depending on individual need.

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10.6.3 Procedures on Student Readiness for Blended Learning and Virtual Classrooms

The procedures on student readiness for blended learning aims to outline the steps taken to ensure that students can engage with blended learning successfully. The procedures state the actions necessary to give students the opportunity to evaluate their own digital skills, develop the necessary digital skills to engage with blended learning approaches at ICHAS through the use of the Learning Management System, attending VIRI classes, electronic submission of assignments and checking academic originality using digital tools.

Before Application

1. Comprehensive information on the form and manner of blended learning used in ICHAS programmes is available from the ICHAS website. This enables potential students to make an informed decision about their comfort and capabilities with blended learning technologies.
2. Comprehensive information on the minimum technical requirements necessary to use blended learning technologies are also outlined on the ICHAS website. This enables potential students to make an informed decision on whether their personal devices and their internet connectivity meets the minimum requirements needed to support a successful learning experience.
3. In both instances, ICHAS programme coordinators and educational technologist are available to answer any additional questions that potential students may have. Contact details are available from the ICHAS website.
4. Several online information sessions take place during the pre-enrolment / student recruitment phase of the academic year. These information sessions use the same technology as ICHAS virtual classes. Potential students are encouraged to attend these sessions, so they may test the software and evaluate how it works for them.

Induction/Orientation Procedure Ensuring Student Readiness for Online Learning & Virtual Classes

ICHAS implements a robust digital skills induction process taking in all key educational technologies to teach students about blended learning and ensure they have a strong foundation of digital skills as teaching commences. Induction takes place in two phases: induction day itself introduces key concepts and technologies. This is followed by a comprehensive "Introduction to Online Learning" short course delivered over several weeks that ensures students have the opportunity to develop digital skills slowly and with robust support.

Induction Day:

At induction day, the information systems team demonstrates the key educational technologies that students will use.

1. The process for logging in to the Learning Management System is outlined. Students are encouraged to bring their own personal device to Induction Day so that they can activate their account immediately.
2. The Password reset process is outlined next, so that students will always be able to access their account.

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3. The structure and navigation of the Learning Management System is outlined next. Students are shown how to access their student email and download Office 365 software.
4. Students are then shown how to access their modules. The module template is explained – all modules have a consistent appearance and outline to ensure easy navigation.
5. Students will be shown where to access important module information, including:
    a. Module Descriptor and Learning Outcomes
    b. Assessment Information
    c. Assessment Upload links
    d. Virtual Classroom & Class Recording Links
    e. Communication tools such as lecturer instant messaging and discussion forums.
6. The virtual classroom software is introduced next.
7. The process to install the necessary software is demonstrated.
8. Students are shown how to launch and access their virtual classroom. An overview is provided of the virtual classroom itself, outlining its use and capabilities in a brief simulated session.
9. The educational technology overview session concludes with an outline of the "Introduction to Online Learning" course. Students are encouraged to attend and shown how to access it.

Introduction to Online Learning

Weeks 1-2 - Virtual Classrooms

- Documentation on installing software

- Drop-in sessions enabling students to test virtual classrooms on their own device

Week 3 - Using the LMS

- Navigating the LMS

- Navigating Module Pages

- Questions from students

Week 4 - Office and OneDrive

- Using Office 365

- Using & Installing Office 2016

- Using OneDrive

Week 5 - Online Libraries

- Accessing Libraries

- Searching using Libraries

- Saving / Downloading Readings

Week 6 - Assignment Submission

- Assignment Submission & Replacement

- Vericte Similarity Report

- Academic Integrity

Figure 27 Overview of Programme for Intro to Online Learning module

Introduction to Online Learning is a 6-week orientation programme intended to enable students to learn about their educational technologies at a relaxed pace. The course exists as an optional, unassessed module available from the Learning Management System. It is delivered entirely online on the LMS to promote meta-learning about the LMS itself through active use of same. Each weekly session covers a separate topic and digital skills that students need to acquire to engage with their programme.

The topics covered are as follows:
- Weeks 1 and 2: Virtual Classroom Overview & Test Rooms
- Week 3: Using the LMS
- Week 4: Office 365 and OneDrive

- Week 5: Online Libraries
- Week 6: Electronic Assignment Submission and Understanding Similarity Reports

Each topic is supported by useful reading and contextual information on the LMS, and a weekly virtual classroom session. The virtual classroom sessions are recorded for students to review.

1. Weeks 1 & 2 provides students with an opportunity to log in to a virtual classroom from home, using the device and internet connection they will use to attend their own virtual classes. This is supported by comprehensive documentation on installing and setting up the virtual classroom software and builds on / acts as a reminder of the demonstration of the software from induction day.
2. The facilitator outlines the virtual classroom capabilities and walks students through important aspects of the virtual classroom including:
   a. Running through pre-class setup and system test
   b. Turning on their microphone and webcam
   c. Muting their microphone when not talking
   d. Turning off or pausing their webcam
   e. Using the Chat Box to type to their lecturer and classmates
   f. Troubleshooting common problems
   g. How to access ICHAS supports before and during virtual classrooms
3. These sessions typically last 1 hour and are offered multiple times throughout the first two weeks. This is to ensure that all students have an opportunity to attend.
4. Sessions will be held at weekends and in the evening to facilitate those who are working or studying part-time.
5. Week 3 concerns the LMS. It repeats much of the content from Induction Day, allow students to bed down learning about the use of the LMS. Attendees are encouraged to ask questions about navigation and finding information.
6. Week 4 focuses on Office 365 and OneDrive.
   a. All ICHAS students have access to Office 365, Microsoft's online cloud-based suite of programmes including e-mail (Outlook), word processing (Word) and presentation software (PowerPoint). Additionally, students may download an installable version of Office 2016 so that they may access e-mail, word processing and presentation software offline.
   b. Students also have access to OneDrive, a cloud storage solution from Microsoft. ICHAS encourages students to back up and save notes and assignments to their OneDrive account, as it will enable them to access stored items anywhere.
   c. In this session, the facilitator shows students how to access and use the Office 365 online versions of Word, PowerPoint, Email and OneDrive.
   d. Students will be shown how to download and install the local, offline version of these programmes, Office 2016.
   e. The difference between the capabilities of both will be outlined.

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    f.   The facilitator will demonstrate OneDrive, and encourage students to use it in order to backup and secure their data and in particular their assignment documents.

7. Week 5 provides an introduction of the online libraries.
    a.   All ICHAS libraries are accessible online in order to promote equality of access to learning material for all students, regardless of campus.
    b.   This session focuses on the act of accessing and using libraries. It does not cover research strategies – all students complete Research & Inquiry style modules that teaching them about the academic practice of finding suitable material and referencing effectively.
    c.   Students will be shown how to access web-based texts, and how to download and access PDF versions of reading material for later reading.

8. Week 6 concerns how to upload assignments and how to access and understand plagiarism reports from the Vericite plagiarism checker software built into the LMS.
    a.   All assignments at ICHAS are submitted electronically. Students will be shown how to upload an assignment to the LMS.
    b.   This week's virtual class is supported by a trial assignment upload utility – this gives all students the opportunity to upload and submit a document and familiarise themselves the assignment submission process in a low-stakes context.
    c.   Students will be reminded of the importance of academic integrity and original work.
    d.   Vericite is a plagiarism checker that operates seamlessly within the LMS. It is built into the assignment submission process.
    e.   Students will be shown how to review their similarity index and how to check areas of their assignments that may require reconsideration. It is recommended that students review assignments that score approx. 15-20% similarity.
    f.   Students will be shown how to replace an assignment upload with a new version. Students may replace an assignment at any point prior to the due date. This facilitates the easy revision of submitted assignments that score poorly on similarity.

Ongoing Supports for Student Digital Literacy and Skills

ICHAS recognises that the need for digital skills development does not cease following the Induction and Orientation process.

1. The educational technologist is always available for students to contact to discuss their learning needs. The educational technologist can be contacted in person, via telephone or email.
2. All virtual classrooms are actively supported by the ICHAS information systems team. The team provides ad-hoc support as needed to all students to resolve once-off technical issues as they arise.
3. If the team notices that a student is persistently encountering technical problems, they can recommend resources for the enhancement of digital skills

4. The LMS contains an IT Services and Blended Learning section that links to resources and advice on the enhancement of digital skills.
5. Reminders are posted regularly in the Student Dashboard page of the LMS to point students towards resources that can support them in:
   a. Using online libraries
   b. Electronic submission of assignments
   c. Understanding similarity reports and replacing assignments with a high similarity score
   d. Using virtual classrooms effectively

10.6.4 Procedures on Ensuring Quality of the VIRI Session

Figure 28 Outline of Differing QA Processes Feeding into QA of Virtual Classroom / VIRI Sessions

The following procedures are in place to ensure quality in the technology supporting the synchronous virtual classroom service:

1. Members of the information systems team are present during all VIRI classes to assist online learners. This ensures lecturers are free to focus on teaching.
2. Staff monitor classrooms for technological issues. Minor issues are resolved as quickly as possible. Major issues are logged as necessary, so they can be investigated.
   a. ICHAS staff provide support through the chat facility in the virtual classroom, via e-mail and/or via telephone as appropriate to the specific technical problems and learner need or preference.
   b. ICHAS staff can also utilise remote login technology, with the student's consent, allowing them to access the student's device and solve their technical problems as quickly as possible.
3. All end-of-year assessment forms contain explicit questions concerning student and lecturer experiences using the virtual classroom. The responses from these surveys feed into the Annual Review process, and lecturer in-service training, where appropriate.
4. Log files, which record student activity and other learning analytics, are recorded and kept on file for all virtual classroom events.
5. Attendance records for all VIRI sessions are logged automatically and maintained for 12 months.

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6. A review of virtual classroom technology is performed on a six-monthly basis. During this review, feedback is considered, other technologies trialled, and incident report logs/ error logs considered.

10.6.5 Procedures on Ensuring Quality of the Learning Management System

The following procedures are in place to ensure that the LMS continues to meet the needs of students and faculty on an ongoing basis:

1. Annual reviews are undertaken of all ICHAS technology including the LMSs. This review considers students, staff, administrators, technical developers and technical developments in the wider technology environment.
2. ICHAS employs a learning technologist to closely monitor new developments in the e-learning arena and the wider technology environment to assess whether and how these applications might enhance the student, faculty and administrator experience.

10.6.6 Procedures for Delivering a Virtual Classroom

The following procedures are in place to ensure that delivering a Virtual Interactive Real-time Instructor-led (VIRI) virtual classroom at ICHAS is a seamless and high-quality experience for students. These procedures are in addition to those outlined elsewhere detailing how lecturers are provided with training in the digital and pedagogical skills necessary to teach online effectively.

1. The educational technologist or other member of information services creates a link for the virtual classroom, based on the semester timetable. Links are created weekly.
2. Links appear in the student Dashboard of the LMS. This is the first page students see on login, which facilitates easy access to the virtual classroom. Links also appear on the relevant module page.
3. General instructions are provided to students alongside the link on how to launch the VIRI software successfully, as a memory aid. Students are also encouraged to join the VIRI classroom 15 mins prior to commencement if possible, so that any technical challenges can be resolved prior to class commencement.
4. A member or members of the information systems team monitors classes. These members of staff work with students as they log in to ensure the equipment necessary for full engagement with the virtual classroom (microphone, webcam, keyboard) is working effectively.
5. Students with technical issues are encouraged to contact the college directly via telephone. ICHAS staff work with them over the phone to resolve technical problems. If necessary, Remote Desktop software can be used allowing staff to access student hardware to resolve problems, with their express consent to do so.
6. Should lecturers experience technical difficulties, IS staff on site will attempt to resolve the issue. Backup hardware can be deployed to replace any equipment that fails or becomes otherwise unusable.
7. If the lecturer is off-campus or lecturing from home, the Remote Desktop access software will be used to resolve any software issues.

At all times it is the preference of the college to resolve IS issues as quickly as possible to allow classes to continue with a minimum of disruption.

- In the event of a catastrophic failure (e.g. power outage, loss of broadband service), the college will canvass student availability for a suitable date to hold a replacement class.

10.6.7 Annual Module Rollover Procedure

Module rollover is performed annually by the educational technologist. It occurs once the timetables are finalised and lecturers have been allocated to modules for teaching.

1. **Previous Academic Year Module Content**: Content from the previous year's module should not be deleted following the conclusion of the academic year. In addition, content should NOT be hidden unless it is for a specific pedagogic reason. Students retain access to the modules they have taken for the duration of their programme (or until they are no longer an enrolled student, whichever is sooner). Students have indicated often that they refer to module content for revision purposes.

2. **New Academic Year Module Content**: All content is carried over from the previous year's iteration of the same module. The module will be made available 4 weeks before the commencement of the first teaching semester of the academic year. This will give lecturers the time to make changes to their module spaces and develop new learning resources, if required.

Content that remains on the module page following rollover is outlined as follows:
- All text written using the LMS text editor
- All activities added to a module space using the LMS's built-in activities function
- Student activity and contributions within a module is not rolled over to the new academic year. If you have created content using collaboration tools such as discussion forums, wikis or glossaries; these activities WILL be rolled over to the new academic year's module, but any student contributions to them will NOT be copied across.
- Uploaded documents, files and resources such as:
  - Word Documents
  - PDF Files
  - Links to External Websites
  - Podcast content (audio, Narrated PowerPoint and Video)
  - Multimedia resources (e.g. Articulate Storyline, Adobe Captivate, Articulate Present content)

Content that WILL NOT be rolled over, is outlined as follows:
- Announcements posted on the previous year's module.
- Recordings of the previous year's VIRI sessions.
- Assignment briefs. Assignments brief documents for the new academic year will be uploaded by the academic administration team in the first week of teaching.
- Assignment submission links.

The new cohort of students will be enrolled on their modules on the first day of Week 1 per the Academic Calendar.

The lecturer will populate the module space with instruction, learning resources and other material necessary to structure their teaching approach in respect of the achievement of module learning outcomes.

The lecturer will adhere to the procedures for creating and maintaining a module page, and the procedures for developing online learning resources

10.6.8 Procedures for Developing Online Learning Resources and Activities
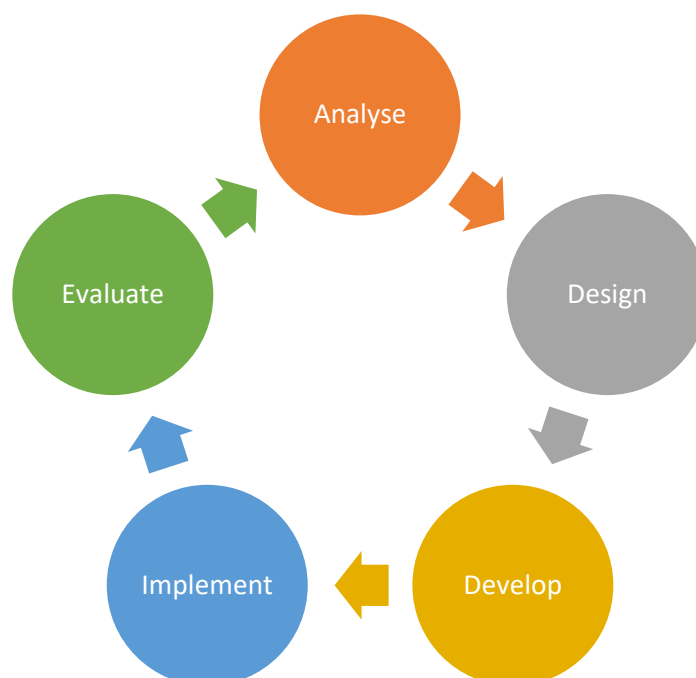
Figure 29 Overview of Process for Developing Online Learning Resources and Activities

The development of online learning resources and activities at ICHAS uses an adapted ADDIE model. Online Learning Resources typically include podcasts, narrated presentations, interactive resources and activities such as discussion fora, quizzes and self-directed online learning components of blended learning.

- **Analyse**: This phase clarifies the instructional objectives of the learning resource(s) and its place in the wider context of the module or programme.
  Ownership: Lecturer, Educational technologist, Module or Programme Lead
- **Design**: Appropriate modes of learning and instruction to meet the learning objectives are considered and settled upon.
  Ownership: Lecturer, Educational technologist, Module or Programme Lead
- **Develop**: The development phase is where the lecturer or other subject matter expert works with the Educational Technologist to develop content and learning interactions in line with what was discussed during the design phase. During this phase, content is written, and graphics, audio, readings and other multimedia are produced or curated.
  Ownership: Lecturer, Educational technologist

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- **Implement**: The learning resource(s) or activities are delivered to the Learning Management System (LMS) for use by students. Direction is provided by the instructor around the use and objectives of the resource.
  Ownership: Lecturer, Educational technologist
- **Evaluate**: Learning resources are evaluated both formatively and summatively. Formative evaluation is iterative and is done throughout the design and development processes. Peer review is an important aspect of this formative evaluation. Summative evaluation utilises student feedback, analysis of student engagement with learning resources
  Ownership: Lecturer, Educational technologist, Module or Programme Lead, QA Team

10.6.9 Procedures for Electronic Assignment Submission
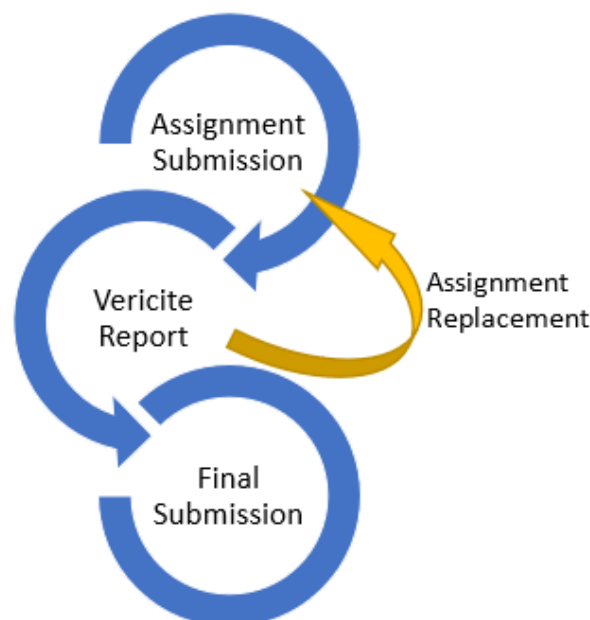
Figure 30 Overview of Procedure for Electronic Assignment Submission and Resubmission (if necessary)

Assignments are submitted using the native assignment submission utility built in to the learning management system. Several redundancies are available to ensure that this system does not fail. Students are encouraged during their induction to use OneDrive to maintain a cloud accessible version of their assignments to prevent loss of file.

1. All assessment work/projects are to be submitted electronically to the LMS on or before the specified deadline. These assignments are date and time stamped.
   a. Submitted assignments may be replaced with a revised assignment at any point up until the specified deadline. Revisions are also date and time stamped.
2. It is not possible for students to amend or change assignments after the specified deadline has passed.
3. Where multiple versions are submitted in advance of the deadline, the final version submitted prior to the deadline will be taken as the intended submission.

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4. Where an assessment has been uploaded by the submission deadline, second or subsequent versions will not be accepted in lieu of the original submission after the deadline has passed, and the original submission received by the deadline will be graded only.
5. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that assignments are successfully uploaded using the correct assignment submission link and students are advised to check and ensure that this is the case.
6. In cases where more than one document file must be uploaded as part of an assignment, students must ensure that all files specified in the assignment brief are uploaded. Failure to upload all required files will be deemed incomplete submission and result in a zero grade.
7. Late submissions may be penalised, or not accepted, in accordance with College policy (specified in Chapter 11). Failure to submit or successfully upload an assessment will be deemed non-submission of the assessment.
8. Students are advised to retain a copy of the assessment work/project submitted. Any work not submitted by the assessment deadline will be given a mark of zero.
9. A formal policy for considering requests for extensions to continuous assessment deadlines is in place. Extensions are granted only where there is evidence of extenuating circumstances.
10. Students must adhere to academic integrity when submitting assignments.
    a. Students may review a Vericite similarity score, which indicates how similar the submitted work is to a comprehensive database of published academic journals, books, and previous student submissions.
    b. Students are advised on how to use their similarity score to evaluate their work, and the steps necessary to avoid academic misconduct and plagiarism. This includes how to revise work to improve its academic integrity.

The online submission procedure exists in addition to the assessment procedures outline in Chapter 11 – Assessment of Learners at ICHAS.

10.6.10 Procedures for Assuring the Quality of Online Forums

As part of the LMS, the College sometimes uses discussion forums as a means of asynchronous learning. The forums are monitored by the lecturer and programme coordinator. The former will respond to posts and moderate academic discussion, while the latter will ensure discussion is taking place respectfully and in accordance with the Discussion Forum Policy below.

Discussion Forum Policy
It is not acceptable to use the forums or any other area of the site to 'sound off' or complain about issues. Any serious concerns about the course should be discussed privately with a relevant member of ICHAS staff.
Abusive comments of any sort anywhere in the online environment will not be tolerated. All posts to online discussion forums are monitored and the College reserves the right to delete

posts of an inflammatory nature. Discussions of a political or religious nature, unless germane to a topic of study, should be avoided.

Communications in an online environment lack the visual signals that you can pick up on in a face-to-face conversation, and it is easy for misunderstandings to arise. Before acting, students should first consider if they are misunderstanding what is being said or the intention of the originator. If still concerned, students should alert their tutor or the site moderators. In such instances, students should not enter a protracted discussion, which is likely to make things worse.

The forum should not be used to:

- Post illegal material
- Defame, abuse, harass, stalk, threaten or otherwise violate the rights (such as rights of privacy and publicity) of others
- Solicit personal information from or about anyone under 18
- Solicit passwords or personally identifying information for unlawful purposes
- Collect or store other users' personal data for purposes other than establishing contact that is reasonably expected to be welcomed by such other users
- Post irrelevant material, repeatedly post the same or similar material or otherwise impose an unreasonable or disproportionately large load on the forum servers or infrastructure
- Post any unsolicited or unauthorised advertising or any other form of commercial publicity
- Post any abusive, harmful, vulgar, obscene, sexually explicit, indecent, profane, inappropriate, or racially, ethnically or otherwise objectionable material, except where the content is appropriate to the content of the forum and you have been granted specific permission to do so and subject to the College's guidelines on said content
- Post material that contains violence or offensive subject matter or links to an adult web site
- Post material that promotes or encourages illegal activity
- Post material that infringes any patent, trademark, trade secret, copyright, rights of privacy or publicity or other proprietary right of any party
- Post material that contains software viruses or harmful programs intended to interrupt, destroy or limit the functionality of computer software or hardware or telecommunications equipment

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11. Assessment of Learners at ICHAS – An Introduction

Providers are mandated to have quality assurance procedures, structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners that comply with QQI policy protocols, conventions and guidelines on Assessment. These refer to:

- Assessment and Standards (Revised 2013)
  Common Awards System Restatement of Policy and guidelines (2014)
- Green Paper on Assessment of Learners and Learning (Draft 2018)
- European Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA, 2015)
- Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining (QQI, 2015)
- HET Core Validation Policy and Criteria (2013)

ICHAS will develop and adhere to procedures for the fair and consistent assessment of students and will publish all related criteria and regulations. ICHAS will ensure validity and reliability of assessment tools and methodologies and will ensure that students will receive timely and constructive feedback on assessment.

11.1. Assessment - Foundational Principles

Student assessment is recognised as both a core teaching activity and a primary means of delivering the College's programmes of learning. The principles that underpin the assessment of students at ICHAS are derived from *Assessment & Standards (QQI, 2013)* summarised in six themes. The learner's responsibility to actively demonstrate the attainment of appropriately designed, unambiguously defined and openly accessible intended learning outcomes form the basis of the assessment strategy in the college. Assessment is not viewed narrowly as outcome but rather as a means of supporting and promoting effective teaching and learning developed organically through robust monitoring, review and renewal. To this end, credibility founded on the principles of fairness and consistency should permeate each and every assessment policy and procedure, where the learner is fully and repeatedly informed of his/her assessment responsibilities prior to and during the learning cycle.

Assessment at ICHAS can be visualised as follows:
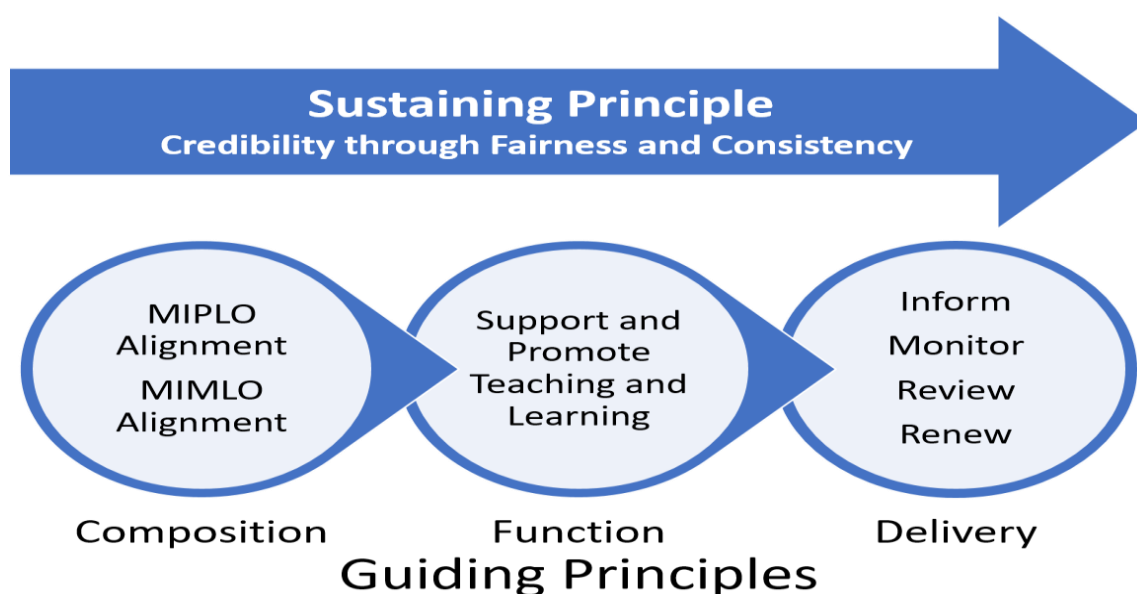
Figure 31 - Sustaining Principle – Credibility based on Consistency and Fairness

Sustaining Principle – Credibility based on Consistency and Fairness.

To establish and ensure the credibility of all assessment processes at ICHAS, the principles of consistency and fairness permeate all assessment policies and procedures.   Student assessment is designed according to validated criteria and is employed exclusively to assess the attainment of intended learning outcomes and the appraisal of progression readiness and for no other purpose. Assessment is inclusive, transparent and administered equitably, impartially and without bias in all instances and in all cases. Consistency, continuity and congruity should be achieved across the entire community of learners through regular and uniform modes of assessment clearly evidenced through a transparent system of grading. Mechanisms are in place to ensure assessor competence, independence and integrity and the existence of appropriate and trustworthy structures of oversight that inform all decision making at every stage of the assessment process. Reliability should be established through adherence to local and sectoral norms without compromising innovation and progressivity.

Sustaining principles should not merely be aspirational but be supported by tangible guidelines, policies and procedures that ensure their realisation. Accordingly, assessment strategies that complement the procedures governing the management and practice of assessment contained in this Quality Assurance Manual, are documented for each programme offered by the College.

The following sections outlines the guidelines associated with each stage of the assessment process from composition to implementation.

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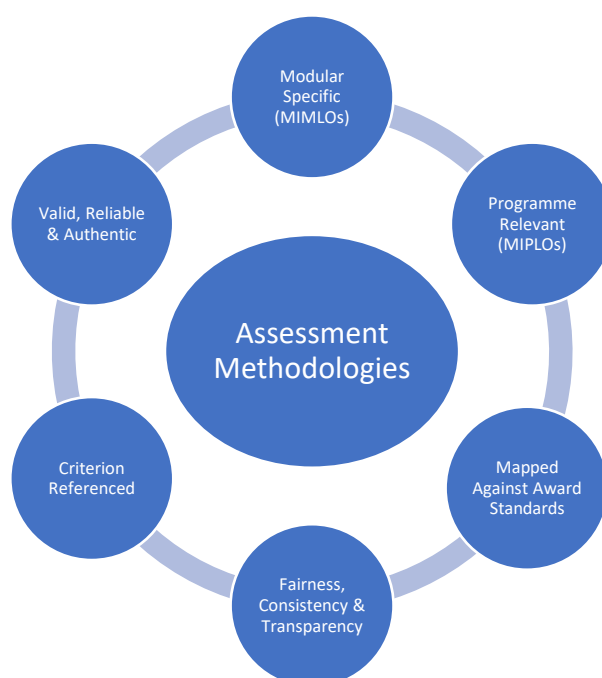
Figure 32 – Expected Characteristics of Assessment Processes on College Programmes

In composing the assessment strategy, the College will always seek to ensure that:

- Assessment methodologies are criterion referenced being derived and clearly linked to modular and programmatic learning outcomes based on a knowledge, skills and competencies approach aligned to specified Awards Standards as contained in the programme validation document or approved revisions of same.

- A rationale for the choice of assessment tasks, criteria and procedures is provided and clarification on how fairness and consistency can be achieved across the range of tasks. In particular, it describes how the validity, reliability and authenticity of the assessment tasks and procedures can be assured.

- Those engaged in the development of assessment strategies possess the required expertise and competencies and have a deep knowledge and understanding of intended outcomes of learning. It is similarly anticipated that assessment development is a collaborative group effort across the appropriate governance structure giving due consideration to learner input.

- The content and connectivity between learning outcomes and assessment is clearly defined and published by the college and that all teaching and learning stakeholders are as fully informed as possible of the rationale and origin of assessment procedures.

- Any programme employs an efficient and fair workload balance across assessment strategies including an appropriate balance of formative and summative assessment approaches. The distinctiveness of these forms of assessment should be persevered and made clear to learners.

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- Any programme's continuous assessment workload is planned and distributed in an appropriately balanced fashion and that account is taken of specific complexities arising from this form of assessment (e.g. opportunities for repeat assessment etc.)
- Any programme's assessment strategy will communicate and define assessment procedures as an integral progression gateway and as the means of establishing the attainment of intended/minimum intended learning outcomes and hence eligibility for HET awards.
- A match between the programme's assessment instruments to the requirements of the sectoral and institutional grading system.
- Any programme's assessment strategy will describe special regulations that may apply to the programme e.g. progression eligibility, compensation, sectoral conventions relating to repeats, pass by compensation, etc.
- The college will benchmark compatibility between programme content and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies' educational requirements where relevant.

Guideline Principles Pertaining to Function

The College is committed to the application of assessment strategies that are fit for purpose and directly related to the programme topic and level and ensures that:
- The purpose of assessment is manifest and integral and there is no deviation from stated purpose or function.
- All forms of assessment promote and support teaching and learning. This acknowledges curriculum and assessment as inseparable and requires a programme assessment strategy that is plainly written and communicated at induction and repeatedly throughout the programmatic cycle
- Modular assessment is integrated with the overall programmatic strategy and that each stage of assessment is suited to an eventual determination of eligibility for a QQI award.
- The assessment task is commensurate with the intended learning outcomes and is appropriate to sectorally agreed benefits for the stage of progression.
- Assessment tasks, criteria and grading are clear, unambiguous and expressed in appropriate and discernible language with advance access to grading schemes for students undertaking assessments. Marking schemes are set and documented for each assessment in advance and are consistently applied by examiners and internal moderators and external examiners.
- Students receive timely and instructional feedback on performance for all forms of assessment (but most especially in the case of formative learning) that is clearly related to the assessment and learning criteria as communicated in the Student and

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Programme Handbooks. Feedback is formulated and delivered in such a way as to enable students to improve their performance in future assessment tasks.

- The distribution of assessment over the course of the academic year is planned so as to avoid a convergence of assessment or over-assessment/double-assessment across modules.

- Principles of best conduct are consistently attained and that acts of plagiarism, collusion or any academic impropriety are actively discouraged by lecturers and examiners. Means of detecting misconduct supported by mechanisms of fair but robust adjudication are incorporated into submission and marking procedures. All lecturers and markers are made aware of the procedures to be applied when an incident of academic impropriety is suspected.

- Confidence through confidentiality and professional integrity underpins the development of assessment tools, marking and invigilation and this be actively communicated to all faculty.

- All forms of assessment are consistent between different examiners and different course centres, and evidence of reviewing and assuring this consistency is maintained.

Guideline Principles Pertaining to Implementation of Assessments

Policies and procedures for the implementation and delivery of the College's Assessment Strategy ensures that:

- Administrative verification and procedural adherence checks are carried with regularity to determine both the accuracy and integrity of stated assessment policies and procedures. These incorporate all possible consequences of examination regulations and procedures.

- Learners are fully informed on all elements of the College's assessment strategy including the validated criteria at modular, stage and programmatic levels. Student assessment procedure is set out in entirely unambiguous ways and in published format that facilitates permanent access. Students are informed in detail not only during induction but regularly during the learning cycle. Information mechanisms include open and accessible explanation of the strategy, criteria, content and timing of assessments and examinations.

- Marking and grading systems are appropriately constructed and explicitly communicated.

- Assessment outcomes are not based on single assessor/examiner marking. This includes clearly stated and comprehensive structures and procedures for internal second marking, examination board structure and functioning and external examiner oversight as established in the College's regulations.

- Assessment strategies are consistently monitored and evaluated through defined structures and systems.

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- Assessment strategies are reviewed regularly and form part of the annual review by the relevant Programme Board. Changes to same are formally approved and documented by the Registrar, following approval and recommendation by the Programme Board. Allowance is made for learner participation in the review process. All reviews also include regulatory impact assessment.

- Assessment materials (most especially unseen examinations) are held securely before and after the assessment takes place to protect the integrity of the assessment process. This ensures efficient fail safes and recording procedures are in place for assessment submission including continuous assessments.

- The College operates an efficient, secure and standardised record keeping and archiving of scheduling around all assessment processes (project/examinations, scripts/submissions, minutes of examination board meetings, external examiners' reports, other committee minutes, broadsheets of results etc.).

- Results and information relating to academic credit are permanently securely stored and archived and student's submissions are retained for an appropriate timeframe and responsibly disposed of thereafter in line with the College's General Data Protection Policy.

- Invigilation procedures are clearly defined and communicated in advance of assessment and carefully managed and monitored during assessment.

- Any new assessment methods are tested in advance of deployment and carefully monitored thereafter.

- Results management systems are robust and accurate, and the promulgation of results occurs in a timely and efficient manner. This extends to notification mechanisms agreed with awarding bodies.

- Assessment procedures address exceptional or mitigating circumstances that might hinder students in fulfilling their assessment responsibilities and that these procedures are clearly stated in the College's regulations.

- Procedural responses to mitigating circumstances are based on reasonable accommodation adhering to the principle of adaptation rather than dilution of assessment criteria ensuring that those who do not receive reasonable accommodation are not disadvantaged.

- While all assessment would normally accommodate flexibility where necessary, any accommodation for flexibility should always be balanced by fairness and consistency for learner population taken as a whole.

- There are clear policies and procedures outlining opportunities for Repeats that are aligned with sectoral conventions (currently - fail affording the opportunity for three repeats).

- There is active and clear communication of procedures for appeals and complaints and the grounds for appeal and complaint are clearly defined. Grounds for complaint should include any deviation from stated assessment procedures, any inconsistencies

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in the content or delivery of assessment, any departure from the stated purpose of assessment or any instances where the College fails to meet its statutory obligations in relation to assessment.

- There are opportunities and clearly stated procedures for re-checks or reviews of submitted assessments.
- The college has sufficiency of resources and facilities required to optimally deliver the assessment strategy

Breaches of confidentiality around assessment are subject to the Disciplinary Procedure contained in the Student and Lecturer Handbooks, which are updated annually.

To ensure that assessment and grading is fair and consistent, each module should be marked initially by the module lecturer and then sample second-marked. Where there is a discrepancy between the first and second marker, the Director of Academic Affairs (who chairs the Internal Moderation Committee) makes the final decision following consultation with the External Examiner and subject to the approval of the Board of Examiners.

11.2. Part 1 - Policies on Management and Oversight of Assessment at ICHAS

Management and Oversight of Assessment

Assessment & Examinations Details developed by Module Leaders

Reports to Lecturers regarding Academic Integrity

Assessment Marking - First Marking

Consideration of Appeals

Report to Academic councli on Enhancement possibilities

Assessment Material approved by Programme Director

Non examination Assessments submitted through Vericite for Integrit Checking

Second Marking

Publicsation of results

Next Cycle

Assessment Material forwarded to Registrar's Office

Assessments/ Examinations Completed by Students

Internal Moderation

Report to Academis Counsli

Confirmation of Assessment Material undertaken by Registrar's Office in consultation with Director of Academic Affairs

Assessments/ Examination Material Published and made avaiable at appropriate time

Pre Examination Board

Examination Board

Figure 33 - The Assessment Cycle

Assessment Roles, Responsibilities and Structures

The key organisational units that support the management and practice of assessment at the College are;

- Academic Council.

- Programme Board.

- Internal Moderation Committee.

- Quality & Standards Committee (including Disciplinary Committee),

- Board of Examiners (including Appeals Committee).

The key individuals (individual duties and responsibilities are outlined in Chapter 4) that support the management and practice of assessment at the College are:

- Director of Academic Affairs.

- Directors of Postgraduate and Undergraduate Studies.

- Registrar.

- Programme Directors.

- Lecturers (internal examiners).

- External Examiner.

The administration and co-ordination of the assessment process is delegated to the Registrar, reporting to the Director of Academic Affairs. All associated documentation, scheduling and minuting of meetings, provision and distribution of information to examiners and moderators, the provision of information to students and other similar activities are the responsibility of this role-holder. This process and associated procedures are overseen and reviewed by the Registrar, while overall accountability for the quality of the assessment process lies with the Director of Academic Affairs.
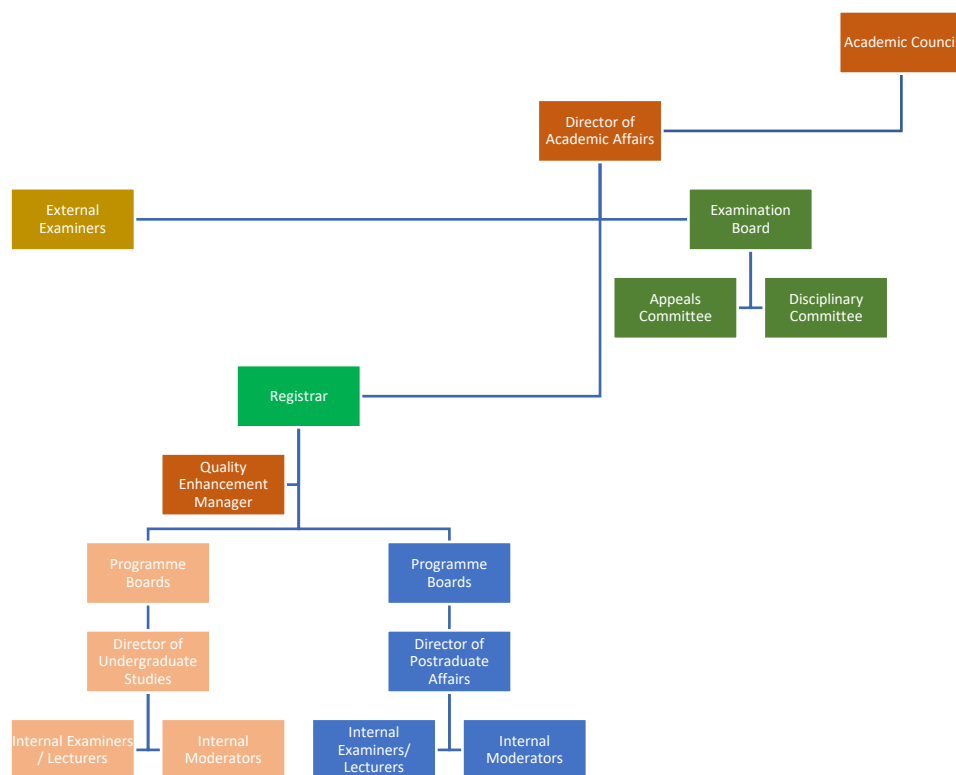
Figure 34- Roles in Assessment Management

The Role of Lecturer/Internal Examiners in Assessment

The role of the internal examiner for any given module is normally undertaken by the lecturer responsible for that module. He/she is expected to:

- Provide the Programme Director and Registrar with draft assessment questions and marking schemes/criteria in approval by the relevant Directors of Studies and consideration by the External Examiner.

- To address any suggestions and recommendations made by External Examiners and to implement the necessary changes in a timely manner.

- To provide support and guidance to students during the assessment process in relation to the structure and layout of examination papers and to communicate the marking criteria effectively and to remind students of assessment deadlines and submission methodology

- To reinforce the requirements for assessment of each module with students

- To grade student work in accordance with the agreed marking schemes/criteria and to ensure that the stated minimum intended module learning outcomes are appropriately examined.

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- To provide feedback (summative or formative) as relevant to students.

- To upload grades and feedback to the ICHAS learning management system on or before agreed deadlines.

- To take account of feedback from the Internal or external moderation process and review any papers and marking as deemed necessary.

- To highlight suspected instances where there may be concerns regarding academic integrity.

- To attend Programme and Faculty board meetings as well as Board of Examiners meetings and other relevant meetings as required.

The Role of the Registrar in Assessment

The Registrar has key organisational responsibility for Assessment Processes within the College as well as for Assuring the Quality of Assessment Strategies and development and enhancement activities. In that regard, these duties are delegated by the Director of Academic Affairs and the Registrar is supported by the Quality Enhancement Manager. The Registrar coordinates the activities of other programme board members including the Directors of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies and the Internal Examiners including Lecturers and Internal moderators. The Registrar manages the following functions in relation to the assessment process;

- Developing timetables for teaching and assessment.

- Ensuring that all internal examiners are appraised of their responsibilities and confidentiality requirements, including assessment deadlines and deadlines for return of grades and feedback.

- Working with the relevant Director of Studies and Programme Directors ensuring marking schemes/marking criteria for each assessment are documented in advance and are distributed to internal examiners.

- To liaise with external examiners and to provide external examiners with details of the requirements and responsibility of the external examiner's role.

- Distribute all documents and scripts to the External Examiner.

- To provide the external examiner with all appropriate college and programme information including (but not limited to) programme aims and objectives, programme learning outcomes, programme assessment strategies, College quality

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assurance procedures relating to assessment, and QQI policy documents related to assessment.

- To notify external examiners of the examinations schedule and calendar of meetings and events relevant to assessment.

- To provide examinations papers, marking schemes and solutions for proofing and comment in a timely manner.

- To provide a relevant representative sample of completed scripts to the external examiner.

- To ensure assessment briefs and examination papers are ready/printed/ distributed.

- Participate in the Internal Moderation and the examination board process.

- Ensure appropriate security and storage of assessment related materials in line with GDPR requirements.

- To ensure that all sensitive and confidential information relating to student assessment is distributed by a suitable secure means of delivery.

- Compile the broadsheets of results in advance of internal moderation and the Board of Examiners meetings.

Internal Moderations Committee

The Internal Moderations Committee which is chaired by the Director of Academic Affairs, is a sub-committee of the Board of Examiners and is convened at the end of each semester once marking of terminal examinations and assessments is complete. Its membership comprises the Director of Academic Affairs, the relevant Programme Directors and the Registrar.

The role of the Internal Moderations Committee is as follows;

- Verify that marking criteria have been applied fairly and consistently across all candidates.

- Responsibility for moderating samples of assessments for each programme following internal marking.

- As part of the role of the internal committee random samples of scripts representing the continuum of grades are reviewed with respect to establishing if the assessments were marked in a way that is consistent with the marking scheme/criteria and the programme level.

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- Where a significant discrepancy is highlighted in relation to the grading of the first and second marker, the internal moderation committee sends the scripts to the Registrar for communication to the External Examiners in advance of the Board of examiners meeting.

Pre - Examination Board

To support the full and proper preparation of results for consideration by the board of Examiners, a pre-examination board is normally convened approximately 1 week prior to the form Examination board. This allows for sufficient time for any corrective action prior for the main examination board. This Pre-Examination Board which is chaired by the Director of Academic Affairs, is also a sub-committee of the Board of Examiners and meets following the Internal Moderation Committee review. The role of this pre-examination board is to;

- Ensure consistency of marking between internal examiners.
- Ensure consistency with national standards for that level.
- Discuss the outcome of marking discrepancies.
- Identify students whose grades are on the borderline in relation to award classification and forwarded for discussion at the Examination board.
- All findings of the Pre- Exam are formally reported at the Board of Examiners.

Formal Examination Board

Within the College, The Board of Examiners is a sub-committee of Academic Council and meets following the pre-examination board and is responsible for the review of the combined outcome of academic work and standards following internal examination, internal moderation and external examination processes. The Board of Examiners will sit at least tri-annually or additionally as otherwise deemed necessary. The Board of Examiners also has an appeals committee as a subcommittee of the board of Examiners which is tasked with the responsibility of considering any appeal of results. The Board of Examiners are charged with the responsibility for considering the marks achieved by individual students with a view to determining eligibility for progression or award. The decision-making process occurs in 3 phases – Pre examination board decisions, examination board decision making and post examination board actions.

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The membership of the Board of Examiners is set out in Chapter 4.   The policy allows for the attendance of a QQI Observer at the Board of Examiners.

Duties of the Board of Examiners

- Ensuring the fair consideration and review of all academic work presented for marking with particular consideration provided to borderline cases and extenuating circumstances in advance of final decisions on grades being reached as highlighted by the Internal Moderation Committee.
- Noting the opinions of the External examiners in relation to academic standards.
- Endorsing a broadsheet of results, which confirms, and records total marks or grades awarded to each candidate in each course module and which indicates a candidate's overall results.
- Review statistics and trends regarding assessment results of programmes under consideration, comparing same with national norms.
- Recommend improvements in process that would enhance the quality of the assessment process.
- Making recommendations for progression.
- Making recommendations to the academic awarding body (QQI) in relation to awards.

Guidelines for Conducting the Board of Examiners

- The Chairperson normally clarifies the roles of board members, and the order of programmes and stages to be considered by the Board. He/She also states the process for recording changes on the original broadsheets.
- Copies of broadsheets should be provided to all members on coloured papers for use during the meeting of the examination board. These are collected by the Secretary before the meeting is closed and shredded.
- One original broadsheet for each programme will be held during the meeting by the Registrar, who will check results and record changes as results are formally considered. This broadsheet as maintained by the Registrar will be distributed for signing by the members of the examination board.

- All attendees must be clearly informed that the proceedings and deliberations of the Board of Examiners are confidential and that, under no circumstances, should any discussion or decision of the Board be disclosed to any other person.
- The Board of Examiners may convene only when there is an appropriate quorum for the proper discharge of the Board's responsibilities. As per QQIs' Assessments and Standards (2013), an inquorate board of examiners meeting does not have the authority to make (legitimate) assessment decisions. Therefore, an inquorate Board has no authority and should not proceed. In order to be deemed quorate, a meeting of the Board of Examiners must include the following participants;
    - Chair
    - Secretary
    - The Programme Director or nominee
    - At least one external examiner
    - At least 50% of the module leaders/ lecturers.

- The External Examiner should attend all Boards of Examiners considering progression and award for learners. Where an external Examiner cannot attend, the approval of the Director of Academic Affairs must be given for the Board to proceed. In such cases, the agreement of the absent External Examiner with the outcomes of the meeting of the Board of Examiners must be secured prior to the publication of results.
- The dates of meetings of the Board of Examiners shall be agreed annually but normally happen three times per annum following each semester.
- QQI are entitled to have a representative in attendance at meetings of the Board of Examiners.

Policy on Board of Examinations Deliberation

The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the conduct and deliberations of the Examination Board are in accordance with ICHAS policies and regulations, marks and standards and QQI Assessment and Standards. The Chair is responsible for directing the board appropriately where misinterpretation, misunderstanding or incorrect application of regulations is

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apparent, and the Chair is required to have sufficient knowledge of programme regulations, ICHAS policies and procedures and QQI Assessment and Standards so as to properly conduct meetings of the Board of Examiners. At all times, the Board members have to be aware of the confidential nature of proceedings. The following decisions are required of the Board:

- Grading is aligned with approved MIMLOs and MIPLOs.

- Assessments have been appropriately graded and learner's results have been appropriately classified.

- Any errors have been appropriately remedied

- Due consideration is given to grade inflation.

- Balanced consideration is given to "borderline" grades with as much deliberation given to increasing and decreasing these grades.

In reaching decisions the Board should adhere to the following

- Examination Board meetings are formal

- Agreement is by consent

- Where intractable disagreement between an Internal Assessor and the Board arises, the majority decision of the Board of Examiners will be considered final

- Where intractable disagreement between the External Examiner and the Board arises, the majority decision of the Board of Examiners will be considered final.

Any disagreement should be diligently recorded in the minutes with due consideration to the implications of dissent in this context.

Policy on Withholding Results from a Board of Examiners

In accordance with its own regulations, and where it has a legitimate reason for doing so, a provider may decide to withhold a learner's results from the board of examiners. In this context, the provider must decide whether it will present such a learner for consideration for the award again. If it does so, the provider must have due regard to the Conventions (Section 3), and under what conditions (e.g. as a first attempt or otherwise) this may be

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External Examiners

External examiners are appointed with a view to providing independent monitoring of assessment adequacy to reflect national and international norms. The External Examiner is a recognised independent expert in the broad field of learning and community of practice, whose qualifications and/or experience attest to his/her ability to fulfil the duties of the role outlined above. Procedures for external examination are developed to ensure compliance with *Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examination (QQI, 2015)* and *Assessment and Standards (QQI, 2013).* These procedures are documented above.

Policy on the Appointment of External Examiner (s)

- Any member of faculty may nominate an individual to the position of External Examiner.

- Such nominations are brought to the attention of the Director of Academic Affairs who will present same to the relevant Programme Board for consideration.

- The Programme Board's decision-making process is criteria based to ensure:
  - required qualification and experience
  - independence and transparency
  - Identification of conflicts of interest

- Once a nomination has been approved, it is brought to Academic Council for approval.

- The Registrar makes initial contact with the nominee to discuss the proposed appointment and establish his/her availability for same.

- Once verbal agreement on the appointment and the nature of the roles and responsibilities is achieved, the details are formally confirmed in a letter from the Registrar to the external examiner.

- The role and function of the External Examiners are explicitly stated and formalised through written agreement.

- Thereafter, the point of contact with the College is the Registrar and relevant members of faculty including Directors of study, programme directors and or lecturers.

- External examiners are normally appointed for a period of three years.

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- External Examiner appointments are communicated to QQI and are accompanied by the External Examiner's curriculum vitae.

Role of the External Examiner

For the purposes of quality assuring assessment, external examiners are responsible for ensuring that the appropriate standards are applied with regard to the various award levels and that the standard of assessment and consequent results is of a comparable standard to other higher education institutions (nationally and internationally). The QQI document Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining (Rev. 2015) defines the main functions of the external examiner as follows:

- Review the appropriateness of the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (i.e. the programme's basic educational goal), and other programme objectives. These should accord with the relevant awards standards and any other standards the programme is designed to satisfy, e.g. professional standards.

- Probe the actual attainment of learners (actual programme learning outcomes) using information agreed with and supplied by the provider.

- Compare and contrast both the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and the actual attainment of learners with the relevant awards standards, with the National Framework of Qualifications, and with corresponding data from other programmes in the same discipline in other higher education institutions in Ireland and beyond.

- Determine whether or not the applied procedures for assessment are valid, reliable, fair and consistent.

- Review the appropriateness of the programme assessment strategy and the assessment procedures and, flowing from this, consider subsidiary module assessment strategies.

- Review key assessment tasks prior to their assignment in light of the programme and module assessment strategies and learners' prerequisite (prior) learning. Where key tasks include key continuous assessment tasks, it might not be feasible to review them prior to assignment, but they should still be reviewed by the external examiner.

- Report findings and recommendations to the provider.

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The external examiner will be required to;

- Acknowledge receipt of examination and assessment material and to take steps to ensure the confidentiality of all material while in his/her possession.

- Communicate all sensitive information relating to assessment via a secure means of delivery.

- Review and approve drafts of all key examination papers, continuous assessment tasks, marking schemes and solutions and to make suggestions and amendments as they deem appropriate.

- Review a representative sample of examination material submitted by candidates, on the basis of a sampling strategy agreed with the College representatives, that will allow him/her judge the appropriateness of the marking at all levels.

- Assessment of the marking associated with borderline cases, and to discuss same with the Registrar and arrive a decision on grades for those students and amendment of assessment marks as he/she deems appropriate and decisions are later ratified at the Examination Board.

- Attendance at the College at least once in the academic year to review student assessment work

- Attendance at appropriate meetings of the Board of Examiners of the College and, in advance, to further review scripts and documentation provided as evidence of the assessment process.

- Completion of an External Examiner Report in accordance with the College template and submit to the College through the office of the registrar on an annual basis

The College's Responsibility in Facilitating External Examination

It the College's responsibility to supply the External Examiner with all necessary supports in order to fulfil his/her duties. The Registrar is the person primarily responsible for the support of external examiners. Where queries relate to the academic content of a programme, the Registrar will liaise between the Director of Academic Affairs and/or the Programme Director/ Lecturer and the External Examiner. The Registrar on behalf of the College will facilitate the provision of all relevant information to the External Examiner, including

- Information on the College, including details of assigned points of contact

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- All relevant QQI documentation on Assessment and Standards

- All Quality Assurance procedures relating to assessment

- All relevant programmatic and modular descriptors outlining learning outcomes and assessment strategies

- All relevant assessment/grading criteria/rubrics.

- All key assessment tasks and briefs to review before the assignment is finalised.

The Registrar will also

- Provide a representative range of assessed material including a sufficient sample of work achieving high, middle and low grades and statistics relating to same.

  • Facilitate the external examiner's visit to the College

  • Provide external examiner's report guidelines and template.

  • Ensure that the findings and recommendations of the external examiner are systematically addressed by the College's quality assurance system and are considered as important inputs into programme's quality assurance cycles and related processes.

All communication between the College and the External Examiner is channelled through the Registrar's Office. The External Examiner is required to acknowledge receipt of all assessment material from the College.

11.3.   Part 2 - Policies on Assessment Process

Formulation of Assessment

Assessment Methodologies

ICHAS employs a broad range of assessment instruments to ensure the fair facilitation of varied learning styles across the student population. Assessment types include

- Continuous Assessment

- Practical Assessment

- Project Assessment

- Terminal Assessment

- Placement Assessment

- Thesis/Dissertation/Research Report

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- Group Assessment
- Written/Oral Examination

Roles and Responsibilities in the formulation of assessment

- Programme directors, in co-operation and collaboration with the Registrar has overall responsibility for the co-ordination of assessment formulation.
- The responsibility for devising assessment material is deferred to the module leader/ lecturer.
- Where a module is taught by more than one lecturer (e.g. full time/part-time group, different centre locations) all formation of assessment material must be singularised collaboratively
- All assessment material is reviewed and sanctioned by the Registrar in discussion with the Programme Director and prior to publication on the LMS.

An assessment development meeting occurs annually comprising of the Director of Academic Affairs, the Registrar, Programme Directors and all module leads/lecturing Staff. The meeting addresses the following:

- Assessment content – ensuring alignment with programme learning outcomes, adherence to stated programmatic assessment strategy and ensuring inclusion of all assessment types (diagnostic, formative and summative)
- Assessment review – review of the continued applicability, relevance and suitability of assessments (includes cyclical refresh of content)
- Assessment timing, weighting and scheduling issues – reviewing outgoing academic year and preparing for incoming academic year.
- Assessment formulation – assessment planning for incoming academic year.

Assessment Specification

Assessment specifications will contain the following:

- Modular brief – (including name, codes, weighting, assessment type,)
- Assessment rationale – (including relevant coursework summation, learning outcomes being assessed

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- Assessment instructions – (formatting, word count, durational boundaries, submission dates)
- Assessment discipline (policy on late submission, non-submission repeat opportunities

Examination Papers

Examinations papers will be developed and formulating according to the same procedures outlined above with the following addendums:

- Examination papers will be designed to a standardised template to be used across all modules.
- Examination papers will undergo a rigorous editing review which is the responsibility of the module leads/lecturer(s) setting the examination and the overseeing Programme Director.
- In addition to typographical editing careful attention should be given to instructional elements of the examination paper with emphasis on consistency, accuracy and clarity.
- Edited examination papers will be submitted for moderation to the Director of Academic Affairs.
- Examinations papers will be finalised prior to the commencement of the semester.
- Timeframes for examinations will be aligned to credit weightings (e.g. 5 Credit – 2 Hours, 10 Credit 3 Hours) and adjusted downward in circumstances where the examinable component is less than 100% of the overall modular mark.
- In the case of unseen examinations, the finalised paper should be stored securely (password protected in the case of digital storage).

Policy on the Provision of Information on Assessment to Students

- The ICHAS Student Handbook contains information on policies, procedures and regulations pertaining to assessment. Each student receives the Student Handbook upon induction in first year and given access to the updated versions at commencement of each stage via the Learning management system. The Student Handbook is reviewed and updated annually.

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- At the start of each academic year, students also receive a Programme Handbook, which supplements the Student Handbook. The Programme Handbook contains the specific academic information relevant to the individual's programme, notably module descriptors, learning outcomes, associated assessment strategies, booklists, and academic calendars. The academic calendar details lecture commencement and conclusion dates, as well as assignment submission dates and examination week dates.

- Within the first week of each module, students receive relevant continuous assessment assignment briefs for the modules being completed in that semester. The assignment briefs provide students with details of the assessment tool being employed, the learning outcome(s) it is designed to measure and what criteria will be applied to assess performance, and the deadline and means of submission.

- The distribution of feedback and assessment results is the responsibility of the Registrars Office. All requests for further feedback area also handled by this Office. Respecting the principle of confidentiality outlined above, module leaders/lecturers/examiners will refer any queries relating to the examination process to the Examination Board Via the Registrar.

Policy on Word Count and Durational Indication for Oral Delivery

- All written assessment will have a word count and all oral presentation should normally have a specified timeframe.

- Specified word count's and specified timeframes will be aligned with stage level assessment requirement as outlined in the validated programme document

- Word count and durational indication will take account both of modular credit weighting and split ratios where more than one form of assessment is applied to a single module

- Plus/minus 10% leeway will be applied to word counts and specified timeframes

- Where the word count/specified time frame is exceeded any written material beyond the stated allowance will not be marked and should normally be indicated in the examiner's feedback

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- Failure to meet the word count results in reduction of marks on a sliding scale 5% mark reduction for every 10% shortfall.
- Word count excludes title page and bibliography/references lists and appendices.

Responsibilities of Students in relation to Assessments

Once students have been provided with information as outlined in student handbook, it is the responsibility of the individual student :

- To ensure all examination and programme fees are paid in advance of examination session
- To confirm the final examination timetable on the ICHAS portal two days before the first examination as there may be amendments to the provisional schedule
- To be familiar with all information relevant to assessments and examinations
- To be aware of the date, time and location of examinations relevant to him/her
- To obey examination and assessment regulations
- To submit all examinable material by the appointed deadline
- To submit any request for extension of assignment submission dates in writing as per the policy on Deferrals/ Extensions/ Late Submissions/ Reasonable accommodation before the assignment deadline; this request must be accompanied by supporting documentation and/or a description of the extenuating circumstances which led to the request for extension.

Policy on Invigilation

- Invigilators are responsible for all activities that occur in the examination venues but will be supported at all times by at least one onsite Programme Co-ordinator.
- Invigilators receive appropriate training of their roles and responsibilities which is recorded for their reference.
- All examinations should have a sufficient number of invigilators.
- Invigilators must be at the examination hall at least thirty minutes before the commencement of the examination.

- Invigilators must ensure that the examination hall is in a state of readiness (including the organisation of examination papers) so that the examination begins precisely as scheduled.

- Invigilators must make any conflict of interest known to the Registrar, where applicable.

- Invigilators should ensure that all examination regulations (as per Policies on Examination Regulations below) are adhered to and provide clear instruction to the learners regarding the examinations which are taking place. They will also have access to an Examinations Incidents' Report template.

- Invigilators should exercise a constant observation over the examination, desist from any activity that prevents invigilation responsibilities (reading, use of mobile or fixed technology, etc.) and must not absent themselves at any point during the examination hall except in agreed circumstances.

- Invigilators should not engage in any activity which distracts them or learners who are sitting the examinations (this includes inobtrusive movement through the examination hall, appropriate footwear, unnecessary conversation, gesticulation etc.)

- Invigilators should ensure that silence is maintained throughout the examination and address any refusal to stay silent. After one warning has not been acted upon they should proceed to note learners' names in their Incidents' Report.

- Invigilators do not answer queries concerning the content of any question paper. Any serious query regarding the examination paper will be brought to the immediate attention of the Registrar.

- No candidate may leave the examination hall save for urgent reasons and with the express permission of the invigilator. The candidate must be accompanied during his or her absence by an invigilator or the onsite Programme Co-ordinator.

- Invigilators must accompany candidates to the toilet. The invigilator must also mark their initials and indicate the time in the margin of the answer booklet whenever they accompany a candidate to the toilet.

- Invigilators will immediately inform onsite Programme Co-ordinator should of any learner requiring medical attention during the examination.

- Any candidate who impinges the rules will be reported to the Registrar.

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- If there are reasonable grounds for believing that a candidate is acting irregularly, invigilators should record the incident in the Examinations Incidents Book and should discreetly monitor the behaviour of the candidate concerned without disturbing any of the candidates in the hall.

- In exceptional circumstances should the candidate be required to leave the examination hall, the matter should be entered in the Examinations Incident Book and reported verbally and in writing, without delay, to the Registrar.

- Invigilators must ensure that candidates do not remove examination script books or part thereof from the examination hall.

- Candidates may not take exam papers from the exam hall unless the full examination time has elapsed.

- Invigilators will announce to the candidates when ten minutes remain of the examination.

- At the end of the examination all examination answer books should be collected by the invigilators and signed in to the Registrars for collection by the appropriate module leader/lecturer/ examiners.

- In the event of a fire, the College fire drill will be followed.

- If there is any external interference with the examination, the Registrar should be informed immediately.

Policy on Reasonable Accommodation

ICHAS is fully committed to equality of educational access and attainment among students. Management will actively seek to develop and implement policies and procedures which promote equality.

Students and potential students with recognised disadvantages or disabilities may be given special consideration during course delivery and assessment. A substantial disadvantage is one that entails time, inconvenience, effort or discomfort compared to other people or students and which is more than minor or trivial. A reasonable accommodation is any action that helps alleviate a substantial disadvantage e.g. changing procedures, providing additional

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time at examinations. The following policies and procedures apply to reasonable accommodation:

- Each request for a reasonable accommodation will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Registrar, the relevant Director of Studies and the Head of Quality and Standards.

- It is the responsibility of each and any student with a disability or disadvantage to inform ICHAS of this when applying for the course of study and, where appropriate, at the start of each academic year.

- Applicants with a disability or disadvantage has the responsibility to provide documentation from acceptable professional sources that verifies the nature of the disability and any disadvantage arising from that disability. All disability records will be treated confidentially, and each applicant will be treated with dignity and respect.

- Appropriate accommodation to be made is agreed with the student and is formally confirmed in writing in advance of assessments or examinations. This confirmation will expressly state the particular examinations and/or assessment to which the accommodation should apply.

Policy on Examination Regulations

- Students must comply with all directions from the invigilators and corridor / toilet duty staff on the day of exams. Each student is to make themselves aware of the Fire Exits in the building

- Students shall display their student cards on the desk during each exam

- Mobile phones are to be switched off and placed in personal baggage which must be placed at the top of the exam hall for the duration of the exam (or outside the building e.g. in your car). If a mobile phone rings during the examination, the learner will forfeit that paper and will have to re-sit at the next available sitting.

- Only authorised stationery and material will be allowed on the desk i.e. questions sheets, answer booklets, spare paper, pens and reading glasses.

- No pencil cases or food allowed on the desk – bottles of water can be left on the floor under your examination table.

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- Other authorised stationary e.g. paper dictionary may only be used with the previous consent of the college.

- Students are not allowed into the exam hall for the first 15 minutes of the exam if they arrive late and no student will be allowed enter the exam hall once the first 30 minutes has elapsed.

- Students are asked to refrain from nervous tapping which causes unnecessary noise and distractions for other students.

- Students may leave the exam hall once the first 30 minutes have elapsed.

- Students are not allowed to leave during the last 15 minutes of the exam.

- Students may leave to go to the toilet during the exam. The invigilator will note the time the student left and the time of return. An invigilator on corridor duty will accompany the student to and from the washroom facilities.

- The invigilator will call the time at various intervals during the exam and when the exam is over.

- Students are advised in advance of the examination that they should advise the invigilator immediately if they perceive a difficulty with the procedure of the examination. The invigilator will immediately notify the Registrar and/or the Registrar who will enter the exam hall and seek to remedy the situation.

- It is the student's responsibility to return all exam booklets and rough work to the invigilator, to sign the log sheet when leaving the exam hall.

- Students must not confer with each other when leaving the exam hall and are requested to remain quiet at all times and not to linger outside the exam hall door.

Breaches of Examination Regulations

It is a disciplinary offence and a breach of examination regulations for a candidate to:

- Have unauthorised items or texts at his/her desk during the examination

- Make use of unauthorised items or texts during the examination

- Copy from the script of another candidate during the examination

- Dishonestly receive help from another person during the examination

- Dishonestly give help to another person during the examination

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- Act dishonestly in any way (whether before, during or after an examination) so as to obtain or confer an unfair advantage to themselves or another candidate.
- Being disruptive to the proper conduct of the examination for other examinees;

Procedure for dealing with Breaches of Examination Regulations

- The Invigilator will be informed and asked to confirm their suspicions
- The following procedure also applies in instances where an Internal Examiner/lecturer/examiner after consultation with a second marker, who, when marking examination scripts, suspects that cheating has taken place.
- The candidate will be warned that a report will be made to the Registrar and recorded in the Examinations Incident Book.
- The invigilator will confiscate any unauthorised material,
- Indicate on the candidate's script what has occurred and remove the script.
- The candidate will then be given further examination books and permitted to complete the examination.
- The invigilator will seek an explanation from the candidate at the end of the examination and submit a report to the Registrar.
- A candidate who has been given a verbal warning by the Invigilator that a report will be made to the Registrar may submit a written statement, before the matter is considered by the Programme Director and the Registrar who will invite the candidate to a meeting to discuss the matter. If either party are responsible for the examination then they may nominate another Chair to act on their behalf, normally the Director of Academic Affairs
- If it is considered at this point that there is a case to answer, they will accordingly inform the candidate in writing. The candidate will then be afforded the opportunity to provide an explanation in writing or orally.
- The Director of Academic Affairs will be then invited to review the incident with the Registrar and the Programme Director. In the case that they conclude that cheating has occurred, they will determine an appropriate penalty.

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Penalties for Breach of Examination Regulations

Penalties for breaches of examination regulations may include:

- Assigning a mark of zero for the particular examination concerned.

- Assigning a mark of zero for all or part of the course/unit/module of which the examination was a component part.

- Setting aside all or part of the overall examination while permitting the candidate to take the examination again at the next available opportunity or in the following year.

- Suspension of the candidate from the College for a period not exceeding two years.

- Permanent exclusion from the College in case of impersonation.

Policy on the Submission of Continuous Assessment materials

- The method for assignment submission is communicated to students on the Assessment Brief.

- The examiner has the right to reject any submission that is not submitted through the agreed mode of submission the main method of submission is through the ICHAS learning management system.

- In advance of programme commencement, all students are provided with personalised login details, and an Assignment Submission Utility Guide is included in the Student Handbook and by download on the learning management system.

- The Information systems department provides practical telephone and online support to any student who experiences difficulties uploading an assignment by the agreed deadline.

- Where technical difficulties exceptionally prevent the upload of an assignment, an agreed extension on the assignment deadline is communicated to students who may then post or email the assignment to the relevant programme co-ordinator.

- Students are advised to retain a copy of all assessment work and project submitted.

Policies on Assessment Timeframes

To ensure fairness and consistency across all modes of assessment delivery, ICHAS requires strict adherence to agreed timeframes for assessment submission. The college recognises

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that personal mitigating circumstances do arise preventing students from meeting these deadlines. These policies take equal cognisance of the necessity to preserve fairness for those students who meet the agreed timeframes. Ameliorative policies to address failure to meet submission timeframes include:

- Repeat assessment
- Penalties for late submission
- Authorised extension
- Authorised deferral

Policy on Repeat Examinations

A candidate who fails to achieve an overall pass at a particular stage or year of a course may be entitled to a repeat sitting of that examination or assessment. Failure to submit a scheduled assessment is considered an attempt and is subject to repeat. The following policy outlines the procedural process for repeat examination:

- Where the assessment is unseen the repeat assessment should be substantively altered from the original assessment
- Any failed examination must be normally attempted at the next scheduled repeat sitting for that examination, except where the learner has an approved deferral
- Candidates are normally allowed a total of three repeat examinations sittings, i.e. the Autumn Repeat Examinations of the same year, and the Summer Examinations and Autumn Repeat Examinations of the following year.
- The maximum grade that may be awarded to a student who is required to repeat assessments is 40% (Pass).

Policy on Personal Mitigating Circumstances

Personal Mitigating Circumstances (PMC) is defined as medical or personal (e.g. bereavement) circumstances that seriously affect a student's ability to attend to or complete a scheduled assessment task. PMC may also pertain to attendance where attendance is a compulsory and graded component of the assessment procedure for a module.

In the absence of prior disclosure of personal mitigating circumstances, student engagement with assessment is based on the assumption of fitness to participate and complete the scheduled task. Consequently, in circumstances where an assessment task is not completed, subsequent disclosures of PMCs are not considered valid. The only exception to this policy is where independent verifiable evidence can be produced that the PMC occurred during, or concurrently with, the assessment deadline. The policy on PMC is as follows

- PMC should be described and evidenced on the appropriate documentation

- The strictest confidentiality should be maintained around any disclosure of PMC

- Access to PMC disclosures will be exclusively limited to those tasked with reviewing and processing the disclosure

- PMC will be submitted through the Programme Co-ordinator and reviewed by the Registrar and the Programme Director/suitably qualified member of Academic Staff.

- Review will be limited to establishing whether or not PMC are present and whether they affected the student's performance

- Where PMCs are present the student will be offered an extension/deferral

- PMC will not result in exemption

- Any decision to accept PMC in relation to assessment completion must be brought to the attention of the Board of Examiners

Policy on Extension Requests

The policy on extension requests acknowledges that circumstances of sufficient extenuation can arise and prevent a student from meeting prescribed assessment deadlines. However, the policy is equally directed by the need to ensure fairness to all students – consideration of fairness to those who meet an assessment deadline must therefore be factored when administering the following policy:

- Students wishing to apply for assignment submission extensions will be required to contact their module Lecturer in the first instance to discuss the reasons behind their decision to seek such an extension

- At this point they should be referred to the programme co-ordinator.

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- Students are requested to complete the Assignment Extension Request form must be undertaken. This must include documentary evidence.

- All requests are reviewed and decided upon by the Director of Academic Affairs

- Requests must be made at least **5 days** before the submission date.

- The duration or length of the assignment extension will normally not exceed **7 days.**

- Extension requests will only be considered retrospectively when the affecting circumstance (outlined below as Medical, Accident, Compassionate) occurred simultaneously with the assignment deadline and unequivocal evidence of the occurrence can be provided.

The following are the only grounds that may be acceptable for the late submission of coursework:

- **Medical:** the student has been absent from College due to illness/injury and submits a medical certificate covering a substantial proportion of the time allowed for completion of the work

- **Accident:** An independently verified occurrence which unequivocally prevented the student from attending or submitting for assessment

- **Compassionate:** recent death or serious injury of a close family relative. The student must however submit a letter explaining the circumstances

Policy on Deferrals

The Board of Examiners may, in exceptional circumstances (such as illness or bereavement), recommend that a final decision on a candidate's result be deferred to enable the candidate to complete specific outstanding requirements of the course. The following policy guidelines apply:

- Students seeking Deferral must establish PMC

- Students seeking Deferral must complete a Deferral Form which should be normally submitted in advance of the assessment submission deadline

- Any deferral of a decision in relation to a candidate's result shall be for a limited period, not exceeding one academic year.

- Any re-assessment arising from deferral will be graded as a first sitting

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The ICHAS Deferral of Module and Deferral of Programme forms are available on the LMS.

Policy on Late Submission

- All students have a responsibility to submit assessment according to published timeframes and agreed modes of submission

- This will be applied consistently to prevent learners who submit beyond the advertised deadline gaining unfair advantage over those who submit their work on time.

- Students will be fully informed of all aspects of submission policy prior to undertaking any assignment both verbally, in the Student Handbook, and on the assessment section of modular content on the LMS

- Penalties will accrue for unauthorised late submission of assessment material

- This does not affect students right to seek or who seek and are granted an authorised extension arising from an acceptance of mitigating circumstances (see Policy on Deferrals and Policy on Extensions above)

- This policy will apply to students who do not meet an agreed revised submission deadline arising from an authorised extension or deferral

- The grade for any assignment work not submitted by the assessment deadline will be a maximum mark of 40%.

- The late submission penalty applies to first attempt submissions only. Unauthorised late submission of repeat assessment will be awarded a mark of 0%.

- Where a piece of group work should be submitted in its entirety as single submission any penalty for late submission incurred applies to all group members.

- Assessments submitted through the LMS will be considered as final for grading

- The LMS will record the date and time of submission

- Internal examiners are required to account for the recorded data and time when appraising submissions and apply stated penalties if late submission is detected.

- Students will be specifically informed by the examiner when a late submission is capped at the 40%

Work which is not undertaken under formal examination conditions and which counts towards a Student's degree or other academic award must be the Student's own work and must not contain plagiarised material. Collusion is a form of plagiarism that can occur as a result of inappropriate collaboration during group work. Collusion involves working with others without permission from the relevant lecturer to produce work which is then presented as an individual's own independent work. The following policy applies to plagiarism:

- Use of plagiarised material in such coursework is treated as a disciplinary offence.

- Assignments are submitted through the LMS. Assignments may not be submitted without student confirmation that the material they are submitting is original and is entirely their own work.

- Essays will not be accepted unless they are accompanied by a completed cover sheet.

- The LMS assessment submission protocol requires students to use plagiarism detection software.

- Each assignment is therefore awarded a percentage similarity score – any score above 23% will be subject to review by the Internal Examiner

Candidates may also commit a disciplinary offence by submitting coursework which has been written by someone else. Where internal examiners agree that there are grounds for suspicion then, subject to the approval of the programme co-ordinator the Student may be called in for a viva voce on the coursework. If the examiners' suspicions are confirmed by the viva voce, they will make a report to the Chairman of the Board of Examiners.

Procedures for Cases of Suspected Plagiarism and Collusion

- If examiners suspect that plagiarism has occurred, they have a duty to report their suspicions to the Registrar and prompt action will be taken to enable procedures to be set in motion quickly.

- The students must be formally notified (with copies of all appropriate College policies on Plagiarism) of the investigation and their rights

- A deliberative interview comprising of the Internal Examiner and the Registrar should be arranged to review the allegation

- The student has the right to attend the deliberation session and has the right to nominate a witness to attend.

- The witness will have no role in the deliberation other than to witness the proceedings

- During the interview the student's work is discussed, with the aim of determining whether the allegations are founded and if so, what the appropriate penalty will be enacted

- If the interviewers are satisfied on the balance of probability that plagiarism has occurred a mark of 0% will be awarded for the assignment under investigation.

- In the case of plagiarism resulting from unauthorised group work rather than straight copying, an appropriately reduced mark, other than zero, may be awarded.

- The student will be offered the opportunity to repeat the assignment under the conditions of the relevant policy on repeat assessment outlined above

- In all cases a record is held and reported to the Board of Examiners.

- Should the student refute the accusation of plagiarism at this point, the matter will be referred to the Programme Board and be brought to the College's Academic Council for consideration.

- For a second offence, or one involving a project, the matter is dealt with by the College's Academic Council.

Policy on Penalties for Collusion

The Board of Examiners may impose any of the following penalties, or a combination of same, for collusion:

a. Award the Student lower marks than those which he or she would otherwise have been awarded, or award no marks, for the examination or coursework in which the Student committed the offence

b. Award the Student lower marks than those he or she would otherwise have been awarded, or award no marks, for the unit of which the examination or coursework was part, or recommend this to the appropriate Board of Examiners

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c. Award the Student a lower class of degree or other academic award than that which he or she would otherwise have been awarded or recommend this to the appropriate Board of Examiners

d. Exclude the Student from the award of a degree or other academic award, which may be either permanent or for a stated period and may be absolute or subject to compliance with stipulated requirements, or recommend this to the appropriate Board of Examiners.

e. Preclude the student from attending the ICHAS conferring ceremony.

Policy on Marks and Grading

Purpose of Marking Criteria

- Explicit marking criteria (i.e. the broad learning outcome knowledge and skills requirements which are taken into account in awarding assessment marks) are necessary in order to enable consistent standards of marking and judgment to be maintained.

- They can also provide Students with a clear statement of what is expected of them and provide guidance on how performance can be improved.

- The aim of the ICHAS marking procedure is to ensure accuracy and consistency of marking, for the individual Student and within the unit.

Formulation of Marking Criteria

- Each Programme Director will establish generic marking criteria relating to the classification of awards.

- Course marking criteria will be supplemented at the level of individual programmes, to reflect discipline-specific learning outcomes.

- Marking schemes are as detailed as possible to ensure consistency when used by a team of examiners

- Marking criteria will take into account the relevant nationally-set subject benchmarks.

Assessment of Marking Criteria

- Students will be informed at the outset of their degree studies and at the beginning of each academic year of any obligation to make available assessed work which might be required for the purpose of moderation.

- Initial marking based on defined marking criteria will be conducted by the module lecturer

- Once marked, scripts will undergo an internal moderation process, where scripts are checked for consistency with the marking criteria and national standards.

- Internal moderators also verify that the marking criteria have been applied fairly and consistently across all candidates.

- All assessed work is also subject to external, independent moderation.

- Only after marks have been approved by the external examiner(s) will marks be submitted to the Examinations Board for approval.

- Boards of Examiners will determine whether:
  - the extent to which the marking criteria are satisfied
  - a candidate's strengths in one area can offset shortcomings in another
  - consideration will be given to factors such as differences of approach, style and interpretation.

Policy on Grading and Grading Schemes

Grading is only applied to the overall award and not to individual modules. The Grading system at ICHAS is aligned with the QQI Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013, which describes the classifications available for major awards (made by QQI or by recognised institutions under delegated authority) in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The following grading system applies to QQI awards:

Ordinary Degree (Level 7)	
• Distinction:	At least 70% of the total marks available
• Merit Grade 1:	At least 60% of the total marks available
• Merit Grade 2:	At least 50% of the total marks available
• Pass:	At least 40% of the total marks available

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Honours Degree (Level 8)	
• First Class Honours	At least 70% of the total marks available
• Second Class Honours Grade 1	At least 60% of the total marks available
• Second Class Honours Grade 2	At least 50% of the total marks available
• Pass	At least 40% of the total marks available

Masters Degree Taught (Level 9)	
• First Class Honours	At least 70% of the total marks available
• Second Class Honours	At least 60% of the total marks available
• Pass	At least 40% of the total marks available

Figure 35 - Grading System -- QQI Awards

ICHAS programmes are organised in clearly-defined stages. To be eligible to progress to a particular stage, a student is normally required to demonstrate achievement of the minimum intended learning outcomes of all the preceding stages.

Reconsideration of Grade by Board of Examiners

Learners may be considered by the Board for an award higher than that indicated by their mark, where:

- The final award grade is within 1%, of the higher classification boundary
- Where at least 50% of the credit-weighted modules are in the higher class bracket
- Other such evidence of extenuating circumstances (such as illness and/or personal mitigating circumstances) that were disclosed to the college is considered at the discretion of the Examination Board to be appropriate

Policy on Assessment Feedback

All grading of continuous assessment should include examiner feedback. Feedback should:

- Correlate with grade awarded, the pertinent marking criteria and the modular learning outcomes
- Be unambiguous, formative, developmentalist, evaluative and constructive
- Be available to all tiers of assessment governance

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- Be specific to and focussed on the assessment task with no reference to elements beyond the assessment remit
- Be based on informed, objective professional opinion

Grade Recheck

Grade Recheck means the "administrative operation of checking (again) the recording and combination of component scores for a module and/or stage" (QQI, 2013). Rechecking is therefore an administrative operation of checking the recording and the calculation of marks for the assessment. Rechecking procedures ensure that the feedback and results published by the College is free of arithmetical or other administrative errors of fact. The following procedure applies to Grade Recheck:

- A request for Grade Recheck must be submitted in writing to the relevant Programme Coordinator within 5 working days after the examination results are approved.
- Learners must be informed of the distinction between recheck, review and appeal and it should be made clear to the learner that rechecking does not involve a review or an appeal of an assessment result
- It is possible for grades to be confirmed, lowered or increased as a result of a recheck and students must be fully appraised of all possibilities in advance of rechecking.
- A charge of €25 per module rechecked is payable with the form, which is refundable if the grade is changed as a result of a recheck.
- The Registrar (or designated staff member) is required to return the completed grade recheck within 5 working days and the Programme Co-ordinator will notify the student in writing once the recheck decision has been confirmed.
- A student who is not satisfied with the result of a recheck may appeal the decision through the Appeals process below.

Grade Review

Grade Review means the re-consideration by the examiners of all or part of the existing examination/assessment material, together with a re-consideration by the Board of Examiners of a full set of results. Similarly, review in this context is defined "the re-consideration of the assessment decision, either by the original assessor or by other competent persons" (QQI, 2013). A Grade Review can be requested in circumstances where a student believes the assessment was erroneous in some respect. The following procedure applies to Grade Review:

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- A request for review must be received by the relevant Project Co-ordinator no later than five working days after the date of posting results on the college portal.

- The request must contain a detailed submission identifying the element or elements of the examination for which the review is being sought according to the procedures outlined in the Grade Review form.

- Students are required to state the grounds on which the review is requested and are advised to submit all supporting evidence that is requested for consideration in the review as outlined in the Grade Review form.

- If the student has not previously paid a fee for Grade Recheck, a charge of €25 per module reviewed is payable with the form which is refundable if the grade is changed as a result of the review.

- The Internal examiner/lecturer, the Programme Director and the Director of Academic Affairs will deliberate and decide upon the Grade Review and they are required to return the completed Grade Review within 10 working days.

- The Programme Co-ordinator will notify the student in writing once the review decision has been confirmed.

- All decisions of the Grade Review Process will be referenced at the following sitting of the Board of Examiners.
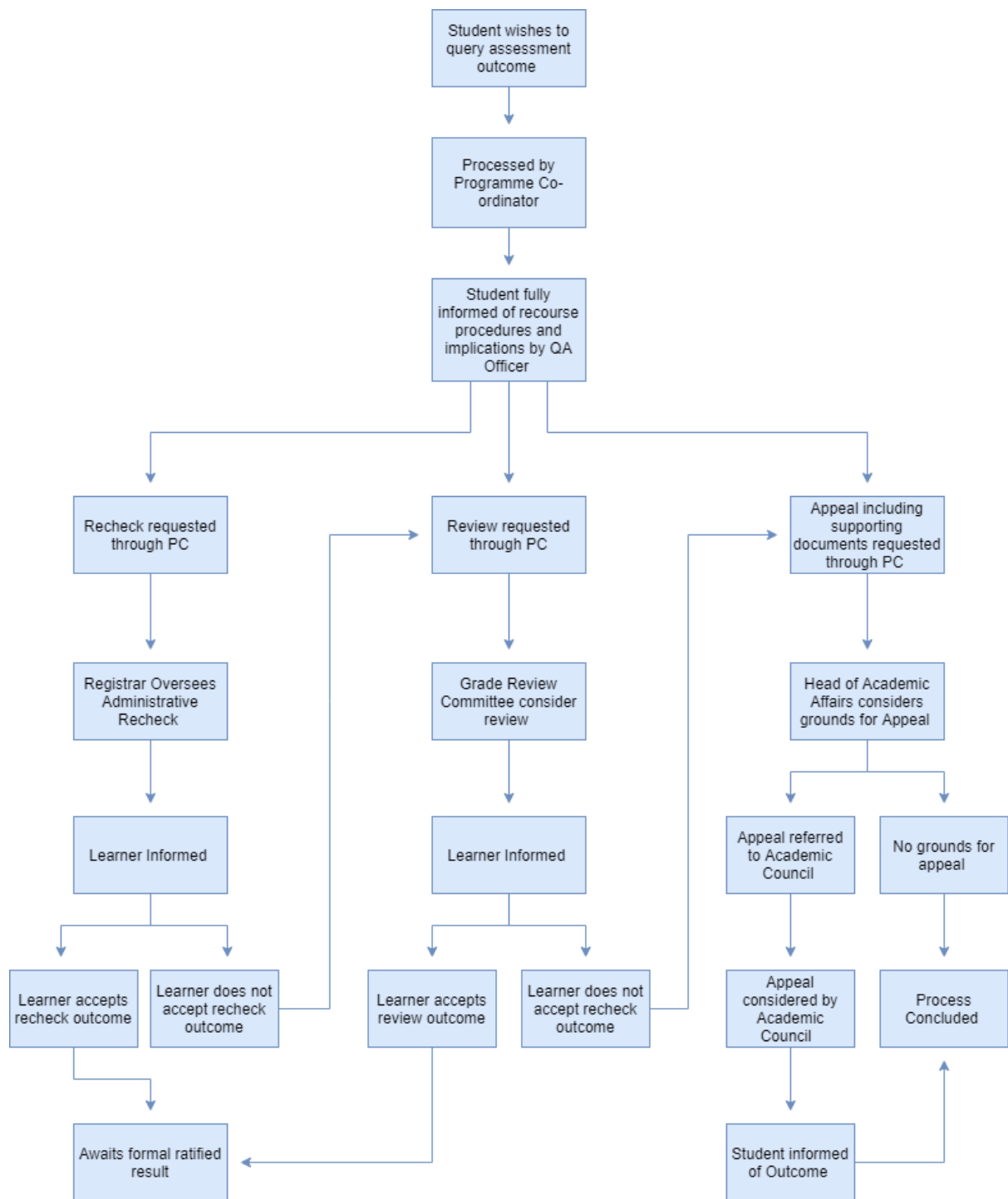
Figure 36 - Assessment Recheck, Review & Appeal

Policy on Student appeals

Appeal in this instance is understood as a learner "request to a higher authority for the alteration of the decision or judgement of a lower one" or "a request for a review of a decision

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of an academic body charged with decisions on student progression, assessment and awards' (Assessment and Standards, QQI, 2013).

The ICHAS appeals process is designed to be transparent and fair and recognises a learner's absolute right to question any decision-making authority within the College. The following Appeals process marks the internal point of finality for a student's right to question the College's decision making process.

Grounds for Appeal

Appeals and Complaints must be evidentially supported and are considered by the Academic Council where the appellant believes substantial irregularity has occurred on the following grounds:

- The assessment processes.
- The conduct of the process or means by which process was conducted
- The assessment criteria including substantive irregularity in the assignment brief or examination paper or the assessment process
- The relevance of the assessment tasks to the intended programme learning outcomes

Excluded Grounds for Appeal

- Failure to adhere to the stated appeals procedures
- Disagreement with a decision
- Academic judgement of the Examiners or Board of Examiners
- Any circumstances other than those stated in the written appeals submission (not including any new evidence arising after the submission deadline)
- Evidence based on third party hearsay

Appeals Procedure

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- Any student who wishes to appeal against the decision of the Board of Examiners, will in the first instance, set out the reasons for the appeal in a detailed written submission through the Registrar's Office.

- Appeals must be made in writing within 10 working of the notified decision under appeal having been issued to the student.

- Late declarations of appeal will only be considered where evidence (e.g. medical or professional certification) is produced that circumstances or valid reasons prevented the learner from filing an appeal within the stated timeframe.

- Appeals can only be made in relation to exam process and not marks attained.

- The Academic Council will consider cases brought on the grounds of substantial irregularity in the conduct of examination or assessment.

- The academic council may invite non-members of the Board to consult or present information pertaining to the appeal should the need arise.

- Decision making will be based on a majority and will either communicate sufficient or insufficient grounds to uphold the appeal and will be further required to agree on remedial action to be taken

- The Academic Council will convene approximately two weeks following the relevant Board of Examiners meeting and will communicate outcomes of any appeal to the student by post on the first working day after its meeting.

- Learners are advised as per QQI Assessments and Standards, Revised 2013, QQI does not have a role to play in a learner's appeal of the provider's assessment decisions.

Policy on Dissemination of Results & Feedback

- Marks that contribute to examination results and overall grades will be disclosed to students once they have been ratified by the Examination Board.

- At this stage, they are clearly marked as being provisional and subject to ratification by QQI.

- Results and feedback are uploaded by lecturers to Gradebook and are cross-checked by relevant personnel in the Registrar's Office.

- They are then uploaded to Gradebook where students can access their individual results on a pre-determined day, by keying in their unique logon details. In this way the anonymity of the student is protected.

12.   Student Support

ICHAS will provide a coherent and integrated range of learning resources and student supports, which will be actively promoted and communicated within the College, and which will be responsive to student feedback, to the evolving needs of students and to the requirements of robust academic governance. Consideration of student support took due cognisance to the following policies and guidelines;

- European Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA, 2015)
- Charter for Inclusive Learning (AHEAD, 2009)
- Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI, 2014)

This chapter outlines the policies and procedures in place for supporting students at ICHAS. It outlines responsibilities, rights and entitlements and the policies that are in place to assure the quality of the various support structures. To ensure this, all staff must be aware of their responsibilities towards students. It is also imperative that students are aware of the supports available to them. The purpose of these policies and procedures is to facilitate the successful completion of studies and reduce any unnecessary deferrals, extensions and withdrawals where possible.

The Registrar's Office is responsible for the co-ordination, management, and operation of student support services. ICHAS has invested in supporting students throughout their journey, from pre-enrolment/enquiry through to graduation.
Polices in relation to the student support services available across the lifecycle of the student journey are set out below.

12.1.   Policy on supporting applicants through the Application / Pre-Enrolment Phase

Pre-Enrolment / Application

The policy on supporting applicants through the Pre-enrolment/ application stage is to provide potential applicants with adequate and accessible information regarding their decisions to apply for a programme.
A range of media and means of communication will be utilised for this purpose. These will include information on the college, its programmes, issues relating to access transfer and progression and other programme related requirements. Print and web-based

communications channels will be the primary means through which such information is provided. ICHAS will also use open days and online webinars to act as information sessions.

Admissions and Enrolment

Applicants will be provided with comprehensive information regarding programme requirements, including access, transfer and progression and this information will be available through the College website and print media. In relation to the website, applicants will be guided to the policy and procedures in relation to the ICHAS admissions and enrolment process which is also outlined in further detail in Section 7 (Policy for Access, Transfer, Progression and Recognition) of this document.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Applicants will be provided with comprehensive information regarding recognition of prior learning and this information will be available through the College website and print information. Applicants will be guided to the policy and procedures in relation to the recognition of prior learning which is also outlined in further detail in Section 7 (Policy for Access, Transfer, Progression and Recognition) of this document.

Induction and Orientation

Applicants will be provided with comprehensive information regarding induction and orientation and this information will be available through the College website and print information. In relation to the website, applicants will be guided to the policy and procedures in relation to the ICHAS induction and orientation processes which is also outlined in further detail in Section 7 (Policy for Access, Transfer, Progression and Recognition) of this document.

12.2.   Policy on supporting Students During Programmes of Study

12.3.   Policy on General Administrative Support

The College is committed to supporting students through their programmes of study, providing appropriate information and support structures to enable them to achieve their own potential. While students will normally engage directly with lecturers relating to module-specific academic queries, and with Programme Directors and the relevant Director of Studies in relation to academic issues relevant to their modules or programmes; most other queries are dealt with by the Office of the Registrar, which is the unit responsible for the co-ordination of learning resources and learner support.

Within the Registrar's office, the team in the Academic Administration & Student Services Department is normally the first point of contact for queries relating to such learner support. Programme Co-ordinators operate within this office and are appointed to support students

on each programme. Programme Co-ordinators are generally the first point of contact for student support.

The College is committed to providing information regarding programmes and supports on the Learning Management system in the first instance, in relation to key areas such as;
- Admissions
- Registration
- Learner induction
- Student and programme handbooks
- Timetables & scheduling
- Assessment and examinations,
- Complaints and compliments,
- Quality Assurance & enhancement and
- Learner records in relation to Academic attainment.

Learners are encouraged to direct queries to the relevant programme co-ordinator within the Office, who will either deal with the query personally or forward the query to the relevant personnel. The Programme Co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that the query is dealt with and that the learner receives a reply and any supporting documentation that may be needed, liaising with other team members and academic staff as appropriate

12.4.   Policy on Student Information
All programme co-ordinators relay information to students on
- accommodation,
- local services,
- medical services
- Sports and social
- Cultural learning and activities

12.5.   Policy on Online Learning Support
The College is committed to supporting students with appropriate online supports. The principle offices associated with this support are the Student Information Systems Department and the Educational Technology Department.

Please see Section 10 (Assuring Quality in Blended Learning) for the supports available to support online and blended learning and the QA procedures associated with them.

12.6. Policy on Digital Literacy and Information Skills Support

It is recognised that it may be difficult for students to adapt to the use of unfamiliar online systems such as the Learning Management System, online libraries, virtual classrooms, digital assignment submission processes and similarity evaluation/academic integrity software. Therefore, a series of online tutorials are offered over the course of the first 6 weeks of the academic year to support students in embedding digital literacy and information skills in their studies. This gives students the opportunity to learn new skills in a less information-dense atmosphere than orientation day, providing additional time to investigate the workings of the various learning technologies that will be important to successful study.

Please see Section 10 (Assuring Quality in Blended Learning) for the supports available to support students in the development of digital literacy and information systems skills and the QA procedures associated with them.

12.7. Policy on Personalised Learning Support

Delivering on a commitment to learning diversity, ICHAS has developed a number of referral facilities for learner support. Students can avail of the following;

- Access to academic writing supports including an academic support lecturer.
- Appropriate accommodation is granted to students on the basis of identified needs.
- Students are provided with feedback and guidance on how to address performance issues

12.8. Policy on Pastoral Care: Student Counselling Liaison

A Counselling Liaison Officer is available to any student who may wish to seek assistance in identifying a suitable counselling service for personal purposes. Each year, the College assembles a panel of independent counsellors, whose members are geographically dispersed around the country. The panel normally consists of counsellors who have completed a degree programme and who are seeking to complete the requisite number of professional counselling hours for accreditation or qualification purposes. The panel members must be contractually independent of the College and their services are not retained by the College for any other purposes. In this way, conflicts of interests are avoided and ethical standards in counselling are respected. The service is offered to learners of the College at a minimal fee.

The role of the Counselling Liaison Officer is to have a preliminary conversation with the student in order to identify his/her particular needs and, based on this, to refer the student to the most appropriate counsellor on the College panel. Neither the College nor the Counselling Liaison Officer play any part in the student/counsellor relationship once initial contact has been made between the student and the panel counsellor.

12.9.   Policy on Reasonable Accommodation for Disability and Specific Learning Needs Support

ICHAS is fully committed to equality of educational access and attainment among students. Management will actively seek to develop and implement policies and procedures which promote equality. The College is firmly committed to supporting students with disabilities or specific learning needs. It is the responsibility of the student to draw such matters to the attention of the College through any means they are most comfortable with. Students are encouraged to disclose such matters on application, so the College can provide necessary support from the outset. Confidentiality is ensured and only staff who need to be aware of the agreed accommodations are informed of such. Please refer to section in XXxX . Where additional costs are accrued by the learner, resources are requested by the Director of Academic Affairs to the Finance Department to cover extra costs. Types of Support available include

- Time extensions in examinations
- Scribe support during examinations
- Technological supports including dragon software, braille & large text keyboards
- Voice to text facilities including software
- Writing accommodations including spelling waiver.

12.10.   Policy on Academic Support

Academic support is facilitated through contacting the Programme Coordinator or Lecturer. The purpose of academic support is to offer students advice and help with regard to any general academic problems they experience during their studies.

12.11.   Policy on On Line Library Resources

The College is committed to the use of on-line library resources to ensure consistency of access to current library resources for both members of faculty and learners, irrespective of location. To this end, ICHAS uses online libraries to enable all students to access high quality research and journal articles. Multimedia tutorials are available to assist in the use of the online libraries. The college currently provides access to three comprehensive e-libraries; namely Elsevier Science Direct, the American Psychological Association's PsycArticles, and DawsonEra eBook Repository.

The College currently subscribes to Science Direct's Life Sciences Collection. Science Direct is one of the largest online collections of published scientific research in the world. It is operated by the publisher Elsevier and contains nearly 10 million articles from over 2,500 journals and over 6,000 e-books, reference works, book series and handbooks across various disciplines including the Social Sciences, the Humanities and Health Sciences.

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PsycArticles is a database of over 200,000 peer-reviewed full-text articles from over 120 journals maintained by the American Psychological Association. It provides access to the full spectrum of research in the field of psychology and psychology-related disciplines – from cutting-edge contemporary research by preeminent scholars, to the historical underpinnings of the behavioural and social sciences.

DawsonEra is an eBook library service offering tailored eBook collections from 500 of the world's leading publisher imprints, including Oxford University Press and Taylor & Francis. The platform provides unlimited, multi-user remote access to ebooks that can be read online or downloaded to the user's PC or mobile devices. With access to a collection of over 250,000 titles, DawsonEra offers easy and regularly updated access to both class and contemporary research.

12.12.   Policy on Practice Placement Support
The policy in relation to the practice placement support has been laid out in Section 9 (Policy on Teaching and Learning)

12.13.   Policy on Academic Supervision Support
Research supervisors are normally allocated to all students who are required to undertake a dissertation or research project as part of their programme of study. Allocation of supervisors takes place after students have submitted their research proposals to ensure supervisors are appropriately qualified and experienced to support their students in the specifics of their chosen area of research. All research proposals require ethics approval prior to the commencement of their research.

12.14.   Policy on Class Representatives
ICHAS strongly encourages each class to elect or appoint a student from within the class cohort to act as representative for the academic year. This person acts as the official representative for the class cohort and facilitates communication within their programme and between their class and the programme coordinator. Appointment of a class rep gives the entire class an opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns and queries through a single person who can then communicate these items to the Academic Team at Class Representative Meetings or at Programme Board Meetings.

12.15.   Policy on Mechanisms for Student Feedback
Feedback is gathered at the conclusion of each semester in relation the teaching and learning experiences on each individual module. Feedback is gathered anonymously and discussed at the Programme Board meeting where it is used to enhance programme delivery for the following academic year. Please refer to section xxx on more information in relation to student feedback.

12.16.   Policy on Attendance Supports

Students are supported independent learners who are responsible for their own study. ICHAS encourages students to attend all classes tutorials, and any other academic activities required. Attendance is monitored and records of attendance are maintained for the duration of a programme of study. Several modules maintain mandatory attendance requirements so that students may learn and implement important practical skills. The requirement for mandatory attendance will be plainly and explicitly stated in programme documentation, module descriptors and the assessment overview of the relevant modules. Class attendance is monitored for both Workshop and Virtual Classroom environments. Attendance statistics are made available to students primarily to facilitate re-integration of students whose attendance does not meet stated requirements. Students who wish to apply for leave from their studies or unscheduled absences must apply to the programme co-ordinator via the Personal Mitigating Circumstances form (PMC). Please refer to the section in teaching and learning on Policy on Personal Mitigating Circumstances for further information.

12.17.   Policy on English Language Supports

All students are required to a minimum standard of English as per the programme validation documents. This is part of the entry requirements. In exceptional circumstances where a student experiences learning disadvantages due to English language deficits, the Programme co-ordinator can advise them of local English languages services.

12.18.   Policy on Garda Vetting and Fitness to Practice

All applicants will be required to complete the Garda vetting procedure for working with children and vulnerable adults all applicants will be subject to the College's 'Fitness to Practice' policy, which is set out in detail in the Programme Handbook and on the website.

12.19.   Fitness to Practice Policy

Context & Background

The Irish College of Humanities & Applied Sciences seeks to apply best Practice and ensure public confidence by requiring that all students who are placed in positions of trust or responsibility with members of the public (including children and vulnerable adults as defined under Section 2 of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012) always act in a manner that meets professional and ethical standards.

The College provides students with advice and support to help them meet the Fitness to Practice requirements of their programme of study. Student placements or engagement with members of the public will be designed to be commensurate with the stage of the student's programme and the

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professional Practices and competencies associated with the placement. This Fitness to Practice policy operates in conjunction with Garda vetting requirements and College's Code of Conduct.

The Fitness to Practice Policy of the Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences (the "**College**") has been developed within a context wherein it recognises the dual role of the College in terms of its duty to support students to;

1. complete their programme of Studies and successfully meet programme requirements
2. help prepare students for future professional Practice within a framework of appropriate support structures

while simultaneously protecting the public in as far as is practicable from exposure to individuals who may transpire to be unsuitable for professional Practice in a particular field of professional Practice.

The Policy is designed to respond to and manage any concerns regarding a student's Fitness to Practice and/or professional suitability, collectively referred to in this policy as their "**Fitness to Practice".** This Policy applies to all programmes of study that require students to undertake practical training in professional environments which involve interaction with patients/clients/service users including those that lead to registration with a voluntary or statutory professional body.

Students registering for and undertaking such programmes are required to be suitable at a number of levels eg., the entry standards of the programme, the professional expectations of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory bodies, including but not limited to, compliance with professional codes of conduct and the codes of ethics and Practices of the profession for which students hope to enter.

As a higher education institute, ICHAS will make every effort to ensure that all students have an opportunity to demonstrate professional competencies in a manner consistent with their programme while also ensuring in as far as is practicable that they are fit for Practice and are fully aware of the professional Practice requirements in their field of study and to encourage them to ask questions and to seek clarification, where necessary, in relation to Fitness to Practice protocols. The College makes every effort to ensure a quality student experience and that students are informed of the range of supports available to them.

Scope

This policy is not designed to limit the opportunities of any student with health challenges or disability, either at point of entry or that may emerge during the trajectory of a student's study. The College prides itself in terms of its commitment to ensuring access to higher education studies and facilitating 'reasonable accommodation' for students with disabilities.

Procedures are in place in the College at point of entry to ensure, as far as is practicable, that applicants are screened on entry to such programmes for their suitability. However it is vital that students are monitored on an ongoing basis as not all challenges may be evident at point of entry and some may emerge within the programme of study concerned. Therefore, students at all Stages of such programmes are required to undertake a progression interview process to ensure suitability to progress to the relevant next Stage of their programme.

Where concerns or complaints are raised about a student's Fitness to Practice, prompt action will be taken to act upon such concerns/complaints in the interests of both the student concerned and also in relation to the protection of the public.

Early identification and pre-emptive action should be taken and taken primarily from a welfare perspective for both the student and for the benefit of potential clients, patients or members of the public. In some instances, transitory problems that may impede Fitness to Practice may be dealt with most appropriately through the provision of appropriate support to help the student manage temporary challenges and/or prevent matters from becoming more serious.

Concept of Fitness to Practice in Educational Contexts

Within an educational context, 'Fitness to Practice' is a term used to broadly refer to the possession of skills, knowledge, health, character and ability to *undertake and complete, both safely and effectively, a programme that includes elements of professional Practice, experiential learning or clinical work.*

It is not restricted to knowledge of a specific subject or practice area and includes the requirement to conform to certain standards of conduct.

The College's Admission Policy sets out the arrangements for the admission of students, with particular reference to the requirements to comply with the Garda Vetting Policy. All students registered with the College are subject to the Garda Vetting Policy.

Relevant Legislation

In implementing this Policy, the Institute will be mindful of its obligations to students under relevant legislation including the Equal Status Act (2000), as amended, and data protection legislation.

Expectation of Students

Students applying for and undertaking Programmes at ICHAS are expected to adhere to the Colleges' Code of Conduct and in particular to:

- Satisfy relevant health requirements for the programme concerned
- Have the capacity to perform key skills and tasks associated with the programme concerned
- Demonstrate acceptable standards of conduct
- Demonstrate relevant values and attitudes
- Satisfy relevant criminal record/prosecutions pending requirements
- Conduct and behave themselves so as not to harm service users, staff and/or others and/or put them at risk
- Conduct and behave themselves in a manner likely not to harm the reputation of their profession.

Aim and Approach of Fitness to Practice Policy

The College will deal with any "Fitness to Practice" issues in a fair, prompt and proportionate fashion. Examples of areas of concern or circumstances that might render a student unfit to Practice include, but are not limited to: substance misuse; aggressive, violent or threatening behaviour; persistent inappropriate attitude or behaviour; failure to accept and follow educational advice, failure to follow health and safety requirements or the regulations; impaired judgement; lack of competence; having health concerns and lack of insight or management of these: failure to seek medical treatment or

other support; refusal to follow medical advice or care plans including monitoring and reviews, in relation to maintaining Fitness to Practice; failure to recognise limits and abilities or lack of insight into health concerns.

In the context of this policy, reference to ill health relates mainly to ill health which is long term, untreated or unacknowledged and may include physical or mental health conditions that impair a person's ability to practice autonomously. Good health means that person is capable of safe and effective Practice autonomously. It does not mean the absence of any disability or health condition.

ICHAS is committed to equal opportunities and the support of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are and have always been welcome and reasonable accommodation will be made where practicable. However, it must be noted that students must have the ability to perform skilled tasks safely, smoothly and rapidly. Where additional support is necessary, it must be practicable within the current sphere of professional practice. It is therefore possible that, regrettably, some persons otherwise qualified to undertake certain programmes of study may be unable to complete elements of the programme required for professional registration for reason of health or ability.

The Fitness to Practice Committee

The College will deal with 'Fitness to Practice" issues within the context of its ethos as a College which aims to provide a supportive learning environment, with due cognisance of the principles of natural justice. The College will establish a Fitness to Practice Committee which will meet on an 'as required basis' drawing on appropriate expertise.

The Committee shall act with full delegated powers of the relevant Programme Board and may make decisions on behalf of the relevant Programme Board regarding the Fitness to Practice cases referred to it.

The responsibilities of the Fitness to Practice Committee are principally to:

- consider student Fitness to Practice matters referred to it.
- ensure a fair, clear and consistent approach to dealing with student Fitness to Practice matters.
- advise the relevant Director of Studies and Programme Board on matters relating to Fitness to Practice.
- provide reports to the relevant Programme Board, Academic Council or its nominated committee, as required.

The Fitness to Practice Committee shall normally comprise three voting members as follows:

- The Chair of the Sub Committee will be nominated by the Director of Academic Affairs
- Member of the Programme Board, nominated by the Chair
- Relevant Programme Co-ordinator
- Non – Voting Members

The Fitness to Practice Sub Committee may wish to co-opt additional members to provide additional expertise or specific representation and advice to the Committee. The co-option of members will be on a case-by-case basis and requires the agreement of the Director of Academic Affairs. Co-opted members will act in a strictly advisory capacity and shall be non-voting. The attendance of co-opted members should be noted in the record of the meeting and the report to the Committee's report to the Programme Board.

- Meetings will be convened as required by the Chair of the Committee at the request of the relevant Director of Studies.
- Decisions of the sub-committee shall be taken by a simple majority.
- Proceedings shall be recorded.
- Reports and recommendations are drafted as soon as possible after the meeting and submitted to the relevant Director of Studies via the Chair.
- A member of the administrative staff shall be appointed as a non-voting secretary of the committee.

The College always tries to ensure a positive student experience and a safe working environment. It is acknowledged that some of the exemplars described above may constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct. Any alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct would normally be reported to the Director of Academic Affairs to be dealt with under the College's student disciplinary procedures. Where there is more than one procedure (and/or policies) of the College which may be applicable to any one matter, the Director of Academic Affairs shall decide which of the procedures (and/or policies) should have priority or be the most appropriate in the circumstances, and may direct the continuation of some procedure(s) (and/or policies) and the suspension of others pending the outcome of the former.

- Where a Fitness to Practice concern is raised, the student will be encouraged to seek appropriate supports (either internal and/or external) available through the Student Liaison Officer.
- The Procedure set out in this Policy sets out how the College will normally deal with issues of a student's Fitness to Practice within an ethos of student support and the responsibility of the College to ensure protection of clients, patients or members of the wider public in as far as is practicable.
- It should be noted that adherence to the procedure may not be appropriate in all cases. In that regard, the College reserves the right to vary the procedures where or if circumstances warrant it and to amend this Policy and the Procedure from time to time.
- While every effort will be made to support students and adopt a welfare approach to students, the college may take action to suspend and/or terminate a student's registration on the programme in appropriate cases.
- Vexatious and/or malicious concerns raised by students/staff will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedure.

This Policy applies to students who are registered, or seek to be registered, on Relevant Programmes throughout their period of registration with ICHAS both on and off campus.

Applicant Stage

- The College will ensure that reference to "Fitness to Practice" is made within the relevant entries in the College's publicly available information provided to prospective applicants.
- A general assessment of Fitness to Practice will be made at application stage taking into account the information disclosed by the applicant including that provided at interview.
- If information disclosed or revealed (for instance through a Garda Vetting check or similar process) subsequent to an offer having been made raises a cause for concern as to an applicant's Fitness to Practice, the decision whether or not to withdraw the offer will be made by the relevant director of Studies after seeking advice from the Director of Academic Affairs.
- If the offer is not withdrawn, consideration as to whether the information needs to be reported to the relevant PSRB (given specific reporting requirements) will be made by the College and the applicant will be informed prior to any report being made.

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During a Programme

Cause for concern as to a student's Fitness to Practice can be raised relating to a wide range of behaviours, including, but not limited to:

- Criminal conviction, caution, reprimand or equivalent;
- Concerns raised by their placement employer;
- Continuing compliance with the entry requirements for the programme;
- Drug or alcohol misuse;
- Aggressive, violent or threatening behaviour;
- Persistent inappropriate attitude or behaviour;
- Academic misconduct;
- Dishonesty or fraud (whether or not linked to the professional role);
- Unprofessional behaviour or attitudes;
- Health concerns and lack of insight or management of these concerns; and,
- Putting client, staff or student safety at risk.

The College reserves the right to use this Policy in relation to students who are qualified professionals on relevant Programmes. In such cases, the student's employing organisation or Regulatory body may be informed of Fitness to Practice concerns.

Fitness to Practice issues can occur at any stage during a student's time at College. The role of the policy and may be temporary in nature. In that regard, the college will always provide appropriate supports to students experiencing difficulties. It is important to note that Fitness to Practice issues can arise and be satisfactorily dealt with during a student's programme of study and outcomes of a formal Fitness to Practice procedures reflect a judgement on a particular issue, at a particular moment in time, and is not necessarily intended to be a judgement about a student's Fitness to Practice in the future.

The College will draw current and prospective students' attention to this Policy and requirements. It is, however, the responsibility of each student to familiarise him/herself with this Policy, specific expectations of his/her programme of study, and the requirements associated with the programme and core competencies expected.

The College cannot guarantee the acquisition of suitable work placements for students. Work placements are provided at the discretion of the placement provider.

The Institute cannot guarantee a student's registration with any Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB). The relevant PSRB will determine membership/registration/ accreditation eligibility according to its own distinct procedures.

The standard of proof applied at every stage of this Policy is the balance of probabilities.

Procedures to be followed in relation to Fitness to Practice concerns

In most instances student Fitness to Practice concerns can be addressed and resolved informally. However Procedures are also set out where Formal Procedures need to be applied in the following sections. It must be borne in mind that an allegation of professional misconduct or unsuitability to practice is a serious and potentially defamatory one. Consequently it is essential that all proceedings be conducted on a basis of strict confidentiality.

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Informal Procedures

For minor infringements the Practice Placement Co-ordinator discussing their concerns directly with the student and agreeing steps to remedy the situation may often be sufficient.

Formal Procedures

Serious or persistent Fitness to Practice concerns are likely to warrant the initiation of formal procedures. The College will initiate an investigation to determine if there is a primia facie case to be answered or not through its formal processes.

Where the cause for concern raised may have implications for the student's placement setting it may be necessary for the student to be suspended from their placement pending investigation. Suspension of a placement will take place in accordance with normal College procedures. Suspension of a placement pending investigation is not in itself to be regarded as a disciplinary measure.

The investigation should normally include an interview with the student in addition to the gathering of documentary evidence. A student has the right to be accompanied to any meeting by a 'friend'. A 'friend' for this purpose, is defined as: an adviser from ICHAS's Students' Representative body, a current member of staff of the College, or a currently registered student of the College. A person who does not fall within these categories will not be able to act as a 'friend' unless otherwise agreed by the Chair.

Concerns or complaints should be formally reported using the Fitness to Practice Concern/Complaint form and any other relevant supporting documentation.

- Reports will be forwarded to the relevant Director of Studies (Undergraduate or Postgraduate) in the first instance.
- On receipt of a report the relevant Director of Studies will decide whether to initiate formal Fitness to Practice proceedings and request that the Chair of the Fitness to Practice Committee convenes a meeting to consider the matter.
- Reported misconduct that represents a breach of the Student Code should be referred directly to the Director of Academic Affairs, where it may dealt with under the college's student disciplinary procedures of the Student Code.

On receipt of a Fitness to Practice Concern/Complaint Form, and having decided that the matter requires the initiation of a formal procedure, the relevant Director of Studies in agreement with the Director of Academic Affairs or their nominee shall arrange for the Fitness to Practice Committee to be convened as soon as practicable. A copy of the Fitness to Practice Concern/Complaint Form and any other relevant documentation should be circulated to the members of the committee in advance of the meeting.

1. The Committee shall normally comprise 3 voting members. Where it is deemed helpful to do so, and at the discretion of the relevant Director of Studies in agreement with the Director of Academic Affairs, an appropriately experienced person from the relevant discipline may be co-opted as an adviser to the Committee.
2. Students should be informed in writing that the Fitness to Practice procedure has been initiated and that the Committee has been convened. The student should be given appropriate notice of the date / time of the meeting.

3. A copy of the preliminary Fitness to Practice Report and any other relevant documentation that has been supplied in respect of the case should be provided to the student in advance of the meeting.
4. The student should confirm their availability to attend the meeting and should advise if they intend to be accompanied by a friend, parent, student advisor or Student representative.
5. Members of the Committee may seek the attendance of other relevant parties, including the placement co-ordinator, Clinical Supervisor or others to provide a verbal account of incidents or behaviour that have called into question the student's Fitness to Practice.
6. When investigating a cause for concern the Committee will weigh the interests of the clients, other students and staff against those of the student involved with proportionality. The Committee will consider:

   - The specific facts of the case, including but not limited to, in particular:
   - The seriousness of the behaviour in question;
   - whether it is part of a pattern of behaviour; and,
   - the year of study of the student and their experience of higher education and/or professional Practice.
   - The risk factors involved, including but not limited to, in particular:
   - how likely a repeat of the behaviour may be
   - how well the student might respond to support

7. At the meeting the Chair of the Committee should outline the procedures of the meeting.
8. Members of the Committee should generally restrict their questioning of the student to questions relating to the concerns raised in the Fitness to Practice Concern/Complaint Form and other relevant documentation.
9. The student will receive copies of all documents relating to the matter and shall be permitted to make their own written submission in advance of the meeting.

Possible Outcomes

When all of the documentation and oral evidence had been considered the Committee will decide on whether there has been a breach of the Fitness to Practice policy and which of the following available outcomes is appropriate.

   - The case can be dismissed with no further action;
   - On the recommendation of the committee the Programme Board may require the student to undertake a second attempt for certain elements of the programme of study without academic penalty;
   - On the recommendation of the committee the Programme Board may require the student to interrupt her/his programme of study for an unspecified period of time or to resolve a specifically identified problem;
   - On the recommendation of the sub-committee a Programme Board may suspend a student from a placement with immediate effect if the well-being of patients/clients/students or other service providers is put at risk. If this occurs, then the Fitness to Practice procedures must be expedited to enable a review to be activated within 2 working days of the suspension. There should be an indication of what constitutes 'at risk' in the context of the programme;
   - On the recommendation of the committee a Programme Board may recommend to the College's Academic Council that an exit strategy be followed by the student;
   - The student may be allowed to continue, subject to review under certain specified conditions such as careful mentoring by a named academic member of staff.

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Within 10 working days of the formal Procedure taking place, the Chair of the Committee or their delegate shall produce a report outlining the concerns raised, details of the investigation undertaken and conclusions.

The outcome of the Committee's decisions shall be given in writing to the student with a copy to the relevant Director of Studies. The student shall be informed of their right to appeal a decision to the College's Academic Council, the procedure for lodging an appeal and the time limit for lodging an appeal (normally 2 weeks from notification of the decision).

12.20. Policy on Learner Safety

ICHAS is committed to ensuring the personal safety and security of its staff and its students. Information on safety awareness both in the College and while on placement is provided to all students during induction. The college maintains a liaison relationship with An Garda Siochana in order to have the most up to date information on security and safety in the locality. Any concerns which emerge are communicated appropriately. The College is also protected by CCTV camera and supported by a local Security company.

12.21. Policy on Complaints

Informal Complaints

ICHAS endeavours to deal with all complaints on an informal basis until such time as the complainant feels it necessary to engage with the formal complaint's procedure. Informal mechanisms can include discussions with Programme Coordinators or members of the Academic Team, or any other intervention deemed fit to resolve the issue. Informal complaints would normally be considered by the Registrar.

Formal Complaints

1. The College has a robust formal complaints procedure which seeks to provide a fair and straightforward system to enable learners to raise concerns and which ensures a timely and appropriate response. The procedure is as follows: Learners have the right to complain about the services offered by the Institute, both general and specific.
2. Learners have the right to complain without fear of reprisal from any Institutional source.
3. Formal complaints should be documented using the Learner's **Complaint Form,** (available on the college portal) within 5 working days of the issue arising. The complaint form may be submitted via the portal or directly to the Registrar.
4. Once a formal complaint has been made using the Learner's Complaint Form, the complainant will be informed in writing that the complaint has been received.
5. Upon receipt of a formal complaint, a letter acknowledging receipt of such will be forwarded to the complainant outlining the procedures and steps to be followed.
6. At all levels of the complaint's procedure, whether formal or informal, the complainant may have a representative with them during the procedures. It is the responsibility of the learner to ensure that this representative accompanies them.
7. Formal complaints will be dealt with in two specific stages outlined below

Formal Complaints Procedure Stage 1

1. On receipt of the formal complaint Stage 1 of the complaint's procedure will be enacted. The Registrar will write to the complainant outlining a time and date for the complaint to be heard. This will normally take place within 7 days of the complaint being received.

2. Where a complaint is made against an officer of the institute, a representative may be appointed to enact the complaints procedures and report directly to the Registrar.

3. The Registrar and a second staff member will meet with the complainant to hear the complaint.

4. Following proper investigation of the complaint the Registrar will issue their findings in writing to the complainant outlining the appropriate course of action.

5. On receipt of the written findings of the complaint at the end of Stage 1 of the procedure the complainant may, if dissatisfied with the findings or procedures, appeal the matter(s) arising to Stage 2 of the procedure.

6. This must be done within 7 days of the findings being issued.

7. Where the formal complaint cannot be dealt with through Stage 1 of the complaint's procedure, Stage 2 of the complaints procedure will be enacted.

Formal Complaints Procedure Stage 2

1. In writing to the Director of Studies, the Learner must outline that they wish to appeal the decision of the preceding complaint stage.

2. A formal complaints meeting will be held within 7 days.

3. This meeting will involve the Director of Studies (or an officer acting on his/her behalf) and other appropriate staff members, as decided by the nature of the complaint.

4. The finding of this committee will be binding (save judicial review) and will be issued to the complainant within 7 days

12.22. Policy on Student Code of Conduct

The student code of conduct is outlined in the context of the Fitness to Practice policy.

12.23. Disciplinary Policy

ICHAS is committed to maintaining the highest standards across all sectors of the organisation. In most instances, misconduct can be dealt with to the satisfaction of all parties via informal means, through short discussions or telephone calls.

For minor offences or first offences of a less serious nature, the College may rely on informal methods of action such as face-to-face meetings or discussions with Programme Coordinators, the Academic Team. Formal disciplinary actions will be enacted where serious offences occur or where offences are repeated following informal interventions. Any Learner who is the subject of a disciplinary procedure has the right to appeal and to have that appeal heard with due consideration and haste. Disciplinary actions may be enacted for a number of reasons including, but not exclusively:

Minor Offences:

- Minor incidents of disorderly conduct or conduct which obstructs the activities of the college or any person carrying out their normal duties
- Smoking, eating and drinking in unauthorised areas
- Causing damage to property
- Being in unauthorised areas without permission
- Failing to identify oneself on request

Major Offences:
- Breach of examination and assessment regulations
- Plagiarism
- Collusion
- Furnishing false information to the college with intent to deceive and/ or forging, alteration, or misuse of college documents, records, or identification cards
- Physical abuse or assault of another person on the college campus
- Malicious destruction, damage or misuse of college property, including library materials, or of private property
- Possession and use of offensive weapons
- Possession of illegal drugs or alcohol
- Occupation of college buildings or grounds
- Interference with safety equipment, firefighting equipment

The disciplinary procedure for the College involves four separate steps:
- Verbal warning
- 1st Written Warning
- Final Written warning
- Termination

The first three steps of the disciplinary process can be enacted by the Registrar or the relevant Director of Studies. Step 4 can only be enacted by the Director of Academic Affairs and the Director of Corporate Affairs of the Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences. Where a matter is considered grave enough, the Directors may begin proceedings up to and including step 4 without recourse to any of the preceding steps. Where the College has a statutory requirement to report an incident to an appropriate authority it will do so with all due haste. All disciplinary proceedings must be noted in writing (including verbal warnings) on the appropriate forms. All warnings must be signed and dated and filed appropriately. A student must be given a copy of the warning under cover of secure and traceable means of deliver and a copy of the receipt therein added to the student file. A student must also be given a copy of the appeals form. Should a warning be given and a period of one academic year pass without further recourse to the disciplinary system, then the warning shall cease to be valid and the student record amended accordingly. Should a person be terminated from the

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College then any future access to the College will be by the expressed permission of the Academic Council. Once a formal warning has been issued a student has 14 days in which to appeal the decision. All appeals must be in writing on the appropriate form.

Where a student is given a 1st verbal warning or a 1st written warning and wishes to appeal the decision their appeal will be heard by two other course co-ordinators (other than the issuing co-ordinator).   Where a student is given a final written warning or has been terminated and wishes to appeal the decision, their appeal will be heard by two other course co-ordinators and a member of the Academic Council. Appeal decisions will be forwarded to the student in writing and by secure means of delivery within 7 working days of the appeal being heard. Where a student is unhappy with the final decision of the appeals board and wishes to appeal to a judicial system, the decision of the appeals board will not be binding until the decision of the judicial process is made known. Where the judicial process overturns or nullifies the decision of the appeals board this decision will be deemed to be binding.

13.   Information and Data Management

13.1.   Policy on Information Systems

Information is a critical asset of the ICHAS College. Accurate, timely, relevant and properly protected information is essential to the daily workings of the College. The College is committed to ensuring all accesses to, uses of, and processing of information is performed in a secure manner. Controls and structures are in place to generate data which are then communicated to the relevant authorised parties for self-monitoring and planning processes. The academic calendar is linked to the reporting requirements for statutory, legal, accreditation and awarding bodies. The Registrar is responsible for the provision of academic data to the various bodies and this is supported by the Programme Managers and the Academic Team.

The purpose of this document and the underpinning suite of policies is to define the security controls necessary to safeguard the College Information and Communication Technology Systems and ensure the availability, confidentiality and integrity of the information stored within and to allow this information to be made available to related parties in a reliable format so that it informs timely decision making. The IS Security Policies themselves can be accessed from the ICHAS shared drive.

The College recognises that failure to implement adequate Information Systems Security controls could potentially lead to:

- o Disruption to the College's business and damage to the reputation of the brand

- o Irretrievable loss of important Organisational data

- o Disclosure of commercially sensitive data

- o Legal consequences

- o Breach of legislation (e.g. Data Protection Legislation, GDPR)

Therefore, measures must be in place, which will help to minimise the risk to the College from unauthorised modification, destruction or disclosure of data, whether accidental or

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deliberate. This can only be achieved if all users observe the highest standards of ethical, personal and professional conduct.

ICHAS has an obligation to abide by all Irish legislation and relevant legislation of the European Community, together with a number of public sector specific guidelines or standards. Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

- General Data Protection Regulation (2018)
- The Data Protection Act (1988/2003)
- European Communities Data Protection Regulations, (2001)
- European Communities (Data Protection and Privacy in Telecommunications) Regulations (2002)
- Data Protection EU Directive 95/46/EC
- Criminal Damages Act (1991)
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act (1998)
- Intellectual Property Miscellaneous Provisions Act (1998)
- Copyright and Related Rights Act (2000)
- Criminal Justice (Theft & Fraud Offences) Act 2001
- Electronic Commerce Act (2000)
- E-Commerce Directive (2000/31/EC)
- The EU General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679)

13.2. Policy on ICHAS Learner Information Systems & Management information system

ICHAS College has put in place information systems that allow for the collection and reporting of all the data required to produce reports for decision making purposes. To that effect the College utilises two main systems that have been intrinsically linked to ensure minimisation for human error.

The ICHAS Learning management system (LMS) works to improve the communication between learners, lecturers and administration staff, while also helping to reduce administration work. The ICHAS LMS is an essential online source of information for ICHAS learners and lecturers. Students can view information such as timetables, lecture notes, guidelines and fees. They also have the facility to upload assignments and view grades. The

current LMS system integrates assignment submission with assignment grading and feedback, creating a seamless experience for students. It offers greater security, flexibility and efficiency; and enables more innovative teaching and assessment opportunities. It has been integrated with MS Office 365, allowing students to access their Office suite, Student Email and cloud storage accounts using the same intuitive interface.

Working alongside this learning management system the ICHAS Management Information System (MIS) is used by the administration staff of ICHAS for maintaining all learner records and for handling such tasks as generating class schedules, recording attendance, setting course groups and structures and invoicing. This is a bespoke management system which is dynamic and currently meets the needs of the college administration team. The MIS enables self-monitoring and planning at the various levels of the student progression and the systems enables the gathering of important information which is considered by the Programme boards to enable decision making.

The ICHAS Management Information System is monitored via operational use and various other meetings such as IS Meetings and staff feedback as well as via the QA audit process. As the College is heavily dependent on the Information systems, improvements and necessary updates are carried out in a timely manner by College Information Systems personnel. A formal Information Systems review is carried out annually to ensure that the physical and system infrastructure are working to their maximum capacity.

Access on both systems has been restricted via the use of passwords and authorised member access levels. This ensures data integrity and accuracy while enabling mechanisms for the corrections of data entered due to human error.

The college has in place the necessary technical knowledge for the ongoing operation of the college information systems and has arrangements in place to allow the backup of the data in three secure cloud / other locations in case of technical failure.
The requirements for the Protection of Enrolled Learners as per the HECA PEL scheme are in place with the backup of the learner data on a monthly basis as per the requirements of the

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HECA PEL scheme. Formal requirements in relation to PEL have been put in place with NTES and Brophy and Hills solicitors who are the two custodians of the data.

13.3. Information for Future Planning

As part of the Information systems policy the College recognises the importance of the effectiveness of the ICHAS Management Information System and have incorporated a policy to provide and collate accurate data for the use of managing programmes and supporting good governance.

13.4. Policy on Completion Rates

All student data and completion rates are contained in the in house MIS and this information is used in the examination boards. An analysis of the success of the programme to date, including access statistics, performance of learners at each stage (including grade profiles and trends), completion rates by stage, graduate performance, etc. and this collected data is used to generate reports to meet internal and external requirements and for Programme boards and academic council. QQI infographic reports are used to allow for future planning. All graduates are listed on the QQI QBS system which certifies the students and timely reports can be obtained where necessary on this activity.

13.5. Policy on Records Maintenance and Retention

Storage of Business-Related Data

Users must store business related data on a protected network location or shared drive.

Examples of Protected Locations are:

- Personal Drive
- Section Share Drives
- Sharepoint (e.g. Document Libraries and Lists)
- Public folders within Outlook/Exchange (For temporary Storage not permanent)
- Mailboxes (For temporary Storage not permanent)

These areas of the network are protected by the College's information systems and data protection policy, are regularly backed up by IS and can be restored, if required. Users wishing to have files, folders or mailboxes in protected locations restored should submit a request to the IS Department.

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Local Storage

Users should be aware that any local storage is not protected and therefore not backed up (this would include, for example: Desktop, C: drive.)

13.6. Policy on Data Retention

The policy on data/ records retention is operated in line with the requirements laid out in the EU General Data Protection Regulation. The following is a schedule of document retention and the documents retention policy is aligned to the Data Protection Policy that the college operates.

The following types of documents will be retained for the following periods of time. At least one copy of each document will be retained according to the following schedule.

Corporate Records

Articles of Association	Permanent
Memorandum of Understanding	Permanent
Board policies	Permanent
Resolutions	Permanent
Board meeting minutes	Permanent
Tax exemption documents	Permanent
Tax or employee identification number designation	Permanent
Annual corporate filings	Permanent

Financial Records

Chart of Accounts	Permanent
Fiscal Policies and Procedures	Permanent
Audits	Permanent
Financial statements	Permanent
General Ledger	Permanent
Check registers/books	7 years
Business expenses documents	7 years
Bank deposit slips	7 years
Cancelled cheques	7 years
Investment records (deposits, earnings, withdrawals)	7 years
Invoices	7 years
Property/asset/equipment inventories	7 years
Petty cash receipts/documents	3 years
Credit card receipts	3 years

Tax Records

Annual tax filing for the organization	Permanent
Payroll registers	Permanent
Filings of fees paid to professionals	7 years
Payroll tax withholdings	7 years
Earnings records	7 years
Payroll tax returns	7 years

Personnel Records

Employee offer letters	Permanent
Confirmation of employment letters	Permanent
Benefits descriptions per employee	Permanent
Pension records	Permanent

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Employee, resumes and contracts	7 years after termination
Promotions, demotions, letter of reprimand, termination	7 years after termination
Workers' Compensation records	5 years
Salary ranges per job description	5 years

Insurance Records

Property Insurance policy	Permanent
Directors and Officers Insurance policy	Permanent
Workers' Compensation Insurance policy	Permanent
General Liability Insurance policy	Permanent
Insurance claims applications	Permanent
Insurance dispersements / denials	Permanent

Contracts

All insurance contracts	Permanent
Employee contracts	Permanent
Construction contracts	Permanent
Legal correspondence	Permanent
Loan / mortgage contracts	Permanent
Leases / deeds	Permanent
Vendor contracts	7 years
Warranties	7 years

Management Plans and Procedures

Strategic Plans	7 years
Operational Procedures	Permanent
Vendor contacts	7 years
Disaster Recovery Plan	Permanent

Application Records

Personal data	7 years -earlier data anonymised
Offer/Acceptance records	7 years -earlier data anonymised
Statistical information	Permanent
School data	7 years

Examination Records

Leaving Certificate data	35 years
GCE data	25 years
FETAC data	25 years
Other qualifications data	25 years
HPAT	2 years
GAMSAT	2 years
MSAP	2 years

Scanned Document

Qualifications	2 years
Supplementary Information Forms	1 year
Higher Education Access Route forms	1 year

13.7.   Policy on Document Protection

Documents (hardcopy, online or other media) will be stored in a protected environment for the duration of the Document Retention Schedule. Computer backup media will be included.

13.8.   Policy on Document Destruction

Hardcopy of documents will be destroyed by shredding after they have been retained until the end of the Document Retention Schedule. Online copies will be destroyed by fire or other proven means to destroy such media after they have been retained until the end of the Document Retention Schedule.

13.9.   Policy on Provision of Documentation for Investigations or Litigation

Documents requested and summoned by legally authorized personnel will be provided within five business days. The Board of Management will authorize provision. No documents will be concealed, altered or destroyed with the intent to obstruct the investigation or litigation.

13.10.   Policy on Data Protection and Freedom of Information

ICHAS is committed to ensuring compliance with the data protection requirements as laid out the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and all the systems and process utilised in the college have been developed and designed to enable compliance with data protection regulation. Any information relating to the specific needs, disability or health of an individual applicant or learner will be retained and shared in accordance with the consent provided and in line with Data Protection legislation. All employees and students are treated equally under this policy in relation to GDPR. The policy covers both personal and special categories of personal data (sensitive data) which the College has obtained in relation to personal data held in manual and automated ways.

ICHAS college acquires, processes and stores personal data in relation to

- Current and former employees
- Current and former students/ graduates
- Applicants
- Third party providers engaged by the College

ICHAS is committed to the protection of all personal and sensitive data for which it holds responsibility as the Data Controller and the handling of such data in line with the data protection principles and the Data Protection Act (DPA). Changes to data protection legislation shall be monitored and implemented in order to remain compliant with all requirements. All member(s) of staff responsible for data protection with specific management of the compliance by the appointed data protection officer at the College. The College is also committed to ensuring that its staff are aware of data protection policies, legal requirements and adequate training is provided to them. The requirements of this policy are mandatory for all staff employed by the College and any third party contracted to provide services at the College

Notification

- If necessary, the College will register the data processing activities with the Data Commissioner's Office as required of a recognised Data Controller.

- Changes to the type of data processing activities being undertaken shall be notified to the Data Protection Commissioners and details amended in the register.

- Breaches of personal or sensitive data shall be notified immediately to the individual(s) concerned and the Data Protection Commission.

- Personal and Sensitive Data:

- All data within the ICHAS College's control shall be identified as personal, sensitive or both to ensure that it is handled in compliance with legal requirements and access to it does not breach the rights of the individuals to whom it relates.

- The definitions of personal and sensitive data shall be as those published by the Data Protection Commission for guidance:

- The principles of the Data Protection Act shall be applied to all data processed:

  1. Processed fairly and lawfully

  2. Obtained only for lawful purposes, and is not further used in any manner incompatible with those original purposes

  3. Accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date,

  4. Adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purposes for which it is processed

  5. Not kept for longer than is necessary for those purposes

  6. Processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under the Data Protection Acts

  7. Protected by appropriate technical and organisational measures against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage

  8. Not transferred to a country or territory outside the European Economic Area unless that country or territory ensures an adequate level of protection of the personal information

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13.11.   Policy on Fair Processing / Privacy Notice

The College shall be transparent about the intended processing of data and communicate these intentions via notification to staff and students prior to the processing of individual's data. Notifications shall be in accordance with the Data Commissioners guidance and, where relevant, be written in a form understandable by those defined as 'Children' under the legislation. The intention to share data relating to individuals to an organisation outside of the College shall be clearly defined within notifications and details of the basis for sharing given. Data will be shared with external parties in circumstances where it is a legal requirement to provide such information. Any proposed change to the processing of individual's data shall first be notified to them.

Data Security

In order to assure the protection of all data being processed and inform decisions on processing activities, the College undertakes an assessment of the associated risks of proposed processing and equally the impact on an individual's privacy in holding data related to them.

Risk and impact assessments are conducted in accordance with guidance given by the Data Protection regulation. Security of data will be achieved through the implementation of proportionate physical and technical measures. Nominated staff will be responsible for the effectiveness of the controls implemented and reporting of their performance. The security arrangements of any organisation with which data is shared will also be considered and these organisations will provide evidence of the competence in the security of shared data and this will be viewed as joint data controllers. In this circumstance, ICHAS in its role as Data Controller, will ensure that an agreement has been drawn up in advance of the data being shared and that there are joint controllers of data involved. Each controller must be made aware of their obligations in relation to personal data, the specific purpose or purposes for which it is collected, processed, retained and transmitted and the need to implement GDPR rules when processing this type of data. Currently joint controllers of data with ICHAS are Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), Central Applications Office (CAO), Revenue commissioners, Department of Social Protection and Department of Justice (INIS services)

Data Access Requests (Subject Access Requests)

All individuals whose data is held by the College, has a legal right to request access to such data or information about what is held. The College will respond to such requests within 40 days. All requests of this nature should be made in writing to the Director of Corporate Affairs. A charge may be applied to process the request.

Photographs and Video

Images of staff and students may be captured at appropriate times and as part of educational activities for use in school only. Unless prior consent from staff and students has been given, the College will not utilise such images for publication or communication to external sources. It is the College's policy that external parties may not capture images of staff or students during such activities without prior consent.

13.12. Policy on CCTV

ICHAS College has CCTV cameras in its Limerick Campus. This CCTV camera records footage of the campus with associated time, dates and locations. Responsibility for the CCTV falls to the Director of Corporate Affairs and the Head of Finance. Authority to access CCTV is strictly controlled by the Director of Corporate Affairs. In order to respect the rights and freedom of data subjects and to balance these with the requirements from a security point of view, the college has placed cameras in areas of main thoroughfare and are not used for the purpose of monitoring staff.

13.13. Policy on Data Disposal

The College recognises that the secure disposal of redundant data is an integral element to compliance with legal requirements and an area of increased risk.

All data held in any form of media (paper, tape, electronic) will only be passed to a disposal partner with demonstrable competence in providing secure disposal service and the nominated 3rd party in this respect for the College is DGD confidential Shredding Services

All data will be destroyed or eradicated to agreed levels meeting recognised national standards, with confirmation at completion of the disposal process. Disposal of IT assets holding data will be in compliance with data protection guidance. The College has identified

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a qualified source for disposal of IT assets and collections which is DGD Confidential Shredding Services.

Please refer to the ICHAS GDPR Policy and the ICHAS Data Protection Policy for further information.

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

13.14. Policy on Security Standards

All of ICHAS's information systems are subject to the Information Systems Security standards as outlined in this document. The goal of the Information Systems Department is to provide excellent computing facilities that support the Colleges information requirements. The College is committed to maintain all the Information systems with the latest hardware and software. All Information Systems users at ICHAS are required to read and accept the contents of this condition of use policy prior to being granted access to ICHAS information systems.

13.15. Policy on Passwords

All ICHAS systems must be protected by a username and password. All users must have individual passwords and these should not be communicated to anybody else.

Password Security

- Once a password has been issued to a user, full responsibility for that account and the associated password passes to the user

- Users must change supplied passwords to user-selected passwords after first login, as directed

- Under no circumstances are passwords to be revealed to anyone else apart from the authorised user

- Users must not use any means to obtain another user's password

- Users must not logon with another user's password. If a user needs access to documents or a mailbox belonging to another user, the user can submit a request to the IS Department , who may be able to arrange access on a case by case basis

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- Computing devices should not be left unattended without enabling a password-protected screensaver or logging off the device. All users should lock devices when the device is out of sight.

- Users must not attempt to circumvent password entry with auto logon, application remembering, embedded scripts or hard coded passwords in client software

- Users must not attempt to gain administrative rights unless granted by IT Admin. Any attempt to gain inappropriate rights is considered a significant breach of the permitted Conditions for Use

Password Storage

- If passwords have to be written down, the user is responsible for making sure that the passwords are stored in a secure location to which only the user has access e.g. locked desk drawer

- Users are not to store passwords on pieces of paper on their desktops or written on paper stuck underneath keyboards

- Users are not to write passwords down alongside the username

- Users must never keep passwords with a laptop. (It would not be normal to leave a PIN with an ATM card)

Creating Strong Passwords

- A strong password should be a minimum of eight characters, should contain upper and lower case and must contain at least one number.

- Strong passwords are essential to the security of the Colleges systems. A strong password is a password that is not easily guessed. Guidelines on how to create strong passwords are outlined below:

- Make the passwords difficult to guess but easy to remember.

13.16.   Policy on Email Usage

Email is an indispensable business tool within the College. This facility is provided purely as a business tool and the same ethical, legal and commercial standards apply to both internal and external email as to any other form of business correspondence. However, limited use of personal email is permitted subject to the conditions set out in this document and underpinned by the more detailed Security Policies.Standard unencrypted email should

never be used to send any data of a personal or confidential nature. Users should secure the information by including it in a password protected document or compressing file or files in a password protected/encrypted zip file. Then provide the recipient with the password by means of other communication, for instance by telephone.

- College data of a personal or confidential nature should never be sent to personal web mail accounts such as (Yahoo, hotmail, gmail etc)
- Non-temporary passwords should never be transmitted by email.

Email Accounts

All accounts maintained on the Colleges email systems are the property of the College. Passwords must not be given to or shared with other people. If access to another email account is required for a business-related reason, the owner of the email account can delegate access or if the owner of the email account is not available, access may be granted on a case-by-case basis on receipt of a business case from the Manager, submitted to the Information systems Manager

Legal Requirements

The following are required by law and are to be strictly adhered to:

- It is strictly prohibited to send, receive, store or forward emails containing libellous defamatory, offensive, racist, indecent, obscene, or otherwise illegal content. If an email with any of this content comes to the attention of any user that user must promptly notify IS Department.
- Users are reminded that it is also a criminal offence under Irish Law to knowingly infringe intellectual property rights, such as copyrights, patents, database rights and registered trademarks and that sharing copyright material may consequently constitute a criminal offence if done without permission of the right owner in question.
- Users should not forge or attempt to forge email messages.
- Users should not send email messages using another person's email account.
- Users should not disguise or attempt to disguise the user's identity when sending emails.

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Personal use of Email

Although the ICHAS's email system is provided for business use, the College also allows the reasonable use of email for personal purposes, if the following conditions are adhered to.

- Personal use of email should not interfere with work.

- Personal emails must comply with the conditions of use set out in this document.

- All emails distributed via the College 's email system, including personal emails, are the property of the College and it reserves the right to view, delete and backup these emails for business purposes.

- The use of the College 's emails for registration to non-business-related web sites is not recommended. Registration to non-business-related web sites could substantially increase the amount of Spam emails both the user and the College receives.

E-mail Attachments

- Users should ensure that only necessary attachments are sent.

- Emails of 10 Megabytes or larger should not normally be sent using the College 's email system. Attempts by standard users to send emails of 10 Megabytes or larger may be blocked, users may contact IS Department for advice on other solutions for transfer of files above 10 Megabytes.

- All sensitive data files should be password protected for transmission. In the case where a password protected file is sent via email, the password should only be communicated via phone call to a nominated person.

Inbound Email Content

The following types of email and content may not be delivered to users:

- Known SPAM
- Unknown Recipient (To) address
- Attachments containing executables such as: .exe, .msi, java and .pif.
- Attachments containing compressed files such as: .tar, .rar, .cab.
- Encrypted attachments
- Attachments containing Multimedia files such as: .mp3, .avi, .wav, .mpeg etc.

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- Emails that cannot be scanned by the anti-virus systems.

In such cases, the intended recipient should receive an email to highlight that an intended email to them has been blocked. Users may contact the IS Department and request that the blocked email be released. The IS Department will only release an email, once the team is confident that the email will not cause harm to the College's systems.

Mailbox Size & Email Maintenance

Long-term storage of Emails should not result in oversized mailboxes. Emails may be saved to archives by arrangement with the Services Manager. Personal emails should be deleted or archived by users, once they have been read, in order to help keep the mailboxes size down. The Internet is an indispensable business tool within the College. This facility is provided purely as a business tool. However, limited use of the Internet for personal reasons is permitted subject to the conditions set out in this document.

13.17.   Policy on Internet Usage

Blocked Web Sites

The College may implement a measure to restrict access to certain categories of web sites. This measure will block certain Internet activities that are deemed unsuitable and/or unacceptable. If access is required to a blocked website for a legitimate business reason, a written request should be submitted by the relevant manager to the IS Department and access may be granted, where appropriate.

Personal Use of the Internet

Although the Colleges systems provide access to the Internet for business use, the College also allows the reasonable use of the Internet for personal purposes, if the following conditions are adhered to.

- Personal use of the Internet must not interfere with work.
- Personal use must comply with the conditions of use set out in this document,
- The College Internet must not be used in support of an external business. For example: the use of Ebay or other auction sites is not allowed for external business purposes.

Monitoring of Internet Usage

The College may monitor Internet usage on the systems. Internet activities may be logged for further review, where necessary, to ensure that users adhere to the conditions for use set out in this document.

Reports on Internet usage may be made available to Management on request.

Web Based Remote Access Software

The use of the Internet to gain remote access to another device either within or external to the College network is generally prohibited. However authorised users may be permitted to use accredited remote access software, for example, to resolve technical issues for students participating in virtual classrooms as outlined in Section 10 (Assuring Quality in Blended Learning).

Downloading from the Internet

Downloading of the following file types without approval from the IS Department is prohibited. The IS Department may put measures in place to prevent such files from being downloaded:

- .exe - Executable File.
- .com - Command File (Executable).
- .msi - Windows Installer File (Executable).
- .dll - Dynamic Link Library.
- .bat Batch File.
- .vbs Visual Basic Script.
- .cmd Command Shell.

Note: This list will be amended as new risks arise. Exceptions may be applied for staff.

If a user needs blocked software to be downloaded for a legitimate business reason, a request should be submitted by the user to the ITSO. Access may be granted, where appropriate. Digital audio files should only be downloaded for business purposes.

Publishing to the Internet

All content published to the ICHAS website must be approved by management prior to being published. Data of a sensitive nature must not be published on the College Website.

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13.18.   Anti-Virus Policy

A virus is a piece of self-replicating code, most often a malicious software programme designed to destroy or damage information on computers. Some viruses cause no damage apart from reproducing, but a significant number are specifically designed to cause data loss or to compromise the confidentiality of files by sending copies of them to others.

Potential sources of viruses include shared media such as USB storage devices or CD-ROMs/DVDs, E-Mail (including, but not limited to, files attached to messages), and software or documents copied over networks such as the Internet.

A virus infection is almost always costly to the College either because of the loss of data (possibly permanently), or because of staff time spent on investigation/recovery, or because of delays to important work. Furthermore, any viruses spread from the Organisation's network can lead to serious reputation issues for the College as well as possible legal risks/costs.

Conditions to ensure Optimal Protection against Viruses

- All desktops, laptops and servers must be installed with the College's standard anti-virus software.

- Users are to report any software virus notifications to the College immediately.

- Users must never open any files or macros attached to an email from an unknown, suspicious or untrustworthy source. Such attachments should be 'double deleted' immediately, meaning firstly that they should be deleted in the normal way, and secondly that they should then be deleted from the "deleted items" folder as well.

- User must never copy, download, or install files from unknown, suspicious, or untrustworthy sources or removable media.

- Users should always scan any devices (CD-ROM's, USB device, floppy disks, etc) prior to access. 'Right-clicking' on the device and selecting "Scan for Virus" achieves this.

- Users should be suspicious of e-mail messages containing links to unknown Web sites. It is possible that the link is a malicious executable (.exe) file disguised as a link. Users should not click on a link received in a message, if the user was not expecting a specific link.

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- Users must notify the IS Department of any virus infection detection indicated by the Anti-Virus software.

13.19. Software Security Policy

Software Copyrights

It is the Colleges policy to respect and adhere to all computer software copyrights and to adhere to the terms of all software licenses, to which the College is a party.

Approval for the Purchase of Software and Hardware

Users must submit a request for approval to the IS Manager prior to purchasing any software or Hardware for installation on any College systems. The relevant software or hardware will then be evaluated for suitability, with the objective of avoiding any conflict with the College other systems.

Bar on Software Installation

Non-IT staff are not permitted to install software on College IT Systems. Request for software installation should be submitted to the IS department.

13.20. Hardware Security Policy

Use of Removable Storage Devices

The term 'removable storage device' refers to any medium such as USB, CD/DVD-Rom, Floppy disk, cameras, Dictaphones, etc. Access to removable storage devices is not technically restricted however the following points must be carried out:

- Personal, private, sensitive or confidential data should not be stored on removable storage devices. In cases where this is unavoidable, any removable storage device containing personal, private, sensitive or confidential data must be encrypted and must be stored in a safe location.

- Each user has responsibility for the protection of any data copied from College systems to a removable storage device.

- Users wishing to connect a mobile device to the Colleges ICT systems, must contact the IS Department, to obtain prior authorisation.

• Removable storage devices should only be used for data transfer where there is a business requirement to do so.

• Users should contact the IS Department if they require access to a third-party USB device. IS will check the contents and virus check the device.

• All devices carrying personal, private, sensitive or confidential data must be stored in a lockable briefcase during transit. Consideration should be made to the use of encrypted devices.

Laptops/Portable Devices

Laptops/portable devices are an essential business tool, but their very portability makes them particularly vulnerable to physical damage or theft. Furthermore, the fact that they are often used outside of the Organisation's premises exposes the laptops to risks at the hands of people who do not work for the Organisation and may not have its interests at heart. Laptops are especially vulnerable to physical damage or loss or theft, either for resale (opportunistic thieves) or for the information they contain.

Physical Security of Organisational Laptop/Portable Device

The physical security of any College laptop/portable device is the responsibility of the member of staff to whom the laptop/portable device has been issued. All laptop users are expected to take all reasonable precautions to secure the laptop and its data. All Laptops/portable devices must be in a secure location when not in use.

Laptops/Portable Devices Outside College Premises

• Users must take reasonable precautions when using a laptop out of the office.

• Laptops must not be left unattended whilst logged-on.

• Users must never leave a laptop visibly unattended in a vehicle or hotel room.

• Users should carry and store the laptop in a padded laptop computer bag or strong briefcase to reduce the chance of accidental damage. An ordinary looking briefcase is also less likely to attract thieves than an obvious laptop bag.

- Users should when using a laptop in a public place e.g. on a train, plane, hotel foyer, etc. be aware that information on the laptop screen may be visible to other people in the vicinity.

- Keep a note of the make, model, serial number and the asset label of the laptop. Do not store this information with the laptop.

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Laptops/portable Devices on Organisation premises

- • Laptops/portable devices must be connected to a guest wireless connection or guest LAN connection that is set up by the IS Department.

13.21. Policy of Wireless and 3G Data connectivity

3G data modems are only to be connected to the Colleges laptops when disconnected from the network outside of the premises. When on the premises, Laptops/portable devices must be connected to a guest wireless connection or guest LAN connection that is set up by the IS Department.

13.22. Policy on Encryption

All laptops/portable devices must have a boot password configured. Personal, sensitive or confidential data must be encrypted.

13.23. Policy on Remote Access

Remote Access

The College has an increasing business requirement for mobile working and e-working. Consequently, the demand from staff to access remotely the same systems that they can access from the office is increasing. This brings its own challenges in relation to data security which the college must address.

Approval

Remote access connections to the College network must be strictly controlled and only granted on submission of a valid business case and approval by the Services Manager.

Access

Access to the IT network from a remote device must only be granted in line with the following criteria:

• ecure encrypted link (e.g. IPSEC or SSL VPN tunnel) with relevant access controls must be used for remote access.

• Consideration should be given to utilise technologies that will provide for the automatic deletion of temporary files which may be stored on remote machines by its operating system.

• Staff must be aware that it is imperative that any wireless technologies/networks used when accessing the College systems must be encrypted to the strongest standard available.

• Only preconfigured devices are able to connect to the College's network

• Two methods of authentication must be required when gaining access to the College's network

• The connecting device must have up to date antivirus software installed.

• Access to areas within the College network must be adequately granted in line with the users' business requirements.

• Remote access must only be granted to specific individuals, generic remote access is strictly prohibited.

Monitoring
• IT must ensure that all remote access must be monitored and logged
• IT must ensure that all remote access/firewall logs are reviewed on a regular basis.

Third Party Remote Access
All third parties who require remote access to the College's network must be sponsored by a member of management.

A business case must be submitted by a member of management including:

• Reason for remote access

• Time and dates remote access is required

• Full name including technical experience of third party.

All third parties must have access and rights restricted to their needs

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All third parties remote access accounts must be configured to expire on completion of the task. Restricted hours of work should also be configured where possible.

Remote Access Termination
Remote access will be terminated in the following circumstances: 1. Failure to comply with the Conditions of Use of IT Systems Policy. 2. Account inactivity for a significant period. 3. A change in the user's status e.g. moving departments, retirement or absence. (N.B. It is the account owner/administrator's responsibility to inform the College that the account is no longer required)

13.24. Policy on Loss or Theft of IS equipment

If any College IT device is lost or stolen, the user must immediately notify IS (or Police authority if abroad. A copy of the Police report must be provided to the IS Department). The IS will inform the Gardaí if required. The IS will disable any lost or stolen Mobile email devices, thus removing all data and rendering the device unusable. Mobile phones will be deactivated.

Reissue/Disposal
Where a device has been damaged or is end of life, it should be returned to the IT team. The IT team must then ensure that all data is cleared off the device prior to re-issue, or disposal. Where a Device has been assigned to an individual in the context of a particular post or responsibility, and the individual transfers, the Device must be returned to IT who must ensure that all data is cleared off prior to reissue to the newly assigned officer.

14.   Policy on Public Information and Communication

ICHAS will seek to establish and maintain effective communication within the College and internally and externally between all stakeholder groups and it will provide students with timely, relevant and accurate information relating to all aspects of its programme offering. The College will also publish objective and impartial information (relating to student profile, programmes, qualifications, assessment and quality assurance procedures) for the public on its website and its marketing initiatives will display honesty and integrity. At all times, the College Policy is focused on providing information that facilitates informed choice for all prospective students. The quality assurance procedures in relation to all published materials undergoes a clearing house process. Each head of department are responsible for the information that's communicated to the various parties. This involves review and sanction of all material prior to publication.

14.1.   Policy on the provision of Learner Information.

The following information is published on www.ichas.ie in relation to all programmes offered at the College and this information is taken from the approved validation documents.
- Programme award title and level of the award on the NFQ
- Accrediting Body
- Programme content
- Student Testimonials
- Application process
- Entry requirements
- Assessment procedures
- Student supports
- Access, transfer and progression arrangements
- Potential employment opportunities
- The College complies with section 65 in respect of arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners by putting in place arrangements for bonding protecting colleges and other financial implications in relation to funding and scholarships.
- Staff Profiles
- Academic Conferences

The College employs a number of different mediums for communicating information related to College programmes:
- College website
- Social media including facebook, and other platforms
- College Prospectus and other printed marketing materials e.g. flyers
- Newspaper and radio advertising
- College Open Days
- Participation in Conferences and Recruitment Fairs & Career Guidance Counsellor events and CAO Conferences

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ICHAS recognises the importance of facilitating efficient and effective communications with learners in all centres to ensure that they have an inclusive and responsive learning experience within the College.   Induction Days, examinations and workshops are held at both the Limerick & Dublin campus.   Ensuring a Class Representative, who fully appreciates the role and its responsibilities, is elected early in the academic year is an important element of good communications.   Lecturers play an important role in liaising between the College and student body. Learners are strongly encouraged to contact the relevant Programme Co-ordinator, either directly or via the Class Representative, to raise any queries or concerns regarding their programme, and are assured of a prompt response at all times. In addition, a senior College representative aims to visit each centre at least once during the academic year.

The following elements form part of the communication procedures for students:
- A general student induction takes place at Limerick or Dublin campus at the start of each academic year
- All programme-specific information is available in print copy and on the ICHAS portal in advance of the academic year, which includes timetables, academic calendar, assessment schedule, marking guidelines, practice placement requirements, student handbook. This ensures consistency and clarity of information across all centres and centres.
- The Director of Academic Affairs visits off-campus centres on a planned basis over the course of each academic year.
- All formal examinations are held in Limerick & Dublin campus to ensure consistency of examination conditions and implementation of examination regulations.
- The class representative system is emphasised during student Induction and lecturers facilitate the election of class representatives in the early weeks of each academic year. A schedule of class representative meetings is communicated at the start of the academic year, the function of the class representative is communicated on the portal and a formal response is provided to all matters raised by class representatives at the Class Representative Meeting.
- The News section of the Learner Portal is designed to relay important information to all learners on an equal basis, and it is also envisaged that discussion forums will be implemented soon after the launch of the portal to provide learners across all locations with an opportunity to interact with the wider student body.
- Lecturers in off-campus centres are briefed on all items that may affect the student learning experience, recognising lecturers' role as the Institute's primary representative

On an ongoing basis, the Programme Co-ordinators are primarily responsible for day-to-day communication with the general student body and are tasked to ensure that all communications are issued to all students, selecting appropriate methods according to geographic location and programme mode.

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The effectiveness of communications to both lecturers and students is reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Quality & Standards Committee and recommendations for continuous improvement in this area are implemented on an ongoing basis by all relevant staff.

14.2. Policy on the Publication of Quality Assurance evaluation reports.

All reports produced by the College in relation to the effectiveness of programmes and services are published on the College website. These include, but are not limited to:
-   The ICHAS Quality Assurance Manual
-   Annual Quality Assurance Reports
-   Programmatic Review Reports (Self Evaluation Report, Peer Review Panel Report and Programme Improvement Plan)
-   Institutional Review Reports (Self Evaluation Report, Peer Review Panel Report and Quality Improvement Plan)
-   Annual Graduate Destination Reports

14.3. Policy on Public Information Provision

The College website at www.ichas.ie contains important information around the activities that the College engages in. ICHAS publishes accurate and current information about the following

-   Programmes offerings
-   Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures.
-   The Institutional Review report and programme validation reports can be found on the QQI website.

ICHAS is committed to promoting a clear and consistent message. These procedures advise on the production of publicity and promotional materials, which enables the College to manage the messages communicated to the public, prospective applicants, enrolled learners and other stakeholders. The following contains some information on the approval of marketing materials at the College

14.4. Marketing Material Policy

The implementation of the ICHAS policy on Marketing Material ensures that
-   the consistency of marketing and publicity materials using the College's name is maintained
-   the message communicated is consistent
-   the College's corporate image is maintained
-   marketing and publicity materials do not compromise, but rather enhance the image of the College
-   messages are complementary and not contradictory

Procedure for the Approval of Marketing Materials

All marketing materials are sent (in hard or electronic copy) to the Head of Marketing, for review and approval on behalf of ICHAS.

It is the responsibility of the Director of Corporate Affairs to ensure that all academic information contained in Marketing Material is accurate at the time of going to print.

14.5. Arrangements with Accrediting Body

Any marketing or publicity material that uses the name or logo of QQI must be approved, in accordance with their publicity guidelines.

15.   Policy on Other Parties involved in Education and Training

In terms of Collaborative Provision in the Independent /Private Sector, QQI's Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines require that a provider's quality assurance arrangements in respect of any collaborative provision must comply with the QQI Policies for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Provision and Joint Awards (2012).

Collaborative Provision refers to situations where other parties are involved with a voluntary provider in the provision of programmes. The quality assurance procedures established by voluntary providers in respect of collaboration with other providers or parties should have regard to the overall suite of education and training provision offered by those other partners or providers and any other parties with whom the voluntary provider is engaged.

Where a voluntary provider organises or procures a programme which is provided in whole or in part by another provider, the voluntary provider must establish and agree appropriate QA procedures with that provider.

QQI requires that voluntary providers must have procedures in place to approve collaboration arrangements with other providers and to monitor and review the effectiveness of those arrangements. QQI cautions that voluntary providers should apply due diligence and be aware of any reputational risk to themselves and the sector and /or the national qualifications system associated with prospective providers, awarding bodies and other third parties with whom they are considering entering into collaborative arrangements.

ICHAS is open to the establishment of partnerships with other higher education institutions which may involve different forms of collaboration, including transnational and joint awards, where the relevant partner organisations or potential collaborators meet the type of expectations set out by QQI in terms of reputational standing. This policy will support that development and will also be subject to revision as such opportunities arise.

15.1.   Policy on Peer Relationships with the broader education and training community

Collaboration in the context of this policy, refers to the development and delivery of programmes with partner colleges which lead to an award on the National Framework of Qualifications to be awarded by QQI.

The purpose of this policy is to:

(a) Set out clearly for both ICHAS and potential collaborative partners the required quality assurance processes;

(b) Detail the processes to be followed in the development of a collaborative agreements regarding programmes through to validation and delivery as appropriate;

(c) Ensure that all procedures deliver a learning experience to those students on the collaborative programmes consistent with the standards expected on programmes delivered by ICHAS alone;

(d) Ensure compliance with QQI standards, policies and procedures on quality assurance.

Guiding Principles

ICHAS subscribes to the guiding principles for collaborative provision as promoted by the IHEQN[16], which require that Institutions:

(a) are cognisant of the strategic and policy contexts for collaborative provision;

(b) have primary responsibility for the management and delivery of programmes of higher education for students;

(c) have primary responsibility for the quality assurance of their provision, wherever or however it is offered;

(d) ensure that students enrolled on collaborative programmes receive an equivalent learning experience to other students within the institution;

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[16] IHEQN *Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of collaborative and Transnational Provision (2013)*

(e) give due consideration to the academic support of students, including to student representation on appropriate committees and bodies;

(f) are committed to respecting the rights of their staff, students and partners in all of their joint ventures, recognising that collaborative programmes may involve wider ethical decisions;

(g) develop institutional approval and quality assurance processes for collaborative programmes, which involve the conduct of appropriate due diligence, ongoing monitoring and checks;

(h) recognise the need to have formal written agreements for all collaborative arrangements.

Scope

This policy refers to all aspects of collaborative provision, encompassing all stages in the development of a collaborative programme up to and including validation by Qualifications and Quality Ireland (QQI) as well as its subsequent delivery. Collaboration is broadly interpreted to include all arrangements with collaborative partners in relation to programme development, student selection and registration, provision of physical facilities as well as technology enhanced learning facilities, provision of support services, programme delivery and assessment.

15.2.   Development of Collaborative Programmes

Proposals for the development of collaborative provision may emerge from many sources, including partnerships with other institutions or identifying new contexts for the delivery of existing modules. Members of the Academic Staff are free to submit proposals to the Director of Academic Affairs. Proposers are required to submit an outline of the programme prior to the development of a full submission. This should be submitted to the Director of Academic Affairs for initial evaluation, prior to wider consideration by Faculty Board, relevant Head of Department and Academic Council.

The Academic Council will examine the outline proposal for feasibility and consistency with ethos and strategic aims of the College's academic profile. In the event of approval, the proposal will then be evaluated by the College's Board of Management to ensure alignment

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with ICHAS's strategic vision, resource availability and quality assurance demands. In addition to any further contribution from the AC, the Director of Academic Affairs, supported by the College President and other staff as appropriate, will normally lead the engagement with the consortium partner[17]. The CEO will be responsible for undertaking due diligence, in addition to facilitating their due diligence as part of their engagement with ICHAS.

The outline proposal for approval should contain sufficient detail to allow for a realistic evaluation of:

(a) Demand from industry/stakeholders;

(b) Demand from prospective students;

(c) Alignment with ICHAS's mission and values;

(d) Profile of proposed partner;

(e) Outline of collaborative arrangement;

(f) Statement of aims and learning outcomes;

(g) Programme design – modules, learning outcomes, teaching and learning strategy;

(h) Programme Schedule - contact hours, credit weighting, examination subjects, marks per subject etc;

(i) Indicative resource demand – accommodation requirements, ICT implications, staffing impacts etc.

It is vital that the initial stages of the process are informed by early engagement of key staff from ICHAS with the partner college. This will ensure that evaluation of the proposal by the Academic Council will be facilitated and assured by timely agreement on issues such as programme title, NFQ Level, delivery location and methodology, assessment strategy, initial assignment of key roles between institutions. While not all elements must be fully agreed at this stage, it will identify key areas for further review and agreement, in addition to provision of opportunity for staff from all potential collaborative partners/ consortium institutions to collaborate and work together.

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[17] *The term Consortium is used to denote the joint structure with responsibility to deliver the programme. Consortium Partner denotes the institution(s) working with SNMCI to deliver the collaborative programme.*

Arrangements and staff for the conduct of appropriate research and preparation of submission for programme validation will be facilitated, with the objective of establishing a joint Programme Design Team with the partner institution to oversee the programme validation process. The tasks of drafting and preparation may be shared between partners, though a lead role may be also identified, with the agreement of the College President & Director of Academic Affairs of ICHAS, assigned to a single institution within the consortium.

The AC shall approve the completed collaborative submission. The Board of Governors of ICHAS will be advised of all stages of the process.

Once the validation process has been completed, the Director of Academic Affairs will bring the report of the QQI Validation Panel to Academic Council for review and consideration. The designated lead member will take responsibility for the formal response and address any conditions/ recommendations to the Validation Panel report. The detailed response will be approved by the Academic Council.

Once the formal approval processes have been completed with QQI, the conduct of review, including Programmatic Reviews shall be in accordance with ICHAS general programme review procedures. The Director of Academic Affairs will be responsible for instituting this process, including the management of relations with the Consortium Partner.

15.3. Key Collaborative Operating Principles

ICHAS will engage in collaborative provision where the process has the capacity to enrich its learning environment and strengthen its programme provision. Its core premise is to further advantage ICHAS students, in a manner which is not possible within its own capacity or resources. Collaborative provision will be strategic in nature.

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ICHAS is committed to collaborative provision where each Consortium Partner plays a significant and equitable part in each facet of the development and delivery of the programmes. This is possible through:

(a) Alternating meetings between sites by utilising ICT;

(b) Sharing responsibilities for key roles such as the Chair of Programme Boards;

(c) Facilitating the engagement of each of the partners institutes in respect of quality assurance activities;

(d) Recognition of each Consortium Partner in all promotions and media communications in relation to its provision in an honest, fair and accurate manner.

Quality assurance processes employed in respect of collaborative provision will be as rigorous as the quality assurance processes operated in respect of other ICHAS programmes. This will also require that partner's quality assurance processes are consistent with ICHAS.

It is a requirement of ICHAS that processes for assessing students are fair and consistent and comply with QQI standards for the relevant award on the National Framework of Qualifications. Procedures for access, transfer and progression will also be implemented in accordance with national policy.

15.4.   Developing the Framework For A Consortium Agreement

A Memorandum of Understanding will be drawn up by the parties to the Consortium, which will set out the following:

(a) The parties involved;

(b) Initial aims of the collaboration;

(c) Work to be undertaken by the parties individually and collaboratively;

(d) Timelines for the completion of tasks;

(e) Membership of the Co-ordinating Committee;

(f) Treatment of confidential matters and disclosure requirements;

(g) Key personnel.

All collaborative arrangements will be negotiated, agreed and managed with the approval of the College President and the Board of Management of ICHAS which will include the Director of Academic Affairs. The College President may delegate functions within the process of agreement as appropriate.

It will be the responsibility of the Director of Academic Affairs to keep the Academic Council and Governing Authority informed of developments in respect of collaborative provision. It will fall within the domain of Academic Council to ensure ICHAS quality assurance processes are observed accordingly.

Prospective students should be advised of the parties to the Collaborative Agreement, including:

(a) The Awarding Body;

(b) Programme validation status and associated information;

(c) Award type, name and its placement on the National Framework of Qualifications;

(d) Admission requirements

(e) Access, transfer and progression information, including Recognition of Prior Learning processes;

(f) Recognition by regulatory, statutory and any professional bodies as appropriate;

(g) Programme structure and intended learning outcomes;

(h) Teaching and assessment strategy;

(i) Delivery mode.

QQI validation of the collaborative programme will normally be conditional on the commencement of the Consortium Agreement.

15.5.   Policy on External Partnerships and second providers

Elements of a Consortium Agreement
Any formal Consortium Agreement will address issues such as:

(a) Programme design and validation;

(b) On-going monitoring of programme;

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(c) Periodic review of programme;

(d) Programme Teaching and Assessment strategies including modalities of assessment, re-checks, reviews and appeals.

The Consortium Agreement should also provide for a review process, which will generally occur within five years of its signature. ICHAS will draw on its existing quality assurance policies and procedures to inform this process.

The Consortium Agreement will have Protection of Enrolled Learners policies and procedures in place, showing how it can fulfil its obligations to students, so that in the event that the collaborative programme cannot be continued, alternative arrangements are in place so that without undue delay, students already registered on that programme are enabled to transfer to a similar programme and gain a qualification equivalent to the one that the first programmes had been leading towards.

The Consortium Agreement will reflect the principles outlined in Section above, particularly reflecting ICHAS's commitments in respect of student welfare.

16.   Policy on Self Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

This section outlines ICHAS's policy on monitoring the quality of its own academic activities. This includes the internal monitoring and review of programmes, which lead to the annual institutional report. As part of this, the chapter discusses the Module Review and Development Plan, student feedback, programmatic review and cyclical institutional review.

ICHAS has primary responsibility for the quality of its programme provision; the implementation and evaluation of its QA procedures; and on-going enhancement. This principle is laid down in Irish law and in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). This is supported by routine monitoring by QQI, defined as an external QA process that involves both routine and once-off evaluations, analysis, observations and recording of provider activities. Routine monitoring by QQI is designed to assist ICHAS in demonstrating the effective implementation of QA procedures, supporting public confidence and providing a source of public information through the publication of the conclusions of monitoring engagements.

Monitoring and Review in this context includes:
- Self-monitoring and Self Evaluation activities
- Periodic evaluation of programmes by way of Programmatic Review.
- External Review including periodic evaluation of the College's Governance and Quality Assurance infrastructure by way of Cyclical Institutional Review

ICHAS is committed to a process of ongoing self-evaluation, monitoring and review to ensure that both the quality of its programmes and services to students and stakeholders with a view to both assuring quality and ongoing enhancement. Both External Review and self-evaluation of quality, including review of programmes of education and training, research and related services is central to ICHAS Quality assurance system. ICHAS supports an ongoing process of reflective self-evaluation which feeds into a Quality Implementation Plan supporting quality enhancement. Self-Evaluation – which incorporates the monitoring and review of the College's activities and programmes involves regular reporting to Programme Boards,

Academic Council, the Board of Management and Governing Authority internally and making reports available to key external stakeholders such as QQI and other agencies and entities as appropriate.

Figure 37 - Key Elements of Self Evaluation and Internal Monitoring in ICHAS

The Evaluative Process facilitates the identification of areas of success as well as potential enhancement and provides the College, its students, members of Faculty and potential learners as well as regulatory and awarding agencies and bodies with assurance regarding the standards that apply within the College.

External Review is an important and integral element of and contributor to the processes of evaluation and monitoring of performance. Within the Higher Education Sector in Ireland, QQI has responsibility for the external assurance quality processes. Within that context, QQI provides multiple opportunities for external review. At a Programme level, Programmes are

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presented for initial validation and are subjected to an Independent Evaluation by external peers. These procedures are referred to in greater detail in Section 6 dealing with the College's policies and procedures for Programme Approval.

Equally, in terms of ongoing performance, QQI has established a Policy for the Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions (QQI, 2018). Cyclical Review takes place on a periodic scheduled basis. These processes provide an opportunity for the College to evaluate the quality of its provision of education, training and research, the fulfilment of its public service mission and the effectiveness of its ongoing monitoring and review activities and to ensure that the activities of the College are externally reviewed to ensure they meet the highest national and international standards.

Collectively, the internal and external review processes are designed to ensure that the programmes and the QA processes of the College are fit for purpose. The review and subsequent reflection of an external team provides valuable peer support and assurance on the effectiveness of the procedures and their external advice on quality processes and enhancement where necessary enhances the overall quality of programmes, student experience and functioning of the College. It equally offers assurance to learners that their experience is being monitored for good practice, and assurances to the public that the College is offering a valuable service.

External Reviews undertaken by QQI incorporate internationally accepted and recognised elements for reviews, including:

- The publication of Terms of Reference;
- The preparation of an Institutional Self-Evaluation Report by the College;
- The conduct of an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers;
- The publication of a review report including findings and recommendations;
- A follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

QQI review functions are set out comprehensively in various sections of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012). However, in summary Cyclical Reviews are co- ordinated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and underpinned by the relevant sections of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012). Cyclical Reviews assess compliance with European standards for quality assurance,

with regard to the expectations set out in the QQI quality assurance guidelines or their equivalent and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures as established in the lifecycle of engagement between the institution and QQI. The Review also explores the institution's efforts at enhancement of quality in relation to impacts on teaching, learning and research, institutional achievements and innovations in quality assurance, alignment to the institution's mission and strategy and the quality-related performance of the institution relative to quality indicators and benchmarks identified by the institution.
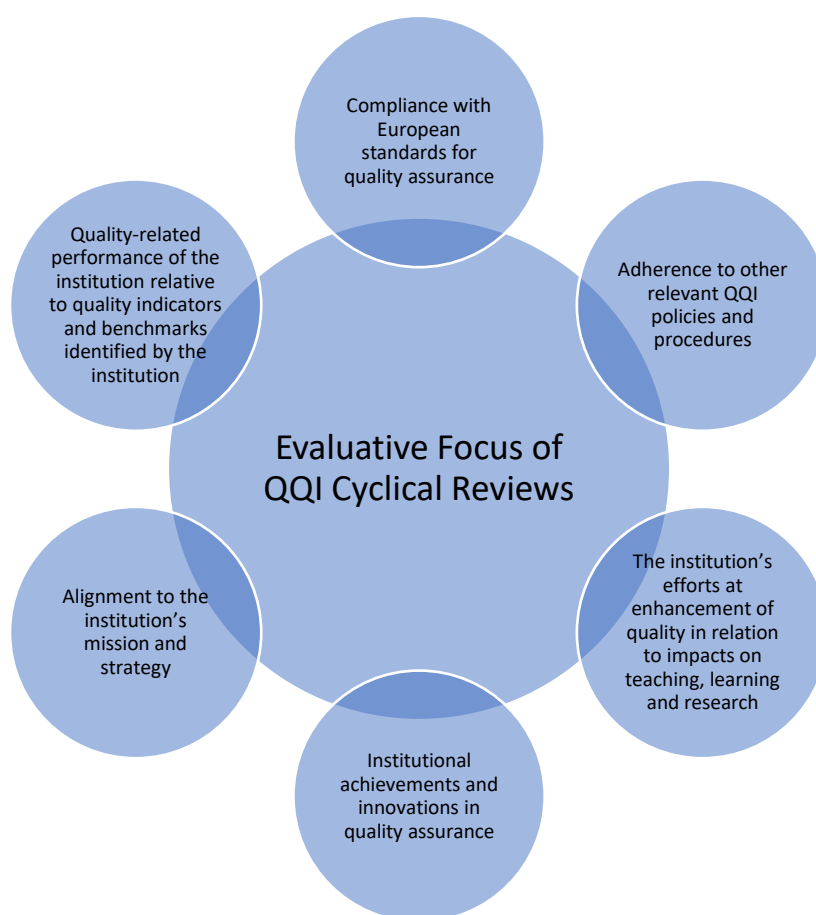

Figure 38- Items of Consideration in External Cyclical Reviews undertaken by QQI

Ongoing internal review and self- evaluation of quality supported by such External Review is central to ICHAS Quality Assurance and Enhancement ethos. ICHAS supports an ongoing process of reflective self-evaluation which feeds into a Quality Implementation Plan supporting quality enhancement.

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16.1.	Policy on Provider owned internal review, self-evaluation and monitoring

Besides being a requirement of QQI that providers of educational programmes engage in ongoing monitoring of programmes, such activities are vital to ensure that programmes of education are fit for purpose and remain so throughout their life cycle. Equally such activity promotes the success of programmes, and ensures the ongoing quality of the learner experience, and offers assurance to the Academic Awarding body of the capacity and competence of the College.

The on-going self-evaluative processes as well as the reports which emanate from these processes provide invaluable data to support programme enhancement, services and quality assurance policies and procedures. Therefore, within the College, the focus of all Self Evaluative and monitoring processes is on:

- Ensuring the ongoing relevance of validated programmes.
- Ensuring that programmes continue to be current and fit for purpose.
- Monitoring the attainment of the original programme aims.
- Ensuring that the Minimum Intended Programme and Module Learning Objectives are met on an on-gong basis or modified appropriately.
- Evaluating the impact of teaching and Assessment strategies and providing opportunities to review same.
- Identify and recommend remedial action if or when necessary.
- Evaluating factors impacting on student attainment and progression.
- Monitoring the ongoing appropriateness of programmes to the needs of the labour market.

More broadly, such processes also contribute to;

- Ensuring that the appropriate expectations of learners can be met relevant to their areas of study.
- Ensuring the requirements of Academic Awarding Bodies and or relevant Professional Bodies are met within programme design and delivery strategies
- Ensuring a culture of quality and enhancement within the College's operations.

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16.2. Policy on Internal Self Monitoring

ICHAS has established quality assurance procedures, systems and processes for obtaining feedback from internal and external sources for the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of education and training which it provides, organises and/or procures. This system enables ICHAS to monitor, review, develop and verify the quality of current and proposed courses of study and to appreciate the need to phase-out/withdraw certain courses.

Learner involvement in Review and Monitoring of Programmes occurs at a range of levels both formally and informally. All students are invited to complete anonymised student evaluations at Modular, Stage and Programme completion phases.

In terms of formal engagement;

Formal meetings are held at least three times annually with Class Representatives.

Class Representatives are members of Programme Boards

Student Representatives sit on Faculty Boards which meet twice each Semester.

Student Representatives sit on Academic Council.

Modular Level
- Individual Feedback Forms appraising Module content, Teaching and assessment as well as Facilities & supports.
- Class based Feedback through Formal Student Representative Meetings

Stage Level
- Individual feedback similar to Module Feedback
- Class Representative Meetings
- Student Membership of Programme Boards

Programme Level
- Student Membership of Programme Boards
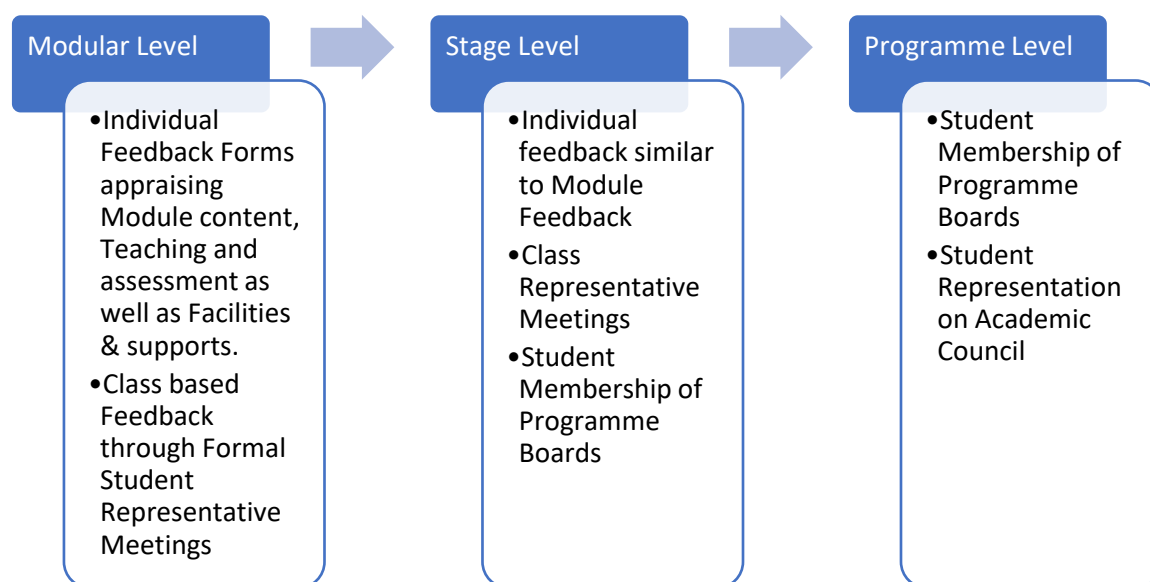- Student Representation on Academic Council

Figure 39 - Principal Formal means of Student Engagement in Programme & Services Monitoring

The College operates both a Modularised and Semesterised structure for Teaching & Learning and therefore, programmes are routinely monitored at the end of each Semester as well as at the end of the academic year to ensure that:

● Programmes are progressing satisfactorily both operationally and academically.

● Teaching schemes are appropriate to facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes of the module and programme.

● Assessment methods are appropriate to determine the achievement of learning outcomes for the different modules and are used appropriately throughout the academic year and consistent with the approved Programme Schedules.

● Academic staff remain current and relevant and engaged in scholarly activity and/or research as appropriate.

● Academic procedures are being followed.

● The suitability of existing programmes to meet the current and future needs of students is assessed.

● Programmes remain fit for purpose.

● Future requirements for programmes, and hence future programme development opportunities are identified.
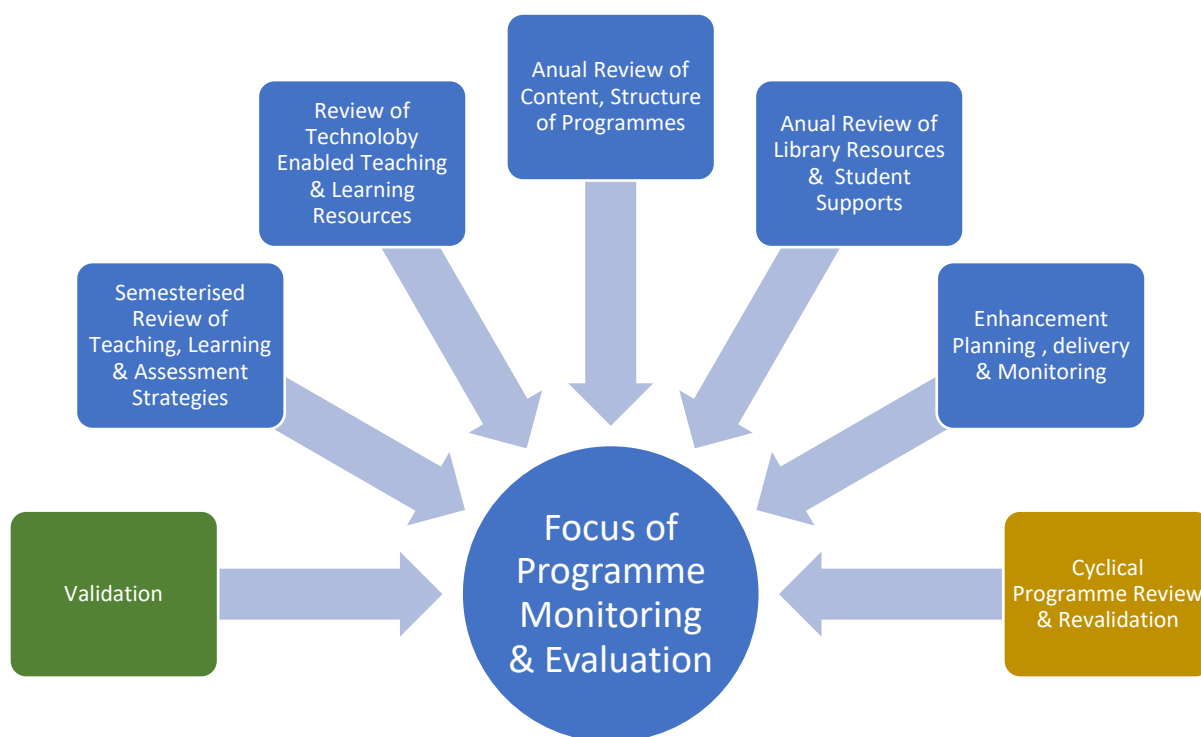
Figure 40 - Focus of Programme Monitoring & Evaluation

Data and feedback is collected and prepared by the Quality Enhancement Team including the Director of Academic Affairs, The Registrar, The Quality Enhancement Manager and the Directors of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies and is subsequently reviewed at the Programme Boards and Academic Council. The type of data utilised will include:

Structured Internal and External Feedback;

- Validation and programmatic review reports.
- Professional body reviews.
- Placement Provider and employer feedback
- External Examiner Reports.
- Lecturer feedback.
- Student feedback.

Performance Indicator Reports relating to such issues as;

- Admissions Data including RPL.

- Data pertaining to Transfer and Advanced Entry etc.

- Student Attrition/ Withdrawals,

- Performance Analysis at a modular, stage and programme level (grades, award classifications etc).

- Programme progression statistics

This review informs decisions of both Academic Council and the Faculty/ Programme Boards and its also an opportunity to raise institutional issues relating to resource allocation etc to the Management Board and Governing Authority.

16.3.   Procedures for Measuring the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Procedures
The effectiveness of quality assurance procedures at ICHAS is measured in a number of different ways. The main reviews are periodic Quality Audits, Annual Quality Assurance Reports, as well as Self Evaluation Reports undertaken for the purposes of Programme Validation, Programmatic Review and revalidation and Cyclical Institutional Review with QQI.

Periodic Quality Audit

The Quality & Standards Committee is charged with the review, evaluation and revision of quality assurance procedures.   The Committee is responsible for monitoring all systems and polices across the College and their impact on the student experience and academic standards. In addition, the Committee monitors adherence to quality assurance policies and procedures.   On a quarterly basis, the Committee members undertake an audit of the implementation of quality assurance procedures, based on a defined cycle, with all procedures reviewed within a twelve-month period. The practice of the review involves consultation with relevant staff through which knowledge of quality assurance procedures is disseminated and understanding enhanced.   Each quarter, a brief Audit Report is prepared and retained by the Quality Enhancement Manager and reports on findings are made available to Programme and Faculty Boards as well as Academic Council and the Board of Management.

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Annual Quality Assurance Report

The Registrar, supported by Quality Enhancement Manager produces an Annual Quality Assurance Report. The Annual Quality Assurance Report is for internal use only and takes the format of a self-study, identifying existing strengths and areas for improvement. The desired outcome of this report is an annual action plan aimed at ensuring the achievement of ongoing quality enhancement. The Report and a proposed Quality Enhancement Plan is submitted to Academic Council for review, discussion and ratification. The Report will consider the implementation and effectiveness of each quality assurance policy and associated procedures, deriving information from the periodic QA audits, consultation with staff, stakeholder feedback and evolving best practice guidelines from QQI and other relevant bodies.

Programmatic Review

ICHAS undertakes a major evaluation of each programme or a suite of related programmes at defined intervals (usually every five-years), termed Programmatic Review. The programmatic review process provides the Programme Board with an opportunity to conduct a critical evaluation of the programme and all associated supports, and to propose significant amendments, where appropriate. The programmatic review is conducted in line with guidelines and criteria contained in the *Policy on Monitoring (QQI, 2014)*. Full details of the procedures relating to Programmatic Review are contained in Section 6.

Cyclical Institutional Review

The College engages with QQI on a Cyclical basis to undertake Institutional Review. According to QQI's policy for cyclical review of higher education institutions (2016), the objectives of the institutional review process are:

- To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made;
- To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution;

- To assess the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the institution;

- To confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression;

- To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution.

QQI may also prescribe institution-specific objectives which will be contained in the agreed Terms of Reference. The College may also choose to include specific objectives relevant to its context. The Registrar is responsible for managing the Cyclical Review Process, which comprises a number of distinct phases:

- Agreement Terms of Reference with QQI.
- Appointment of an External Panel of Experts by QQI.
- Institutional Self Study, including a review of each objective above, based on available documentary evidence, experience and extensive stakeholder consultation.
- Submission of the Self Evaluation Report to QQI and the External Panel.
- External Panel Site Visit.
- Report of the External Peer Review Group including recommendations.
- College Response and Implementation Plan.
- Progress Report.

Provider-Owned Internal Review, Self-Evaluation, Monitoring

ICHAS is committed to a policy of self-evaluation of all its programmes and services on an annual basis which encompasses a quality self-assessment. The College supports the use of both formal and informal methods for reviewing its activities and informing its decision making in relation to monitoring the progress of a programme (details of which are provided below) or the support services provided by the College. In terms of informal mechanisms, ICHAS prides itself on its communication and engagement with its students and members of Faculty. The College therefore constantly receives informal feedback on every aspect of its programmes. Students are actively encouraged to highlight their concerns to any member of staff in the College. Likewise, members of Faculty have a range of opportunities to raise issues of concern regarding the quality of programmes and services.

In meeting its commitment to structured internal self-evaluation of all its programmes and services, the College undertakes a range of quality self-assessment processes. Specific programme/subject monitoring occurs on a formal basis at Programme Board meetings, with the schedule for such meetings set out in the College's Academic Calendar. These Programme Board meetings provide a formal opportunity for students and members of Faculty to highlight issues of concern or of good practice and feed into the process of cyclical Programmatic Review as well as into the broader self-evaluation and monitoring of the College's activities and services. Programmatic Review is a 'Provider – owned Process which no and Revalidation which normally occurs in five-year cycles (though it can be more frequent) and occurs in consultation with QQI (the academic awarding body).

In addition to the involvement of Faculty on Programme Boards, the perspectives of others within a peer reviewed ethos is also important. Therefore, the role of the External Examiner is set out in detail in Section 11 and the reports of External Examiners provide a very useful benchmark for performance appraisal. Equally the Examinations Board Reports also provide opportunities to formally review the quality of programmes and college services.

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Internal Review through Monitoring Results

The monitoring of results is an important indicator of student progress on and engagement with a programme. Problems with a subject within individual Modules can be identified when the performance of students in assessment tasks are reviewed. At a Modular level, the Programme Director will normally discuss the results and trends in results with the lecturer and agrees a plan of action to deal with performance issues on both an individual and more systematic basis. Examples of such actions include extra tutorials and the provision of extra support materials for students. It may also include altering assessment tasks where, for example, results are deemed to be at odds with expected norms and to ensure that the assessment tasks are appropriate to the proper assessment of the Module content, MIMLO's and MIPLOS.

At a Stage and Programme level, in addition to monitoring by Lecturers and Programme Directors, results will be monitored by the Internal Moderation Committee at a Modular, Stage and Programme Level. The Internal Moderation Committee will recommend systemic changes where necessary and report them to the Examinations Board. These findings and recommended actions will be reported through the Examinations Board to Academic council and following approval will be implemented at Modular and/or Programme Level as appropriate. The Programme Director and the relevant Director of Studies will ensure implementation of recommendations and monitor progress of implementation. Where recommendations impact on resources, the Board of Management will be notified, and appropriate resources agreed by the Director of Academic Affairs in consultation with the CEO.

Review of Quality Assurance Procedures

Feedback is gathered from every quality assurance procedure to determine/confirm the effectiveness and appropriateness of that procedure. An annual review of Quality Assurance Procedures is undertaken to ensure fitness for purpose, with updates made if/as necessary. Additionally, a thorough review of Quality assurance practices takes place within the context of the Self Evaluation processes which underpin Cyclical Institutional Review. Updates of the Quality Assurance Handbook are reviewed through the internal committee processes, with final approval required through Academic Council.

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Audit of College's Academic Provision and its Professional Services

The ICHAS Audit process provides an opportunity for the College to not alone undertake an overview of its academic programmes as a whole, but also to evaluate the effectiveness of the governance structures and the management and quality assurance arrangements in the context of the College's Strategic Plan.

The purpose of the Quality Audit process is to provide an opportunity for the College to:

- Reflect on its academic programmes,

- Monitor the effectiveness of its management of that provision, and

- Review the quality of the experience it provides for its students

- Review approaches to student recruitment and retention;

- Monitor learning and teaching strategies;

- Review processes for student engagement; scholarly activity; and thinking creatively about future challenges

- Monitor the college's arrangements for managing provision in conjunction with one or more collaborative partner institution where applicable

- Reflect on ways it might be able to enhance its effectiveness.

Reflect on
- Academic programmes
- Ways to enhance effectiveness

Monitor
- Effectiveness of its management and governance
- Learning and teaching strategies
- Collaborative provision

Review
- Quality of the student experience
- Approaches to student recruitment and retention
- Processes for student engagement; scholarly activity; and future planning.
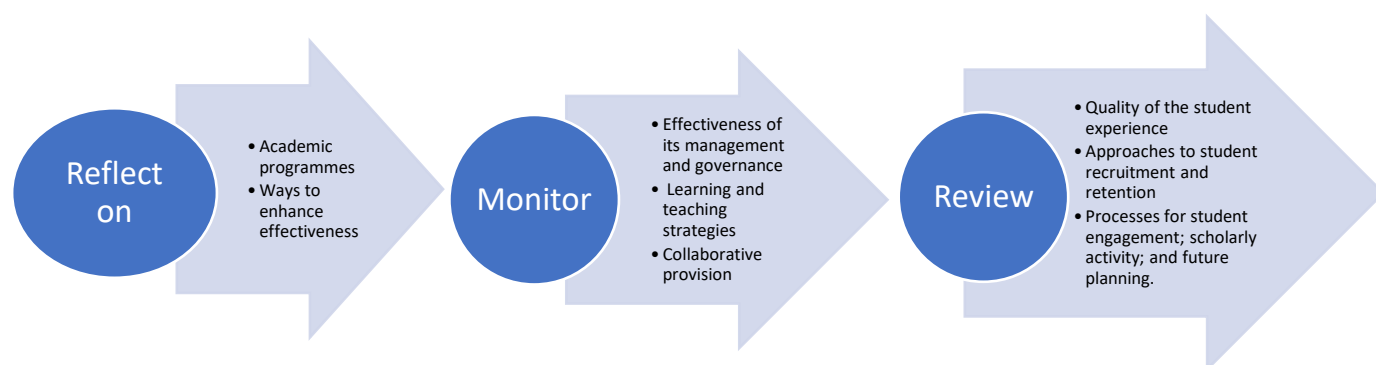
Figure 41 - The purpose of the Quality Audit process

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These audits facilitate the College to show compliance to procedures, to determine what is and what is not working or could be enhanced, and the audits may propose changes for implementation. Reports from the Audit process are monitored through the Academic Council and the Board of Management and are reviewed by the Governing Authority.

Student Involvement in Review, Self-Evaluation and Monitoring

Students are key stakeholders in the Teaching and Learning Relationship as well as in the overall monitoring of quality. Therefore, the College supports the formal engagement of students in the decision making of the College. This is achieved formally through;

- The use of a Class Representative System

- Student Participation in Programme Boards

- Student participation on Academic Council
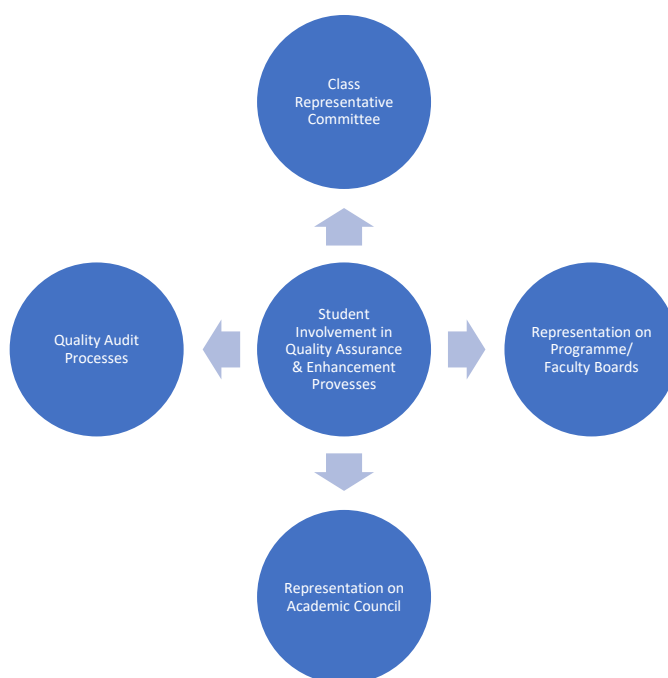
- Student involvement in Quality Audit Processes

Figure 42 – Formal Student Engagement Opportunities for Quality Assurance & Enhancement

Within the context of Class Representation, which each class selects two representatives annually to formally represent their peers in engagement with the senior management of the College and Programme Boards. Class Representatives are met by the Director of Academic

Affairs, the Registrar, the QAE Manager, the CEO and other College representatives formally three times per year as a medium of formal communication regarding issues of concern or to highlight developments or areas of good practice etc.. Class Representatives also participate in Programme Boards which meet 4 times per year.

Student Representatives also sit on Academic Council as a means of ensuring a student voice in the overall assurance of quality and the enhancement of programmes and services.

Students will always be consulted within the Audit Process and Student Representatives will be formally involved on the Quality & Standards Committee.

16.4. Policy on Provider-Owned Quality Assurance engaged with External Quality Assurance

QQI Cyclical (Institutional) Review

A condition of offering a QQI validated programme is that the College conducts a Cyclical Institutional Review. ICHAS values the quality and standards promoted by QQI in terms of its approach to Programme validation, review and revalidation and is proud to have successfully completed a cycle of Institutional Review with QQI's predecessor – HETAC in 2012. It is equally committed to the process of re-engagement with QQI and ongoing engagement with QQI cyclical reviews thereafter. In preparing for Cyclical (Institutional) Review the College will review its existing quality assurance procedures and structures relative to QQI's QA Guidelines, specifically the;

- Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines:
- Statutory QA Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers Guidelines (QQI, 2016) and
- Sector Specific Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines: Statutory QA Guidelines developed by QQI for Independent/Private Providers coming to QQI on a Voluntary Basis (QQI, 2016).

The following sections set out the purpose, criteria and processes associated with Cyclical Review as published by QQI. The College commits to collegial peer review and engagement with these criteria and processes. It welcomes the opportunities provided by formal Self Evaluation and the benchmatking of the College's procedures against best national and

international practice within the culture of being itself a Learning Organisation and commits to engage positively and proactively with any action plans that emanate from Cyclical Reviews.

Purpose of Cyclical (Institutional) Review

A QQI Cyclical (Institutional) Review has five specific measurable purposes, namely to:

1. encourage a QA culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment and experience within institutions

2. provide feedback to institutions about institution-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance.

3. improve public confidence in the quality of institutions by promoting transparency and public awareness.

4. support systems-level improvement of the quality of higher education.

5. encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice.

Criteria for the Cyclical (Institutional) Review

The overarching standards against which review findings are compared are:

1. The College's mission and strategy and selected quality indicators and benchmarks.

2. European and national standards for quality and awards.

3. QQI QA guidelines, and other relevant QQI policies

The Cyclical (Institutional) Review Process
The single QQI Cyclical (Institutional) Review model is based on the internationally accepted procedure for reviews, i.e.:

1. the agreement and publication of terms of reference,

2. generation of an institutional self-evaluation report,

3. external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers,

4. publication of a review report including findings and recommendations, and

5. follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

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Within this single model there is scope for differentiation between reviews in the objectives set out in the Terms of Reference, in the review team profiles and in specific methodologies (e.g. duration of site visit).

Terms of Reference for Cyclical Institutional Review

According to the Policy for Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions (QQI, 2016) document, in considering the terms of reference, the College is provided with an opportunity to identify indicators and benchmarks for quality, relevant to its own mission and context, and is encouraged to derive these from international sources. The key questions and lines of enquiry to be addressed by the cyclical review team are:

- How have quality assurance procedures and reviews been implemented?

- How effective are the internal quality assurance procedures and reviews?

- Are the quality assurance procedures in keeping with the requirements of the European Standards and Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance within Higher Education Institutions (ESG, 2015)?

- Are the quality assurance procedures in keeping with QQI policy and guidelines?

- Who takes responsibility for quality and quality assurance?

- How transparent and accessible is reporting on quality assurance and quality?

- How is quality promoted and enhanced?

- Are there effective innovations in quality enhancement and assurance?

- Is the student experience in keeping with the stated mission and strategy?

- Are achievements in quality and quality assurance in keeping with the stated mission and strategy?

- How do achievements in quality and quality assurance measure up against the benchmarks and quality indicators identified by the institution?

The Institution Self-study

The key role of self-study in the cyclical (institutional) review process is that it emphasises that quality derives from the activity of the College. The external review builds on internal quality assurance processes and any previous institutional reviews. The self-study is based on consultation with internal and external stakeholders of the College, including and especially students. The resulting report is developed to be analytical and succinct, with substantiating

evidence retained for examination by the team of reviewers. The College publishes the self-study report.

The Expert Panel

Evaluation by peers and stakeholders is central to external evaluation. QQI appoints a team of reviewers to carry out the Cyclical (Institutional) Review on its behalf. QQI also appoint a chair and a secretary for the review. QQI consults with the College prior to appointing the panel, which are normally identified at the same time as the terms of reference for the review. The recommendations of the review team inform any decisions the Council makes on foot of the review. Panel members (normally 5-7 members) are chosen by QQI on the basis of their expertise and independence, and receive training for the task. The membership of each panel includes persons reflecting the perspective of students and of the world of work and persons with senior management experience of higher education and training provision, and normally at least one member from outside Ireland is also required to bring an international perspective to the review.

The Site Visit

The review team schedule a visit or visits to the College, when they meet with members of the College, students and other stakeholders. The agenda is drawn up by the panel in consultation with the College. The panel may also review documentary evidence relating to the institution.

The Review Report

The review team prepare a report following the site visit(s). A draft report is submitted to the College to comment on factual inaccuracies before the final version is drafted. The College prepare a response to the report including a plan with a timeline for the implementation of any required actions. QQI consider the panel report, the College's response and make recommendations for adoption. QQI may impose conditions on the College arising from the review. When considered and adopted by QQI the report and response are published in full on the QQI's website. Sanctions available to QQI include withdrawal of programme validation, but these sanctions normally only arise in circumstances where serious problems were

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evident in advance of the review and flagged in the terms of reference. The relevant criteria are set out in the QQI's policies on programme accreditation.

Follow-up Report

The College submits a follow-up report to QQI not more than twelve months after the publication of the institutional report. This outlines how the College has implemented the plan contained in its response to the review report and evaluate the initial impact of such implementation. The College's follow-up report is considered by QQI, who may adopt the follow-up report and/or may impose further conditions. Following adoption by QQI, the follow-up report and any further observations are published on QQI's website.

European Standards, Guidelines, Directives or Policies

QQI's core and sector specific QA guidelines are underpinned by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), May 2015. Specifically, the quality assurance procedures of voluntary higher education and training providers must have regard to:

- Any European standards, guidelines, directives or policies adopted nationally
- The *European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes*, October 2014 (approved by EHEA ministers in May 2015), as appropriate (in addition to the QQI Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards [Revised 2012])

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