7 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

7.0 Policy for Teaching, Learning and Assessment

QA Area (s)	• Programmes of Education and Training • Governance and Management of Quality • Documented Approach to QA
Applies to	☐ Staff only ☐ Learners only ☒ Staff and Learners
Policies Owner	Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes

7.0.0 ESG Standard 1.3: Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment.

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

7.0.1 Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy

Introduction

The overarching Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Strategy of the College ensures that our core practices are aligned with the achievement of our five-year Strategic Plan, and the Mission and Vision of the College.

With regard to programmes of education and training:

- Any programme proposed for validation by the College will be accompanied by a programme specific TLA strategy (*see criteria 17.9 & 17.10 of QQI's Policy and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education & Training, 2017*).
- All programme specific TLA strategies will be developed with reference to this overarching strategy.
- As the College operates using blended modes of programme delivery, both the College's TLA strategy and programme specific TLA strategies are informed by best practice in blended and online pedagogy and instructional design[11].
- The College's overarching TLA Strategy has been developed with regard to QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016) and *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes* (2018).

[11] QQI (2018) Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (4.1.1)

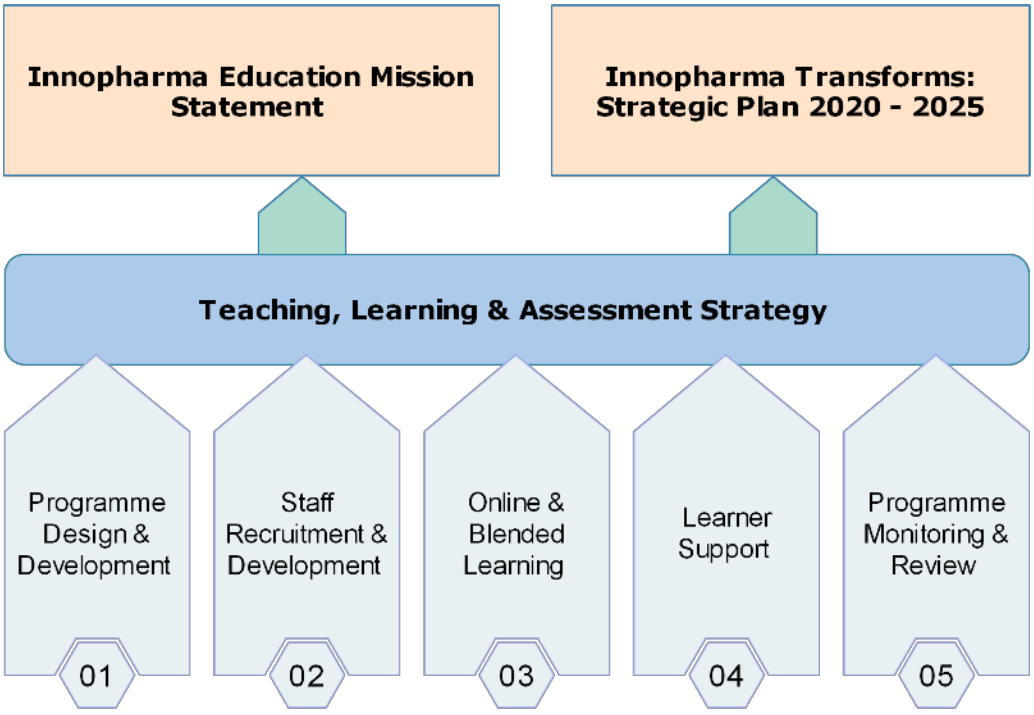
- The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework (QAEF) of the College is integral to the TLA strategy. While all aspects of the QAEF support implementation of the strategy, the most directly relevant dimensions of QA are represented in Section 7.2 below.

7.0.2 Representation of the Integrated Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy

Innopharma Education Mission Statement

Our mission is to contribute value to our society by ***re-skilling***, ***up-skilling*** and ***life-skilling*** our learners, enabling them to grow personally and professionally and build a better future for all.

(*Innopharma Transforms: Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025*)



7.0.3 Integration of the QAEF to the TLA Strategy

The QAEF provides the foundation for the effective realisation of the Learning and Teaching strategy within the College.

7.0.4 Programme Design and Development

QAEF processes encompass all activities contributing to design and development of the curriculum at both module and programme level. Learning design within the programme curriculum is learner-centred and takes into account the profiles and changing needs of learners. Programme development

entails input from subject experts, industry representatives, educational technologists and learning designers. The programme development process therefore ensures that technology is used appropriately, and in the service of pedagogy (see guideline 4.1.4 of QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes). Related QAEF documents include:

5.1 Policy for Development & Approval of Programmes

5.2 Procedure for Development & Approval of Programmes

7.0.5 Staff Recruitment and Development

QAEF processes ensure the recruitment of high calibre teaching staff, and provision of strategically aligned Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for all staff engaged in teaching or academic support. CPD facilitated by the College takes account of the specific needs of staff with regard to the blended and online delivery modes of the College programmes. Opportunities for CPD are facilitated internally, and staff are additionally supported to pursue external CPD opportunities, such as attendance at conferences or undertaking further studies, on a case-by-case basis. Related QAEF documents include:

6.1 Policy for Staff Recruitment, Management & Development

6.2 Procedure for Recruitment of Staff

6.3 Procedure for Induction and Management of Staff

6.4 Procedure for Staff Applications for Continuing Professional Development Support

7.0.6 Online & Blended Learning (Including Asynchronous)

QAEF processes ensure that all staff engaged in teaching or academic support are required to undertake a minimum level of VLE training and participate in professional development in blended and online pedagogies. Minimum standards for online content and curriculum ensure the consistency of the learning experience across modules. The ongoing enhancement of the College's pedagogic approaches is supported by the Learning and Teaching function of the College. This function coordinates learning design resources, assesses potential platforms and tools for use in the College and monitors/evaluates use of current platforms and tools. Related QAEF documents include:

- 7.3 Standards for Blended Learning at College
- 7.3.3 Standards for Online Content & Curriculum
- 7.3.4 Standards for Learner Induction and Supports
- 7.3.5 Standards for Staff Development and Training
- 7.4 Procedure for Assessment, Use and Monitoring of Platforms and Tools
- 7.5 Policy for IT Security

7.0.7 Learner Supports

QAEF processes ensure that all learners are inducted to the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) of the College and provided with a high level of technical support and guidance in the course of their studies. Online and blended pedagogies are learner-centred, promoting interaction and facilitating the development of an online learning community. Related QAEF documents include:

- 3. Our Learner's Charter and Associated Policies and Procedures
- 10.1 Policy for Learner Supports

7.0.8 Programme Monitoring and Review

QAEF processes ensure ongoing monitoring and review activities are undertaken that provide insights to the learner experience within the College's programmes, including the quality of teaching and curriculum. Feedback is collected from learners on all aspects of their experience at the College, inclusive of the VLE, on-site classes and programme support services including the efficacy of online learning support, and the onboarding process. Staff working in online learning support roles are able to provide real time feedback to teaching staff pertaining to synchronous learning, as well contributing to overall programme monitoring. This is supplemented by the collection of feedback from teaching staff and other stakeholders in relation to programme delivery, and data on learner retention, outcomes and completion. All of these indicators are reviewed by Programme Boards, which recommend and implement improvements approved by the Board or the Academic Council.

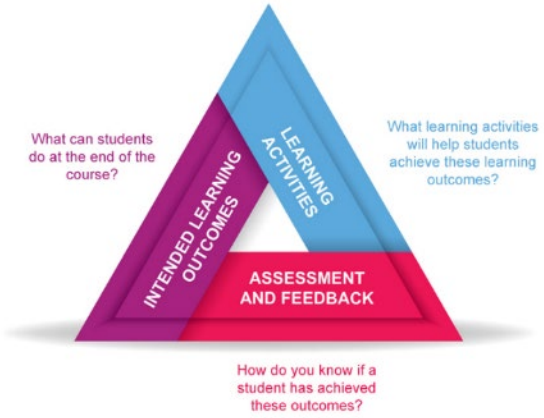
- 5.5 Policy for Monitoring, Review and Re-validation of Programmes
- 5.5 Procedure for Monitoring Review and Re-validation of Programmes

7.1 Priority Areas

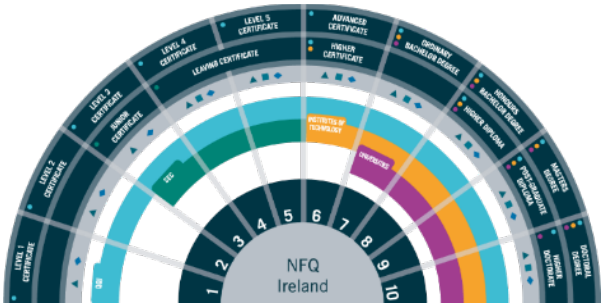
7.1.1 Priority 1: Approaches to Learning, Teaching and Assessment

All teaching, learning and assessment practices at the College are *Constructively Aligned*[12]. There are three dimensions essential to the concept of constructive alignment.

1. Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs): These articulate what learners will be able to do upon successful completion of each module and programme.
2. Assessment: The assessment strategy for each module and programme is derived from the ILOs. Assessment must provide learners with an opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the ILOs.
3. Learning Activities: The learning activities within a module and programme are chosen to facilitate learners acquiring, developing and practicing the knowledge, skills and competences they need to achieve the ILOs, and to be able to demonstrate this through the assessment process.



ILOs for all modules and programmes within the College are formulated with reference to the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and the Generic and Specific Awards standards published by QQI.



All learning and teaching practices at the College are firmly grounded in a learner-centred approach, with an emphasis on developing transversal skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and independent learning within the learning journey. Learner-centred instruction emphasizes the facilitative role of teachers and the uniqueness of learners. It encourages the

[12] *Biggs, J.B. & Tang, C. (2011). Teaching for Quality Learning at University. Buckingham: Open University Press/Society for Research into Higher Education. (Fourth edition)*

fostering of successful interpersonal relationships between teachers and learners, and an appreciation and respect for diversity and difference[13].

Formative assessment and feedback are integral to the process learning and reflect the emphasis on learner-centeredness that underpins teaching and learning in the programme. Feedback processes at the College are intended to situate the learner at the centre of the process, emphasizing opportunities for learners to seek and use feedback, and develop self-evaluative judgement over time[14].

7.2.1.1 Priority 1 Actions

- Module and programme development will be undertaken regarding the principles of Constructive Alignment. Programme development teams will be provided with appropriate training and development in constructively aligning the curriculum, including writing effective ILOs.
- ILOs will be used as the basis on which decisions are made regarding specific assessment methods and approaches to learning and teaching within individual modules and programmes.
- Guidance will be provided to academic staff and module teams in relation to assessment design. That guidance will have regard to the principles of Constructive Alignment, and to the College's agreed minimum standards for communication of assessment (i.e. assessment briefs and related materials) to learners. The latter will be developed by the Teaching and Learning function within the College and approved by the Academic Council.
- Guidance will be provided to academic staff and module teams in relation to the form and timeliness of formative and summative feedback to learners, and with regard to the College's agreed minimum standards for provision of feedback to learners. The latter will be developed by the Teaching and Learning function within the College and approved by the Academic Council.
- Programme Boards will consider the extent to which ILOs are being achieved, and the extent to which the communication of assessment and provision of feedback within modules are aligned to the College's minimum standards for each.

[13] McCabe, A. & O'Connor, U. (2014) Student-centred learning: The role and responsibility of the lecturer. Teaching in Higher Education 19 (4). Pp. 350-359.

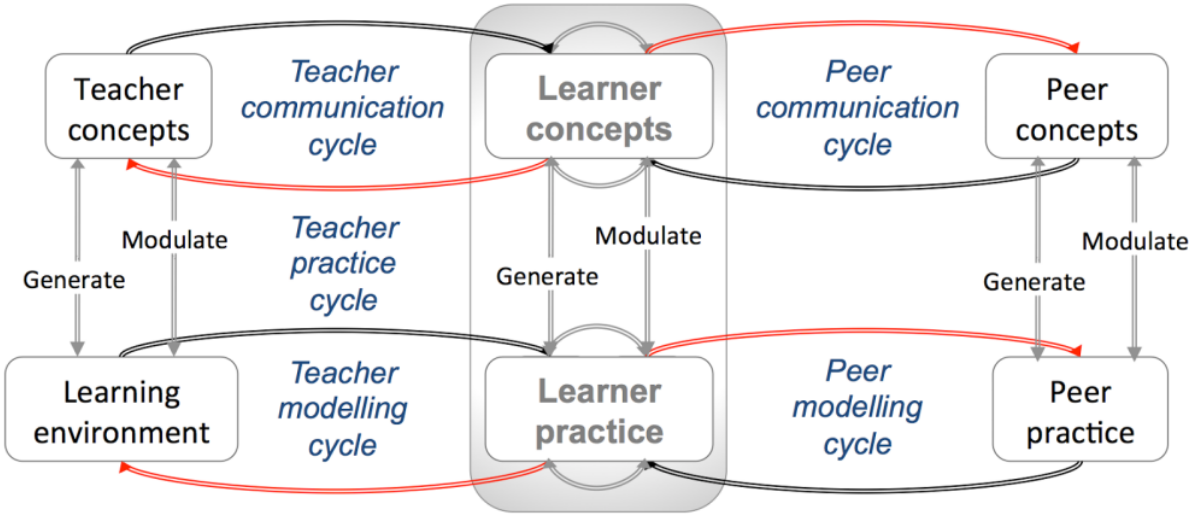
[14] Boud, D. & Molloy, E. (2012) Feedback in Higher and Professional Education: Understanding it and doing it well, Routledge.

7.2.2 Priority 2: Learning Design & Learning Technologies

Programmes and modules at the College are designed specifically for blended and online delivery. Therefore, they are designed using frameworks for learning design that are appropriate to these delivery modes. The College Teaching and Learning function engages learning design expertise with experience in the higher education context to facilitate this. At an institutional level, learning design at the College is informed by the pedagogic theory of Laurillard's Conversational Framework[15], which proposes six learning types:

- Acquisition
- Inquiry
- Discussion
- Practice
- Collaboration
- Production

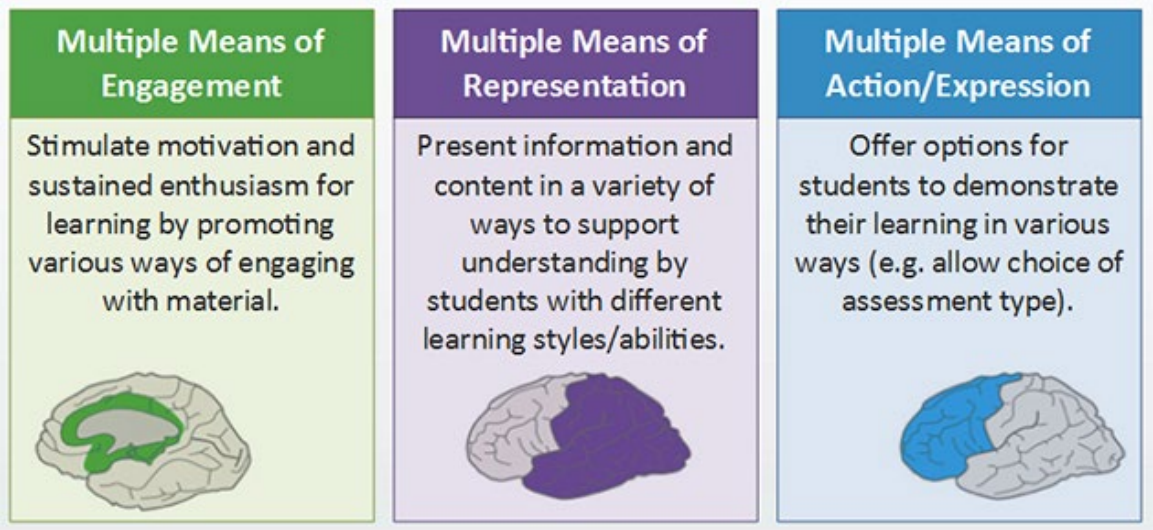
Laurillard's framework provides explicit guidance for the appropriate selection of learning technologies to facilitate distinct forms of learning. Learning technologies are assessed with regard to how appropriate they are to the learning activities required to achieve the ILOs of a module or programme. The use of technology and choice of learning platforms at the College is therefore "subject-led rather than technology-led" and "ensures that technology is in the service of pedagogy"[16].



The Conversational Framework (Laurillard, 2002)

Within this, the College is additionally committed to applying the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) within its learning design. UDL fosters inclusivity and supports diverse learners with a range of needs and preferences to succeed. The foundational principles of UDL are represented below.

[15] Laurillard, D. (2002) Rethinking University Teaching: A Conversational Framework for the Effective Use of Learning Technologies, 2nd Edition, Routledge.
[16] QQI (2018) Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (4.1.4).



7.2.2.1 Priority 2 Actions

- Programmes and modules will be designed for blended and online delivery in a manner that is consistent with the priorities and objectives of the College's Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and QQI's (2018) Statutory Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes.
- Online content will be subject to informed peer review and evaluated with reference to the minimum standards of the College.
- The minimum standards for online content and all quality assurance processes and documentation associated with blended and online delivery will be regularly reviewed, and, if required, updated via the College's established processes for amendment or updated to the QAEF (see Section 4.3 Policy for Ongoing Review of QAEF Documentation)
- New platforms and tools will be assessed by the Teaching and Learning and IT functions of the College with reference to a set established criteria, and with regard to the pedagogies they are required to support and enable.
- Planning, development and evaluation of the appropriate infrastructure and resources to support the College's reliable and high-quality provision of blended and online learning will be ongoing. Formal planning and evaluation activities will take place, at a minimum, annually.
- Learners will be clearly informed regarding the details of any hardware or software required to enable access to or participation in College programmes (see Section 12 Policy for Public Information and Communication).

7.2.3 Priority 3: Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning, which promotes the continuing development of knowledge, skills and competences throughout an individual's career, is central to the ethos of the College. We accept that *"learning is all about change, and change drives learning"*[17]. Our mission is to enable our learners to grow personally and professionally. As the majority of our learners are mature, we are cognisant of the fundamental principles of adult education and andragogy in our approaches to teaching and learning, and our curriculum design.

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience provides the basis for the learning activities. As adults, learners bring significant past experience (including mistakes) to the classroom which should form the basis for learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in practical subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their work or personal life.
4. Adult learning is problem-centred rather than content-centred (or memorisation oriented)[18].

We prepare our graduates to succeed by ensuring their skills are relevant to the dynamic and rapidly shifting context of high-tech manufacturing. The College is committed to supporting learners in their development of transversal skills, for example, problem-solving, communication and creativity. The College will approach this through a range of curricular and co-curricular measures.

7.2.3.1 Priority 3 Actions

- Our programmes will be industry informed and developed in response to future skills needs. The curriculum will attend to the importance of lifelong learning for our learner cohorts, and this will be reflected in the programme teaching and learning strategies.
- ILOs will be derived from the relevant Awards Standards and the NFQ, and will have regard to the lifelong learning focus of the College
- Work preparation modules will be embedded within the written curriculum of our programmes. These will be guided by the College's dedicated professional business coaches and allow each learner to develop and implement an individual career strategy.
- Career focused supports and resources will be available and promoted to learners within the VLE, and will provide learners with assistance in practical tasks such as structuring and building a CV, or preparing for interviews.
- Our programmes will be developed for regional, blended and part-time delivery to enable mature learners to balance the demands of study with their work and family commitments, and to foster widened participation.

[17] London, M. (2011) The Oxford Handbook of Lifelong Learning, Oxford.
[18] Knowles, M.S. (1980) The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy, Cambridge.

- Our programmes will be industry aligned, and feature guest lectures by industry experts, site visits and work placements.
- Our teaching and learning will have regard to the principles of adult education in learning design and in all interactions with learners.

7.2.4 Priority 4: Staff Training & Development

The College is committed to the provision and support of strategically aligned Continuing Professional Development for all staff and has processes within the QAEF to facilitate this (see 6.1.3). All staff in teaching, academic and learner support roles will be offered training and development opportunities that are directly relevant to their jobs.

7.2.4.1 Priority 4 Actions

- A comprehensive academic induction will be formalised and made mandatory for all staff in teaching, academic and learner support roles. This will include an introduction to the VLE and the College's TLA Strategy (including blended learning).
- A programme for staff development in Learning, Teaching and Assessment at the College will be developed. This will place emphasis on blended and online learning pedagogies and the principles of learning design.
- Both full-time and part-time lecturing staff who do not hold a recognised teaching qualification will be required to complete the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment development programme.
- In addition to full-time staff, our part-time faculty, online teaching assistants and similar categories of staff will be provided with opportunities to participate in training and CPD activities.
- A formal mentoring system will be established within the College to support academic staff with limited experience in teaching, or in teaching in a comparable context.
- The College will engage actively with national and international Communities of Practice in Teaching and Learning, including (within Ireland) the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and AHEAD.

7.2 Standards for Blended Learning (Including Asynchronous)

7.2.1 Definition

Blended Learning: "The integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences" (Garrison and Kanuak, 2004, p.96). This definition has been adopted by QQI (2018, p.3) in the Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes.

Blended learning at Innopharma Education refers to the strategic combination of face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous learning experiences to optimise learner engagement, flexibility, and achievement of learning outcomes.

While our original model emphasised on-campus and synchronous online delivery, we are now enhancing our provision to include fully asynchronous components. These self-paced modules - developed using tools such as Articulate Rise - are designed to support independent learning, allow flexibility in study scheduling, and maintain academic rigour through structured content, embedded assessments, and interactive elements.

All delivery modes (on-site, synchronous, and asynchronous) are underpinned by a consistent QA framework, aligned with QQI's Blended Learning Guidelines (2023), ensuring parity of experience and outcome across all formats.

7.2.2 Overview

Programmes of Education and Training at the College are purposefully designed for delivery in a flexible, blended mode. Blended delivery modes are appropriate to the needs and preferences of the College's learners, who are typically (though not exclusively) mature, part-time and regionally located learners. Programmes and modules utilise a blend of asynchronous, synchronous and face-to-face learning modes. The relative weighting of these modes within individual modules is decided on the basis of "the most effective and efficient means to support learners in achieving intended learning outcomes"[19].

The decision to deliver the College's programmes in blended modes is central to the College's Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025, and the institutional Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. QQI's guidelines caution that "provision that was originally designed for a face-to-face learning environment may be poorly adapted for learners"[20]. Historically, the College has not delivered programmes in an exclusively face-to-face learning environment. Therefore, the college is unencumbered by systems, processes or curriculum designed for that context. Instead, the College has the distinct advantage of operating solely, and by design, as a blended learning provider. Programme Leads and academic staff within the College have considerable experience in the development and delivery of QQI validated programmes within the context of its current collaborative provision arrangements.

The College's capacity plans in relation to learner support services, administrative systems and IT have been developed specifically for blended learning provision. Further, the College engages learning designers and educational technologists in the curriculum development process, enabling close collaboration between this function and academic subject specialists. This enables the College's programmes to be developed in a subject-led, learner-centred manner, in which technology is in the service of pedagogy, as per QQI's guidelines. The design, delivery and evaluation of blended learning

[19] QQI (2018) Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (p.6).
[20] QQI (2018) Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (p.8).

provision are informed by the College's overarching Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Strategy (Section 7.1.2) and associated programme-specific TLA strategies.

Innoskills (Moodle) and Zoom form the basis of the College's VLE. Innoskills (Moodle) is used extensively for all programme offerings in course management, content creation and delivery, communication and collaboration.

Digital Tool	Purpose within Blended Learning
Innoskills (Moodle)	Learning management system, content delivery, assessments, communication and learner analytics
Zoom	Synchronous teaching, tutorials, workshops and learner support
Articulate Rise	Development of interactive asynchronous learning content
Vyond	Creation of animated learning resources and instructional content
Online Library Resources	Independent research and academic skills development
Discussion Forums	Learner interaction, collaboration and peer learning

Innoskills (Moodle) allows lecturers to develop and select appropriate online content and learning resources for learners, and enables learners to access this in a controlled, secure environment. It encourages communication and collaboration in learning tasks, thus encouraging cooperation and adding to the learning experience of the learners. Forum activities in Innoskills (Moodle) are used by lecturers, staff and learners for online discussions which promote collaborative working, engagement and interactivity with all members of the group. Innoskills (Moodle) is also used to manage continuous assessment and feedback. All assignments are required to be submitted in soft copy via the relevant Innoskills (Moodle) page and through the relevant plagiarism detection software where appropriate.

Zoom is an interactive on-line training delivery platform which can incorporate tests to evaluate knowledge and retention during synchronous delivery, promote learner engagement through small-group interaction with breakouts and live chat facilities, and offers Whiteboard Sharing for enhanced delivery.

The College takes a proactive approach to reviewing new tools and resources that may be used to enhance programme delivery. The College's procedure for the assessment, use and monitoring of platforms and tools ensures that potential new technologies are carefully evaluated to determine whether they are reliable, secure and aligned to pedagogic objectives prior to use, and that opportunities for staff to test these are planned and controlled. The College determines the appropriate blend of onsite, synchronous and asynchronous delivery through the Blended Mode Decision Checklist. The selected delivery mode must:

- support achievement of learning outcomes
- reflect learner needs
- support learner engagement

- align with assessment requirements
- utilise the most appropriate learning technologies

The outcome of this process informs programme design, validation, revalidation and module review activities.

To ensure the quality, consistency, academic integrity and learner experience across all delivery formats of blended learning, the College adheres to the following standards for blended learning, inclusive of asynchronous components and has developed minimum standards for online content and learning resources, learner induction/supports and staff development/training.

The standards outlined in this section are supported by the criteria contained in Appendix 1: Criteria for Blended Learning (Synchronous and Asynchronous Only), which are used during programme development, validation, revalidation and review activities.

Additional Standards for Asynchronous Delivery

The following standards apply to the design, delivery, and monitoring of blended learning at Innopharma Education. In addition to established practices for onsite and synchronous online learning, these standards explicitly cover our emerging use of fully asynchronous learning components.

1.	Alignment with Programme Outcomes	All asynchronous content must be mapped directly to validated learning outcomes, ensuring equivalency with face-to-face and synchronous delivery.
2.	Instructional Design Standards	Asynchronous materials are developed using structured, modular approaches and interactive tools (e.g., Articulate Rise) that promote learner engagement, autonomy, and active learning.
3.	Assessment Integrity	Assessments delivered asynchronously must include clear guidance, authentic task design, and mechanisms for academic integrity and learner authentication.
4.	Learner Engagement & Monitoring	Asynchronous delivery includes regular touchpoints such as automated check-ins, reflective prompts, and engagement analytics reviewed by programme teams.
5.	Accessibility and Inclusivity	All asynchronous materials meet accessibility standards (e.g., WCAG 2.1), include alternative formats where needed and are comparable with assistive technologies.
6.	Tutor Presence and Feedback	Tutor presence is maintained through discussion boards, scheduled asynchronous feedback, and optional live support, ensuring learners feel connected and supported.

7.	Technology Reliability	Platforms used for asynchronous delivery (e.g., Innoskills, Articulate Rise) are tested for reliability, device compatibility, and user experience prior to deployment.
8.	Learner Readiness and Orientation	Asynchronous learners receive specific onboarding resources and guidance on managing self-paced study, digital tools, and communication expectations.
9.	Continuous Improvement	Learner feedback and performance data are routinely analysed to improve asynchronous design and delivery in line with quality enhancement processes.

7.2.3 Standards for Online Content and Learning Resources

The College's minimum standards for its online content and learning resources have been derived from QQI's guidelines and the College's own TLA Strategy. These may be supplemented and augmented as appropriate over time, utilising the processes within the QAEF for ongoing review of QAEF documentation. The Programme Lead, in consultation with the Head of Academic Programmes, is ultimately responsible for the implementation of the College's Standards for Online Content and Learning Resources.

All content items and learning resources within the College's VLE and supported platforms must:

1	Be subject to quality review by an appropriately informed peer (e.g. subject matter & learning design expertise) prior to integration to the platform.
2	In the case of Open Educational Resources (OERs), be of sufficient quality, accurate and current.
3	Cite copyright and licensing status appropriately for any third-party content.
4	Be integrated with other content items and learning resources to enable learner achievement of the ILOs.
5	Reflect the learner-centred pedagogy of the College.
6	Be accessible (e.g. utilise alt text and captioning, reflect the design principles of UDL).
7	Be 'owned' by an academic department and Programme Lead.
8	Engage learners in activities that enable them to test and monitor their progress at appropriate points in their learning.
9	Be presented in a clearly defined relationship to learning activities or materials encountered in the face-to-face learning environment.
10	In the case of interactive items, be preceded or accompanied by clear protocols for the management of online interaction for both learners and staff and be monitored by appropriately trained staff.
11	In the case of text items developed within the College, be written in plain language. Specifically, text items for learners should: • Use an active rather than a passive voice wherever possible (i.e. 'we do something' rather than 'something is done'). • Be brief and specific. • Avoid use of jargon and acronyms (unless these are being explained or are appropriate to the context of use).
12	Be spell checked and proofread prior to publication.
13	Be accompanied by links to clear information regarding the availability of relevant academic supports and general pastoral support for learners of the College, and the appropriate communication channels for these.
14	Reflect culturally diverse perspectives that are free of bias.

7.2.4 Standards for Learner Induction and Supports (Blended Learning)

The College's minimum standards for learner induction and supports in blended learning have been derived from QQI's guidelines and the College's own TLA Strategy. These may be supplemented and augmented as appropriate over time, utilising the processes within the QAEF for ongoing review of QAEF documentation.

All learners within the College must:

	Standard	Responsibility
1	Be informed prior to enrolment of the level and nature of the support available. This will include information pertaining to: • The blend of learning that will be experienced within a specific programme (i.e. the proportion of online asynchronous, online synchronous and face-to-face learning; the extent to which learning is autonomous, collaborative or supported). • The realistic commitment required from a learner to successfully complete the programme. • Pre-knowledge or technical skills a learner requires to successfully complete the programme. • The hours when academic, technical and pastoral supports are available and the nature of these supports. • Details of any hardware or software required to enable access to or participation in College programmes, and mechanisms to test hardware. • Mandatory attendance or participation requirements for specific aspects of the programme, where these exist. • Terms and conditions relevant to a specific programme (e.g. specified timings for synchronous learning or assessment, regulations pertaining to re-assessment opportunities).	The Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes
2	Be systematically inducted to the College's VLE and integrated platforms following admission. This induction must include information pertaining to: • Overall layout and navigation of the VLE. • Location of contact lists for academic, administrative and technical queries within the College. • Availability of online technical support and contact information.	IT Specialist

	• Location of essential learner support information, policies and procedures within the VLE. • Features and functions of the VLE. • Location of self-help user tutorials for specific features and troubleshooting. • General protocols for communicating online, which promote dignity, courtesy, and respect for diversity. • Communication channels used within the VLE and the College.	
3	Be systematically inducted to learning in blended and online modes. This induction must include information pertaining to: • Overall expectations and standards. • Strategies for successful blended and online learning. • Academic support services and resources available online, including those relevant to academic integrity and the avoidance of plagiarism. • Online library access and associated resources and supports.	Programme Manager
4	Have access to comprehensive information regarding their programme of study, to include: • ILOs and teaching, learning and assessment methods for each module and for the programme overall. • Schedules for the submission and assessment of work. • Information on how their performance will be assessed, and the relative weighting of assessment tasks. • Information on how timely formative feedback will be provided to them in the online Sections of the programme. • Information about the quality assurance processes in place to ensure that assessed work conducted through online activity is appropriately attributed to the learner. • Lists of learning resources available. • Module and programme specific contacts (academic, administrative, technical).	Head of Academic Programmes
5	Have access, within a reasonable time frame, to technical support for asynchronous learning activities.	IT Manager

6	Have access, in real time, to technical support during synchronous learning activities.	IT Manager
7	Have the opportunity to provide feedback to the College, both routinely and ad hoc, on their experience of using the VLE and integrated platforms.	Programme Lead
8	Be provided with information in advance of commencement on how their personal data will be used, for instance, in relation to the monitoring of learner engagement with the VLE and integrated platforms.	The Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes

7.2.5 Standards for Staff Development and Training (Blended Learning)

The College's minimum standards for staff development and training in blended learning have been derived from QQI's guidelines and the College's own TLA Strategy. These may be supplemented and augmented as appropriate over time, utilising the processes within the QAEF for ongoing review of QAEF documentation.

All staff in academic, teaching and learner support roles within the College must:

	Standard	Responsibility
1	Undertake a general and an academic induction upon commencing employment with the College (see 6.3 Procedure for Induction and Management of Staff).	Head of Teaching & Learning and Learner Support
2	Within the academic induction, be introduced to: • The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) of the College. • The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy of the College (inclusive of Blended Learning)	Head of Teaching & Learning and Learner Support
3	Complete a suite of in-house Blended Learning training modules within a time frame agreed with their manager.	Head of Academic Programmes
4	Participate in bespoke training and development activities for Technology Enhanced Learning.	Head of Teaching & Learning and Learner Support

5	Participate in general professional development training regarding up-to-date methodologies and trends, alongside training specifically directed towards FET and HE.	Head of Teaching & Learning and Learner Support
6	Ensure their contributions to the development of curriculum within the College comply with minimum standards for online content and learning resources and associated processes.	All staff in academic, teaching and learner support roles
7	Observe protocols for communication with learners and facilitation of online discussions.	All staff in academic, teaching and learner support roles
8	Strive to facilitate a safe, inclusive, accessible and reliable online learning environment which reflects the Core Values of the College (Excellence; Integrity; Diversity; Innovation; Collaboration) and the principles established in the College's Policy for Equality (see Section 6.5)	All staff

7.2.6 Annual Schedule of Staff Development Opportunities

In addition to the minimum standards outlined above, the College maintains an annual schedule of staff development opportunities to support the effective delivery and enhancement of blended learning provision. These opportunities are designed to support staff in developing knowledge and skills relating to synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning, digital learning technologies, assessment design, academic integrity, learner engagement and emerging educational practices.

Staff development opportunities may be delivered through formal training sessions, workshops, communities of practice, briefing events, external conferences, webinars and self-directed professional learning activities. The schedule is reviewed annually and may be updated in response to learner feedback, quality assurance findings, technological developments, regulatory requirements and strategic priorities.

Development Activity	Frequency
Academic Induction	On commencement
VLE (Innoskills) and Digital Platforms Training	On commencement and as required
Lecturer Induction and Semester Briefings	Prior to each academic intake
Blended Learning (Synchronous and Asynchronous) Development Sessions	Annually

Technology Enhanced Learning Workshops	Throughout the academic year
Assessment Design, Academic Integrity and Generative AI Training	Annually
Sharing of Good Practice and Communities of Practice	At least annually
External Conferences, Webinars and Professional Development Activities	Throughout the academic year
Digital Platform Updates and New Tool Training	As required

Participation in development activities is encouraged as part of the College's commitment to continuous quality enhancement and the ongoing development of staff capability in delivering high-quality learner-centred education and training. Records of staff development activities are maintained by the College and may inform future planning and enhancement initiatives.

7.3 Procedure for Implementation of Blended Learning Standards

QA Area (s)	• Teaching and Learning; Blended Learning
Applies to	☒ Staff only ☐ Learners only ☐ Staff and Learners
Policies this Procedure relates to	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy Standards for Blended Learning

7.3.1 Procedure

The College's procedure for the implementation of Blended Learning Standards has been derived from QQI's guidelines and the College's own TLA Strategy. This procedure and criteria listed within it may be adapted as appropriate over time, utilising the processes within the QAEF for ongoing review of QAEF documentation.

7.3.2 Relationship to Quality Assurance Processes

The delivery of blended learning is integrated within the College's wider quality assurance framework. The table below outlines the key quality assurance processes that support the design, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and enhancement of blended learning provision.

Blended Learning Activity	QA Process
Programme Design	Validation & Revalidation
Learning Resources	OCLR Review Process
Delivery	Programme Monitoring
Assessment	Assessment Procedures
Learner Feedback	Learner Surveys & Class Representatives
Enhancement	Annual Programme Review
Governance	Programme Board & Academic Council

These processes ensure that blended learning provision is subject to the same governance, monitoring, review and continuous improvement mechanisms as all other programme delivery activities within the College.

7.3.3 Implementation of Standards for Online Content and Learning Resources

The Programme Lead, in consultation with the Head of Academic Programmes, is ultimately responsible for the implementation of the College's Standards for Online Content and Learning Resources (OCLR).

- OCLRs may comprise of internally authored/created text, graphics, audio or multimedia or externally sourced OERs of appropriate quality, or a combination of both.
- Permission to approve and publish OCLR specific to an academic module or programme lies with the relevant Programme Lead and/or Head of Academic Programmes.

Academic and teaching staff may author, create or source OCLRs:

- in response to a request by the Programme Lead
- in response to a request by the Head of Academic Programmes
- independently, to propose their use within an academic module or programme

Academic and teaching staff are responsible for:

- facilitating and managing learner interaction in the online environment
- responding to learner queries and providing timely feedback on work submitted by learners
- development of OCLR (either commissioned or independently proposed)
- requesting approval and publication of OCLR from the Programme Lead or Head of Academic Programmes
- if requested to do so, providing peer review of OCLR with reference to the College's standards in this area

Key Steps

1. The staff member responsible for the OCLRs places these in draft and unpublished form within the College's VLE.
2. The staff member responsible for the OCLR item(s) notifies the Programme Lead or Head of Academic Programmes, requesting review and approval.
3. The Programme Lead or Head of Academic Programmes arranges for review and feedback from (a) an appropriate subject matter expert (this may, where appropriate, be undertaken by the Programme Lead or Head of Academic Programmes) and (b) the Learning Design function within the College.

4. After feedback emerging from the review process, the Programme Lead or Head of Academic Programmes may:
    a. Approve and publish the OCLRs
    b. Make or arrange for minor amendments to the OCLRs before proceeding to approve and publish the OCLRs
    c. Refuse to approve the OCLRs, providing feedback to the staff member responsible

N.B. Under normal circumstances, OCLRs to be used within a specific academic module will be reviewed, approved and published prior to the commencement of that module. In some instances, for example, in response to learner requests and to facilitate a responsive approach to curriculum delivery, a decision may be made to publish additional OCLRs during the delivery of a module.

7.3.4 Standards for Learner Induction and Supports

The Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes is responsible for overseeing the provision of information to learners as per Section (1) of the Standards for Learner Induction and Supports. This responsibility is outlined within the College's Policy for Public Information and Communication. The Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes is further responsible for ensuring as per Section (8) of the Standards for Learner Induction and Supports that learners are provided in advance of commencement with information on how their personal data will be used.

The Learner Support Coordinator is responsible, in consultation with the Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes, and other relevant personnel, for overseeing the systematic induction of learners to the College's VLE and integrated platforms as per Sections (2) and (3) of the Standards for Learner Induction and Supports. This induction includes, but is not limited to, essential learner support information, self-help user information, protocols for communicating online.

The Programme Lead and Head of Academic Programmes are responsible for ensuring as per Section (4) of the Standards for Learner Induction and Supports that learners have access to comprehensive information regarding their programme of study. This includes, but is not limited to, ILOs and teaching, learning and assessment methods for each module and for the programme overall, information pertaining to the submission and assessment of work, and specific contact information for academic, administrative and technical staff.

The IT Manager is responsible for ensuring as per Sections (5) and (6) of the Standards for Learner Induction and Supports that learners have access to technical support for asynchronous learning activities (within a reasonable time frame) and synchronous learning activities (in real time).

The Programme Lead is responsible for ensuring as per Section (8) of the Standards for Learner Induction and Supports that learners have the opportunity to provide feedback to the College, both routinely and ad hoc, on their experience of using the VLE and integrated platforms.

7.3.5 Standards for Staff Development and Training

The Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes is responsible for ensuring as per Sections (1) and (2) of the Standards for Staff Development and Training that all staff in academic, teaching and support roles within the College undertake a general and academic

induction that introduces them to the VLE and the TLA Strategy of the College, inclusive of Blended Learning.
The Head of Teaching & Learning and Learner Support is responsible for ensuring as per Sections (3) and (4) of the Standards for Staff Development and Training that all staff complete a suite of in-house Blended Learning training modules and participate in bespoke training and development activities for Technology Enhanced Learning.
All staff in academic, teaching and learner support roles in the College, guided by the Programme Lead and Head of Academic Programmes, are responsible for ensuring as per Sections (5) and (6) their contributions to the College comply with minimum standards for OCLRs and that their communication and interaction with learners observes College protocols.
All staff in all roles, inclusive of academic, teaching, learner support, administration, leadership and management, are jointly responsible as per Section (7) of the Standards for Staff Development and Training for striving to facilitate a safe, inclusive, accessible and reliable online learning environment which reflects the Core Values of the College and the principles established in the College's Policy for Equality.

7.4 Procedure for Assessment, Use and Monitoring of Platforms and Tools

QA Area (s)	• Teaching and Learning; Blended Learning
Applies to	☒ Staff only ☐ Learners only ☐ Staff and Learners
Policies this Procedure relates to	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy Standards for Blended Learning

7.4.1 Procedure

The College's procedure for the assessment, use and monitoring of platforms and tools has been derived from QQI's guidelines and the College's own TLA Strategy. This procedure and criteria listed within it may be adapted as appropriate over time, utilising the processes within the QAEF for ongoing review of QAEF documentation.

7.4.2 Assessment of Potential Platforms and Tools

Potential new technologies are carefully evaluated and tested by the College to determine whether they are reliable, secure and aligned to the pedagogic objectives of a module or programme prior to their use. Opportunities for staff to test new technologies are planned and controlled. If a decision is made by the College to adopt and support a new technology, staff and learner training will be facilitated.

- A new technology may be identified and proposed for use by any member of staff. In many instances, proposals may emerge from the Learning Design function within the College.
- New technologies will be assessed by the Senior Teaching and Learning Co-Ordinator and at least two members of academic staff (nominated by the Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes) with regard to the following criteria, as appropriate to their role within the organisation:
    - The nature of pedagogic activity that the technology facilitates, and the extent to which it is likely to be used within the College's programmes.
    - The extent to which the technology differentiates from, overlaps with or duplicates the function of existing supported technologies.
    - The ease of integration with existing supported technologies.
    - The security and reliability of the technology, and the risks associated with its use.
    - The accessibility of the technology for users with disabilities or special needs.
    - The costs associated with the technology.
    - Any other factors deemed relevant or important.

- If a high level of agreement is reached, a formal proposal to adopt and support the technology may be tabled at the Academic Council by the Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes.
- Where adoption of the technology has cost and resource implications, the Academic Council, if approving the proposal, may table a recommendation to either the Executive Management Team or Board of Directors (depending on the required investment) for decision.

7.4.3 Use and Monitoring of Platforms and Tools

The effectiveness of the platforms and tools used by the College is continually monitored and reviewed, utilising feedback from learners and academic staff. There are a number of mechanisms in place to facilitate this.

- Feedback is routinely sought from learners regarding their experience at the College. This encompasses feedback on programme curricula and delivery via the VLE, quality of teaching, quality and availability of support services and effectiveness of administration.
- Additional feedback from learners regarding their experience of the College VLE and integrated platforms, including issues related to blended and online delivery, may be provided via the class representative system, and the inclusion of learner representatives on the Academic Council.
- Academic and teaching staff are able to provide feedback and raise any concerns pertaining to the VLE and integrated platforms on an ongoing basis. Additionally, Programme Annual Review provides an opportunity for academic and teaching staff to make formal input.
- All synchronous online delivery is supported by the College's Online Tech Support Team. Dedicated support personnel are available during online class delivery to assist learners and lecturers with access issues, troubleshooting, online broadcasts and recordings, learner participation and the escalation of technical issues where required. Online Teaching Support personnel are also able to raise issues and concerns to the college's IT Manager regarding the learner experience and operation of the College's VLE and associated platforms on an ongoing basis.
- The Academic Council will review an annual report on learning technologies supported by the College provided by the IT Manager and Learning Design function within the College.

7.5 Policy for IT Security

The purpose of the IT Department is to provide suitable information technology and educational resources (including educational technology and any VLE provided as required by the College, identified at programme development and agreed at validation).
It is the responsibility of the Programme Lead and Head of Academic Programmes to identify and specify the IT and computing requirements for programme delivery.

The IT department is responsible for the provision and the management of sustainable computing facilities accessible to staff and learners.
The IT department works with academics and the EMT to systematically upgrade hardware and software in line with technical developments and advise the College on more effective tools and methodologies to enhance the learner experience.
IT support services are available at all time during class delivery. Helpdesk support is available for students and lecturers during normal office hours.
The IT Manager is responsible for maintaining a comprehensive list of IT and computing resources. The IT Manager is also responsible for ensuring that all software is properly licensed and copyright protocols are respected. Other responsibilities include firewalls, backups, etc.
Details of backup and recovery are given in Section 11.12 Data Backup and Recovery.

7.6 Policy on the Use of Automated Assessment

QA Area (s)	Teaching, Learning and Assessment
Applies to	☒ Staff only ☐ Learners only ☐ Staff and Learners
Policy Owner	Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the principles governing the use of Automated Assessment in Module and Programme Assessment Strategies.

Scope

This policy applies to all Innopharma Education programmes inclusive of those delivered under collaborative provision arrangements, excepting where this policy directly conflicts with the QA procedures of a collaborative partner.
This policy applies to assessed tasks, the outcomes of which constitute some percentage of students' final grades for a module.
This policy does not apply to the use of ungraded tests, quizzes or activities that may be made available to students to facilitate formative feedback or enable them to monitor their own learning or progress.

Policy

Automated Assessment strategies utilize technology to test learner knowledge or understanding of a subject area. The use of Automated Assessment[1] is increasing across the higher education sector and is associated with numerous benefits. Automated Assessment can be used to:

- Effectively and efficiently assess knowledge-based learning outcomes;

- Reduce lecturer workload;
- Enhance the speed and volume of formative feedback students obtain.

However, there are challenges associated with Automated Assessment that need to be carefully managed.

- Overuse may lead to an overemphasis on declarative knowledge (demonstrated through recognition or recall of facts, definitions, theory);
- Overuse may deemphasise procedural knowledge (demonstrated through the application of knowledge in skills-based and contextualised tasks);
- Automated Assessment tasks may lack face validity for learners due to the lack of authenticity associated with the question types and testing conditions;
- The platforms and systems associated with Automated Assessment must be carefully monitored and managed to ensure that the assessment process runs smoothly and is fair, transparent and accessible.

Acknowledging both the benefits and challenges associated with Automated Assessment tasks, this policy has been developed to guide their implementation within the College's modules and programmes.

The use of Automated Assessment tasks within the College's programmes must:

- Be demonstrably aligned to the learning outcomes of a module;
- Be proportionate in volume and weighting to non-automated assessment tasks for the same module;
- Be appropriate to the NFQ Level of the module/programme stage;
- Be carefully planned and administered;
- Allocate a sufficient amount of time that will enable learners to make a reasonable attempt at completion of all question items;
- Utilize practices designed to protect academic integrity;
- Be developed with reference to best practice principles.

In practice, this means that Automated Assessment tasks will typically:

- Adhere to the College's guidelines on proportionality for NFQ Level;
- Be subject to fixed scheduling, which is subject to change only pending consultation with the Head of Assessment & IT manager and in agreement with the student cohort;
- Be accompanied by clear communication to students and an opportunity for a standard 'dummy run' quiz in which students can orient themselves to the process.
- Use randomisation ('shuffle') functionality;
- Use sequential navigation;
- Not utilize negative marking practices;
- Use questions developed with reference to College guidance notes (where these are available) and which have been reviewed by an Informed Peer[2];

- Be subject to Technical Approval[3] confirming that the task is setup correctly and linked to a question bank from the IT Manager or delegated IT personnel.

Automated Assessment - Guidelines on Proportionality to NFQ Level

NFQ Levels	% of Total Marks for Module
5	Dependent on module
6	Not more than 40% (over 2 tasks)
7 - 9	Not more than 20%

* Automated Assessments weighted outside these guidelines should be discussed and agreed with the Programme Lead and Head of Teaching & Learning and Learner Support.

Automated Assessment – Guidelines on Timing

Type of Question	Timing per Question	Timing
Standard MCQ	1 minute per question	Allow an additional 5 minutes as a buffer before the test closes to account for variance in internet speeds & other issues.
Item Flipped MCQ	90 seconds per question	
Multi-logical MCQ	2 minutes + per question	

*Timings are indicative and should be discussed and agreed with the Programme Lead or Head of Teaching & Learning and Learner Support.

Responsibility

- **Teaching and Learning** is responsible for communicating the implementation of the College's Policy on the Use of Automated Assessment to teaching staff and facilitating appropriate development and support activities.
- The **Head of Assessment** is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Policy within the assessment calendar.
- The **Programme Lead** is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Policy within Programme teams.
- The **Registrar**, supported by the **Head of Academic Programmes** and **Programme Lead** is responsible for ensuring that programme assessment strategies are constructively aligned, appropriate to the NFQ Level of the programme and comply with the principles stated within this policy.

Procedure for Developing and Implementing Automated Assessments

Development

1. The lecturer identifies their intention to use an entirely or partially Automated Assessment within a module assessment strategy.

2. The lecturer notifies the Head of Assessment and Programme Lead of this intention within communications regarding the overall module assessment schedule and agrees the schedule for this prior to the semester start date.

3. The Head of Assessment ensures the overall assessment schedule for the semester is included within the timetable and shared with the IT Manager.

4. If new question items are to be developed and used,
    a. the lecturer identifies an Informed Peer to review those question items *OR* requests that the Programme Lead identifies an Informed Peer.
    b. The lecturer *OR* the Programme Lead ensures the availability of the Informed peer to review new question items.
    c. The lecturer prepares the new question items and shares these in preview mode with the Informed Peer, copying the Programme Lead not less than 2 weeks prior to the commencement of the semester.
    d. The Informed Peer completes a review, notifying the lecturer of any queries or errors found within a period of one week.

5. If question items are being drawn from a question bank and have previously been reviewed, step 4 can be omitted.

Implementation

6. The lecturer must provide learners with specific information regarding the scheduled date and time at which the automated assessment will take place at the start of the semester. This information must be included:
    a. During the first teaching session of the semester
    b. In summary within the Module Orientation section in Innoskills/Moodle
    c. In detail within the Assessment section in Innoskills/Moodle

7. The lecturer must provide learners with access to a non-assessed 'dummy' task prior to the scheduled assessment to ensure all learners have sufficient opportunity to (re)familiarise themselves with the platform and functionality. The task should, insofar as is possible, model the format of the questions that will be used in the actual automated assessment task. A minimum of three sample questions should be provided. This will minimize anxieties caused by lack of familiarity with the platform or task type for learners during the Automated Assessment task.

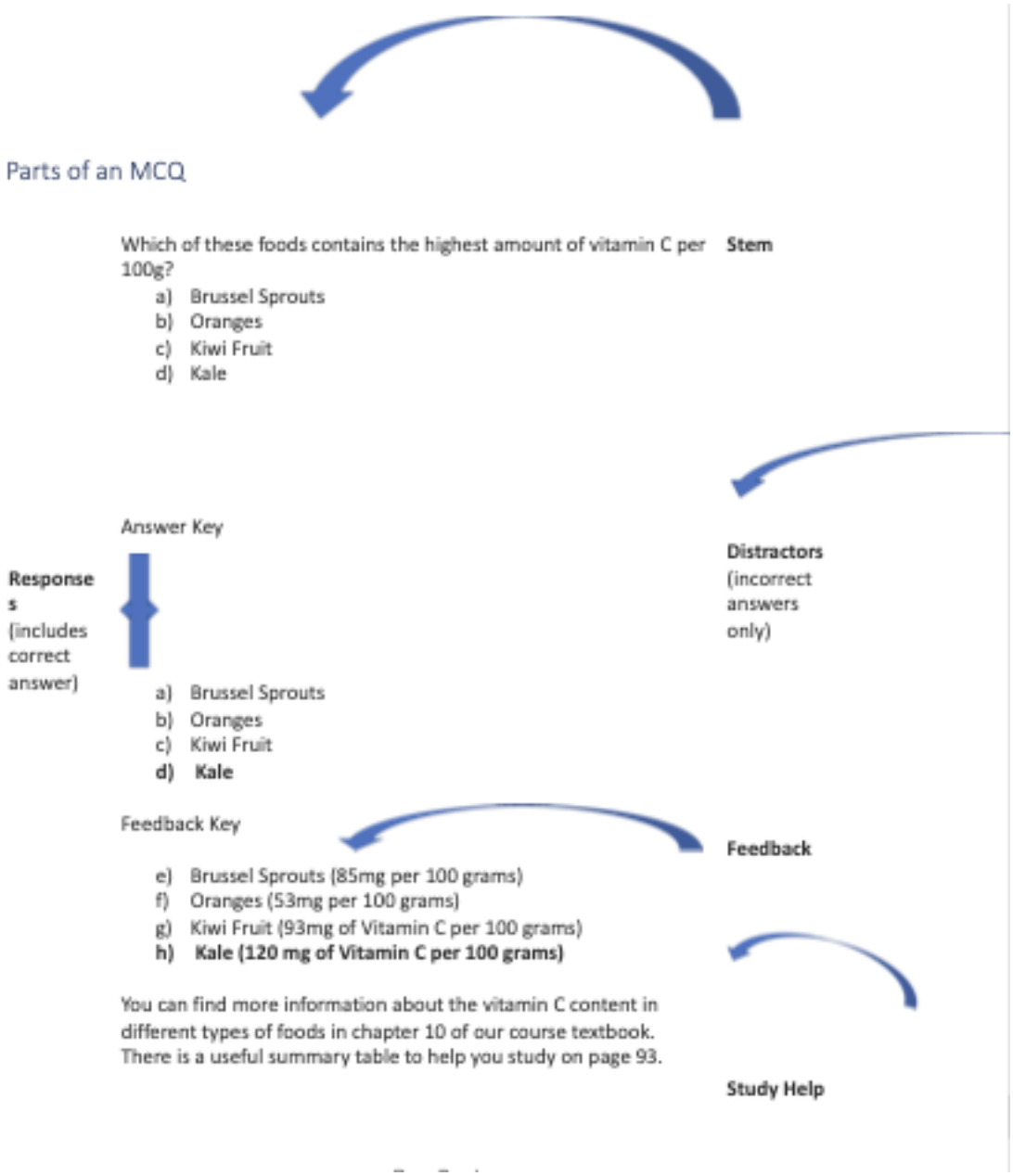
8. The lecturer, assisted by IT as required, must ensure the following:
    a. The ‘shuffle’ function is used (1) for questions and (2) within questions (randomising the order of responses). This protects the integrity of the assessment task by ensuring different learners sitting the test concurrently encounter the questions and responses in a different sequence.
    b. The ‘free navigation’ function is not used and ‘sequential navigation’ is selected. This protects the integrity of the assessment task by ensuring learners are not able to go back and change answers (which enables a ‘workaround’ of the shuffle function).
    c. Under the timing settings, the option to have open attempts submitted automatically should be selected. This ensures no attempts are lost in the case of learners who have not completed at the end of the allocated time for the assessment task.
    d. Under the review options, only the options that allow learners to review the answers (providing automated feedback) after the quiz is closed should be ticked.
    e. There is no use of Negative Marking Practices within any of the question, or the task as a whole;
    f. All learners are made aware of all of the above in communications (oral and written) about the assessment task. Template text to inform learners of these conditions is provided in an appendix to this procedure.

9. The lecturer must contact the IT department not less than two weeks prior to the assessment task being delivered for IT sign off.

Note: This step safeguards against errors caused due to technical missteps. It does not safeguard against errors in content or the matching of questions to answers. The latter is the responsibility of the lecturer and informed peer and is provided for in Step 4.

Guidance Notes - Writing Good MCQs

Several decades of research on cognition and learning has provided us with clear guidelines on how to write ‘Good MCQs’, or MCQs that will act as a fair, transparent and effective method for assessing learner knowledge. These guidance notes summarise and exemplify best practice in this area.
Lecturers on Innopharma Education programmes are strongly encouraged to make use of these guidance notes when writing MCQs. A list of additional helpful resources is provided at the foot of this document.



Using MCQs to Test Foundational Knowledge

Standard MCQs

Writing the Stems

- Generally, use complete question forms, e.g.,
  Which of these foods contains the highest amount of vitamin C?

- Where possible, avoid partial sentences/fill in the gaps, e.g.,
  The highest amount of vitamin C is found in _____

- Avoid negative stems or questions, unless they are absolutely essential to a specific content item and learning outcome, e.g.,
  The highest amount of vitamin C isn't found in...

Negative stems or questions are known to be more difficult to understand, particularly when a student is under pressure during an exam.

- Always avoid double negatives, e.g.,
  Which of these options isn't unexpected?
  Which person is not unable to act?
  Which process isn't going to be unsuccessful?

Writing the Responses

- Write a consistent number of possible responses for each question, e.g., choose from 3 - 4 options.

- Write possible responses of a consistent length and format, e.g., use a similar amount of words or grammatical structure for each.

- Use clear, concise language.

- Be careful to vary the position of the correct response, ensuring it is not frequently positioned in one place, e.g., usually the third answer.

- Be careful to include only one correct or clearly best choice answer.

- Avoid using 'all of the above' or 'none of the above' as learners can easily achieve the correct answer with incomplete knowledge, e.g., if they know that 2 options are correct and are not sure about the other two.

Writing the Distractors

- All of the distractors should be reasonably plausible. This is because implausible distractors that are 'obviously wrong' reduce test validity. Questions that use implausible distractors are testing 'common sense' more than actual knowledge.

Item Flipped MCQs

In a standard MCQ, the test-taker typically only has to recognize one piece of information or a specific instance/definition of a concept or problem that is presented in the stem.

Education Example 1
Which of the following best describes what is meant by 'formative assessment'?

A. Is based on the student's attitudes, interests and values
B. Is designed primarily to evaluate learning
C. Is usually high-stakes
D. Provides information to modify teaching and learning*

Source: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1355&context=pare

A flipped item changes this pattern by requiring a test-taker to examine an instance (typically in a scenario) in the stem. They then have to identify the concept or principle being instantiated from the list of options.

Education Example 2
A teacher uses a strategy called Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down with her students. This illustrates the use of:

A. Affective assessment
B. Formative assessment*
C. Diagnostic assessment
D. Summative assessment

Source: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1355&context=pare

This raises the level of cognition, by moving up a level from simple knowledge recognition (the first example) to a level that requires comprehension of the concept when it is presented in context (the second example).
Recommended for NFQ Level 6.

Using MCQs to Test Higher Order Thinking

Multi-logical MCQs

These questions require learners to apply more than one piece of knowledge, concept or principle to select the best answer, which is why they are often referred to as 'multi-logical'. To write a multi-logical question, formulate a succinctly written scenario or problem, followed by a question. To answer the question, learners must need to interpret the scenario or problem and apply more than one piece of knowledge, concept or principle to choose the best answer (otherwise it is just a long-winded but regular MCQ).

Multi-logical questions are often used to test the application of knowledge for clinical or diagnostic purposes:

Veterinary Science Example:
A 4 year-old intact female Maltese dog has anorexia, fever, severe trembling, and stiffness of the limbs three weeks post partum. Which of the following is the most appropriate emergency therapy?

A. Intramuscular calcium chloride
B. Intravenous calcium gluconate
C. Intravenous dexamethasone
D. Intravenous 50% glucose
E. Oral calcium lactate

Source: https://it.umn.edu/sites/itumn.umn.edu/files/writing_effective_multiple_choice_exams_c_petersen_5_18.pdf

Nursing Science Example
A nurse is making a home visit to a 75 year old male who has had Parkinson's disease for the past five years. Which of the following has the greatest implication for this client's care?

A. The client's wife tells the nurse that the grandchildren have visited for over a month
B. The nurse notes that there are numerous throw rugs throughout the client's home
C. The client has a towel wrapped around his neck that the wife uses to wipe her husband's face
D. The client is sitting in an arm chair, and the nurse notes that he is gripping the arms of the chair

Source: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1355&context=pare

Note: Multi-logical questions are hard to write and should always be carefully considered and subject to review by an informed peer.
Recommended for NFQ Levels 7 – 9.

Useful Resources

Brigham Young university 14 Rules for Writing Multiple-Choice Questions
Vanderbilt University Writing Good Multiple Choice Test Questions
The eLearning Coach 10 Rules for Writing Multiple Choice Questions
Scully (2017) Constructing Multiple-Choice Items to Measure Higher-Order Thinking
The University of Texas at Austin Writing Good Multiple-Choice Exams

7.7 Policy for Managing Group Assessment

QA Area (s)	Teaching, Learning and Assessment
Applies to	Staff and Learners
Policy Owner	Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes

7.7.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the principles governing the management of group assessments within the College.

7.7.2 Scope

This policy applies to all QQI validated programmes.

7.7.3 Policy

Context

A strategic priority within the Innopharma Education 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan is 'Our Delivery'. Within this priority, the College has committed to formally integrating the development of transversal skills for lifelong learning within the Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) strategy.

The College will therefore ensure that transversal skills are represented in the Intended Learning Outcomes of all programmes. In keeping with the principles of Constructive Alignment, the achievement of these outcomes will be evidenced within the assessment strategies of those programmes. Diverse formats and modes of assessment will be used to facilitate the achievement of this objective.

Group Assessment Tasks

For the purposes of clarity, this policy defines group assessment tasks as:
Tasks that are assigned to designated groups of students to be completed collaboratively, which are assessed and contribute to a % of the students' overall grade for the module.
The College recognises that group assessment tasks are a particularly powerful mechanism for fostering the development of transversal skills and are increasingly used in higher education for this purpose.
Used appropriately, group assessment tasks:

- Facilitate learner development of skills intrinsic to teamwork, including communication, negotiation, time management, leadership, problem-solving, conflict resolution and interpersonal skills.
- Foster collaborative and peer supported learning; build peer relationships and reduce learner isolation.

Moreover, group assessment tasks may additionally:

- Increase the authenticity of a task by mirroring team projects within a workplace.
- Enable learners to engage in a more expansive or broadly scoped task than would be feasible individually.

- Facilitate opportunities for learners to reflect and learn from the process of the task (self-regulation) and engage in peer and self-evaluation activities (reflecting an Assessment AS Learning approach).

However, it is recognised that group assessment tasks:

- Are complex to design and evaluate.
- May be unpopular with students.
- May be impacted by poor group dynamics and conflicts.
- May at times require teaching staff to intervene and engage in mediation activities.
- Are not appropriate to all modules/to demonstrate all learning outcomes.
- Must balance measures of group and individual contributions within the grading strategy in the interests of fairness.

Acknowledging these challenges, the College takes the position that group assessment tasks make a valuable contribution to the overall TLA strategy. The College has therefore developed the principles below to guide the implementation of group assessment tasks within modules and programmes.
It should be noted that these principles are not designed to provide detailed guidance on specific group assessment task designs, outcomes or processes. Those decisions should be made locally by academic staff at module and programme level in consultation with Programme Leads. Additional support can be accessed as required from the Head of Academic Programmes, Head of Teaching & Learning and Learner Support and Head of Assessment.
The principles are designed to mitigate the risks associated with group assessment tasks. They will reduce common challenges associated with group assessment tasks and safeguard minimum standards of fairness and equity in the overall assessment strategy for programmes.

7.7.4 Principles for the Implementation of Group Assessment Tasks

General

1. In any one semester on any programme, a learner may experience no more than two group assessment tasks in total (one for a part-time schedule). Where possible, these should be scheduled to occur during different stages of the semester.
2. Under normal circumstances, groups will be randomly assigned by lecturers or programme leads rather than self-selecting.

Grading

3. No group assessment task within any module may be weighted at more than 50% of the total grade for that module.
4. All group assessment tasks will have components of the grade that are awarded individually (and may differ between group members) in addition to the

component of the grade that is awarded to the group (and is the same for all group members).

5. The component of the grade that is awarded individually should represent no less than 20% of the total grade for the group assessment task.
6. The component of the grade that is individual will be awarded on the basis of:
    a. The individual's agreed contribution to the group task.

or

    b. Peer and self-assessment of the individual's contribution.

or

    c. Some combination of a) and b).

Management of Groups

7. Groups will be required to agree the basic principles of how they will work together (frequency of meetings, modes of communication, division of responsibilities, interim targets and deadlines) prior to commencing work on their task.
8. Groups may request the assistance of the lecturer or a representative of the College to mediate or intervene in a group at the invitation of individual members or the group as a whole. In all cases, this should occur subsequent to efforts made by the group members to resolve problems independently and in a constructive manner.
9. Groups may, in extreme circumstances, apply to their lecturer to expel a group member on the basis of non-participation, non-contribution or in the event of other serious grievances. In such an occurrence, this must occur during (and not after) the submission of the group assessment task.
10. Group members have the right to escalate via the College's established complaints and appeals processes.

Responsibility

- The **Registrar**, is responsible for ensuring academic staff are aware of the Policy for Managing Group Assessment.
- The **Head of Academic Programmes and Programme Lead** are responsible for overseeing, the implementation of the Policy for Managing Group Assessment within an academic programme.
- **Lecturers** are responsible for implementing assessment processes in keeping with the principles outlined in the Policy for Managing Group Assessment.
- **Learners** are jointly responsible for the submission of group assessment tasks, and individually responsible for completing tasks associated with self and peer evaluation to facilitate timely grading and feedback.

Related Legislation, Regulation or Guidelines

- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016 (QQI).
- Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013 (QQI).

7.8 Policy and Procedure for Venue Approval

QA Area (s)	• Teaching, Learning and Assessment
Applies to	[x] Staff only [ ] Learners only [ ] Staff and Learners
Policy Owner	Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes and Registrar

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the principles governing the selection, monitoring and review of venues used for the purposes of teaching and assessment by the College.

Scope

This policy applies to all QQI validated programmes.

Policy

A strategic priority within the Innopharma Education 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan is 'Our Delivery'. Within this priority, the College undertakes to 'Ensure learners in all locations and modes have access to a well-supported, high-quality and flexible learning experience that enables them to realize their full potential'.

Learners within the College are typically, but not exclusively, mature, regionally located and undertaking study part-time. To enable those learners to participate, programmes are usually validated for delivery in one or more regional location in addition to Innopharma Education's Sandyford campus in Dublin.
Within the scope of its activities, the College may from time to time identify an opportunity to deliver a programme at an additional location that was not specified within the original application for validation of that programme to QQI. In such a case, prior to initiating marketing or recruitment activities, the College will:

- Identify potential venues following the procedure set out within the College's QA documentation for Approval, Review and Monitoring of Venues.

and

- Seek approval for differential validation for any proposed additional location and venue from QQI.

The College is committed to ensuring the quality of all venues that are used in the delivery of its programmes of education and training to ensure their continuing adequacy and effectiveness. The College selects venues that meet the following criteria:

- All venues must be purpose built or appropriately equipped/fitted for education and training purposes and provide optimal physical environments for learning. They should, at a minimum, provide:
    - Teaching rooms suitable for the group size and class format
    - Appropriate break-out and small group working spaces

- Capacity to regulate temperature, ventilation and lighting
- Access to IT equipment (e.g. hardware, software, projection, WiFi)
- Full accessibility for wheelchair users and staff/learners with limited mobility

- All venues must be located within reasonable proximity of public transport and car parking facilities.
- All venues must have sufficient health and safety provision, including fire exits and first aid arrangements.
- All venues must provide free access to appropriate facilities for comfort and human needs (e.g. drinking water, refreshments).
- All venues must have public liability insurance or equivalent to cover the use of the venue by a third party and the staff and learners attending the venue.

Wherever possible, the College will seek to utilize facilities owned or managed by education and training providers that have had their QA procedures approved by QQI.

As per QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (see Section 5.4.d) the College is also committed to regularly reviewing the venues used for the delivery of the College's programmes. Review and monitoring will be undertaken within the College's Procedure for Monitoring, Review and Re-validation of Programmes, with outcomes from this process included within Annual Programme Reports.

Responsibility

- The **Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement** is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the College's Policy and associated Procedure for the Approval, Review and Monitoring of Programme Delivery Venues.
- The **Head of Teaching & Learning and Learner Support**, supported by the relevant **Head of Academic Programmes** and **Programme Lead** is responsible for the collection, review and monitoring of staff and learner feedback in relation to programme delivery venues.
- The **Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes and Registrar** is responsible for overseeing, where required, the implementation of any Health and Safety requirements or training associated with programme delivery venues.
- The **Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes and Registrar** is responsible for managing applications to QQI for the approval of any additional venues for a programme's delivery within the validation period of that programme.
- **All Staff and Learners** are responsible for personally observing any Health and Safety requirements, rules or regulations associated with programme delivery venues.
- The **Academic Council** is responsible for approving new venues in relation to their adequacy for a planned teaching and/or assessment activity.
- The **Executive Management Team** is broadly responsible for managing the College's resources to ensure that appropriate venues are available to ensure the quality of delivery to learners and for making recommendations to the **Board of Directors** where required.

Related Legislation, Regulation or Guidelines

- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016 (QQI).
- Sector Specific (Independent/Private) Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016 (QQI).

7.9 Policy for Learner Feedback and Enhancement

QA Area (s)	Teaching, Learning and Assessment
Applies to	Staff and Learners
Policy Owner	Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes and Head of Teaching & Learning and Learner Support

Purpose

To establish the principles governing the systematic collection, review and use of learner feedback within Innopharma Education and to ensure that learner feedback contributes meaningfully to the ongoing monitoring and enhancement of the learner experience and quality of programme provision.

Scope

This policy applies to all QQI validated and non-validated programmes across all delivery modes.

Policy

7.9.1 Context

Innopharma Education recognises learner voice as an important component of its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework and is committed to providing learners with meaningful opportunities to contribute to the evaluation and enhancement of their educational experience. Learner feedback provides an important source of evidence for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of teaching, learning, assessment, learner supports and programme delivery. It also supports the identification of good practice, emerging issues and opportunities for continuous improvement.

The College is committed to ensuring that learner feedback is not considered in isolation, but is reviewed alongside other relevant quality indicators to inform programme-level and institutional monitoring, review and enhancement.

7.9.2 Learner Feedback and Enhancement Framework

Innopharma Education operates a structured Learner Feedback Framework designed to provide learners with meaningful opportunities to contribute feedback at key stages throughout their learner journey.

The framework comprises three core mechanisms:

- Mid-semester (pulse) feedback, providing an opportunity to identify and respond to issues or areas for enhancement while teaching and learning is ongoing;
- End-of-module / semester feedback, providing a more comprehensive evaluation of the learner experience and informing future programme and module enhancement; and

- Formal Learner Representative channels, providing an ongoing mechanism through which the learner voice can be represented within programme and College quality assurance processes.

Learner representation forms an important component of the College's approach to learner feedback. Through the Class Representative structure, learners have an established channel for raising feedback, suggestions and concerns relating to their programme and wider learning experience. Feedback received through learner representatives is communicated to relevant programme teams and, where appropriate, informs actions at programme or institutional level. In addition, Class Representatives meet annually with Learner Support and the College President to review learner feedback, discuss key themes and identify actions and opportunities for enhancement. This provides a direct mechanism through which the learner voice can inform both programme-level and wider institutional improvement.

These mechanisms may be supplemented by other appropriate feedback activities where required to support programme monitoring, review or enhancement.

The College's approach to learner feedback is underpinned by the following principles:

- Accessibility: learners are provided with appropriate and accessible opportunities to provide feedback.
- Representation: feedback mechanisms seek to capture a broad range of learner experiences and perspectives.
- Confidentiality: feedback is managed appropriately and in accordance with relevant data protection and confidentiality requirements.
- Responsiveness: feedback is reviewed and, where appropriate, informs actions for improvement.
- Transparency: relevant outcomes and actions arising from learner feedback are communicated to learners and other stakeholders, where appropriate.
- Continuous enhancement: learner feedback contributes to the ongoing monitoring, review and enhancement of programmes, services and the overall learner experience.

7.9.3 Feedback Cycle for Continuous Improvement

Learner feedback is managed through a continuous improvement cycle to ensure that feedback is not only collected, but systematically reviewed, acted upon and used to inform quality enhancement. The cycle provides a consistent framework from the design and implementation of feedback mechanisms through to the analysis and review of findings, action planning, communication of outcomes and ongoing quality oversight.

The feedback cycle comprises the following stages:

1. Design: appropriate feedback mechanisms are planned and developed.
2. Implementation: feedback mechanisms are implemented and made available to the relevant learner cohort.
3. Collection: learner feedback is gathered through the appropriate mechanisms.
4. Collation and Analysis: feedback is organised and analysed to identify relevant findings and themes.
5. Review: findings are reviewed to identify trends, areas of good practice, emerging issues and opportunities for enhancement.

6. Action Planning: appropriate actions are identified in response to feedback and incorporated into relevant quality enhancement activities.
7. Communication and Closure: relevant findings, outcomes and actions are communicated to learners and other stakeholders, where appropriate, supporting the closing of the feedback loop.
8. Reporting and Oversight: feedback outcomes and resulting actions are documented and monitored through the College's quality assurance and governance structures.

7.9.4 Review, Action and Enhancement

Learner feedback is considered at appropriate programme and institutional levels and is used to support evidence-informed decision-making and continuous improvement.
Actions arising from learner feedback are identified, documented and monitored through the College's established quality assurance processes. Feedback may inform, among other areas, enhancements to teaching and learning practices, assessment approaches, learner supports, programme delivery, learning resources and the wider learner experience.
Significant or recurring themes, systemic issues and enhancement opportunities are escalated through the appropriate governance structures. Relevant institutional trends and enhancement activities are reported to Academic Council as appropriate.
Where changes or improvements are made in response to learner feedback, the College seeks to communicate these outcomes to learners through appropriate channels, thereby demonstrating how learner voice contributes to ongoing quality enhancement.

7.9.5 Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for learner feedback is shared across the College.
The Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes and Registrar has overall responsibility for the policy and for ensuring that appropriate governance and oversight arrangements are in place.
The Head of Teaching & Learning and Learner Support is responsible for the central coordination and oversight of the learner feedback process.
Programme Leads and other relevant staff are responsible for engaging with feedback relating to their areas, identifying and implementing appropriate actions and contributing to the monitoring of resulting improvements.
Learners are encouraged to engage constructively with the feedback opportunities provided and to contribute to the ongoing enhancement of their learning experience.

7.9.6 Operational Arrangements

The specific feedback mechanisms, timelines, responsibilities, processes for analysis and reporting, action-tracking arrangements and methods for closing the feedback loop are detailed in the Learner Feedback SOP.

The Learner Feedback SOP is maintained separately within the College's controlled QA documentation to ensure that operational arrangements can be appropriately reviewed and updated while the principles established within this policy remain consistent.