5.6 Policy for Access, Transfer and Progression

QA Area (s)	• Programmes of Education and Training
Applies to	☐ Staff only ☐ Learners only ☒ Staff and Learners
Policy Owner	Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes

5.6.0 ESG Standard:

ESG Standard 1.4

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the learner "life cycle", e.g. learner admission, progression, recognition, and certification.

5.6.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles underpinning Access, Transfer and Progression at the College, in alignment with the requirements of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act (2012), as per QQI's 2015 policy restatement.

5.6.2 Scope

This is an overarching policy that establishes principles applied to all programmes of education and training at the College. Within that scope, procedures are programme specific.

5.6.3 Policy

5.6.3.0 Definitions

Access – refers to the process by which learners may commence a programme of education and training, having received recognition for the knowledge, skill or competence required.

- Initial Access – refers to a learner commencing at the initial stage of a programme.
- Advanced Entry – refers to a learner commencing at a post-initial stage of a programme.

Transfer – refers to the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme, having received recognition for knowledge, skill and competence acquired.

Progression – refers to the process by which learners may progress from one programme of education and training to another programme of a higher level.

5.6.4 Policy statement

Access

The College is committed to providing fair, equitable and consistent access to all applicants to its programmes, and will ensure the following:

- The policy and all admissions arrangements are clear and accessible.
- Decisions regarding the allocation of places on programmes are timely and transparent.
- All applicants are treated in a fair, equal and consistent manner.
- Appropriate arrangements will be in place to facilitate an appeals process.
- For every programme, prospective learners have available statements of the knowledge, skill and competence needed as a basis for successful participation.
- Mechanisms will be in place to facilitate Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (See Policy 5.7).

Transfer and Progression

The College is committed to identifying, where available, any transfer and progression routes into and onwards from all programmes leading to awards in the framework. Where these are found to exist, any particular attainments required to facilitate access to a programme leading to an award at the next level will be specified. Where appropriate and feasible, necessary adaptations will be made to programmes to facilitate participants in making successful transitions.

Annual transcripts of performance will facilitate transfer to other programmes or institutions. The European Diploma Supplement will enable graduates to demonstrate competence to employers and facilitate credit transfer between institutions and/or jurisdictions.

5.6.5 Responsibility

- The **Academic Council** is responsible for approving the Access, Transfer and Progression opportunities set out in programme specific procedures by Programme Development Teams.
- The **Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes** has ultimate responsibility for the implementation of policy and procedure pertaining to Access Transfer and Progression.
- The **Programme Lead** is responsible for assisting the Head of Academic Programmes in the implementation of policy and procedure specific to the programme they are responsible for.
- The **Head of Quality Assurance and Admissions** is responsible for monitoring and maintaining the overall alignment of the College's policy and procedures pertaining to Access, Transfer and Progression to QQI's guidelines and policy statements.
- The **Head of Quality Assurance and Admissions**, in consultation with the Head of Academic Programmes and Programme Lead has responsibility for reviewing admission standards and procedures, for considering the fairness and consistency of their application, and for overseeing the administration of the College's admissions system on behalf of the Academic Council.

- The **Admissions Office** is responsible for overseeing the admission of learners to programmes under the oversight of the Registrar.
- The **Registrar** is responsible for ensuring that all QQI entry and enrolment conditions are complied with.

5.6.6 Related Legislation, Regulation or Guidelines

- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016 (QQI).
- Sector Specific (Independent/Private) Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016 (QQI).
- Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training 2017 (QQI)
- Policy and Criteria for Making Awards 2014 (QQI)
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015).
- Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013 (QQI).
- Policy for Determining Awards Standards – QQI, 2014
- NFQ Awards Standards
- European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) User Guide –2015
- International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) – UNESCO, 2011.

5.7 Procedure for Access, Transfer and Progression

QA Area (s)	• Programmes of Education and Training
Applies to	☐ Staff only ☐ Learners only ☒ Staff and Learners
Policies this Procedure relates to	Policy for Access, Transfer and Progression

5.7.0 Procedure

Every programme at the College will have clear entry requirements set out and approved at validation. Entry requirements will describe the:

- Minimum prerequisite learning (knowledge, skill and competence) required to access the programme.
- Prerequisite learning for access (or transfer) to higher stages of the programme.
- The minimum English language competence required for participation in the programme.
- The minimum Mathematics, or other specific competence (where relevant), required for participating in the programme.
- Any special requirements as noted in the approved programme document (e.g. a precursor award in a particular discipline for admittance to a programme at a higher level in the NFQ).
- Any programme-specific Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)/ Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) criteria arrangements for entry, exemptions from modules, advanced entry and direct access to the award (Section 5.9).

5.7.1 Recruitment of Learners

5.7.1.0 Marketing of Programmes

Before each intake, a marketing campaign is planned in order to generate awareness and to attract learners to study at the College. A typical marketing campaign consists of the following:

- Digital and offline advertising activity throughout the year with campaigns executed leading up to the commencement of an academic intake.
- Attendance at regional exhibitions.
- Open days organised prior to the commencement of an academic intake and focused on a group of programmes or learners.

The Marketing Manager, in consultation with the Head of Academic Programmes, is responsible for the generation of promotional material which supports the provision of information through the website and other media, while also supporting the College's presence at exhibitions and fairs. All promotional material is subject to the College policy on Public Information and approved by the Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes.

The College reserves the right to cancel a programme of study where there are insufficient numbers to run a viable programme. In such circumstances, applicants will be notified that the programme is not to run, and the College will organise a refund of any payments made to the College according to the College Refund Policy. All offer letters will clearly state that the programme will run dependent on numbers.

The College is committed to ensuring that all applicants who have paid a deposit will have that deposit refunded in full as soon as it is known that the programme will not run.

5.7.1.1 Full-time Learners

The target learners for a new programme will inform the College's decision on the preferred modality for learner recruitment. For example, in the case of full-time undergraduate programmes that lead to major awards where the target learners are in the main mature learners, application will be made directly to the College. By contrast, in the case such programmes where the target learners are in the main school leavers, the College may decide to have applicants apply through the CAO system.

For CAO applicants, entry will be based on leaving certificate point scores, or equivalent, with offer and acceptance processing being managed by the CAO.

Mature applicants (those at the age of 23 or higher on January 1st of the year of the course of entry) are required to complete the College application form, attach copies of all relevant secondary or third level qualification certificates and transcripts and/or training certificates and submit these along with a summary of previous work experience. It is not necessary for mature students to satisfy minimum academic requirements. Such applicants will be interviewed by admissions staff and the Programme Lead to determine their suitability for the chosen programme, their motivation for the subject discipline and for the chosen mode of study, and to assess their potential to succeed.

5.7.1.2 Part-time Learners

Part-time learner applicants are required to complete the College application form, attach copies of all relevant secondary or third level qualification certificates and transcripts and/or training certificates and submit along with a summary of previous work experience. Such applicants will be interviewed by admissions staff and the Programme Lead to determine their suitability for the chosen programme, their motivation for the subject discipline and for the chosen mode of study, and to assess their potential to succeed.

The Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes Office is responsible for ensuring each application is rigorously evaluated and a decision is made and sent to the applicant. All admissions are subject to the approval of the Head of Quality Assurance & Admissions.

5.7.1.3 Applications from Persons with Disabilities

Aligned to the admissions policy of fair, equal and consistent treatment of all applicants, the College is committed to a policy of reasonable accommodation to meet individual needs and enable full access and participation for all learners with specific needs. The College may refer to the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability for advice if required. All applicants with a disability or other specific needs should declare those requirements at the application stage, as this is to ensure that the College can evaluate any additional supports required and if reasonable accommodation can be made. Once accepted and registered on a

programme the learner can access the disability support or reasonable accommodations via Student Affairs.

5.7.2 Applications for Admission with Advanced Standing (Transfer)

Applicants transferring from cognate programmes may be considered under these arrangements for access, transfer and progression, in straightforward cases. Depending on the degree of complexity of the application, it may be preferable to treat such applications under the associated RPL policy (Section 5.7).

There are two categories of access with advanced standing:

1. Direct entry where a learner is exempt from one or more complete stages.
2. Module exemption where a learner is considered for exemption from a module or modules comprising part of a stage.

Credit will not be awarded for exempted modules or stages in order to avoid granting double credits for the same learning; such modules will be denoted 'exempt' on the learner's transcript and European Diploma Supplement.

Individual module exemptions are only considered for learners on part-time undergraduate programmes. Exemptions are agreed when an admission is being evaluated prior to registration. Exemptions are not considered at the Award Stage or for programmes of less than 60 ECTS such as Minor or Special Purpose Awards.

Transfer from one programme to another (other than progression programmes) in the College will be judged on a case-by-case basis, taking into account required knowledge, skill and competence required for successful participation in the new programme.

5.7.3 Progression

Progression to another programme of education and training is generally on the basis of successful completion of a stage or an award, as determined by the receiving programme or institution. The College will facilitate any progression applications to other institutions through the provision of transcripts and references as may be required. Progression following graduation to higher level awards in the College, elsewhere in Ireland or abroad will be further facilitated by providing the graduate with the European Diploma Supplement. This will be catered for within the Student Information System.

5.7.4 Appeal

An applicant is entitled to seek a review of an admissions decision, if they are not satisfied. An applicant may only seek this review on the following grounds:

1. Incorrect process. Specific evidence of irregularity in the College's application assessment process must be provided.
2. Specified/stated grounds where the College's decision was based on misinterpretation of data or information provided as part of the application process.

False or vexatious appeals will not be considered.

Requests for a review must be made in writing to the Registrar's Office within 10 days of the decision being communicated. The request must be accompanied by all relevant and supporting documentation and a fee of €50, to be refunded only if the review is successful. The grounds for review will be considered by the Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes and evaluated by another senior staff member, who was not

involved in the original decision. The outcome of the review will be communicated in writing to the applicant normally within 10 days of receipt.
If the applicant remains dissatisfied, they may seek to appeal through the College's formal Appeals Procedure in Section 3.9. The fee for such an appeal is €100, refundable only if the appeal is successful.

5.7.5 Learner Registration

Once an applicant has formally accepted an offer and paid the required fee or deposit the applicant is provided with details of the programme on which they will be enrolled, complete the registration process, attend induction, be supplied with timetables and any other information. The applicants are formally registered with the College and enrolled on a programme and associated modules in the Student Information System.

5.7.6 Learner Induction

Each registered learner undergoes an induction programme which includes an introduction to the learner, Innoskills (Moodle) access, learner supports, the role of the class representative, library, career services and facilities. (Ref: Supporting Document 6)

5.7.7 Deferring Admission

An applicant in receipt of an offer who does not wish to take up their place may apply for a Deferral of Admission and this must be received by the registration date given for that intake. Deferrals are not indefinite, and an offer will expire within one year or by the revalidation date of the programme, whichever is the shorter. Deferred applicants must be made aware that admission is subject to the availability of the programme and capacity.