**QQI Approval of Provider QA Procedures**

**Blended Learning**

**Gap Analysis Tool and Action Plan**

**For Provider Use**

**Part 1 Provider Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1.1 Provider** | |
| Name: |  |
| Person completing this gap analysis:  (Name and job title) |  |
| Contact phone: |  |
| Contact email address: |  |
| Date: |  |

**Gap Analysis – why?**

*When starting this exercise, it is important to remember the purpose of the QA Approval process: i.e.*

*QQI is keen to ensure that the provider has*

1. *done a genuine assessment of its own situation based on its expertise and experience, which has identified any potential areas of vulnerability – institutional or programmatic, which could impact on the quality of online provision as part of a blended / online programme.*
2. *considered its resource base relative to the demands of online provision and made a genuine assessment of the potential viability and effectiveness of blended programmes.*
3. *with reference to QQI core and blended learning guidelines, amended its QA policies and procedures to address any identified vulnerabilities and to disseminate good practice*

*When evaluating the provider’s application for QA approval for blended learning, QQI will be looking to see that the updated quality assurance procedures demonstrate:*

* ***Enhanced governance*** *– oversight for areas of significant decision making relevant to blended learning. This should include informed and independent views on the implications of blended provision.*
* ***Clarity*** *: at a minimum, a policy on blended learning should make clear:*
  + *What constitutes blended learning for you as a provider[[1]](#footnote-1).*
  + *Why blended learning is being proposed as a means of delivering programme material.*
  + *Who is it for i.e. for what learner profile(s) will your online programme material be suitable.*
  + *Which of your programmes are suitable for conversion to blended learning.[[2]](#footnote-2)*
  + *How your organisation will support and maintain online provision[[3]](#footnote-3)*
* ***QA methodology*** *to know, in the context of future blended programmes* 
  + *What’s working and what isn’t – institutional and programmatic*
  + *What learners think of blended programmes and supports*
  + *How comparable programmes compare and contrast (benchmarking)*
* *if resources, human, financial, technological and physical, are adequate*
* ***Clarity and accessibility*** *in policy and procedure*
  + *For staff*
  + *For learners*

*An honest and meaningful self-assessment is an indicator of a well-functioning quality assurance system. You are encouraged to engage in this gap analysis exercise, not for compliance with a QQI requirement, but to ensure your organisation is equipped for and can effectively develop and deliver blended programmes.*

**Gap Analysis – what?**

*You are being asked to do a gap analysis with reference to:*

1. [*QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning*](https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Statutory%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20Blended%20Learning%20Programmes.pdf) *(Topic)*
2. [*QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (Core)*](https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf)

*While the topic guidelines are primary for this purpose, it is important to remember that almost all aspects of provision covered by the Core guidelines will be impacted by a move to blended learning. Hence it is important to consider both sets of guidelines.*

*On the assumption that your provider already has approval against the Core QA Guidelines, this gap analysis tool will follow the structure of the Blended Learning Guidelines.*

**2.1 Part 3 Gap Analysis with reference to QQI Guidelines for Blended Learning**

***What Guidelines?***

*Providers are required to ‘have regard’ to* [*QQI’s Topic Specific Guidelines for Blended Learning*](http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Statutory%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20Blended%20Learning%20Programmes.pdf) *(BLGs) when writing their own procedures for quality assuring programmes of education and training which are to involve a blend of face to face and online provision and assessment.*

*The guidelines are not intended as a ‘how to’ manual for providers on the establishment of QA procedures. Rather, it is up to providers to supplement their internal quality system with additional strategy, policy, procedures and review relevant to blended / online provision.*

*A panel acting on behalf of QQI will evaluate the provider’s draft procedures using the BLGs as a reference but not as criteria. It is important that the panel will be able to see that the guidelines have been used and applied in a manner appropriate to the specific context of the applicant provider.*

*When conducting a gap analysis between your draft QA procedures and the BLGs, you should use the questions set out below for each of the guideline sections. The answers should help you identify your state of readiness and also what work needs to be done before you can submit your QA procedures for approval.*

*It is important that a provider’s draft procedures go through internal consultation and governance prior to being submitted to QQI for approval. As moving to blended and online provision for the long term has considerable implications for a provider, in terms of change and cost, it is critical that the system to support it be considered and approved by corporate and academic governance.*

**Blended Learning Guidelines - Section 1 Organisational Context**

| ***Gap-analysis question*** | ***Already in place? Summarise*** | ***Action Required? Describe*** | ***Who Responsible*** | ***By When*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. *Has the organisation adopted and approved a* ***Strategy*** *for Blending Learning (BL)?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Does the Strategy include a clear* ***Definition*** *of what BL will be in your provider, consulted on and agreed throughout the provider?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Do the Strategy and Definition address the limits of what will constitute BL, in terms of learner numbers and geography?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Is there* ***Expertise*** *in BL provision included in, or available to, corporate and academic governance?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Does the Strategy show a clear* ***Rationale*** *and business case for BL?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Is there a* ***Budget*** *for establishing BL, approved by senior management? What timescale does the budget cover?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Has the academic governance group (Academic Council / Quality Committee etc) considered and approved the move to BL for existing and / or new programmes and learner profiles?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Does the Strategy demonstrate the organisation’s understanding of the resource implications (human and infrastructural) of providing blended programmes and its commitment to addressing those implications?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Does the Strategy inform programme developers of the types of programmes and learner profiles for which blended learning is and is not appropriate in your context?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Has the organisation selected and approved a particular software, hardware and media infrastructure to support BL?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Have the reasons for this choice been communicated to and approved by corporate and academic governance?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Have the terms of reference of the academic governance and risk committees been modified / extended to include consideration of issues particular to BL?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Have the risks associated with BL been included in the Risk Register?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Has someone with appropriate expertise been designated as in charge of QA for BL programmes?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Has the organisation sustainable access to expertise in instructional design and educational technology?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Have programme staff who are to work on BL programmes been given CPD on online delivery and assessment and the implications for how their work will change?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Have programme staff who are to work on BL programmes been given CPD on the specific hardware and software to be used to deliver and manage BL programmes?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Have resources being budgeted to provide additional supports for learners?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Do these budgeted supports include technical, educational and pastoral supports?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *When selecting a VLE and associated technology, were the following considerations included and tested:*  * *Reliability* * *Accessibility* * *Security against data breaches / hacking* * *GDPR* * *Tech Support* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *When selecting and appointing suppliers of tech. infrastructure and software, were Service Level Agreements (SLAs) made?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Do SLAs provide for contingency arrangements in the event of hardware or software failure?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Is there an SLA covering tech. support and maintenance?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *When selecting software to support BL, was monitoring of academic integrity included?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Does the VLE facilitate monitoring of learner progression through programme material?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Does the VLE facilitate monitoring of learner engagement with the programme?* |  |  |  |  |

**Blended Learning Guidelines Section 2 Programme Context**

| ***Gap-analysis question*** | ***Process already in place? Summarise*** | ***Action Required? Describe*** | ***Who Responsible*** | ***By When*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. *Does the procedure for programme development include the following:* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *testing a programme proposal against criteria / rationale for choosing BL.* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *ensuring a target learner profile includes elements relevant to online participation* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *collaboration between subject matter experts and educational designers / technologists?* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *deciding on the blend for any BL programme i.e. agreement on the balance between face 2 face, online and workplace learning?* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *developing a ‘Capacity to Succeed’ statement for learners i.ie clear information for learners as to what will be required of them to successfully participate in the programme?* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *consideration of Intellectual Property and protection of same?* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *consideration of professional body / regulator requirements?* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *Protection for Enrolled Learners (PEL), where required?* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *adaptation of the Teaching and Learning Strategy for the programme for online context?* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *adaptation of the Assessment Strategy for online context and with Academic Integrity in kind?* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *consideration of how the online teaching and learning of skills will be done? Have appropriate facilities been deployed?* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *design of formative and summative assessment instruments appropriate to the programme and its blend?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Are programme staff recruited with / provided with CPD on the following in respect of online programme content:*  * *Instruction* * *Assessment* * *Learner supports* * *Academic Integrity* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Does the QA of Assessment procedures include the following:* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *information to learners on assessment schedule – Face to Face and Online.*   2. *information to learners on Academic Integrity / Cheating Sites and how breaches of rules will be handled.*   *authentication of identity*   * 1. *tracking receipt of learner work submitted online.*   2. *security of assessment material and records*   3. *monitoring consistency between online and face to face assessment outcomes* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Are there metrics for success of the blended programme which can be monitored by the programme team?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *How is an individual learner’s progress and levels of engagement / attendance monitored? Are there early warning systems?* |  |  |  |  |

**Blended Learning Guidelines Section 3 Learner Experience Context**

| ***Gap-analysis question*** | ***Process already in place? Summarise*** | ***Action Required? Describe*** | ***Who Responsible*** | ***By When*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. *Does learner information for blended / online programmes include the following additional / adapted information:* |  |  |  |  |
| * 1. *Information on/ tour of learning environment*   2. *Hardware, software and IT competence requirements*   3. *Time commitments – face to face, synchronous and asynchronous, workplace (as appropriate)*   4. *Capacity to Succeed statement*   5. *How to access supports – tech and programme*   6. *Expected behaviour / net etiquette*   7. *Academic Integrity – general info and provider rules and procedures* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Will learners have access to tech support? What times will it be available?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Will learners have access to support from instructors in respect of online programme material? What times will it be available?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Will learners working remotely have access to pastoral supports? What times will it be available?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Is there sufficient support capacity relative to envisaged number of online learners?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *If the blend is primarily online, how will learners be able to engage with other learners on the programme?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Can learners on programmes working online access provider services and processes (e.g. complaints and appeals) in the same or comparable way to face to face learners?* |  |  |  |  |
| 1. *Will learners be asked for feedback on their experience of remote learning? Where will this feedback be considered and responded to?* |  |  |  |  |

1. Consider, among other aspects – synchronous and/or asynchronous delivery, resource material for learners or active participation online, learning only or assessment also. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This might be described in terms of award type, duration, learner profile or a combination of same. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Has your senior management committed to resourcing and maintaining online provision i.e. have the organisational implications been considered and accepted. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)