



## Reengagement Panel Report

### Assessment of Capacity and Approval of QA Procedures

#### Part 1 Details of provider

##### 1.1 Applicant Provider

Registered Business/Trading Name:	Iona College
Address:	Unit 6F, Kells Business Park, Cavan Road, Kells, Co. Meath
Date of application:	27 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
Date of resubmission of application:	
Date of virtual site visit:	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2021
Date of reconvene meeting (if applicable)	
Date of recommendation to the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee:	24 <sup>th</sup> June 2021



## 1.2 Profile of provider

Iona College was established in 2004 as Iona Training Services Ltd. The College delivers programmes in the domains of healthcare, childcare and social care. The college engaged with FETAC in 2007 (now QQI) and the current scope of provision for QQI validated programmes is as follows:

1. Early Childhood Care and Education (Level 5)
2. Applied Social Studies (Level 5)
3. Healthcare Support (Level 5)
4. Nursing Studies (Level 5)
5. Health Services Supervisory Management Skills (Level 6)

The profile of learners for these programmes is adults seeking employment in the areas specified above, who wish to pursue the accredited training required in order to gain employment. The programmes are typically short in duration, delivered over a maximum of four weeks.

Additionally, the College offers a range of bespoke self-certified/certified training, CPD and workshops, including programmes certified by other bodies such as the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI), Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) and the Irish Heart Foundation (IHF):

1. Management of Actual and Potential Aggression
2. Patient Moving and Handling
3. Manual Handling
4. First Aid Responder
5. Safeguarding the Vulnerable Adult
6. Safeguarding the Vulnerable Child
7. Fire Safety
8. Basic First Aid
9. CPR/AED

The provider serves a diverse range of clients, including hospitals, home care agencies, crèches, CE schemes, nursing homes ETBs and hospices. Training may be delivered at Iona College utilizing its own training suites, onsite at a client's premises or in a rented venue. Intake has remained constant over the last three years, with a total of 3,721 registered learners, of which 1,125 were submitted to QQI for certification.



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## Part 2 Panel Membership

Name	Role of panel member	Organisation
David Treacy	Chair	Formerly City of Dublin Education and Training Board
Anne Higgins	Panel Member	Galway/Roscommon Education and Training Board
Pat Flynn	Panel Member	NCU Ltd.
Laura Devlin	Report Writer	Formerly Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology



## Part 3 Findings of the Panel

### 3.1 Summary Findings

The panel acknowledges the good standing of Iona College in the sector and made the following commendations to the provider:

1. The panel commend the close collaborative relationship between Iona staff, which was obvious in the discussions during the online panel visit. The team displayed a cohesive vision and common approach to the delivery of their programmes.
2. The panel commend the appropriate language around assessments which is straightforward and easy for learners to follow.
3. The panel commend the preparation of documentation for the reengagement process, which is informative and comprehensive. It was evident in conversation that the team is clear about how policies and procedures map into the everyday delivery of their programmes. The inclusion of a glossary at the beginning of the Quality Manual was helpful in navigating around the many acronyms. Prior to the online visit, the panel requested additional information on processes around governance, RPL, staff recruitment/development, assessment, programme development, learner supports and tutor recruitment. This information was provided to the panel in a timely manner, supported by an online explanatory presentation.
4. The panel commend Iona's philosophy of investing in strong supports for its learners. The calibre of learners will ultimately be reflected and tested in the relationship that develops between the carer and the recipient of care.
5. The panel commend the open dialogue and positive engagement of Iona College in its dealings with the panel throughout the reengagement process.

At the conclusion of the site visit, the panel recommended Iona College's draft quality assurance procedures for approval to the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee of QQI, with two Conditions attached. These Conditions are outlined in more detail in Section 6.1 of this report. An additional item of Specific Advice is included in Section 7.2.



3.2 Recommendation of the panel to Programmes and Awards Executive Committee of QQI

	Tick <u>one</u> as appropriate
<b>Approve</b> Iona College draft QA procedures	X
<b>Refuse approval</b> of [the provider's – insert name] draft QA procedures <b>pending mandatory changes</b> set out in Section 6.1 <small>(If this recommendation is accepted by QQI, the provider may make a revised application within six months of the decision)</small>	
<b>Refuse to approve</b> [the provider's – insert name] draft QA procedures	



## Part 4 Evaluation of provider capacity

### 4.1 Legal and compliance requirements:

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Partially</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>4.1.1(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Is the applicant an established Legal Entity who has Education and/or Training as a Principal Function?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Iona Training Services Ltd. is a private limited company, trading as Iona College. The provider has submitted a Certificate of Incorporation, the CRO number is provided. (Application Form, page 2). Both co-owners are also directors of Annadale Training Ltd., which is a non-trading company, formed for the sole purpose of acquiring the fixtures and fittings of Iona College. A letter of clarification from an Accounting/Auditing firm was supplied with the application documentation, confirming the purpose of establishing Annadale Training Ltd.
<b>4.1.2(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Is the legal entity established in the European Union and does it have a substantial presence in Ireland?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The provider has an established presence in Ireland since 2004. The company registered with FETAC in 2007 (now QQI). Over the past three years, the provider had 3,721 registered learners on QQI courses.
<b>4.1.3(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are any dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries clearly specified?</i>	<b>No</b>	The provider has declared it is not engaged in any form of collaborative provision, nor has it identified any dependencies or obligations. (Application Form, page 17).
<b>4.1.4(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are any third-party relationships and partnerships</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The College is engaged as a sub-contractor to Rutledge Recruitment and Training Ltd.,



	<i>compatible with the scope of access sought?</i>		delivering training on behalf of LMETB and CMETB. Training is delivered under the quality assurance criteria of LMETB and CMETB respectively. Iona College is a third provider. A Contract for Services Agreement between Rutledge Recruitment and Training Ltd. and Iona College was submitted with the provider's application documentation.
<b>4.1.5(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are the applicable regulations and legislation complied with in all jurisdictions where it operates?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Supporting documentation submitted indicates the provider is compliant with all regulations and legislation. A signed, statutory declaration to this end was submitted by both of the co-owners of Iona College.
<b>4.1.6(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Is the applicant in good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in any countries where it operates (or where its parents or subsidiaries operate) or enrolls learners, or where it has arrangements with awarding bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators.</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The provider has a relationship with FETAC (now QQI) since 2007. Iona also delivers training programmes with certification by other bodies. Membership/associations include QQI, PHECC, American Heart Foundation, Irish Heart Foundation, Irish Institute of Training and Development and Crisis Prevention Institute and City and Guilds.

**Findings**

The panel is satisfied based on the evidence submitted that Iona College meets all legal and regulatory requirements as outlined in Section 4.1.

During the online site visit, the panel sought further detail from the provider in relation to criterion 4.1.4(a), the quality assurance arrangements between Iona College, LMETB and CMETB. Iona delivers courses as a third provider on behalf of Rutledge Recruitment and Training Ltd., mainly to LMETB. Responsibility for QA lies with the ETBs. Rutledge as the contractor provided Iona College with some supports in resources, such as a learner management system. The College currently uses its own assessment briefs (under the QA oversight of each ETB) and has a good track record in writing briefs that are user friendly. All briefs were agreed with ETBs and input and advice from QQI was helpful in this regard.

**4.2 Resource, governance and structural requirements:**

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Partially</b>	<b>Comments</b>
4.2.1(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have a sufficient resource base and is it stable and in good financial standing?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The provider's application included insurance documents, tax clearance, signed financial statement for years 2017 – 2019 inclusive, and a commercial viability statement from an Accounting/Auditing firm confirming Iona's financial standing and conformance with Irish company law.
4.2.2(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The provider's policy and strategy relating to risk management is included in the Draft QA Manual (Section 1.1.9, page 51). Iona acknowledges business development as a priority on its Risk Register. (Draft QA Manual, Appendix 1, page 179). The ability to deliver programmes both on and offsite also affords the provider flexibility in responding to the demands of a dynamic, changing market.
4.2.3(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision making structures in place?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Prior to the online panel visit, the panel requested some clarification around the separation of academic and corporate governance at Iona College. This additional information was provided by the provider in a timely manner. This is discussed further in section 5.1 of this report.
4.2.4(a)	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are there arrangements in place for providing required information to QQI?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The provider has an established relationship with QQI (previously FETAC) since 2007. The Director of Learning and Development is the main contact person for QQI.

**Findings**

At the conclusion of the virtual site visit the panel was satisfied that overall Iona College has the resource base, governance and structures in place to satisfy criteria under 4.2. The provider has a proven track record of delivering training within its scope of provision.

It is evident from the provider's comprehensive and cohesive suite of documents that the reengagement process has provided an opportunity for Iona College to review its quality processes across its provision.

**4.3 Programme development and provision requirements:**

	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Partially</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>4.3.1(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have experience and a track record in providing education and training programmes?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Iona College is an established provider since 2004, with a proven track record in the provision of both accredited and non-accredited courses.
<b>4.3.2(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Iona College has a core of three full time staff. All tutors are employed on a contract basis. Iona maintains a bank of well qualified and experienced tutors. Tutors undergo an induction process and in cases where training is required in relation to delivery of a particular course, Iona can provide financial support to tutors.
<b>4.3.3(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have the capacity to comply with the standard conditions for validation specified in Section 45(3) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) (the Act)?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The panel is satisfied overall that Iona's approach to the reengagement process demonstrates its ability to comply with requirements in the areas of; a. cooperating with the Authority in the performance of its functions



			<p>b) fair and consistent assessment procedures</p> <p>c) protection of enrolled learners</p> <p>d) providing information to the Authority as required</p> <p>In relation to (c), see criterion 4.3.7 (a) below.</p>
<b>4.3.4(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Does the applicant have the fit-for-purpose premises, facilities and resources to meet the requirements of the provision proposed in place?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<p>The panel were provided with a virtual tour of the premises prior to the online panel visit. Iona's courses are delivered on site at its own premises, at clients' premises and if required, at rented venues. The draft QA Manual outlines the process for approving learning sites. (QA, page 101, Learning Environments)</p>
<b>4.3.5(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are there access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval in place?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<p>Prior to the visit, the panel requested further detail around the RPL process. The information was sent to the panel in a timely manner, which outlined the process in place at Iona for both RPL and RPCL. The draft QA Manual outlines this process (QA, page 72). In relation to information in the public domain for</p>



			Access – the panel issued a Condition in relation to this criterion. This is discussed further in Section 3 of this report (Programmes of Education and Learning).
<b>4.3.6(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners in place?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	The panel requested extra detail around assessment prior to the online visit and were provided with the information in a timely manner. Policies relating to this are included in the draft QA Manual (QA, page 107).
<b>4.3.7(a)</b>	<b>Criterion:</b> <i>Are arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to meet the statutory obligations in place (where applicable)?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	Iona College has exchanged letters with two other providers for PEL purposes. At the time of the panel evaluation, PEL arrangements had not yet been finalised. All courses are of short duration lasting a maximum of four weeks. Learners do not pay in advance. If a course does not run, applicants are provided with a refund.

**Findings**

The panel is satisfied that overall Iona College's programme development and provision meet the criteria under 4.3.  
However, the panel imposed a Condition under criterion 4.3.5(a) – Access. The details are outlined in Section 6.1 of this report.



The provider has a bank of approved and experienced tutors for delivery of courses. A policy is in place to monitor venues for the delivery of courses. The provider also has a suite of policies in place focussed on the learner experience from registration to certification.

Additional information provided to the panel on RPL and Assessment clarified the steps in both of these processes.

The panel has been advised that QQI is currently discussing arrangements for the Protection of Enrolled Learners with Iona College.

#### **4.4 Overall findings in respect of provider capacity to provide sustainable education and training**

The panel is satisfied that Iona College has the capacity to provide sustainable education and training within its scope of provision.

While all courses are currently delivered online due to the Covid pandemic, the College does not plan to expand its scope of provision post Covid, to include blended learning delivery. The courses delivered lend themselves to hands on experience and face to face interaction with learners. The College responded proactively to the crisis and the online experience has been a positive learning curve.

Early engagement with QQI guided decisions and processes around ensuring the quality of online delivery and the Academic Quality Council established a contingency plan in response to the crisis. Smartsheet is used for records retention and tracking of learners from registration to certification.

Discussions took place with LMETB, for whom Iona delivers a sizable amount of training, to implement a plan to continue to deliver courses successfully online.

Technology supports and training were enhanced for staff and learners. Zoom licences were purchased for both students and staff, and briefing/training sessions were delivered.

Iona's comprehensive suite of quality assurance procedures was beneficial in transferring all course content to online delivery. Assessments are reviewed and marked online and academic integrity is maintained with cross moderation of all assessments.

Externality is assured across academic and corporate management, with a total of 6 External experts on the College committees.

In the Self Evaluation Review completed at the end of 2020, the provider's gap analysis highlighted a number of vulnerabilities. The newly established Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) includes fifteen actions to implement improvements across the College. The SER report was approved on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and will be published on Iona's website.



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## Part 5 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by Iona College

*The following is the panel's findings following evaluation of Iona quality assurance procedures against QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016). Sections 1-11 of the report follows the structure and referencing of the Core QA Guidelines.*

### 1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY

#### **Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied overall that Iona College has met the requirements under this section of QQI's Core QA Guidelines.

QQI's Core QA Guidelines (2016, page 11) require a provider to have a system of governance in place 'that protects the integrity of academic process and standards. Academic decision making reflects the interests of learners and the maintenance of standards. It is independent of commercial considerations'.

During the virtual site visit the separation of corporate versus academic responsibility was discussed in detail. Extra information provided to the panel informed the discussion, helping to delineate more clearly the separation of roles and responsibilities within the two strands of the business. The Academic Quality Council is chaired by an external expert and the membership includes the Director of Learning and Development, tutors and learner representation. The Commercial Governance Council is also chaired by an extern, and the membership includes the Managing Director of Iona and an HR specialist.

Depending on the issues under discussion, the CGC will on occasion enlist additional outside expertise for consultation and advice. The panel noted the external presence on both committees as helpful in assuring independent and objective decision making across academic and commercial domains.

QQI's Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016, page 6) require a provider to have a system of governance and management 'Where a provider's scale is such that it cannot support internal committees, alternative arrangements are put in place to ensure objective oversight, such as the use of external experienced expertise'.

Given the small size of core staff at Iona, it is inevitable there will be some crossover of input, in particular between the two owners. Where a conflict may arise, external advice can be sought, to bring an additional aspect to the decision-making process and to ensure both theoretical and practical elements of any issues are considered. During the online panel visit, both owners cited their respective roles and separate areas of expertise.

QQI's Core QA Guidelines (2016, page 12) require a provider to ensure 'there are procedures in place for the identification, assessment and management of risk'.

Since December 2019 Iona have a Risk Management policy and procedures in place which are included in the draft QA Manual (QA, page 51). The College has also developed a comprehensive Risk Register (QA, page 177)



## 2 DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

### ***Panel Findings:***

QQI's Core QA Guidelines (2016, page 15) require a provider to ensure "The quality assurance system is fully documented; there are robust, documented policies and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of provision".

The panel were satisfied that Iona College satisfied QQI requirements within this dimension of QA and commended the comprehensive suite of documents provided for the reengagement process. The Academic Quality Council has overall responsibility for maintaining and reviewing Iona's QA systems and carry out independent audits and evaluation of QA systems on an annual basis.

An external review of QA systems is commissioned every second year. Roles and responsibilities, terms of reference and membership are defined for all committees. All policies and procedures are documented, using a common template, in the draft QA Manual.

The provider's SER, completed at the end of 2020, offered an opportunity to implement a strategy for the ongoing review and monitoring of QA systems, with short, medium and long term goals identified. The Quality Improvement Plan, which derives from the annual Programme Review Report, will highlight any gaps identified in QA systems. This cycle of review will ensure ongoing enhancement and reinforcement of QA systems across the College.

The QA documentation demonstrates Iona's commitment to creating a single system across the College. The panel noted the challenges for Iona in aligning their criteria with that of other bodies, for example, the courses delivered by Iona as a second provider on behalf of Education and Training Boards. Iona engaged with ETBs and consulted with QQI to resolve any issues and consequently an agreement was reached, whereby Iona delivers courses under the QA system of the particular ETB.



### 3 PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

#### **Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied that, overall, Iona College has met the QA guidelines under this criterion. The panel noted the provider's track record on delivering both non-accredited training and courses accredited by QQI and other awarding bodies, such as CPI, PHECC and IHF.

QQI's Core QA Guidelines (2016, page 25) require a provider to indicate 'whether the programme is subject to procedures for access, transfer and progression'.

Regarding published information on access/entry requirements to courses, the panel imposed a Condition in relation to specifying the level of proficiency in English required by applicants. This is detailed in Section 6.1 of this report.

QQI's Core QA Guidelines (2016, page 11) require a provider to have a system of governance in place where 'this governance structure enforces separation of responsibilities between those who produce/develop material and those who approve it. Included in the governance structures are groups or units which (1) make decision and (11) approve them'.

For new courses a training needs analysis is carried out by Iona's Programme Review and Evaluation Board, followed by the design of content, which entails utilising internal expertise or consulting with external experts and practitioners. Tutors who are involved in course design do not review the content. The Programme Leadership and Assessment Committee devise assessment material for courses. The course is approved by the Academic Quality Council and subsequently sent to QQI.

Proposals for courses can come from various sources, including tutors and current clients. The provider engages with stakeholders and learners and seeks feedback to identify any gaps in industry demands. The panel heard from a number of tutors, who spoke enthusiastically about their interaction with learners and emphasised a learner centred approach to training as a priority.

QQI's Core QA Guidelines (2016, page 17) require a provider to include 'fair recognition of education and training qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning'.

Prior to the panel visit, the panel were provided with detailed additional clarification around the RPL process implemented at Iona. The RPCL (Recognition of Prior Certified Learning) mechanism is more frequently utilised at Iona, for learners that have been certified by another awarding body and wish to apply for an exemption on a QQI course. To date the RPEL (Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning) system has been implemented for one learner only. The provider is confident they have managed the RPL process across awarding bodies well.

The panel noted new legislation requirements for childcare will be implemented from September 2021. This regulatory change will require providers to review their suite of courses to ensure they are compliant. Iona College has had discussions with other private providers delivering ECCE awards to agree a process of developing a shared curriculum for the Early Learning and Care (ELC) awards. The College acknowledged that its experience of RPEL is labour intensive. It will consider streamlining its approach if the need arises following the implementation of the ELC awards.



In relation to a proposed new ELC course with a shared curriculum, the College acknowledges it will need guidance on how its module by module delivery format will work within the new structure. The College will seek clarification and guidance once the framework is in place.

#### **4 STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

##### ***Panel Findings:***

The panel is satisfied overall the QA guidelines under this criterion have been met. Prior to the online visit, the panel were provided with additional information around the tutor recruitment process. The College employs three core full time staff. The policy on Staff Recruitment, Management and Development is included in the draft QA Manual (QA, page 79).

Positions can be advertised on the Iona College Facebook page, in the Independent Tutors Ireland Group, or with recruitment agencies such as Indeed.ie. All tutors are employed with a Contract for Service. Iona has an established relationship with its bank of tutors, many of whom have a long term connection with the College. Tutors are employed for their academic and industry experience.

A detailed induction process is provided for all tutors and the tutor handbook outlines roles and responsibilities. At the end of each course management seek feedback from tutors. Communication between management and tutors is both formal and informal. Management will visit classes to review tutor/learner interaction. Tutors are encouraged to interact with their peers for advice and review of teaching practices. They may also consult with senior assessors and management for advice.

As contracted staff, tutors are responsible for their own CPD, however if specialist upskilling or training is required in relation to delivery of a particular course, the College can provide financial support towards this training. During the online visit, the panel heard from tutors who articulated their enthusiasm for the ethos and approach to teaching and learning. The policy on Staff Development is included in their draft QA Manual (QA, page 83).

**5 TEACHING AND LEARNING*****Panel Findings:***

The panel is satisfied overall Iona College's teaching and learning methodology complies with QQI guidelines in this respect.

The College's philosophy towards teaching and learning is detailed in its Promoting a Learning Ethos policy, included in the draft QA Manual (QA, page 85).

During the online panel visit, the panel engaged with tutoring staff who outlined their pedagogical approach to teaching and learning. Tutors are committed to creating a positive experience for learners. Many learners are mature adults and a reciprocal approach to teaching is embraced, with continual dialogue encouraged. Tutors are cognisant of their learner profile, some of whom may be early school leavers returning to education, have particular requirements or have different learning styles. Courses delivered are heavily weighted towards providing practical hands-on experience for learners, whose ultimate aim will be finding employment in their chosen discipline area.

Work placement is an important part of the learning experience. The College has developed a strong network of potential employers across their domain of delivery. Feedback from clients has been productive, with many learners employed as paid staff before the completion of their placements.

Staff training days are arranged to ensure consistency of delivery across courses. Tutors are encouraged to engage in peer review and sit in on colleagues' classes. Monitoring of delivery is carried out by senior management with unannounced class visits.

The College delivers training in a variety of venues. The training co-ordinator will check all external venues to ensure the learning environment meets the required standard and is compliant with health and safety regulations.

In response to the Covid pandemic, course delivery went completely online. This is envisaged as a temporary mode of delivery and Iona does not envisage extending the scope of its provision to offer blended learning in the long term. A priority for Iona was to ensure consistency for learners in the virtual space. The College consulted with QQI for advice on ensuring the academic integrity of online delivery. Tutors continue to interact with learners on a daily basis to maintain personal contact. Students are encouraged to provide feedback on their experience. The use of flipcharts has proved popular with learners, as a visual reference. A proposal from a tutor resulted in outline documents for all assessments being developed, with clear step by step details on what was required. Proctoring of online assessments takes place and there is 100% cross moderation of assessments.

The College's Teaching and Learning policy and procedures are included in the draft QA Manual (QA, page 89).

**6 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS*****Panel Findings:***

The panel is satisfied overall that QQI guidelines for this criterion have been adhered to by Iona College. Prior to the online visit, the panel were provided with additional information around repeat assessments, cross moderation and practical assessments. This information was provided in a timely matter.

The College has demonstrated experience in writing assessments within their discipline areas. A senior tutor who is an SME will develop assessments for the module they teach.

The policy on the Assessment process is included in the draft QA Manual (QA, page 111). All assessments are graded by a team of senior assessors, with a focus on confirming that the learner has met all learning outcomes. Grading is followed by cross moderation of results to ensure consistency and to fine tune any disparity. Assessments are then sent to both internal and external experts for review and verification. Once agreed the results are sent to the Results Approval Panel for sign off.

Practical assessments that take place in the workplace are not normally recorded. However during the Covid pandemic, practical assessments are completed online via Zoom and the assessment is recorded with the tutor observing and completing the skills sheet. The learner also provides a written account of the assessment and the work is assessed at a time convenient to both tutor and learner.

Repeat assessments can be facilitated depending on the activity. Repeat assessment for portfolios, projects, assignments and learner records will be capped at 50% for the particular module.

Security for submission of assessments is built into the College's technology. Personal e-mail addresses are not part permitted in the submission process. Learners submit their work directly to the assessor's Iona e-mail address. The assessor then inputs the information directly on to Smartsheet. Access to Smartsheet is password protected. Tutors only have access to information on their own learner class. A system of photo ID is also in place to ensure a match with the user.

The learner handbook provides information on how learners may appeal their grades. The Learner Appeals Policy details the process in the draft QA Manual (QA, page 131).



## 7 SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

### ***Panel Findings:***

The panel was satisfied overall that supports and facilities available to learners meet QA requirements as defined by QQI.

Iona College employs a pastoral and holistic approach to learner support. The College has an increasing diversity of learners, with applicants from more than twenty five countries. Social and cultural diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion are promoted. Supports are available for learners with specific needs, for example visual impairment, early school leavers, physical disability or applicants with literacy and numeracy challenges.

The College is currently developing an Integrated Learner Support system, which will come into effect from July 2021. A centralised Learner Support and Advice leaflet will ensure the full range of learner supports are communicated across all courses, from induction through to final certification.

Learner representation on committees is encouraged. Feedback from the learner's point of view helps to inform course delivery, review and monitoring.

Payment plans are offered to learners to help with the cost of their training. A pay as you go system is also available. Learners are made aware of other financial supports they may access, for example Technical Support Grants.

The providers draft QA Manual includes policies for;

Reasonable Accommodation (QA, page 117)

Complaints Policy (QA page 118)

Learner Appeals Policy (QA, page 131)

Support for Learners (QA, page 133)

Learner Information (QA, page 159)



## 8 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

### ***Panel Findings:***

The panel is overall satisfied that Information and Data Management at Iona College is compliant with QQI criterion.

In relation to the retention of records, the panel offered a piece of Specific Advice for the College to consider. This is detailed in Section 7.2 of this report.

Policies for the control, storage, protection and security of data are included in the draft QA Manual;

- Information and Data Management (QA, page 136)
- Information Systems (QA, page 137)
- Records Maintenance and Retention Policy (QA, page 144)
- Data Protection and Freedom of Information (QA, page 151)
- Data Disposal Policy (QA, page 154)

The Director of Learning and Development is the nominated Data Controller. The College has implemented a new online information management system. Smartsheet is a bespoke software application that was introduced in response to the Covid pandemic. All learner information is now stored on this facility.

Access to the Learner Information System is managed by the Training Coordinator, as the nominated Data Processor. Log-in to the system is protected with a password, and depending on what information is required, users have different levels of access.

**9 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION****Panel Findings:**

QQI's Core Guidelines (2016, page 25) require a provider ensures all public information relating to its operations is 'clear, accurate, objective, up to date and easily accessible'.

The panel is generally satisfied Iona College is in compliance with QA requirements in this regard, but had a concern around published information regarding the timeframes for learner completion of courses.

The College's Public Information policy is included in the draft QA Manual (QA, page 157). The policy is informed by the Communications and Customer Service policy.

The panel made it a Condition (see Section 6.1) that the information for the public on the courses available needs to be clear. While the courses are advertised as full awards and suggest a timeframe for completion, the courses are delivered on a module-by-module basis, with no specific time frame for completion. Accuracy of information will ensure that applicants are aware of what they are signing up for. The description, including branding, of the awards should comply with the relevant legislation, for example an ITECH award, QQI award etc.

**10 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING (incl. Apprenticeships)****Panel Findings:**

The panel is satisfied that QQI's core guidelines have been met by Iona College under this requirement.

Iona has indicated it is not involved in any collaborative provision with other providers. As outlined earlier under criterion 4.1.4(a) Iona is contracted as a third provider to deliver training on behalf of LMETB and CMETB. A formal Contract for Service is in place for this provision.

Iona's policy on Other Parties Involved in Education and Training (QA Manual, page 162) details the external stakeholders Iona engage with, and sets out the criteria for selecting external examiners and authenticators.

The College enjoys good relationships with stakeholders and clients, who provide feedback which is utilised by Iona in responding to industry needs. Engagement with stakeholders and peers provides an opportunity to benchmark course content, to ensure currency and relevancy in the sector.



## 11 SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

### **Panel Findings:**

The panel was satisfied that the College's SER process conforms to QQI's criterion for this aspect of QA, which stipulates that the purpose of the self-evaluation process is to 'review, evaluate and report on the education, training, research and related services provided by the provider and the quality assurance system and procedures which underpin these'. (QQI Core Guidelines, (2016) page 27).

The College completed a Self-Evaluation Review at the end of 2020. A survey was conducted involving stakeholders, tutors, learners, external authenticators and the College client base – nursing homes, ETBs etc. The SER report was compiled by an external expert and will be published on the College website.

The implementation of a Quality Improvement Plan, with fifteen actions resulted from the review process. Short, medium and long term goals were established. Issues for review, development and enhancement include:

#### Short term

Completion rates, developing a work experience guide, corrective action for the complaints log and streamlining Survey Monkey.

#### Medium term

Compliance audits, integrated learner supports, career guidance and information around funding.

#### Long term

Risk assessment, links to other providers for learner progression and handbooks linked to approved course content for easy navigation.

Iona has procedures in place for Programme Monitoring and Review, these are included in the draft QA Manual (QA, page 77). A suite of evaluation and feedback forms helps the College respond to and address any issues.

Internal audits are conducted annually and external audits are conducted bi-annually.

### **Evaluation of draft QA Procedures - Overall panel findings**

At the conclusion of the online site visit, the panel was satisfied that Iona College has met QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines criteria. As a consequence, the panel recommends that the QQI approve the College's QA procedures, with two Conditions of QA Approval. These are detailed in Section 6.1 of this report.

The panel also issued an item of Specific Advice for Iona to consider. This is detailed in Section 7.1 of this report.



## **Part 6 Conditions of QA Approval**

### **6.1 Conditions of QA Approval**

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | The College needs to establish specific criteria for applicants for each course, including the level of language proficiency.  |
| 2. | The information for the public on the courses available needs to be clear and transparent. While the courses are advertised as full awards and suggest a time frame for completion, the courses are delivered on a module by module basis, with no specific time frame for completion. Accuracy of information will ensure that applicants are aware of what they are signing up for. The description, including branding, of the awards should comply with the relevant legislation, for example an ITECH award, QQI award etc. |

## **Part 7 Mandatory Changes to QA Procedures and Specific Advice**

### **7.1 Mandatory Changes – not applicable.**

### **7.2 Specific Advice**

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | The data retention policy should be amended to comply with current data protection legislation and the term ‘minimum retention period’ deleted. |
|----|---|

## **Part 8 Proposed Approved Scope of Provision for this provider**

<b>NFQ Level(s) – min and max</b>	<b>Award Class(es)</b>	<b>Discipline areas</b>
Minimum: NFQ Level 5	Minor, Major	Healthcare, childcare, social care, supervisory management
Maximum: NFQ Level 6		



**QQI**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

## **Part 9      Approval by Chair of the Panel**

This report of the panel is approved and submitted to QQI for its decision on the approval of the draft Quality Assurance Procedures of Iona College.

Name:                      David Treacy

Date:                        31<sup>st</sup> May 2021



## **Annexe 1: Documentation provided to the Panel in the course of the Evaluation**

Document	Related to
CRO Certificate of Registration	Legal and Compliance Requirements (Part 4.1)
Statutory Declaration	Legal and Compliance Requirements (Part 4.1)
Insurance Cover Note	Legal and Compliance Requirements and Resource , Governance and Structural Requirements (Parts 4.1 and 4.2)
Insurance Policy Documentation	Legal and Compliance Requirements and Resource , Governance and Structural Requirements (Parts 4.1 and 4.2)
E Tax Clearance	Legal and Compliance Requirements and Resource , Governance and Structural Requirements (Parts 4.1 and 4.2)
Accountant's Clarification Letter	Resource , Governance and Structural Requirements (Part 4.2)
Accountant's Commercial Viability Statement	Resource , Governance and Structural Requirements (Part 4.2)
Signed Financial Accounts 2017 – 2019 inclusive	Resource , Governance and Structural Requirements (Part 4.2)
Contract for Services with Rutledge Training and Recruitment	Legal and Compliance Requirements and Resource , Governance and Structural Requirements (Parts 4.1 and 4.2)
Organisation Chart	Resource , Governance and Structural Requirements (Part 4.2)
Re-engagement Application Form containing Gap Analysis.	All Sections
Draft Quality Assurance Manual	All Sections
Policy and Procedures Manual	All Sections
Learner Handbook	All Sections
Tutor Handbook	All Sections
Additional Information and Clarifications, including virtual presentation and site tour	Various Sections

**Annexe 2: Provider staff met in the course of the Evaluation**

Name	Role/Position
Agnes Loftus	Managing Director
Helen Macken	Director of Learning and Development
Carolann Clarke	Training Coordinator
Orla Griffin	Senior Assessor/Tutor
Jeanette Smith	Senior Tutor
Gabrielle Grant	Senior Tutor

*Appendix: Provider response to the Reengagement Panel Report*



Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)  
26-27 Denzille Lane  
Dublin 2  
D02 P266

2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2021

**Re: Re Engagement Panel Report-Assessment of Capacity and Approval of QA Procedures**

To whom it may concern,

Iona College received the Re Engagement Panel Report draft on 21<sup>st</sup> of May and reviewed it for any factual inaccuracies as requested. We have returned same with minor changes noted.

Iona College would like to offer our sincere thanks to the panel for their time, expertise and constructive advice during the process and we are extremely pleased with the outcome. Iona College found the panel to be engaging and respectful at all times and it was a very positive experience. It will be of enormous benefit to the college going forward to have the governance structure, policies and procedures in place.

We have reviewed the specific advice and recommendations given to enable approval by PAEC on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June.

Iona College would also take this opportunity to thank QQI for their support and professionalism throughout this process. Walter, Deirdre, Marie and staff, your continued support and availability to offer advice has been particularly important throughout this challenging year.

We look forward to hearing the outcome of the Programme and Awards Executive Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Macken

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Helen Macken , Director

Agnes Loftus

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Agnes Loftus , Director