Annual Quality Report
(Open Training College - OTC)
Reporting Period 2019-2020

[Open Training College]

2021

Annual Quality Report
(Open Training College - OTC)
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2019-2020

PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report (AQR;** formerly AIQR) forms part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) quality assurance (QA) framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The AQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's internal quality system. It provides QQI with assurance that internal QA procedures have been established and are being implemented consistent with regulatory requirements.

The AQR, particularly part A, should assist with **document management** in the institutional review process and will facilitate institutions in providing review teams with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. It is an important part of the evidence base considered by external **review teams** as part of QQI's CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

Each AQR is **published in full on QQI's website**, providing transparency on the HEIs' assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders. (As such, institutions should ensure that their submissions do not contain any data that they consider to be commercially sensitive.) Collectively, the AQRs comprise a single national repository of quality assurance practice in Irish higher education institutions.

Each year, QQI produces a synthesis report of the key themes highlighted across the AQRs, primarily arising from Part B of the reports.

CONTENTS

PREFACE 3

Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template 6

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM 7

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG) 7

Introduction and Overview of Institution 8

1.0 Internal QA Framework 11

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality 11

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision 17

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery 19

The following sub-headings correspond to SECTION 3: "Programmes of Education and Training" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document: 19

2.1 Programme Development and Approval 19

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification 19

Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here: 19

The following sub-heading correspond to SECTION 5: "Teaching and Learning" and SECTION 6: "Assessment of Learners" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document (QuAD, V3,2): 20

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards 20

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment 20

Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here: 20

3.0 Learner Resources and Support 23

This heading corresponds to SECTION 7: "Support for Learners" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document (QuAD, V3,2). 23

Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here: 23

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes 25

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support 26

This heading corresponds to SECTION 4: "Staff Recruitment, Management and Development" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document (QuAD, V3,2). 26

Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here: 26

6.0 Information and Data Management 28

This heading corresponds to SECTION 8: “Information and Data Management” in OTC’s Quality Assurance Document (QuAD, V3,2). 28
Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here: 28

7.0 Public Information and Communication 30
This heading corresponds to SECTION 9: “Public Information and Communication” in OTC’s Quality Assurance Document (QuAD, V3,2). 30
Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here: 30

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review 39
This heading corresponds to SECTION 11: “Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review” in OTC’s Quality Assurance Document (QuAD, V3,2). 39
Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here: 39

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties 41
9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies 41
9.2 Collaborative Provision 42
9.3 Articulation Agreements 42

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM 44

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments 45
1.1 Strategic QA Updates 45
1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR 47
1.3 Governance and Management 48
1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review 49

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts 50
2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity 52

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period 53
3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives 53
3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods 54
3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period 54

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies 55

Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template[1]

Legislation

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended)
- Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 (as amended)
- Technological Universities Act 2018
- Universities Act 1997

QQI Documents

Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

- Core QAG
- Sector-specific QAG for Independent/Private Providers
- Sector-specific QAG for Designated Awarding Bodies
- Sector-specific QAG for Institutes of Technology
- Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes
- Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes
- Topic-specific QAG for Blended Learning

Other QQI Policy Documents

- QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012
- QQI's Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015
- QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression, 2015

Other National/International References

- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)
- IHEQN Guidelines on Collaborative Provision
- National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland
- Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019
- HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education
- The Salzburg Principles
- The Salzburg II Recommendations
- SOLAS Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices
- UN Sustainable Development Goals

[1] These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - *Internal QA Framework*	**2.1**	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	**2.3**	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*				
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
5.0 - *Staff Recruitment, Development and Support*	**2.4**	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - *Teaching, Learning and Assessment*	**2.5**	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - *Learner Resources and Supports*	**2.7**	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - *Information and Data Management*	**2.8**	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - *Public Information and Communication*	**2.9**	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - *Programme Delivery and Development*	**2.10**	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*				
9.0 - *Details of Arrangements with Third Parties*			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
2.0 - *Programme Development and Delivery*	**2.11**	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - *Monitoring and Periodic Review*			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - *QA of Research Activities and Programmes*	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for the Open Training College - OTC for the reporting period 1 September 2019 – 31 August 2020.

It is to be submitted by Friday, 26 March 2021.

The AQR has been approved by OTC's Academic Council (AC) and is submitted by Ronnie Harrison, Head of Quality & Academic Affairs.

Overview of Institution

The Open Training College (OTC) is a section of St. Michaels' House (SMH), Dublin and a third level Institution offering programmes of education and training to staff who work in the disability, health-related, non-profit, community and voluntary sectors nationally. St. Michaels' House was established in 1955 and since then has grown to become the largest provider of services to people with intellectual disabilities, and their families, in the greater Dublin region and the third largest provider nationally. (See www.smh.ie).St. Michael's House operates under the auspices of the Health Services Executive (HSE) and is directly funded by it through an annual service plan.

In the early 1990s, St. Michael's House was providing extensive education and training to staff and sought to formalise and accredit the programmes delivered. To this end made an application for (non-funded) designation as a third level educational institution to the then Minister of Education. On achieving this designation St. Michael's House set up the Open Training College (OTC) in 1992 as the operational mechanism for the delivery of accredited training.

As part of the designation as a third level institute, St. Michael's House was required to offer the programmes and training it developed to staff in all staff employed in disability services nationally. To achieve this objective the organisation was innovative in developing a model of delivery based on a distance learning approach, but with significant adult-friendly supports built in. This model is known as the Supported Open Learning (SOL) Model and has been operated successfully by the College since 1992. More recently other educational providers and educational researchers have referred to this model as 'blended learning'.

The College administration offices are located in Goatstown, Dublin 14 and programme delivery is national (through online and regional locations). The College employs 14 core staff and 15 associate/contract teaching staff plus a range of workshop presenters, consultants, module/topic authors and specialist topic experts. The College budget is generated through student fees, project work, work for St. Michaels' House and tender activity. College awards were initially validated by the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) 1992-2003, followed by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) 2004-2012 and then Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI) 2012-to date. The QA arrangements with QQI (and its former iterations) pertains to St. Michaels' House trading as (T/A) the Open Training College. St. Michael's House also has a separate structure which provides access to Awards at levels 1-3 on the NFQ to adult service users.

The College's Mission Statement is as follows:
"*The Open Training College is committed to offering staff in the disability, health-related, non-profit, community and voluntary sectors, learning opportunities that are accredited, accessible and embody best practice*".

Process for Development and approval of AQR

OTC took part in the pilot AIQR submission for independent providers in 2020, submitting a report for the academic year 2018-19. This report is published on the College website here:
https://opentrainingcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AIQR-OTC-Part-2-FINAL-May2020.pdf

As then, the following process was used for compilation of this AQR for 2021, covering the academic year 2019-20.

The feedback mechanisms identified in the academic governance and corporate governance structures ensure timely information is gathered and acted upon, in order to deal with arising issues and/or invoke enhancements. These include:

- Regular student and tutor surveys;
- The sub-committee structure under the Academic Council (AC);
- A separate corporate management structure;
- End-of-year and graduate surveys;
- National and international benchmarking against similar programmes/providers as part of new programme development and programme re/validation;
- Continual Student/Personal Tutor contact;
- The organisational structure and reporting lines therein;
- Regular, recorded staff and project team meetings;
-External monitoring and review by QQI and its representative panels.

The College's Information Management System (IMS) offers ease of access for users, including student online registration. Many processes, including results processing for QQI's QBS, have been streamlined. This allows for easier access to information such as real-time analysis of student progression and results.

External Examiner reports provide vital feedback in the area of the most important impacts of enhancements and their findings are recorded in the annual QA reports for the relevant suite of programmes (e.g. Applied Management/Social Care), along with end-of-year student feedback and the improvement plans of the programme board. Therefore, these improvements can be effectively tracked by the boards using the QA reports as a central reference point, which intersects with the real time reports which are generated by the College's IMS.

OTC offers the Supported Open Learning (SOL) model as the basis of its blended learning for students. In recent years, there has been continued enhancement of this model, including immediate feedback on workshops and strengthened resources (including library resources) and increased conditionality within the online delivery of programmes.

All of these inputs are gathered through the "Governance of Academic QA" (outlined at Figure 3 below) and the Annual Quality Report is compiled by the Head of Quality and Academic Affairs. The draft report is circulated to the Academic Council (AC) for final feedback before that body approves a final version for submission to QQI.

Following submission, the AQR is published on the College's website and a dialogue meeting is subsequently arranged with QQI to garner feedback and recommendations for future reporting.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

Following Re-engagement with QQI in 2018, and the issuing of the panel report on 15th January 2019, the Open Training College (OTC) took part in the AIQR pilot initiative for Independent providers. That report, for the academic year 2018-19, has been published on the OTC website and may be found here:

https://opentrainingcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AIQR-OTC-Part-2-FINAL-May2020.pdf

As noted therein, the majority of 'Specific Advices' from the Re-engagement panel's report had been met within the 2018-19 academic year. However, the following were identified as outstanding for completion in 2019-20:

- "Develop clearer step-by-step procedures for all policies mentioned in the Quality Assurance document."
- "Publish a Blended Learning Strategy."

The former requirement was met in 2019-20 and is published here:
https://opentrainingcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Addendum-ADDITIONAL-PROCEDURES-QuAD-V3.2-Final.pdf

The latter requirement was also met in the current reporting period and is published here:
https://opentrainingcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Blended-and-Online-Learning-Strategy-Final-Website.pdf

The completion of these re-engagement items was notified to QQI and the relevant panel. Moreover, in developing the 'Blended Learning Strategy' the College also concurrently developed a strategy for **fully online learning,** as this had been noted as an objective for OTC for the period in question. This combined strategy is published as "Blended Learning & Online Learning Strategy" (V2.0, April 2020), as above.

In the absence of statutory guidelines for fully online learning, the College referred to ENQA's – "Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision", 2018. These considerations were integrated, as "indicators", into each section of OTC's core QA Document (QuAD), an updated version (V3.2) of which was published in June 2020 and can be found here:
https://opentrainingcollege.com/quality-assurance/

For ease of access for all stakeholders, the QuAD is also published in individual sections, which correspond to the Core QAG sub-section titles, and individual policies are also published and presented, at the following respective links:
https://opentrainingcollege.com/quality-assurance-sections
and
https://opentrainingcollege.com/quality-assurance-policies/

The individual sections of the QuAD can be navigated to directly through the following links:

OTC – Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) – Policies and Procedures Version 3.2 (June 2020)

Individual Sections:

Section 1 - Governance and Management of Quality

Section 2 - Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

Section 3 - Programmes of Education and Training

Section 4 - Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

Section 5 - Teaching and Learning

Section 6 - Assessment of Learners

Section 7 - Support for Learners

Section 8 - Information and Data Management

Section 9 - Public Information and Communication

Section 10 - Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

Section 11 - Self- Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

In relation to 'Blended and Online Learning', the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the area titled here:

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- Inclusion of the development of the College's Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) delivery, as part of the College's overall strategic plan
- Updating on BL/OL developments and initiatives through the College's Governance structures
- Setting of an annual budget for BL/OL
- Availability of IT support and Helpdesk
- BL/OL as part of the College's overall Quality Culture
- Key quality output; student support
- BL/OL induction for all external representatives on Academic Council and its sub-committees
- Reviews of BL/OL delivery

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. Quality management arrangements for online learning provision and other non-face-to-face learning are supported by fit-for-purpose organisational infrastructure and processes.

ii. Online developments that are subject to business case approval for viability and sustainability.

iii. Appeals and complaints policies and processes which accommodate remote learning.

iv. Regulations and arrangements for Boards of Examiners and external examiners which include any additional consideration of online learning experiences.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:
(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• E-learning is part of the overall strategy for the institution's development as well as the policy for quality assurance.
• The institution uses a clearly articulated policy framework and governance structure when deciding on the adoption of new technologies to ensure the expected quality of e-learning provision.
• The institution has a clear strategy for digital innovation, e-learning being a part of it. This strategy is known within the institution at all levels and is adopted by teachers in charge of designing the curriculum.
• E-learning programmes are aligned with the institutional mission.
• The institution takes into account the European, national, and local policies, as well as ethical and legal considerations when designing its policy for quality assurance and its internal quality assurance system.

It is noted that the "Indicators" with regard to fully online learning are not seen as being equivalent to statutory guidelines but are a temporary measure to be utilised for monitoring and development activities while such official guidelines are awaited, in the next reporting period, 2020-21.

Academic Quality Overview

The following diagram gives an overview of the Academic Quality system at OTC:

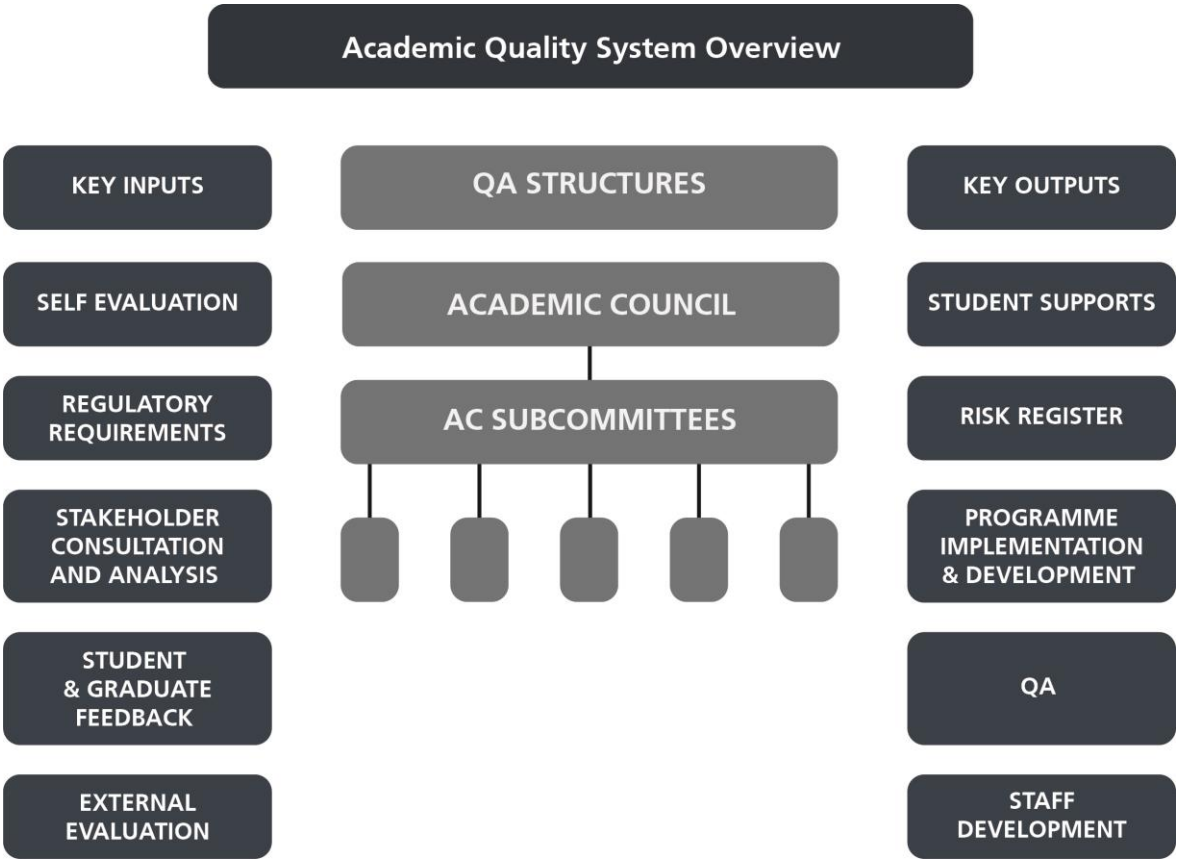

Figure 1: Academic Quality System Overview

The Academic Council and Sub-committee structure is further represented as follows:

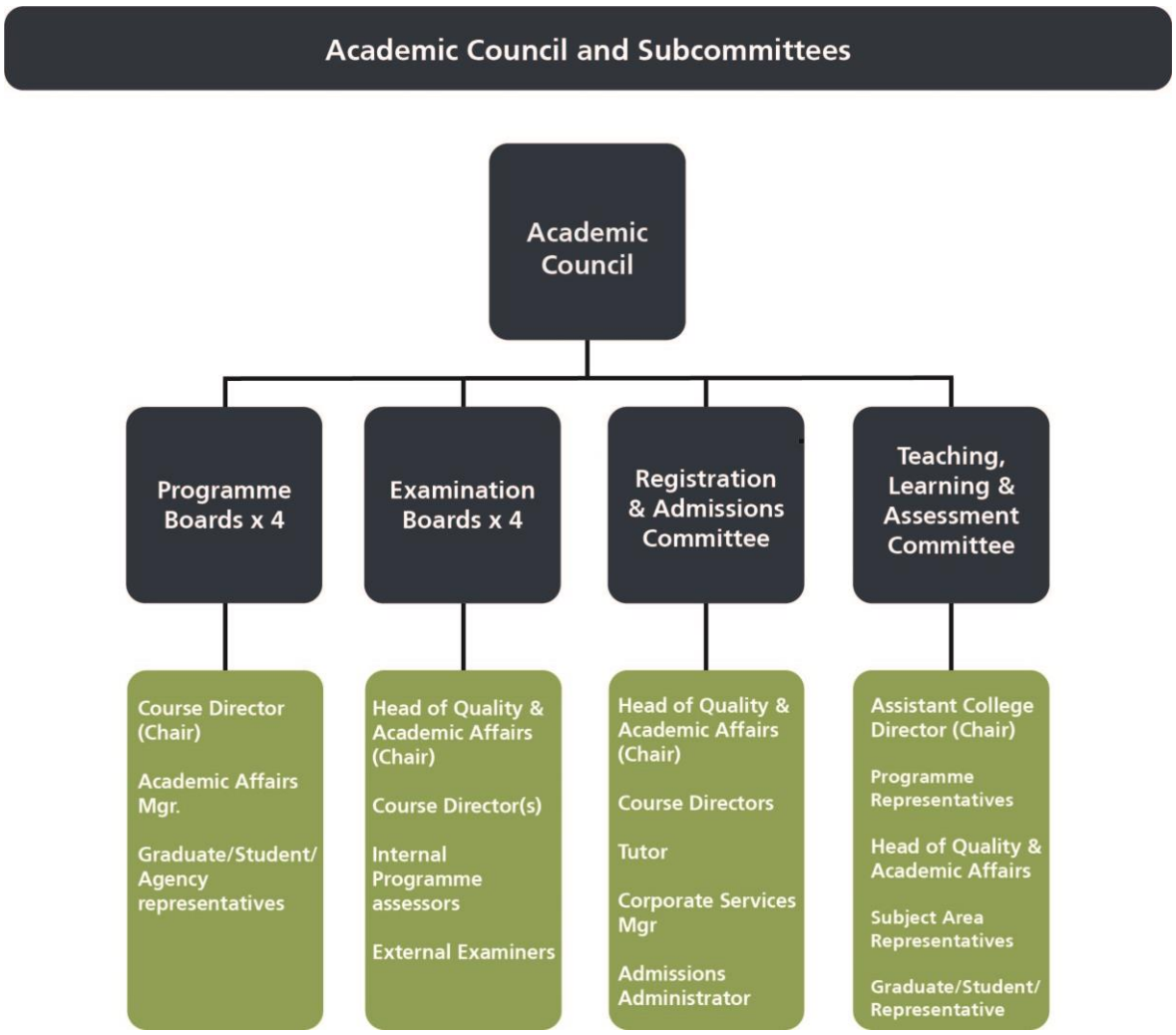

Figure 2: Academic Council and Subcommittees Structure

Governance of Academic QA is shown in the following diagram:

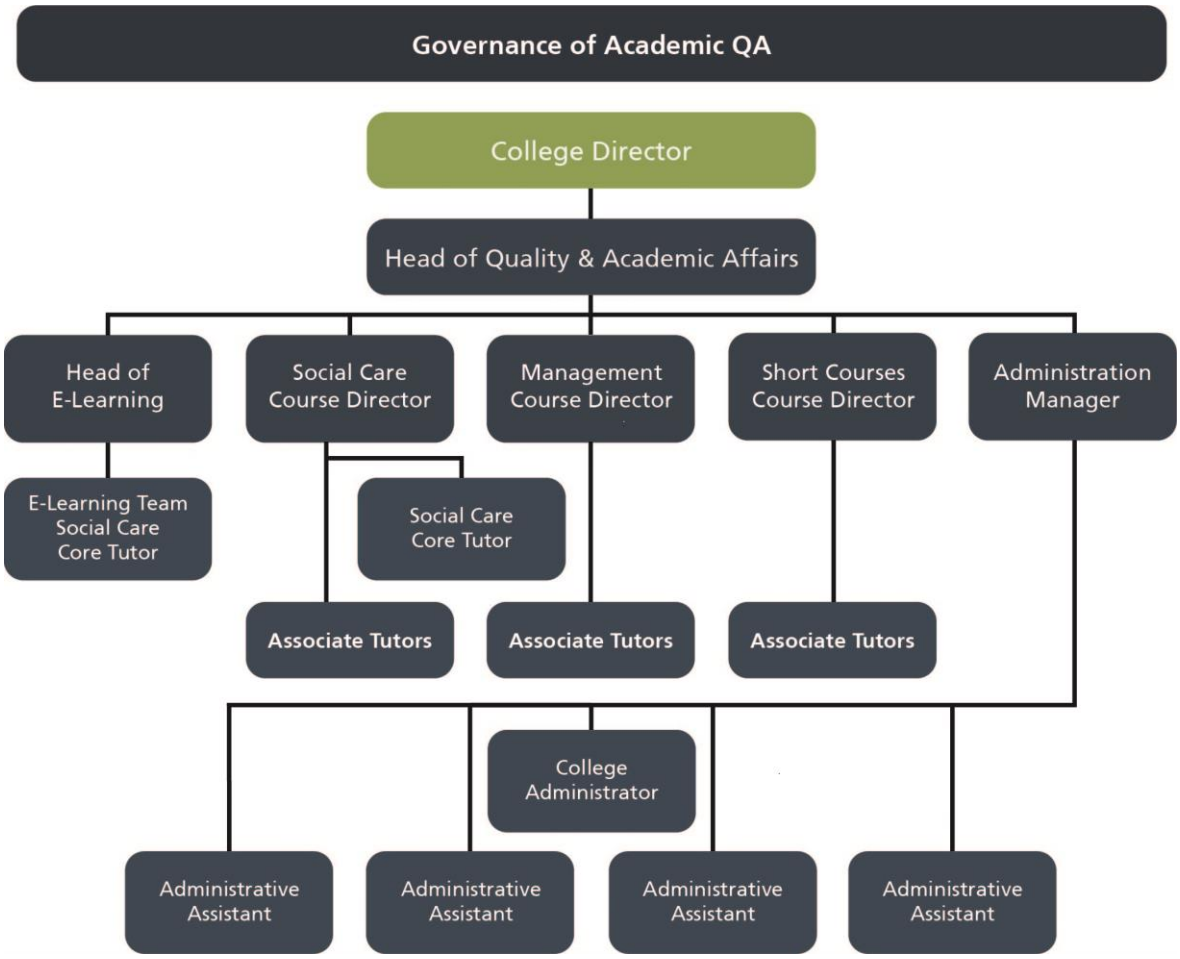

Figure 3: Governance of Academic QA

[Source: QuAD V 3.2, June 2020]

Representation of learners and external stakeholders

Learners are represented at all stages and levels of decision-making processes within the College, including as follows:

- Class representatives;
- Stakeholders consulted in programme design;
- Student and Graduate representatives on Programme Boards;
- Student representative on Academic Council.

Additional external stakeholders consulted on areas such as programme design or strategic decisions include Employers, Placement Agencies, Graduates, St. Michael's House (parent organisation), QQI, the National Forum, IASCE, Peer Colleges, Peers, HECA and HECA's Academic Enhancement Forum (HAQEF).

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

OTC has a Collaborative Provision Policy in place, agreed with QQI and previously used. However, there was no delivery of programmes through collaborative provision during the reporting period. Transnational Provision is also not currently relevant to the OTC.

In relation to 'Blended and Online Learning', the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the area titled here:

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- Collaborative provisions include all Blended Learning and Online Learning (BL/OL) considerations
- External referencing to and representation on bodies such as the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education (NFETL –HE) and the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA)
- Cross-institutional peer relationships for networking and collaboration
- Joint projects
- External stakeholder consultations and reviews

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. The use to be made of external consultants and experts in online provision, including in critical review and appraisal of draft learning resources.

ii. Arrangements for assuring compliance with any legal or regulatory obligations are appropriate to the blended learning and online learning context.

iii. Arrangements for collaboration or partnership as set out in the Core Statutory QA Guidelines facilitate any additional responsibilities to be specified for learners in a blended learning context.

iv. Intellectual property rights and software licensing issues are addressed in the development and delivery of online learning.

v. Where a provider is relying on a second provider, partner or collaborator to provide aspects of blended learning such as online learning, a number of aspects are covered by the internal QA procedures.

vi. Formal written agreements are in place and clearly specify the respective rights and division of responsibilities, including in the case of data protection for those processing data.

vii. Learners and staff are made aware which organisation carries legal responsibility for the delivery or support of defined sections of the blended learning provision.

viii. (Where appropriate) information about the respective responsibilities of the provider and any third parties – such as local study centres or administrative offices - that may be involved in supporting the provider's online learning.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:
(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Authors of learning materials are relevant for the subject. Learning materials are reviewed and updated periodically.
• Site visit − The site visit takes place at a location where most of the institution's technical infrastructure is situated. − Interviews with stakeholders include representatives of all groups involved (i.e. teaching staff, tutors, students, technical staff, administration, alumni, employers, etc.). − The institution provides reviewers with access to the VLE, classrooms, e-library, etc.
• The criteria for the composition of expert groups includes e-learning competence/ experience.
• The QA agency holds trainings for all experts before the site visit. Special attention is given to characteristics of e-learning.

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

The following sub-headings correspond to SECTION 3: "Programmes of Education and Training" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document:

2.1 Programme Development and Approval
2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here:

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- BL/OL focus as part of Programme Review/Revalidation/Validation
- External review
- Informing of External Panel Members on BL/OL
- Induction of external academic Council and Sub-committee members re. BL/OL
- Design of programmes around BL/OL delivery
- Equality of access
- Information provided to prospective learners on BL/OL requirements
- Evaluations and surveys relating to BL/OL
- BL/OL expertise on programme development committees

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. Organisational structures and processes ensure that technology is in the service of pedagogy.

ii. All materials and media (for example audio-visual, printed or digitised assets) used to deliver online learning are subject to informed peer comment at one or more draft stages and allow for the incorporation of feedback into subsequent and final versions of the learning resources.

iii. The programme as a whole is intended to achieve learning outcomes. Online learning is effectively integrated into the programme for this purpose. Overall programme design is informed by best practice in curriculum design.

iv. Curriculum development processes with an appropriate representation of subject, educational technology, instructional design and other key internal stakeholder expertise. For example, specialist student support advisers and administrators, library and information professionals play significant roles in effective online learning as well as the teaching staff who will support learners.

v. Developments are subject-led rather than technology-led.

vi. A focus on the delivery of an interactive learning experience for each module delivered online and academic content appropriate to the unit of study.

vii. Information for individuals developing online learning modules to ensure the use of the platform the institution has committed to and that they are bound by the institutional policies, systems, hardware and processes for online learning.

viii. Approval and validation processes for blended learning programmes including online learning modules are appropriate and fit-for-purpose.

ix. Testing of delivery mechanisms for online modules or parts of modules. For example, confirming that (where appropriate) it is possible to access learning on a private computer or on a mobile device or other as appropriate.

x. Programmes are fully designed before being offered to learners.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:
(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Authors of learning materials are relevant for the subject. Learning materials are reviewed and updated periodically.
• External quality assurance considers the characteristics of e-learning in regular procedures, such as innovation in teaching and learning processes (institutional or programme evaluation).

The following sub-heading correspond to SECTION 5: "Teaching and Learning" and SECTION 6: "Assessment of Learners" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document (QuAD, V3,2):

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards
2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here:

SECTION 5: "Teaching and Learning":

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- The Supported Open Learning (SOL) Model = Blended Learning (BL) Model; Adapted for Online Learning (OL) only = SOL – Online Model
- Student support policy
- Student handbooks
- Staff handbook
- The Tutorial function
- Monitoring effectiveness
- An ethos that promotes learning
- Applied nature of programmes
- National and International effective practice
- Learning environments; Physical and Online

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. Blended learning providers should be particularly mindful of using a learner-centred approach, for example when using technology-enhanced/assisted learning, which may pose a challenge for some learners while creating opportunities for others.

ii. The delivery system for each online section/unit of study is fit-for-purpose.

iii. Learning and teaching practices that are informed by best practice in blended and online provision. Subject-specific and educational scholarship informs the pedagogy and instructional design.

iv. Developments are learner centred.

v. Open education resources referenced by the provider are subject to quality evaluation.

vi. Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms are appropriate, fit-for-purpose, monitored and reviewed.

vii. Learners can test and monitor their progress at appropriate points. The whole learning environment for blended learning used in conjunction with the learning resources requires active engagement by the learners.

viii. Robust arrangements for the quality assurance of learning resources, the learning environment and other learning resources.

ix. Teaching and learning resources for online learning which meet the provider's specified expectations around equality of opportunity, interactivity and the empowerment of autonomous learning.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:
(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• E-learning is part of the overall strategy for the institution's development as well as the policy for quality assurance.
• Institutional policies, structures, processes, and resources are in place to guarantee the successful teaching and learning process of students, including those with special educational needs.
• Teaching methodologies and learning activities are chosen with the aim of achieving learning outcomes.
• Learning materials fit the pedagogical model and facilitate student learning.
• The technical infrastructure is aligned with the teaching methodology, learning activities, and e-assessment methods, and it eases the teaching and learning process.
• Students are trained in how to appropriately paraphrase, cite, and reference, regarding both online and print sources.
• The institution gives advice on appropriate online behaviour (netiquette rules).
• Students are informed about the workload and pedagogical model of the e-learning programme.
• The institution has a policy and procedure in place for recognition of prior learning.

SECTION 6: "Assessment of Learners":

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- External examiner induction
- Approved programme schedules; balance of blended learning (BL) elements
- Additional supports for Online learners
- BL/OL induction for students as part of Access
- Formative online assessment and summative submission
- Feedback from Tutors/Markers
- Plagiarism policy and procedures; use of Turnitin
- Use of technology in External examination process
- Assessment strategies take full account of BL/OL
- BL/OL expertise of examination boards

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. Tracking learner progress and achievement, marking and returning assessments, providing feedback to learners and assessors are just a few of the areas where existing policies, systems and processes are unlikely to be fit-for-purpose in an online learning context.

ii. Appeals and complaints policies and processes which accommodate remote learning.

iii. Arrangements for online assessment including pre-assessment, the conduct of assessment and marking/grading which are robustly tested and invoke confidence.

iv. Robust and consistent systems and processes across the organisation to manage the submission, receipt, marking and return of assessments.

v. Include assessment practice and process that are published and provide consistent, equitable and fair arrangements for the setting of, marking of and return of feedback on assessment tasks. Learners are provided with consistent, secure and reliable means for submitting work to be assessed and confirmation of receipt. There are institutional regulations and protocols to ensure confidentiality and security in feedback to individual learners on assessment, and for the recording of marks or scores.

vi. Assessment strategies with opportunities for learners to engage in formative assessment activities that will check and reinforce learning remotely.

vii. Moderation processes are in place to ensure consistency and share good practice where more than one associate is employed to support or assess more than one group of learners. Documentation of best practice examples and exchange of information among all staff is important where there is a growing knowledge base, a growing availability of additional open access resources and constant demands to update ICT skills. Provider support through structured networking is in place to facilitate this.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:
(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• The institution has a policy and code of practice to ensure academic integrity and freedom and ethical behaviour.
• The technical infrastructure is aligned with the teaching methodology, learning activities, and e-assessment methods, and it eases the teaching and learning process.
• E-assessment methods are fit for purpose, allowing students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.
• Students are aware of plagiarism rules.

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

This heading corresponds to SECTION 7: "Support for Learners" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document (QuAD, V3,2).

Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here:

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- MyOTC (Online platform-Moodle) Induction
- Academic Tutor support
- Additional supports (Assistive Technology / Reasonable accommodation etc.)
- Online library
- IT support
- E-learning consultation
- Learning & Development in Higher Education (LDHE) module
- Online facilitators
- Intervention support strategies
- Learner analytics
- Equality policy
- Complaints & Appeals
- Freedom of Information
- Monitoring, Review & Improvement of Resources & Support Services

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. The provider's arrangements for the validation of online programmes will focus on some additional issues such as: design and development mechanisms for **approving and updating learning resources**; **arrangements for student support and guidance**; and the availability and accessibility of appropriate learning resources.

ii. Specialist, reliable and accessible computer hardware and software applications are required for designing, developing and delivering online learning.

iii. There is a planned approach to staff guidance of online learners on any open education resources referenced including any intended or unintended endorsement of such resources.

iv. The infrastructure and resources required to support good quality blended learning are understood, planned, and routinely monitored and evaluated. These arrangements should take into account that, while online, learners are likely to be remote from the provider and from teachers and/or assessors. There is an institutional approach to these matters.

v. Any blended learning elements of provision have had the reliability of their delivery systems tested and signed off in advance, with confirmation that appropriate technical support and contingency plans are in place.

vi. Intellectual property rights and software licensing issues are addressed in the development and delivery of online learning.

vii. The delivery system for each online section/unit of study is fit-for-purpose.

viii. Curriculum content and student support that accommodates enhancement or updating, for example, in response to feedback or other quality assurance mechanisms. All online content is subject to approval and ongoing quality assurance. Resource planning at programme level includes a budget for the updating of content to ensure it remains current.

ix. Open education resources referenced by the provider are subject to quality evaluation.

x. All materials and media (for example audio-visual, printed or digitised assets) used to deliver online learning are subject to informed peer comment at one or more draft stages and allow for the incorporation of feedback into subsequent and final versions of the learning resources.

xi. Learners are supported to make informed choices about participating in a blended learning programme and to develop the necessary independent study skills to successfully progress towards becoming an autonomous learner. The level and nature of support available to learners is clear.

xii. Processes to ensure the delivery of any study materials direct to learners remotely through, for example, online methods or correspondence, are secure and reliable, and there is a means of confirming its safe receipt.

xiii. Deliberate steps taken to assist every learner to understand their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided and to shape their own learning experience.

xiv. Learner support for monitoring their own programmes. Every learner undertaking online learning is supported in monitoring their own progression and achievement through the provision of regular opportunities to test their knowledge and understanding, reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff and/or their peers.

xv. Appropriate interventions and mechanisms to identify learners who may be struggling with online remote learning. Learners are encouraged to complete their programme. Progress is monitored, and learners are provided with prompt and helpful comments on their progress in relation to learning guidelines and goals.

xvi. Equality of opportunity.

xvii. Arrangements that make reasonable effort to ensure blended learning experiences are accessible to all learners, including learners with disabilities.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:
(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Students are clearly informed about the e-assessment.
• Students/prospective students are informed about requirements concerning equipment, e-learning and digital skills, pre-knowledge and prerequisite subjects, and attendance.
• Learning resources: − The VLE supports a variety of methods and tools. − The technical infrastructure ensures the accessibility of the e-learning programme by students with special educational needs. − The institution defines the electronic security measures that guarantee standards of quality and information integrity and validity. − The VLE is based on non-proprietary web standards and is constantly updated to reflect technological changes. − The institution provides students with an adequate e-library and virtual labs.
• Student support: − The institution has procedures in place that cover student support, including tutoring, pedagogical, technological, and administrative elements. − Student support is offered according to the student's profile and their specific needs. − The student support reflects characteristics of e-learning. − Support for the development of learning, as well as digital skills (students are guided towards reflection, developing time management skills, etc.), is provided. − Students receive guidelines/training in using e-learning resources (VLE, e-library, etc.). − Hours of support are transparent and suit the needs of students; for instance, periods of peak demand (evenings, weekends, holidays, etc.) are considered.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

OTC does not currently provide Research Degree Programmes.

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

This heading corresponds to SECTION 4: "Staff Recruitment, Management and Development" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document (QuAD, V3,2).

Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here:

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- Relevance of Blended and Online Learning (BL/OL) expertise in staff recruitment and selection
- Acceptable usage of E-learning environment policy
- Staff induction and training
- CPD policies and procedures
- Performance management
- Evaluating impact and disseminating good practice

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. The strategies and processes for the appointment, induction, training, professional development and appraisal arrangements for teaching and support staff are appropriate and specific to blended and online learning.

ii. Staff engaged to support online learners can either demonstrate previous experience of online provision or are provided with appropriate induction and training.

iii. There is a planned approach to the appointment of (or access to) specialist staff to support the provider's blended learning strategy.

iv. There is planned close collaboration between the academic and other support personnel and specialist staff, such as teams involved in designing learning technologies and other methodologies supporting online learning.

v. also include appropriate competencies required, for example, in designing a programme, understanding the pedagogical differences within a curriculum of supporting learners in a blended learning environment, such as virtual learning environment.

vi. Planned and controlled opportunities for staff to test new or evolving technologies not currently supported by the existing policy or provider platform.

vii. Staff qualifications and experience in online learning.

viii. Arrangements for the induction and continuing professional development (CPD) of staff involved in a) the development and support of online resources; b) online teaching, where such experience is lacking; c) support services for learners.

ix. Staff induction processes for staff employed to support or assess learners are in place. Staff are appropriately inducted and trained for their role in online learning.

x. Arrangements that provide assurance that all those involved in teaching and learning or supporting learning are appropriately qualified, supported and developed to provide effective online learning. This will include the protocols for communication and facilitation of online discussions and other challenges of teaching with technology.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:
(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Teaching staff involved in designing/developing/evaluating programmes are familiar with the advantages/disadvantages of using e-learning in particular course contexts.
• The institution has defined the structure, profile, and role of the teaching staff that is aligned with the pedagogical model.
• The institution uses appropriate instruments to guarantee that the profile of the teaching staff corresponds to their duties.
• The teaching staff is trained and proficient in the use of learning technologies and e-assessment methods. There are particular training activities for new staff.
• The institution has developed procedures to identify the support requirements of the teaching staff.
• Technological and pedagogical support services for teachers are adequate, accessible, and timely.
• The teaching staff-student ratio avoids excessive workload for teachers and tutors.
• The institution has implemented appropriate procedures for recruiting and hiring teaching staff.
• The teaching staff is coordinated effectively.

6.0 Information and Data Management

This heading corresponds to SECTION 8: "Information and Data Management" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document (QuAD, V3,2).

Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here:

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- The Information Management System (IMS)
- Survey tools
- Policy and procedures for Data Protection & the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Special categories of data
- Subject Access Requests (SARs)
- Assessment, feedback and rubrics
- Management Information Systems (MIS)

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. Tracking learner progress and achievement, marking and returning assessments, and providing feedback to learners and assessors are fit-for-purpose in an online learning context.

ii. Clarity in any additional registration arrangements deemed necessary by the provider.

iii. Policies, regulations and processes (including administration) are fit-for-purpose in the context of blended learning.

iv. Arrangements for assuring compliance with any legal or regulatory obligations are appropriate to the blended learning and online learning context.

v. Clear parameters on data protection including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

vi. Mandatory training includes child protection, intellectual property and copyright, and protection for enrolled learners.

vii. A planned approach to the procurement of services (e.g. cloud services), hardware and software to support online learning and a clear policy on a common platform for approval of exceptions.

viii. Contingency arrangements in the event of platform, hardware or software failures.

ix. A student record system designed or adapted to support blended learning programmes and learners and their quality assurance.

x. There are nominated academic/professional moderators who understand and have the authority to intervene in, for example, cyber bullying that may constitute risk to learners and/or the provider.

xi. Processes for learner records are sufficient and accurately maintained, and up-to-date learner records are available for monitoring progression and achievement.

xii. Privacy laws on data protection are appropriate for all aspects of online provision. Learner concerns about the confidentiality of learner records are respected.

xiii. A unique learner identity used by the provider; that protects learners and indicates their own electronic trail or digital persona.

xiv. Mechanisms that facilitate a safe, accessible and reliable blended learning environment for all learners. These mechanisms promote dignity, courtesy and respect in their use and encourage gender sensitivity amongst both learners and teachers.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:
(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Electronic security measures are considered by the institution's policy/code of practice.
• Collected data is used in order to evaluate e-learning programmes (e.g. comparative analysis of course design).
• There is a strategy on the use and purpose of learning analytics within the institution (i.e. the aim is improving student support).
• The information management system includes relevant, updated, and reliable information concerning the institution and its programmes.
• The institution considers ethical norms and government policy with respect to data protection and the privacy of students.

7.0 Public Information and Communication

This heading corresponds to SECTION 9: "Public Information and Communication" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document (QuAD, V3,2).

Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here:

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- Publication of Reports (incl. IERs-Independent Evaluation Reports) and Reviews
- External reviews
- College website and information to learners
- Annual QA reports
- Surveys
- AIQR

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. That a strategic approach to the use of blended learning is explicit and is shared with staff, learners and other stakeholders. A strategic plan includes appropriate investment in infrastructure and contingency arrangements to support all options for blended learning in an online context. Accountable key roles have been identified.

ii. Arrangements for assuring compliance with any legal or regulatory obligations are appropriate to the blended learning and online learning context.

iii. The provider has approved and published expectations for the overall quality of the blended learning provision, including expectations on the effectiveness and accessibility of learning resources and other learning materials to support online provision. The provider also has approved and published expectations for the effective delivery of teaching and learning and assessment in a blended learning context, which are available to stakeholders.

iv. Make available benchmark or specification documents for learning resources and information specific to monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of learning resources and the learning environment. These are all considered as part of a programme validation and review process.

v. The availability of appropriate information that adequately explains the online sections of the programme and assesses the suitability of a programme. This is available in advance of the programme commencing.

vi. Clear terms and conditions: Prior to enrolment on a particular programme, the prospective learner is made aware of all terms and conditions relevant to that programme, either in the prospectus or similar material, by correspondence, or in discussion with the provider.

vii. Requirements for access, bandwidth and any prescribed hardware or software are appropriate and viable, are communicated well in advance to the learners and all requirements are published.

viii. There is clarity in the information provided to learners and staff about communication channels and the availability of advice and support, for example, communication must manage learner expectations of communication and availability of staff in the provider. What learners may reasonably expect is specified, for example, expectations of staff and learners on developing any meta skills as part of engaging with the online aspects of the blended learning programme.

ix. Learners have access to:

• Descriptions of the online components of the blended learning programme, or aspect of study, to show the intended learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment methods of the unit or module.
• A clear schedule for the delivery of their online learning study materials, learner support (local and/or remote) and for the submission and assessment of their work. This will include learner responsibilities in this regard.
• Information on the ways in which their achievements will be judged, and the relative weighting of online and other remote parts of the programme in respect of assessment overall.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:
(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Students are clearly informed about the e-assessment.
• The institution gives advice on appropriate online behaviour (netiquette rules).
• The institution has a policy and procedure in place for recognition of prior learning.
• The institution publishes reliable, complete, and up-to-date information on study programmes (i.e. recognition of qualifications, learning objectives, credits, requirements, assessment methods, timelines, dates relevant for the programme).
• The institution publishes reliable, complete, and up-to-date information on institutional technical support.
• Technical requirements to enable the full and effective use of the system are clearly identified and published.
• The institution publishes information on completion rates, pass rates, and dropout rates.
• Specific e-learning criteria for external quality assurance procedures (institutional or programme evaluation) are publicly available.

Communication of Contingency Planning

This reporting period also saw the need to communicate contingency plans to all stakeholders in relation to the Public Health Emergency; including QQI, staff and students. QQI were updated with College contingency plans throughout the academic year and a link to current and updated plans could be found here:

https://opentrainingcollege.com/covid-19-otc-contingency-arrangements/

A summary of some of the most relevant actions in this regard are contained in the following table.

The objectives for this OTC Contingency Plan are:

- To minimise infection spread, protecting students and staff
- To follow national and organisational (St. Michael's House – SMH) guidelines
- To minimise impact on students
- To ensure continued programmes delivery and assessment validity
- To continue to operate within QA approved structures and procedures
- To meet commitments to stakeholders and workplace partners
- To address potential financial and other impacts
- To continue to recruit an intake for 2020/21
- To continue in so far as possible with strategic/developmental initiatives
- To maintain College reputation and commitment to students throughout the emergency

Topic	**The plan includes…**
Approval by Academic Council	Original plan: Sanctioned on 11/03/2020 and during subsequent weekly/fortnightly meetings. Ongoing review and revisions through the College Executive Committee (CEC) meetings process; key decisions on academic matters brought to AC. • External examiners and AC consulted/approved modifications with regard to changes in delivery and assessment. • Continuing Increased frequency of AC and CEC meetings.
Involvement of External Examiner	*Consultation with Extern on alternative assessment instruments, practices, arrangements etc* In relation to the above changes all Course Directors were in contact with external examiners since the PHE was declared. In addition to discussion on and agreement of alternative assessments a key output was the extension of the academic year and assessment deadlines and the resulting rearrangement of the exam boards from September to November. • External examiners and AC consulted/approved modifications with regard to changes in delivery and assessment.

Alternative programme delivery methods	*Summary of what means of programme delivery will be used to substitute for face-to-face interaction* Ensuring ongoing content delivery to students and support of students through their studies including those affected by placement restrictions. Plans to address this required change in the OTC blended model of delivery. **Delivery and Assessment Modifications** • Recording of lectures for synchronous and asynchronous learning and fulltime availability • Online workshops that included breakout sessions to replace face -to-face workshops • Q&A sessions online in live time • Presentations and discussions (tutor and student-led) • Podcasts on a range of areas • Links and readings • Substantial increase in tutoring hours available to students via Zoom, Phone and email • Increased video, telephone and email tutorials • Facilitation to support online socialising • Specific podcasts to support assessment • Changes to exam protocols • Pausing of placements and determining alternative arrangements for students following engagement with IASCE and CORU
Alternative assessments	*Summary of what methods of assessment will be used where the currently approved methods are no longer possible* Ensuring compliance with QA requirements including assessment validity – ongoing - based on information from QQI, the National Forum and HECA and contact with these bodies. **Assessment Modifications** A key area where the approved methods had to be modified was in the provision of examination centre examinations. An alternative approach was devised through discussion with QQI, HECA and based on the National Forum for Teaching and Learning resources. An online, open book, time bound examination was devised and communicated to the students. The process has been used four times so far with no major issues identified. How it works:

	The students are provided with an open book, time bound examination. 1. The exam paper is emailed to all students 9.00 am on Day One. 2. The students must return the complete paper to assessments by 9.00 am on Day 2 (24 hours later). Any papers submitted after this time are not accepted. 3. Students submit the completed paper to the electronic assessment portal 4. Students record exam number only on the paper 5. Before submitting the completed paper the student must upload the paper to Turnitin. 6. The student must complete the entire paper on google drive – do not cut and paste from any other document. 7. The student may use the module booklet or other reference material when completing the paper.
Alternative arrangements for work placement	*Summary of alternative arrangements, if any, where learning and / or assessment currently carried out on work placement are no longer possible.* The Practice Coordinator, in consultation with the Irish Association of Social Care Educators provided the OTC CEC and the Social Care Programme Board with 5 options for alternative assessment, as all students had their placement stopped when lockdown commenced. **Social Care Practice Placement Modifications** The option selected and implemented is as follows: • Develop an individual contingency plan for each student that is based on foundational aspects, including • Students will complete 400 hours of work-based learning in total in their paid employment Where this is not possible alternative placement hours will be sought through voluntary work • Explore and practise the relevant SOPs in a social care setting – from a combination of the hours they have already completed in placement and from paid hours in their own workplace • Support/supervision from a social care worker within placement of employment will be sought • Support of a social care worker from within the college team will be provided • Linking in with the original PE in the placement site to arrange for the completion of the mid-way evaluation aspect of the Assessment • Record Book – in order to sign off on any SOPs the students had achieved prior to the pausing of placement • Each student to complete their placement portfolio in their new context

Resource implications	*Summary of what additional resources (hardware/ software / broadband) will be required for the organisation and learners to conduct / participate in programmes* • Tests commenced with virtual meeting software, new online delivery software – Zoom used for all meetings, all staff received voice thread license, training ongoing; • April to date – all features of Zoom employed for varied content delivery. This will continue for 20/21 delivery: • Delivery model revised to take account of social distancing requirements; a number of actions developed, piloted and are currently in roll-out as detailed above; • External examiners and AC consulted/approved modifications with regard to changes in delivery and assessment. **Social Care Practice Placement Modifications** • Full team review and further planning scheduled for September 2020. • Recruitment for vacancies ongoing; • Agency cover employed where required; • Homeworking IT supports continually under review. Corporate Services Manager is addressing needs that arise, e.g., venues bookings. Online Supports: Agreed with our contractor Wholeschool (on 03/04) to increase capacity of online to 6000 users on YourOTC. A further increase has been prepared for and can be implemented as necessary at short notice. Academic staff upskilling with regard to online delivery using Zoom or other resources. Currently no plans to scale back or suspend operations but this is under continual review. Factors which may impact identified as: • Any impact of staff illness, self-isolation requirements, building shut down (access to documents- mitigated through use of Drive as an interim shared folder) • students having issues accessing course due to redeployment or other family/health issues; • Loss of income from student numbers dropping.
Information to learners	*Detail on how learners are informed and kept up to date on new arrangements*

	Students and their representative advised and consulted through website and email. **Student Supports & Communications Modifications** • Zoom individual and Group tutorials introduced in addition to telephone and email • Additional online reading and resources links created and circulated • Online introductory session at start of each module via Zoom/podcast • Creation of student Whatsapp groups supported by College • Making online social contact a requirement to help those less comfortable with technology • Weekly programme team meetings on Zoom to keep staff up to date and connected • Increased contact with members of AC to advise of changes • Updated website and circulation of information emails to students and staff OTC is basing all decisions on national guidelines, HSE and SMH. Repositories of information in place and system for fast dissemination of information are in place and operating.
Induction of New Learners	*Summary of how starting learners will be inducted onto the programme.* **Plan for Management Programmes Intake 2020/21:** At the current time it is envisaged that the management programmes will continue to be delivered online utilising all the supports and initiatives that have been developed to date and outlined above; indeed, the OTC has a validation submission with QQI on this very issue. Under current validation and with regard to the 2020/21 intake, applications are strong and the commencement of a cohort is fully expected to commence in autumn. To this end the following is in place: • Course Calendars are developed and available; • The Management team continues to work on the annual updating of content where necessary, developing new online content and enriching existing content; • Initial planning has commenced with regard to the staffing required to deliver on the expected application; • The Student Handbook and QA manual is being updated as is usual at this time of year. With regard to the induction of new learners, the Open Training College utilised a blended learning model before the public health emergency. Therefore, the induction always included a dedicated online induction

	programme for all new students. The main difference is the move from workshops to online webinars. This move has been supported with additional online supports including online group tutorials and an increased availability of 1:1 tutorials.
Training / Support of Staff	*Detail on how staff are briefed / supported to change to online delivery and assessment* Named person assigned responsibility to ensure full circulation of all relevant information to the full OTC team. Rests with CEC, ongoing two-way communication with staff teams through managers; all relevant information provided. Programme Directors in communication with all contract tutors and workshop presenters. Ensuring the parent organisation SMH is fully informed and updated on activity of the College during the period of COVID-19. Full team review and further planning scheduled for September 2020. • Sector partner agencies seeking training for redeployed staff and maintaining skills and training. As part of this we have developed and are running a Foundation Programme for Residential Staff to support staff training needs at this time. • The sector using OTC as a touchstone for online education and training for staff. Business partners such as the DoH programme – OTC has developed alternative models of provision. • All staff (internal and associate) required training. • Creation of online material internally. • Recruitment continues as required. • New Staff Well-Being and Mental Health Resource developed by OTC for SMH available to all staff including OTC staff and available online. Includes all levels of resources including free online to the formal employee assistance Scheme (EAP). • Regular circulation of material on the Resource and the EAP. • Regular check-in by managers with staff. Ongoing material available also through the regular communication channels.
Monitoring arrangements	*Detail on how the feedback from staff and learners on the effectiveness of new arrangements is monitored.*

College Executive Committee – CEC: From early March to end May 2020 this team held at minimum a weekly meeting and fortnightly meetings from June 2020 to date; this will continue for the remainder of 2020.

Head of QA and AA also acts as the link to Academic Council and eternal bodies - e.g. QQI, HECA etc.

To continue to monitor the efficacy of the modifications the College's standard feedback mechanisms have been in use since commencement of the PHE. The College has observed the increasing role for the student rep working hard to gain feedback from many students in multiple locations. Grades have been monitored to ensure there has been no discernible decrease (or increase) in marks. All year heads have held general zoom conferences to discuss any ongoing issues with all students. The normal annual QA review work will be undertaken for this year albeit with a longer timeframe.

In regular and ongoing contact with SMH, HECA, IASCE, SCI QQI, National Forum, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies.

Critical activities and the inputs required were identified by each Director /Manager for each programme and area of activity;

These were presented to the CEC for review, agreement and sign-off.

Continual feedback on each activity is presented, reviewed and any changes required identified at each CEC – a continual cycle of plan, do, review.

- Withdrawal rate being monitored, Student response to plan being monitored, marketing approach softened but commenced (application trends being monitored); worked with stakeholders to support our main sector (disability), worked with main organisation (SMH) to support staff education and training through the crisis.

Ongoing: Risk register developed and continually revised by Head of QAAA.

- Ongoing discussion on other actions the OTC can take in relation to being retooled for COVID-19 with regard to the core business of HE and FE programme delivery;
- Development of new initiatives to address business continuity during and after the emergency;

Further Strategic Planning being tabled for October/November 2020.

Commenced in relation to workshop delivery and online options. Using Videothread and Zoom respectively.

Concern numbers will fall in the 2020/21 intake; a number of measures implemented to seek at address this.

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

This heading corresponds to SECTION 11: "Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document (QuAD, V3,2).

Therefore, the following criteria and indicators have been added to the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD V3.2, June 2020) in this period in respect of the areas titled here:

The most pertinent elements relating to Blended Learning (BL) and Online Learning (OL) in this section are:

- Surveys of students on modules, End-of-year, Graduate Destinations etc.
- Stakeholder consultations
- External examiner reports
- Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs)
- Internal self-monitoring
- Quality Assurance & Enhancement
- Engagement with External QA
- Affiliations, memberships and representations
- Risk management

Blended Learning: This section meets "*Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*" (QQI, 2018), in relation to the following:

i. Quality management arrangements for online learning provision and other non-face-to-face learning are supported by fit-for-purpose organisational infrastructure and processes.

ii. This usually means there needs to be a strategy and plan, an appropriate investment of time, money and other resources to develop capacity and resources to deliver high quality blended learning that will offer learners a consistent, enjoyable and effective learning experience.

iii. That a strategic approach to the use of blended learning is explicit and is shared with staff, learners and other stakeholders. A strategic plan includes appropriate investment in infrastructure and contingency arrangements to support all options for blended learning in an online context. Accountable key roles have been identified.

iv. The strategies and processes for the appointment, induction, training, professional development and appraisal arrangements for teaching and support staff are appropriate and specific to blended and online learning.

v. The infrastructure and resources required to support good quality blended learning are understood, planned, and routinely monitored and evaluated. These arrangements should take into account that, while online, learners are likely to be remote from the provider and from teachers and/or assessors. There is an institutional approach to these matters.

vi. Arrangements for quality management in general are consistent with the Core Statutory QA Guidelines for all providers and topic- or sector-specific guidelines as appropriate.

vii. Learners can test and monitor their progress at appropriate points. The whole learning environment for blended learning used in conjunction with the learning resources requires active engagement by the learners.

viii. Mechanisms that monitor and/or moderate standards (both in terms of learner outcomes and teachers and/or assessors' practice). Assessment arrangements conducted through online learning are valid, reliable, and secure and provide learners with appropriate confidential feedback on their progress.

Online Learning: Indicators, for mapping and monitoring:
(Adapted from: *ENQA - Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision*, 2018)

INDICATORS
• Stakeholders (especially students) are involved in the internal quality assurance system, even if they are not on campus.
• Student needs are considered when developing the learning model and the curricula design.
• E-learning programmes are reviewed, updated, and improved.
• Pedagogical developments are aligned with the institutional strategy.
• ICT and pedagogy developments are analysed and implemented when appropriate.
• The internal quality assurance system includes feedback to stakeholders (especially to students).
• External quality assurance considers the characteristics of e-learning in regular procedures, such as innovation in teaching and learning processes (institutional or programme evaluation).
• All relevant stakeholders are involved in developing e-learning criteria (institutional or programme evaluation).
• The self-assessment report makes specific reference to e-learning by describing, for example: − the institutional strategy, pedagogical model, and VLE; − the innovation of instructional design; − the profiles and experience of teaching staff; − the online study programme (with detailed learning outcomes, course description, and competencies of teaching staff).

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

OTC has a Collaborative Provision Policy in place, agreed with QQI. However, there was no delivery of programmes through collaborative provision during the reporting period or previously. Articulation agreements are also not currently relevant to the OTC.

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	1
Awarding bodies	1
QA bodies	1

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	CORU
Programme titles and links to publications	B.A. Social Care (L7): https://opentrainingcollege.com/courseitems/ba-in-social-care/
Date of accreditation or last review	First approval applied for in reporting period re. Education Provider for the Social Care Workers' Registration Board
Date of next review	Panel visit currently scheduled for Q1 2022

2. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	Awarding Body/QA Body
Name of body:	QQI
Programme titles and links to publications	https://opentrainingcollege.com/courses/ https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProviderDetails?providerCode=PG00253
Date of accreditation or last review	QA Approval Report (Re-engagement), 2019: https://www.qqi.ie//sites/docs/ProviderDocumentsLibrary/PG00253/PRID-253-ApprovalReport-20190613.pdf
Date of next review	Annual (AQR/Cinnte cycle) - 2022

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Not applicable.

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Not applicable.

[Open Training College]

2021

Annual Quality Report (Open Training College - OTC)

PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT

Reporting Period 2019-2020

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

Strategic objectives

Relevant College strategic objectives for the reporting period included:

- Increased risk assessment of planned programmes and projects;
- Development of placement model for the proposed CORU B.A. in Social Care (Level 7);
- Development of the College website;
- Development of fully online Applied Management programmes for validation.

Improvements and enhancements arising from internal quality improvement

Additional staff training was provided for risk assessment and the relevant tools were applied more widely in organisational decision-making. This became increasingly relevant in the second half of the academic year, when contingency planning during the Public Health Emergency (PHE) became an important factor.

The Placement Policy was fully reviewed and a new version published. Further student supports were also put in place through an expanded College placement team. In general, there were increased supports for students on all programmes, particularly in relation to frequency of contact with Tutors and supports for well-being and mental health.

The website was developed to make policies more accessible and increase search function. For ease of access for all stakeholders, the core Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) is also published in individual sections, which correspond to the Core QAG sub-section titles, and individual policies are also published and presented, at the following respective links:
https://opentrainingcollege.com/quality-assurance-sections
and
https://opentrainingcollege.com/quality-assurance-policies/

The B.A. in Applied Management degree programme (Level 7), and its constituent parts, the Higher Certificate and Certificate, were submitted to QQI for Differential Validation as fully online programmes. This submission was then re-arranged for postponed re-submission in the next reporting period, pending the publication of statutory guidelines in this area and a proposed pilot scheme through QQI in 2021.

Specific changes to QA system during the reporting period arising

The above gave rise to the specific changes outlined, as well as the more overarching changes outlined in part A, through the publication of an updated core QA Document (https://opentrainingcollege.com/quality-assurance/), an "Additional Procedures" Document (https://opentrainingcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Addendum-ADDITIONAL-PROCEDURES-QuAD-V3.2-Final.pdf) and a "Blended Learning & Online Learning Strategy" (https://opentrainingcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Blended-and-Online-Learning-Strategy-Final-Website.pdf).

In addition, there was a specific amendment to Extenuating Circumstances and Progression policies, (re. Public Health Emergency) approved by Academic Council on 24th April 2020. This was necessitated to allow for students to progress to the following year where it had not been possible to complete all requisite placement hours.

Contextual factors which impacted on QA system implementation, developments and enhancements

From September 2019 to March 2020, the focus of QA enhancement was on completion of the outstanding specific advices arising from OTC's Re-engagement report in 2019. These were completed and published, as outlined in Part A in relation to:

- "Develop clearer step-by-step procedures for all policies mentioned in the Quality Assurance document."
- "Publish a Blended Learning Strategy."

From March 2020 there was a focus on contingency planning in light of the ongoing PHE, which also necessitated some specific policy changes as outlined in the previous sub-section. Given the extension to scope of provision allowed by QQI from that time, all programmes were delivered in a fully online format to the end of the academic year.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Re: Pilot AIQR 2018-19, Section 5.1	Update on Status
1	The publication of the College's Blended Learning Strategy and its integration into to the core QA Document. An action plan for blended learning will also emerge from this development.	Completed – "Blended Learning and Online Learning Strategy" published
2	The publication of an addendum document outlining Procedures, Protocols and Processes which have emerged since the re-engagement process. The development of the Practice Placement Handbook has produced new and updated systems in this area.	Completed – "Additional Procedures, Protocols and Processes" published
3	Further dissemination of the Risk Management policy, its tools, implementation and use of the risk register.	Completed – additional training and implementation throughout the reporting period
4	Further implementation of the GDPR action plan, particularly in relation to suppliers and associate staff, as well as a focus on deletion/destruction in relation to the retention element of the GDPR policy.	Completed – the action plan was implemented. Ongoing focus on deletion/destruction, with a further audit planned for 2020-21

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Academic Council	11th October 2019 24th January 2020 27th April 2020 19th June 2020

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

There were no specific changes to units of governance nor to leadership/management occurring in this reporting period.

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

There were no periodic reviews in this period, apart from normal annual reviews of programmes. A planned review of the B.A. and B.A. (Hons.) in Contemporary Disability Studies has been postponed by application for extension of the programmes through QQI's PAEC. This will now take place in 2022.

The review of E-learning in preparation for submission for differential validation of the B.A. in Applied Management (Human Services) and its associated programmes has already been outlined in this report, as has the review of the Placement Policy in relation to the B.A. in Social Care. Similarly, the review of the College's website has been outlined.

There were no new programme validations or revalidations in the reporting period and no external panels were engaged during 2019-20.

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels[2] involved in IQA

Not applicable; see 1.4.1 above.

[2] QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Given the stated aim in the last reporting period to pursue the validation of fully online Applied Management programmes and the subsequent increased 'scope of provision' necessitated by the Public Health Emergency (PHE) in this period, the primary focus for enhancement during 2019-20 was on the delivery of programmes in a fully online mode. It has already been shown in Part A how the core QA documentation has been developed to provide overarching guidance in this area in terms of blended learning guidelines and fully online indicators which may be used for monitoring purposes.

In relation to the application for delivery of fully online programmes, the following enhancements were highlighted:

- The recording of lectures so that they could be delivered synchronously in the first instance, then viewed asynchronously, and repeatedly on the VLE
- Online workshops that included break out room activities, Q and A sessions and online presentations and discussions
- Additional podcasts
- Additional links and contemporary readings
- A substantial increase in tutorial support and hours
- Increased telephone/video and online tutorials
- Increased focus on online facilitation to support socialisation online
- An additional tutorial and podcast relating to fulfilment of the assignment brief
- Increased online security and procedures in place to monitor remote examinations
- Recorded skills demonstrations

These measures supplement existing approved QA procedures and controls in relation to materials provision, reliability of online delivery and the technical capabilities of relevant stakeholders. They are also in addition to established high levels of tutorial support, commitment to timely and meaningful feedback (as attested to repeatedly by External Examiners), and consistent high quality of programme delivery.

In addition, it was identified that there was a need for:

- additional declarations by staff and students in relation to the recording of synchronous lectures which may later be available asynchronously.
- additional monitoring and quality checks, particularly in relation to the technical elements (sound, visuals etc.) of asynchronous lectures.

This initiative, its impacts and supporting research is further outlined in the section 4.0 Case Study, included as part of this report.

In terms of the overall impact on programme delivery, as monitored through student feedback in end-of-year surveys the following was reported to Academic Council in December 2020:

"The demographics of the responders (in comparison to last year) are slightly more female, slightly younger, less experienced in services, and funded/ self-funded in nearly exactly the same way. The responses were slightly more positive than last year, not by much, but in the middle of a pandemic this

is very good.

For example, last year 28% said their overall experience was excellent, this year 37% with the same scores as last year for very good (58/57 respectively). Scores for learning materials are up slightly, but the indication on purchasing of hard copies is down. Workshops are slightly down (69% said excellent or very good last year; 66% this year). While facilitation of workshops is slightly up (78% said excellent or very good last year, 80% this year).

Telephone tutorials had a big rise with 52% saying they were excellent or very good last year; 71% this year, and the same for email tutorials 78% to 91%. The evaluation from students who requested additional support is down, 88% last year to 75%; although the numbers involved are much lower and students are not happy with having to get a costly evaluation to access supports. With regard to the library, satisfaction is slightly down from 62 % to 60%, with more poor ratings this year 12% up from 9%. Podcasts are still very popular, 90% said excellent or very good, now 92%, with narrated presentations scoring very well at 91%.

Google Drive had its best rating ever for being easy to use (94% said it very easy or easy to use with only 6 % saying it was difficult or very difficult (this rating was 14% last year). In addition, admin's rating also increased from 94% saying the service was excellent or very good up from 92% last year.

So overall the results are a testament to the team's resilience, innovation and hard work during this difficult time."

This feedback has seen a review of library services and content being added to the schedule of reviews for the next reporting period.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

OTC has an established Plagiarism Policy, which is published in the Quality Assurance Document and all Student Handbooks, currently as follows:

https://opentrainingcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/1701-Plagiarism-Policy.pdf

Turnitin has long been used in conjunction with assessment submission and students are alerted to issues of academic integrity during online induction for programmes and at workshops, where assignment processes are outlined. In this reporting period there was an adjustment to fully online examinations. In this context, the following section on Online Examinations outline the primary additional measure taken in relation to academic integrity in this period.

Online Examination

The College aims to ensure the integrity of the examination process within the limitations of delivery online. The online examinations are structured as follows:

- Examination posted online at 9am of Day 1
- Student is asked to complete the examination by 9am of the following day.
- The exam must be completed on a fresh Google Document.
- The use of a Google document allows the College to check when the document was created and the revision history of the document (which includes time to complete, person completing the work and IP address, the identification of any cut and paste processes).
- Each student is asked to upload their final paper into Turnitin.
- The student is asked to sign a document stating that the work is original and own work.
- If the College has concerns about the originality of the exam paper they can enact the plagiarism policy as outlined in the QuAD and Student Handbook which includes the option for a viva voce.

The examination process within the Open Training College asks the student to apply the theory to their specific work/organisational experiences. This approach allows the student's tutor who will have been in contact with the student through the year to be able to gauge the authenticity of the student's voice through the work submitted.

The College is aware of the ongoing developments in the area of online examination proctoring, including video monitoring and key stroke analysis. These processes have yet to be embedded into higher education in Ireland. If in the future a system is identified that increases exam integrity and authenticity, the College will take these developments on board.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	Relevant objectives	Planned actions and indicators
1.	The development of fully online provision.	Library review; ongoing development of written procedures and protocols in the online area; mapping against statutory guidelines when published; full monitoring review of implementation of blended learning guidelines and fully online indicators. This objective will also include a full review of all technical infrastructure used in the delivery of fully online and blended learning/teaching.
2.	The implementation of the GDPR action plan.	A full audit of the GDPR action plan to date and recommendations for future implementation.
3.	The provision of contemporary and accredited Disability Studies qualifications.	A full review of the existing B.A. and Honours B.A. in Contemporary Disability Studies programmes. Application for re/validation in 2021.
4.	The ongoing development of the College's core QA.	Policy review of all policies which have not be updated since re-engagement in 2018-19.

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Full audit of all overarching Blended Learning guidelines and Fully Online indicators against programme delivery and processes.	Q4 2020	2019-20
GDPR audit.	Q3 2020	2018
Review of the Contemporary Disability Studies degrees.	Q2 2020 – Q1 2021	Full: 2016; with annual reviews to date.
Policy review.	Q4 2020	2018-19
Library review.	Q4 2020	2018

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

N/A.

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

Case Study

Preparation of application for validation of a fully online programme

- **The targeted programmes and context:**

The Applied Management (Human Services) suite of programmes; including Certificate, Higher Certificate and ordinary Bachelor of Arts (Level 7); was last revalidated in 2018. The application prepared sought to differentially validate the existing programmes so that they could be delivered in a fully online mode. Until the recent temporary approval of extension of scope of provision granted by QQI during the public health emergency, the programmes were delivered through a blended model; 80% online and 20% face-to-face. Therefore, it was proposed to validate the migration of the face-to-face elements of the programmes to a fully online delivery.

- **Main features and considerations:**

The following features were most pertinent to that migration to the online platform:

- The recording of lectures so that they could be delivered synchronously in the first instance, then viewed asynchronously, and repeatedly on the VLE
- Online workshops that included break out room activities, Q and A sessions and online presentations and discussions
- Additional podcasts
- Additional links and contemporary readings
- A substantial increase in tutorial support and hours
- Increased telephone/video and online tutorials
- Increased focus on online facilitation to support socialisation online
- An additional tutorial and podcast relating to fulfilment of the assignment brief
- Increased online security and procedures in place to monitor remote examinations
- Recorded skills demonstrations

These measures supplement existing approved QA procedures and controls in relation to materials provision, reliability of online delivery and the technical capabilities of relevant stakeholders. They are also in addition to established high levels of tutorial support, commitment to timely and meaningful feedback (as attested to repeatedly by External Examiners), and consistent high quality of programme delivery.

In addition, it was identified that there was a need for additional declarations by staff and students in relation to the recording of synchronous lectures which may later be available asynchronously. Overall, the main findings were that while additional content will require added vigilance and monitoring, especially in the initial migrations to the online platform, OTC's existing quality assurance, policies and procedures are more than adequately robust enough for this migration. The College's Quality Assurance system was approved for re-engagement with QQI in 2018 and the existing QA is based on a model of delivery which was 80% online and 20% face-to-face at the time. Therefore, the need for extra monitoring and quality checks, particularly in relation to the technical elements (sound, visuals etc.) of asynchronous lectures, have been highlighted here.

To ensure the further meeting of international (European) standards, an additional mapping was carried out against ENQA's "Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision; Report from the ENQA Working Group VIII on quality assurance and e-learning (2018)". The mapping, presented above, shows OTC meeting all required internal indicators. While these guidelines have not been published as standards in the same way as the European Standards and Guidelines, they are set against the same categories, which correspond to the respective sections of providers' QA. Therefore, OTC has adopted the indicators as laid out in this publication as part of its core QA and integrated those indicators against each relevant section so that they may be used for monitoring and compliance purposes.

- **Relevant supporting data and data analysis:**

In order to fully inform the planned process of delivering the Open Training College Management Programmes in a totally online format, consultation and research were undertaken with the following stakeholders:

- The student cohort of the OTC Bachelor of Arts in Applied Management (Human Services)
- The student cohort of the OTC Certificate in Applied Management (Human Services)
- The student cohort of the OTC Bachelor of Arts in Social Care (Year 1)
- The OTC Associate Tutors
- Employer representatives
- QA experts in HEIs in Ireland

One of the primary findings from the research highlighted the view that there was no decrease in the quality of the delivery of the programme with the move from the blended approach to delivering totally online. Similarly, respondents maintained that the availability supports provided by the Open Training College with the delivery of the programme online were either excellent (75%) or very good (25%).

Students had already completed three modules though the blended approach before moving to completing the remaining three modules of the programme totally online. At the time of the research, students had completed the study of one online module and had begun the study of a second online module.

When requested to consider the quality of delivery of the online modules to those delivered in a blended format the majority of students (66.67%) stated that the quality of delivery was the same while 16.67% stated that the quality of delivery was better with the same percentage maintaining that the quality of delivery was less. Similar responses were recorded in relation to the structure of the modules and the amount of study undertaken to complete modules.

With the delivery of online programmes, the workshops now consist of a narrated PowerPoint Presentation, a Voice Thread presentation and Zoom tutorials, whereby students can speak directly with the workshop presenter.

For students, the clarity of information before and at the time of application was underlined. Ensuring that students have the ability to use and fully interact with the technology was, of course, seen as being paramount. Further considerations raised in relation to students specifically included:

- Availability of additional supports and accommodation as required
- Clear communication on timing of provision
- Setting out clearly and in advance the expected workload
- Contact hours and communication protocols
- Increased importance of formative assessment and feedback

Resulting from these considerations the QA experts surveyed suggested the prioritisation of the following areas for additional vigilance or development within an institution's existing QA system and sub-systems:

A. Standardisation of quality for all modes of delivery
B. Assessment marking procedures
C. Building feedback from all stakeholders into the system
D. Use of interactive and conditional learning tools
E. Ability to analyse engagement rather than attendance (re. learner analytics)
F. Ability for the system to be updated and adapted
G. Compliance of all elements with GDPR and data protection legislation
H. Copyright compliance
I. Ensuring relevant expertise of External Examiners
J. Quality checks and protocols for module development before publication
K. Quality assuring asynchronous elements to ensure technical levels of sound etc.
L. Continued focus on national and international, particularly European, developments in relation to the quality assuring of online provision

- **Conclusion:**

The suite of programmes was submitted to QQI for differential validation in Q2 of 2020. However, due to the need for QQI to establish statutory guidelines for fully online teaching and learning, OTC awaits the opportunity to re-submit in Q1 of 2021, when it has been proposed by QQI that a pilot application opportunity will be available in this area.