

Irish College of Humanities & Applied Sciences
2021

Irish College of Humanities & Applied
Sciences
2021

Annual Quality Report (Irish College
of Humanities & Applied Sciences)
Reporting Period 2019-2020

Annual Quality Report (Irish College
of Humanities & Applied Sciences)
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2019-2020

PREFACE

Note: QQI's provider portal, QHub, is currently under development and will be completed in November 2020. AQR 2021 will be submitted via QHub.

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.

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Guidelines on Completing the Report

The AQR is aligned with QQI's Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and with the ESG (2015). A mapping of the ESG to QQI Core QA Guidelines is included in Table 1 below; the structure of Part A of this report template aligns with the first column of the table. Additional guidance on completing this template and reference material is included in each section. Institutions should adhere to this guidance and have regard to QQI Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. **The guide text within each section should be deleted before submission of the report.**

Submission Process and Timeline

The deadline for submission of the AQR each year is in February of the relevant year, with the call for submission sent to institutions in November of the preceding year. Once the call for submission has been made, QQI will provide access to QQI's provider portal, QHub, to the designated institution contact(s) to facilitate submission of the report. Through QHub, each institution will have access to an editable version of its AQR for the previous reporting period. This document can then be amended/updated to reflect any changes or developments that occurred during the current reporting period before submitting the final report to QQI.

Completing the AQR

- When completing the AQR template, all relevant colleagues in the institution should be consulted.
- Consider whether external audiences will be able to understand the terminology used (particularly local abbreviations and acronyms); it may be helpful to include a glossary.
- Aim to avoid duplication in the report – where information is relevant to more than one section, the first mention may be referenced in subsequent sections.
- Provide reflections on what worked well, but also what may have been tried but did not work.

Report Structure

Part A: Internal QA System

Part A of the AQR comprises a record of each institution's current QA policies and procedures and should provide links to those policies and procedures. Private HEIs may provide links to the policies and procedures approved by QQI during initial access to validation (IAV) or reengagement. It is the responsibility of each HEI to ensure before submission of the AQR that all links are correct and functional, and that the policies and procedures referred to are the most up-to-date versions available. Given that the AQR is submitted in respect of a discrete reporting period, it may be helpful for institutions to establish a SharePoint/OneDrive folder (or similar) for each reporting period that contains the current versions of their policies and procedures, and that hyperlinks to these versions of the documents be provided in the AQR

Part A is to be completed only if there have been **material** changes to QA policies and procedures during the reporting period. Such changes may include the approval and implementation of new polices or procedures, or significant amendments to existing ones.

Part B: Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE)

Part B of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**. Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period – these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

Case Studies

In each reporting period, QQI may request updates on specific thematic areas or may invite the institution to submit case studies in response to specific topics. Further, institutions may include case studies to share good practice on topics of their choosing, demonstrating QA and QE in action. In formulating case studies, institutions are encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination. Further guidance is provided in Part B.

Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template¹

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](#)

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

- [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](#)

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			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 – Monitoring and Periodic Review				
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			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
9.0 – Details of Arrangements with Third Parties				
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 IRISH COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & APPLIED SCIENCES for the reporting period **1 September 2019 – 31 August 2020**.

It is to be submitted by **Friday, 23rd March 2021**.

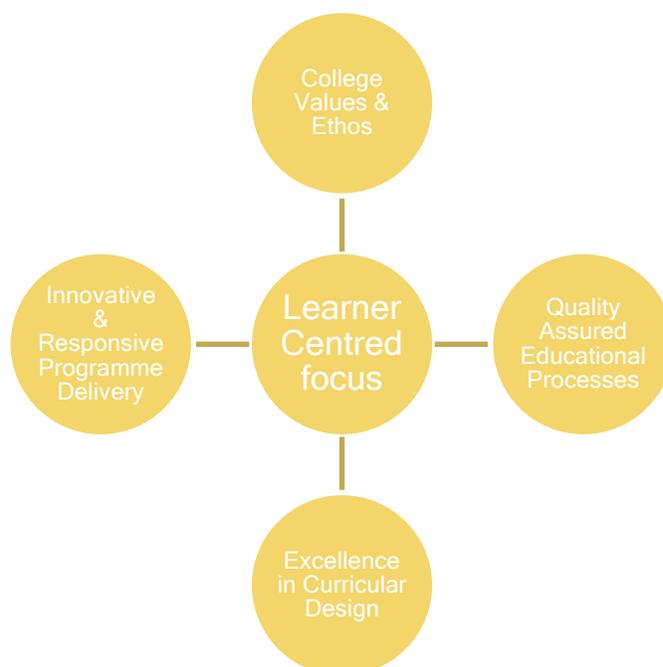
The AQR has been approved by Academic Council and is submitted by **Prof. Jane Alexander on behalf of the College**.

Overview of ICHAS

The Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences (ICHAS) is an independent (voluntary) education provider, specialising in the delivery of higher education programmes. It also offers a range of continuing professional development opportunities.

Mission

The ICHAS mission is to facilitate and enable adult learners to achieve qualifications that are accessible, affordable, relevant to the needs of business, industry and the professions, and that are nationally and internationally recognised. This is achieved through adherence to the College Values & Ethos; ensuring a learner centred focus, providing quality assured education, excellence in our curricular design, and innovative delivery.



Vision

The Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences will become a national and international centre of excellence in the fields of higher education, further education and continuing professional development.

Values

The College commits itself to underpin its activities through the values it espouses, namely, to encourage social awareness and responsibility as well as promoting flexibility, maximising opportunities for social inclusivity and accessibility in Higher Education.

Operational Principles

Within the context of its Mission, Vision and Values, the College ensures as far as is practicable that it:

- Recognises and supports the right of students, faculty and staff to enjoy and express freedom of thought and to operate within an ethos of respect and dignity which is free from any form of discrimination.
- Understands education as a fundamental right with associated responsibilities.
- Promotes scholarly and educational activities that are aimed at producing ‘thinking practitioners’ or knowledgeable ‘doers’ within the domains of applied sciences and the humanities.

The College seeks to ensure that it:

- Provides the widest possible access to students across all strata of society in a non - discriminatory way.
- Works with other agencies and communities in relevant partnerships for the benefit of society within the domains of applied science and the humanities.
- Develops appropriate partnerships within the academic, social, political and other communities to further the mission of the College and the opportunities for its students.
- Remains committed to the enhancement of society and the optimisation of sustainable development with due cognisance to the environment.

Process for the development and approval of the AQR

The process for the development and approval of the AQR is a process very much guided by the College’s Policy and Procedure on Documenting the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Documenting-the-Effectiveness-of-Quality-Assurance.pdf> and in particular informed through the auditing process as outlined in the QAE manual <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedure-associated-with-Documenting-the-Effectiveness-of-Quality-Assurance.pdf>; particularly utilizing the Annual Quality Assurance Report.

As set out in the procedures for documenting the effectiveness of Quality Assurance in the College, the Annual Quality Assurance Report takes the format of a self-study, identifying existing strengths and areas for improvement. The development of the Annual Quality Assurance Report is co-ordinated by the QAE Officer. The range of data sources relied on for the report are set out in the following graphic.



The Report and a proposed Quality Enhancement Plan is initially approved by the Quality & Standards Committee and then submitted to Academic Council for review, discussion and ratification.

INTERNAL QA FRAMEWORK

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

This section provides information on the quality assurance system within ICHAS and details the governance and management structures within the institution including decision making structures and is set out under the following heading with links to the relevant Policies and Procedures.

Governance

The system of governance at the College is designed to comply with best international standards and to ensure appropriate distinction in terms of Academic and Corporate Decision making. The full detail in relation to Governance and ensuring the appropriate governance of QAE within the College structures is detailed in the following section of the QAE Manual.

<https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Governance-and-Approaches-to-Quality.pdf>

In summary, however the overall governance structures are presented graphically in the following figures.

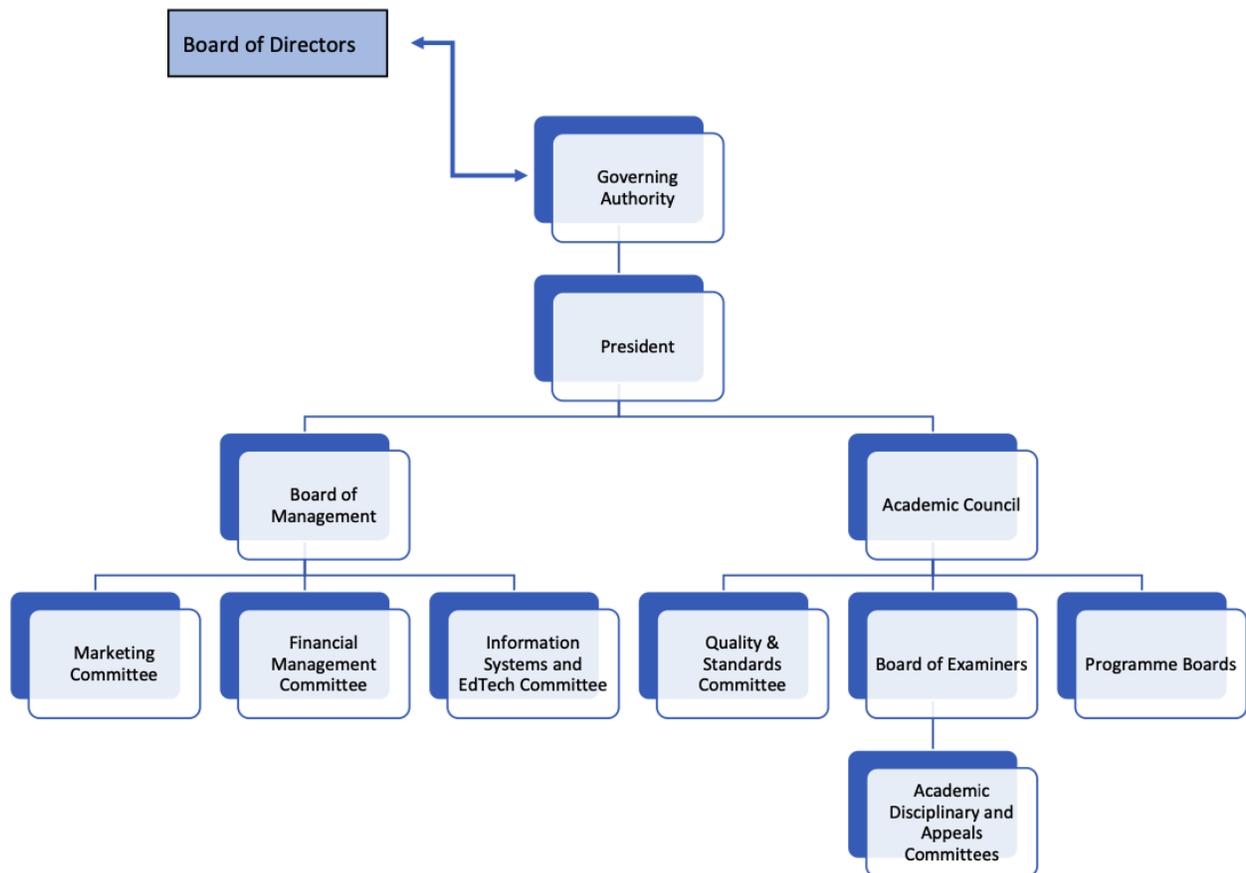


Figure 1 – Governance Structures within ICHAS

Likewise, in relation to Academic Governance the following Figure outlines Academic Governance Structures as approved in 2019.

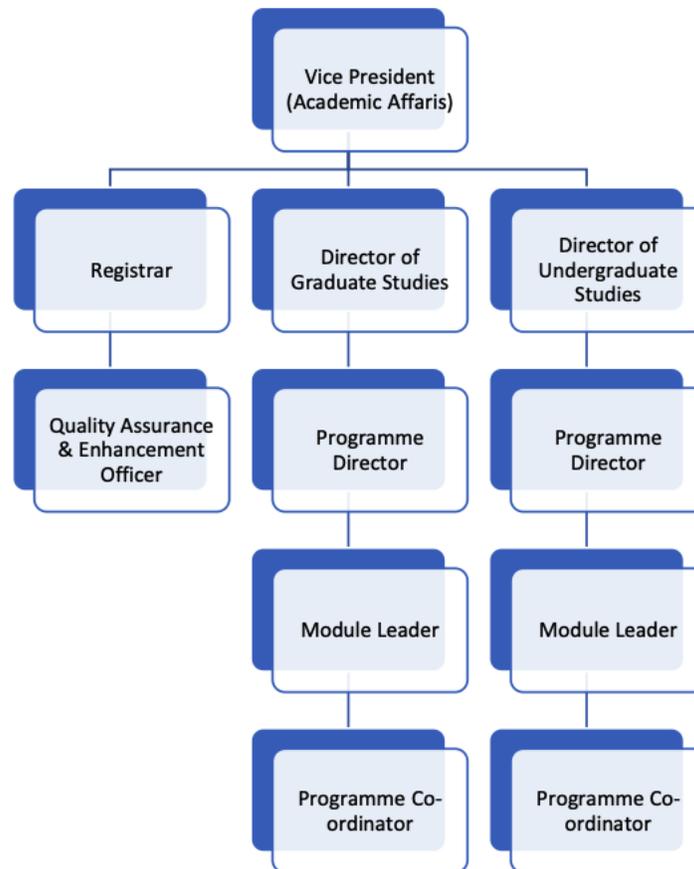


Figure 2 – Academic Governance Structures

The following Graphic outlines the key personnel and their relationships with key Governance Structures and Decision-making bodies within the College

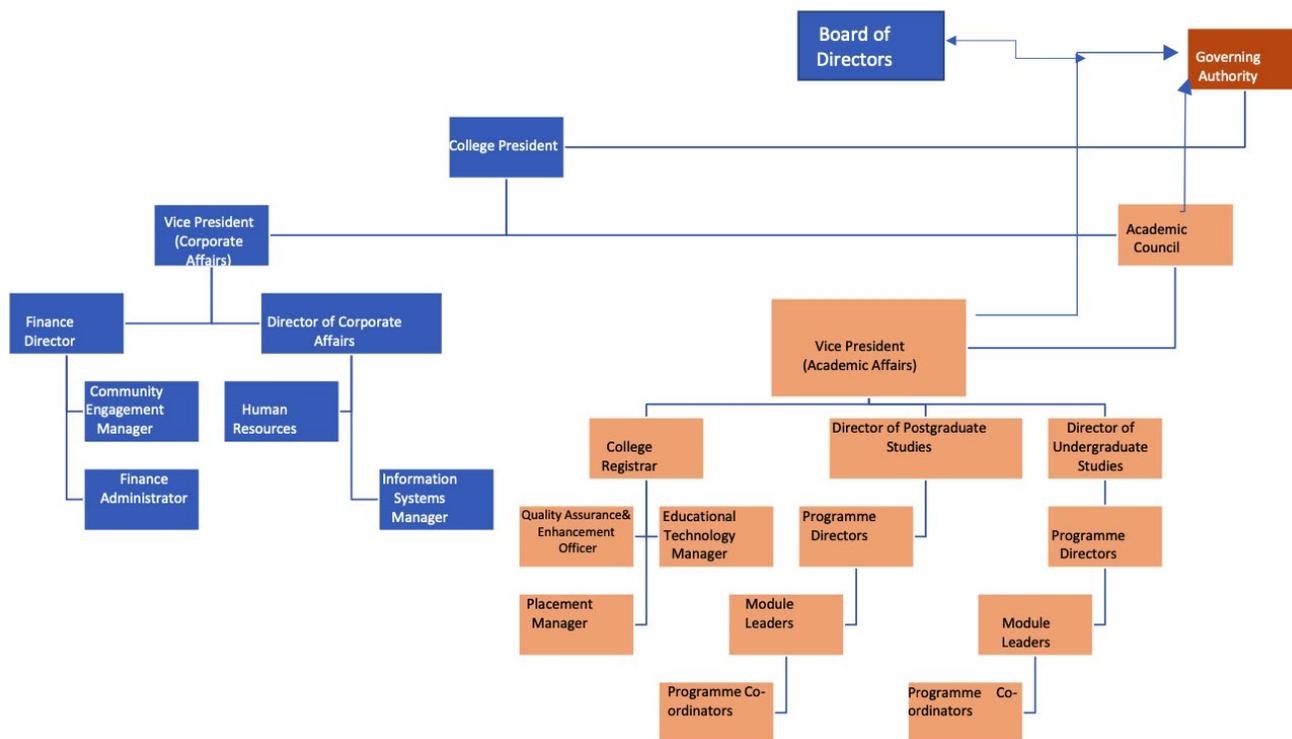


Figure 3 - Key personnel and their relationships with key Governance Structures and Decision making bodies within the College

This graphic demonstrates through simple colour coding the distinctions between Corporate and Academic Decision making.

The Terms of Reference for Decision making bodies are set out in the following link;

- <https://ichas.ie/quality-assurance-enhancement-manual/#1561638159318-51362cf8-0fc0>

The individual relevant sections of the QAE manual relevant to the documenting of Quality Assurance may be found in the following links;

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Documenting-the-Effectiveness-of-Quality-Assurance.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedure-associated-with-Documenting-the-Effectiveness-of-Quality-Assurance.pdf>

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

The College has no current collaborative provision or Transnational provision but the College has approval for its Policy and Procedures relating to Collaborative Provision. The original approval for a Collaborative Provision Policy and set of procedures was approved by QQI in 2016 and was subsequently revised and updated in the re-engagement processes in 2019. The following links set out both the Policy and Procedures.

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Collaborative-Provision.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Collaborative-Provision.pdf>

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

This section sets out the Policies and Procedures in relation to programme design and development at ICHAS and includes policies and Procedures associated with review and revalidation.

Programme Design

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Programme-Design-and-Development.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Procedures-associated-with-Programme-Design-and-Development.pdf>

New Validation

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Validation-of-New-Programmes.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Validation-of-New-Programmes.pdf>

Review and revalidation

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Programme-Review-and-Revalidation.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedure-associated-with-Programme-Review-and-Revalidation.pdf>

Programme Management and Annual Monitoring

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Programme-Management-and-Annual-Monitoring.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedure-associated-with-Programme-Management-and-Annual-Monitoring.pdf>

Work-based Learning

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Work-Based-Learning.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Work-Based-Learning.pdf>

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

This Section sets out the Policies and procedures associated with Access, Transfer and Progression at ICHAS

Access, Applications and Admissions

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Access-Applications-and-Admissions.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Access-Applications-Admissions.pdf>

Transfer and Progression

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Transfer-and-Progression.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Transfer-Progression.pdf>

Recognition of Prior Learning

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Recognition-of-Prior-Learning.pdf>

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Recognition-of-Prior-Learning.pdf>

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

Marking, Grading and Certification

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Marking-Grading-and-Certification-in-Assessment.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Marking-Grading-and-Certification.pdf>

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The links below sets out the policies and procedures associated in respect of Academic integrity and External Examining.

External Examining

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-External-Examining.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-External-Examining.pdf>

Academic Integrity

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Academic-Integrity.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Breaches-of-Academic-Integrity.pdf>

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

This Sections Sets out the Policies and procedures in relation to support for learners in terms of General supports, Academic supports and Pastoral supports within ICHAS.

General Student Support:

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Accessing-General-Student-Services.pdf>

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Accessing-General-Student-Services.pdf>

Academic support

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Academic-Support.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Academic-Support.pdf>

Pastoral Support

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-the-provision-of-Pastoral-Care.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-provision-of-Pastoral-Care.pdf>

The below sections outline the Policies and Procedures associated with supporting students with blended learning and Student Engagement.

Supporting Students with blended learning

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-supporting-students-to-engage-with-Blended-Learning.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-supporting-students-to-engage-with-Blended-Learning.pdf>

Policy on Student Engagement

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Student-Engagement.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Student-Engagement.pdf>

This Section addresses the policy and procedure for supports for international learners at ICHAS

Supports for international learners.

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Supports-available-to-International-Learners-.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-relating-to-Supports-available-to-International-Learners.pdf>

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

Please see links below to the Policies and Procedures in relations to relation to the conduct of ethical research.

Research

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-the-Conduct-of-Ethical-Research-within-the-College.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-the-Conduct-of-Ethical-Research-within-the-College.pdf>

Please also see link below to the terms of reference for the Ethics Committee.

Ethics Committee

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Terms-of-Reference-for-the-Ethics-Committee.pdf>

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

Below outlines the Policies and procedures in relation to staff recruitment, Management and Development

Staff recruitment, Management and Development

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Staff-Recruitment-Management-Development.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Staff-Recruitment-Management-Development.pdf>

Staff induction

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Staff-Induction.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Staff-Induction.pdf>

Staff Communication

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Staff-Communication.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Staff-Communication.pdf>

Staff Development

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Staff-Development.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Staff-Development.pdf>

Staff Performance and Appraisal

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Staff-Performance-Appraisal.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Staff-Performance-Appraisal.pdf>

Staff engagement with blended learning

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-supporting-staff-engagement-with-Blended-Learning.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-supporting-staff-engagement-with-Blended-Learning.pdf>

6.0 Information and Data Management

The link below sets out the Policies and procedures in relation to Data Collection, usage and Management within the college.

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Data-Collection-Usage-Management.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Data-Collection-Usage-Management.pdf>

7.0 Public Information and Communication

The links below outlines the policies and procedures in relation to Public information and Communication.

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Public-Information.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Public-Information.pdf>

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

The links below set out the Policies and procedures in relation to internal monitoring.

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Provider-owned-internal-monitoring.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Provider-owned-internal-monitoring.pdf>

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

N/A

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	Addiction Counsellors Ireland (ACI)
Awarding bodies	QQI
QA bodies	QQI

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	Professional Accreditation Body
Name of body:	Addiction Counsellors Ireland (ACI)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA in Counselling Skills and Addiction Studies, BA (Hons) in Counselling and Addiction Studies; MA in Addiction Counselling, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Addiction Counselling. https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProviderDetails?providerCode=PN00007
Date of accreditation or last review	September 2015
Date of next review	November 2020

2. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	
Name of body:	National Association for Professional Counselling and Psychotherapy (NAPCP)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA in Counselling Skills and Youth Studies; BA (Hons) in Counselling and Youth Studies; BA in Counselling Skills & Psychotherapy Studies; BA (Hons) in Counselling & Psychotherapy. MA in Counselling & Psychotherapy; MA in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy; MA in Clinical Supervision in Professional Practice; MA in Counselling & Pastoral Care. Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Clinical Supervision in Professional Practice, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Counselling & Pastoral Care. https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProviderDetails?providerCode=PN00007
Date of accreditation or last review	September 2015
Date of next review	November 2020

3. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	
Name of body:	Association of Professional Counsellors and Psychotherapist (APCP)
Programme titles and links to publications	BA in Counselling Skills and Youth Studies; BA (Hons) in Counselling and Youth Studies; BA in Counselling Skills & Psychotherapy Studies; BA (Hons) in Counselling & Psychotherapy. MA in Counselling & Psychotherapy; MA in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy; MA in Clinical Supervision in Professional Practice; MA in Counselling & Pastoral Care, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Clinical Supervision in Professional Practice, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Counselling & Pastoral Care. https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProviderDetails?providerCode=PN00007
Date of accreditation or last review	September 2015
Date of next review	November 2020

4. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	Awarding Body
Name of body:	QQI
Programme titles and links to publications	BA in Counselling Skills and Youth Studies; BA (Hons) in Counselling and Youth Studies; BA in Counselling Skills & Psychotherapy Studies; BA (Hons) in Counselling & Psychotherapy. MA in Counselling & Psychotherapy; MA in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy; MA in Clinical Supervision in Professional Practice; MA in Counselling & Pastoral Care. MA in Addiction Counselling. MA in Leadership & Management, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Counselling and Psychotherapy, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Clinical Supervision in Professional Practice, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Counselling & Pastoral Care, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Addiction Counselling, Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Leadership & Management. https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProviderDetails?providerCode=PN00007
Date of accreditation or last review	2015 for all programme with the exception of MA in Addiction Counselling which was validated in 2017
Date of next review	2020 for all programme with the exception of MA in Addiction Counselling. MA in Addiction Counselling is due for Programmatic review and revalidation in 2022.

5. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	QA body
Name of body:	QQI
Programme titles and links to publications	BA in Counselling Skills and Youth Studies; BA (Hons) in Counselling and Youth Studies; BA in Counselling Skills & Psychotherapy Studies; BA in Counselling Skills and Addiction Studies, BA (Hons) in Counselling & Psychotherapy, BA (Hons) in Counselling and Addiction Studies; MA in Addiction Counselling. MA in Counselling & Psychotherapy; MA in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy; MA in Clinical Supervision in Professional Practice; MA in Counselling & Pastoral Care. MA in Leadership & Management. https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/ProviderDetails?providerCode=PN00007
Date of accreditation or last review	2019
Date of next review	2024

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Type of arrangement	Total number
Joint research degrees	N/A
Joint/double/multiple awards	N/A
Collaborative programmes	N/A
Franchise programmes	N/A
Linked providers (DABs only)	N/A

1. Collaborative provision (Type of collaborative provision)	N/A
Name of body (/bodies):	N/A
Programme titles and links to publications	N/A
Date of last review	N/A
Date of next review	N/A

The College has no current collaborative provision, but the College has approval for its Policy and Procedures relating to Collaborative Provision. The original approval for a Collaborative Provision Policy and set of procedures was approved by QQI in 2016 and was subsequently revised and updated in the re-engagement processes in 2019. The following links set out both the Policy and procedures.

- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-on-Collaborative-Provision.pdf>
- <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Procedures-associated-with-Collaborative-Provision.pdf>

9.3 Articulation Agreements

ICHAS currently has no articulation agreement in place

Articulation agreements - Total number	
1. Articulation agreement:	N/A
Name of body (/bodies):	N/A
Programme titles and links to publications	N/A
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	N/A
Date of next review	N/A
Detail of the agreement	N/A

[Higher Education Institution]
2021

**Annual Quality Report (Irish College of Humanities
& Applied Sciences)**

**PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT**

Reporting Period 2019-2020

Part B: Internal QA System

Guidelines on Completing Part B

As outlined in the general guidelines for this template (p.5), **Part B** of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**.

Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR submission were progressed during the reporting period – these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

Part B of the AQR is an opportunity for self-reflection and critical evaluation of the effectiveness of QA activities over the reporting period. Institutions are encouraged to reflect both on what worked well and what did not work well, and to consider impact measures, using both quantitative and qualitative evidence (metrics, benchmarks and feedback/judgement) in how they led to specific QA improvements and enhancement.

Part B provides evidence of quality improvement and enhancement and impact² of QA activities within the totality of an institution's QA system.

Section 1 pertains to internal quality assurance implementation and developments since the previous reporting period.

Section 2 deals with institutional analysis of IQA enhancements and impacts including activities undertaken in respect of academic integrity, and the enhancements and impacts resulting from same.

Section 3 relates to IQA developments and plans for the next reporting period.

Section 4 provides an opportunity for institutions to illustrate IQA in action through case studies in relevant thematic areas.

Institutions are invited, if they wish to do so, to use case studies to demonstrate quality in action and to highlight areas of practice for dissemination at any point in this part of the report.

Case Studies

QQI recommends that written case studies should:

- Be between half a page and two pages in length;
- Relate to a specific time- and subject-bound issue;
- Include an introduction that sets out a brief overview of contextual matters;
- Include any relevant supporting data and data analysis;
- Include links to any sources cited;
- Include a clear concluding paragraph with overview of key outcomes/learning.

Although case studies will generally be in written form, institutions may also provide links to audio-visual/multimedia case studies. QQI does not prescribe a format for case studies.

² The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education have considered impact and measures leading to development and improvement specifically in terms of teaching and learning. See: <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/NF-2020-Insights-from-Practice-About-Impact-in-Teaching-and-Learning-web-ready.pdf>. This is a very useful reference, though impact in the context of this report should be considered

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

Institution's strategic objectives

The college's strategic aims and objectives were set for a period between 2018 – 2022 in a Strategic Plan, building on a previous Strategic Plan for the period 2012 – 2017. During the period 2012 – 2017, the College and its activities were significantly influenced by rapid and continuous changes in the economic, technological and political environment, as well as the changes underway in Irish higher education. The College delivered on most of the stated strategic aims over the past five year cycle. However, given the economic climate, projected growth in student numbers was revised and a strategic decision was made to modify this aim and to achieve diversity through consolidation and collaboration. Therefore, the college did not substantially grow learner numbers and, as indicated, has decided to consolidate student numbers in the region of between 600 – 700 in total. It is expected that the College will not exceed those numbers in the next five years.

Therefore, the revised strategic aims for the period from 2018 to 2022 are as follows;

1. To consolidate the diversity of learners and growth in learner numbers within a student population of between 600 – 700 students.
2. To continue to develop a suite of relevant academic programmes and career-focused life-long learning alone and in partnership with other HECA Colleges.
3. To enrich the teaching and learning experience for all learners and staff.
4. To continue to employ and expand innovative approaches to programme support and delivery. To further strengthen external engagement and public confidence in the College.
5. To advance the governance structure and systems within the College.

Within that context, the college has successfully achieved a student population as set out in the strategic plan. In addition, the College has engaged in Programmatic Review and both revalidation and new validation, reporting of which will occur in the next AQR cycle. The College has continued to enhance Quality Assured approaches to blended learning and incorporated CPD initiatives to support lecturers with a particular focus on monitoring sectoral norms in terms of academic grading and standards. Likewise, the College has been active in participation in networked opportunities with a variety of agencies, including participation in QQI activities and also including, but not limited to

Programme Validation, Initial Access to Validation and Re-engagement panels. Likewise, members of faculty are actively engaged with relevant communities of practice, professional networks and professional accreditation bodies. Finally, the Strategic objectives spoke to the need to further advance the governance structure and systems within the College. In that regard, within the period of reference, a significant review was undertaken of the overall governance system including Quality Assurance structures and processes. This also resulted in significant changes which took formal effect in late 2019 and will fall into the next reporting period in terms of a review of their implementation and effectiveness.

Improvements and enhancements arising from internal quality improvement planning, review and monitoring processes or re-engagement.

The specified reporting period for this report is the first iteration of the AQR for the College and as such there is no previous formal AQR against which to benchmark performance. However, as indicated in the previous section, the college undertook significant change in terms of QA through the re-engagement process which culminated in formal re-engagement with QQI in 2019. The College's revised QAE structures, policies and procedures were approved by QQI on 12th September 2019, following an initial site visit in May 2019. In the period prior to the site visit, there was significant review and enhancement of previously agreed QA Policies and Procedures. Within the re-engagement appraisal process itself, the panel identified some concerns pertaining to the identification of groups or units responsible for the oversight of education and training, research and related activities and additional concerns pertaining to the provision of necessary information to staff and the public as required in usable formats. Within that context, the College was afforded an opportunity to address and respond to these concerns. As the issues were considered discreet, the panel proposed both mandatory changes and specific advice and much of the period between May and July of 2019 was devoted to addressing those issues. The Panel re-convened for a desktop review in July 2019 and while it provided some additional advice, most importantly, the panel recommended approval of the Colleges QA Policies and Procedures. We are pleased to report that it was the panel's view that ICHAS had comprehensively addressed the proposed mandatory changes and specific advice at that time.

<https://www.ggi.ie//sites/docs/ProviderDocumentsLibrary/PN00007/PRID-7-ApprovalReport-20190912.pdf>

Within that context, significant parts of the reporting period were spent reviewing previously approved QA Policies and Procedures. The College had undergone Institutional Review in 2011, wherein Policies and Procedures were agreed with QQI and which formed the basis of the College's functioning. However, the most recent review was undertaken within the context of QQI's revised general policies on Quality Assurance, as well as Core and Sector Specific Guidelines (QQI, 2016). Following review, the college re-drafted significant elements of existing policies and procedures and drafted some new material, where new policies or procedures needed to be developed to meet the revised standards required by QQI.

Following the initial site visit, significant time was devoted to further refining and responding to the very helpful feedback of the re-engagement panel as well as making the required changes, which the College was very happy to address. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manual was updated to reflect the findings of the panel and as a result, we believe the College has produced a more accessible set of policies and procedures which the College believes are far more robust and fit for purpose.

Please see the link to the reengagement panel's approval report for full information on their findings:

<https://www.ggi.ie//sites/docs/ProviderDocumentsLibrary/PN00007/PRID-7-ApprovalReport-20190912.pdf>

In summary, the College is confident that the Improvements and enhancements arising from this very significant period of planning and review of internal quality processes, supported by external expert review by an independent panel are significant and meet best national and international standards. However, in keeping with the principles set out by QQI (2016), it is vital that the learning associated with the implementation of these policies and procedures are monitored regularly and robustly. We look forward to the first formal review of effectiveness in the next AQR cycle.

Specific changes to QA system (policies and procedures) during the reporting period arising.

As indicated in the previous section, the QA policies and procedures were radically changed and are fundamentally different from previous QAE documentation. The Policies and Procedures were benchmarked against those of other Sectoral Colleges as well as a broader range of providers in both the University and Institute of Technology sector nationally and other providers internationally. They

have been determined by an Independent Panel of experts to be aligned with QQI requirements and standards. In that context, the entire documentation is fundamentally different and while many of the principles of governance and academic standards supporting student learning are consistent with previous documentation, the manner in which they are communicated has radically changed.

Contextual factors which impacted on QA system implementation

There have been no significant contextual change factors during the period of review. Ownership has remained consistent and there were no changes to the scope of provision required. In terms of the developments and enhancements of QAE policies and procedures, these occurred within the context of formal re-engagement with QQI, required under the 2012 legislation.

<https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Qualifications%20and%20Quality%20Assurance%20Act%202012.pdf>

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

This specified reporting period is the first iteration of the AQR for the college and as such there is no previous AQR, however prior to the reporting period the college undertook significant change in terms of QA through the reengagement process as set out in the previous section. The most recent formal external review of Quality Assurance for the College occurred in 2011- immediately before the formal establishment of QQI. That report (Nov. 2011) made a number of commendations, as follows –

- Capacity to improve and track record of continuous improvement.
- Determination to seek ways to improve.
- Ability to act quickly to enhance education provision once we see the need.
- New governance structure and the willingness to spread authority.
- Staff commitment to students.
- The movement to flexible and online delivery modes.

- The care in planning and developing the Blended Learning Model – well planned with a steady and careful execution.
- Strong links with real-world practice – a strong USP for the College.
- Commitment to local delivery so as to promote accessibility.
- Strong commitment to social values.
- Responsiveness to external feedback.
- The fact that students really do have a voice in the college.

The Panel also made a number of recommendations in three key areas – Public Confidence, Strategic Planning & Governance and Quality Assurance as follows -

RECOMMENDATIONS

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

- College should work to make the information that is made available to its various publics clearer and more easily understood.

STRATEGIC PLANNING & GOVERNANCE

- Panel were concerned about the movement to new subject areas and programme development which will be very demanding on available resources – panel recommended that we consider this move carefully and develop a solid development and action plan around this.
- College should develop a formal and systematic way of capturing feedback – strategic plan should be based on factual data.
- Involve more people in the strategic planning activities, especially the academic staff.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

- The formal judgement that will be made on quality assurance is that it is ‘substantially effective’. Panel advised that they only have four judgement options and that this is the nearest one but does not capture what they feel. In their opinion, the College has a road to travel in terms of its QA.
- Complete and embed QA systems asap. Panel acknowledge that much is still under development and many areas need to be made more explicit e.g., terms of reference of programme board.

- Formalise the student voice in formal governance systems.
- Make sure what we are doing matches general practice – need to benchmark out procedures against external peers and practice.
- Develop a more systematic system of review for QA.
- Improve information to students about their qualifications and professional options.
- Improve information to students in advance of joining the programme about the amount of work involved and the resources required.
- Improve feedback on assessment; circulate external examiner reports to stakeholders.
- Make a more concerted effort to draw academic staff into academic decision-making.
- Work harder to support students in finding placement.
- Review resources
 - Library; research and scholarly material
 - IT skills, academic support
 - Pastoral support including careers
 - IT access
- Improve method of informing out-centre staff about decisions and work to enhance their awareness of what's required.
- Given that there is so much still to do, panel will be formally recommending that ICHAS has a mini review of effectiveness of its QA procedures earlier than the normal 7 year period.
- All recommendations that arose from Programmatic Review need to be included in the QA Action Plan/Enhancement Plan.

Over the intervening period, these recommendations were actioned as follows-

Public Confidence

A fundamental review of all forms of public information relating to the College, its programmes or other issues was undertaken, which resulted in a revision of Website Content, a review of paper-based information as well as marketing material. In addition, this material again became the focus of attention in the Self Evaluation processes supporting the 2019 re-engagement process and a formal policy and set of procedures relating to Public Information was incorporated into the 2019 QAE material, which is now also publicly available on the ICHAS website – see www.ichas.ie

STRATEGIC PLANNING & GOVERNANCE

In relation to Strategic Planning and development, the panel recommended that we consider this move carefully and develop a solid development and action plan around this. This recommendation resulted in a Strategic Plan from 2012 -2017 and a subsequent Strategic Plan which spans 2017 - 2022 (referred to earlier).

It was also recommended that the College enhance systematic means of capturing and utilising feedback from stakeholders to inform planning and decision making. In that regard, the College reviewed and enhanced feedback structures for students and Lecturers as well as external stakeholders. The initial focus was on embedding formal Class Representative structures from 2011 onwards. In addition, the use of individual Student feedback through structured Module and End of Semester Evaluations was revised from paper-based evaluation forms to online formats, with a view to enhancing participation. In the most recent QAE developments as part of re-engagement, the audit and feedback loops were more systematically described and updated.

The following Chart outlines the range of sources and stakeholders involved in contributing to the Documentary Evidence of the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance & Enhancement activities.



It was also recommended to broaden the range of participants involved in strategic planning activities; the College has moved in the intervening period to broaden participation in Academic Council as well as Governing Authority. Faculty participation in Programme-Faculty Boards has always been a feature of College Decision making. Faculty and Programme Boards have always included Lecturer and Student membership. Membership of these bodies was reviewed and updated in 2019 and the updated Terms of Reference for membership of all these key decision-making bodies within the College are set out in the following links:

Programme Boards - <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Terms-of-Reference-for-Programme-Boards.pdf>

Academic Council - <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Terms-of-Reference-for-Academic-Council.pdf>

Governing Authority - <https://ichas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Terms-of-Reference-for-Governing-Authority.pdf>

QUALITY ASSURANCE

In the 2011 review, the panel reported that the College's QA systems were 'substantially effective' but recommended that QA systems and processes needed more work in terms of development and being embedded within the culture of the College life.

They offered specific advice around QA systems development, benchmarking, and review, which the College was very happy to act on.

In the intervening period, the College has completed a formal review of QA policies, procedures, and the management of QA itself, which included Governance structures, processes, and systems. These aspects of QAE were formally reviewed in 2019 and agreed with QQI as part of re-engagement.

Please see link to the reengagement pane approval report for more information

<https://www.ggi.ie//sites/docs/ProviderDocumentsLibrary/PN00007/PRID-7-ApprovalReport-20190912.pdf>

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
<u>Autumn Examinations Boards</u>	30/08/2019 - ICHAS Internal Moderation 05/09/2019 - ICHAS Pre-Examination Board 12/09/2019- Exam board 19/09/2019 - Release of results 03/10/2019 - Date for Appeals 10/10/2019 - Appeals Committee
<u>Spring Examinations boards</u>	30/01/2020 - ICHAS Internal Moderation 04/02/2020 - ICHAS Pre-Examination Board 05/02/2020 - Spring Exam Board 12/02/2020 - Release of results 26/02/2020 - Date for Appeals 11/03/2020 - Appeals Committee
<u>Summer Examinations Boards</u>	27/05/2020 - ICHAS Internal Moderation 02/06/2020 - ICHAS Pre-Examination Board 10/06/2020 - Exam Board

	<p>17/06/2020 - Release of results</p> <p>01/07/2020 - Date for Appeals</p> <p>15/07/2020 - Appeals Committee</p>
<u>Autumn Examinations Boards</u>	<p>19/08/2020 - ICHAS Internal Moderation</p> <p>26/08/2020 - ICHAS Pre-Examination Board</p> <p>03/09/2020 - Exam Board</p> <p>17/09/2020 - Release of Results</p> <p>31/09/2020 - Date for Appeals</p> <p>07/10/2020 - Appeals Committee</p>
<u>Academic Council Meeting</u>	<p>05/02/2020</p> <p>10/06/2020</p> <p>03/09/2020</p>
<u>Student Representative Meeting</u>	<p>10/10/2019</p> <p>14/11/2019</p> <p>16/01/2020</p> <p>03/04/2020</p>
<u>Programme Boards – 2 per semester</u>	<p>12/09/2019</p> <p>05/02/2020</p> <p>10/06/2020</p> <p>03/09/2020</p>
<u>Meetings of the Board of Directors 3 per year</u>	<p>1/09/2019</p> <p>11/12/2019</p> <p>01/04/2020</p>
<u>Governing Authority Meeting 3 per year</u>	<p>01/08/2019</p> <p>05/12/2019</p> <p>05/02/2020</p>
Quality and Standards Committee	<p>13-01-2020</p> <p>11-05-2020</p> <p>14-09-2020</p>

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

No new appointments had been made during this reporting period, as previously mentioned prior to this reporting period the college went through the reengagement process, as part of this process and the self-evaluation process the College identified a number of roles that would strengthen the existing Quality Assurance approach within the college, and as a result the following appointments and changes were made.

- Appointed an Independent Chair to Academic Council.
- Appointed a Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officer.
- Established a Quality and Standards Committee.
- Revised Governance Structures within the college.

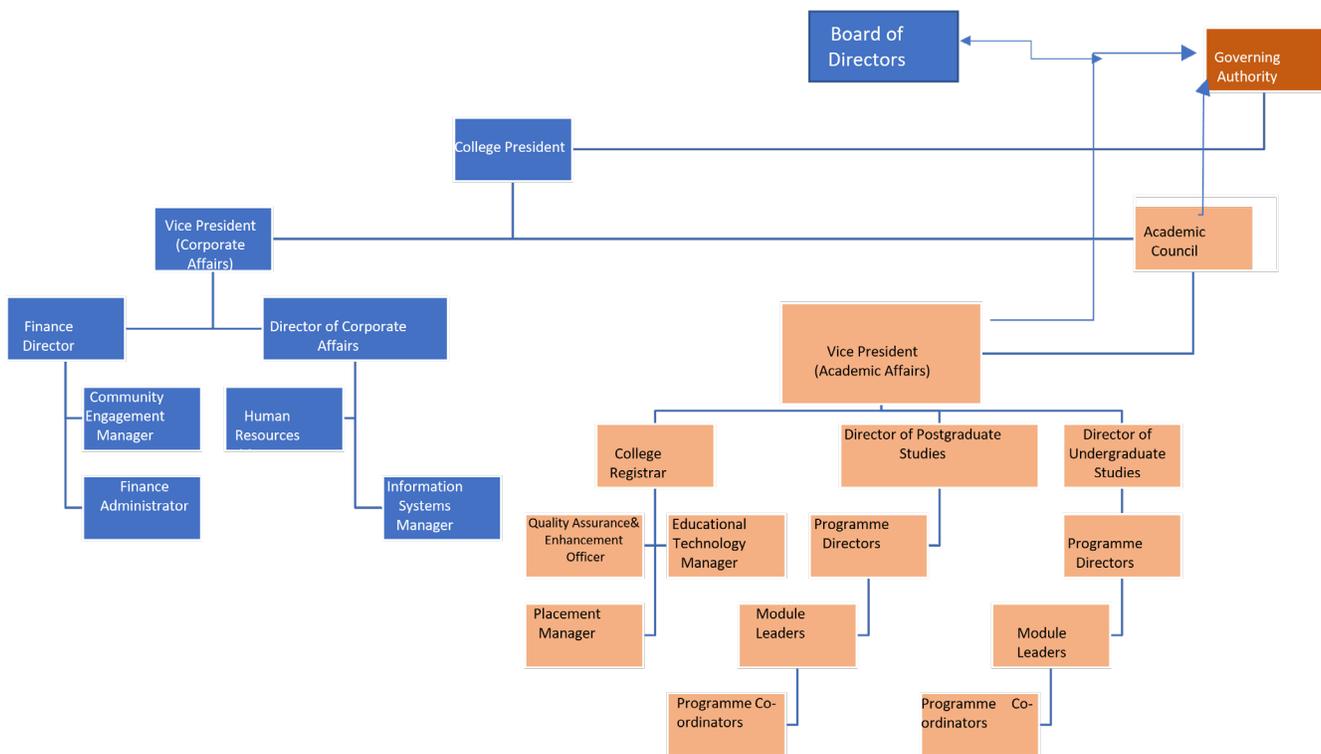


Figure 4 - Key Personnel

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
Internal Review Undergraduate Programmes	June 2020	Pending PAEC Approval
Internal Review MA programmes	June 2020	Pending PAEC Approval
BA (Hons) Validation	September 2020	
Annual Programme Reports	July 2020	

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels³ involved in IQA

(i) Expert Review Team/Panel Size and Related Processes

Guide

Details in respect of review/evaluation processes that concluded during the reporting period should be set out below. Please use whole numbers rather than percentages.

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes	1	ICHAS					Re-engagement
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes	1						
Desk reviews	1 (as part of the overall process=						
Virtual processes							
Average panel size for each process type*							

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

³ 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

Prior to the reporting period the college undertook significant change in terms of Quality Assurance through the reengagement process as set out in the previous section. Below details the colleges responses to the mandatory changes and specific advice that the college has implemented as part of the reengagement process:

Response to the Report of the Re-Engagement Panel, Dated 9th August, 2019

The College warmly welcomes the report of the independent panel convened to consider the College's reengagement with QQI. While we are very grateful for the commendations made by the Panel, we are equally appreciative of both the Mandatory Changes and elements of Specific Advice, which the College is happy to unreservedly accept and has acted upon within the process. They are all both insightful and constructive.

ICHAS is particularly pleased that the Panel has acknowledged the College's track record of certification and its established good standing in the Irish Higher Education sector, the commitment of the College to facilitating widened participation in third level education in its disciplinary domain, the substantial investment in both technology and expertise related to blended learning and our endeavours to deliver blended learning programmes appropriately to both the subject matter and achievement of learning outcomes. We were equally pleased that the Panel noted our commitment to flexibility for the benefit of our diverse cohort of learners and recognised the College's ethos of and commitment to inclusivity. We experienced the entire process, which includes the preparatory and support work undertaken by QQI up to and including the Site Visit by the Panel and the support from QQI in terms of providing clarity and responding to queries following the process, as one that was driven by a commitment to excellence in Higher Education and one that epitomised all that is positive about peer review. It was robust and fair.

We wish to acknowledge the time and commitment given by the Panel members to the review process and the professional manner of the engagement. While we welcome the overall recommendation to QQI's Programmes and Awards Executive Committee to approve the College's QAE procedures, we also

want to note our appreciation for the collegial tone of the process. The College's response to both the Mandatory Changes and elements of Specific Advice follows.

Response in respect of Mandatory Changes

At the time of the site visit, the panel noted that a number of changes were required. The panel availed of the option to defer its decision in relation to recommending approval (or otherwise) and therefore this welcome decision allowed the College an opportunity to address these issues within a six-week period.

The Panel reconvened on 30th July 2019 to evaluate the supplementary evidence submitted by ICHAS.

The 7 Required Changes are summarised as follows:

1. Clarify the roles and responsibilities as well as reporting relationships of Programme Directors.
2. Address the inconsistency in the application documentation in relation to 50% vs.100% shareholding.
3. The document in its current form contains unnecessary levels of background and contextual information and is not consistently written in a user-friendly style. It needs to be comprehensively edited to ensure that it is informational in tone and uses plain language.
4. Policies and procedures need to be comprehensively reviewed to remove unnecessary duplication, and to reflect a consistent format. ICHAS are advised that good practice would be to have a single, clearly written source from which the student handbook content is directly extracted (or hyperlinked to).
5. The revised version of the QA manual must include clearer procedures in relation to rechecks, reviews, and appeals.

College Response to Mandatory Changes Required

The College was happy to accept and address the required changes. Many related to issues of providing clarity and editing to ensure consistency and avoidance of unnecessary duplication. The College was very grateful for the opportunity to address these matters in the time period available. We were grateful that the Panel believed that these issues were relatively discreet and in the panel's view could be addressed quickly. While the College acknowledges the very significant work undertaken by the

leadership team within a tight timeframe, we were, nonetheless, very appreciative for the opportunity to address the issues identified by the Panel. What is most gratifying is the fact that the Panel was satisfied that each of these reasonable requirements were met when the Panel reconvened.

Governance and Management of Quality

As indicated the College was pleased to formally agree QAE policies and procedures with QQI in 2019 as part of the Re-engagement process. In doing so the Expert panel required a number of changes to the documentation presented to them for consideration. The following were highlighted as needing attention within the process-

- Include clear and specific Terms of Reference for all units of governance within the college.

These should include:

- Purpose, including scope of responsibilities.
 - Membership
 - Roles and responsibilities of the officers of the unit
 - Operating procedures
 - Powers of decision-making
 - Reporting relationships
- Make visible the Board of Directors within the structure, using appropriately clear and specific information as per the previous point.
 - Provide evidence of the resolution to delegate functional responsibility to the Governing Authority.

Within the Reengagement process the College indicated that it was happy to accept and address the required changes and did so. The College noted that many of these points related to issues of providing clarity and editing to ensure consistency and avoidance of unnecessary duplication. The College was very grateful for the opportunity to address these matters in the time period available. We were grateful that the Panel believed that these issues were relatively discreet and in the panel's view could be addressed quickly. The College was very appreciative for the opportunity to address the issues identified by the Panel.

In addition, the Panel offered the following specific advice:

- a. Consider strengthening the Terms of Reference for the Academic Council, for example, making explicit that its role is to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the institution.
- b. Develop a performance management policy and associated procedures, and ensure information is provided on this through the recruitment process.
- c. Identify whether peer observations are developmental, or a practice associated with performance management. If the latter, ensure it is clear how peer observation integrates with HR processes.
- d. Review risks associated with contracting out lecturing services, with regard to the accountability for QA of lecturing staff, with particular regard to the binding nature of the QA procedures for those who come under the remit of a contract for services.
- e. Clarify in the revised QAM whether members of teaching staff will sit on the academic council following their selection by peers, or whether all will be ex officio members.
- f. Explicitly state in the QAM that the Governing Authority is appointed by the Board of Directors, and that therefore all acts and things done by and decisions made by a Governing Authority, or in the name of, or on behalf of the College with the express or implied authority of the Governing Authority, shall be deemed to have been done or made by the Company.
- g. Note explicitly in the Programme Development Procedure that the Board of Management should be consulted.

College Response to the elements of specific advice

The College was happy to address the first 4 elements of specific advice from the panel following the site Visit. The Panel was satisfied that each of these points of advice had been incorporated in the relevant documentation prior to their desktop review in July 2019.

In relation to the final 3 elements of specific advice, received after the Desktop review, the College was also happy to accept them unreservedly and notes the following in relation to each point.

- i. Clarify in the revised QAM whether members of teaching staff will sit on the academic council following their selection by peers, or whether all will be ex officio members.

College Response

The College was very pleased to accept this advice. The QAE Manual was revised to distinguish between ex-officio members who are teaching staff and those Members of Faculty who are

elected by their peers. <https://ichas.website/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Terms-of-Reference-for-Academic-Council.pdf>

- ii. Explicitly state in the QAM that the Governing Authority is appointed by the Board of Directors, and that therefore all acts and things done by and decisions made by a Governing Authority, or in the name of, or on behalf of the College with the express or implied authority of the Governing Authority, shall be deemed to have been done or made by the Company.

College Response

The College was very pleased to accept this advice. The QAE Manual was revised to include this statement. <https://ichas.website/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Terms-of-Reference-for-Governing-Authority.pdf>

- iii. Note explicitly in the Programme Development Procedure that the Board of Management should be consulted.

College Response

The College was very pleased to accept this advice. The QAE Manual was revised to include this statement. <https://ichas.website/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Procedures-associated-with-Programme-Design-and-Development.pdf>

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

ICHAS continuously monitors issues in relation to academic integrity formally in terms of reviews, revalidations, External Examining, internal moderation, programme boards and examinations boards.

ICHAS is committed to collaborative engagement with students, staff, faculty on supporting and assuring academic integrity and promoting a culture of learning in that regard the college has offered the following supports to students and staff.

Assessment Review Process

The College has committed to establishing a scheduled assessment review process involving all relevant faculty each semester before the commencement of teaching. The objective of this process is to review the previous year's assessment strategy, tasks and processes, following which the College formally agrees and set the assessments for the coming academic year to be available for student for their first class, this will provide clarity for both the lecturer and student in relation to expectations for the module.

The event also provides the opportunity for training in terms of using information technology as a tool for grading e.g. VeriCite reports. It also provides an opportunity for devising marking matrixes, agreeing model answers etc.

The process affords faculty the opportunity to analyse and discuss the previous year's assignment and ensure that alterations its assignments are consistence with the programme validation documents.

In addition, the event provides opportunities for comparative analysis of grades and academic performances against previous trends within the college but also at a sectoral level.

VeriCite

ICHAS is cognisant that students may be attending college for the first time or may be coming back to education after some time out. In that regard students on all undergraduate programmes will engage in a research and inquiry module in the first year of their degree programme and the College also offers students the opportunity to attend a writing skills workshop at the beginning of each year.

ICHAS also uses anti plagiarism software in the form of VeriCite. This software is not only a tool which supports grading and the determination of originality, but also provides a valuable learning tool for students as it allows student to view their similarity score prior to submitting the final assignments and affording students to alter referencing etc. where issues may arise.

National Academic Integrity Network

The Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences is proud to have representatives from the College on the National Academic Integrity Network which was established by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in November 2019. This was in response to the introduction of the amended legislation as set out in the QQA (Education and Training) Amendment Act (2019). The amended Act provides a statutory basis for the prosecution of those who facilitate learner cheating, including the advertisement, or publication of advertisements, of these services, by companies such as 'essay mills', or by individuals.

Purpose

The purpose of the Network is to advise, raise awareness and offer guidance on the following:

- Current landscape of academic integrity in Ireland
- Current approaches to prevention, detection and penalising of academic misconduct and the roles and responsibilities of identifying the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders in addressing this issue: Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), learners and QQI;
- A strategy for HEIs to engage with enrolled learners as key partners in the embedding of a positive culture of academic integrity within the institution.
- Good practice with regard to;
 - Fostering an institutional culture of academic integrity.
 - Preventing and addressing suspected cases of academic misconduct.
- A working methodology and procedures for the reporting and prosecution of instances of cheating within Higher Education Institutions that are offences under the QQA (Education and Training) Amendment Act (2019).
- A national communications strategy for all stakeholders with a primary focus on learners
- Definitions of commonly used terms in the field of academic integrity
- The identification of areas for enhancement to support and grow a culture of academic integrity in HEIs nationally.

For more information, please read the NAIN Terms of Reference

<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/FINAL%20ToR%20National%20Academic%20Integrity%20Network%20January%202020.pdf>

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 Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Planned actions and indicators <i>Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.</i> <i>If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).</i>
	Develop a Policy and Procedure on the retention of recordings.	Academic Council, Registrar, Quality and Standard Committee, Garda Vetting Officer, Quality Assurance and enhancement officer, Information Technology department
	Review the current Garda Vetting Policies and Procedures	Academic Council, Registrar, Quality and Standard Committee, Garda Vetting Officer, Quality Assurance and enhancement officer
	Develop a Code of Conduct for Virtual Learning Policy and Procedure	Vice President (Academic Affairs)QAE officer, Academic Council, Registrar, Quality and Standard Committee, Information Technology department.
	Develop a Protocol for proposing new policies and procedures	QAE officer, Academic Council, Registrar, Quality and Standard Committee

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
MA Programmes Review and Validation	2020	
Complete BA / BA (Hons) Review & Validation Process	2020	
Quarterly QAE Audits	ongoing	

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

MA in Addiction Counselling review

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

Case Study:

This Case relates to the contingency management processes associated with the Covid-19 restrictions in Higher Educations from March 2020 to the end of the reporting Period (September 2020). It will specifically focus on the actions taken to ensure compliance with Public Health Guidelines, the contingency measures taken to ensure continuity of education and ensuring the quality of the teaching and learning experiences as well as assessment processes.

Context

Throughout the month of March, a series of announcements were made by Government relating to Public Health Measures designed to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 . The initial announcement in relation to the closure of educational establishments was made on March 12th – with an announcement by An Taoiseach, closing all schools and Colleges until March 29th. This was followed on March 27th with a further announcement with continued requirements to ‘Stay at Home’. The College worked in collaboration with the HE sector as well as closely with QQI throughout the period and followed advice from Government, Public Health services as well as ongoing helpful updates provided by QQI.

Actions Taken

In early March, in consort with other Colleges within the HECA group, and in consultation with QQI, the College’s Management team in conjunction with the Academic Council considered a series of measures in relation to distancing options as well as Health & Safety requirements and worked on the design of plans to accommodate in-person classes while simultaneously trying to ensure as far as practicable the safety of the College Community. It also purchased Persona Safety equipment and drafted a series of guidelines for safe engagement.

On March 10th the Management team with the members of the Academic governance team at the College to consider the implications of a physical Closure of the College. The Management team identified a COVID Officer to co-ordinate COVID-19 related responses within the College and Training sessions were developed for all staff as well as students.

Collectively it was decided to move all possible teaching to Online engagement and develop a listing of class engagements likely to require in person engagement and re-scheduled any classes requiring in person attendance to beyond March 29th. The situation was discussed and agreed with stakeholders including members of Faculty and Student Representative groups as well as PSRB's associated with the College's programmes. Following those consultations, a public announcement was posted on the College Website on 12th March to cover the period up to March 29th. From that date onwards the Management team, under the co-ordination of the COVID Officer met weekly to monitor the situation and engaged in a series of stakeholder consultations.

Following the March 27th announcement extending the Containment measures, and updates received from QQI on the same date, the College made a strategic decision to move all teaching and learning activities online, with the exception of vital work-based learning. In the case of work-based learning, the College agreed to develop a training initiative for both students and Service Providers to support them in the provision of technologically facilitated therapeutic engagement. It worked with relevant PSRB's to offer such training over a 4-week period. A total of 152 accredited members of PSRB's engaged in this training initiative, with further free training offered to 43 Guidance Counsellors to support their work as well as to students. All these initiatives were offered through the Online Teaching & Learning infrastructure, which had been developed initially for the delivery of Blended Learning programmes.

As indicated the plan originally devised to re-schedule in person teaching to a period beyond March 29th when it was anticipated that closures would be reversed was modified to refer to all class-based teaching. In addition, an online 'drop in' facility was established for both faculty and students which operated weekly to support the College Community dealing with any emerging challenges related to the revised arrangements.

The Management team at the College continued to closely monitor the situation regarding Covid 19 and prepared a revised Contingency Plan, which took effect following the Government announcement of March 27th. The revised plan emphasised the 'balanced card' approach taken by the college to try to ensure the optimal educational experience of students which could be continued as seamlessly as possible. A summary of the key actions taken in relation to Teaching & Learning adjustments; Work-Based Learning and Assessments are set out below.

KEY TEACHING & LEARNING ADJUSTMENTS

- Students were required to take scheduled classes from home, to avoid any unnecessary public congregation in either campus.
- Information System Services and the Educational Technology Departments worked with any students (or faculty members) who had not utilised online Virtual Classroom (Adobe Connect/ Zoom) platforms previously to familiarise them with the technological requirements. To that end the College Community were provided with a range of online support material by the College's Educational Technology Department to familiarise themselves with the System and the types of IT requirements necessary for engagement (laptops, headsets, broadband connectivity etc.).
- Module requirements which had been scheduled as Workshops or which require mandatory class-based attendance, were rescheduled as Synchronous Blended Learning with lecturers delivering classes either from the college or from home.
- The College continued class schedules in line with their original scheduled times.
- All classes were recorded and available on the LMS.

KEY ASPECTS OF WORK-BASED LEARNING

- In relation to Placements and Work-Based learning, students were asked to adhere to HSE/Government advice in relation to safety and wellbeing and any challenges were reviewed on an individual (Case by Case basis).
- Additional contact times and supports were made available through the Placement Manager and Programme Coordinators.
- Students, in agreement with PSRB's were allowed, following a period of training to engage in Therapeutically Facilitated Therapeutic Engagement for the completion of hours of therapeutic engagement.

ASSESSMENT ISSUES

- Assessment tasks and schedules were modified where necessary and advice in relation to specific assessment Tasks provided on the LMS, with the alterations designed to minimise disruption to students, but the overriding concern was be public health concerns and the College followed all relevant Public Health Guidance.

LESSONS LEARNED

This period was undoubtedly a period of significant turmoil and arguably one which will define the direction of the country for many years to come, with a significant number of deaths and illness with profound challenges to the public health system as well as the wider society and economy. At a macro level, perhaps the biggest lesson, thus far, have been ones of societal transformation, adaptability, survival, resilience as well as hope. At a micro level and within the College's micro system, there have also been some key lessons. Many reflect those identified at the macro level. As a small College, we have been fortunate enough to have had systems in place which facilitated transformative processes. We have had a College Community, which has proven remarkably adaptable. As a college, we have survived and thus proven resilient and we look forward in hope. From a learning perspective, the following highlight some of the specific learnings encountered.

1. The College was fortunate to have had processes approved which enabled the use of synchronous teaching methods as well as online assessment methods and/or assessment submission. This facility ensured continuity of education – albeit in a modified form from what either students or the College anticipated.
2. The QAE structures were both sufficiently robust but also adaptable to be able to support extraordinary and unusual as well as arguably unpredictable forced changes.
3. There was a range of collegial support available from both PSRB's as well as regulatory agencies, including QQI which proved adaptable and supportive.
4. The QAE developed for Blended Learning Programmes provided lessons that should support online delivery and that while there is a clear distinction drawn by ENQA (2018) between Online Courses and Online Programme delivery, there are also significant areas of overlap and commonality, where one could inform the development of the other.
5. Faculty and students are more adaptable than anticipated and accommodate changes more willingly than perhaps some might have expected.
6. The College had a robust HR infrastructure in place and was able to leverage the combined expertise of Academic Staff who operate largely on a Lecturer/Practitioner basis, a highly dedicated Administration and Support team, well capable of providing both academic and pastoral support.

7. Perhaps most importantly, in the circumstances, the College as a small college, was fortunate to have put in place a combined Educational Technology and Information Systems Department a number of years ago, which was highly influential in terms of bridging the gap between academic expertise and technological engagement.
8. There was an unanticipated level of support for the online drop-in support structures for the pastoral support of both students and staff.
9. Academic or corporate governance meetings worked well remotely, but clearly mechanisms for verification of digital signatures need some greater consideration.
10. There is a need to have greater clarity around the policy and procedures for digital recording and storage of teaching or meeting sessions online, complying with GDPR requirements and the protection of Intellectual copyright.

It is important to note that these key lessons have not yet been formally appraised and these, therefore, comprise the initial analysis of lessons learned, gleaned from Student Representative meetings, dialogue with members of Lecturing and Administrative staff. They will be more formally considered for the next Review Period report.