International School of Business

2022

Annual Quality Report (Institution)
Reporting Period 2020-2021

Annual Quality Report International School of Business
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM
Reporting Period 2020-2021

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.

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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 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

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[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 International School of Business for the reporting period 1 September 2020 – 31 August 2021. It has been approved by Senior Management and the Academic Board and is submitted by Francis Kelly, Director, ISB Dublin.

International School of Business (ISB) was established in June 2009 as a private limited company. Its remit was to become a bespoke private provider as a niche expert in the provision of "semester abroad" education. This offering consisted of a suite of certified business courses with English language support classes enhanced by a range of social and cultural extracurricular activities to a range of European partner institutions. It also obtained a licence to operate the CEA Study Abroad brand to offer its programmes in Dublin thereby allowing American students study at ISB with their fellow Europeans. ISB is a member of the Irish Council for International Students (ICOS), the American Study Abroad Providers in Ireland (ASAPI), and the Forum on Education.

Profile & Ethos

The compact size of ISB is a hallmark of the College. This small size relates to the number of students, staff and the QQI programmes on offer. ISB operates from a single core with 5 full-time staff and 15 – 20 part-time lecturing staff. The international student population of approximately 150 – 200 is refreshed each semester and primarily consists of mainland European and US students.

Small class numbers and a highly interactive student-lecturer relationship mean that students are firmly placed at the forefront of learning. There is a friendly and communicative culture in which students are known individually to their lecturers and management.

A key feature of the school is its emphasis on cultural and educational immersion and to this end it organises a range of study visits, guest speakers, social activities, and educational excursions to complement the traditional curriculum.

This atmosphere and positive working environment are greatly enhanced by an active student council and "class rep" system that meets twice per semester formally.

Pastoral Care: A pastoral approach to student welfare forms a key philosophy in the College. An emergency contact phone is operated by staff on a 24/7 basis throughout their semester. This is backed up by close working relationships with their sending institutions and a system of academic supports and accommodations.

Business model: ISB deals directly, on a business-to-business model, with a network of European partner institutions of higher education with which it has memoranda of understanding. Each partner sends a cohort of students, on a semester basis, to populate its programmes. Two semesters of fourteen weeks duration are run each year in Autumn and Spring across three QQI accredited Level 6 Special Purpose awards:

Certificate in Business for International Learners   Level 6 Special Purposes Award
Certificate in Sales and Management   Level 6 Special Purposes Award
Certificate in Digital Marketing and Media   Level 6 Special Purposes Award

ISB also offers a range of customised programmes to European and American institutions.

Faculty: Another distinguishing feature of ISB is that its lecturers are contracted on a part-time basis. ISB benefits greatly from the participation of its staff in the professional and educational networks that they have established in their other academic and business employment. This peer interaction is encouraged and facilitated formally and informally during the academic year.

This lends itself to programme development and enhancement: As the College applies in-depth business and commercial knowledge to its programme design and content it benefits greatly from its faculty who have a strong industry background and networks. This also brings a high degree of insight to the classroom and ensures that the curriculum is both academically grounded, current, and relevant to employers and market conditions.

Principles: Supporting empowerment, promoting equality and inclusiveness, tolerance, and celebration of diversity, learning to learn and working ethically in partnerships are the principles that underpin the ethos of education at ISB.

ISB successfully completed reengagement with QQI in 2020. This demanding but rewarding process resulted in a revised and improved set of Quality Assurance polices in the form of our Quality Assurance manual. This new version will be cited and referenced with hyperlinks throughout this report as they contain the information specifically sought by QQI in this AQR exercise.

Developing the AQR

This report was developed through a series of meetings by a management that drew on the combined data in three seminal internal documents: the ISB Annual Academic Report (AAR), the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report (QAER) and our Quality Assurance Manual (2.1). Together these documents reflect the regular application, monitoring and enhancement of quality assurance at ISB. This AQR has been co-written and approved by the Senior Management Team of the institution.

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

Having recently had its quality assurance policies endorsed by QQI. A narrative summary of ISBs Governance and Management of quality is provided below and further details can be found in the links here which relate specifically to ISBs a) Structure, Governance & Organisation and b) Quality Assurance Policies and procedures (Ch 2 & 3)

Quality Assurance of structure, governance, and organisation at ISB has been informed by the following QQI Quality Assurance Documents:

- *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for use by all Providers* (QQI 2016)

- *Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines*: *Statutory quality assurance guidelines for independent / private providers coming to QQI on a voluntary basis* (QQI 2016)

- *The Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education & Training to International Learners* (QQI 2015)

The following chart illustrates ISB's organisational structure and responsibilities:
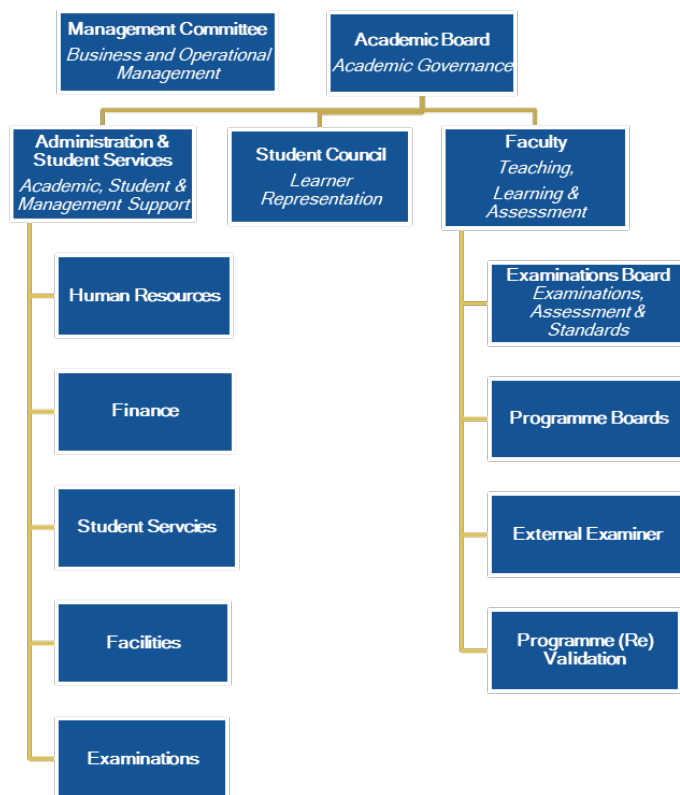
Quality Assurance and Enhancement Resources and Structures

The governance structures at ISB have been designed to facilitate the integration of quality assurance activities with strategic planning and operational management processes on an ongoing basis. This requires the allocation of resources, financial and human, commensurate with the terms of reference of the following QA bodies within ISB. The links below will provide further detail:

1. The Management Committee
2. The Academic Board
3. The Student Council
4. Faculty
5. Stakeholders
6. Examinations Board
7. Programme Boards

Representation of learners and external stakeholders

The Student Council is a body directly elected from the learner population, and representative of different nationalities and programmes. Elections take place at the beginning of each academic semester. The Student Council meets twice per semester. The Student Council first meets on its own and then meets with the College Director, Academic Director and Assistant Directors. These meetings are chaired by one of the Assistant College Directors, with the agenda directed by a set of predetermined headings including academic issues, teaching and learning, facilities, sports and social activities. The minutes of all meetings are recorded and issued within 48 hours to the representatives of the Student Council for agreement/amendment and dissemination to the student body. Please see the above link (#3) for further information.

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

ISB is not involved in any collaborative or transnational provision as defined by QQI's Guidelines on Collaborative Provision.

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

Programme development and approval at ISB occurs according to the most recent QQI Policy related to the validation and review of programmes, namely, QQI's Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training, (2017). The development of new programmes is conducted systematically in line with our approved policies and procedures as laid out in our quality assurance manual sections 3.6 to 3.8.

This process, and the proposed timeline that must be included in any Terms of Reference submitted to QQI for programme approval, ensure that mechanisms for timely consultation with internal and external stakeholders are considered.

While the above links provide full details, a summary of programme developmental and approval is also provided below.

The Academic Board is the body within the school that makes the ultimate decision as to whether a new programme will be proposed for validation to QQI. Once the Academic Board approves the proposed new programme concept, it will then delegate the responsibility to fully develop it to the Management Committee under the auspices of the Academic Director and an agreed Development Team and team leader. The Development Team Leader, guided by the relevant QQI policy documents (*Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training*, QQI, November 2017) will develop the programme addressing the following elements:

1. Philosophy and aims of the programme
2. Relevance of the programme to Irish, European, and international labour markets
3. Relevance of the programme to ISB's mission, strategic plan, and other programmes
4. Objectives of the programme and its constituent modules
5. Structure, aims and learning outcomes for each subject and module
6. Mapping of the programme standards of knowledge, skills, and competence to the appropriate level on the NFQ Grid of Level Indicators
7. Teaching, learning and assessment procedures for delivering the stated learning outcomes of the programme
8. Fair, valid, reliable, progressive, and transparent assessment measures appropriate to the learners on the programme
9. Mode of delivery and contact hours
10. Subject syllabus templates including indicative weekly content, resources, and assessments
11. Pedagogy relevant to the programme
12. Human Resources: Faculty recruitment (see 14.1.1) and Curricula Vitae of all staff associated with the proposed programme
13. Industrial or other relevant links
14. Programme management procedures including programmatic review
15. Admissions criteria including prerequisites and recognition of certified prior learning
16. Impact of the programme on ISB's physical resources and support facilities
17. Impact and amendments to existing QA policy
18. Financial implications of offering the programme

19. Scan of similar or related programmes offered by other providers
20. Consultation with relevant stakeholders and peers, including awarding bodies
21. Satisfactory provision for learner access, transfer, and progression

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

ISB prides itself on full, open, clear, and timely commination with its learners regarding all issues which includes admission, progression, RPL and certification. This is achieved through three main instruments:

- The Student Handbook
- Predeparture e-mails
- Academic induction

The ISB policy on Access Transfers and Progression was formed by observing NQA/QQI's 2003 *Policy & Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training (Restated in 2015)*.

ISB fulfils its legal obligations in this area by following the QQI guidelines (2003/2015) whose legal framework and function are founded in the Quality & Qualifications Education and Training Act (2012).

Due to the international nature of ISB students it avails of the services of NARIC Ireland for advice on academic recognition of non-domestic qualifications, where required.

As mentioned above a principle of the ISB policy is the provision of clear information for learners to make timely and informed decisions regarding their access, transfer, and progression onto, from and within programmes. This is done through ISB's various media including brochure, website, in-person presentations at partner institutions, student handbook and on-site induction and orientation.

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

ISB is not a designated awarding body. All awards are made by QQI at level 6 for Special Purposes Awards.

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

This section provides specific details of how our institution quality assures teaching and learning illustrated through the following links to our quality assurance manual and a summary:

SECTION 4. QUALITY ASSURED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS (LINK)

SECTION 5. ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES: CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT (LINK)

SECTION 6. ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES: WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS (LINK)

SECTION 7. ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES: PRACTICAL EXAMINATIONS (LINK)

SECTION 9. POLICY ON REPEAT ASSESSMENTS (LINK)

SECTION 10. EXTERNAL EXAMINING AT ISB (LINK)

SECTION 11. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS (LINK)

SECTION 12. APPEALS REVIEW (LINK)

SECTION 13. ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY POLICY (LINK)

SECTION 14. QUALITY ASSURANCE OF TEACHING STAFF / NON-TEACHING STAFF (LINK)

A key strength and a hallmark of the educational standard at ISB is the College's compact size, both in learner numbers and faculty. Small class numbers and a highly interactive learner-lecturer relationship mean that students are firmly placed at the forefront of learning.

ISB's vision is of a safe but demanding community of learning, where effective and imaginative teaching and learning approaches are fostered and supported; where learners engage with and learn from fellow learners from diverse backgrounds and cultures; and where teachers and learners feel challenged, rewarded and mutually respected. The strategy outlined below is designed to be programme appropriate, aimed at an identifiable learner market and provide regular checkpoints for faculty to feed into programme development.

The current teaching and learning policy of ISB is rooted in traditional classroom pedagogy and is explained further in 16.4 below. While this policy includes and endorses the use of digital supports and online research tools in its existing programmes they could not be considered as blended learning. However, this does not exclude a provision for blended learning in future new programmes that may be proposed for validation.

ISB is an academic community based on the principles of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Academic integrity is a core value which ensures respect for the academic reputation of ISB, its students, faculty and staff. ISB expects that students will learn in an environment where they work independently in the pursuit of knowledge, conduct themselves in an honest and ethical manner and respect the intellectual work of others.

ISB policies in this area have been informed by amended legislation (2019), QQI Policies and its Green Paper (2018) "Assessment of Learners and Learning" and industry best practice from a) liaisons with peers and b) The Forum (National Forum for Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education).

The following ISB policies on external examining have been guided and informed by the QQI document "Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining" (2015, QQI).

As a quality assured institution ISB has integrated this External Examiner policy into its overall quality assurance system and the reports of the External Examiner are a key mechanism in monitoring and enhancing quality at ISB.

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

The international learner mix enriches the campus and the experience of learners at ISB, but it also requires additional and tailored supports. A pastoral approach to student welfare forms a key philosophy in the College. A range of learning support mechanisms are put in place for the learner, as outlined below, whereby the reference numbers (17.1.1 etc) relate to a specific policy in the Quality Assurance Manual:

Pre-programme Support

Information, advice, and guidance are provided to potential students through presentations in partner institutions, email communication and the student handbook (sent a few weeks before the semester begins). As part of its holistic approach to student wellbeing, the College actively helps students to source accommodation in Dublin and provides them with a detailed Accommodation Guide (see Appendix 6) and directs them to the ISB website for further information.

Induction

The College Director, the Academic Director and the Assistant Directors use the first day of the programme to provide mandatory student induction, registration, and orientation. This two-hour session, delivered with a personal touch by the college management, has a dual purpose: firstly, to provide orientation and a genuine welcome to the College, Dublin and Ireland; secondly, to highlight issues relevant to their upcoming semester. These issues include: ISB ethos and organisational overview, roles and responsibilities, policies, rules and regulations, health and safety, semester calendar and timetable, accommodation, and practical issues. ISB student inductions also include a welcome reception.

Academic Induction

A comprehensive, compulsory academic induction provided by the Academic Director takes place in the first week of the programme. Learners are taken through the Academic Calendar and the assessment schedule for their programme and are fully briefed on college facilities and resources, academic procedures and regulations, sources of support, library services, complaint, and grievance procedures, I.T. facilities, ISB intranet/Moodle electronic learning environment and access to course materials. They are also issued with their student cards and student numbers.

Learners are familiarised with the structure, content, specific objectives and learning outcomes of their programme and its constituent modules. They are given full assessment guidelines for each module, including assessment methods and weightings, mapping of assessment criteria to learning outcomes, assessment schedule, sample marking schemes, an introduction to the Irish university marking system and feedback and action plans. The nuances of group work and intercultural productivity norms are also highlighted along with the grievance procedure for dealing with group issues. The session finishes with a brief training session and a "tour" of the ISB Moodle online learning resource.

Learners are familiarised with ISB's Quality Assurance Manual and in particular its policy on plagiarism and academic impropriety as described in Section 13.

On-course Support

There is **ongoing orientation** in the specific objectives and learning outcomes of the programme and its modules provided by faculty and members of management.

Learner engagement is promoted, whereby faculty and management actively encourage learners to engage formally or informally with each other, their lecturers, student services and management in regard to any areas of their teaching and learning that may be causing them difficulty or concern. The small size of ISB facilitates this greatly. ISB believes in a direct correlation between class attendance and assessment performance. To this end attendance is taken in all classes either manually or electronically. The tracking of unexplained absences is communicated to the Academic Director by faculty. The Academic Director then contacts the student.

A post **midterm examination results review meeting** is held at which learners who fail three or more subjects or who are deemed to have performed extremely badly in two subjects are invited to a meeting with the Academic Director. This meeting is designed to act as a safety net and has three functions: to discover the reasons for the poor performance, to offer further school supports and resources and to develop an action plan in consultation with the learner.

As well as the teaching and learning supports offered by **ISB's extracurricular activities**, mentioned earlier, these activities also facilitate specialist or 'top-up' learning, whereby a learner with a specific interest in a specialist topic is exposed to an expert in that area and also has unrestricted and informal access to the relevant faculty member. This facilitates a level of discussion and resourcing that may not be achievable for that individual learner in the confines of the classroom setting.

ISB also offers an open-door office policy, a referral system to professional counselling for students, a 24/7 emergency phone service manned by ISB staff & a host of other pastoral care initiatives.

Further student supports come from the long-standing and close working relationship with our partner institutions whereby interventions, special academic accommodations and supports for students can be arranged pre-arrival or put in place efficiently during the semester if the need arises.

ISB also appreciates that not all learning happens in the classroom and, in an effort to enhance and support its quality physical learning environment, the following resources are available to learners and faculty:

ISB library – learners and faculty can avail of the library facilities, including reference books and documents, subsidised photocopying, printing, and PC access; it should be noted that students also have access to their home university's online library facilities

Group Work Study Zones – students can avail of specific rooms for group and project work and have unlimited access to computers and printing facilities.

Positive Reinforcement

It is part of ISB's policy to incentivise and reward excellence in learning. Following a recommendation from the May 2011 sitting of the Examinations Board, ISB put in place the following initiative:

The "ISB Scholar of the Semester Award for Academic Excellence": a certificate is awarded by the Examinations Board to the one learner that the Board feels has shown academic excellence across all subjects.

ISB regularly reviews the effectiveness of all academic and other support services related to its programmes of higher education and training. The support services included in these procedures include:

- Library, information, and computing services
- Learner support services (both academic and non-academic)
- Administrative services
- Technical services
- Premises servicing and maintenance services
- Services aimed at communicating the ISB's mission and operations to learners, potential learners, other institutions, employers, professional bodies and the general public

These reviews focus on the contribution of each of the identified services and facilities to successful learning by learners on the programme. In the case of each of the services and facilities, ISB asks the questions, "How do we know the service or facility is effective?" and "How could we improve it to make it more effective?" Responses are elicited using learner and faculty feedback surveys.

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

ISB Policy 14.8 (Staff Development) refers to ongoing development of its staff members who are actively encouraged to:

- Engage with the faculty and departments of other 3rd level institutions through scholarly activity, external examinership or membership of programme validation or review panels
- Research, write and submit journal articles for potential publication

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

Critical to the quality assurance of ISB's teaching is its commitment to ensuring that each of ISB's programmes has clear and explicit learning outcomes; that its staff are capable of providing teaching and learner support that will help its learners achieve those outcomes; and that there is full and timely recognition of the contribution to its work by those of its staff who demonstrate particular excellence, expertise and dedication.

Staff development is critical to the ongoing success of ISB, the achievement of its mission, and the enhancement of the student experience. It is ISB policy that teaching staff should be given opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity and should be encouraged to value their skills. In addition, assessment design, academic honesty and integrity, and the use of technology in teaching, learning and assessment form key pillars of staff development.

In compliance with the Equality Act 2004, ISB maintains a policy of non-discrimination towards all employees and applicants for employment and learners. As an equal opportunity employer, this school commits to treating all its employees, potential employees and learners equally irrespective of gender, marital status, family status, age, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation or membership of the traveller community.

Senior Management is committed to the active implementation of this equality/diversity policy. All employees receive a copy of the equality/diversity policy as part of their staff handbook. Senior management has responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the policy in the workplace and promoting a culture that supports the policy. All staff members have an important role to play in ensuring equality/diversity throughout the College. Members of staff have a particular responsibility to engender respect for difference and to accommodate diversity where appropriate.

The specifics of ISB policies on **staff recruitment, development and support can be found here:**

QAM (2.1) Section 14   Quality Assurance of Teaching & Non-Teaching Staff

6.0 Information and Data Management

The quality assurance of information and data management at ISB is supported through the relevant policies, procedures and resources governing personal data, appropriate/acceptable use of ICT, public/private information and GDPR.

A specific role of the assistant director is the management of records and data who is responsible for managing compliance with data protection and storage.

The content of the relevant policies can be found here:

- Information and Communications technology (Link)
- Data Protection Policy (Link)
- Copyright Policy (Link)

7.0 Public Information and Communication

ISB has a policy of openness and transparency in all matters relating to the College. This has been informed by QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance, section 9.

The small size of the College (with each learner being known to his/her lecturers and to the management team), together with its pastoral approach to learners, means that communication takes place on a daily and open basis. This is enhanced by staff involvement in the extracurricular social, cultural and sporting activities which play such an important role in the ISB semester.

In terms of formal communications, ISB communicates its mission and objectives, policies and procedures through a range of media to learners, potential learners, staff, national and international third-level institutions, employers, professional bodies and the general public. It is committed to publishing all relevant reports and documents relevant to its stakeholders.

Section 19 "Communications" of the Quality Assurance Manual contains the specifics of these policies and can be found (here).

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

The periodic monitoring of quality assurance takes place over three related cycles using the methods listed below. The three periodic cycles are:

1. Semester
2. Annual
3. 5 yearly (statutory programme review)

During these three periods the following are used to regularly review, assure and enhance quality:

- Programme Board meetings
- Annual Subject Review Meetings
- Annual Academic Report
- Annual Quality Report
- Student Evaluations
- Student Council
- Academic Board Meetings
- External Examiners Reports
- Management Meetings

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	QA Body
Name of body:	QQI
Programme titles and links to publications	Reengagement Panel Report
Date of accreditation or last review	December 2020
Date of next review	TBC

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2022

Annual Quality Report (Institution)
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2020-2021

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1   Strategic QA Updates

The most significant event of this reporting period was ISB's reengagement with QQI. The process involved all stakeholders of the institution and resulted in a very constructive and rewarding experience. Some of the highlights of this were:

- ISB has a very strong student focus and pastoral care;
- Faculty, although mostly part-time, are highly engaged and enthusiastic;
- A very clear distinction exists between the commercial and academic elements of the institution;
- Reengagement offered the opportunity to do a thorough review of all QA aspects of the institution and has led to improvements in QA;
- Excellent quality of documentation in the reengagement process.

The weaknesses that emerged included:

- A need for a greater role in QA for the Course Boards;
- A clearer line of communication for student council;
- Review of assessments overall;
- Review of staff training and development;
- Increased role for Assistant Directors.

Each of these elements have since been addressed by ISB and Reengagement was formally completed by December 2020.

The other significant element within this reporting period was the request and subsequent granting of an extension to the cyclical programme revalidation of ISB's three Certificate programmes. Revalidation was deferred to 2022.

1.2   Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1	Resignation of owner from Academic Council	Completed
2	Re-organisation of Course Boards	Completed
3	Review of assessments	Completed
4	Review of staff training and development	Completed
5	Enhanced student voice in QA	Completed

1.3 Governance and Management
1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Student council meetings	29th September 2020, 17th February 2021
Academic Board meetings	7th December 2020
Management meetings	Weekly
Examination Board meetings	13th January 2021, 26th May 2021
Course Board meetings	13th January 2021, 26th May 2021

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

Following the retirement of the Chair of the Academic Board, ISB has since elected a senior lecturer from IT Carlow as the new Chair.

Following ISB's reengagement process it was decided the Director / owner of ISB should resign from the Academic Board to ensure clear delineation of power between academic and commercial imperatives.

As a result of ISB's re-engagement process a more robust and direct means of capturing learner opinions has been put in place. Unfortunately, due to Covid, it was not possible for students to attend any Academic Board meetings in the past year, but their views were presented through reports via the Assistant Directors.

Course Boards were enhanced and now play a more active role in QA and Programme evaluation.

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
QQI Reengagement	October 2020	QQI Panel Report
Annual Subject Review meetings	June 2021	
Course Board meetings	December 2020, June 2021	
Quality and Enhancement Report	June 2021	
Annual Academic Report	December 2021	
External Examiner's Reports	January 2021, May 2021	

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

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

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
Number of review/ evaluation processes	1	1					1
of those:							
On-site processes							
Desk reviews							
Virtual processes	1						
Average panel size for each process type*							

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

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

(ii) Composition of Expert Review Teams/Panels involved in IQA

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	1		1			1					1
Secretary	1		1			1				1	
Academic/Discipline Specific	1	1					1				1
Student Representative	1	1				1					1
QA	1	1									1
Teaching & Learning											
External Industry /Third Mission											

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

Governance and Management of Quality

- Resignation of owner from Academic Council

- Election of new Chair to the Academic Council

- Enhancement of role of Course Boards

- Enhancement of role of Assistant Directors

- Reporting: Development from the annual *QAER* (Quality Assurance Enhancement Report) into the AQR

Programmes of Education and Training

- ISB requested a deferral of the revalidation of its three level 6 certificates due to Covid

- Full assessment Audit of all modules and programmes

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

- Due to the retirement of several lecturers and an increase in the number of students and programmes at ISB a number of new lecturers were recruited during the period.

- More comprehensive new contracts of employment were provided to all lecturers following recommendations from the Reengagement Panel.

- Further online training options have been provided to facilitate staff development.

- Face to face staff training/development session run

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

- Online teaching and assessment were once again necessary in the second semester of the academic year 2020/21. A return to normal in person tuition was possible in autumn 2021.

- ISB does not envisage developing online programmes nor hybrid models of learning as a large part of the student experience involves learning by doing as evidenced in a student survey.

Supports and resources for learners

- Significant efforts were made to increase the range and type of online resources to students.

- Non-academic online or outdoor activities were also conceived to ensure the well-being of students.

Information and Data Management (including analysis and impact of information gathered via the national Student Survey)

- A significant upgrade of Wi-Fi facilities took place during this period which has greatly enhanced the virtual learning experience of our students.

- ISB continues to score extremely well in student evaluations across all programmes.

Public Information and Communication

- ISB's updated QA Manual has been public since the successful completion of Reengagement with QQI in December 2020.
- Student and faculty handbooks have been amended to ensure knowledge of relevant sections to key stakeholders.

Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review

- The introduction of an amended Annual Academic Report and a new Quality and Enhancement Report that align with the AQR.
- Enhanced role of Programme Boards has provided a further checkpoint for monitoring and enhancing programme quality.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

Due to the Covid pandemic ISB was obliged to move both classes and assessments online during the second semester of 2020/21. This presented significant challenges. Thanks to the excellent flexibility of ISB faculty the transition happened with no interruption to class delivery. Great efforts were made to significantly increase materials available on our online learning platform, Moodle.

ISB utilised and was highly appreciative of guidance, allowances and resources provided in the main by QQI but also members of the wider educational community.

Unfortunately, we encountered significant numbers of academic impropriety in our mid-term examinations. Based on this experience lecturers strove to design final assessments which were more task-based and case studies, resulting in a reduction in the number of cases of impropriety. Students were also better informed about the conditions and consequences of not adhering to institutional regulations in this area. ISB faculty were also assisted through the use of relevant software such as Quetext. Group final presentations were held remotely and did not pose any great threat to the integrity of the assessment. Both faculty and students were happy with the experience.

Aligned with the above was the development and approval of a new set of policies titled "Academic Honesty and Integrity" that can be viewed in the quality assurance manual (here), and are used as the basis for academic induction for all students.

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 *Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.* *If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).*
1	Greater role for student council in QA	Invitations to upcoming Academic Board meeting and involvement in programme revalidation
2	Continued improvement in staff development and training	Accessing more online options for staff according to their various roles and needs
3	Revalidation of programmes	Involving all institutional stakeholders
4	Responding to External Examiner's reports	Ensuring faculty provide detailed and homogenous examination reports
5	Monitor the updated Appeals process	A more detailed policy was put in place and will be monitored in the coming academic year

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
Certificate in Business for International Learners	June 2022	2016
Certificate in Sales & Management	June 2022	2016
Certificate in Digital Marketing & Media	June 2022	2016

3.2.2   Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

2023   Annual Quality Report

2027   Programme Revalidation