

Annual Quality Report Hibernia College
Reporting Period 2024-2025

Hibernia College

2026

Annual Quality Report Hibernia College

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Reporting Period 2024-2025

PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report** 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 CINTE 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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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
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
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 Hibernia College for the reporting period **1 September 2024 – 31 August 2025**.

It is to be submitted by **Friday, 27 February 2026**.

The AQR has been approved by the College Academic Board and is submitted by the QA Office

Hibernia College was founded in 2000 to meet the growing demand for flexible, lifelong learning that would not be restricted by location or time. The College is driven by a passion to provide equal education opportunities to learners — particularly those who may have been excluded from various programmes or professions previously due to geography or life circumstances. It does this by delivering technology-enhanced and flexible programmes that are built around an e-learning model and that prepare students for today's complex professional roles. Today, the need and demand for access to flexible learning has never been greater, and Hibernia College is uniquely positioned to continue to respond to social and employment needs, offering learners flexible opportunities to study.

In 2024–25, the College completed a major milestone engagement with QQI and received its first-ever finalised CINNTE report, along with its associated response (details on the actions taken are included).

The College's offerings have had a strong focus on professional education and practice-based learning for regulated professions, with a particular focus on teacher education and, more recently, nurse education. Since its establishment, it has grown to a position where its Professional Master of Education (PME) programmes now provide a significant proportion of Ireland's teacher education, and Hibernia College graduates the largest number of primary school teachers annually from any HEI.

To date, there have been approximately 12,000 graduates of the College and, currently, there are an estimated 2,200 students enrolled across the programmes. Hibernia College is approved by QQI for the provision of a range of validated programmes leading to QQI awards at NFQ Levels 8 and 9. The following Hibernia College programmes are currently validated by QQI:

- Professional Master of Education in Primary Education
- Professional Master of Education in Post-Primary Education
- Master of Science in Corporate Governance
- Master of Arts in Inclusive and Special Education
- Master of Arts in Education
- Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Inclusive and Special Education
- Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Business Data Analytics
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing
- Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education

Hibernia College initial teacher education (ITE) programmes are accredited by the Teaching Council of Ireland. The early childhood education Bachelor of Education programme is accredited by the Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB) for the early learning and care (ELC) sector; the Nursing programme is approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI); and the Corporate Governance programme is accredited by the Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland (CGIUKI).

Process for Development and Approval of the AQR



Preparation for the submission of this AQR is ongoing throughout the year and is a standing item for all Quality Assurance Team meetings. This includes provision of regular briefings to the Academic Board, the Executive Management Team (EMT) and senior academic staff or faculty about the preparations required for annual engagement with the process. Cross-institutional engagement supports the gathering of required data, and all staff are encouraged to submit relevant information for inclusion. Engagement with the case study process is continuous, as potential areas for reporting are identified through meetings of the Academic Board and its subcommittees. Furthermore, the Academic Leadership Team and other managers are asked to collaborate with the Quality Assurance Team in the

process of developing case studies. The Quality Assurance Team assumes responsibility for compiling available information to produce the report for submission to QQI. The final report is reviewed internally by the Quality Assurance Team and the Registrar. The final report is approved by the College's EMT and Academic Board. This process is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: AQR development life cycle

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

The Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF) is the single true source of all Hibernia College quality assurance documents. This framework reflects the College's ongoing commitment to international best practice through a range of mechanisms that seek to continually monitor, review and enhance the College and its programmes. The HCQF is regularly reviewed for its effectiveness. Input from key stakeholders, such as students, staff and adjunct faculty, is an important dimension of the Framework. This ongoing involvement of internal and external stakeholders in various processes is emphasised throughout the policy and procedure documents.

The Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF) Policy sets out the principles and standards for the creation and maintenance of the HCQF. It establishes the College's policy for building and distributing a quality culture throughout all its activities.

The Governance and Management Policy describes the Hibernia College management structure and outlines the structure in place to effectively enable the interrelationship between corporate and academic governance. It articulates the principles by which the College is governed and identifies the key boards, committees and positions and their regulatory context. The Board of Directors formally delegates all authority for academic decision-making to the Academic Board.

Within the HCQF, terms of references are set out for each subcommittee of the Academic Board; these set out the functions, responsibilities, logistics and membership, including representation of external stakeholders and learners. [Figure 1](#) provides a high-level visual overview of the College's governance and management structures.

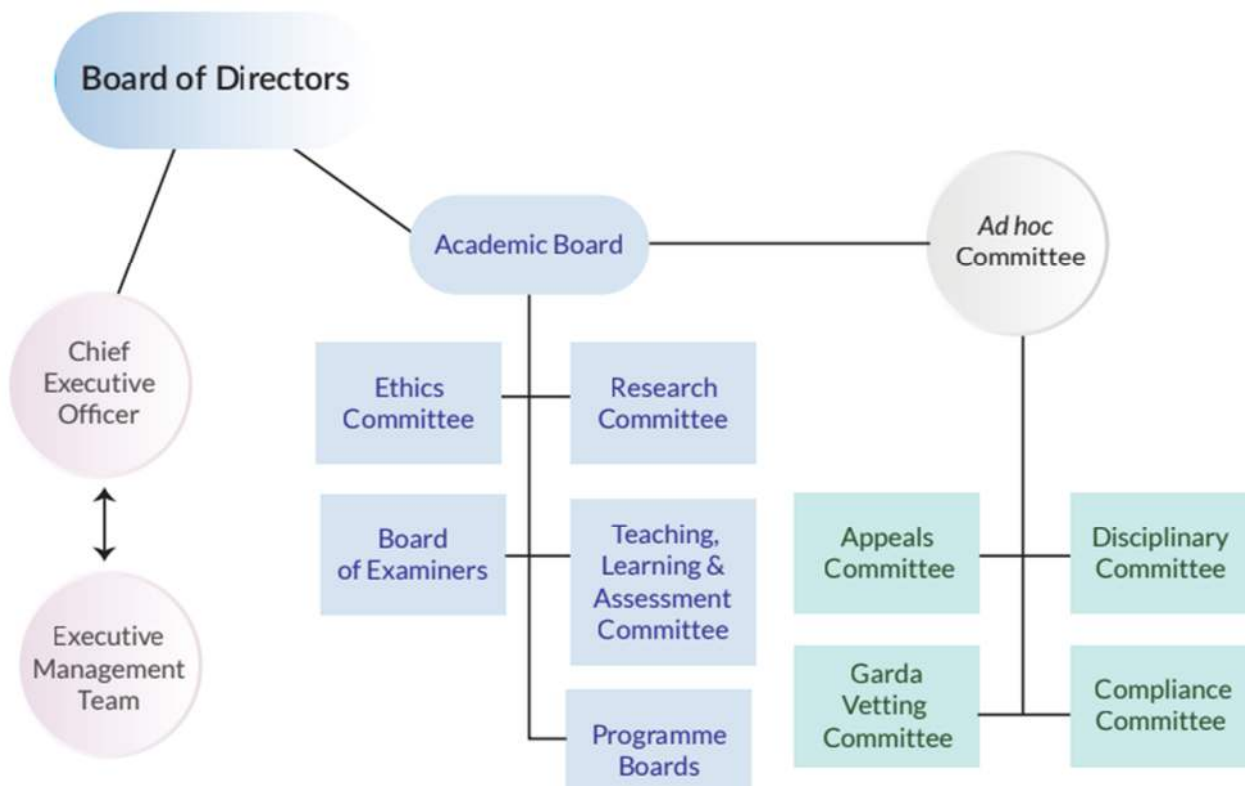


Figure 1: High-level overview of the College's governance and management structures

The table below indicates the policies and procedures relevant to the governance and management structures of the College.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<p><u>Corporate Governance Code</u></p> <p><u>Monitoring and Review of the Hibernia College Quality Framework Procedure</u></p> <p><u>Developing New Elements of the HCQF Procedure</u></p> <p><u>Ethics Committee Terms of Reference</u></p> <p><u>Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee Terms of Reference</u></p> <p><u>Conceptual Framework</u></p> <p><u>Fitness to Practice Policy</u></p> <p><u>Fitness to Practice Procedure</u></p> <p><u>Board of Examiners Terms of Reference</u></p> <p><u>Elections and Appointments to Governance Committees Procedure</u></p> <p><u>Erasmus Policy Statement</u></p>	<p><u>Academic Board Terms of Reference</u></p> <p><u>Governance and Management Policy</u></p> <p><u>Programme Board Terms of Reference</u></p> <p><u>The Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF) Policy</u></p> <p><u>Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee Terms of Reference</u></p> <p><u>Research Committee Terms of Reference</u></p> <p><u>Board of Examiners Terms of Reference</u></p> <p><u>Ethics Committee Terms of Reference</u></p>	

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

Quality assurance requirements for collaborative provision are integrated throughout the HCQF and are subsequently accounted for in the documents outlined in the following table. Principles for engaging in collaborative provision include alignment with College strategy; a demonstrable societal, educational and professional need; ensuring sufficient resources are in place to implement the programme; the programme curriculum aligns with the College Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and student support mechanisms are in place. A detailed due diligence and risk assessment must be undertaken as part of the development process for any collaborative programme. Following approval of any collaborative programme, a programme-specific terms of reference for a joint programme committee must be developed and agreed.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<p><u>Full Development and Final Approval of a New Programme Procedure</u></p> <p><u>Obtaining Initial Approval to Develop a New Programme Procedure</u></p> <p><u>Collaborative and Transnational Provision Framework</u></p> <p>MSc in Corporate Governance — Joint Programme Committee Terms of Reference</p> <p><u>Collaborative and Transnational Provision Framework</u></p>	<p><u>Design of Programmes and Curricula for a Blended or Online Environment Policy Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Online Environment Policy</u></p> <p><u>Ongoing Monitoring of Fully Online or Blended Learning Programmes Policy</u></p> <p>Public Information — Promotion and the Recruitment of Students Policy</p> <p><u>The Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF) Policy</u></p> <p><u>Engagement and Management of Adjunct Faculty Policy</u></p>	<p><u>Collaborative and Transnational Provision Framework</u></p> <p>Master of Arts in Inclusive and Special Education — Joint Programme Committee Terms of Reference</p> <p>MSc in Corporate Governance — Joint Programme Committee Terms of Reference</p>

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

The HCQF was developed in the context of current QQI policy related to the validation and review of programmes, for example, QQI's Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training. The development of new programmes is conducted systematically in line with the College's approved HCQF policies and procedures, including mechanisms for timely consultation with internal and external stakeholders.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<u>Full Development and Final Approval of a New Programme Procedure</u> <u>Obtaining Initial Approval to Develop a New Programme Procedure</u> <u>Collaborative and Transnational Provision Framework</u>	<u>Design of Programmes and Curricula for a Blended or Online Environment Policy</u> <u>Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Online Environment Policy</u> <u>Ongoing Monitoring of Fully Online or Blended Learning Programmes Policy</u>	

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

The HCQF includes an [Access, Transfer and Progression \(ATP\) Policy](#), a [Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\) Policy](#) and an [Assessment, Grading and Certification Policy](#). These are supported by various procedures that support matters related to admission, progression, deferrals and withdrawals. Widening participation through ensuring inclusivity and equality of opportunity for prospective and current students and alumni is an explicit aim of the College's [Access, Transfer and Progression Policy](#) and is facilitated also through the College's [RPL Policy](#) and [Procedure](#).

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
Recognition of Prior Learning Policy Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure External Examining Procedure Student Charter Reasonable Accommodation Application Form Admission Offers Procedure Withdrawal from Studies Policy Admission Interviews Procedure Assisting Failing Students to Exit Programmes Procedure Appeals Policy College Initiated Withdrawals Due to Non-Engagement Procedure Garda Vetting Procedure Grade Moderation Procedure Grading Student Effort Procedure Student Initiated Withdrawals Procedure Temporary Suspension and Deferral of Studies Policy Appealing a College Admissions Decision Procedure Posthumous Award Policy	Access, Transfer and Progression Policy Public Information, Promotion and the Recruitment of Students Policy Orientation Policy Admissions Policy Admission Application Procedure Assessment, Grading and Certification Policy Programme Application Terms and Conditions (non-HCQF)	

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

Not applicable

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The HCQF includes a range of policies, procedures and additional resources to ensure the ongoing quality assurance of the teaching, learning and assessment environment.

During this period, significant work continues to be undertaken in the area of academic integrity and good practice, and alongside the implementation of the [Academic Integrity and Good Practice Policy](#) in addition to the [Principles for the Acceptable Use of Generative AI in the Assessment Process](#). The Teaching Learning and Assessment (TLA) committee continues to consider and advice on all materials related to teaching learning and assessment as part of its annual workplan.

Furthermore, a new policy and procedure on the testing and implementation of technologies in education were introduced, please see Part B

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
Regulations for Written Examinations Appeals Policy Academic Misconduct Investigation in Coursework Procedure Academic Misconduct Investigation in a Formal Examination Procedure Discussion of Examination Scripts (or Equivalent) with Assessors Procedure Grade Moderation Procedure Grading Student Effort Procedure Review of a Provisional Assessment Decision Procedure Regulations for Oral Examinations (Online or In Person) Principles for the Acceptable Use of Generative AI in the Assessment Process	Engaging in Online Communication Guideline Assessment, Grading and Certification Policy Regulations for Synchronous Online Examinations Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy Academic Integrity and Good Practice Policy	The Use of Educational Technology Policy The Review and Implementation of Educational Technology Procedure

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

Learner support and the College's commitment to students are fundamentally underpinned by the Student Charter and the College's Student Support Policy. Student conduct is also related to the Student Charter and, consequently, standards for student conduct are also dealt with in this group of HCQF policies and procedures. Additional supports for students are provided through formal College processes such as those for extenuating circumstances, reasonable accommodation, appeals and complaints. Administrative support is provided by programme administrators for each programme and additional central administrative support is provided by the Assessment and Awards Office.

The College also has a full-time Student Support Officer who provides pastoral support to students as required throughout their studies. Furthermore, students have access to a professional counselling service. The College has also undertaken a review of current student supports offered to students during this period and drafted a new Framework for Supporting International Students.

Learners and staff are additionally supported by an established Technical Support Team who control and administer access, content, calendars and technical support. The College continuously invests in applications and infrastructure to enhance the learning environment. Existing infrastructure includes MyHELMS (virtual learning environment (VLE)), InPlace (Student Placement Management System), Quercus (Student Information System), the Cohort messaging app, Dynamics CRM, Office 365, Zoom and Access Dimensions. Data resilience and security are supported by regular off-site backups, full replication of internal infrastructure, centralised AV/malware protection and advanced email protection. Programme delivery is supported by the College's VLE, which features access to media-rich digital learning content; discussion forums; blogs and other collaborative tools; personalised calendars and submission deadline countdown timers; announcement feeds; facilities for uploading, grading and providing feedback on assessments; text-matching software; access to administrative, placement and support resources; the digital library; and a live chat facility for technical support. Live programme delivery is facilitated via Zoom professional accounts for all students and faculty. Hibernia College students have access to an extensive digital library integrated into the VLE, which provides them with secure, direct access to all resources through a discovery search engine.

A major library upgrade was completed in 2020, facilitating further personalised access to online resources. The College subscribes to an ever-increasing electronic resource collection that is regularly reviewed by the Librarian and faculty members. Students receive support and training from the Librarian. New students receive library induction training at the beginning of their programme, and all students have access to one-to-one support from the Librarian when they have specific library-related queries.

Furthermore, a Safeguarding Policy was introduced to complement the existing Garda Vetting Procedures.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<u>Intellectual Property Policy (non-HCQF)</u> <u>Acceptable Use of ICT Policy</u> <u>Change of Personal Details Application Form</u> <u>Change of Personal Details Procedure</u> <u>Data Protection and the Handling of Student Data Guidelines</u> <u>Data Subject Access Request (DSAR) Management Procedure</u> <u>Data Subject Access Request Form</u> <u>Personal Data Security Breach Management Procedure</u> <u>Personal Data Security Breach Report Form</u> <u>Framework for International Student Support</u> <u>Library Collection Development Policy</u>	<u>Implementing Data Protection Principles in Research Guidelines</u> <u>Engaging in Online Communication Guideline</u> <u>Public Information, Promotion and the Recruitment of Students Policy</u> <u>Personal Data and Records Policy</u> <u>Reasonable Accommodations Policy</u> <u>Reasonable Accommodations Procedure</u> <u>Student Support Policy</u>	<u>Safeguarding Policy</u>

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

The Research Committee is a subcommittee of the Academic Board that guides the Academic Board and the College community in strategy, policy and the approach to research activity in the College. Research Activity is supported and overseen via the College's overall academic governance system. The Ethics Committee is an additional subcommittee of the Academic Board that provides guidance on approaches to ethical teaching, research and scholarship. The Ethics Committee grants ethical approval for research to staff, faculty and third parties seeking to conduct research in the College. Data collected during the course of research activities is managed according to the principles set out in the Implementing Data Protection Principles in Research Guidelines.

Outputs or artefacts arising from research activities can be self-archived in the Hibernia College Institutional Archive of Scholarly Content (IASC). The new policy and procedure that govern this ensure that an appropriate licence is in place to allow self-archiving and a complete set of metadata accompanies each submission.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<u>Research Committee Terms of Reference</u> <u>Open Access Self-Archiving of Research Policy</u> <u>Procedure for Open Access Self-Archiving of Research</u>	<u>Governance and Management Policy</u> <u>Academic Board Terms of Reference</u> <u>Implementing Data Protection Principles in Research Guidelines</u> <u>Research Committee Terms of Reference</u> <u>Ethics Committee Terms of Reference</u>	

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

The majority of College documentation in this area is managed within the remit of Human Resources and related documents are therefore published internally on the College's intranet. Human Resources policies are written with regard to the Employment Equality Act, 1998, as amended, and the Equal Status Act, 2000, as amended. In accordance with relevant legislation, the College is committed to creating an environment that promotes equality, where all members of the College community are treated equally regardless of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Travelling community.

The College has a detailed recruitment and selection procedure, which is implemented and monitored by the Human Resources Manager. All staff are required to comply with this in seeking to fill posts within the College.

All managers and personnel likely to be involved in the recruitment and selection of staff and faculty are required to complete the appropriate training provided by the College to ensure suitable and consistent practice in the selection of applicants and making offers of appointment. The Human Resources Manager also participates in recruitment and selection activity to ensure consistent practice and compliance with College policy.

All new staff are inducted into Hibernia College by the relevant manager or Academic Lead (depending on the role) in conjunction with the Human Resources Manager. As part of this process, staff and faculty are introduced to the key aspects of their role and any associated documentation, databases and systems, as necessary. An induction period is set aside to allow the new recruit sufficient time to familiarise themselves with relevant policies, procedures, working practices, role requirements and so on, and also to assure the College that each employee has been appropriately advised to enable them to work in a safe and secure manner. The Human Resources Manager facilitates regular induction days at which new employees have the opportunity to meet representatives from all College departments and senior management.

The College's Staff Development & Continuing Education Policy sets out Hibernia College's commitment to the development of its staff. As an educational institution, learning is seen as a core value within the College. It is recognised that continuous learning and development of staff offers benefits to both members of staff and to the College as a whole, which ultimately contribute to the future growth of the College. The overall aim is to achieve a positive, innovative working environment where employees are encouraged to develop their skills so that they may improve their performance and/or prepare for future career progression. The College VLE hosts a dedicated Staff Learning Hub, which includes the Employee Orientation Programme, online learning opportunities, inhouse training courses, information about international opportunities (such as Erasmus+), staff training and shadowing opportunities, staff wellbeing and a knowledge sharing hub.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<u>Erasmus Policy Statement</u> <u>Engagement and Management of Adjunct Faculty Policy</u>		

6.0 Information and Data Management

The quality assurance of information and data management is supported through the HCQF policies, procedures and resources related to personal data, appropriate use of ICT and public information. The College prioritised the review of existing documentation and the development of additional documentation in these areas during this reporting period.

The information and data management infrastructure includes MyHELMS (VLE), InPlace (Student Placement Management System), Quercus (Student Information System), Dynamics CRM and Access Dimensions. The Records and Data Manager is responsible for managing compliance with data protection legislation, overseeing record management, and providing data and statistics to support decision-making. The Data Protection Officer (DPO) holds responsibility for managing the training of staff in the associated areas of information and data management; the College engages with PrivacyEngine for the provision of training and data management support. Data collected as part of Research Activities is managed via the Implementing Data Protection Principles in Research Guidelines.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<p>IP Policy (non-HCQF)</p> <p><u>Acceptable Use of ICT Policy</u></p> <p><u>Change of Personal Details Procedure</u></p> <p><u>Change of Personal Details Application Form</u></p> <p><u>Data Protection and the Handling of Student Data Guidelines</u></p> <p><u>Data Subject Access Request (DSAR) Management Procedure</u></p> <p><u>Data Subject Access Request Form</u></p> <p><u>Personal Data Security Breach Management Procedure</u></p> <p><u>Personal Data Security Breach Report Form</u></p> <p><u>Public Information, Promotion and the Recruitment of Students Policy</u></p> <p><u>Engaging in Online Communication Guideline</u></p>		

<u>Implementing Data Protection Principles in Research Guidelines</u> <u>Personal Data and Records Policy</u>		
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As a private institution the College does not operate a Freedom of Information (FOI) policy.

7.0 Public Information and Communication

The College has an explicit policy related to public information and communication, which sets out the principles for the ethical and effective public communication about and promotion of Hibernia College and its programmes, as well as for the recruitment of students to Hibernia College programmes. Information related to evaluation and findings from quality assurance evaluations is also clearly referenced and linked on the College website and the HCQF website itself. Quality assurance policies and procedures are accessed on this dedicated website.

The Marketing Director oversees the management of the College website and social media channels, including Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. The Marketing Director regularly liaises with the Registrar, Programme Director and Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager when drafting communications. During this reporting period, open days were held online; therefore, all College communications with potential learners were conducted online, via messaging or by telephone.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<u>Acceptable Use of ICT Policy</u> <u>Public Information, Promotion and the Recruitment of Students Policy</u>		

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

The HCQF sets out the principles and purposes surrounding the periodic review of Hibernia College and its activities, specifically the effectiveness of its quality assurance policies and procedures and how the College's internal quality assurance system engages with external quality assurance. Furthermore, it details the principles and requirements for the formal periodic review of academic programmes. Critical self-evaluation underpins all of these processes.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<u>Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Policy</u> <u>Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Procedure</u> <u>Cyclical Review of Hibernia College — An Institutional Review Policy</u> <u>Cyclical Review Procedure</u> <u>Approval, Monitoring and Review of Venues Procedure</u> <u>External Examining Procedure</u> <u>Monitoring and Review of the Hibernia College Quality Framework Procedure</u> <u>Ensuring and Maintaining the Quality of Physical Learning and Assessment Environments Policy</u> <u>Collaborative and Transnational Provision Framework</u>	<u>Preparing for External Quality Assurance Peer-Review Panel Reviews Guidelines</u>	

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	3
Awarding bodies	1
QA bodies	1

1. Type of arrangement	QA body
Name of body:	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Reengagement took place December 2018 with recommendation to Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) 7 February 2019 Independent Evaluation Report on a Provider's Quality Assurance Procedures and Capacity for Fully Online Learning - PAEC Meeting 27/11/2024 https://qsdocs.qqi.ie/sites/docs/ProviderDocumentsLibrary/PK03060/PRID-3060-ApprovalReport-20241127.pdf
Date of accreditation or last review	07/12/2019
Date of next review	

2. Type of arrangement	Awarding body
Name of body:	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education – 10/09/20 Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing – 19/07/17 Professional Master of Education in Post-Primary Education – 19/11/14 Professional Master of Education in Post-Primary Education – 08/06/2023 https://qsdocs.qqi.ie/sites/docs/PanelReportsLibrary/ProgID-42582_Certificate_of_Validation_PG25173_C.pdf Professional Master of Education in Primary Education – 19/11/14 Professional Master of Education in Primary Education – 13/07/2023 https://qsdocs.qqi.ie/sites/docs/PanelReportsLibrary/ProgID-42562_Certificate_of_Validation_PG25153_C.pdf Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Business Data Analytics – 19/10/21 Master of Arts in Inclusive and Special Education - 14/07/2022 Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Inclusive and Special Education - 14/07/2022 Master of Science in Corporate Governance Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Corporate Governance https://qsdocs.qqi.ie/sites/docs/PanelReportsLibrary/ProgID-43187_Certificate_of_Validation_PG25761_C.pdf

Date of accreditation or last review	13/07/2023
Date of next review	

3. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	The Teaching Council
Programme titles and links to publications	Professional Master of Education (PME) in Primary Education Final report – July 2014 (https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/_fileupload/updated-reports/13_-hibernia-pme.pdf) Progress report – April 2016 (https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/_fileupload/teacher-education/completed-reviews/april-2016-update-to-website-/09_-master-of-arts-in-primary-education-hibernia-college.pdf) Teaching Council Accreditation Report 2023 - https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/assets/uploads/2023/09/Professional-Master-of-Education-primary-14-April-2023.pdf Professional Master of Education (PME) in Post-Primary Education Final Report – May 2014 (https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/_fileupload/updated-reports/13_-hibernia-pme.pdf) Progress report – April 2016 (https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/_fileupload/teacher-education/completed-reviews/april-2016-update-to-website-/13_hibernia-pme.pdf) Teaching Council Accreditation Report 2023 - https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/assets/uploads/2023/09/Final-Report-PMEPP.Hibernia-post-primary.pdf
Date of accreditation or last review	07/07/2023
Date of next review	

4. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing
Date of accreditation or last review	22/07/2020
Date of next review	

5. Type of arrangement	QA body
Name of body:	Department of Education and Qualifications Advisory Board for the Early Learning and Care Sector
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education Published list of approved programmes for adherence to the Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines available on gov.ie (https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/d6685-professional-award-criteria-and-guidelines/)

Date of accreditation or last review	29/05/2020
Date of next review	

6. Type of arrangement	PRSB
Name of body:	Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Master of Science in Corporate Governance and Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Corporate Governance https://www.cgi.org.uk/professional-development/study/validated-postgraduate-courses
Date of accreditation or last review	18/01/2024
Date of next review	

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Definitions:

QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012 defines collaborative provision as a process that occurs where two or more providers are involved by formal agreement in the provision of a programme of higher education and training.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'joint award' as a single award made jointly by two or more awarding bodies

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (as amended) defines 'linked provider' as a provider that is not a designated awarding body but enters into an arrangement with a designated awarding body under which arrangement the provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all or part of the prerequisites for an award of the designated awarding body.

Type of arrangement	Total Number
Joint research degrees	0
Joint/double/multiple awards	0
Collaborative programmes	2
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

1. Collaborative provision	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	The Institute of Child Education and Psychology, ICEP
Programme titles and links to publications	Master of Arts in Inclusive and Special Education
Date of last review	14/07/2022
Date of next review	01/12/2026

2. Collaborative provision	Collaborative programme
Name of body (/bodies):	The Accountancy School
Programme titles and links to publications	Master of Science in Corporate Governance (PG25761) https://qsdocs.qqi.ie/sites/docs/PanelReportsLibrary/ProgID-43187_Certificate_of_Validation_PG25761_C.pdf
Date of last review	30/09/2024
Date of next review	30/09/2028

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Definition:

Per the IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision, an articulation agreement may be defined as a process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advance standing to a subsequent stage of a programme of a degree awarding body. These arrangements are subject to a formal agreement between the parties.

Articulation agreements - Total number	0
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Annual Quality Report Hibernia College
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2024-2025

PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

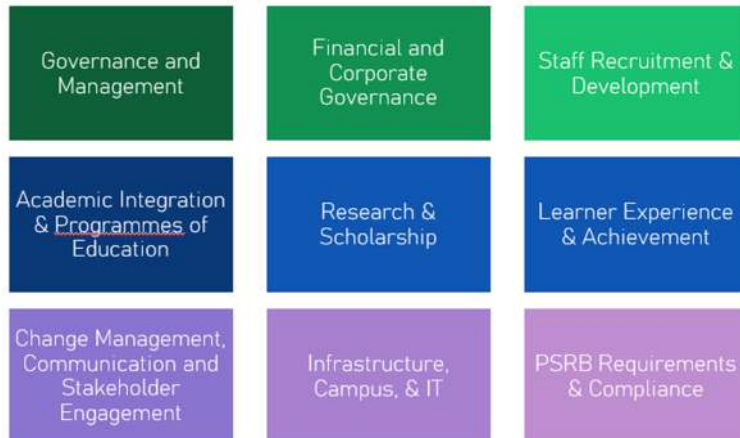
Strategic Updates

During this reporting period the College celebrated its 25th year of operation; planning for a number of key events commenced to celebrate this milestone including hosting Teaching Learning and Assessment awards to recognise the contribution of Faculty and Staff to the achievements of our learners and graduates. The College CEO, Mr David Carpenter, retired during this reporting period and a successor, Mr Paul Farrell has assumed this post as of May 2024. As part of the appointment process and one of the first actions has been a review of the Strategic Plan which has been updated and revised for 2026-2030. In addition to this the College appointed its inaugural Dean of School of Health Sciences, Ms Miriam McCarthy. Further to this the College also successfully validated its first fully online Master programme, the MA Education commenced in Autumn 2025.

The Hibernia College parent company, Folens Group, have in recent year acquired both Hibernia College and IICP College. The ultimate strategic goal is the creation of a single entity. We have formally commenced the process of integrating the two colleges now operating under the same parent company. The initial phase has concentrated on back-office and enabling functions, where alignment can deliver efficiencies without disrupting academic provision or regulatory obligations. This has involved mapping structures, and establishing common processes across areas such as finance, HR, and IT systems. The intention has been to create a stable operational foundation before progressing to more outward-facing academic collaboration. At present both Hibernia College and IICP College continue to operate as separate entities for the provision of programmes and support of learners enrolled in either College.

With that groundwork underway, the focus is now shifting toward shared, non-validated and non-statutory domains where collaboration can add strategic value while remaining proportionate and manageable. In particular, we are exploring areas of common research interest, opportunities for joint scholarly activity, coordinated knowledge exchange initiatives, and shared professional development. This next phase is being approached carefully to ensure that any integration enhances academic identity and distinctiveness rather than diluting it, while also positioning both institutions to benefit from complementary strengths. This work is being

planned and conducted in 9 individual workstreams as illustrated below.



QA Monitoring, Improvements and Enhancements

During the reporting period the College completed its engagement in the CINNTE process submitting the institutional self-evaluation report (ISER), taking part in the on-site visit, and responding to the panel review report with a formal implementation plan. The QA team were central to the coordination of this process, and a number of highlights in and arising from CINNTE include:

- Student Satisfaction Survey
- Work-Integrated Learning
- Scoping of 3rd generation SIS requirements
- A cross-sectional alumni engagement survey

Further detail on the process is provided in Section 2 of this report.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

Guide:

An update should be provided on objectives/planned actions for the year as outlined in the last AQR. If these have not been completed or are no longer applicable this should be indicated.

The table is designed to assist in this process and should include headline information only.

Please delete guide text before submission.

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	Creation of a Hibernia College alumni network (Section 3, AQR 2025)	This work is ongoing. A survey of the alumni body of the College, spanning graduates from the past decade through to current completers, has been completed with circa 1000 responses gathered via email and phone. The data arising from this has now been fully analysed and presented internally at a number of levels, including at the Department of the Registrar, the Academic Board and to the EMT. The findings have informed a series of targeted follow-up actions aimed at strengthening engagement and enhancing the graduate network. These actions include the development of a dedicated alumni portal to support ongoing communication, professional networking and access to CPD resources. In scoping these developments, the College has engaged with a number of external providers and institutions that operate established alumni portals in order to benchmark functionality and ensure that the emerging platform reflects sectoral good practice. A major finding from the alumni survey includes the means in which alumni seek to continue to engage with the College.
2	Enhance student engagement across governance structures (Section 3, AQR 2025)	This work is now completed. Student engagement in governance has been strengthened through a focused review of the representative role, with particular attention to how representatives are identified, supported and recognised. Faculty and module lecturers now play an active role in recruiting representatives,

		<p>helping to ensure credibility and commitment within cohorts of learners. A reward mechanism has also been reinstated to acknowledge meaningful participation in the role. In addition, the QA team now provides structured briefings in advance of committee meetings, including orientation to agendas and papers, followed by post-agenda guidance where appropriate, to ensure representatives are well prepared and able to contribute in an informed and confident manner.</p>
3	<p>Initiate a plan to increase the research profile for research active staff (Section 3, AQR 2025)</p>	<p>This work is ongoing and will be further reported in the College CINNTE follow-up report.</p> <p>To strengthen the research profile of staff, the College has conducted an International Womens Day/Women in Research campaign. This served to highlight the research undertaken by current female Faculty across the spectrum.</p> <p>The College has also engaged in number of research tender applications that have been centrally coordinated and supported by the Department of the Registrar and the Digital Library. These tenders have been targeted in core strengths of the College to develop an initial critical mass in existing expertise. This has served to bring researchers together and cement multiple new collaborations. The College was successful in wining one of these tenders and the outcomes will be reported in the next reporting period.</p> <p>Local supports such as library supports for researchers, ethics application guidance, research funding supports and an IASC workshop have been held for all research active staff to refresh engagement in these services provided to all. This central support has also been complimented by the existing Erasmus mobility opportunities that the College holds to encourage the development of European collaborative networks.</p>
4	<p>Explore ways to create a more supportive, streamlined and efficient learning environment for students (Section 3, AQR 2025)</p>	<p>This work is ongoing and will be further reported in the College CINNTE follow-up report.</p> <p>To create a more supportive, streamlined and efficient learning environment, the College has undertaken comprehensive research and</p>

		gathered user requirements to inform the development of a next-generation student information system (SIS) and virtual learning environment (VLE). The tender process for the SIS has now commenced, marking the first step towards a more integrated and coherent student experience across the entire lifecycle. The new system is being designed not only to automate and simplify administrative processes, such as template letter generation, but also to provide a holistic, 360-degree view of each student. This will enable staff to access relevant academic, engagement and support information in one place, improving responsiveness, reducing duplication and creating a more seamless interface between students and the College's services.
5	Deploy a proactive evidence-based evaluation process, supported by evidence informed data analysis, that facilitates the formal benchmarking of practice and secures sustainable outcomes (Section 3, AQR 2025)	This work is ongoing and will be further reported in the College CINNTE follow-up report.
6	Conduct a placement review across programmes (Section 3, AQR 2025)	<p>A comprehensive review of placement and work-integrated learning (WIL) provision has recently been completed, designed to take a structured and institution-wide view of current practice. The methodology centred on structured interviews with key stakeholders across the College, including programme teams, placement coordinators, professional services staff, learners and a range of external partners and employers, ensuring that both operational realities and strategic considerations were fully captured. In addition, a desk-based review of comparator institutional policies was undertaken to benchmark governance arrangements, documentation standards and oversight mechanisms against sectoral practice.</p> <p>The review report was explicitly informed by <u>draft guidance issued by QQI</u> in the area of WIL, allowing the College to assess alignment with emerging national expectations. The process resulted in a series of targeted recommendations addressing roles and responsibilities, risk management, assessment and the student</p>

		<p>support framework across the placement lifecycle. A draft institutional policy has been developed as a direct outcome, providing a clearer and more consistent framework for implementation across programmes while retaining appropriate disciplinary flexibility.</p>
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1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Academic Board	03/09/2024, 12/11/2024, 21/01/2025, 25/03/2025, 29/04/2025, 24/06/2025
Ethics Committee	10/09/2024, 26/11/2024, 18/03/2025
Research Committee	03/12/2024, 25/02/2025, 27/05/2025
Student Engagement Committee	14/04/2025, 10/06/2025, 11/08/2025
Erasmus Committee	26/09/2024, 25/02/2025, 28/03/2025, 10/04/2025
Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee	22/10/2024, 11/02/2025, 25/02/2025, 20/05/2025

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

The College has recently marked a significant milestone with the appointment of a new CEO, providing renewed strategic leadership at a pivotal stage in its development. The appointment signals a clear commitment to strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing external engagement and positioning the College for its next phase of growth. Early priorities include consolidating recent initiatives, reinforcing governance structures and advancing key strategic objectives; these are captured in a refreshed College Strategy 2026-2030. Following a competitive appointment process, the College also appointed a new Registrar within the same reporting period. The new Registrar took up their post in January 2025 and sits on the College Executive Management Team and acts as vicechair of the College Academic Board.

The College has appointed its first Dean of the School of Health Sciences, a development that reflects both academic maturation and expansion within this discipline area. The creation of the role establishes dedicated leadership for programme development, regulatory engagement, research activity and professional partnerships within the health domain. This appointment has commenced with extensive external stakeholder engagement, including but not limited to CORU, the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). Together, these appointments represent an intentional strengthening of executive and academic leadership, aligned with the College's broader strategic ambitions.

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
Hibernia College — CINNTE institutional review	Completed 2025	CINNTE review report
Master of Arts in Education — programme validation	Completed 2025	Validation report
Expansion to scope of provision — fully online learning	Report published 2025	Fully online learning

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels¹ 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	2				1		1
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes	1						1
Desk reviews							
Virtual processes	1				1		
Average panel size for each process type*	7				8		6

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

¹ 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	2	1	1			1	1				2
Secretary	2	1	1			1	1				2
Academic/Discipline Specific	4	2	2			2	1	1			4
Student Representative	2		2			2					2
QA	1		1			1					1
Teaching & Learning	1	1				1					1
External Industry /Third Mission	2	2				2					2

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

In this reporting period we focus on discussing 4 key areas that have arisen from the preparation for CINNTE, work undertaken to develop a specific element of the CINNTE ISER, work undertaken arising from a recommendation of the CINNTE process and follow-up recommendations from the Fully Online extension of scope assessment the College undertook. These examples demonstrate a considered and responsive monitoring of QA that leads to ongoing enhancements for the College and Learner provision.

2.1 The Institutional Review Process

Preparing for institutional review (IR) is an extended, college-wide process that necessitates the establishment of a collaborative and supportive approach, driven by a clear understanding of the purpose and scope of review and review outputs. A framework to guide this was established within Hibernia College under the following headings:

- Planning and Facilitation
- Drafting and Reviewing
- Communication and Engagement

The purpose of this framework is to guide and provide structure to the process and to act as a supporting and contextualising document for those engaged with the IR. The existence of the framework facilitates knowledge sharing, communication and transparency. This section summarises the content of that framework and the process that emerged from it. The College approach to the IR process is informed by and adheres to the Cyclical Review of Hibernia College — An Institutional Review Policy and the Cyclical Review Procedure. The objectives of this Hibernia College policy align with the Terms of Reference provided by QQI, as follows:

- To encourage a quality culture and the enhancement of the learner environment and experience
- To provide feedback to the College about College-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of quality assurance
- To improve public confidence in the quality of the College by promoting transparency and public awareness
- To contribute to systems-level improvement within higher education of the quality
- To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and feedback from stakeholders

2.1.2 Planning and Facilitation

2.1.2.1 QQI Engagement

QQI Office, Tuesday, 19 September 2023.

Initial Meeting with QQI Initial engagement with QQI on IR comprised of a meeting of senior QQI staff with the Registrar, the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager and the Assessment and Awards Manager, alongside other private providers engaging with the process. This was an opportunity to discuss and give feedback on the Terms of Reference for IR, the purpose of IR and to broadly identify possible timelines.

Hibernia College, Wednesday, 18 October 2023.

Follow-Up Meeting with QQI This was followed by a meeting with QQI at Hibernia College, inclusive of a presentation by QQI to the EMT and Programme Directors. This presentation provided an opportunity to initiate IR with senior management actively engaged in the process from the beginning. An indicative timeframe was established, and further clarity was brought to the details of the process, specific to the size and composition of Hibernia College.

Online, Tuesday, 21 November 2023.

QQI Peer Learning Event QQI facilitated a peer learning event with contributions from institutions that have engaged with IR. This provided invaluable insights as to the practicalities around facilitating the panel and writing the required documentation. Peers ranging from Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to universities were present, and the diversity of experience provided useful information for Hibernia College due to size, mode of delivery and position within the wider context. Peer learning is an important aspect of the IR process, and Hibernia College continued to engage informally with members of peer institutions on their experiences and preparations for IR.

Online, Monthly from March 2024.

QQI/Hibernia Check-in There was a monthly meeting with the QQI team facilitating the IR process. This afforded the College an opportunity to seek guidance and support in an informal setting while providing feedback to QQI on their experience thus far. The content of these meetings evolved dependent on the pending deadlines/milestones.

2.1.3 Institutional Review Steering Committee (IRSC)

Tuesday, 26 September 2023, IRSC Inaugural Planning Day IR was a detail-driven process and as such requires a focused and sustained approach. An initial 'think-in' day was conducted by the Registrar, the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager, and the Academic Dean to enable early considerations of how best to facilitate a comprehensive approach to IR. Key considerations were:

- Key contributors: Who should be involved in guiding the process?
- Structure: How can a sustainable and inclusive approach be ensured?
- Record-keeping: How can the process be tracked and recorded?

The decision was made to propose to the Academic Board the establishment of an Institutional Review Steering Committee (IRSC) in order to provide oversight and

guidance to the process. As a small group, the IRSC can be agile in its fulfilment of purpose and in shifting priorities.

The IRSC was established to guide the planning process. From early engagements with QQI, the importance of establishing a cohesive approach to IR to facilitate the extensive body of work was apparent. The primary purposes of the IRSC are to:

- Ensure adherence to the Terms of Reference of Institutional Review
- Facilitate and monitor a collaborative approach
- Enable a cohesive strategy for the development of the required documentation (Institutional Profile and ISER)

The IRSC recognises the value in bringing members of the College community together for robust and challenging dialogue. Therefore, IR is as much a process as an end result and a priority of the IRSC is to facilitate comprehensive engagement.

As a small institution, the decision was made by senior management to keep the permanent membership of the IRSC compact and to draw other members of staff into the process as appropriate through cluster groups. The permanent committee members were invited to join the IRSC based on the professional knowledge and experience they could contribute. In addition to the overall purpose of IRSC, each member had a specific role that supported efficacy. Each of the three key objectives of IR are reflected in these specific roles.

2.1.3.1 Roles within IRSC

Institutional Coordinator, Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review: Dr Robin Flynn, Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager, undertook the role of 'first contact point' with QQI in order to facilitate ongoing communication. He also acted as a contact point within Hibernia College to staff across the College. Key to this role was the review of all documentation with a focus on quality assurance, quality standards, process improvements, the HCQF and quality enhancement.

Academic Leadership: Dr Mary Kelly, Academic Dean, undertook this key role within the IRSC. At the peer learning event, it became clear that there is a need to actively engage with all staff, including academic faculty on the programmes, and avoid IR being seen as merely a 'quality assurance task'. The academic leadership role facilitated the IRSC in seeking sustained and willing participation at programme level and as a link with the EMT and Board of Directors.

Digital Learning/Design Co-ordinator and Stakeholder Engagement Facilitator: Irene O'Dowd, Researcher, Digital Learning, was well-positioned for this role that recognises the importance of presenting substantive documents in a user-friendly and engaging format using visual supports and multimedia approaches. The role is also a recognition of the opportunity to engage in targeted and specific stakeholder engagements and research for the purpose of IR.

Assessments and Awards Co-ordinator: Michael O'Leary, Assessment and Awards Manager, facilitated a structured approach to reviewing assessment practices across the College, with a specific focus on the assurance and maintenance of academic integrity.

Editor, Reviewer, Governance and Management Structures: Elva Casey, College Registrar, engaged in an ongoing editing, writing and review process to facilitate consistency across the documentation. She ensured that the documentation retained a sustained focus on how the management structure facilitates quality assurance of the College and worked with members of the College community across all departments to ensure a substantive and inclusive process.

2.1.4 IRSC Meetings and Work Plan

The IRSC met at three-week intervals, both online and in person, from Wednesday, 13 December 2023. Up to the point of ISER submission, they had met on 14 separate occasions. Meeting minutes and an action log for all meetings were maintained throughout. A work plan and Terms of Reference were established and approved at the first meeting of the IRSC.

These meetings provided an opportunity for the IRSC to discuss the logistics and operations underlying the development of the ISER, with reference to deadlines and an agreed project plan. They also served as an opportunity to maintain editorial oversight of the developing ISER, its content, the evidence being incorporated and crucially served to identify potential gaps. One such gap identified during these meetings was the need to ensure that SWOT analysis resulted in actionable improvements where weaknesses or threats were identified and that these were incorporated into the relevant sections. Over the development of the ISER, commonalities and themes emerged that served as the basis for the ISER conclusions.

2.1.5 Drafting and Reviewing

A robust drafting and review process is crucial to ensuring quality, accuracy and effectiveness of written content. The challenges of producing documentation with multiple contributing authors include consistency of tone and content, avoiding unnecessary repetition, ensuring pertinent areas are included and completing tasks in a timely fashion. However, it was essential to balance these challenges with the need to include contributions from across the College community in the development process. The drafting and editing followed the following structure:

Outline Planning

- Review of purpose of documents
- Establishment of an outline plan

Tuesday, 26 September 2023, IRSC Inaugural Planning Day

The IRSC met for a planning day to discuss the strategic approach to IR. It agreed on a cluster group structure, whereby each cluster group would be assigned a subcategory within the three objectives of IR. The composition of these cluster groups was decided upon to provide a balance, where possible, between faculty and staff composition.

Initial Drafting

- Development of templates and support documents
- Allocation of tasks to cluster groups

- First drafts

Revision and Editing

- Initial review by IRSC — for clarity, coherence and relevance
- Peer Review Groups — consistency in tone, style and approach, constructive criticism and quality of evidence
- Final IRSC review — for gaps in content
- Academic Board review and Student Engagement Committee review
- Editing — grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure.

Approval Process

The ISER document was submitted for approval to the following College bodies: the Academic Board, EMT and the Board of Directors. Approval and feedback were received from both the Academic Board and EMT, which was incorporated into the ISER. For the final approval step, the Academic Dean presented the ISER document to the Board of Directors for comment and approval.

2.1.5.1 Institutional Cluster Groups

November–December 2023, Cluster Group Briefings

Each group was invited to a meeting with two members of the IRSC to discuss the brief assigned to them. A short presentation giving an overview of IR was shared, followed by a Q&A session. A SharePoint area was set up for each cluster group, inclusive of a template and supporting documentation. Additionally, a SWOT analysis process was outlined for each cluster group. A timeframe for the completion of first drafts was agreed upon with each group. A mechanism for review, peer learning and feedback was set up with the facilitation of three sessions across the cluster groups. Feedback was captured through Microsoft Forms and used to inform the editing and review process.

Wednesday, 17 January 2024, ISER Cluster Group Feedback Session

The majority of cluster groups had met with either the Registrar and/or the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager prior to this meeting. Each group had been advised as above. Prior to this meeting, a survey was shared to capture groups' intended date of submission for a draft SWOT and cluster response. During this meeting, the following topics were discussed:

- Recap of the process
- Review of timelines for the review
- Uniform effectiveness rating scale

- Design/production process for images, figures, tables for cluster responses
- Cluster group requirements for evidence
- Feedback from cluster groups on their experiences thus far.

Discussion in the feedback session was largely concerned with the types of evidence cluster groups were using and the scope of the individual cluster groups themselves. The meeting was recorded and the recording shared.

2.1.5.2 Evidence Gathering

As part of the feedback session held on Wednesday, 17 January, the requirements of cluster groups with regard to evidence yet to be gathered was collated via Microsoft Forms. Two separate surveys were conducted — one targeting all College employees and one targeting College learners. The surveys were conducted to ascertain staff perspectives on development opportunities and learner feedback on the support infrastructure, respectively.

2.1.5.3 Editing Cluster Group Responses

Cluster groups submitted their responses under one of three objectives via the project SharePoint site. These responses then underwent a series of editing steps to produce a coherent response in a single narrative voice.

2.1.5.4 Peer Review

Following the editing of cluster responses, a round of peer-review of the ISER objectives was performed. Members of faculty and staff were identified as peer reviewers based on their experience and current role profiles and seniority to ensure an even representation of the College community was achieved. Four individuals were asked to review each objective and up to two individuals were asked to review all objectives to ensure a consistent approach to critical appraisal. The terms of reference for the peer-review were set out by the IRSC as follows:

- Has the document addressed the specific Institutional Review objective and guiding questions?
- Are statements made throughout the document supported by relevant evidence, where presented? If you feel more evidence is required in certain sections/areas, please specify. Is there a single, coherent narrative voice within the document?
- Is the tone of the document appropriate, i.e. academic and formal?

Peer-reviewers were asked to provide feedback on their specific objective within seven working days via Microsoft Forms. This feedback was collected, collated and discussed by the IRSC, identifying areas for improvement and amendment. Core themes that emerged from the peer-review exercise included:

- Consistency, or lack thereof, in procedures and practices
- Absence of evidence to support known good practice
- Clarity in reporting and communicating structures

Subsequent to the peer-review and drafting processes, the nascent ISER document was then subject to a final editing and review. This editing and review phase was monitored by members of the IRSC, who interacted with members of the editing team daily to address emerging issues or any queries requiring resolution.

1.a.6 *Communication and Engagement*

Communication and engagement are integral to developing an ISER that accurately represents Hibernia College and the College community. A robust and inclusive system of communication ensures good and equitable representation. Guiding principles for this communication were:

- Transparency
- Inclusivity
- Clarity
- Consistency
- Collaboration
- Responsiveness

2.1.6.1 *Academic Board*

IR was placed as a standing item on the Academic Board agenda to facilitate robust discussion of content and approval of final documentation. A member of the IRSC provided an update at each board. There was robust discussion of the IR process, the work involved and the scope of the review during these updates.

2.1.6.2 *Student Engagement Committee*

IR was placed as a standing item on the Student Engagement Committee agenda. The Quality, Enhancement and Registrations manager, as a member of the IRSC, co-chairs the committee, facilitating regular updates. Learner feedback and input was also sought after each presentation.

An e-learning object was developed in Articulate Rise 360 to share with and inform learners of the progress in the IR process and the associated documentation in development. The development and circulation of these resources was timed to coincide with the submission of the College Institutional Profile. Feedback was encouraged in these communications with the learner community.

In addition to this, a learner feedback session was held on 26 April 2024 to update learners on progress in the IR process and to solicit feedback on the content, tone and development of the ISER. Feedback from comments collected during the session and immediately afterwards by email submission was used to edit and refine the ISER documentation. At the point of ISER submission, a further learner engagement session/webinar was scheduled to update the learner community on the purpose and

logistics of the main review visit and the role of learners in this step of the IR process.

2.1.6.3 Staff Engagement

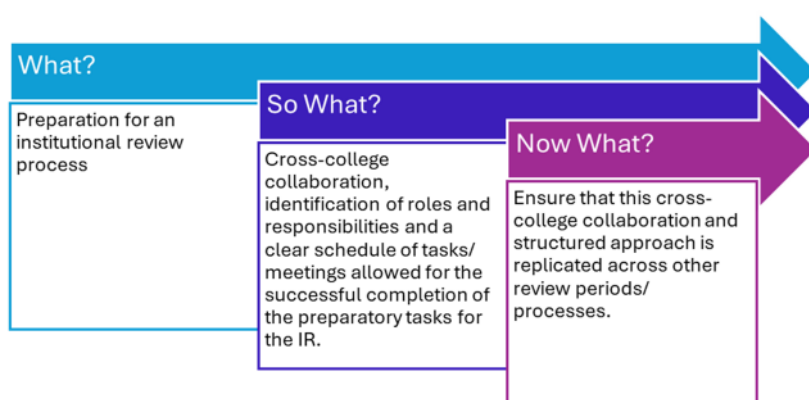
While staff across departments were involved in the cluster groups, early in the process the IRSC identified the need to keep all staff informed and seek input from across the College. For this purpose, a dedicated SharePoint site was set up. This included three videos introducing the process and staff roles and possible contributions. It was updated by the IRSC throughout. The information on this SharePoint site was presented using clear, accessible language and supplemented by images and diagrams.

A number of College-wide engagement events were conducted to ensure that all members of the Hibernia College community were aware of the IR process and work underway by the staff and faculty contributing to the IR process:

- 8 March 2024: Webinar to inform about the progress in developing the Institutional Profile and ISER and the next steps in finalising and submitting these documents
- 19 April 2024: Webinar to update about the submission of the ISER document and plans to prepare for the panel visit

At the point of the ISER submission, two further staff engagement events were scheduled to take place prior to August 2024. These webinars were scheduled to update and inform the College community of the purpose of the planning review visit and the main review visit.

2.1.7 Conclusions



Undertaking the IR process has allowed members of the Quality Assurance Unit, an assembled IRSC and the wider College community to engage in an in-depth period of review and reflection across a range of topics pertaining to all aspects of the teaching, learning and assessment undertaken by the College. The IR allowed and challenged all members of the College community to expand their

perspectives on the scope and potential of a review process beyond programmatic-level reviews. College engagement was positive throughout, and crucial to this was developing a regular and routine means of communication tied to key milestones. This was supported by the development and sharing of permanent resources.

Furthermore, a nuanced approach to communication and engagement with the learner community was required and this is reflected in the resources developed for this element of the IR process.

2.2 Learner Uptake of Supports

The visibility of learner services and supports is key to their usefulness and utilisation by learners. A variety of means are employed to ensure that all learners are made aware of and have access to learner services. All Hibernia College programmes commence with an orientation programme, where learners are introduced to the practicalities and logistics of learner life on a Hibernia College programme. Other means of ensuring learners are aware of the existence of the supports available to them throughout their studies include meeting with learners at scheduled in-person days, at webinars organised by individual support teams (e.g. the Library and Student Support) and regular email contact. As part of the learner support service provision, a routine assessment of uptake is monitored. For example, monitoring engagement with and effectiveness of the learner counselling service is undertaken on an annual basis. Most recently, 76% of learners were aware of the service; however, only 51% of learners were aware of how to access contact details for the same. Of those survey respondents accessing the service, 78% reported self-referral. This would indicate that awareness of and confidence in self-referring to learner support services is good, but the availability of necessary information may be lacking.

2.2.1 Support Services Availability and Learner Satisfaction

To determine if a wider issue existed affecting the accessibility and availability of support services, a College-wide survey was conducted in February 2024 for a seven-day period to determine learner opinion on mode of access and satisfaction with a range of College support services; the survey received 81 responses. Of those who contacted the Student Support Officer, Programme Administration Team, Library Team and Technical Support Team, the primary mode of contact for all teams was via the VLE learner home page *Figure 2*. Furthermore, the majority of all learners surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that identifying the most appropriate service to contact was easy, as illustrated.

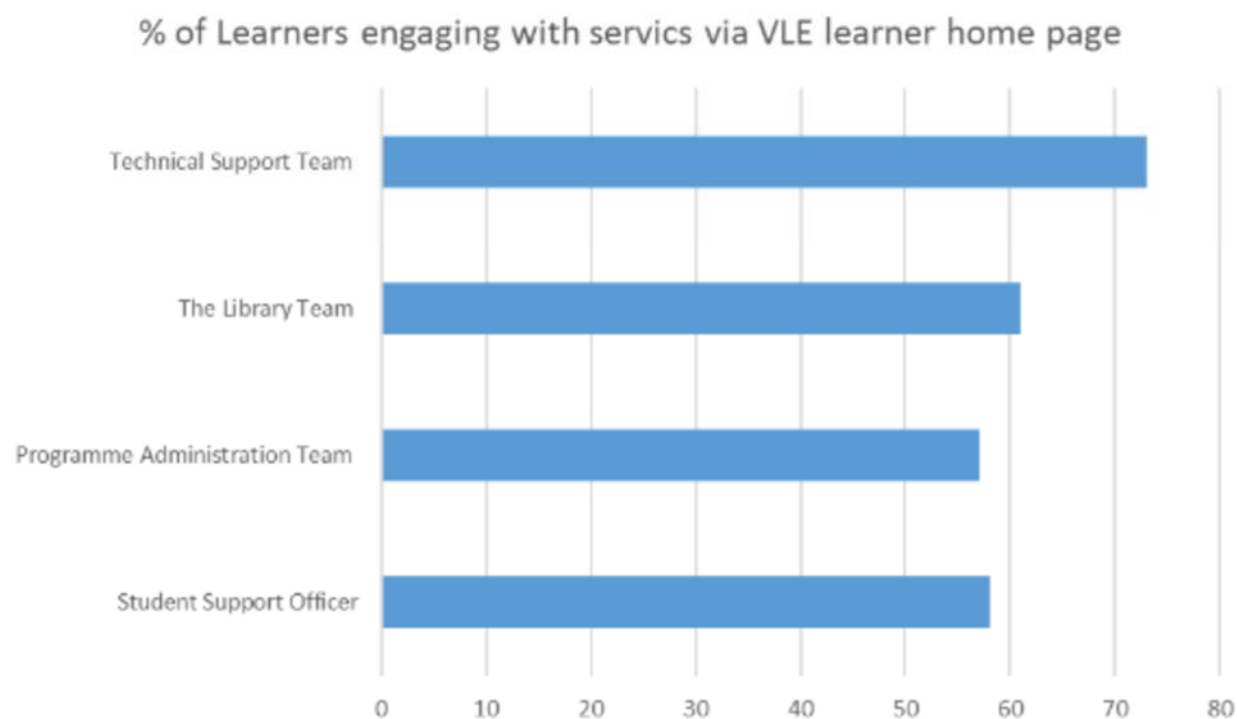


Figure 2: Learner engagement with VLE home page

Learner satisfaction was assessed through responses to the statement “The support provided met my needs”. For all support service teams, the majority, >50%, of responding learners reported that the response of any particular support team met their needs *Figure 3*. The degree of satisfaction varied, with the Technical Support Team receiving the highest satisfaction rating.

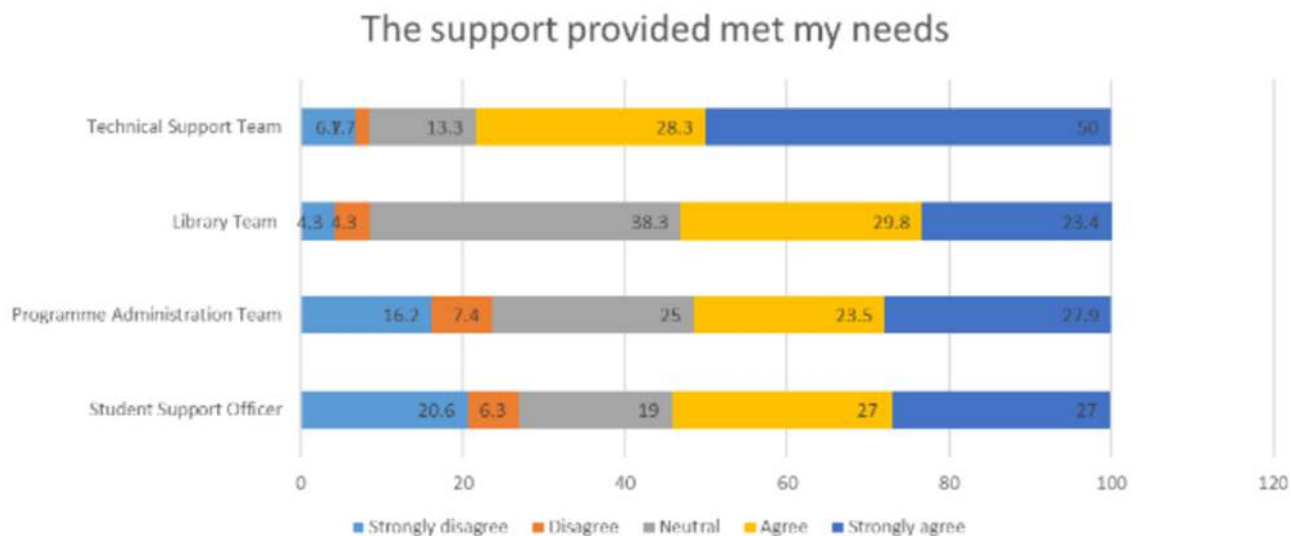


Figure 3: The support provided met my needs

This would indicate that where learners seek to engage with support services, they are able to access the appropriate service with relative ease and the majority of learners did so via the same route. Further work may be required to ensure that those who do not regularly use the VLE home page or access only limited elements of this VLE page have the requisition information provided in a repeated and accessible fashion. The satisfaction of learners taking up these services was on the whole positive. However, where perceived boundaries of particular support teams begin to blur, learner satisfaction may decline due to the time taken to resolve a particular query, e.g. where the incorrect service is initially contacted and a redirection is required *Figure 4*.

I could easily identify the student support service to contact for my query

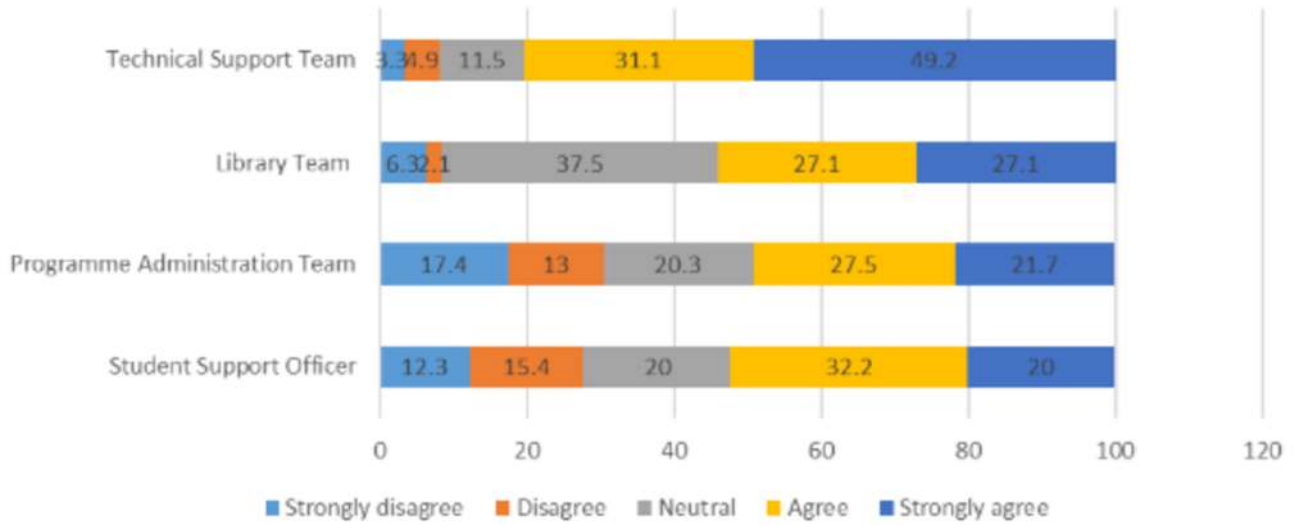
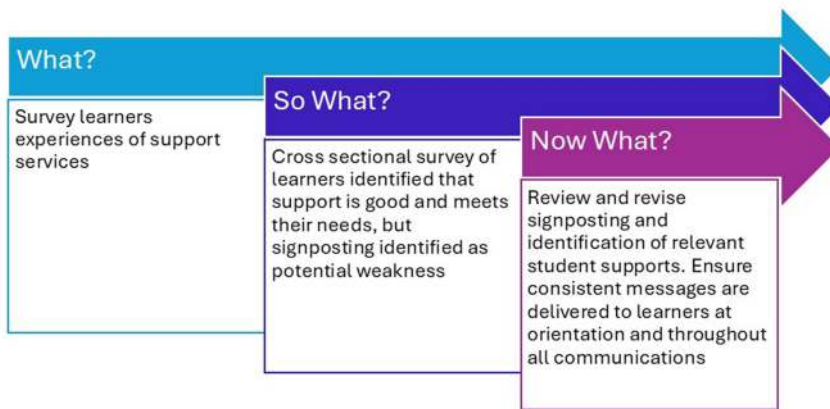


Figure 4: Easy identification of the appropriate support service

Therefore, clearer signposting of appropriate supports is essential to continuing student engagement with supports and maintaining a high level of satisfaction.



2.3 Alumni Engagement Survey

As Hibernia College celebrated its 25th anniversary, it sought to strengthen its relationships with past students and build a lasting connection with these individuals because, at present, there is not much engagement between graduates and the College itself. The goal is to understand what individuals would like to gain from this community and what it means to them as a collective. The main purpose of this report is to present key findings from the data that was collected following a survey carried out on graduates of the College — ranging from those who have graduated recently to those who are up to 10 years graduated. The key findings from the survey are that students — no matter the timeline from their graduation — are looking for opportunities to develop greater skills for their career with CPD.

Based on the data analysed and the findings of this report, it could be suggested that there is a great appetite for extra CPD training and seminars to be put in place. Additionally, because the College primarily uses online or blending learning, it is key that the alumni community established is set up the same way with online portals to access extra courses and training.

2.3.1 Introduction and Context

There are many ways of providing such aftercare through an alumnus, ranging from networking, career development opportunities and even social benefits. The primary aim of this report is to present research as to what an alumni association means for Hibernia College graduates and what they would hope to gain from the launch of this community.

Groups of past graduates were surveyed to understand if a difference in demographics would change the opinion of what the individual requirements were depending on when they graduated.

From this, we can start to look at what resources we can put in place for alumnus and what this may look like moving forward.

The objective of the research is to understand:

- What survey respondents wish for in terms of resources that Hibernia College can be put into place (survey data)
- What platforms would be best to carry this out on and engage potential alumni (survey data)
- If past graduates are currently engaging with other colleges alumni (survey data)

2.3.2 Methodology

Primary survey research was carried out by inviting past graduates, who were contacted via their last recorded personal email, to complete the survey using an attached link. The research was undertaken by a single individual between 15 January and 11 April 2025, using a quantitative research approach. Surveys were issued via email, staggered from 29 January. They were sent to recent graduates first, followed by 5 years graduated 1 week later, and 10 years graduated a week afterwards. A grace period of 2 weeks was given before a reminder email was sent out to those who had not responded, followed by phone calls to those who may have changed emails. Follow-up calls took place from 13 February to 25 March. Members of the quality assurance team ensured that the quality and resultant survey data was reliable by pretesting the survey on 3–4 people before use. The sampling technique

used was random. Graduates were grouped depending on the year they graduated and segmented into 10 years graduated, 5 years graduated and recently graduated.

2.3.3 Survey Data

Age of Respondents

The average age of all respondents is 34 and the average age of enrolment is 26. This means that many had previously started a career in education before joining Hibernia College, which would influence what they hoped to gain from the course and what an alumni association may look like for them, *Figure 5*.

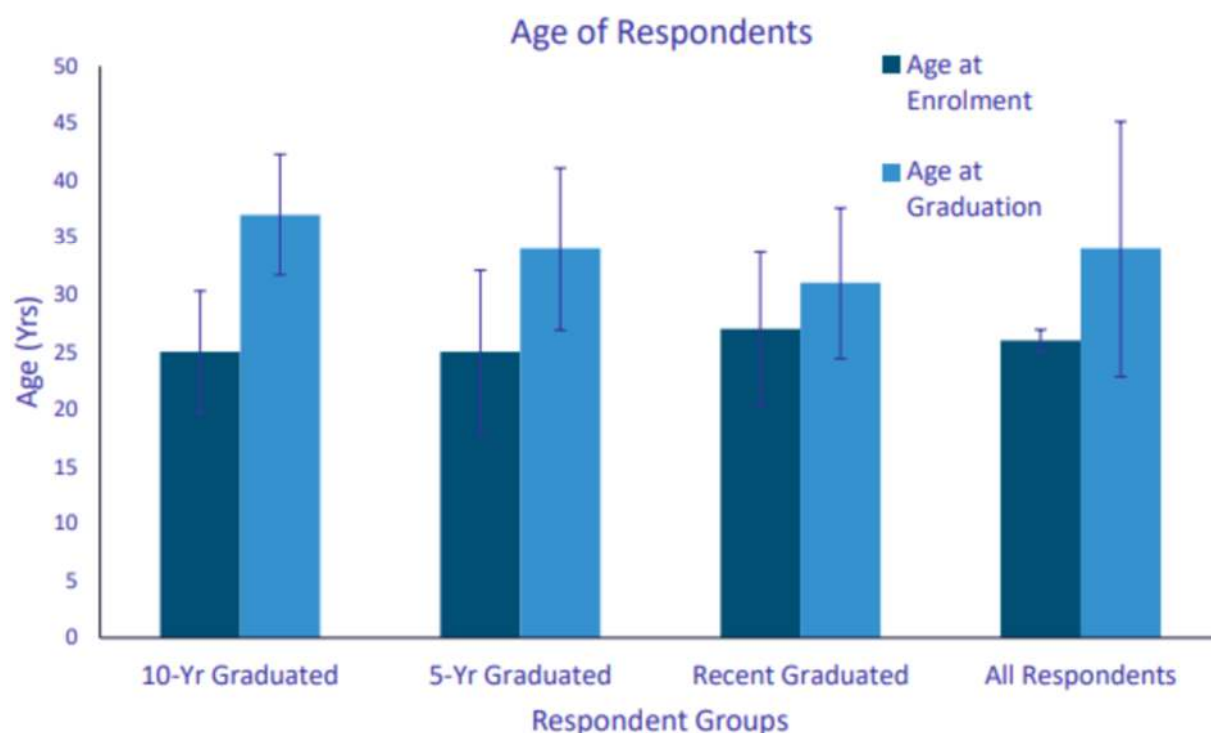


Figure 5: Age of survey respondents

How Interested Would You Be in Joining an Alumni Association?

The responses of all graduates are shown in *Figure 6*. There was an even response between those who are uninterested and those who would be interested in an alumni association, with 33% staying neutral.

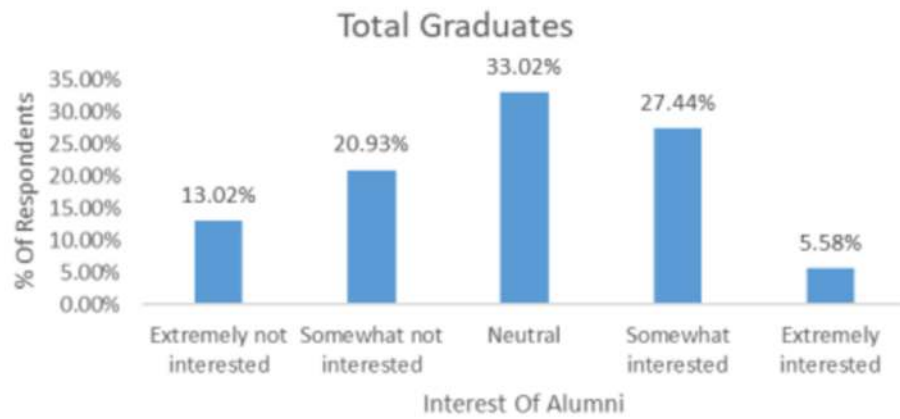


Figure 6: Interest in an alumni association

What Do Past Graduates Hope to Gain?

Figure 7 shows the responses from all graduates and there is a clear appetite for CPD courses to be available to them following graduation.

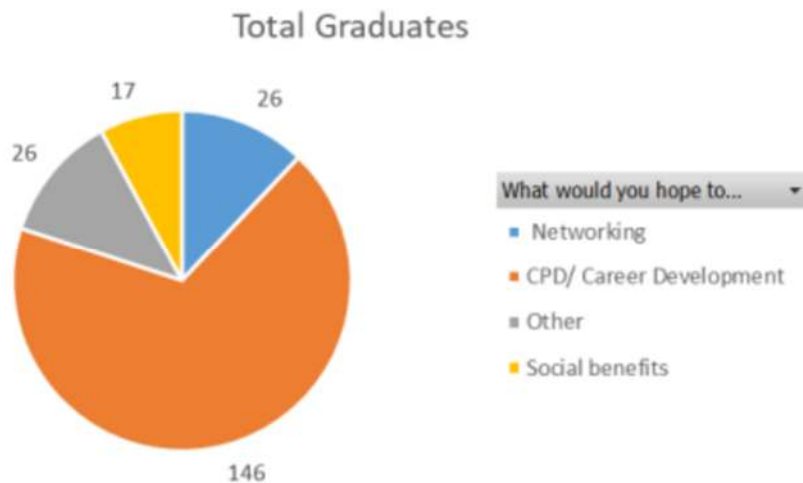


Figure 7: What do graduates hope to gain?

How Beneficial Are Job Listings of Current Opportunities to Students?

Although primarily focused on those selecting CPD as a primary benefit, this question was asked of all respondents. There is a demand for job listings to be available to past graduates as part of an alumni association. These data are stratified by respondents' initial interest in an alumni association, i.e. interested in an alumni association for networking etc. Figure 8 indicates that although respondents may have chosen networking and social as to what they hoped to gain, there is still a need for a level of CPD.

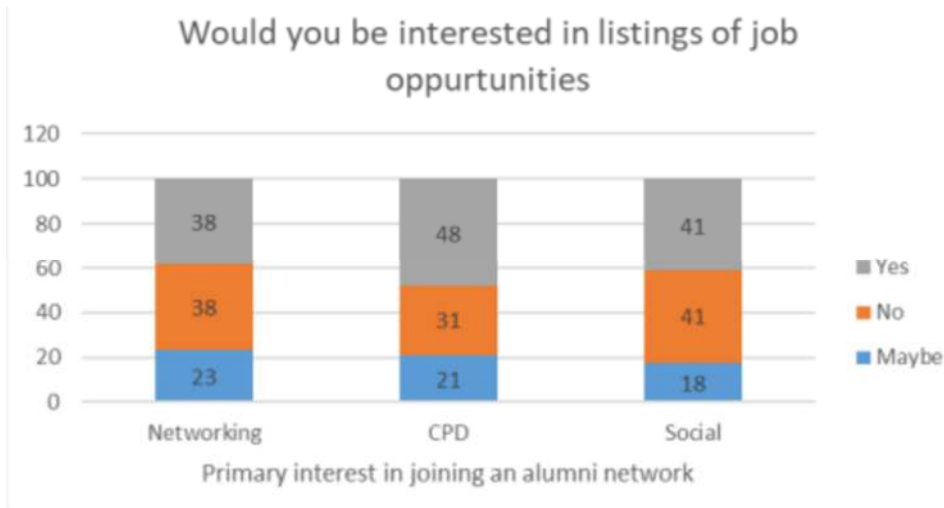


Figure 8: Graduate interest in job listings

How Beneficial Would Continued Library Access Be?

Respondents were asked to rate how beneficial continued access to a library would be for graduates. The total number of responses to this question indicates that there is a desire for continued library access with 36% finding continued access would be most beneficial, Figure 9.

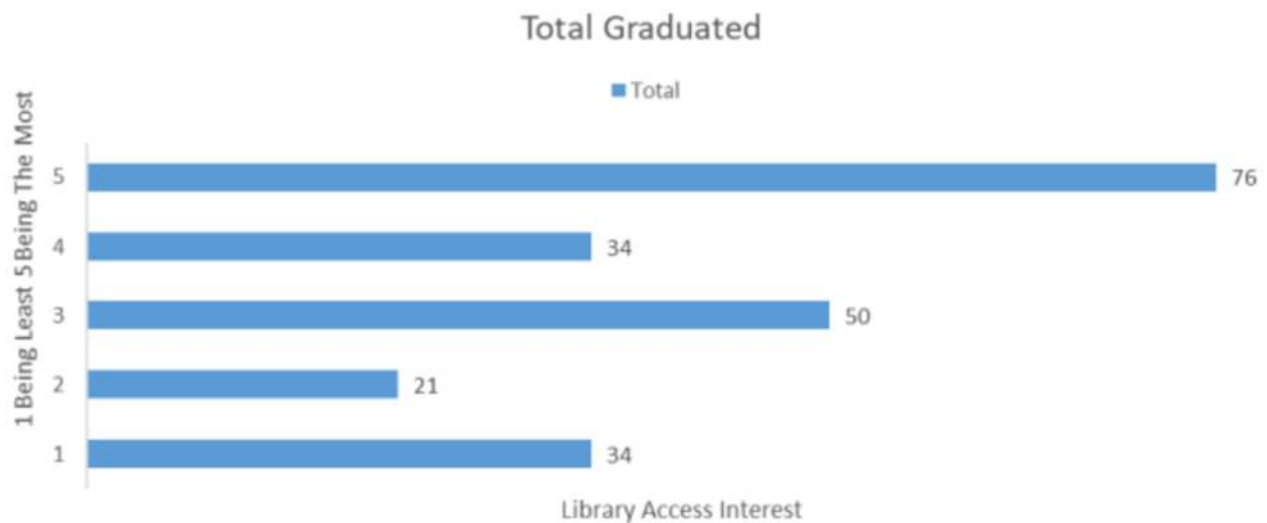


Figure 9: Interest in library access

How Beneficial Are Continuous Training Courses to Respondents?

There is a significant desire for additional training courses and skill development seminars amongst past students, which resonates with the high volume of responses in Figure 10. 70% of graduates had CPD as a primary interest in an alumni association.

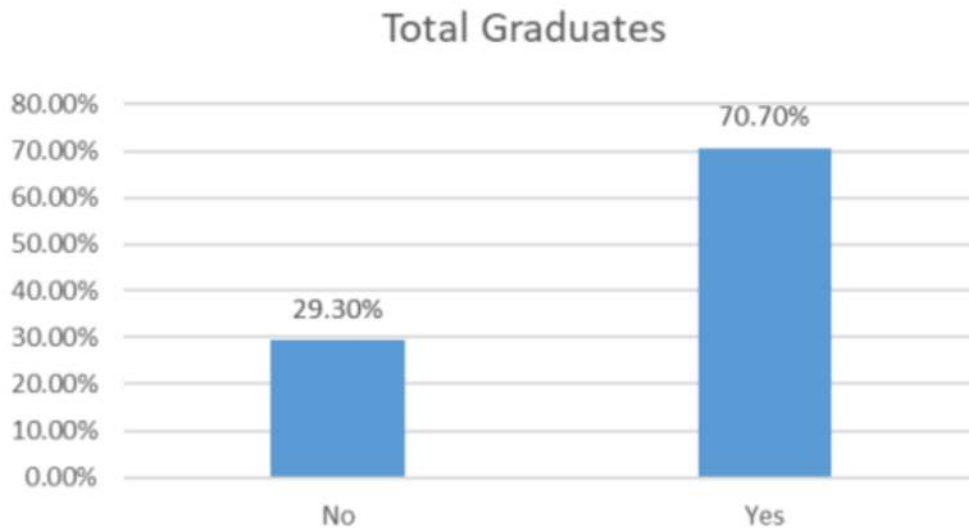


Figure 10: Graduate interest in CPD

Social Media Preference

From the data collected, *Figure 11*, Instagram is the most preferred social media platform for respondents to use, with Facebook in second place. Evidently, LinkedIn only has 6 respondents placing it as their first choice. Of the 26 Facebook first preferences, only 3 listed LinkedIn as a second preference. Of the 140 Instagram first preferences, only 4 listed LinkedIn as a second preference. Although many institutes avail of LinkedIn as a means to connect alumni, Hibernia College graduates do not have interest in LinkedIn as a platform from a teaching background, making it an unsuitable platform for targeting Hibernia College graduates.

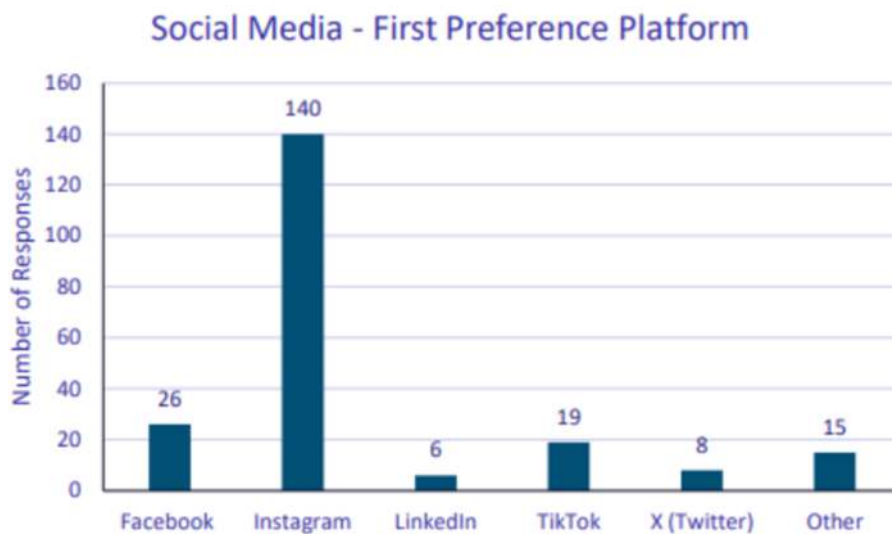
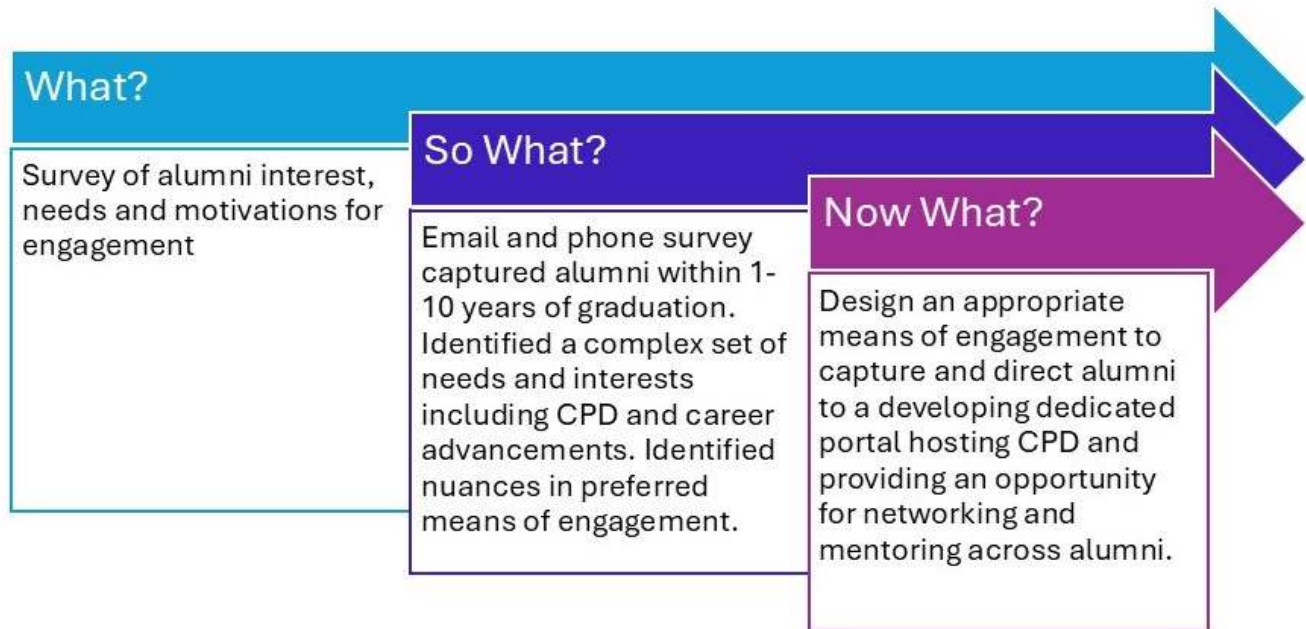


Figure 11: Graduate use of social media platforms

2.3.4 Conclusion

The data analysis gives a clear indication for there to be more CPD resources put in place for graduates, focusing heavily on training around special education and curriculum development in primary schools. Graduates are looking for a way to improve and progress with their careers in education, stay up to date with relevant policies and enhance the quality of their work. Making these courses accessible to teachers through an online portal would make it easy and convenient for them to gain more knowledge on these topics in their own time. The responses also indicate that individuals and their needs are complex, with those who may have answered their initial interest as a social or networking gain still wanting to see elements of CPD integrated into the alumni community.



2.4 Actions Arising from Fully Online Extension of Scope

Within the independent panel assessment report provided to QQI and the College on foot of the expert assessment of the College for extension of scope for fully online provision two recommendations were made. Arising from this two follow-up actions resulted in:

- 2.4.1 The development of a policy to govern the use of educational technology
- 2.4.2 A review of identity verification

2.4.1 Identity Verification for the Purposes of Admission, Teaching and Graduation

The Academic Board approved the establishment of a cross-College working group (WG) to address this recommendation.

Preliminary Considerations

a. Identity Verification

Throughout the discussions and the resulting Academic Board discussion paper, we consider identity verification as the process the College would undertake to assess a learner's identity, associated admission credentials or eligibility criteria to register for a programme of study and undertake any associated assessments.

b. Data Protection

Regardless of learners' location, their personal data would be processed by the College; therefore, the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) would apply as per existing College policies.

c. Localised Risk

The WG agreed that different risk profiles would apply, depending on the geographical location from which learners are drawn and/or the target profile of learners. The assessment of the risk posed to identity verification should therefore be undertaken, using this document as a guide, for each proposed programme and in concert with the due diligence assessment for each new proposed programme.

Areas of Challenge

To begin, the WG considered the distinct points in the student life cycle. Of these, the following points were not identified as requiring top-down identity verification mechanisms:

a. Attendance at teaching

The College does not record attendance for the most part, and this is reflected in the absence of an attendance policy. The WG considered whether there was a role for attendance monitoring in engagement with teaching materials in an online setting and determined this should not be a priority for a top-down rule to be enforced. Attendance or any monitoring thereof should be dictated by either i) accreditation/validation requirements and/or ii) pedagogical needs or approach. The WG also assessed the current means of monitoring attendance in online teaching as impractical from an operational perspective given the potential class/cohort size.

b. Accessing teaching materials

The WG considered the current risk posed in accessing teaching materials, i.e. copying and sharing materials/content from the College VLE, and whether this had the potential to be greater in fully online programmes. The WG considered the risk to be equal across the two modes. Furthermore, to accurately monitor the identity of those accessing teaching materials, a form of biometric verification would be required. This was deemed operationally impractical based on potential class/cohort size and the technology required. The WG identified the potential rollout of two-factor authentication (2FA) for all students, irrespective of mode or location, for the purposes of VLE sign-on as good practice to be considered.

c. *Engagement with teaching*

The WG considered whether real-time verification of student identity during live teaching was not deemed necessary, though informal identity checks during tutorials or supervision may be pedagogically appropriate. In parallel to this WG and in response to a recent validation exercise, the College has developed a set of guidelines to monitor engagement with online learning.

Areas that were identified as carrying the greatest risk were verification of applicants at admissions, secure delivery of transcript(s) and verification of identity in the case of examinations conducted online.

a. *Verification of applicants for enrolment/admission*

The WG identified this point in the student life cycle as particularly vulnerable to identity fraud, especially in the case of international applicants where documentation may be harder to verify. While the College currently relies on scanned copies of official documents (e.g. passports, prior qualifications), the WG questioned the robustness of this approach in a fully online setting. The use of a third-party service to perform document/applicant verification was explored but ultimately found to be cost-prohibitive without a substantial increase in enrolment volume. Moreover, the process behind this was manual in nature and did not offer any decrease in the time taken to process applications.

The WG discussed the live online verification interviews where applicants may be required to attend a secure, recorded video (Zoom) interview, presenting original identification and responding to contextual questions. This may or may not form part of the formal admission process as outlined in a validation application or programme proposal but could take place in addition to these more formal admission criteria-checking processes. While resource-intensive, this method is defensible and scalable and avoids over-reliance on costly or unreliable automated tools. However, its deployment would need to be targeted based on the programme risk profile and applicant origin.

It was noted that for the purposes of finance processes, e.g. refunds, it would be beneficial if applicants were required to supply a verified copy of a photographic identification that would list the confirmed/official name of an applicant. It should be a requirement that this name aligns with the name of the applicant as used in financial transactions.

Further to this, the WG discussed the subscription to sectoral databases containing exemplar transcripts and documents from third-level institutes that may be used for comparative purposes during the admission process. The WG also discussed the use of educational agents and investigated the use of such agents by three other comparator institutions: a private provider, a Technological University (TU) and a National University of Ireland (NUI) establishment. The use at these

institutions differed depending on whether the learner was required to obtain a visa to enter the state, the jurisdiction from which the learner originates and the associated risk profile, and the potential volume of applicant learners that a programme may attract.

b. *Secure delivery of transcript(s)*

The WG examined the current practice of issuing digital transcripts via email or downloadable PDFs. These are typically protected by standard security measures (e.g. watermarks, PDF locking), but the potential for forgery remains a concern. The group was unconvinced by many commercial digital credential solutions and based on previous interactions with commercial entities and a contemporary engagement with the same third-party provider, the WG concluded that there had been a significant increase in the price for its product with little improvement or enhancement of what was offered.

The WG were able to confirm that a third-party provider of secure transcript services was beginning conversations with QQI. However, the stage at which these discussions are currently at may indicate that developments and improvements of the Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ) may supersede the use of a third-party provider of secure transcript delivery.

c. *Verification of student identity during examinations*

This item intersects with all ongoing discussions of academic integrity and assessment security within the College. Because the programme profile is currently blended with continuous assessment and few in-person proctored exams, it is already under consideration at a programme level. The WG considered that the risk posed by fully online programmes, international or otherwise, was no different to that posed by current programmes and their associated assessment strategies. The use of remote proctoring services was discussed extensively. While such services offer features such as live monitoring, screen recording and biometric ID checks, the WG remained sceptical about their true deterrent value, fairness and alignment with College principles. Of particular concern were the accessibility challenges these tools may pose for neurodiverse learners or those in low-bandwidth regions when considering international expansion.

The WG considered the potential that appropriately deployed oral assessment may have as part of the overall assessment process. When used outside of the moderation process, this approach has the potential to provide faculty with a contextualised assessment of the authenticity of the submitted work.

Conclusions and Recommendations for the Academic Board

The WG concludes that while technology can support identity verification in online education, its application must be critically assessed, ethically justified, and avoid the introduction of biases into our processes and contextually appropriate. The College should resist pressure to adopt commercially driven solutions without clear evidence of their efficacy or necessity. Instead, it should focus on programme development that considers the risk profile to identity fraud, the volume of applicants/learners, staff training, digital literacy and robust pedagogical frameworks that combat the potential, or perceived need, for academic misconduct in assessments.

Based on its discussions and this paper, the WG would ask the Academic Board to consider making the following recommendations for further discussion and action.

1. Risk-based implementation: Identity verification measures should not be universally applied but tailored to the risk profile of the programme and applicant pool. The approach

to identity verification measures should be outlined in the programme validation document and considered during the due diligence process of new programme development.

2. Adoption of live onboarding interviews: Introduce live verification interviews at the admissions stage for programmes where no admissions interview is mandated. This is to be supplemented with mandatory submission of photographic identification that aligns with names associated with bank accounts intended for use in the payment of fees/receipt of refunds. This will be implemented with fully online programmes where no admissions interview takes place.
3. Upgrade of digital security approaches: The WG identified the potential rollout of 2FA for all students, irrespective of mode or location, for the purposes of VLE sign-on as good practice to be considered. This should be further investigated for feasibility considering ongoing work.
4. Investigate the use of oral assessment: Systematically evaluate the use of oral assessments as part of a process of verifying the authenticity of students' work. This should include the consideration of the workload involved in its implementation.

2.4.2 Policy on Emerging Technologies

A policy and accompanying procedure were developed and approved by the Academic Board with the explicit intention of upholding the academic standards that underpin and assure all programmes, validated or non-validated. The Academic Board is conscious that the proposed use of any technology must comply with any legal or statutory responsibilities of the College and conditions of validation or accreditation associated with specific programmes. The introduction of any technologies must be accompanied by an articulated benefit for the learner experience and must not disadvantage individual learners. Technologies for use in education must align with the core values and mission of the College — flexibility, innovation, inclusivity and student centredness. Prior to implementation, the Academic Board must be notified of any intended use of technology in education.

Therefore, the Academic Board must provide explicit approval for the introduction of new technology into teaching or any student-facing system. The Academic Board may request that proposed new technologies must be subject to testing and review before they are considered for implementation. The following documents were approved and added to the HCQF:

- The Use of Educational Technology Policy
- The Review and Implementation of Educational Technology Procedure

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

The College has undertaken consideration of oral defence as a structured mechanism to support academic integrity within continuous assessment. This review arises in the context of increased sectoral focus on assessment authenticity, assurance of standards and alignment between intended learning outcomes and assessment design.

Oral defence is not proposed as a replacement for existing assessment methodologies. Rather, it is being considered as a complementary mechanism that may:

- Provide additional assurance of authorship and individual understanding
- Enable verification of applied knowledge and academic judgement
- Strengthen institutional confidence in assessment integrity without reliance on technological detection tools
- Support transparency and defensibility of standards

In many external contexts, oral defence is used as a means of securing assessment rather than as a standalone additional assessment instrument. The College recognises that clarity of purpose is essential in determining its appropriate policy location and operational use.

The introduction of oral defence within continuous assessment raises several considerations, including:

- Scalability and staff workload
- Consistency in application across modules and programmes
- Clarity of criteria and associated staff training requirements
- Accessibility, reasonable accommodations and student wellbeing
- Implications for marks release timelines, review and appeals processes

For these reasons, oral defence is not being considered as a universal or high-stakes assessment method. Instead, it is being examined as a bounded and proportionate component within the College's quality framework, subject to defined parameters and programme-level oversight.

1. Internal Consideration

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee, in consultation with Programme Directors, has examined the potential role of oral defence. The following areas were identified as requiring further clarification before formal adoption:

- Scope of application: Whether oral defence should be applicable to all summative assessments leading to an NFQ award, or limited to specified assessment types (e.g. written continuous assessment, presentations, artefact-based work)
- Decision-making authority: Responsibility for selecting assessments or students for oral defence and for conducting the discussion
- Timing: Scheduling relative to submission deadlines and implications for marks release timelines
- Selection criteria: The number of assessments subject to oral defence and alignment with the existing Academic Integrity and Good Practice Policy

There was broad agreement that oral defence should not be conflated with moderation because its function differs from testing the consistency of grading against rubric criteria.

2. Internal Trial

Process

A pilot implementation was undertaken within the Professional Master of Education in Primary Education (Primary (PME)) and Professional Master of Education in Post-Primary Education (Post-Primary (PME)) programmes.

The Post-Primary (PME) model included advance notification within continuous assessment briefs that students may be invited to participate in an oral discussion. Students were selected randomly and notified by standard email with three days' notice. Discussions were conducted via Zoom and recorded. Each session lasted approximately 15 minutes and focused on:

- Students' approach to developing their submission
- Use and evaluation of sources
- Relevance of material selected
- Integration of module content

Within Primary (PME), participation formed part of a broader moderation process. Administrative coordination was supported by the Programme Administrator.

Feedback and Observations

Student confidence levels varied. Where students appeared prepared, the discussion was viewed positively and as an opportunity to elaborate on their work. Where preparation appeared limited, anxiety levels were more evident. Framing the discussion as a verification or moderation step, rather than as a disciplinary mechanism, appeared to reduce stress.

Faculty reported that the process provided valuable insight into:

- Students' interpretation of assessment briefs
- Engagement with feedback
- Referencing practices and evaluative judgement
- Application of module content

The use of a structured question bank was identified as beneficial in supporting consistency and transparency. However, it was also noted that excessive rigidity may limit flexibility where academic misconduct concerns arise.

The principal operational challenge identified was workload, particularly in relation to scheduling, coordination, recording and documentation.

Analysis

The trial indicates that oral defence may provide additional assurance regarding authorship and understanding. However, it also represents a significant resource commitment and does not in itself guarantee detection of all forms of academic misconduct. Importantly, oral defence does not test grading consistency and therefore does not serve as a moderation mechanism in the traditional sense. Its function is distinct from marking and should not be conflated with routine moderation processes. Internal reflection, aligned with sectoral guidance, suggests that oral defence should be positioned within the Academic Misconduct framework rather than embedded within standard marking procedures.

4. Current Position and Future Considerations

Subject to further data analysis regarding workload and case volumes, the following position is proposed:

1. Policy Location

Oral defence should be incorporated within the Academic Misconduct Policy and referenced in the HCQF. It should also be referenced in all assessment briefs to ensure transparency.

2. Scope

The possibility of oral defence should apply to all summative assessments leading to an NFQ award. Its use would not be automatic but would remain at the discretion of the Module Lead or Programme Director.

3. Triggers

Oral defence may be initiated on one of the following bases:

- Random sampling
- Marker concern
- Integrity flags aligned with policy thresholds

4. Training

Investigator training should be developed and delivered to ensure consistency, proportionality and procedural fairness.

5. Operational Considerations

Marks release timelines and related processes (review, appeal) may require amendment where an oral defence is initiated. Data on current academic misconduct case volumes will be required to model resource implications.

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>
1	Create a Hibernia College alumni network.	Continuing action To respond to the now identified needs of the College alumni community, an online portal will be developed and implemented. Unit responsible: Office of the President/IT/Digital Learning Design (DLD)/Registry Planned actions: Build an online portal. Populate with CPD and/or educational resources. Establish a timetable of CPD events. Communicate and advertise the portal to all alumni. Review and update in the first six months.
2	Deploy a proactive evidence-based evaluation process, supported by evidence-informed data analysis, that facilitates the formal benchmarking of practice and secures sustainable outcomes.	Continuing action As the College increases its participation across the sector, both public and private providers, it will seek to set formal benchmarks based on measurable, transparent and well-defined data collection. This is continuing work from AQR 2025. A set of principles have been drafted and will be approved shortly. A review of existing data sets has commenced to identify what sources and types of actionable data are collected and give rise to enhancement in College activities. Unit responsible: Registry/Academic Dean/IT/DLD Planned action: Finalise required datasets. Conduct user acceptance testing of dashboards. Agree a final set of acceptable analysis approaches and external benchmarks. Set a timeframe for routine reporting of data to the Academic Board along with commentary or actions from the responsible unit/team/programme.

3	Explore ways to create a more supportive, streamlined and efficient learning environment for students.	<p>Continuing action</p> <p>The requirements for the next generation of SIS are finalised and a call for tender has been issued. These reviews are currently underway.</p> <p>Unit responsible: Registry/IT/Student Affairs</p> <p>Planned actions: Finalise the SIS supplier. Agree a timeframe for implementation. Establish a project team. Identify the communication and training needs of learners and staff. Develop training resources and a regular staff engagement schedule. Commence and finalise data migration.</p>
4	Permissible use of GenAI: Review core assignments and module rubrics.	<p>The continued expansion of GenAI into the field of education both at the level of primary/post-primary and ITE training demands that a constant watching brief is maintained on the prohibited or acceptable use of GenAI in coursework.</p> <p>Unit responsible: Registry/School of Education</p> <p>Planned actions: Review current assessment instruments for risk as they relate to the non-permissible use of GenAI. Identify potential uses of GenAI in amended and modified module assessments. Review accompanying marking rubrics. Re-map module learning objectives (LOs) against modified assessment instruments and their rubrics. Establish module-specific guidance. Identify potential required changes in HCQF policies to enable the acceptable use of GenAI in coursework.</p>
5	NMBI Periodic Review and BSc Nursing Periodic Review.	<p>The College was subject to a periodic inspection from the NMBI in October 2025 and a response to the findings of this report and undertake the production of a periodic review of the Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing programme.</p> <p>Unit responsible: Registry/School of Health Sciences</p> <p>Planned actions: Agree terms of reference for a periodic review of the programme. Commence data collection for periodic review and analysis for trend identification prior to programme comment. Collate qualitative data on programme effectiveness and learner experience and feedback, conduct thematic analysis prior to programme comment. Review module content with respect to NMBI standards and requirements and data gathered.</p>

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
Learner recruitment – Admissions with Enrolment and Marketing. The commencement of this review was delayed because a new Group Commercial Director was appointed in 2025.	August 2026	
Admissions interview instruments – A focused review of the use and effectiveness of interviews as an admissions instrument will be conducted. This review will capture best practice in relation to the use of interview, what alternative means of admissions assessment may be used, and whether admissions interview remain an effective tool for the College programmes.	July 2026	

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

Case Study 1

Title: Programme Responses to External Drivers. Embedding Modern Foreign Languages within the Initial Teacher Education: A Specification-Led, Plurilingual and Coherent Programme Response

1. Context and Rationale

The publication of the Primary Language Specification by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in Autumn 2025 introduced a distinct Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) component for primary schools. The specification makes clear that:

“The addition of MFL (at Stages 3 and 4) further supports children to learn about, understand and develop their intercultural awareness.” (NCCA, 2025, p.9).

This development has immediate implications for ITE, particularly within the Primary (PME) programme, because student teachers must be prepared to support schools in implementing MFL in ways that are pedagogically sound, culturally responsive and aligned with the specification’s intent.

A central message of the specification is that MFL at primary level is not about discrete language mastery. Rather, it is about:

- Developing awareness of languages and cultures
- Fostering curiosity and positive dispositions towards linguistic diversity
- Enabling children to view themselves as language learners
- Promoting transfer across Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 through a plurilingual lens

Since September 2025, focused work has been undertaken within the Primary (PME) programme to explore how this new curricular area can be coherently embedded across existing modules, without overloading Module 105 (Languages), and while maintaining programme integrity. An in-depth focus group took place at programme board level to discuss the preliminary steps involved in the implementation of this. This case study outlines the consultative, research-informed and collaborative steps taken to date and identifies the next stages of development.

2. Engagement with National Curriculum Developments (NCCA)

A key early step involved engagement with an Education Officer from the NCCA. This meeting provided clarity on the intent, structure and expectations underpinning the MFL specification. A central message was that:

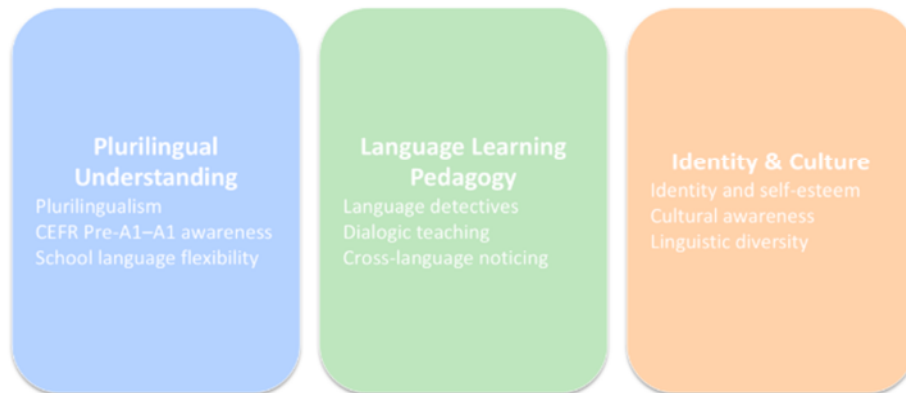
“Languages by their nature are interconnected. Developing skills in one language can help children to develop similar skills in other languages, provided they have adequate exposure to the language, and adequate motivation and opportunities to engage with the language.” (NCCA, 2025, p.9).

Key insights shaping the programme thinking included:

- The emphasis on plurilingualism rather than teaching a third language as an isolated subject
- The importance of teachers' understanding of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Pre-A1 to A1 levels, which underpin expectations when children begin learning an L3
- The role of children as 'language detectives', noticing patterns, similarities and differences across languages
- The importance of dialogic teaching, where children reflect on themselves as language learners
- The strong focus on identity, self-esteem and cultural awareness as foundational elements
- The flexibility afforded to schools in choosing an L3 based on their linguistic context

The core pedagogical ideas underpinning MFL at primary level can be understood across three interconnected dimensions: plurilingual understanding, language learning pedagogy and identity and cultural awareness.

Key Pedagogical Foundations of MFL



PLURILINGUAL UNDERSTANDING	LANGUAGE LEARNING PEDAGOGY	IDENTITY & CULTURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plurilingualism as the guiding approach • CEFR Pre-A1–A1 awareness • Flexibility in school language choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children as 'language detectives' • Dialogic teaching and reflection • Noticing similarities and differences across languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity and self-esteem • Cultural awareness • Respect for linguistic diversity

This engagement clarified that ITE must prepare student teachers to teach through a language lens, making implicit language knowledge explicit and helping children connect prior learning in English and Gaeilge to new linguistic experiences.

3. Engagement with Professional Supports (PPLI)

A subsequent meeting with a leader from Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI) provided insight into national supports and pedagogical priorities. The leader highlighted the increasingly diverse cultural and linguistic profiles of children and teachers entering our schools. The NCCA's *language specification for primary and special schools* notes:

“In the context of the Primary Language Curriculum, it is important to note that Ireland is a linguistically and culturally diverse country. Our schools include children with English as a first language, children with Irish as a first language and children with another language as their first language. Children with a first language other than English or Irish are already learning in an integrated way which will enhance their learning of English, Irish and MFL (at Stages 3 and 4) in primary and special schools.” (NCCA, 2025 p.9).

Key learnings included:

- The success of the Say Yes to Languages initiative and availability of its materials
- The distinction between primary and post-primary expectations
- The importance of pedagogy over resources
- The value of informal target language use (paralleling Gaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil)
- The development of resources focusing on vocabulary, classroom language and culturally respectful content (including non-fiction texts to avoid stereotyping)
- The existence of 20-hour upskilling courses for teachers (one of which has been undertaken to inform programme planning)

This meeting reinforced the need for ITE to prioritise pedagogical understanding of MFL rather than resource acquisition.

4. Internal, Cross-Sector and ITE Collaboration

Additional collaboration has included:

- Engagement with the Hibernia College Post-Primary team regarding transferability of language competency approaches
- Consultation with colleagues in other ITE institutions that are currently restructuring modules for MFL
- Identification of further expertise through the President of Hibernia College
- Ongoing liaison with module leaders across the Primary (PME) programme

This cross-sector dialogue has supported benchmarking and ensured alignment with emerging national practice.

5. Module Mapping and Coherence Work

The specification places strong emphasis on cultural understanding:

“As languages are inextricably linked to cultures, this element provides children with opportunities to develop intercultural awareness by exploring and celebrating the cultures associated with languages in and beyond the classroom. They learn to understand, celebrate, compare and contrast their own and other cultures and approach children from other cultures with openness and respect.” (NCCA, 2025 p.18).

Using the Module Coherence Document, work is underway to identify where MFL aligns naturally with module learning outcomes within the following:

- Module 103 — Arts
- Module 104 — Social and Environmental Education
- Module 105 — Languages
- Module 116 — Ethics and Multi-Beliefs
- Modules 107, 108, 109 — School Placement
- Exploratory scope within Module 110 (Research pillars)

The focus is on embedding MFL through the awareness of the Cultures and Languages Strand, ensuring deliberate links across modules rather than adding content.

6. Proposed Structural Developments

Subject to presentation and approval at the Programme Board, several developments are planned:

1. Reallocation of a contact day from Module 116 to Module 105 to host an MFL conference day with a PPLI leader
2. An MFL upskilling webinar (September) drawing on students with existing language competencies (in liaison with the Admissions office)
3. Exploration of a future MFL elective focused on competency for senior classes
4. Mapping assessment across modules to evidence MFL learning without adding assessment burden
5. Consideration of an MFL subject lead
6. Engagement with the forthcoming NCCA MFL toolkit
7. Participation in UL's A2.2 Spanish upskilling course to inform understanding of teacher learning

Subject to presentation and approval at Programme Board, several developments are planned. These can be understood as short-term implementation actions and long-term programme developments, with the latter feeding into the Periodic Review process anticipated to commence next year.

Short-term developments (2025–2026)

- Reallocation of a contact day from Module 116 to Module 105 to host an MFL conference day with a PPLI leader
- Delivery of an MFL upskilling webinar (September) drawing on students with existing language competencies (in liaison with the Admissions office)
- Engagement with the forthcoming NCCA MFL toolkit to support programme planning
- Participation in UL's A2.2 Spanish upskilling course to inform understanding of teacher learning and professional learning design

Long-term developments (Periodic Review/Programme Development)

- Exploration of a future MFL elective focused on language competency for senior classes
- Mapping assessment across modules to evidence MFL learning without adding assessment burden
- Consideration of an MFL subject lead within the programme structure

7. Impact to Date

This work has:

- Increased staff awareness of the pedagogical intent of MFL
- Positioned the Primary (PME) programme as proactively responsive to curriculum reform
- Established national connections with NCCA and PPLI
- Identified coherent embedding opportunities across modules
- Ensured planning is specification-led and research-informed

8. Next Steps (2026)

- Complete a module mapping exercise.
- Schedule a Spring 2026 MFL day in Module 105.
- Deliver a September upskilling webinar.
- Establish assessment links across modules.
- Continue liaison with NCCA and PPLI.
- Explore elective development.
- Include MFL development within AQR review processes.

1. Conclusion

The introduction of MFL offers an opportunity to reconceptualise how language, culture and identity are positioned within ITE. The work undertaken since September 2025 ensures that the Primary (PME) response is coherent, specification-aligned, pedagogically robust and future-

focused, preparing student teachers to engage meaningfully with this evolving area of the curriculum.

Reference

- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2025). *Primary Language Specification*. Dublin: NCCA.

Case Study 2

Title: Embedding Global Citizenship Education in Initial Teacher Education Through a Whole-Institution, Partnership-Based Approach

Context and Rationale

This case study outlines a multi-year initiative undertaken within an Irish Higher Education Institution (HEI) to embed Global Citizenship Education (GCE) across a Post-Primary (PME) ITE programme. The Post-Primary (PME) programme is a postgraduate, consecutive programme in which student teachers have already completed an undergraduate degree in their subject specialism before undertaking professional teacher education.

The initiative is grounded in key national policy frameworks. Ireland's *ESD to 2030: second national strategy on education for sustainable development*, developed by the Department of Education (DoE) and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), emphasises the role of education in developing learners' capacity to contribute to sustainable development and active citizenship. In parallel, the Teaching Council of Ireland's *Céim: standards for initial teacher education (2020)* identifies GCE as one of seven core elements that must inform the design of accredited ITE programmes.

Supported by the Ubuntu Network, a national community of practice for GCE in post-primary ITE, the Post-Primary (PME) programme team sought to move beyond awareness raising activities towards a more authentic, systematic and sustainable integration of GCE across teaching, learning and assessment. The initiative aimed to enhance staff confidence, strengthen curriculum coherence and support student teachers to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to embed GCE meaningfully in post-primary classrooms.

Initial Awareness-Raising Phase

The first phase of the initiative began in 2021 and focused on building a shared understanding of GCE across the institution. With support from the Ubuntu Network, the College hosted a Global Citizenship Awareness Week involving academic staff, adjunct tutors, student support teams and administrative staff. External facilitators from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and education organisations contributed practitioner perspectives on sustainability, global justice and education for sustainable development.

Pre- and post-event surveys demonstrated increased awareness of GCE and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) among participants. However, the findings also highlighted a significant gap between conceptual understanding and practical implementation. Many staff reported uncertainty about how to integrate GCE authentically into subject pedagogy, assessment design or professional practice. This evidence prompted a strategic shift from isolated awareness-raising events towards a more embedded, curriculum-focused approach.

Embedding GCE in Programme Design

Following the introduction of the Céim standards, the PME programme undertook a systematic review of programme and module learning outcomes. GCE was explicitly embedded across the curriculum to ensure that all student teachers engaged with global citizenship themes throughout their studies.

This approach required faculty to consider how GCE could be integrated into:

- Subject methodology modules
- Professional studies
- Assessment tasks
- School placement preparation

Embedding GCE in learning outcomes ensured that it became a core, assessable component of the programme rather than an optional theme. Tutors were encouraged to model dialogic, inclusive and reflective pedagogies aligned with GCE principles, thereby supporting student teachers to develop the confidence and competence to address global issues in their own classrooms.

This curriculum redesign enhanced alignment between institutional practice and national policy, while also strengthening the coherence of the student learning experience across modules and placements.

Student Voice and Elective Provision

Student feedback mechanisms indicated a strong interest in exploring ESD in greater depth. In response, the programme introduced an ESD elective module alongside existing options such as Wellbeing, Special Educational Needs and Digital Technology for Teaching and Learning.

The ESD elective provides student teachers with opportunities to:

- Explore sustainability and global justice issues in depth
- Develop subject-specific GCE teaching strategies
- Design inclusive, inquiry-based learning activities
- Reflect critically on the teacher's role in promoting active citizenship

Student uptake has been strong, with participants reporting increased confidence in addressing complex global and sustainability issues within post-primary subject contexts. This elective has also enhanced learner engagement by offering choice and recognising diverse professional interests.

Community of Practice: Bridging Theory and Practice

To strengthen alignment between theory-based modules and school placement experiences, a Community of Practice (CoP) model was established. This brings together academic module

tutors and school placement tutors to share experiences, resources and pedagogical strategies across a number of areas. One such event was organised exploring the theme of GCE-related practices.

This collaborative approach has helped to address the traditional theory–practice divide in teacher education. Tutors report greater confidence in discussing GCE with student teachers and in modelling reflective, socially responsible teaching practices.

Professional Development for Tutors

Recognising the importance of staff confidence and expertise, the programme introduced targeted professional development initiatives for tutors. In-person training days focused on:

- Identifying GCE opportunities within subject areas
- Designing inclusive and globally oriented learning activities
- Supporting student teachers to address emotive or contested issues
- Sharing practical classroom resources

These sessions provided tutors with practical tools and discipline-specific examples, helping to normalise GCE as part of everyday teaching practice rather than a specialist topic.

Supporting Treoraithe in Schools

Treoraithe (cooperating teachers) play a central role in mentoring student teachers during school placements. To support the Treoraithe in their role, a CPD course was developed with modules created around observation, feedback and reflection practices to support student teachers during placement. An additional module has been created in the area of GCE and ESD. By equipping Treoraithe with the knowledge and tools to embed GCE in their own teaching, the programme seeks to create a more coherent and supportive placement experience for student teachers.

Outcomes and Impact

The CPD materials for Treoraithe have recently been released, with formal evaluation scheduled for May 2026. Early informal feedback suggests that Treoraithe value having structured, accessible resources to guide conversations about sustainability, global justice and citizenship with student teachers.

At programme level, embedding GCE into learning outcomes has led to noticeable changes in faculty practice. Tutors increasingly model:

- Critical discussion of global issues
- Inclusive and dialogic teaching approaches

- Reflective engagement with ethical and sustainability themes

Student uptake of the ESD elective has been strong, and participants report greater confidence in integrating GCE into their subject teaching and lesson planning. The CoP has strengthened collaboration between academic and placement tutors, improving coherence across the student learning journey.

Collectively, these developments have contributed to a more consistent, visible and meaningful presence of GCE across the PME programme.

Future Directions

Two key developments are planned to further enhance GCE integration:

Virtual Scenario-Based Learning (VSBL)

A digital resource is being developed to allow student teachers and faculty to engage with realistic classroom scenarios involving emotive or contested global issues. This will support:

- Safe exploration of sensitive topics
- Structured reflection and discussion
- Development of professional judgement

Sustained Professional Support

Ongoing investment in tutor development, CoP meetings and school-partnership CPD will remain central to sustaining GCE across the programme.

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates how a whole-institution, partnership-based approach can move GCE from peripheral awareness to embedded professional practice within ITE. Through curriculum redesign, staff development, student engagement and school-based collaboration, the PME Post-Primary programme has developed a coherent and sustainable model for preparing future teachers to address sustainability, global justice and citizenship in post-primary classrooms.

The initiative aligns with national policy priorities, Teaching Council standards and international expectations for education's role in sustainable development. It illustrates how evidence-informed enhancement, collaboration and reflective practice can strengthen the quality and impact of teaching and learning in Irish higher education.