

Open Training College (OTC)

2026

Annual Quality Report
Open Training College – OTC
Reporting Period 2024-2025

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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 CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

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

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

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Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template¹

Legislation

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

QQI Documents

Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

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

Other QQI Policy Documents

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

Other National/International References

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

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

PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - Internal QA Framework	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes			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 Open Training College (OTC) 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's Academic Council (AC) and is submitted by Ronnie Harrison, Head of Quality & Academic Affairs.

Overview of Institution

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

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

The College administration offices are located in Goatstown, Dublin 14 and programme delivery is national (through online and regional locations). The College employs 15 core staff and 30 associate/contract teaching staff plus a range of workshop presenters, consultants, module/topic authors and specialist topic experts.

The College's Mission Statement is as follows:

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

Process for Development and approval of AQR

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

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

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

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

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

Following submission, the AQR is published on the College's website:

<https://opentrainingcollege.com/>

1.0 Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

For ease of access for all stakeholders, the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) is published in full on the College's website: <https://opentrainingcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Quality-Assurance-Document-V4.1-1.pdf>

It is also published in individual sections, which correspond to the Core QAG sub-section titles, and individual policies are also published and presented, at the following respective links:

<https://opentrainingcollege.com/quality-assurance-sections/>

and

<https://opentrainingcollege.com/quality-assurance-policies/>

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

OTC - Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) - Policies and Procedures Version 4.1 (May 2022)

Individual Sections:

Section 1 - Governance and Management of Quality

Section 2 - Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

Section 3 - Programmes of Education and Training

Section 4 - Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

Section 5 - Teaching and Learning

Section 6 - Assessment of Learners

Section 7 - Support for Learners

Section 8 - Information and Data Management

Section 9 - Public Information and Communication

Section 10 - Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

Section 11 - Self Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Academic Quality Overview

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

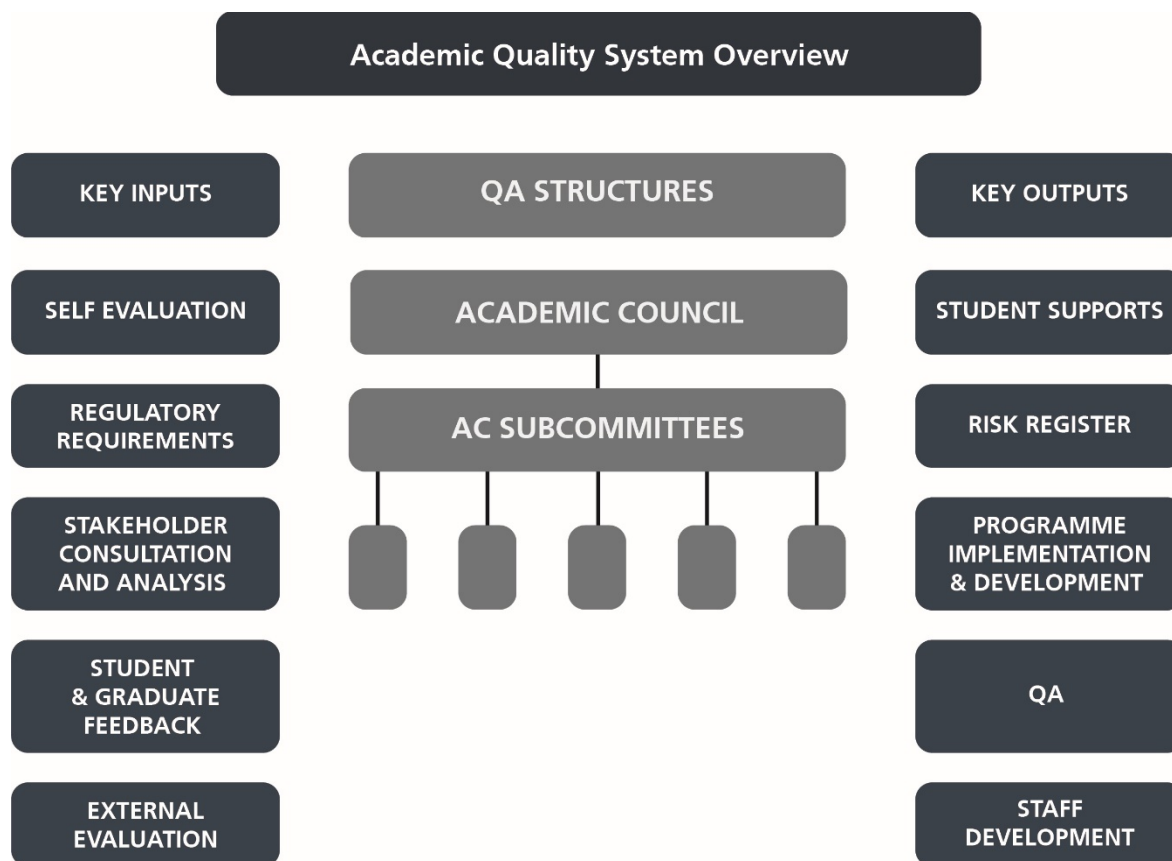


Figure 1: Academic Quality System Overview

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

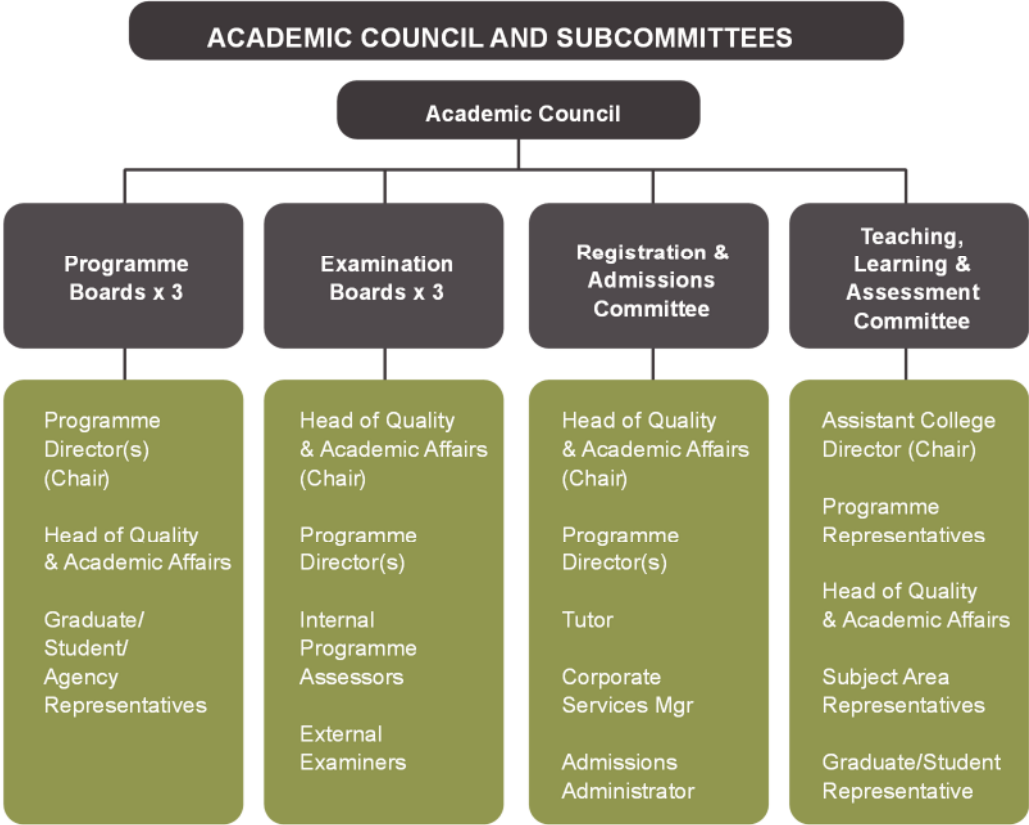


Figure 2: Academic Council and Subcommittees Structure

Governance of Academic QA is shown in the following diagram:

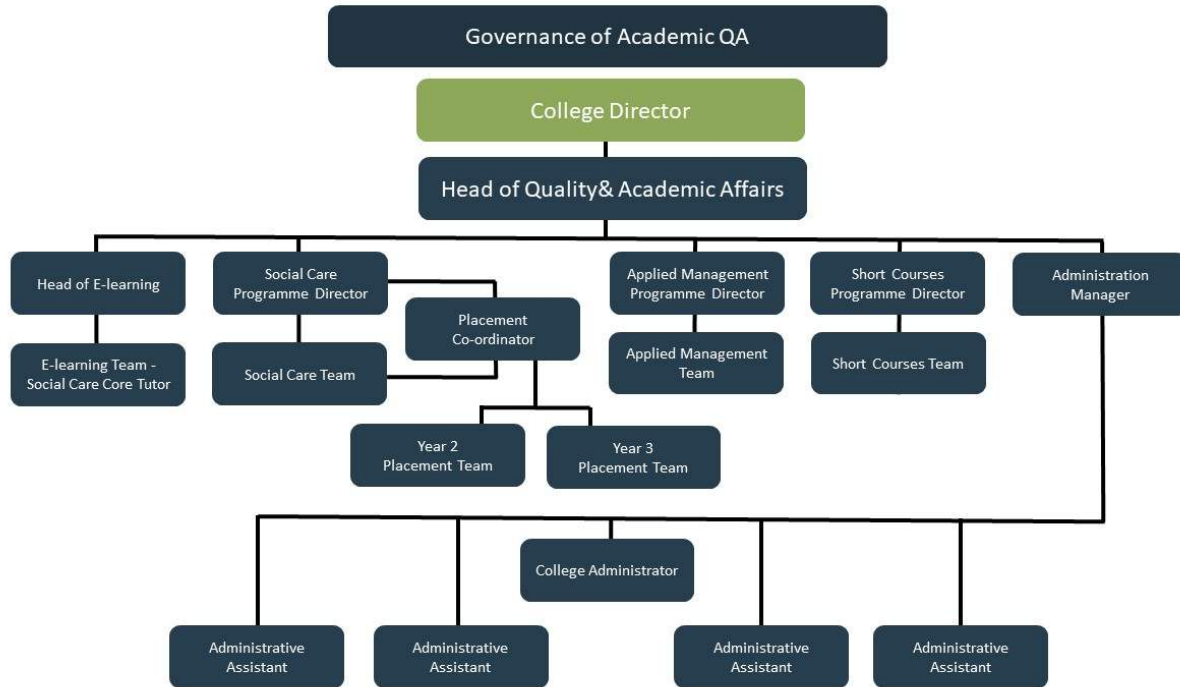


Figure 3: Governance of Academic QA

[Source: QuAD V 4.1, May 2022]

Representation of learners and external stakeholders

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

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

Additional external stakeholders consulted on areas such as programme design or strategic decisions include:

- Employers
- Placement Agencies
- Graduates
- St. Michael's House (parent organisation),
- QQI,

- CORU
- the National Forum
- IASCE
- Peer Colleges
- Peers
- HECA
- HECA's Academic Enhancement Forum (HAQEF)

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

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

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

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

Section 3 - Programmes of Education and Training

2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

These sub-headings correspond to SECTION 5: "Teaching and Learning" and SECTION 6: "Assessment of Learners" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document:

Section 5 - Teaching and Learning

Section 6 - Assessment of Learners

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

This heading corresponds to SECTION 7: "Support for Learners" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document:

Section 7 - Support for Learners

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

OTC does not currently provide Research Degree programmes. However, there is a Research Ethics approval process as part of the Level 8 degree "Honours B.A. in Applied Social Studies (Disability Service Management)", which links to the following policy and procedures:

<https://opentrainingcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/OTC-Research-Ethics-Policy-and-Procedure-V1-Final-Website.pdf>

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

This heading corresponds to SECTION 4: "Staff Recruitment, Management and Development" in OTC's Quality Assurance Document:

<https://opentrainingcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Section-3-Programmes-of-Education-and-Training.pdf>

Section 4 - Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

6.0 Information and Data Management

This heading corresponds to SECTION 8: “Information and Data Management” in OTC’s Quality Assurance Document:

Section 8 - Information and Data Management

7.0 Public Information and Communication

This heading corresponds to SECTION 9: “Public Information and Communication” in OTC’s Quality Assurance Document:

Section 9 - Public Information and Communication

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

This heading corresponds to SECTION 11: “Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review” in OTC’s Quality Assurance Document:

Section 11 - Self Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	1
Awarding bodies	1 (incl. QQI)
QA bodies	0 (excluding QQI)

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	CORU - Social Care Workers' Registration Board
Programme titles and links to publications	B.A. Social Care (L7): https://opentrainingcollege.com/courseitems/ba-in-social-care/
Date of accreditation or last review	Approval of the programme was notified to the College in November 2022. Monitoring commenced in 2025, with internal review taking place in 2026 and submission to CORU for 2027.
Date of next review	2027

2. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	Awarding Body
---	---------------

Name of body:

QQI

Programme titles and links to publications

<https://opentrainingcollege.com/courses/>

No.	Programme Code	Programme	Level/Type
1	PG24966	Honours Bachelor of Arts in Applied Social Studies (Disability Service Management)	8/Major
2	PG22384	https://irq.ie/courses/bachelor-of-arts-in-professional-social-care-disability-?id=68f4ea6d-8e66-474d-95c1-ae3246731606 Bachelor of Arts in Contemporary Disability Studies	7/Major
3	PG24094	Bachelor of Arts in Social Care	7/Major
4	PG24096	Higher Certificate in Arts in Social Care	6/Major
5	PG23919	Certificate in Applied Management (Human Services)	6/Minor
6	PG00253	Certificate in Human Service Manager Skills (Micro-credential)	6/Special Purpose Award
7	PG23915	Certificate in Supported Employment	7/Special Purpose Award
8	PG24073	Certificate in Patient Safety Complaints Advocacy	7/Special Purpose Award
9	PG10224	Certificate in Intellectual Disability Practice	5/Major
10	PG21078	Certificate in Health Service Skills	5/Major

	11	PG21103	Certificate in Training and Development	6/Special Purpose
	12	PG10865	Certificate in Person Centredness in Intellectual Disability Services	5/Minor
	13	PG10227	Certificate in Facilitating Communication through Lámh	5/Minor
	14	PG10225	Certificate in Wellbeing and Positive Behaviour Supports	5/Minor
	IRQ.ie - OTC: https://irq.ie/providers/the-open-training-college?id=1128aaf9-0343-44cb-b8e2-d9af74848c6e&ref=%257B%257D			
Date of accreditation or last review	QA Approval Report (Re-engagement), 2019: https://gsdocs.qqi.ie/sites/docs/ProviderDocumentsLibrary/PG00253/PRID-253-ApprovalReport-20190613.pdf			
Date of next review	AQR - Annual; CINNTE cycle for Institutional Review: date to be confirmed with QQI (2026-2027).			

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Not applicable.

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Not applicable.

[Open Training College (OTC)]

2026

Annual Quality Report (Open Training College - OTC)
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

The College sets objectives against the following key strategic areas:

1. Quality and Academic Affairs
2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment
3. Corporate Services
4. Management Programmes
5. Social Care Programmes
6. CPD/Short Courses - HET/FET
7. St. Michael's House (SMH) Service Plan - OTC Objectives

Examples of strategic objectives during the reporting period include:

A. Quality and Academic Affairs

Quality - Programmes To provide a clear validation and programme development plan for the OTC.

To continue the rationalisation of core programmes and to support the strategy of development of Micro-credentials in the Management and other discipline areas.

B. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Processes To review several processes including:

- withdrawal form (in conjunction with the Registration & Admissions Committee)
- submitting assignments incorrectly e.g. no declaration.
- internal moderation processes
- standardisation of the recording of 'Pass by Compensation' (PbC)
- catch-up activities
- documentation around support for students

C. Social Care Programmes

FET (Level 5) To significantly develop the online resources available for the Certificate in Intellectual Disability Practice (IDP), which will form part of the future blended delivery of this programme; particularly in relation to critical mass group education and training at the organisational level.

D. St. Michael's House (SMH) - OTC Objectives

External Review To conclude the external review carried out by Crowe in relation to the College's strategic and objective standing with regard to its parent organisation, St. Michael's House.

The Quality Assurance system operated by the OTC ensures that there is regular input by relevant stakeholders. The information produced by QA procedures allowed for developments and an accurate picture of the current state of the systems, process and programmes to be produced.

Further detail on the implementation and setting of strategic objectives can be found in the relevant sections of this report. A summary of the main QA and Academic Affairs activities during the year is contained under the next sub-heading.

Quality Assurance and Academic Affairs

The priority activity in this area in the last year continued to be the revalidation of the B.A. in Social Care programme; including preparing the next iteration of this Level 7, CORU-approved, degree. The validation event, including an Independent Expert Panel visit (virtual) took place in February 2025, with the programme then being approved for revalidation at QQI's July PAEC meeting.

The strategic development of micro-credentials also continued with the first of the three-programme management suite being launched for delivery, the second in the review stage with the expert panel and the third submitted for review, by the end of this reporting period. The findings and challenges from these processes are outlined in the case study attached to this report.

In addition, a further micro-credential application was underway for the Certificate in Supported Employment (CSE - Level 7, 20 credits) and an extension of one academic year was further sought for the Certificate in Patient Safety Complaints Advocacy (PSCA - Level 7, 20 credits).

OTC continued to rationalise the overall number of programmes offered, as part of the College's strategy to consolidate and focus on core programmes. This has meant a reduction in the number of QQI-validated minor and special awards, so that in 2024/25 three degrees (major award), three special purpose award and one minor award is now offered as part of the College's HE (Higher Education) provision. In the FE (Further Education) sphere two major awards, one special purpose and one minor award continue to be delivered. Overall, this accounts for fourteen active QQI-validated programmes, while some former minor and special purpose awards continue being delivered as courses which are certified in-house and can be taken by students for CPD purposes.

The Registration & Admissions Committee, as well as supporting the Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Committee with regards to withdrawal, also focused on:

- Garda vetting;
- Extenuating circumstances;
- Interview forms;

- Applicants' days.

Previously we have had issues with withdrawing students not completing the withdrawal form. The form has been updated and the procedure tightened up to ensure students are aware of the implications of not completing the form.

The TLA Committee reviewed attendance processes in relation to the catch-up activities required should a student miss direct contact hours for any reason. This was with regards to ensuring compliance with attendance requirements, as agreed with CORU.

There continued to be strong focus on increasing the number of high-quality placement sites for students, as numbers have increased over the last two years (with the CORU-mandated cap on numbers still in place). The feedback from the practice educator panel was very positive. They expressed that the communication from the College was very effective and the amount of paperwork and information is appropriate.

Updates have been made to the Academic Integrity (AI) module; all students must complete this module. More training has been provided for tutors to deal with AI issues. Students have been told that they must complete all work on a single Google Document so their version history can be reviewed if required.

Contribution to QQI Insights:

Themes from the OTC's last AQR were analysed along with five other independent/private colleges for QQI's 'QQI Insights: "Quality Assurance in Higher Education 2025 (Independent and Private HEIs)', which can be found here:

<https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2025-10/qqi-insights-quality-assurance-in-higher-education-2025-independent-and-private.pdf>

The purpose of the synthesis report was to highlight how each institution is advancing QA, strategic planning and enhancement initiatives in response to sectoral priorities and challenges under the following headings; Strategic Focus, Governance and QA, Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Student Experience, Staff Experience, External Engagement and Research and Continuous Improvement.

The conclusion of the Synthesis Report stated that: -

Overall, QA across the institutions is effective and evolving. Strategic planning is tightly integrated with QA, supported by strong governance, regular policy updates, and leadership renewal. Institutions are actively responding to external reviews and national

frameworks, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement. The AQRs demonstrate the maturity and resilience of internal QA systems across these independent and private HEIs, highlighting a collective capacity to adapt, innovate, and support students within an evolving higher education landscape.

<https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2024-10/quality-in-irish-higher-education-2024.pdf>

In addition, the following areas have been highlighted at Academic Council during the year:

- The requirement for an Overseas Police Certificate has been highlighted to all relevant incoming students and applicants.
- The level 8 Research Ethics Committee (REC) ran smoothly this year. New forms were implemented following a review of the process last year, and they proved effective.
- The Student Representatives reported students were very busy but feedback was mostly positive particularly around the support provided by the College.
- AC previously voted to implement the requirement for students to achieve 40% in both elements of a dual assessment to pass overall. This matches the guidelines received from CORU.
- Broadsheets for External Examination now have clearer coding. New codes, agreed at the TLA committee, are provided on a legend on the broadsheets and have greatly increased clarity.
- Assignment briefs are being updated to incorporate UDL principles. All standard information was reviewed to streamline and simplify the brief.
- Grammar waiver has been standardised to avoid confusion for students and added to the student handbook.

As outlined, below, the central activities in this area for 2025/26 will be:

1. The complete review of the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) and its associated policies, procedures, standards, protocols and guidelines, in preparation for Institutional (CINNTE) Review in 2027.
2. The completion of monitoring for the B.A. in Social Care regarding a submission to CORU by the end of 2026, for their review in 2027.

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
1	Policies; a. EDI Policy b. CPD Policy	a) The new EDI policy was finalised, approved by Academic Council and has been implemented. b) The CPD policy has undergone some minor updates and will be fully reviewed in 2025/26, following the closing of registration for Social Care Workers in November 2025.
2	Review and Revalidation of the B.A. in Social Care	Completed - Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Panel visit took place in February 2025. Report: https://qsdocs.qqi.ie/sites/docs/PanelReportsLibrary/ProgID-43939 Validation Report 3.%20PER%20B%20-%20Panel%20Report.pdf <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programme(s) - including embedded Higher Certificate, as an 'exit only' award - were approved by QQI's PAEC in July 2025. Certificate of Validation: https://qsdocs.qqi.ie/sites/docs/PanelReportsLibrary/ProgID-43939 Certificate of Validation PG26500 C.pdf
3	Micro-credentials Review	Partially Completed - Evidence: The Certificate in Human Service Manager Skills (HSMS) and the Certificate in Human Service Compliance Management (HSCM) were submitted for micro-credential validation, as Special Purpose Awards, during the reporting period. Both programmes were drawn from modules of the previously validated Certificate in Applied Management (Human

		<p>Services), which was discontinued at the end of the academic year 2024/25.</p> <p>At the end of the reporting period:</p> <p>a) The Certificate in HSMS had been validated (PAEC - July 2024); Certificate of Validation: https://qsdocs.qqi.ie/sites/docs/PanelReportsLibrary/ProgID-43120 Certificate of Validation PG25708 C.pdf</p> <p>b) The Certificate in HSCM was with the expert panel for review.</p> <p>c) Further programmes in progress towards micro-credential validation were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate in Supported Employment (Level 7 - 20 Credits) • Certificate in Human Service Staff and Resource Management (Level 6 - 20 credits)
4	Website Review	<p>Completed - Evidence: https://opentrainingcollege.com/</p> <p>With regard to:</p> <p>Updating of all programmes, including revision of entry requirements and removal of discontinued programmes.</p>
5.	Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) Review	<p>Initial review of the Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) showed a need to update certain procedures including those for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Placement. -Internal moderation and broadsheet presentation for External Examination. <p>These procedures were agreed through the Teaching, Learning & Assessment (TLA) Committee and ratified by the Academic Council (AC).</p>

		<p>Further areas of focus were also identified for updating during the next reporting period (2025/26), in preparation for an expected institutional review in 2027:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Supervision Policy-Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) Policy-Terms of Reference (ToR) for the College Executive Committee (CEC)-Titles, Diagrams, Legislation
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1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Academic Council (AC)	7 th November 2024 7 th -13 th March 2025 (Incorporeal) 27 th June 2025 7 th November 2025
College Executive Committee (CEC)	18 th September 2024 16 th October 2024 13 th November 2024 18 th December 2024 22 nd January 2025 12 th March 2025 9 th April 2025 14 th May 2025 11 th June 2025 9 th July 2025 17 th September 2025

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

During the reporting period the following changes in key personnel occurred:

A new Programme Director (PD) for Applied Management was appointed.

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
Revalidation of the B.A. in Social Care	Completed in Q3 of 2025	Completed in July 2025. Certificate of Validation: https://qsdocs.qqi.ie/sites/docs/PanelReportsLibrary/ProgID-43939_Certificate_of_Validation_PG26500_C.pdf
Validation of the Certificate in Human Service Manager Skills (Micro-credential - Special Purpose Award)	Completed in Q3 of 2024	Completed in July 2024. Certificate of Validation: https://qsdocs.qqi.ie/sites/docs/PanelReportsLibrary/ProgID-43120_Certificate_of_Validation_PG25708_C.pdf
Validation of the Certificate in Human Service Compliance Management (Micro-credential - Special Purpose Award)	To be completed in Q4 2025 / Q1 2026	Expert panel appointed and under review at time of reporting, Q3 2025.

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels² 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	3				2	1	
<i>of those:</i>							
On-site processes							
Desk reviews	2				2		
Virtual processes	1					1	
Average panel size for each process type*					3.5	6	

* excluding secretary if not a full panel member

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

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

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	3	3				3				1	2
Secretary	3	2	1			3				1	2
Academic/Discipline Specific	5	1	4			4	1			4	1
Student Representative	1	1				1				1	
QA	1	1				1					1
Teaching & Learning											
External Industry /Third Mission	3	1	2			3					3

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

In terms of the overall impact on programme delivery, as monitored through student feedback in end-of-year surveys (EOYs) the following was reported from the EOYs 2023/24:

The 2024/25 EOY (End-of-year) survey received feedback from 89 students, a decrease in participation compared with 127 respondents last year. Engagement levels dropped by 7%. Respondents represented BASC (B.A. in Social Care), CDS (B.A. in Contemporary Disability Studies), CAM (Certificate in Applied Management), and IDP (Intellectual Disability Practice), with social care students comprising the largest group at 71% (up from 61% the previous year). management students accounted for 10%, CDS 6%, and IDP 5%.

Demographics

Students this year are slightly younger: 40% under 35 (34% last year).

Female representation has decreased: 72% this year compared with 78% (2023/24) and 84% (2022/23).

Levels of professional experience are lower: 25% have 15+ years' service (down from 32%), and only 6% have 20+ years (down from 7%).

Self-funding remains consistent at 54%, while use of the OTC instalment plan declined to 60% (from 74%).

Geographically, most students are from Dublin, Louth, Kildare, and Cork.

37% entered with a FET qualification (similar to last year's 38%).

There has been a notable increase in non-Irish/non-EU students, rising from 14% to 22%.

Employment Roles

Care assistants: 45% (up from 31%).

Social care workers: 19% (down from 22%).

Social care leaders: unchanged at 7%.

Satisfaction with the OTC Experience

Overall satisfaction rose slightly: 89% rated their experience as excellent/very good/good (up from 88%).

Excellent ratings increased significantly, from 26% to 40%.

Only 5% rated their experience as fair (down 5%), and 2% rated it poor (unchanged).

Learning material satisfaction improved to 90% (from 88%).

Workshop satisfaction rose slightly to 69%.

Workshop facilitation ratings showed strong improvement, with 52% marking them excellent (up from 35%).

Library satisfaction fell slightly, from 65% to 60%, with some students still experiencing database access issues.

Tutoring and Support

Telephone tutorial satisfaction decreased to 65% (from 78%).

Email tutorial satisfaction increased to 78% (from 75%).

Group tutorials were rated satisfactory by 75%, down 6%.

Health and wellbeing supports were rated helpful by 77% (similar to last year), though usage declined from 32% to 26%.

Placement Experience

Placement ratings improved significantly:

45% excellent (up from 38%).

29% very good (same as last year).

0% rated fair/poor (down from 13%).

Ratings of placement tutors and educators also improved:

Placement tutors rated excellent by 76% (up from 56%).

Educators rated excellent by 66% (up from 54%).

Administration

Excellent ratings rose from 37% to 47%.

Only 2% of students reported dissatisfaction.

Overall Analysis

The 2024/25 results indicate generally positive trends in student satisfaction with the OTC experience, despite lower survey participation. Key improvements include stronger ratings for placements, workshops, and administrative support, as well as increased excellence scores overall. However, there are areas requiring attention, particularly declining satisfaction with telephone and group tutorials, reduced library ratings, and lower engagement levels. The profile of students is shifting: they are younger, more diverse, and less experienced, with a growing proportion from outside Ireland/EU.

Things to ponder:

- Workshops to make good use of time to reduce travel time for students not living in Dublin
- Sign and sign-out sheets process needs attention, waiting time for sign-out in particular
- Ensuring links and videos are up to date and working
- Feedback needs to be timely
- Narrowing down resources gathered from the library and databases
- More support for the library
- Articles not available in the library databases
- Need to promote the end-of-year survey as an important opportunity to provide feedback
- Need to promote student representatives and what they do
- Print out modules for a fee
- Clear source for assessments, some variation in tutor guidance
- Need for more variety of speakers in year 2

Things to congratulate ourselves on:

- The overall results are positive
- Modules are deemed excellent or very good
- Tutorial supports increased uptake
- Some tutors go above and beyond

- OTC is very supportive
- Students liked the reflections from student support, and some needed the support provided
- Student representatives are seen as good support (up 10% to 71% see the SR as enhancing feedback)
- Placement team is seen very positively
- The Administration team is seen very positively.
- Some Workshop facilitators were given great reviews
- Podcasts are still getting excellent reviews
- Online database and library
- Variety of speakers in first year
- Health and wellbeing supports

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

The Academic Integrity Policy is of central importance in assuring the overall integrity of assessment, and can be found here:

<https://opentrainingcollege.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ACADEMIC-INTEGRITY-POLICY-Procedure-FINAL-VWebApr2023.pdf>

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (a standing sub-committee of the Academic Council) oversees the integration of Assessment with Teaching & Learning within the College.

The College has always maintained a strict but fair policy and procedure when it comes to Academic Misconduct (formerly plagiarism/cheating) and the need for this has never been greater since the arrival of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a possible resource towards cheating, particularly in the last two years.

The last two years have indeed seen a marked increase in investigation of possible cases of Academic Misconduct and many more cases where this has been found to be the case than before the arrival of ChatGPT and other chatbots/virtual assistants based on large language models. Most of these cases have been dealt with at Level 1 of the AM procedure. There are three levels:

Level 1 - Minor Offence

Level 2 - Major Offence

Level 3 - Grave Offence

All students are made aware of the value of the Academic Integrity policy and the penalties should this policy be abused. They must also take an AI module as part of their studies and submit assignments on a Google Document so that a version history is available for checking.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	Relevant objectives	Planned actions and indicators
1	Quality - Institutional Review/Delegated Authority/ Corporate Fitness To commence groundwork for institutional review and due diligence in 2026/27	a) To continue the update of policies for institutional review (Review CPD policy plus explore Fitness to Learn policy in other institutions) b) Set up a group to develop and implement plan for IR (HQAA, CD, ACD, CS) c) Finalise an action plan for 2026 in relation to IR and due diligence Implement plan
2	RPL options Exploring RPL options from FET to HET in the social care and management sectors	a) Discuss options with CORU through monitoring b) Explore other College/agency options to allow RPL and/or set up EAYL (Earn as you learn)
3	Staff Development To review the current CPD policy and develop processes	a) To benchmark the current CPD policy and actions in the OTC with other institutions and create a gap analysis b) To provide a paper looking at any required changes to the policy and how to record and communicate actions
4	Micro-credentials	a) Commence Micro 2 - HSCM (Human Service Compliance Management) b) Validate and commence Micro 3 - HSSRM (Human Service Staff and

	To complete and promote the suite of micro-credentials for management	Resource Management) c) Develop a package to promote all 3 micro-credentials
5	CORU Monitoring To complete the CORU monitoring of BASC (B.A. in Social Care)	a) Engage with the CORU education team to outline process b) Set up an internal CORU Monitoring team c) Create an action plan around documentation d) Identify dates for the monitoring visit
6	CPD To develop a suite of CPD options for staff and agencies on LearnWorlds	a) CPD team to meet b) Finalise what the OTC are promoting for CPD c) Develop site area including new CPD offerings, CPD support d) Promote CPD including developing a network of agencies e) Monitor uptake and review in the summer

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
<p>Review of Complete Quality Assurance Document (QuAD) in preparation for Institutional (CINNTE) Review.</p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strategy review -Full benchmarking of all policies -Due Diligence -Internal Self-evaluation Report (ISER) -Internal and External Stakeholder consultation -Updating of Blended and Online Learning Strategy 	Q3 2025 - Q4 2026	2023
Review of the B.A. in Social Care, Level 7 degree for CORU monitoring	Q2 2026 - Q1 2027	2023

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

OTC will look to develop a new Blended and Online Learning policy, following review of the current strategy, with a view to seeking a change to the College's scope of provision, through QQI, with regard to providing fully online national delivery for identified programmes.

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

Case Study: Transitioning the Open Training College's (OTC's) Certificate in Applied Management (Human Services) Programme to Micro-credentials for frontline human service managers

Introduction

In 2022, the Open Training College decided to begin moving the successful Certificate in Applied Management (Human Services) (CAM) (L6 Minor Award - 60 ECTS credits) to micro-credentials to align its management programme delivery with best educational practices and stay current in the marketplace.

The health and social care sector in Ireland is experiencing sustained workforce pressure, including increased regulatory oversight and growing demand for competent frontline management. Student feedback and employer engagement through the CAM programme highlighted a need for shorter and more focused learning interventions. The traditional year-long programmes are becoming increasingly inaccessible due to workload pressures and staff shortages in the ever-evolving and complex health and social care landscape.

In response to this demand, the OTC undertook the redesign of its traditional one-year programme into three 11-week Micro-credential courses. Each Micro-credential will carry 20 ECTS credits, enabling accumulation, and the combined total will equate to the previous CAM qualification in terms of credits and NFQ level.

The primary objective of this transition was to offer flexible, practice-focused learning opportunities for frontline and middle managers, ensuring alignment with the latest best practices and meeting the essential criteria for advancement into management roles within human service environments.

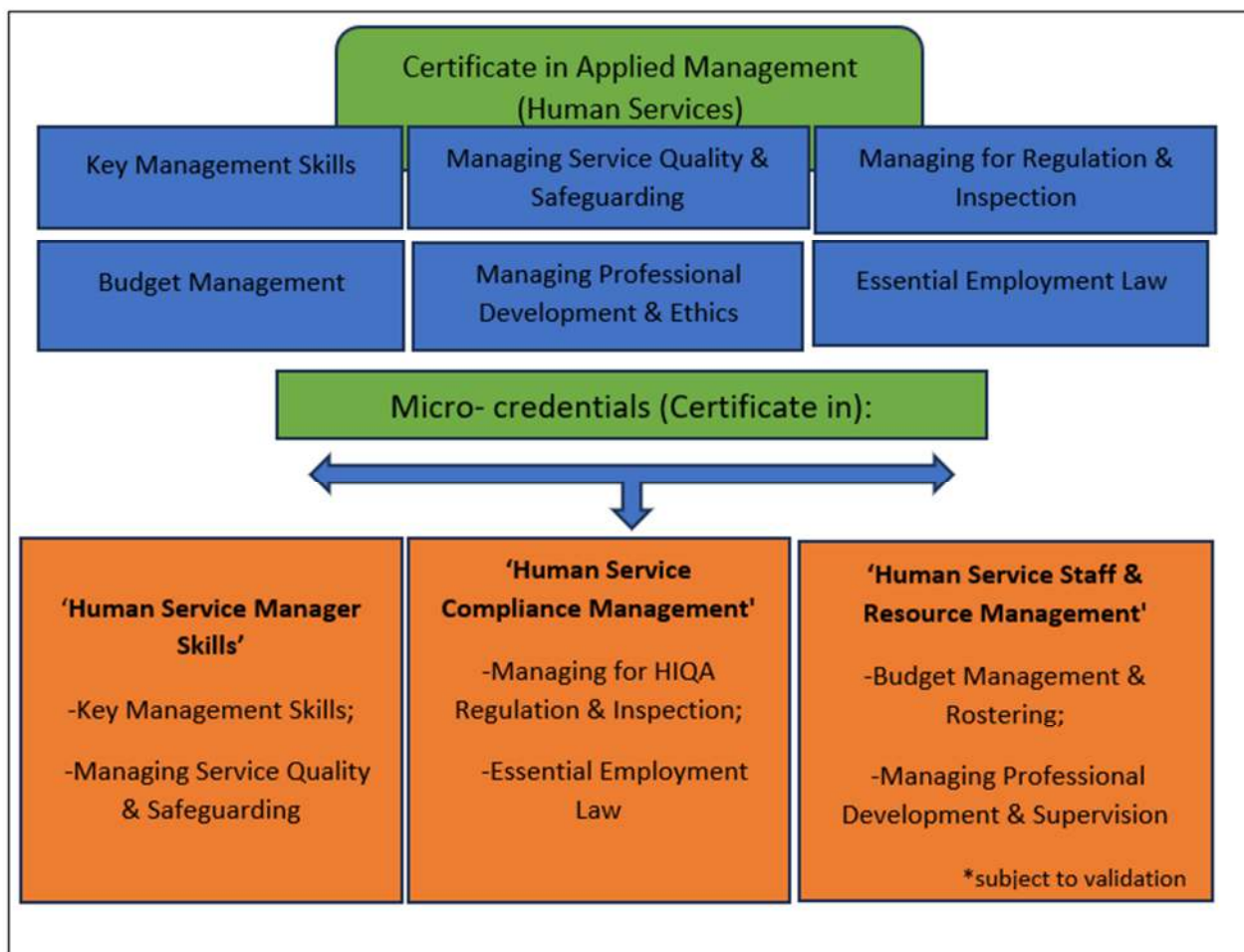
This case study outlines how the college approached this transition, including the opportunities, challenges, and key learning along the way. To note, this transition is still in progress; however, it is on target to be completed and fully launched by the end of 2026.

Opportunities

This transition gave the college an opportunity to fine-tune and focus on the key learning and the current relevance to practice of each module and its associated learning materials. The first task involved identifying which modules complemented each other best and how to package them to fulfil the overall programme learning outcomes for each micro-credential.

As part of this review, the college tailored content and redesigned some modules to meet current sectoral demand. For example, the Budget Management module is now redesigned to incorporate 'rostering'. Frontline managers highlighted a skills gap in roster design and best-practice principles as they transition into frontline management roles. This targeted learning approach, unique to micro-credentials, allowed the college to fine-tune and tailor the design of content to match sectoral demand.

The following visual highlights the current redesign structure of the CAM programme, including the addition of redesigned modules.



The first micro-credential, 'Certificate in Human Service Manager Skills' (HSMS), was validated in July 2024. This course has been delivered five times (as of January 2026) and aims to run four times over the calendar year. Numbers remain consistent throughout the year and are a promising reassurance for the college as the plan for the second and third micro-credentials develops through the validation process.

A benefit of transitioning to shorter, more manageable courses is the ability to run them over the calendar year rather than traditional academic cycles. This also allows greater flexibility for students (and their employers) as they can register at four different cycles throughout the year.

The HSMS course fulfils the minimum requirements for management HIQA registration procedures and meets most human service organisations' HR recruitment criteria for frontline management positions. This course, therefore, has met the needs of many human service organisations, as it enables them to upskill and advance their staff to fulfil management role vacancies in a timely manner without compromising standards. Students can return to complete additional micro-credentials as they progress in their careers or identify individual skills gaps along the way.

The launch of micro-credentials is also timely in light of current updates, specifically for students who are qualified Social Care Workers. The commencement of CORU registration in November 2023 has transformed the CPD landscape within the profession, with registered SCWs now required to complete regular CPD as part of their registration compliance. When all three are validated, they offer attractive and sector-specific courses that can be completed not only to progress as a frontline manager but also as CPD for the individual practitioner.

Challenges

As with any change process, challenges have emerged during this transitional period. Ensuring coherence across standalone micro-credentials required careful sequencing of learning outcomes across modules and new programme groupings in order to avoid fragmentation.

There were also concerns about the status of micro-credentials compared to traditional awards. Clearly defined pathways and explicit alignment with QQI were necessary to reinforce their academic and professional value. It remains a challenge to communicate this difference and clearly define micro-credentials to students, given the popularity and length of time during which CAM was delivered. Building from that reputation to move into the new model remains a key goal and challenge of the transition. Here, it is important to underline that these programmes are ultimately Special Purpose (SP) awards, even though validated through the micro-credential process; and the notion and value of SP awards is already well established through QQI.

Marketing strategy is an important element of the transition to avoid losing potential students during the transitional period. At present, the college is delivering HSMS but remains in the validation stage for the third micro-credential; the second has recently been validated but has not as yet been delivered. The college will have a stronger marketing position once all three have been validated, as they can be positioned and marketed as both a suite of three courses and as standalone CPD courses. Retaining potential students during the transitional period requires careful consideration.

In relation to teaching and learning, as the modules currently fit within a year-long programme, they required redesigning and repackaging to be presented and engaging to students as a two-module programme. Traditional processes such as end-of-year surveys and external examiner reviews require adjustment to fit shorter academic cycles throughout the calendar year. This necessitates considered academic and operational resources and is an ongoing piece of work as the college progresses through the validation process.

Conclusion

Aligning the Open Training College's 'Certificate in Applied Management' programme to micro-credentials, and ultimately three separate Special Purpose Awards, represents a strategic response to Ireland's evolving human service workforce and educational landscape. By focusing on frontline management competencies and embedding QQI and NFQ principles, the redesigned programmes aim to support both high-quality and flexible learning. While challenges remain, the transition demonstrates the potential of micro-credentials to enhance the college's capacity to deliver high-quality management courses that respond to current demands across health and social care settings.