

Hibernia College Quality Framework

Policy for Governance and Management



1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy describes the Hibernia College management structure. It articulates the principles by which the College is governed and identifies the key boards, committees and positions and their regulatory context.

1.2 Scope

- a. *To whom does the policy apply?*
 - i. This is an overarching policy that applies to all members of the College, reflecting the nature of the College as both an Irish state-accredited higher education institution and a private unlimited company.
- b. *Who is responsible for implementing the policy?*
 - i. The Academic Board and the Board of Directors are respectively responsible for formally approving this policy and for overseeing its implementation.
 - ii. All members of the Hibernia College community are jointly responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

2 Context

2.1 Legal and Regulatory Context

Irish company law regulates how Hibernia College Unlimited functions. In addition, law and regulation specifically pertaining to provision of higher education programmes apply to the College.

In higher education, good organisational practices for management and governance are presented and conceptualised within quality assurance (QA) frameworks. Within these frameworks, such as those established by *Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)* under the *Qualifications and quality assurance (education and training) act 2012*, QQI have established standards for institutional governance and management, which must be adopted by providers of programmes leading to QQI awards and these standards apply to all educational provision of the College.

a. *Irish company law*

This policy helps to facilitate compliance with the law and regulations for companies operating in Ireland and the EU, in particular, the Companies Act 2014 (revised)¹.

¹ *Companies Act 2014*, Dublin: The Irish Statute Book. Available at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/38/enacted/en/html> [Accessed 28/08/2018].

b. *QQI statutory QA Guidelines*

Hibernia College provides programmes that are validated by the statutory body QQI. QQI awards qualifications to successful candidates of these Hibernia College programmes. Accordingly, a prerequisite to providing programmes leading to QQI awards is that Hibernia College 'have regard to' all provisions of QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*² and QQI's *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers*³. Hibernia College was established to provide online and blended learning programmes, we also have regard to QQI's *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*⁴. This Policy for Governance and Management reflects our implementation of these requirements.

2.2 International Policy Context

Within Higher Education, good governance and management practices are deemed to belong to an institutional QA infrastructure. In this context, the standards and guidance provided in key international texts on quality assurance have implications for governance and management and are considered by Hibernia College.

a. *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*

Both as a Europe-based provider of higher education programmes and a provider of programmes leading to QQI awards, Hibernia College will, at a minimum, adopt and fulfil the standards established in the 2015 policy *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*⁵. The ESG is the benchmark for reputable Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

b. *Quality Assessment for E-learning: a Benchmarking Approach Third Edition (EADTU)*

Hibernia College was established to provide online or blended learning programmes. The European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) is Europe's leading institutional network for open and flexible higher education. Its 2016 publication *Quality Assessment for E-learning: a Benchmarking Approach*⁶ guides Hibernia College.

² *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016), Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Available at: <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf> [Accessed 28/08/2018].

³ *Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016), Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Available at <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Sector%20Specific%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%20V2.pdf> [Accessed 28/08/2018].

⁴ *Topic Specific: Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes* (2018), Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Available at: <https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Statutory%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20Blended%20Learning%20Programmes.pdf> [Accessed 28/08/2018].

⁵ European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), et. al (2015), *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, 2nd edn, p. 32.

⁶ The European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU), (2015), *Quality Assessment for E-Learning: A Benchmarking Approach*.

3 Policy Statements

3.1 Principles for Governance and Management

a. *Statutory Guidelines from QQI*

Hibernia College fully adopts the governance and management requirements as identified in QQI's *Core QA Guidelines* and in QQI's *QA Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers* and combined in the *extract* below. These principles form the basis of Hibernia College's approach to Governance and Management and are manifested in the Hibernia College Quality Framework.

1.1 Governance

There is a system in place to oversee the education and training, research and related activity to ensure its quality. This governance structure enforces separation of responsibilities between those who produce/develop material and those who approve it. Included in the governance structure are groups or units which (i) make decisions and (ii) approve them. Some broad examples of areas overseen by governance structures include:

- Education, training and related activities (for example, programme development prior to approval and submission for evaluation or validation)
- Internal and, where appropriate, external programme approval (validation) procedures
- Learner results prior to submission for approval as qualifications/awards and for certification
- Self-evaluation findings and programme and related service improvement reports, including agreed follow-up actions

Groups or units responsible for the oversight of education and training, research and related activities are identified in the documented procedures. The terms of reference for these groups or units are documented and published. Where scale is such that it cannot support internal committees, alternative arrangements are put in place to ensure objective oversight.

Quality assurance systems include procedures that ensure (as fit for context and purpose):

a) *A system of governance where objectives are aligned with mission and strategy*

The quality assurance system focuses on how, and whether, the College achieves its objectives and (periodically) on the suitability of the objectives in light of the College's mission and other criteria. Operational objectives are specified (at various levels) and are aligned with the mission, strategy and obligations to external stakeholders (statutory, regulatory, professional or other).

b) *The quality assurance system is owned by the College and the quality assurance procedures support the College as a legal entity*

The quality assurance system is embedded and maintained on a cross-organisational basis with involvement of all provider staff. This includes all levels of management, administration, teaching staff and learners. The system must assist the provider to maintain its status as an established legal entity, which is a clearly identified legal person, having rights and responsibilities under law. It must identify dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries and other stakeholder obligations that impact upon the capacity of the College in any way.

c) *A system of governance that protects the integrity of academic processes and standards*

Academic decision-making reflects the interests of learners and the maintenance of standards. It is independent of commercial considerations. Overall corporate decision-makers within the provider, whether trustees, owners, shareholders or others, do not exercise exclusive authority or undue influence over academic decision-making. Academic decision-makers are appropriately qualified and experienced; they are aware of available resources for programme delivery and ensure that standards are maintained.

d) A system of governance that considers risk

There are procedures in place for the identification, assessment and management of risk. The system of governance has procedures in place to ensure that the College is not engaged in activities or partnerships that might undermine the integrity of the education and training offered or the awards in the National Framework of Qualifications to which they lead, either in Ireland or abroad. Risk extends to the mode of provision, for example, alternative modes of delivery not embraced by the QA system. The consideration of risk also extends to:

- Maintaining academic integrity
- The avoidance of academic or other fraud associated with provision and related services
- Planning to ensure capacity to provide adequate services to the number and type of students recruited, ensuring it is stable and in good financial standing, with a reasonable business case for sustainable provision
- Ensuring that where its capacity is in any way reduced (for example, reductions in staff, resources, other education and training aspects; capacity to uphold the conditions and standards of validation or any other significant matters), QQI will be notified

e) A system of governance that considers the results of internal and external evaluation

Consideration is given to the findings of internal and external evaluation and self-monitoring processes. Appropriate responses, including action plans, are developed in light of those findings and of past experience (including trends).

1.2 Management of quality assurance

Quality assurance procedures form part of a coherent system, which is central to the promotion of a quality assurance culture within the College. The basic activities captured in the policies and procedures of the quality management system include, but are not limited to:

- A description of processes
- Demonstration of how it complies with applicable regulations and legislation in all jurisdictions in which it operates, its general good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in any jurisdictions in which it operates (or in which its parents or subsidiaries operate) or enrolls learners, or in which it has arrangements with awarding bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators
- Identification of roles and positions responsible for the implementation of quality assurance policies and procedures, which are clearly described and designated
- Self-monitoring of processes; indicators are developed and data is collected which can be used to measure the effectiveness of policies and procedures
- Systematic analysis of QA findings following self-evaluation involving stakeholders; layers of moderating and supervisory processes, as appropriate, are in place to enable strategic and co-ordinated analysis of information at appropriate levels

- Clear decision-making and follow-up. Systematic formal decision-making procedures are built into a provider's various evaluative mechanisms, including the procedures for oversight of such mechanisms by the governance system or equivalent. Management acts on the self-evaluation findings.
- A resource base which is sufficient to ensure sustainability, supporting and managing the quality assurance system and programmes of education and training, research and related services offered. The corporate infrastructure, including financial solvency of the business, supports the sustainability of the teaching and learning environment and underpinning quality assurance system. The College is adequately resourced to undertake and complete the education and training or research programmes proposed. Continuity planning procedures are developed to understand and anticipate events that could threaten the provider and to ensure that the College remains viable.
- Quality assurance procedures for the recruitment, management and development of staff will be developed in the context of all the education and training activities and related services provided by the College. This includes those education and training activities leading to awards of awarding bodies other than QQI, such as professional bodies and local provider provision, so that the overall commitments of staff are taken into account by the College.

b. Student Participation in Governance

- i. Student representation structures are an essential part of the College's collegial environment.
- ii. Appropriate and participative decision-making includes student representation within academic governance.
 - The College seeks and uses students' feedback on their experiences. This feedback is used to inform academic decision-making
 - The College communicates with students about the HCQF and the governance and management of the College.

3.2 Management and Governance Bodies: Regulatory Requirements for Distributed Governance Responsibilities in Higher Education⁷

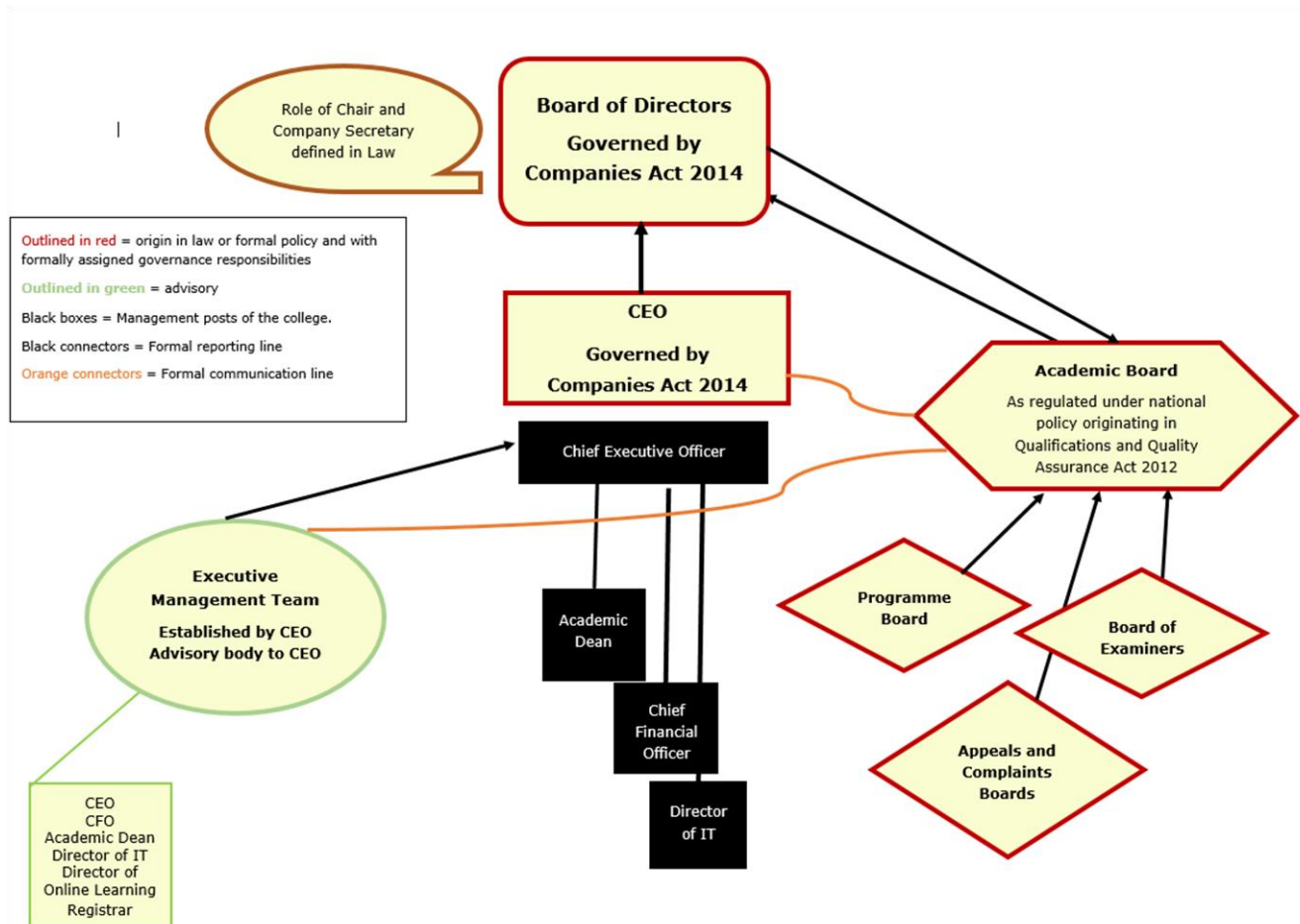
a. Context of Distributed Responsibilities

The implementation of structures to address this principle results in the establishment of distinct bodies with different responsibilities for the management of academic and corporate matters, as described below. Within Higher Education Institutions, good governance means that there is a dispersed, but defined, structure of governance, with one body (the Academic Board) being responsible for academic matters and a separate body (the Board of Directors) being responsible for resources, with an executive head of institution (the Chief Executive Officer) with legal and fiduciary duties under the law. The CEO has a particular role in liaising with the Chair of the Academic Board and facilitating reporting to the Chair of the Board of Directors. In practice, academic decisions impact corporate governance and vice versa, and this means that how the Academic Board and the CEO and the Board of Directors interact, communicate, and function together is important for effective institutional governance. Policies and procedures are established to provide effective mechanisms for this interrelationship.

⁷ Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, *Governance Briefing Notes* (2018). Available at: <https://www.lfhe.ac.uk/en/governance-new/governance-briefing-notes/index.cfm> Accessed 28/08/2018.

Ways to work together whilst respecting the different roles and responsibilities may include minutes and papers of Academic Board meetings being received by the Board of Directors and the use of joint committees for certain tasks.

b. Distributed Governance Organogram



3.3 Corporate Governance

Hibernia College is a private unlimited company incorporated in Ireland, managed by its Board of Directors and a Chief Executive Officer, who is supported by an Executive Management Team.

a. Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is the governing authority of Hibernia College. The Board of Directors complies with and satisfies the resources and the general business of the College, as well as setting its strategic direction. Collectively, these elements are sometimes referred to as corporate governance. The profiles of the members of the Board of Directors are set out in the Hibernia College Corporate Governance Code, which outlines the role and function of the Board of Directors.

b. Delegation of Authority and Responsibility to the Academic Board

In recognition of the nature of the organisation as a Higher Education Institution (HEI), approved by Quality and Qualifications Ireland to provide programmes of Higher Education leading to national awards, the Board of Directors formally delegates all authority for academic decision-making to the Academic Board. The nature of the decisions are provided in the Board-approved

terms of reference for the Academic Board. The Academic Board is established to reflect the particular competences required to make academic and quality assurance decisions for the College. It reports to the Board of Directors.

c. Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has the responsibility of ensuring that the day-to-day running of the College and its performance is in accordance with the strategic goals that the board has determined. The CEO monitors and directs the College's activities for business development, College performance, quality, culture, and compliance. The CEO works with the support of an Executive Management Team.

d. Executive Management Team (EMT)

The Executive Management Team (EMT) is appointed by and reports to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), to assist and advise the CEO in decision-making on College matters not reserved to the Board of Directors or Academic Board, including implementation of the strategic plan, and resource planning. The EMT is also responsible for initiating new business activity and partnerships; this includes setting, monitoring, and revising student recruitment targets. Additionally, the EMT is responsible for the financial management of all academic initiatives and programmes.

The members of the Executive Management Team are:

- i. Academic Dean
- ii. Chief Financial Officer
- iii. Director of Information Technology
- iv. Director of Online Learning
- v. Registrar.

The EMT has an advisory role to the CEO and makes decision on matters delegated to it by the CEO.

3.4 Academic Governance

Academic governance refers to the oversight of academic matters including student enrolment, programme design, development and review including programme curricula, assessment of students, academic standards, and academic quality. Academic governance is distinct from matters of corporate governance which relates to, for example, finance and resources, which are the responsibility of the CEO and his/her advisory team, and ultimately of the Board of Directors. Matters of academic governance are the responsibility of the Academic Board, as delegated by the Board of Directors. Responsibility for good academic management, quality assurance and the enhancement of the student experience is a feature of every staff and faculty role in Hibernia. Terms of reference and membership for the Academic Board and each of its subcommittees are established. It is mandatory that a detailed Terms of Reference exists for each committee.

a. Academic Board

The Academic Board is the ultimate decision-making body for academic matters in Hibernia College. The Academic Board and its subcommittees make decisions on the management and governance of academic programmes and the quality assurance infrastructure supporting those programmes. Its decision-making powers have been delegated to it by the Board of Directors, and it reports to the Board of Directors.

b. Sub-Committees of the Academic Board

The following are the key sub-committees of the Academic Board, each of which has a terms of reference approved by the Academic Board to assist it in the fulfilment of its governance and academic oversight responsibilities.

i. Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners is a subcommittee of the Academic Board. It makes summative assessment (and related) decisions based on the recommendations of assessors on programmes.

ii. Programme Board(s)

Programme Boards are subcommittees of the Academic Board. They are the committee for each programme, responsible for academic decision-making and design for the programme. These may include *Joint Programme Boards*, which are established where a particular programme is provided in partnerships with another body.

iii. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLAC)

The TLAC is a subcommittee of the Academic Board. It guides the College, through the Academic Board, on strategy, policy, and on the College's approach to teaching, learning and assessment for all programmes.

iv. Research Committee

The Research Committee is a subcommittee of the Academic Board. It guides the College, through the Academic Board, on strategy and policy. It leads the College in approaches to research activity and research elements of programmes.

v. Ethics Committee

The Ethics Committee is a subcommittee of the Academic Board. It guides the College, through the Academic Board, on approaches to ethical teaching, research, and scholarship.

vi. Appeals and Complaints Committees

Appeals and Complaints Committees are subcommittees of the Academic Board established as required by the Academic Dean to hear appeals with valid grounds against decisions of the Academic Board and its subcommittees or to hear complaints by students about their experiences.

vii. Other committees

The Academic Board may establish other committees to oversee areas of academic import, including the creation of various bodies to which decision-making powers may be delegated in respect of the management and governance of academic programmes.

3.5 Corporate Management Roles

a. *Chief Financial Officer*

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is responsible for overseeing financial planning, financial transactions, and financial reporting activities. The CFO also has responsibility for compliance with statutory fiscal requirements such as audit, accounting records, tax management, and planning.

b. *Director of IT*

The Director of IT is responsible for all technical areas of the College: internal and external. Responsibilities include progression of internal and external applications, licensing and purchasing

within the IT department, and the use of technology to enhance the e-learning quality of College Programmes.

c. Director of Business Development

The Director of Business Development is responsible for the overall management of all strategic and operational Marketing and Customer Relationship activities. The Director provides market feedback to the company leadership regarding competitive offerings, prospect needs, and generate sales development ideas.

3.6 Academic Management Roles

a. Academic Dean

The Academic Dean is responsible for the academic leadership of the College, for the quality of the intellectual dynamic that underpins learning, teaching, assessment and research and for oversight of each of the schools within Hibernia. Directors of Programmes report to the Academic Dean. The Academic Dean works closely with the Registrar in the development of academic collaborations, new programme proposals, academic review and accreditation activity. The Academic Dean is responsible for maintaining a panel of qualified external and internal members for appointment to subcommittees of the Academic Board.

b. Registrar

The Registrar is responsible for ensuring the academic integrity of the College, leading the development and overseeing the implementation of the Hibernia College Quality Framework. Responsibilities include College-wide developments such as policy development, strategic collaborations, organisational change, and consulting on national policy. S/he is the main agent of the Academic Board and is the central liaison officer between the College and its various accrediting bodies or collaborating institutions. The Registrar is responsible for the management of student and programme records, and considers and takes initial action on student management and compliance matters.

c. Director of Online Learning

The Director of Online Learning ensures that the student learning experience is prioritised in strategic growth through the ongoing evaluation and implementation of new technologies and online pedagogies. This role is responsible for managing the Digital Learning Department and provides leadership in all aspects of the development of online content.

d. Director of Research

The Director of Research is responsible for driving College strategy and day-to-day activity in respect of research and for supporting research activities on the programmes.

e. Directors of Programmes

Directors of Programmes (or Programme Directors) are the academic leaders within the disciplinary areas of the College. Directors of Programmes have overall responsibility for the management, provision, and academic integrity of the programmes they lead in their specific discipline area. This includes oversight of:

- i. Design, development, provision, and quality of all modules within the programmes.
- ii. Teaching, learning and assessment strategy for their Programmes (in consultation with the TLAC).
- iii. Resourcing of the programmes.

- iv. Communicating accreditation and professional standards body requirements and meeting those requirements.
- v. Implementation of QA policies and procedures and organisational strategy.
- vi. Recruitment, selection, training and management of faculty, adjunct faculty and supervisors.
- vii. Keeping current with disciplinary developments in their field and assessing their potential impact on the programme.
- viii. Raising the profile of the programme through research, publications, conference proceedings and networking.
- ix. Management of the assessment process.
- x. Representing the programme to the Academic Board (as chairperson of the Programme Board).
- xi. On-going monitoring and review, planning and reporting.

f. Director of Student and Alumni Support and Services

The Director of Student and Alumni Support and Services is responsible for the development, delivery and review of the student welfare and support programme that enhances the student experience. The Director manages the Student Support Officer and Student & Alumni Services Manager and also has responsibility for the Graduation Ceremony and Alumni Association.

g. Director of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The Director of CPD is responsible for the successful development and delivery of Hibernia's suite of CPD programmes in consultation with the relevant Directors of Discipline. The Director also has responsibility for the preparation and completion of annual submissions to the Irish Department of Education and Skills for the approval of summer courses. In addition, the Director of CPD:

- i. Represents the College at Department of Education and Skills briefings pertinent to the summer course programme.
- ii. Acts as academic advisor to summer course authors.
- iii. Engages with authors, tutors and the Digital Learning Department to ensure excellence, in keeping with the Hibernia ethos and values.

4 Document Control

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Author	Registrar/QA Officer		
Version	V.1	Adoption Date	Academic Board 28/06/2018 Board of Directors 17/07/2018
Expected Review Date	2019, and at least every five years thereafter		
Related Policies	Hibernia College Quality Framework: A Policy		

Related Procedures	Procedure for Monitoring and Review of the Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF)
Other related documents	Terms of Reference for the Academic Board Terms of Reference for Executive Management Team Terms of Reference for the Board of Directors Corporate Governance Code