

# Hibernia College Quality Framework

## Policy for On-going Monitoring of Online or Blended Learning Programmes



## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this *Policy for On-going Monitoring of Online or Blended Learning Programmes* is to

- a. *ensure that the College manages and makes appropriate changes to ensure programmes continue:*
  - i. To be viable
  - ii. To be fit for purpose
  - iii. To meet their conditions of validation, and where relevant professional approval
  - iv. To be up to an acceptable academic standard and meeting the award standard to which the programme has been designed
  - v. To provide a high quality of teaching and learning experience for learners in an online or blended learning environment.
- b. *enable the College to identify good practices in the provision of higher education programmes for wider dissemination*
- c. *provide vital information to inform strategic decision-making at programme and College level to include the development of new programmes or the discontinuation of current programmes.*

### 1.2 Scope

- a. *To whom does the policy apply?*
  - i. The policy applies to all staff and faculty involved in the design, provision and support of a Hibernia College programme.
- b. *In what situations does the policy apply?*
  - i. The policy applies throughout the lifecycle of a programme, following development and approval and runs in between periodic reviews.
- c. *Who is responsible for implementing the policy?*
  - i. The Academic Board has ultimate responsibility for the monitoring of programmes for the purposes identified.
  - ii. The Academic Board delegates responsibility for the implementation of measures to fulfil this policy to the Programme Board, under the leadership of the Director of Programme.
  - iii. The Programme Board implements monitoring mechanisms and reports findings through the Director of Programme to the Academic Board.
  - iv. The Director of Programme has responsibility for convening meetings of the Programme Board as prescribed in the Terms of Reference for the Programme Board.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 Legal or Regulatory Context

#### a. QA Guidelines

This policy has been designed with regard to the European standards and guidelines<sup>1</sup> and the QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines<sup>2</sup>; both of which specify the need for Hibernia College to implement policies and procedures setting out how programmes are monitored on an ongoing basis. Other QQI policies which have relevance include Topic Specific Guidelines for Blended Learning, Policy for Transnational and Collaborative Programmes and Core Validation Policy.

#### b. Policies, Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Development and Approval

On-going monitoring seeks to confirm that (amongst other things) a programme continues to meet the regulatory criteria for approval of a programme where the programme is accredited by a third party. This means that the legal and regulatory context set out in the Policy for Programme Development and Approval are relevant here.

## 3 Policy Statements

### 3.1 Principles for On-going Monitoring of Blended or Online Programmes

#### a. Continuous improvement - On-going monitoring and improvements over time

The programme including course materials, intended learning outcomes shall be regularly reviewed, updated and improved using feedback from stakeholders.

- i. Programmes are not static, they evolve over time, and College procedures must be utilised to capture and reflect on possible changes required.
- ii. Accredited programmes are subjected to systematic oversight, as documented in the relevant procedure, to ensure that they continue to meet the regulatory criteria for their approval. Where relevant this includes both academic and professional approvals.
- iii. On-going monitoring identifies areas for change and prompts incremental improvements to the programme over time.
- iv. Specific consideration is given to
  - the security of learner engagement within an online environment
  - and the recognition of qualifications in all locations in which learners are based
  - emergent technologies and educational developments in the field of online learning and considers their integration in the learning environment.

#### b. Instruments for on-going monitoring

The following must be utilised by all programmes under the auspices of the programme board

- i. The preparation of a detailed Annual Programme Report<sup>3</sup> for consideration by the Academic Board. A template is provided and it include amongst other things the consideration of feedback from the external examiners; the consideration of student

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<sup>1</sup> European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, 2nd edn, 2015, sec. 1.9.

<sup>2</sup> Quality and Qualifications Ireland, 'Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines', 2016, sec. 11.2.

<sup>3</sup> A template is provided.

feedback; the consideration of staff feedback; the collation of data on appeals, complaints and disciplinary hearings, and thematic analysis arising from same.

- ii. The consideration of reports required from External Examiners and reports required from External Chairs of Appeals Committees, or any other committee externally chaired.
- iii. Implemented models of systematic student, faculty, adjunct faculty and staff feedback<sup>4</sup>
- iv. A minimum of two meetings a year of the programme board for each programme, to include student and faculty representatives from all programme variants where such exist.<sup>5</sup>

#### *c. Outcomes of on-going monitoring*

On-going monitoring may lead to:

- i. Normal day-to-day operational changes to the management and provision of the programme as deemed necessary by the Programme Director.
- ii. Proposed minor changes to the programme for consideration by the Academic Board, and where deemed appropriate by the Registrar, for the relevant accrediting bodies.
- iii. Reports to the Programme Board in relation to the performance of the programme.
- iv. Ad hoc reports – where on-going monitoring gives rise to an academic issue which is urgent or of particular significance and pertains to the validation, an ad hoc report can be made to the Chairperson of the Academic Board.
- v. Recommended changes to HCQF policy or procedure.

#### *d. Information Sources for effective monitoring*

On-going monitoring draws on information from a variety of sources, including:

- i. Systematic Student feedback to include, survey outcomes, focus group, ad hoc feedback, etc.
- ii. Systematic feedback from adjunct faculty and faculty.
- iii. Marketing and student recruitment information.
- iv. Programme resources information – including in relation to human, physical, virtual and educational resources
- v. Third party stakeholders input – including by (prospective) students, alumni, placement providers, accrediting bodies, other providers and representative bodies, etc.
- vi. Progression, retention and academic engagement information – including from the virtual learning environment.
- vii. Information about use of student support services.
- viii. Reports required from External Examiners and reports required from External Chairs of Appeals Committees, or any other committee externally chaired.

#### *e. Link to programmatic review*

- i. Where an outcome of on-going monitoring includes a concern about the programme in relation to any of these principles, it may trigger a review of the programmes in line with the Policy for Periodic Review of Programmes where this is deemed appropriate by the

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<sup>4</sup> Models are described in a procedure on the collection of feedback.

<sup>5</sup> A variant may exist where there are multiple versions of a validated programme with slight provision or curricular differences to cater for particular audiences or within particular countries. A programme board exists for the parent programme, but with representation from all variants.

Academic Board. A proposal shall be made by the Programme Board to the Academic Board.

*f. For collaborative and transnational provision*

For collaborative and/or transnational programmes on-going monitoring seeks to confirm that there is:

- i. Equivalency of the teaching and learning experience across locations, programmes and modes of delivery.
- ii. Equivalency of the rights and experience of staff and students.
- iii. Effective oversight and governance arrangements with appropriate allocation of responsibility, ensuring that Hibernia College retains full academic oversight where it is the lead provider.
- iv. That where there are number of programme variants, i.e. a parent programme with variants based on it, that there is a single programme board, and a coherent mechanism to collate feedback and information on the effectiveness of the variants, so that the information can be considered as a whole.
- v. Transparency of recognition of qualifications in all locations in which learners are based
- vi. Ongoing review of any memorandum of agreement in place to support the provision of the programme and/or the provision of work placements associated with the programme.

## 4 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for On-going Monitoring of Online or Blended Learning Programmes		
Author	QA Officer/Registrar		
Version	V.1	Adoption Date	16/08/2018
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Related Policies			
Related Procedures	<a href="#">Procedure for Periodic Review of Academic Programmes</a>		
Other related documents	<a href="#">Template for Annual Programme Report Template</a>		