



Quality Assurance Manual

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PREFACE

This quality assurance manual is a total revision of that which was previously compiled for submission to HETAC in seeking accreditation for SQT Training Ltd. The original manual was compiled using an overarching quality framework which aimed to accommodate the provision of programmes accredited by a range of awarding bodies, each of which imposed distinct requirements on providers. As the number of awarding bodies have grown, it was found that the layout of the original quality assurance manual became complex, particularly when used by external stakeholders. This revised document has been simplified to incorporate the delivery of QQI/HETAC programmes only. Additional documents have been developed to satisfy the requirements of other awarding bodies.

This manual has been developed based on the on-going internal review of quality systems within the organisation coupled with recommendations arising from the QQI/HETAC Institutional Review which took place in May 2012. The framework has been organised around 7 key sections based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, part one. Supporting documents provided by QQI and other relevant organisations and bodies have been utilised to ensure necessary compliance across the entire framework, such documents are referenced at the beginning of each section. Internal work instructions safeguard the implementation of all policies and procedures and specific student handbooks (dependent on awarding body) and programme documents provide relevant information for students and other stakeholders.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

Founded in 1989, SQT Training Ltd (hereafter SQT) is an independent training organisation owned equally by two shareholders, Siobhan Cunningham and SBCT Investments (a Collison Family Trust). Siobhan Cunningham and David Williams jointly hold the position of Managing Director. SQT offers a range of accredited and non-accredited programmes. These range from 0.5 to 20 teaching days and cover 12 broad areas, as shown below.

The company was born out of a sense of entrepreneurship owing to the founder's awareness of the lack of the IRCA validated Quality Management Systems Auditor/Lead Auditor training programmes in Ireland. Though the demand from industry was high, at the time no Irish trainers were validated by IRCA and many students were travelling to the UK to complete this programme. Shannon Quality Training (SQT), later to be incorporated and re-named SQT Training Ltd in 2001, was thus established to deliver this one programme. At the time the company engaged UK trainers to deliver the programme. The first programme was delivered in 1989 and this original programme has been delivered almost every month in the intervening years. Today SQT delivers programmes covering 12 broad areas shown below.

1.1.1 Programme Range

The training programmes currently provided by SQT can be categorised into the following subject areas:

- i. Lean Six Sigma
- ii. Continual Process Improvement
- iii. Project & Programme Management
- iv. Quality
- v. Environment & Energy Management
- vi. Health & Safety
- vii. Food Safety
- viii. Life Sciences
- ix. Laboratory
- x. Hospitals / Medical
- xi. Train the Trainer
- xii. Leadership & Personal Development

SQT's programmes vary in duration from 0.5 to 20 teaching days and many programmes involve significant learner effort hours outside of face-to-face delivery. All programmes are tutor led with

one exception (International Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety). This programme is delivered through a blended learning methodology and is accredited by the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH).

1.1.2 Student Profile and Modes of Delivery

A distinctive feature of SQT is its student profile. SQT does not provide programmes for second-level school leavers; all students are adult learners, the majority of whom are in full-time employment.

SQT is located within the National Technological Park in Limerick, all administration and management functions are located on site.

Unlike many other higher education providers, SQT does not deliver centre-based delivery at its location in Limerick. SQT offers two types of delivery options as follows:

- i. **Public Programmes** are delivered at central locations, typically hotel venues across Ireland.
- ii. **In-house Programmes** are tailored for a particular organisation and generally cater for four to fifteen students. Such programmes are usually delivered at the company's own training facilities.

1.2 Accreditation

As well as offering short non-validated programmes, SQT delivers a range of programmes which are validated by the following awarding bodies:

- QQI / HETAC (Higher Education and Training Awards Council)
- QQI / FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council)
- NEBOSH (National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health)
- IRCA (The International Register of Certificated Auditors)
- IEMA (The Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment)
- CIEH (The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health)
- AEE (Association of Energy Engineers)
- ICEB (International Cleanroom Education Board)

Please note that the quality assurance policies and procedures outlined in this document apply to all QQI/HETAC accredited programmes. SQT offers four higher education programmes which are validated by QQI. All four lead to **Special Purpose** awards at Levels 6 to Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The four part-time programmes are:

- i. **8S15639** - Lean Six Sigma Black Belt Certificate in Process Engineering (Service & Transaction) Level 8 (40 ECTS)
- ii. **7S15640** - Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Certificate in Process Engineering Level 7 (15 ECTS)
- iii. **6S15641** - Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Certificate in Process Engineering Level 6 (10 ECTS)
- iv. **8S15642** - Lean Six Sigma Black Belt Certificate in Process Engineering Level 8 (60 ECTS)

These programmes are in the area of process engineering, specifically Lean Six Sigma. Lean Six Sigma is a comprehensive and highly effective strategy for achieving and sustaining business success. The strategy delivers bottom line savings, project by project, in an organised, proactive and highly transparent manner. It is driven by a close understanding of customer needs, disciplined use of knowledge, facts and statistical analysis and diligent attention to the DMAIC (Define; Measure; Analyse; Improve; Control) methodology to improve or reinvent business processes.

1.3 SQT's Mission Statement

SQT's mission is as follows:

To provide a wide variety of relevant, effective challenging and innovative training and education programmes specifically designed, developed, delivered and supported by our panel of expert Tutors and robust systems, for Learners in; Service and Manufacturing companies, Public and Semi-state organizations and individuals.

Our short duration, focused programmes will help our Learners overcome the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives and contribute to their on-going personal & professional development.

We are committed to providing recognised trusted qualifications (where available) and a quality service, every step of this learning experience.

1.4 Organisation Structure

Figure 1 below shows the current SQT organisation structure. It shows the key functional areas in terms of both academic and operational responsibilities. The working committees supporting this organisational structure are set out in Figure 2.

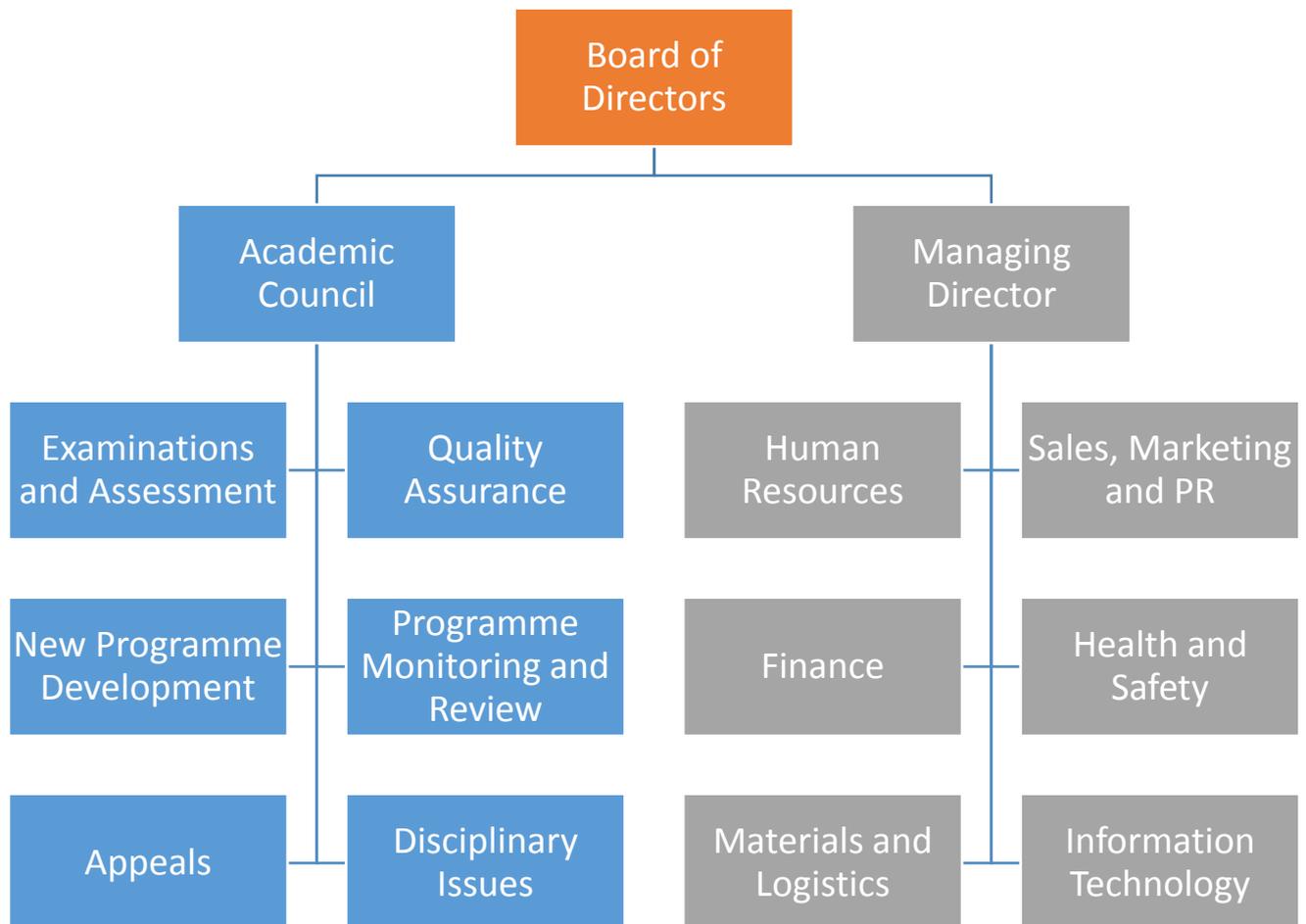


Figure 1: Organisational Structure

2 POLICY & PROCEDURES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

The following sets out SQT's policy statement in regard to its policy and procedures for Quality Assurance:

SQT commits itself explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality assurance throughout the entire organisation. This is supported by a published quality assurance system together with a suite of work instructions for internal use. This quality framework enables SQT to deliver its education and training programmes to the highest standard whilst conforming to national and international best practice guidelines, policies and procedures and legal and statutory regulations. The organisation is committed to on-going internal monitoring and continuous improvement and will undergo reviews and audits by external accreditation bodies in an honest, open and positive manner.

Table 1 puts this statement in context by summarising the European standards for policy and procedures for quality assurance in higher education. It also incorporates supporting documentation including reference to on-going monitoring mechanisms and continuous improvement.

STANDARD: POLICY & PROCEDURES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions: Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

<p>Supporting Policy Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HETAC (2011) Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education and Training ▪ HETAC (2007) Policy on Institutional Review of Providers of Education and Training ▪ HETAC (2009) Supplemental Guidelines for Institutional Review ▪ ENQA (2005) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 	<p>On-going Monitoring Mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systematic QA audit Reports and implementation / action plans arising from external reviews i.e. programmatic and institutional review 	<p>Relevant KPI's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Internal Audit Improvement Plan (quarterly completion rate) ▪ No. QA audit actions open ▪ % High priority QA audit actions open ▪ KPI Summary Report (weekly) <p>(both of the above reports contain relevant KPI's which are referenced throughout this manual)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Continuous Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation of recommendations arising from internal QA audits ▪ Actions arising from review of weekly KPI and summary PIN reports ▪ Implementation of quality improvement plans arising from audits and reviews carried out by awarding bodies 		

Table 1: Quality Assurance Overview

2.1 The Quality Assurance System at SQT

This quality assurance document has been developed by SQT for the purpose of clearly defining the mechanisms and procedures adopted by the organisation to achieve and maintain a quality service and product in accordance with Section 28 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999.

The document specifically relates to policies and procedures in place for QQI/HETAC accredited programmes at SQT. A number of important supporting documents have been used in the development of this manual, all of which are referenced at the beginning of each section.

Quality assurance is embedded in all aspects of the organisation, and, therefore spans both corporate (human resources, finance, health and safety etc.) and academic domains (teaching, assessment, curriculum, learning environment, student support services etc.). All staff undertake relevant roles and responsibilities in the implementation of quality assurance procedures and a number of committees and boards ensure accountability. The quality system is managed by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs whilst the Academic Council has the ultimate responsibility for approval of all quality assurance procedures and related activities.

In order to ensure that the policy and procedures remain relevant, fit for purpose and compliant with changes to statutory, legal and accrediting body requirements, the quality framework is subject to on-going monitoring and review. The Quality Committee is tasked to review the output of internal quality audits as well as keeping under review all aspects of the quality assurance system. This ensures that all procedures are audited at least once per year. Major changes and updates are sanctioned by the Academic Council and a comprehensive document control system is maintained.

2.2 SQT Academic Governance

The system of academic governance within SQT is central to the successful implementation of its quality assurance system. The organisation complies with all relevant legislation, including freedom of information, data protection, safety, health and welfare, employment and equality legislation. For the purpose of overview and ease of reference, the governance structures are diagrammatically represented in Figure 2, whilst Table 2 specifies the membership and function of the various boards and committees.

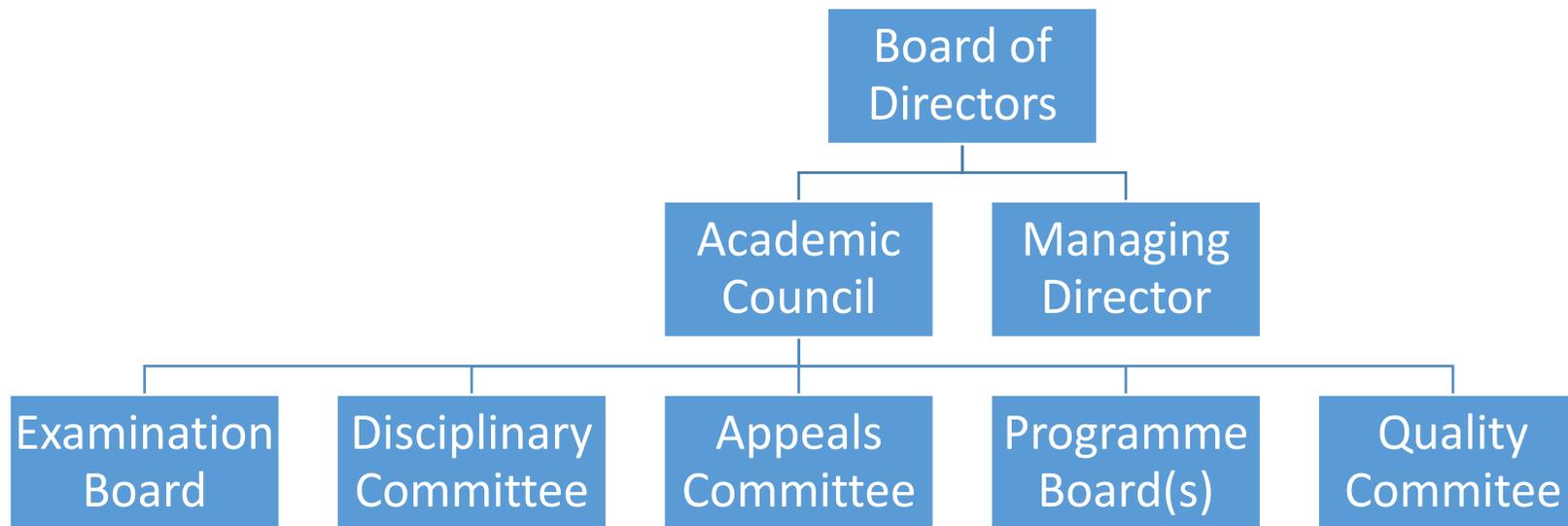


Figure 2: Academic Governance

2.2.1 Academic Governance: Boards and Committees

Body	Function	Membership (Chairperson in red)	Meeting Frequency
Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oversight and advice concerning strategic planning and development ▪ Oversight of compliance with quality assurance procedures and legal obligations ▪ Guardianship of corporate and academic governance best practice ▪ Budgetary / financial governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Independent Non-Executive Director ▪ Joint Managing Directors ▪ Non-Executive Director 	Three times per year
Academic Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsible for the academic regulation of the organisation ▪ Approve new programme proposals ▪ Review and approve updates and amendments to any aspect of the quality assurance system ▪ Review annual programme review reports and feedback from awarding bodies and make recommendations based on same ▪ Formally assess and approve reports for awarding bodies such as programmatic and institutional review documentation ▪ Review reports and recommendations received from its sub-committees and make recommendations based on same ▪ Form ad-hoc sub-committees where considered beneficial and appropriate ▪ Review cases of academic misconduct and plagiarism when appropriate (when escalated from disciplinary or appeals committee) ▪ Review External Examiner reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Independent Non-Executive Director ▪ Managing Director ▪ Director of Quality and Academic Affairs ▪ HETAC programme leader ▪ Examination Secretary ▪ Learner representative(s) for the following validated subject areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ QQI/HETAC ○ NEBOSH ▪ Tutor representative(s) for the following validated subject areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ QQI/HETAC ○ QQI/HETAC ○ NEBOSH 	Twice per year
Quality Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of QA audit reports ▪ Monitor adherence to QA policies, procedures and internal work instructions ▪ Informal training and provision of information re QA updates to relevant stakeholders ▪ Review relevant reports from external bodies and External Examiners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Director of Quality and Academic Affairs ▪ Examination Secretary ▪ Course Manager(s) 	Twice per year
Programme Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operational planning ▪ Monitor student progression and retention ▪ Manage the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment methods and procedures as applied to the programme(s) ▪ Review student, tutor and industry feedback and take action where required ▪ Participate on reviews as determined by relevant awarding bodies (i.e. institutional and programmatic reviews) ▪ New programme identification ▪ Review annual programme review reports and make recommendations based on same ▪ Review External Examiner reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and / or Managing Director ▪ Course Manager(s) ▪ Programme Tutors ▪ Programme Leader ▪ Student representative (for QQI/HETAC programmes only) 	Twice per year

Body	Function	Membership (Chairperson in red)	Meeting Frequency
Examination Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review outcomes of External Examiner moderation of programme(s) under consideration ▪ Ratify assessment results for all students of programme(s) under consideration ▪ Review penalties applied to assessment activities of programme(s) under consideration ▪ Review statistics/trends regarding assessment results of programme(s) under consideration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Director of Quality and Academic Affairs ▪ Examination Secretary ▪ Programme Tutors ▪ Programme Leader ▪ External Examiner 	Three times per year
Appeals Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review appeals of examination and assessment grades or against the decisions of the academic committees 	To be convened by the Managing Director ; membership based on significance of appeal (level, module etc.). Minimum 3 persons, including Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and independent Tutor).	Ad-hoc as required
Disciplinary Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hear unresolved cases of alleged misconduct and academic impropriety 	To be convened by the Independent Non-Executive Director , as necessary; membership based on the nature of the alleged disciplinary offence. Minimum 3 persons including Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and / or Managing Director.	Ad-hoc as required

Table 2: Boards and Committees

2.2.2 Academic Governance: Roles and Responsibilities

Below is a description of the roles and responsibilities of individual personnel referenced in Table 2 above. Please note that responsibilities listed below are not exhaustive.

Managing Director

The Managing Director is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the organisation functions effectively as an academic institution and quality training organisation for both students and staff. The MD's role is to encourage, motivate and support all teaching and administration staff to achieve the strategic objectives and goals of the organisation.

Key responsibilities include;

- Resource allocation and Human Resource Management of all teaching and support staff
- Management of External Relations and establishing and maintaining Strategic Alliances in association with Programme Leaders
- Financial Planning and Financial Management of the organisation to ensure it operates effectively as a training organisation
- Management of Sales, Marketing and Public Relations functions
- Management of the company's Information Technology and associated IT support systems
- Overall responsibility for the Health & Safety systems supporting all SQT Students and staff

External Non-Executive Director and External Non-Executive Chairperson

The Non-Executive Director should bring to the board the ability to be independent, impartial, experienced and knowledgeable so that he/she can:

- Uphold the highest ethical standards of integrity and probity
- Constructively challenge and help in developing corporate strategy
- Monitor management performance in meeting agreed targets and objectives
- Satisfy themselves on the integrity of financial information.
- Ensure controls and risk management systems are robust and defensible
- Determine appropriate levels of remuneration for Executive Director, appointment and removal of same and succession planning

In carrying out their responsibilities, Non-Executive Directors are expected to support executives in their leadership of the business whilst monitoring their conduct. This means questioning intelligently, debating constructively, challenging rigorously, and deciding impassionately. In doing so, he/she

needs to listen sensitively to the views of others, gain the trust of other board members and promote the highest standards of corporate governance.

The Non-Executive Chairperson presides over Board of Director meetings and ensures that it conducts its business in a professional and orderly manner. He / she must promote a culture of openness and debate and is responsible for reflective communication and ensuring that the board convenes three times per year.

Director of Quality and Academic Affairs

The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs acts as the primary point of contact for communications between SQT and external awarding bodies. Key responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that all Tutors are aware of and have the capability to carry out their roles in line with organisational policies and procedures
- Oversight of programme validation, monitoring and review
- Management of new programme development
- Planning and implementation of learning technology in the organisation
- Management of the assessment process
- Management of the quality assurance system
- Management of academic strategy in line with the organisations strategic planning documentation

Examination Secretary

The Accreditation / Systems Manager performs the key administration function relating to assessment of students which includes:

- Development of programme timetables & scheduling of examinations
- Provision of assessment information to Programme Leaders, Tutors and Students
- Acting as a point of contact for all awarding bodies
- Ensuring that assessment material is securely printed and distributed (where applicable)
- Coordination and approval of assessment venues and associated invigilation
- Collection and management of student assessment
- Maintaining relevant records and documents
- Management of the secure transfer of student assessment to assessors
- Making arrangements for students requiring special accommodation
- Providing administrative support for all External Examiners

Course Manager

The Course Manager works closely with Programme Leaders and Tutors to perform the following key functions:

- Providing support to Tutors in all aspects of planning and programme delivery
- Acting as a primary point of contact for current and prospective students
- Providing student support as appropriate
- Management of student registrations
- Coordination and approval of venues in accordance with training specifications
- Management of training material requirements and logistics associated with same
- Moodle support and software licencing

Programmes Leader

Each QQI/HETAC programme is assigned a Programme Leader whose key responsibility is the management and development of the programme. Key responsibilities of the Programme Leader include:

- General academic planning, management and on-going development of the programme
- On-going review of assessment instruments to ensure that assessment is fit-for-purpose and is compliant with relevant policies, procedures and standards
- Maintaining agreed records in conjunction with relevant internal staff
- Communication with both prospective and registered students when necessary to ensure they are fully informed of programme requirements as well as resources and services available
- Providing general assistance, support, and guidance to students
- Development and continuous review of learning materials and associated schemes of work
- Maintaining records to monitor student progress, achievement and attendance
- Producing an annual programme review report under the guidance of the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs
- New programme identification
- Participating in Programme Board and other relevant committees as assigned by the organisation

Programme Tutor

Key responsibilities of Tutors include:

- Delivery of teaching and assessment of students
- Integrating relevant published research into course delivery and assessment processes

- Contributing to the development, planning and implementation of a high quality curriculum
- Grading of assessments where relevant as well as providing feedback and mentoring to students within the agreed timescale of the assessment activity
- Providing pastoral care and support to students when appropriate
- Liaising with administration and management staff as necessary on an on-going basis
- New programme identification
- Participating in Programme Board meetings and other meetings and committees as assigned by the organisation

External Examiner

The function of the External Examiner is as follows:

- Review the appropriateness of the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (i.e. the programme's basic educational goal), and other programme objectives
- Probe the actual attainment of students (actual programme learning outcomes) using information agreed with and supplied by SQT
- Compare and contrast both the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and the actual attainment of students with the relevant awards standards, the National Framework of Qualifications, and corresponding data from other programmes in the same discipline in other higher education institutions in Ireland and beyond
- Determine whether or not the applied procedures for assessment are valid, reliable, fair and consistent
- Review the appropriateness of the programme assessment strategy and the assessment procedures
- Approve key assessment tasks prior to their assignment in light of the programme and module assessment strategies and students' prerequisite (prior) learning. Where key tasks include key continuous assessment, it might not be feasible to review them prior to assignment, but they should still be reviewed by the External Examiner
- Carry out external moderation of APEL process and review of APEL applications for entry onto a programme
- Report findings and provide recommendations for continuous improvement to SQT

2.3 Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Quality Assurance System

The effectiveness of the quality assurance system is measured in a number of different ways. For the purpose of QQI/HETAC quality assurance systems, the main reviews in place are on-going quality

audits, programmatic reviews, and institutional review. On-going measurement and evaluation of specific aspects of the QA system are dealt with within the relevant sections of this document.

2.3.1 On-going Quality Audits

An audit schedule is developed at the beginning of the year which ensures that all procedures are evaluated at least once in a twelve month period. An audit team is assigned to each audit. Membership of each audit team is rotated on an annual basis in so far as is possible. The internal audit is carried out by reviewing documentation and consulting with relevant staff who are familiar with the policy and related procedures. An audit checklist is maintained for each internal audit and a report is subsequently prepared which outlines the findings, recommendations and key actions of the audit. Key information is presented, reviewed and approved (where necessary) by the Academic Council.

2.3.2 Programmatic Review

SQT undertake a major review of each QQI/HETAC programme and/or suite of programmes, usually at five-yearly intervals. This review is called a programmatic review. Full details relating to this procedure are outlined in section 3.2.4.

2.3.3 Institutional Review

All providers offering QQI/HETAC awards are subject to external quality assurance review of their institutions. Such reviews are termed institutional reviews and are carried out by QQI (usually at five year intervals).

The objectives of the institutional review are:

- to enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made;
- to assess the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the institution;
- to confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and procedures for access, transfer and progression;
- to evaluate the operation and management of delegated authority where it has been granted;
- to provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution;
- to contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution.

The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs is responsible for managing the review process which consists of the following six phases¹:

- i. QQI sets terms of reference following consultation with institution;
- ii. Self-study by the institution;
- iii. Visit by expert panel appointed by QQI and written panel report;
- iv. Institutional response including implementation plan;
- v. Panel report and response published;
- vi. Follow-up report submitted by the institution

▪ ¹ HETAC (2007) Policy on Institutional Review of Providers of Education and Training

3 APPROVAL, MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES

The following sets out SQT's policy statement in regard to its policy and procedures for Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes:

SQT are committed to ensuring that all programmes are:

- *developed in accordance with prescribed policies and guidelines*
- *delivered consistently, professionally and safely and*
- *reviewed on an on-going basis*

Particular attention is given to the feedback of students, staff, Tutors and other relevant stakeholders as a method of identifying opportunities to continually improve the quality and effectiveness of the programmes and services provided.

Table 3 puts this statement in context by summarising the European standards for policy and procedures for quality assurance in higher education. It also incorporates supporting documentation including reference to on-going monitoring mechanisms and continuous improvement.

STANDARD: APPROVAL, MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES

European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions: Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.

<p>Supporting Policy Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HETAC (2010) Core Validation Policy and Criteria ▪ HETAC (2010) General Programme Validation Manual ▪ HETAC (2008) Policy and Draft Guidelines on Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards. ▪ HETAC (2010) Provider Monitoring Policy and Procedures ▪ HETAC (2009) Participation in an Evaluation Panel as an Expert Assessor: Guidelines. Version 2 ▪ IHEQN (2009) Common Principles for Student involvement in Quality Assurance / Enhancement 	<p>On-going Monitoring Mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programme Board Meetings which consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student performance - External Examiner reports - Student feedback - Tutor feedback - Feedback from other relevant stakeholders - Review of PINs - Review of programme information provision ▪ Annual programme review report ▪ Programmatic Review Reports – action plans resulting from SER and Report of Expert Panel 	<p>Relevant KPI's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion Rate ▪ Withdrawal / Non-submission Rate ▪ No. Registered Students ▪ Student CAF Ratings ▪ No. Potential for Improvement Notices (PINs) ▪ No. New Programmes Offered
<p style="text-align: center;">Continuous Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review outcomes of on-going monitoring mechanisms as above and implement improvements based on same 		

Table 3: Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes

3.1 Procedures for the Design of New Programmes

For ease of overview and reference, the process of designing new QQI/HETAC programmes is diagrammatically represented in Figure 3 below and is further detailed in the subsequent sections.

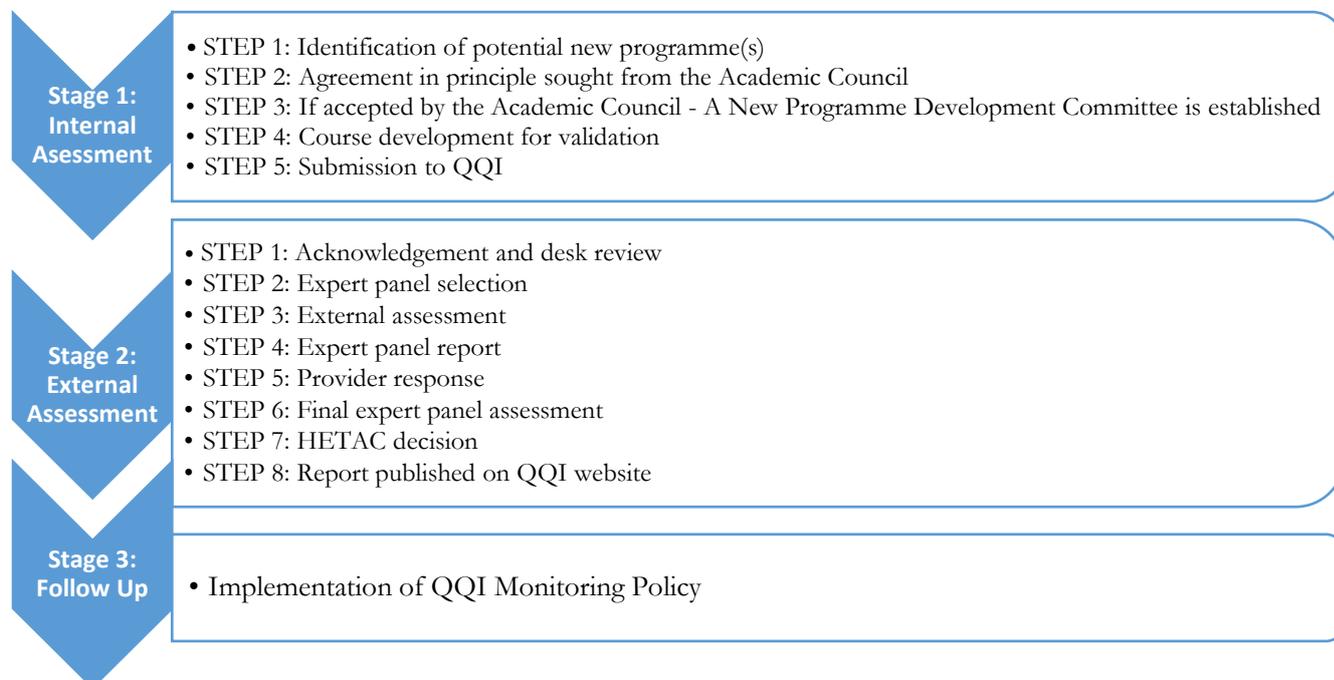


Figure 3: Procedure for Design of New Programmes

3.1.1 Stage 1: Internal Assessment

“... a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by subject of the quality assurance process (SQT) ...”

The internal assessment stage incorporates the following five steps:

Step 1: Identification of potential new programme(s)

Ideas and demand for the development of new programmes for QQI validation generally originate from the on-going monitoring of current programmes as well as from engagement with companies, Tutors, Programme Leaders and other relevant stakeholders.

Step 2: Agreement sought from the Academic Council

When an idea is generated, subject to approval in principle from the Board of Directors, the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs in association with the nominated Programme Leader prepares a proposal for consideration by the Academic Council. This brief new programme proposal generally includes the following:

- Overview of programme content and intended academic level
- Rationale and student demand for the programme
- List of similar programmes in other institutions

- Expected programme fee structure including business plan showing viability
- Proposed schedule for development and validation
- Proposed resource requirements (human and capital) and cost associated with same

The Academic Council will review the proposal with specific regard to the following criteria:

- Relevance of programme to SQT's vision and strategic development plan
- Relevance of the programme to SQT's market and industry needs
- Alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications
- Students demand for the programme
- Whether similar or related programmes are offered by other providers
- Consultation with stakeholders/peers
- Accreditation body requirements
- Implications of providing the new programme including human resources, IT requirements, financial implications, physical and support facilities
- Programme management arrangements
- Implications for protection of enrolled students

Step 3: If accepted by the Academic Council - A New Programme Development Committee is Established

Following formal approval of the proposal by the Academic Council, a New Programme Development Committee is established to develop the programme. Membership of the committee is dependent on the nature of the new proposed programme(s). In some cases the guidance of additional external personnel may also be sought at this stage. This committee is a sub-committee of the Academic Council. An identified Chairperson will ensure that all programme development processes are carried out in strict coherence with agreed internal policies and procedures and relevant supporting policies and guidelines from the awarding body. Reporting to the Academic Council is carried out through the Chairperson.

Step 4: Programme Development for Validation

The following documentation is required by QQI for submission of a new programme application for validation:

- Proposed Programme Schedule
- Programme Information supplied using the General Programme Validation Template. This includes:
 - Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes
 - Profile of the Proposed Programme's Target Students

- Programme Assessment Strategy
- Module Assessment Strategies
- Critical Self Evaluation Report (SER)
- Any additional/specific quality assurance procedures required for the programme

Having completed programme documentation, the New Programme Development Committee may wish to submit the documentation to a third party for review prior to submission to QQI. In addition to the criteria for approval set out in Step 2 above, the following criteria should also be considered prior to submission to QQI.

- The documentation should include clear aims/objectives
- The documentation should include clear and appropriate learning outcomes
- The programme should meet its stated objectives, particularly with regard to intended learning outcomes
- Appropriate modes of delivery should be documented
- Appropriate pedagogy, relevant to the programme should be documented
- Fair and consistent assessment of learning outcomes should be identified
- Learner access, transfer and progression should be clearly documented

Step 5: Submission to QQI

Following approval by the Academic Council and, if appropriate, a third party, six copies of the submission document are forwarded to QQI.

3.1.2 Stage 2: External Assessment

“... an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency (QQI).”

Step 1: Acknowledgement and desk-review

Following receipt of application, QQI acknowledges the application in writing and conduct a desk review to determine whether or not the application addresses the validation criteria and the programme description in accordance with the guidelines set out in HETAC’s General Programme Validation Manual.

Step 2: Expert Panel Selection

Following acceptance of an application, an expert panel is established to make an assessment of the application.

Step 3: External Assessment (Site Visit)

The expert panel assesses the proposed programme against the core validation criteria. SQT's self-assessment is a key part of the evidence considered by the expert panel. The expert panel will normally undertake a site-visit as part of the assessment to establish if the programme meets the criteria and should be validated.

Step 4: Expert Panel Report

Shortly after the site visit, the expert panel agree a report of its findings, conclusions, prerequisites for validation, conditions and recommendations. Recommendations may be optional. This report is known as the draft expert panel report.

Step 5: SQT Response

The expert panel report is sent to SQT who are invited to respond in writing (within a specified time) on the expert panel report's findings, conclusions, and prerequisites for validation, conditions and recommendations.

Step 6: Final Expert Panel Assessment

Following consideration of the response from SQT, the expert panel agrees a brief statement setting out its reaction and its final recommendations to QQI regarding validation. This statement will be included as an addendum to the report and included in the submission to Academic Council.

Step 7: QQI Decision

QQI delegates the formal validation decision to its Academic Council. The Academic Council's decision is based on QQI/HETAC's validation policy and criteria and informed by the following evidence:

- i. The expert panel report;
- ii. The provider's response;
- iii. The expert panel's reaction to the provider's response if any;
- iv. A memorandum from the QQI executive on the context for and conduct of the process noting any concerns or complaints expressed by the provider.

Step 8: Report Publication

Following the validation decision, the expert panel report is published on the QQI website.

3.1.3 Stage 3: Follow Up / Monitoring

Validation by QQI is supplemented by its *Policy on Registration of Providers, Provider Monitoring Policy and Procedures* which address post-validation follow-up. Specifically, the monitoring policy ensures that the conditions of validation and any binding recommendations are met by SQT and its programmes.

3.2 Procedures for the On-going Monitoring of Programmes

SQT operate a cycle of evaluations and reviews which aim to provide regular academic quality assurance and allow for the continual improvement of each programme.

3.2.1 Internal Programme Monitoring

Table 4 below outlines the instruments and methodologies which are used to ensure that programmes are monitored on an on-going basis.

Evaluation Method	Stakeholder(s) Involved	Frequency	Programme Elements Reviewed
Student Course Assessment Forms	Students	Interim and on completion of programme delivery	Items considered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Course objectives - Tutor delivery - Course materials provided - Training facilities - Provision of course information - Programme Administration - Assessment (where relevant)
Tutor Course Assessment Forms	Tutors	Interim and on completion of programme delivery	Items considered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflection of programme delivery - Timing - Training facilities - Issues with students - Support from SQT - Changes to programme documentation - Response to student ratings
Programme Board Meeting	Programme faculty, internal staff and students	Biannual	Items considered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student performance - External Examiner reports - Student feedback - Tutor feedback - Feedback from other relevant stakeholders - Review of PINs (Performance Improvement Notifications) - Review of programme information provision
Informal Correspondence with Students and Tutors	Students and tutors	On-going	All aspects of programme content and provision
Examination Board Meeting	Programme faculty, internal staff and External Examiner	Biannual	Items considered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completion rates - Student achievement - Statistics and trends with respect to assessment
External Examiner Reports	External Examiner	Three times per year	The report is developed using the following as headings: Evidence considered, Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes, (knowledge, skill, competence), Actual Attainment of students, Assessment procedures, Trends
Company Course Organisers (In-house programmes)	In-house course organiser	On-going	Items included include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administration, planning & organisation - Course delivery - Appropriateness of support materials provided
Management Meetings	SQT/MD and/or Programme Leader, Company Management	As required	All aspects of programme content and provision.

Table 4: Methods for Internal Programme Monitoring

3.2.2 Changes to a Programme

The Programme Board is responsible for the review of data generated by the monitoring instruments and methodologies set out in Table 4. It is also tasked with identifying areas for continuous improvement and proposals for programme modification, where necessary. When making any proposals for modification, initial feedback is sought from the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs to confirm whether the proposed change is minor or major. Minor modifications are approved internally by the Programme Board whereas major modifications require QQI approval prior to implementation.

Minor Modifications include but are not limited to:

- Changes to the admissions process for example, the timing of outcomes to applicants or the process of allocating places
- Changes to the module content that doesn't impact on the learning outcomes of the module
- A change in the assessment methods in a particular module, as long as these are consistent with the approved programme schedule, the overall stated programme aims, learning outcomes and assessment strategy, for example changes in the assessment tool utilised for the percentage of the module that is assessed by continuous assessment.

Major modifications include but are not limited to:

- The addition of modules
- Changes to the programme title
- Changes to the approved programme schedule
- The addition of a new route / minor award
- Changes to module or programme learning outcomes
- Change to credit weightings of modules or programmes

3.2.3 Annual Programme Review Report

An annual programme review report is jointly developed by the Programme Leader and Director of Quality and Academic Affairs with the assistance of programme Tutors and programme administration staff, as required. The desired outcome of this report is an annual action plan aimed at ensuring the achievement of on-going quality enhancement.

As well as the sources set out in Table 4 above, other key inputs to the annual programme review report include:

- Relevant feedback from QQI
- Review / recommendations from the Programme Board meetings

- KPIs (Key Performance Indices, completed weekly)
- PINs (Potential for Improvement Notices)
- Student completion rates
- Attainment levels
- Review of programme brochure and course material
- Feedback from Students and Tutors (Course Assessment Forms)
- Feedback from Course Managers
- Review of new developments in training delivery
- Research into programmes offered by other providers

3.2.4 Programmatic Review

Programmatic review is a formal evaluation of QQI/HETAC accredited programmes. The review is generally carried out at five year intervals or as otherwise prescribed by QQI. Programmatic review is the responsibility of the Programme Board and is project managed by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs.

The specific objectives of a programmatic review are to²:

- Analyse the effectiveness and efficiency of each validated programme, including details of student numbers, retention rates and success rates
- Review the development of the programmes in the context of the requirements of employers, industry, professional bodies, the Irish economy and international developments
- Evaluate the response of the provider/school/department to market requirements and educational developments
- Evaluate the feedback mechanisms for students and the processes for acting on this feedback
- Evaluate the physical facilities and resources provided for the provision of the programme(s)
- Evaluate the formal links which have been established with industry, business and the wider community in order to maintain the relevance of its programmes
- Evaluate feedback from employers of the programmes' graduates and from those graduates
- Review any research activities in the field of learning under review and their impact on teaching and learning (notwithstanding that the reviews of the research degree programmes may be undertaken separately)
- Evaluate projections for the following five years in the programme(s)/field of learning under review.

² HETAC (2010) Provider Monitoring Policy and Procedure, Pg. 12

The review comprises three distinct stages, an internal evaluation which culminates in an SER (self-evaluation report), an external phase which includes a site visit by an expert panel and culminates in an expert panel report and a decision by SQT whether to request revalidation or not based on QQI conditions and recommendations. The key stages of the programmatic review are summarised in Figure 4 below.

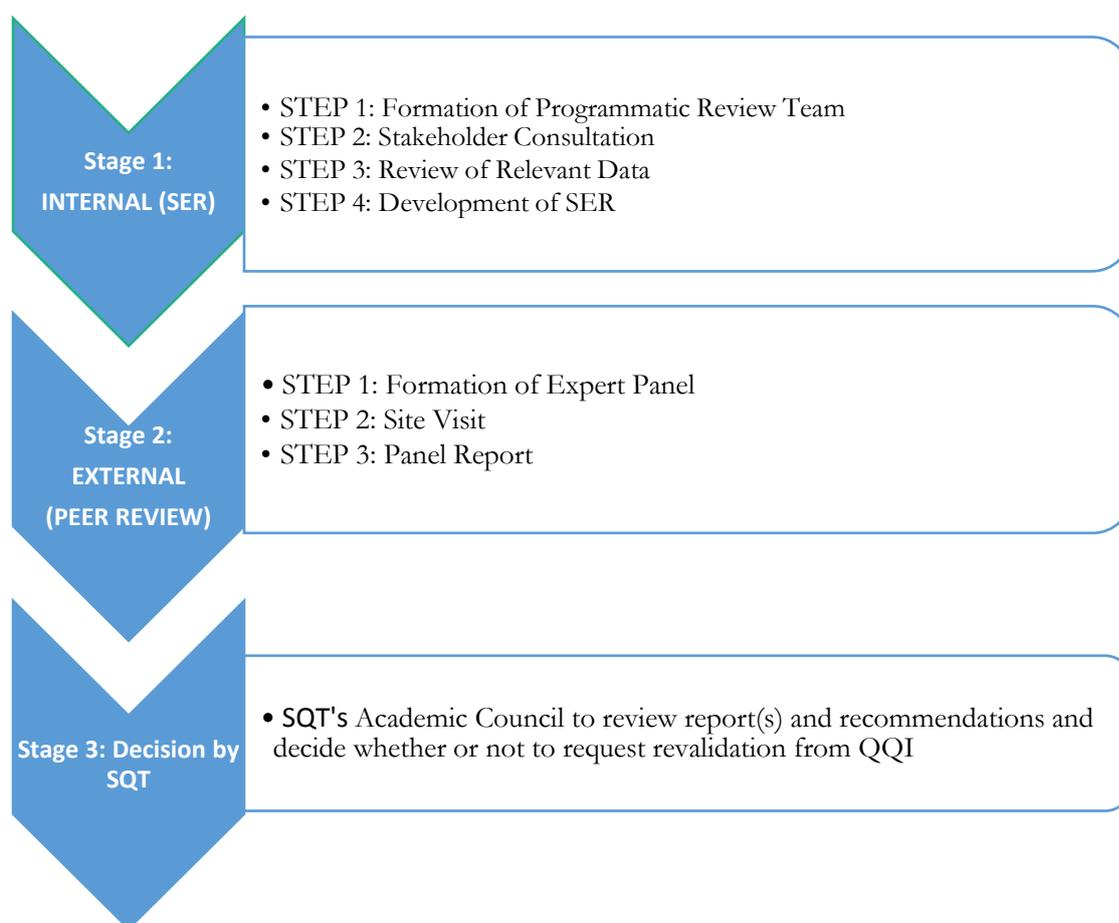


Figure 4: Programmatic Review Process

3.2.4.1 Stage 1 – Self Evaluation (SER)

Self-evaluation has been defined as the

“process which requires a provider to reflect on its objectives and critically analyse its activities and how these lead to the achievement of its objectives. It requires an analysis of the providers’ functions, resources, services and administration as they impact on programme provision”³.

³ HETAC (2010) Provider Monitoring Policy and Procedure, Pg. 14

The key steps in formulating an SER are as follows:

Step 1: Formation of Programmatic Review Team

A programmatic review team is appointed by the Programme Board and ratified by the Academic Council. The process is coordinated by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs. Having agreed terms of reference of the review with QQI, the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs develops a detailed project plan which identifies timelines and key tasks to be completed. Regular review meetings and follow-ups are carried out to ensure that the timeline for the review process is met.

Step 2: Stakeholder Consultation

In order to successfully evaluate the programme and provide recommendations for continuous improvement, feedback from relevant stakeholders is gathered. A range of appropriate data collection methodologies is utilised and a wide selection of stakeholders are consulted such as the following (list is not exhaustive):

- Current students
- Graduates
- Programme Leaders and Tutors
- Employers
- Relevant external organisations

Step 3: Review of Relevant Data

In addition to the data received from the consultation process in Step 2 above, additional data is also derived from the annual programme review reports which contain information gathered during the on-going monitoring and review of programmes. The data is critically analysed to establish the extent to which the programme continues to meet the core QQI validation criteria. The findings and recommendations of this review are presented to the relevant Programme Board prior to the completion of the SER.

Step 4: Development of SER

The self-evaluation report (SER) is compiled by the programmatic review team. The report is designed to provide the expert panel with an overview of developments over the five year period under review and to provide relevant information as specified by QQI⁴. The final SER is presented to Academic Council for endorsement prior to submission to QQI for review consideration by the expert panel.

⁴ As per guidelines and procedures set out in Provider Monitoring Policy & Procedures (HETAC, 2010).

3.2.4.2 Stage 2: External Peer Review

The external phase of the review is referred to as a peer review and is carried out by an expert panel which is required to make an impartial judgement on the continued maintenance of the overall standard of the programme.

Step 1: Formation of Expert Panel

An expert panel is an independent panel appointed by QQI and comprises of experts from relevant fields of learning who are capable of making national and international comparisons with regard to the programme(s) under review.

Step 2: Site Visit

The expert panel normally visits the provider to review necessary documentation and meet with relevant representatives. A detailed agenda for the visit is agreed between SQT and the Chair of the Expert Panel in advance. This agenda allows for meetings with Programme Leader(s) and Tutors, support staff, students, graduates and employers. The agenda should also allow for private discussions of the panel and for review of further documentation and evidence not included in the SER. The Chairperson of the expert panel normally provides verbal feedback at the end of the visit, indicating overall conclusions, whether the panel will be recommending the programme(s) for further validation, and conditions and recommendations associated with same.

Step 3: Panel Report

The formal report of the expert panel is compiled by the Chairperson of the group and is based on their combined review and evaluation of the SER and the panel visit. It will make a recommendation in respect of the continuing validation of the programme, including the duration of the revalidation recommended (not exceeding 5 years). The report includes proposed programme schedules and any conditions and recommendations associated with the continuing validation of the programme. SQT receives a copy of the panel report and is afforded the opportunity to check the factual accuracy of same before being finalised by the Chairperson of the expert panel.

3.2.4.3 Stage 3: Decision by SQT

Following receipt of the report of the expert panel, SQT's Academic Council reviews the findings and makes a decision on whether or not to consider revalidation from QQI. A formal response to the QQI report and supporting implementation plan is prepared by SQT. This plan addresses the findings and recommendations in both the SER and in the report of the expert panel.

4 ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS

The following sets out SQT's policy statement in regard to its policy and procedures for the Assessment of Students:

SQT are committed to carrying out assessment processes in a fair and transparent manner. To achieve this, SQT will develop and adhere to procedures for the fair and consistent assessment of students in line with relevant and prescribed standards and guidelines set out by the awarding body. Assessment tools will be fit-for-purpose and students will receive on-going support and formative feedback in a timely manner. Criteria and regulations governing student assessment will be made available in a manner which is easily understood and accessible by all relevant stakeholders.

Table 5 puts this statement in context by summarising the European standards for policy and procedures for quality assurance in higher education. It also incorporates supporting documentation including reference to on-going monitoring mechanisms and continuous improvement.

STANDARD: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS

European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions: Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

<p>Supporting Policy Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HETAC (2011) Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education and Training ▪ HETAC (2013) Assessment and Standards (Revised) ▪ HETAC (2010) External Examining Guidelines ▪ ENQA (2005) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 	<p>On-going Monitoring Mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systematic QA audit reports ▪ Examination Board Meetings ▪ External Examiner Report ▪ Programme Board Meetings ▪ Student and tutor course assessment forms (CAFs) ▪ Assessment Statistics 	<p>Relevant KPI's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. Certified ▪ Completion Rate ▪ Withdrawal / Non-submission Rate ▪ Assessment Results (Grades) ▪ Pass / Fail Rate ▪ No. Reviews, Rechecks and Appeals ▪ No. Extension Requests / Deferrals ▪ APEL Statistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ % students admitted on basis of APEL ○ Comparison of assessment results for those admitted on basis of APEL vs Educational History
<p style="text-align: center;">Continuous Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement appropriate changes to assessment processes resulting from recommendations and feedback from External Examiners, Students and Tutors – subject to approval from the Programme Board (note: major changes will require approval from QQI – refer to Section 3 of this document) ▪ Implement appropriate changes to assessment policy and procedures resulting from recommendations noted in the relevant audit report (subject to approval from the Academic Council) and policy changes implemented by the relevant awarding body 		

Table 5: Assessment of Students

4.1 Principles of Assessment

The principles that underpin the assessment of students enrolled on QQI/HETAC programmes at SQT are derived from HETAC Assessment and Standards (2013) as follows:

- i. Students are responsible for demonstrating their learning achievement
- ii. Assessment supports standards based on learning outcomes
- iii. Assessment promotes and supports effective teaching and learning
- iv. Assessment procedures are credible
- v. Assessment methods are reviewed and renewed, as necessary, to adapt to evolving requirements
- vi. Students are well informed about how and why they are assessed

4.2 Marking and Grading

Specific programme assessment strategies are documented for all QQI/HETAC programmes offered by SQT. The **programme assessment strategy** is developed at programme design stage and should:

- Link programme assessment instruments (summative and formative including continuous and repeat assessment) to the minimum intended learning outcomes
- Describe and provide a rationale for each choice of assessment task
- Describe specific ‘special’ regulations associated with a programme i.e. students may be required to achieve a minimum grade in each assessment
- Match the programmes assessment instruments to the requirements of SQT’s grading system, particularly concerning the recording and combination of module grades/marks (i.e. provide clear criteria for grading/markings).
- Ensure that the programme workload is appropriately balanced and distributed and that the effort required is proportionate to the credit allocated
- Relate to the programmes teaching and learning strategy

Each Programme Leader establishes generic marking criteria in the form of marking schemes and associated rubrics for each assessment element. Such criterion ensures accuracy and consistency of standards across all internal examiners. Once graded, assessment material is subject to internal cross moderation in the case of borderline or failed grades. All assessed work is subject to external, independent moderation which is carried out by an External Examiner. Only after assessment material has been moderated and marks have been approved by the External Examiner will they be submitted to the Examination Board for approval.

4.3 Assessment Strategies

Assessment strategies are developed, implemented and reviewed by the new programme development team at programme design stage. Strategies and assessment instruments are reviewed on an on-going basis and changes are implemented as appropriate by the Programme Leader (subject to recommendations and approval from the Programme Board and within the scope of minor changes allowed ref section 3.2.2). Table 6 below presents an overview of the assessment strategies and associated weightings utilised for each QQI/HETAC programme.

Programme Title	Assessment Strategies	Weighting	Type of Award	ECTS Credits	NFQ Level
8S20274 (<i>old code 8S15639</i>) - Lean Six Sigma BLACK BELT (Service & Transaction) - Certificate in Process Engineering	Project Proposal (Project Charter & Project Plan)	10%	Special Purpose	40	8
	Project Oral Presentation	30%			
	Written Examination	20%			
	Project Continuous Assessment	10%			
	Written Project Report	30%			
7S20279 (<i>old code 7S15640</i>) - Lean Six Sigma GREEN BELT - Certificate in Process Engineering	Project Proposal (Project Charter & Project Plan)	20%	Special Purpose	15	7
	Written Project Report	70%			
	Project Story Board	10%			
6S20273 (<i>old code 6S15641</i>) - Lean Six Sigma GREEN BELT - Certificate in Process Engineering	Written Examination	40%	Special Purpose	10	6
	Written Case Study Report	60%			
8S20275 (<i>old code 8S15642</i>) - Lean Six Sigma BLACK BELT - Diploma in Process Engineering	Project Proposal (Project Charter + Project Plan)	10%	Special Purpose	60	8
	Project Continuous Assessment	10%			
	Written Project Report	30%			
	Project Oral Presentation	30%			
	Written Examination	20%			

Table 6: Assessment Strategies

4.4 Sectoral Conventions

Sectoral Conventions for assessment comprise a set of regulations and benchmarks which in the interest of fairness and consistency, are agreed at the sectoral level by QQI and all associated providers. Table 7 below summaries SQT's compliance with the conventions.

Sectoral Conventions	SQT's compliance
Sectoral Convention 1 on Award Classifications. Classification of awards shall be criterion-referenced as distinct from norm-referenced ⁵ .	SQT's awards are made and classified exclusively on the basis of criterion-referenced assessment of learning outcomes. Programmes have been validated by QQI as Special Purpose Awards and are, therefore, unclassified.
Sectoral Convention 2 on Mixed Grading Systems. Each provider shall adopt either the percentage grading system or the alphabetic grading system (for all of its provision), in accordance with Sectoral Convention 4 (see below).	SQT has adopted a percentage grading system
Sectoral Convention 3 on Determination of Award Classification. Calculation of the award classification shall be based on the credit-weighted mean value of the allowable grades (<i>i.e.</i> those that contribute to the classification) for modules of a specific programme which has been validated by HETAC or by a recognised institution for the purpose of making the award.	SQT's awards are pass/fail only and are thus unclassified
Sectoral Convention 4 on the Percentage and Alphabetic Grading Systems. Percentage marks (p) and percentage point values (ppv) are defined in the table.	SQT's pass mark is set at 40%
Sectoral Convention 5 on Post-award Achievement required for an additional major award at the same level	N/A. Major awards do not apply to SQT
Sectoral Convention 6 on ECTS Grade and Grade Interpretation Scheme (EGIS) Whenever the ECTS Grade and (if appropriate) the ECTS Grade Interpretation Scheme are implemented, it shall be on the basis of a sectoral or national convention.	N/A. This convention is not yet active within the sector
Sectoral Convention 7 on Exceptions In exceptional circumstances where, for a particular programme, the legitimate requirements of external authorities conflict with one or more of the Sectoral Conventions <i>and make their application impossible</i> , an alternative arrangement may be used for that programme.	N/A. This will only apply where a need arises and a mechanism is approved

Table 7: SQT's Compliance with Sectoral Conventions

⁵ Norm-referenced tests (or NRTs) compare an examinee's performance to that of other examinees. Criterion-referenced tests (or CRTs) differ in that each examinee's performance is compared to a pre-defined set of criteria or a standard.

4.5 Provision of Assessment Information to Students

Assessment information is available to all potential students' via the SQT website. In addition, information pertaining to all policies, procedures and regulations is available in the student handbook which is accessible on the Moodle VLE. The student handbook is reviewed and updated, as necessary, to reflect current practices, policies, procedures and regulations within SQT.

Students also have access to a programme handbook which supplements the student handbook and provides 'programme specific' information such as: programme overview, descriptors and learning outcomes, assessment strategies and marking schemes, booklists and recommended resources. Students are also provided with assignment briefs and notified of assessment deadlines on programme commencement.

4.5.1 Responsibilities of Students in the Assessment Process

Students have a number of responsibilities with respect to assessment which are outlined below:

- i. Students are expected to attend all teaching days unless otherwise approved by SQT
- ii. Students are expected to actively engage with the assessment activities provided on their programmes, and to act on feedback provided by their Tutors
- iii. Students must ensure that they familiarise themselves with marking schemes, assessment criteria and learning outcomes against which their work is assessed
- iv. Students must ensure that they fully understand assessment guidelines and assessment briefs, advice and guidance should be sought if necessary
- v. Students are expected to submit legible work for assessment as required
- vi. Students must ensure that all assessment deadlines are met or that approval for an extension has been granted in advance of the original deadline
- vii. Students must ensure they understand what constitutes academic misconduct and plagiarism and ensure they do not commit such offences in preparing for assessment

4.6 Assuring Quality of the Assessment Process

The day to day operation and management of assessment is performed by a number of SQT personnel. The administration and coordination of assessment rests with the Accreditation / Systems Manager. The process and associated procedures are overseen and reviewed by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs. These functions are supported by the Academic Council and its relevant subcommittees. The functions of individual personnel with respect to assessment are

presented in Table 8. The function of the Academic Council and its subcommittees with respect to assessment are documented in Table 9 below.

Individual	Roles and responsibilities with respect to the assessment process:
Tutor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicate assessment requirements to students as per student and programme brochures and handbooks - Grade student assessment in accordance with agreed marking schemes and regulations - Provide mentoring and guidance to students completing assessments and provide on-going feedback in a timely and formative manner - Track, monitor and record student progress - Note and report possible cases of plagiarism or breach of assessment regulations with respect to assessment - Participate in examination board meetings and other relevant meetings as designated by the organisation
Programme Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and suggest revision of assessment methodologies when necessary - Ensure the programme assessment document and other supporting documents are accurate and up to date - Develop assignment briefs and associated marking schemes as appropriate - Implement internal cross moderation where necessary - Participate in examination board meetings and other relevant meetings as designated by the organisation
Examination Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure security in all matters pertaining to assessment - Act as a point of contact for all awarding bodies - Securely print and distribute examination papers (where applicable) - Coordinate and approve of assessment venues and associated invigilation - Collect and manage student assessment material - Maintain relevant records and documents - Securely transfer student assessment to assessors - Make arrangements for students requiring special accommodation - Provide administrative support for all External Examiners - Organise and prepare relevant information for examination boards - Ensure that accurate results, assessment material and other data such as statistical data is available for the External Examiner and Board of Examiners - Ensure that special accommodations are reviewed and arrangements are in place where necessary - Administration of student appeals - Participate in examination board meetings and other relevant meetings as designated by the organisation
Course Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of assessment information to Programme Leaders, Tutors and Students - Deal with assessment queries from students and programme staff in a timely manner

Individual	Roles and responsibilities with respect to the assessment process:
Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage of the assessment process - Investigate possible cases of plagiarism or misconduct with respect to assessment - Appoint External Examiners subject to approval by the Academic Council - Manage Examination Board and associated activities and reports - Document findings and recommendations of the quarterly QA audit
External Examiner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acknowledge receipt of examination / assessment material and take appropriate steps to ensure confidentiality of this material whilst in his/her possession - Communicate all sensitive information via registered mail or agreed form of secure delivery - Review and approve drafts of assessment briefs and make appropriate suggestions for amendments - Examine representative samples of assessment material and in particular cases where results are borderline or failed results - Meet and discuss findings with relevant programme and administrative staff - Attend Board of Examiners meeting twice yearly or more often if required - Prepare external examiner reports - Carry out external moderation of APEL applications for entry onto a programme - Review programme assessment strategies at programme design stage and on-going review where necessary

Table 8: Roles and Responsibilities of Individuals wrt Assessment

Board / Committee	Key Function wrt Assessment
Academic Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ratify proposed major amendments to quality assurance policies and procedures relating to assessment - Ratify assessment results prior to submission to QQI - Review cases of academic misconduct and plagiarism (when escalated from Disciplinary Committee)
Quality Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the output of internal quality audits - Keeping under review all aspects of the quality assurance system
Programme Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and monitor student throughput and assessment statistics - Suggest on-going updates and continuous improvement to the programme with respect to delivery and associated assessment methods
Examination Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review outcomes of External Examiner moderation of programme(s) under consideration - Ratify assessment results for all students of programme(s) under consideration - Review penalties applied to assessment activities of programme(s) under consideration - Review statistics/trends regarding assessment results of programme(s) under consideration
Appeals Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review appeals of assessment grades and penalties associated with instances of plagiarism and academic misconduct
Disciplinary Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hear unresolved cases of alleged misconduct and academic impropriety

Table 9: Key Functions with respect to Assessment

4.7 External Examination

Procedures for external examination of QQI/HETAC programmes have been designed in compliance with a number of documents including Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examination (HETAC, 2010) and Assessment and Standards (HETAC, 2013).

The key function of the external examination process is to ensure objectivity and validity of student assessment by introducing an independent element.

4.7.1.1 Appointment of External Examiners

An External Examiner is an independent expert who is a member of the broader community of practice within the programme's field of learning and whose accomplishments attest to his/her likelihood of having the authority necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of the role. Any member of the Programme Board or Academic Council may nominate an individual to the position of External Examiner. Nominations are brought to the attention of the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs who makes a proposal to the Programme Board. Once agreed, the appointment is ratified by the Academic Council. Once a verbal agreement and commitment has been made with the nominee, details are confirmed in a formal letter of appointment by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and a formal induction is provided prior to commencing the role. External Examiners are normally appointed for a period of three years after which time a replacement is identified. QQI are notified of an External Examiner appointment and relevant information is provided as requested.

4.7.1.2 Roles and Responsibilities of the External Examiner

The main functions of the External Examiner are as follows:

- Review the appropriateness of the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (i.e. the programme's basic educational goal), and other programme objectives
- Probe the actual attainment of students (actual programme learning outcomes) using information agreed with and supplied by SQT
- Compare and contrast both the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and the actual attainment of students with the relevant awards standards, the National Framework of Qualifications, and corresponding data from other programmes in the same discipline in other higher education institutions in Ireland and beyond
- Determine whether or not the applied procedures for assessment are valid, reliable, fair and consistent
- Review the appropriateness of the programme assessment strategy and the assessment procedures

- Approve key assessment tasks prior to their assignment in light of the programme and module assessment strategies and students' prerequisite (prior) learning. Where key tasks include key continuous assessment, it might not be feasible to review them prior to assignment, but they should still be reviewed by the External Examiner
- Carry out external moderation of APEL process and review of APEL applications for entry onto a programme
- Report findings and provide recommendations for continuous improvement to SQT

SQT welcomes recommendations and feedback from the External Examiner and is committed to implementing such items as soon as is practicable. All recommendations / actions set out in the exam board minutes and reports of external examiners are implemented by relevant SQT personnel under the management of the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs. A follow-up report is sent to all board members within two calendar months of the exam board meeting noting actions required and status of same.

4.7.1.3 Induction and On-going Support for External Examiners

Newly appointed External Examiners are provided with a formal induction prior to commencing their role. An External Examiner induction pack includes the following:

- i. Programme Aims and Objectives
- ii. Programme Learning Outcomes
- iii. Programme Assessment Strategies
- iv. Quality Assurance Procedures
- v. Sample assignments, rubrics and feedback
- vi. Contact details of relevant internal staff, together with details of their key functions
- vii. External examiner report template
- viii. Copies of recent external examiner reports
- ix. Appropriate QQI policy documents

The External Examiner is supported in his/her role by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and Examination Secretary.

4.7.1.4 External Examiners Visit

The External Examiner is required to attend at SQT for each Examination Board, preferably on the day of the Examination Board meeting. The agenda for the visit includes the following:

- External moderation of APEL applications for entry onto a programme
- Meeting with key programme and administration personnel
- Examine representative sample of assessment material, in particular where results are borderline cases

- Attendance and provision of relevant feedback at the QQI/HETAC Examination Board meeting

4.7.1.5 Removal / Replacement of an External Examiner

Should an External Examiner need to be replaced prior to their three year appointment, the procedure for the appointment of an External Examiner will apply.

4.7.1.6 Examination Board

A QQI / HETAC Examination Board convenes at least twice per year (or more often if necessary) and operates in accordance with relevant QQI/HETAC Policy. The primary function of the Examination Board is to agree assessment results for all students. The operation and function of the board is reviewed and amended appropriately in accordance with revisions to QQI policies and procedures. The terms of reference and membership of the board is set out on Table 2 (section 2.2.1).

4.7.1.7 Decision Making Process of the Examinations Board

When negotiation is required the following board members act as voting members and are charged with making the final decision with respect to student results.

- External Examiner
- Director of Quality and Academic Affairs
- Programme Leader

All information presented, is taken into account when considering a student's final result.

4.7.1.8 Conduct of Examination Board Meeting

The Examination Board meeting is carried out as follows:

- i. Meeting opened by the Chairperson (Director of Quality and Academic Affairs)
 - a. Statement of process by the Chairperson
 - b. Clarification of function
- ii. Declaration of Confidentiality
- iii. Feedback from External Examiner
- iv. Review and Agreement of Results

Copies of broadsheets are provided to all members on different coloured paper. The original broadsheet is held by the Accreditation / Systems Manager who makes appropriate changes as results are read out by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs (Chairperson). The relevant changes are updated immediately and the revised broadsheets are made available for signing.

- v. Signing of Broadsheets

4.7.1.9 Ratification of Assessment Results

On completion of the Examination Board meeting all signed broadsheets are submitted to the Academic Council for internal ratification. The Academic Council also makes final decisions on student appeals and matters relating to academic misconduct. Once ratified all results are forwarded to QQI.

4.8 Assessment Regulations

4.8.1 Regulations for Written Examinations

Students should observe the following regulations during written examinations. Regulations indicated with an asterisk (*) are specific to written examinations of one hour or more in duration:

- Students are required to be in attendance at least ten minutes before the commencement of the examination
- No student may be admitted to the examination room more than 15 minutes after the commencement of the examination. However, in exceptional circumstances, and provided that no other student has left the examination room, a student may be admitted after the first 30 minutes has lapsed, at the discretion of the supervisor. Extra time will not normally be allowed.*
- Any behaviour which causes inconvenience or disruption to other students is not permitted
- If a student requires attention during the examination he/she must raise his/her hand to attract the attention of the supervisor, taking care not to disturb other students
- The instructions of the supervisor must be obeyed promptly at all times
- Students must stop writing immediately when instructed to do so by the supervisor. Answer books must be handed to the supervisor immediately upon request
- Silence must be maintained in the examination room at all times
- Mobile phones must be 'powered off' for the entire duration of the examination
- No student shall bring into the examination room or have in his/her possession any materials other than those permitted for that examination
- No student shall take out of the examination hall any answer books, rough work paper, or other supplied material, whether used or unused. Students found to be in possession of such material are liable to disciplinary procedures and serious penalties may be imposed
- Books, bags, electronic dictionaries, portable devices such as USB devices, CD's, DVD's, media storage devices etc. are not permitted in the examination room

4.8.2 Submission of Student Assessment Material to SQT

The method for submission of continuous assessment materials is communicated to all students within an assignment brief. Unless otherwise notified all assessment material must be submitted via SQT's Moodle VLE on or before the deadline which is also specified within the assignment brief. Learners must also accept a declaration of authenticity within Moodle prior to assignment submission. Students are advised to retain a copy of all assessment work and projects submitted.

4.8.3 Extension Requests

Assessment submission deadlines are provided to students within an assignment brief on commencement of their programme. In cases where extenuating circumstances or compassionate consideration apply, students are required to complete an extension request form (with accompanying evidence) to the Accreditation / Systems Manager no later than **two calendar weeks** of the assessment deadline unless other mitigating circumstances apply. The following are examples of circumstances under which SQT may consider giving compassionate consideration to the student:

- medical reasons, in cases where the student has been absent due to illness / injury and has submitted a medical certificate covering a substantial proportion of the time allowed for completion of the assessment in question
- a physical injury or emotional trauma during a period four to six weeks previously
- a physical disability or chronic or disabling condition such as epilepsy, glandular fever, or other incapacitating illness of the student
- recent bereavement of close family member or friend
- severe accident
- domestic crisis
- terminal illness of a close family member
- other extenuating circumstances

Technical problems, such as computer failure or viruses are not deemed legitimate grounds for an extension.

Relevant members of the Programme Board considers the severity of the circumstances, the nature and weighting of the assessment activity and the quality of past achievement of the student where appropriate in making the decision to grant compassionate consideration. This decision is final and is not subject to an appeal. Students are notified of the decision **within 5 working days**. If an extension is neither sought nor granted, or work is submitted after the extended due date, late submission of assignments are penalised as per 4.8.4 below.

4.8.4 Late Submission of Assessment

If work is submitted after the due date (and an extension is neither sought nor granted or an extended deadline is missed), late submission of assignments are penalised as follows:

- 20% penalty for assignments submitted within two calendar weeks of the submission deadline (for example a learner who achieves a mark of 80% will have 16% deducted from their mark, reducing it to 64%)
- late submissions after two weeks will not be accepted

4.8.5 Failed and Repeat Assessment

Students who fail to submit work in respect of a continuous assessment element of a module (and have not sought or been granted a deferral) are not to be given an opportunity to be reassessed if the overall grade achieved in that module is greater than a pass result (unless specifically stated on programme documentation). Any student who fails an element of coursework and subsequently fails the module are normally permitted a further attempt at the unsuccessful assessment(s) within a specified period and subject to a reassessment fee. In cases where it is not possible to set a repeat assessment element (due to the live nature of the assessment), students may be required to attend all or part of the training, complete new assessments and pay relevant fees (generally a percentage of the original programme fee which will be calculated based on the level of attendance required and the nature of the assessment). Learners who satisfy the requirement for the award by availing of a reassessment opportunity for any part of the continuous assessment of a programme may be capped at a pass mark only, this decision is at the discretion of the examination board.

4.8.6 Communication of Results

Results are formally communicated to students via email within one week of the relevant meetings of the awarding body. Certificates from SQT and/or relevant awarding body will be issued to the postal address provided by the student.

4.8.7 Recheck and Review

A **grade recheck** is the administrative process of checking the recording of assessment results to ensure that the correct result was provided to the student. In the case of an application for a recheck of examination results the student's examination scripts and continuous assessment marks will be checked to ensure that:

- each element of all assessment material has been marked
- all marks have been included in the final score
- there are no errors in the addition of marks

- approved assessment weightings have been appropriately applied.

A request for a grade recheck must be submitted via email using an examination appeal form within 5 working days of results been sent from SQT. There is a €25 charge which is refunded on the event of the results been changed. It is possible for results to be lowered as a result of a recheck. If a student is not happy with the result of the recheck they have the right to request an appeal of the result.

A **grade review** refers to the reconsideration of the assessment decision by a competent assessor (other than the original assessor) together with a re-consideration by the Examinations Board. A review automatically includes a recheck as detailed above.

A request for a grade review must be submitted via email using an examination appeal form within 5 days of results been sent from SQT. Students are required to provide grounds on which the review is requested. The submission must clearly identify the element or elements of the assessment for which the review is being sought. It must also specify the grounds on which the review is sought and must contain **all information** which the candidate requires to have taken into account in the review.

A request for a grade review must be submitted in writing within 5 working days of results been sent from SQT. There is a €50 charge which is refunded in the event of the results been changed. It is possible for results to be lowered as a result of a recheck. If a student is not happy with the result of the review they have the right to request an appeal of the result.

4.8.8 Appeals

A request for an appeal must be submitted in writing using an examination appeal form within 5 working days of results been sent from SQT. There is a €75 charge which is refunded on the event of the results been changed. Students may only appeal results on the following grounds:

- The student believes that there was a non-academic irregularity in the manner in which their assessments were conducted
- The student wishes to appeal against a decision to penalise him/her on the grounds of academic misconduct
- The student wishes to present information of relevant mitigating circumstances which were not known to the Examination Board. In this case the student must also show good reason why such circumstances could not have been made known prior to the Examination Board meeting

Students should note that a mark can be brought down as well as up. An Appeals Committee will consider student appeals and communicates outcomes of the appeal to students within 2 working days of the meeting.

4.8.9 Change of Programmes

Where a student, pursuing a QQI/HETAC Level 8 and Level 7 award, through no fault of his/her own, is unable to complete their assessment, the exit pathway below is in place to facilitate this student with an alternative QQI award.

Options for Level 7 Students: The student is given the opportunity to obtain a QQI/HETAC Level 6 Award by completing an individual case study. The case study will be assigned to the student by the Programme Leader along with a case study guide. The student has up to 15 weeks from the date the case study is assigned to them to complete their case study.

Options for Level 8 Students: The student is given the opportunity to obtain a QQI/HETAC Level 6 award as set out above or a Level 7 award by submitting a project and storyboard within an agreed timescale (not to exceed 6 months)

The following are examples of circumstances where a student is unable to complete their project:

- Unforeseen Company closure/Redundancy/Role change
- Priority change by company management vis a viz project

A “Request for Alternative HETAC Award Title” form must be completed and signed by both the students and their sponsoring company. Such requests are reviewed by the Programme Leader and Director of Quality and Academic Affairs.

4.8.10 Deferrals

If a student transfers from one programme cohort to another due to date clashes etc. all training days must be completed within 9 months from the original programme commencement date (applies to level 6 and 7 programmes). In the case of Level 8 programmes, all training must be completed within 12 months. Failure to meet this regulation may result in attending additional training at an added cost. In the event that SQT are unable to offer a student dates to complete their training within this period the student will be awarded a timeline extension to the next available course sitting.

4.9 APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning)

Where applicants do not meet the formal entry requirements for a programme, they may apply for admission under SQT’s APEL policy. Under this policy, a set of relevant APEL criteria is developed by the Programme Leader in collaboration with the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and is approved by the External Examiner. The procedure for applicants **wishing to apply for entry onto a programme** on the basis of accreditation of prior and experiential learning is as follows:

Step 1: Applicant Completes Online Application Form

All applicants must complete the programme application form. Programme entry requirements are clearly specified on the form. In the case of applicants who do not meet the relevant qualification based entry criteria, additional information pertaining to relevant work experience is required.

Step 2: Internal Assessment

The applicant's documentation i.e. detailed application form is reviewed by the Course Manager to ensure sufficient information has been provided to enable a decision to be made on their application by the Programme Leader. Where insufficient information is deemed to have been provided the Course Manager will contact the applicant and request additional information. Such additional information may include

- Previous training programmes attended (Both accredited and non-accredited)
- Projects undertaken
- CV (curriculum vitae)

Once the Course Manager has gathered all the information required, the documentation is then assessed by the Programme Leader who confirms whether the applicant has sufficient prior learning (in accordance with approved criteria) to be accepted onto the programme.

Step 3: Confirmation/Refusal of Programme Place

If the Programme Leader is satisfied that the applicant has met the APEL requirements, he/she is contacted by email confirming their eligibility for the programme. Otherwise the applicant is informed that he/she does not meet the requirements and is informed of their right to appeal the decision.

Step 4: Appeals Procedure

In cases where an applicant is refused a place on a programme, he/she may appeal the decision. Their application and associated documentation is reviewed by the External Examiner whose decision with regard to admission is final.

Step 5: External Review of APEL Process

All applicants approved on the basis of APEL (incl. associated documentation) are reviewed by the External Examiner at each Examination Board Meeting. A sample of applications for programmes due to commence at a future date are also reviewed. This is to ensure fair and consistent treatment of all applicants. The process of admission is also reviewed at each Examination Board meeting and any weaknesses in the process are highlighted with recommendations as to how the process may be revised. As set out above the APEL criteria which is used for each programme, is also approved by the External Examiner.

4.10 Plagiarism

SQT expects students to follow acceptable standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism constitutes an act of academic dishonesty and is not accepted or tolerated by SQT. Plagiarism is the act of taking or copying someone else's work, including another student's, and presenting it as if it were their own. Typical plagiarists use ideas, texts, theories, data, created artistic artefacts or other material without acknowledgement so that the person considering this work is given the impression that what they have before them is the student's own original work when it is not. Plagiarism also occurs where a student's own previously published work is re-presented without being properly referenced. Plagiarism is a form of cheating and is dishonest.

4.10.1 Categories of Plagiarism

Plagiarism can take a variety of forms and can be categorised as follows:

- copying a whole or substantial parts of a paper from a source text (e.g. a web site, journal article, book or encyclopaedia), without proper acknowledgement
- piecing together sections of the work of others into a new whole
- procuring a paper from a company or essay bank (including Internet sites)
- submitting another student's work, with or without that student's knowledge
- submitting a paper written by someone else (e.g. a peer or relative), and passing it off as one's own

The work based nature of the assessment strategies approved for QQI/HETAC programmes make it difficult for students to plagiarise assessment material. Learners must accept a statement of authenticity prior to submitting assessment via Moodle.

4.10.2 Procedure for Dealing with Plagiarism

Step 1: Where a Tutor/Internal Assessor suspects that a piece of coursework contains plagiarised material, a short report should be prepared including a marked up copy of the assessment material, together with any evidence for suspected plagiarism. The report should be forwarded to the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs within 5 working days of the suspected case been identified.

Step 2: The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs carries out an initial investigation based on the information provided. If a case is not proven, the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs will inform the relevant Tutor/Internal Assessor of the reasons for his/her decision. If a case is proven, relevant programme tutoring staff will examine the candidate orally on the content of the coursework or ask the student to attend an interview to discuss the piece of work within 10 working days. The aim of the interview is to determine whether

the allegation is founded and if so, what the appropriate penalty will be. Best practice recommends that more than one Tutor should be present when interviewing a student. A record of the meeting should be kept and reported to the Examination Board.

Step 3: If plagiarism cannot be confirmed as a result of the interview process, the student will be notified in writing. If plagiarism has been confirmed, the student will be penalised taking into account the history of the student (1st, 2nd time offence), amount/extent of plagiarism (% of document plagiarised), level of the award and credit weighting, value of the assignment. The student should be informed of the penalty accordingly within 5 working days of the interview.

4.10.3 Right to Appeal

The student has the right to appeal the decision which must be done within 5 working days of the correspondence from SQT. In such cases an Appeals Committee is convened and a definitive judgement is made. The decision of the Appeals Committee is final. The student must be notified of the decision within 10 working days of the appeal being lodged.

4.10.4 Penalties for Cases of Suspected Plagiarism

An academic judgement is made on the required penalty for a plagiarism offence using the following criteria: History of the Student (1st, 2nd time offence), Amount/Extent of Plagiarism (% of document plagiarised), Level of the Award and Credit Weighting, Value of the Assignment.

5 QUALITY ASSURANCE OF TEACHING STAFF

The following sets out SQT's policy statement in regard to its policy and procedures for the Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff:

SQT is fully committed to ensuring that sufficient and appropriately qualified staff are employed to meet the academic and administrative requirements to deliver all programmes to the highest standard. The organisation will engage in an open and constructive feedback process with staff to promote continuous programme improvement and on-going personal and professional development.

SQT will pursue employment policies and procedures that will promote equality of opportunity. In addition, the organisation will ensure that human resource practices adhere to internal policies as well as legal and regulatory requirements.

Table 10 puts this statement in context by summarising the European standards for policy and procedures for quality assurance in higher education. It also incorporates supporting documentation including reference to on-going monitoring mechanisms and continuous improvement.

STANDARD: QUALITY ASSURANCE OF TEACHING STAFF

European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions: Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

<p>Supporting Policy Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ European Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA, 2009) ▪ Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HETAC, 2011) ▪ Contracts and Legal Agreements 	<p>On-going Monitoring Mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tutor and student course assessment forms (CAFs) ▪ Tutor feedback on training and development events organised by SQT ▪ External Examiner reports ▪ Annual programme review reports ▪ Programme Board minutes ▪ Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Logs ▪ Annual review meeting – minutes ▪ Weekly review of tutor and student course assessment forms (CAFs) and Potential for Improvement Notice (PINs) 	<p>Relevant KPI's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Course Rating ▪ Tutor Rating ▪ No. Academic Staff Retired from SQT ▪ No. New SQT Tutors ▪ No. Potential for Improvement Notices (PINs)
<p style="text-align: center;">Continuous Improvement Process:</p> <p>Agreement, implementation and review of recommendations resulting from the on-going monitoring mechanisms noted above.</p>		

Table 10: Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff

5.1 Staff Recruitment and Selection

SQT employs the services of ASST (Applied Six Sigma Technology) Ltd (hereafter ASST) for the development, delivery and ancillary services associated with all current QQI/HETAC accredited programmes. In broad terms their key functions are as follows:

- Development of programme documentation and all relevant course and assessment material
- Recruitment and supply of appropriately qualified personnel for the delivery of the programmes. Such personnel perform the roles of Programme Leaders and Tutors⁶
- Provide ancillary services to SQT in connection with the provision of the programmes

With respect to the provision of all current QQI/HETAC accredited programmes, ASST delegates full authority to SQT to monitor and control the quality of provision of ASST staff. The following terms and conditions apply:

- SQT will direct ASST and its personnel as if they were employees of SQT in connection with all aspects of the development, preparation and delivery of the programme content and all associated assessment
- While ASST recruit and supply suitably qualified staff to SQT, SQT has the ultimate authority to decide which if any personnel of ASST shall supply services to SQT in connection with the provision of a particular programme

5.1.1 Recruitment and Selection Procedure of Teaching Staff for QQI/HETAC Programmes

Once a vacancy arises, ASST develop a job specification and associated selection criteria for the particular role, both of which are approved by SQT's Managing Director prior to advertising. All vacancies are advertised externally using both ASST and SQT websites and, where necessary, regional and national newspapers and online recruitment websites. Candidates are shortlisted by ASST. This shortlist is approved by the Managing Director of SQT prior to interviews taking place. All interview candidates are required to provide copies of relevant qualifications, which are kept on file by ASST together with curriculum vitae and other relevant supporting documentation. When signing up the successful candidate, their roles and responsibilities with respect to the delivery of QQI/HETAC programmes will form an integral part of the process. A Tutor Recruitment checklist is completed and maintained to safeguard compliance with all aspects of this procedure.

⁶ Both Programme Leaders are Directors of ASST and perform dual roles of programme Tutors

5.2 Staff Induction, Training and CPD

Whilst ASST have the ultimate responsibility to induct, train and manage CPD processes for their Tutors, SQT are also involved at each stage in the process.

5.2.1 Induction

Prior to delivery of a programme, Tutors are required to complete a thorough induction process.

ASST Induction: As well as providing ongoing mentoring and support to all staff involved in the delivery of the specified programmes, ASST provide a comprehensive induction to new Tutors. This includes a review of official programme documents together with all associated material such as student hand-outs and assessment briefs. To ensure that the Tutor has a clear understanding of the assessment standards required, he or she is asked to assess a complete assessment element (generally a project or case study) using specific grading criteria. The grade and associated marking scheme is reviewed by the Programme Leader and feedback is provided. Further assessment material is cross moderated and feedback is provided, as necessary, until such time that the required grading standard is met by the Tutor. Training is also provided in the use of relevant IT and software systems used to fulfil the Tutor role.

SQT Induction: An induction is also held with SQT. This affords the Tutor an opportunity to meet with relevant SQT staff such as the Managing Director, Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and Course Manager who they will liaise with on an on-going basis throughout the delivery of a programme. During this induction, the Tutor will be briefed on the following:

- SQT background, aims, ethos and organisation structure
- Specific responsibilities associated with the Tutor role
- Lines of communication with SQT staff and the role of relevant internal SQT personnel
- Academic and administrative procedures and regulations, including relevant documentation
- Training in the use of SQT's VLE (Moodle)

Details and logs of both inductions are maintained in each employee's CPD log, which is retained by ASST. Copies of this document are sent to SQT in January each year.

5.2.2 Training and CPD

The responsibility for on-going training and staff development rests with ASST. When necessary, specific training to support programme or organisational developments is organised by SQT as required. All Tutors are also afforded the opportunity to attend any SQT training programme at a minimal fee.

A tutor training day is organised by SQT once a year. All staff involved in the delivery of SQT programmes are expected to attend and make suggestions on items to be included on the agenda. The event usually includes workshops, presentations and open reflective discussion amongst internal SQT staff, Programme Leaders and Tutors. At the end of the training day, those involved are asked to complete an evaluation form and provide suggestions for future events. Details and logs of all training and other relevant information is added to each Tutor's CPD log, records of which are sent to SQT once a year.

5.3 Roles and Responsibilities

ASST staff perform the following key roles and responsibilities with respect to QQI/HETAC programmes.

Each QQI/HETAC programme is assigned a Programme Leader whose key responsibility is the management and development of the programme. Key responsibilities of the Programme Leader include:

- General academic planning, management and on-going development of the programme
- On-going review of assessment instruments to ensure that assessment is fit-for-purpose and is compliant with relevant policies, procedures and standards
- Maintaining agreed records in conjunction with relevant internal staff
- Communication with both prospective and registered students when necessary to ensure they are fully informed of programme requirements as well as resources and services available
- Providing general assistance, support, and guidance to students
- Development and continuous review of learning materials and associated schemes of work
- Maintaining records to monitor student progress, achievement and attendance
- Producing an annual programme review report under the guidance of the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs
- New programme identification
- Participating in Programme Board, Examination Board and other relevant committees as assigned by the organisation

Programme Tutor

Key responsibilities of Tutors include:

- Delivery of teaching and assessment of students
- Integrating relevant published research into course delivery and assessment processes

- Contributing to the development, planning and implementation of a high quality curriculum
- Grading of assessments where relevant as well as providing feedback and mentoring to students within the agreed timescale of the assessment activity
- Providing pastoral care and support to students when appropriate
- Liaising with administration and management staff as necessary on an on-going basis
- New programme identification
- Participating in Programme Board meetings and other meetings and committees as assigned by the organisation

5.4 Effectiveness of Tutors

The purpose of procedures in this area is to ensure that tutors receive constructive feedback on their teaching performance in order to allow them to identify key strengths and areas for improvement and agree action plans where necessary.

5.4.1 Monitoring Effectiveness of Tutors

The effectiveness of Tutors is monitored using a number of feedback mechanisms:

- Student course assessment forms (interim and end of course delivery)
- Student feedback at Programme Board meetings
- Tutor course review report (self-evaluation)
- External Examiner reports
- Company feedback (in the case of programmes delivered in house)

These mechanisms facilitate the on-going monitoring of Tutors.

On-going Monitoring and Review

Tutors are asked to review student course assessment forms at the end of each programme, this affords the Tutor an opportunity to reflect on and review the effectiveness of his/her work and seek improvement as well as providing on-going review of the programme content. Forms must be returned to SQT immediately after a programme is delivered. Where programmes are delivered in blocks, a feedback form is completed at the end of each block. A copy of all forms are also forwarded to ASST.

Immediately after a course has been delivered (or at an interim stage for courses delivered on a split basis). The Course Manager analyses Student and Tutor Course Assessment Forms and prepares an over-all rating based on key metrics. In the case of in-house training courses, feedback from the course organiser is also sought by telephone first and failing that by email.

The Course Manager brings to the Director of Quality Affairs and Managing Director's immediate attention any adverse course performance arising from student course assessment forms. If a course does not achieve the desired minimum rating of 80%, a discussion will take place between the Course Manager, Tutor and Director of Academic Affairs. As a result a PIN (Performance Improvement Notice) is raised to ensure corrective action will be taken. In certain circumstances, at the discretion of the Course Manager/Tutor and Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and subject to no adverse comments being received on the course assessment forms, a PIN will be deemed to be unnecessary, notwithstanding the fact that the overall score was less than 80%. A record is nonetheless logged in such cases.

5.4.2 Supports for Poorly Performing Tutors

When Tutors are not performing to the standard required for the role, it is the responsibility of ASST and SQT to jointly discuss such shortcomings with the Tutor in question. Following discussions with SQT, the Managing Director of ASST discusses the shortcomings with the Tutor, an action plan is put in place to address such issues and subsequent feedback is noted to evaluate if improvements have been made. Records of informal and formal interventions and supports are retained by ASST and made available to SQT, as necessary.

5.4.3 Removal of Poorly Performing Tutors

Following discussions with SQT any Tutor who fails to meet the required standards for the position following application of formal and informal interventions will be subject to dismissal by ASST (with respect to the delivery of QQI/HETAC programmes).

5.5 Staff Disciplinary Procedures

In the event that a Tutor needs to be disciplined, SQT (in association with ASST) will do so in a fair and consistent manner. SQT's disciplinary process operates at a number of stages. These are outlined below. The Board of Directors of SQT will be appraised of the situation at all stages and documentary evidence will be recorded on the individuals personnel record.

Stage 1: Informal Meeting – The Managing Director of ASST (after consultation with the SQT MD) will speak with the staff member and point out clearly the desired improvement required in behaviour / work practice. Every effort will be made by SQT and ASST management to support the staff member in making the desired improvement.

Stage 2: Verbal Warning – If the desired improvement does not occur, the ASST Managing Director will again speak with the person. A verbal warning will be given.

Stage 3: Written Warnings - If after one month, the verbal warning does not result in the desired improvement, a first written warning will be given signed by both the SQT and ASST Managing Directors. If after one month the first written warning does not result in improvement, a second written warning will be given.

Stage 4: Dismissal – If after one month, the second written warning does not result in improvement, dismissal will be the final part of the process.

6 LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORTS

The following sets out SQT's policy statement in regard to its policy and procedures for Learning Resources and Student Supports:

SQT will provide a coherent and integrated range of learning resources and student supports, which will be actively promoted and communicated within SQT, and which will be responsive to student feedback and to the evolving needs of students.

Table 11 puts this statement into context by summarising the European standards for policy and procedures for quality assurance in higher education. It also incorporates supporting documentation including reference to on-going monitoring mechanisms and continuous improvement.

STANDARD: LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORTS

European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions: Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

<p>Supporting Policy Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Charter for Inclusive Learning (AHEAD, 2009) ▪ European Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA, 2009) ▪ Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HETAC, 2011) 	<p>On-going Monitoring Mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systematic QA audits and resulting quarterly reports ▪ Programme Board ▪ Annual SQT / ASST review meeting ▪ Review of student and tutor course assessment forms (CAFs) ▪ Weekly PIN review ▪ Verbal feedback from relevant stakeholders ▪ Tutor Reports 	<p>Relevant KPI's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student course assessment form ratings (specific to resources and support) ▪ No. Health and Safety Incidents at SQT (Callan Centre) ▪ No. Health and Safety Incidents at SQT (on courses) ▪ No. Students with disabilities / specific learning difficulties
<p style="text-align: center;">Continuous Improvement Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuous improvement based on on-going review and monitoring of PINs and CAFs as well as verbal feedback from relevant stakeholders (both interim and at the end of programme). ▪ Feedback from programme boards and relevant QA audits is also utilised to inform on-going updates and improvements to student resources and support. 		

Table 11: Learning Resources and Student Supports

6.1 SQT Model of Student Support

SQT is committed to delivering relevant and flexible programmes which are facilitated through an integrated support system that promotes effective learning with a unique work based focus. Figure 5 represents the model of student support provided by SQT for its QQI/HETAC programmes.

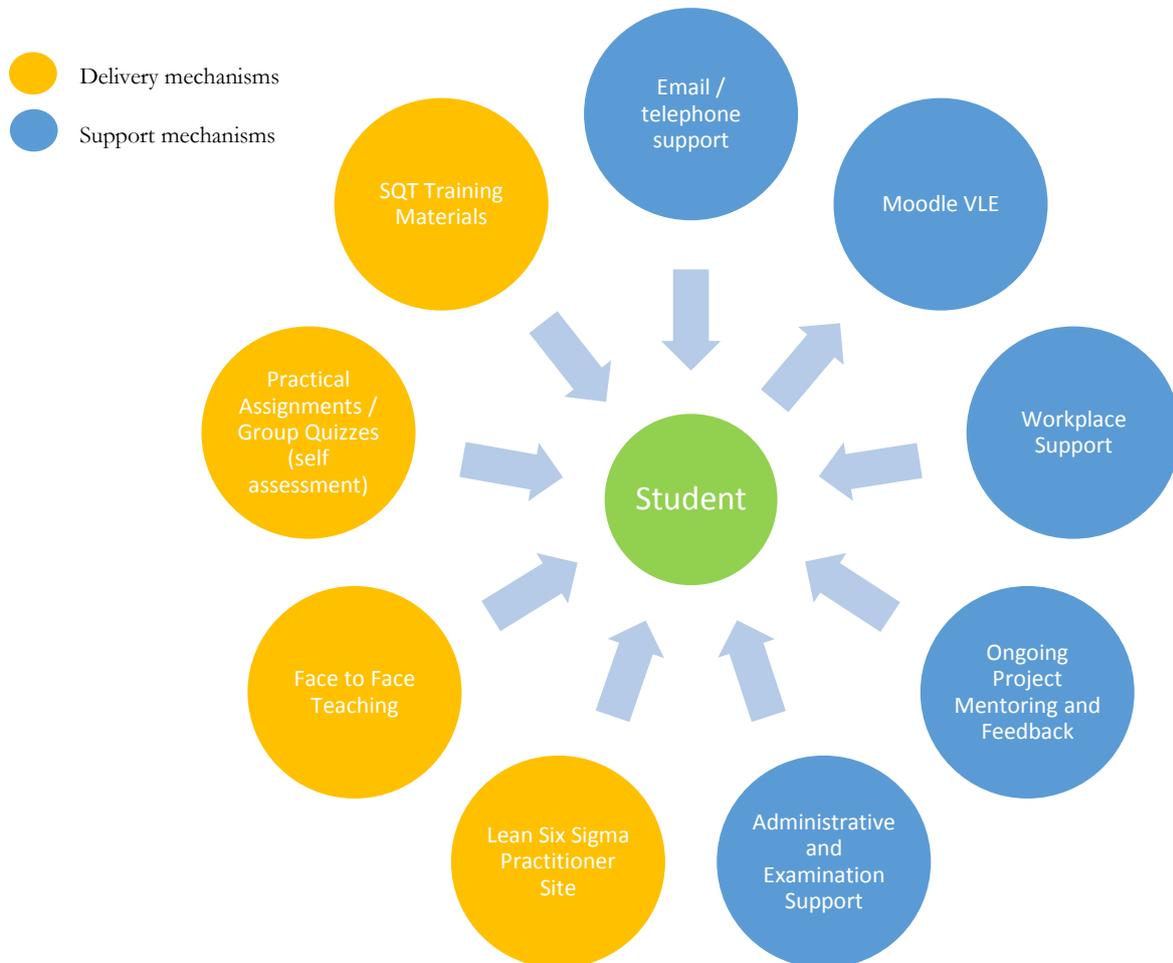


Figure 5: SQT Model of Delivery and Support

6.1.1 Delivery Mechanisms and Learning Resources

SQT utilises the following delivery mechanisms and learning resources, each of which are customised for individual programmes depending on specific student profiles and company requirements.

- **Face-to-Face Teaching:** In keeping with the ethos of adult learning and the integration of work based assessment, programme content is facilitated through appropriate delivery mechanisms such as group discussion, tutorials and workshops.
- **SQT Training Materials:** SQT provides all students with both hard and soft copies of programme specific notes, which are supported by self-directed assessment. Programme material is updated as necessary to ensure currency whilst ensuring that programme and module specific learning outcomes are delivered. Case samples and self-directed group work and quizzes are reviewed on a programme basis, and where necessary are updated to reflect the profile of the specific student group.
- **Practical Assignments / Group Quizzes / Self-Tests / Mini Assessments:** A key component of all QQI/HETAC programmes provided by SQT is the practical application of a students learning in the workplace. This process is assessed through practical assignments such as case studies and project work. Tutors also use individual and group quizzes and tests to reinforce learning.
- **Access to Lean Six Sigma Support Library:** SQT provide all QQI/HET students with access to the Lean Six Sigma Support Library (via Moodle). The facility provides a wide range of supplementary material which is reviewed and updated by Programme Leaders on a regular basis.

6.1.2 On-going Support Mechanisms

SQT utilises the following support mechanisms over the duration of the programme, particularly during the assessment period, which extends from 10 weeks to 12 months post programme delivery.

- **Moodle VLE inc LSS Support Library:** SQT has deployed a Moodle open source VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) as its virtual learner support platform since Autumn 2013. SQT's LSS Support Library is incorporated within this platform. The virtual support library provides a combination of technical, discursive and applied research publications in addition to real life case studies and storyboards.
- **Email / Telephone Support:** SQT Tutors provide individualised student support such as email and/or telephone throughout the duration of the programme.
- **Workplace Support:** Support within the student's workplace is usually provided by the student's line manager, or another supporting professional. He/she mainly supports the student's professional development.

- **On-going Project Mentoring and Feedback:** SQT Tutors provide on-going mentoring and project feedback for the duration of their practical assignments (case studies and projects).
- **Administration and Examination Support:** SQT Course Managers and Accreditation / Systems Manager are available to provide necessary administrative support and endeavour to respond to all queries within 24 hours.

6.2 Three-Way Partnership

Given the relevance and focus of both the practical and technical aspect of all SQT's QQI/HETAC programmes, SQT considers participation on such programmes as a three way partnership between the student, employer and SQT. Figure 6 below provides an overview of this approach and summarises the responsibilities of each partner.

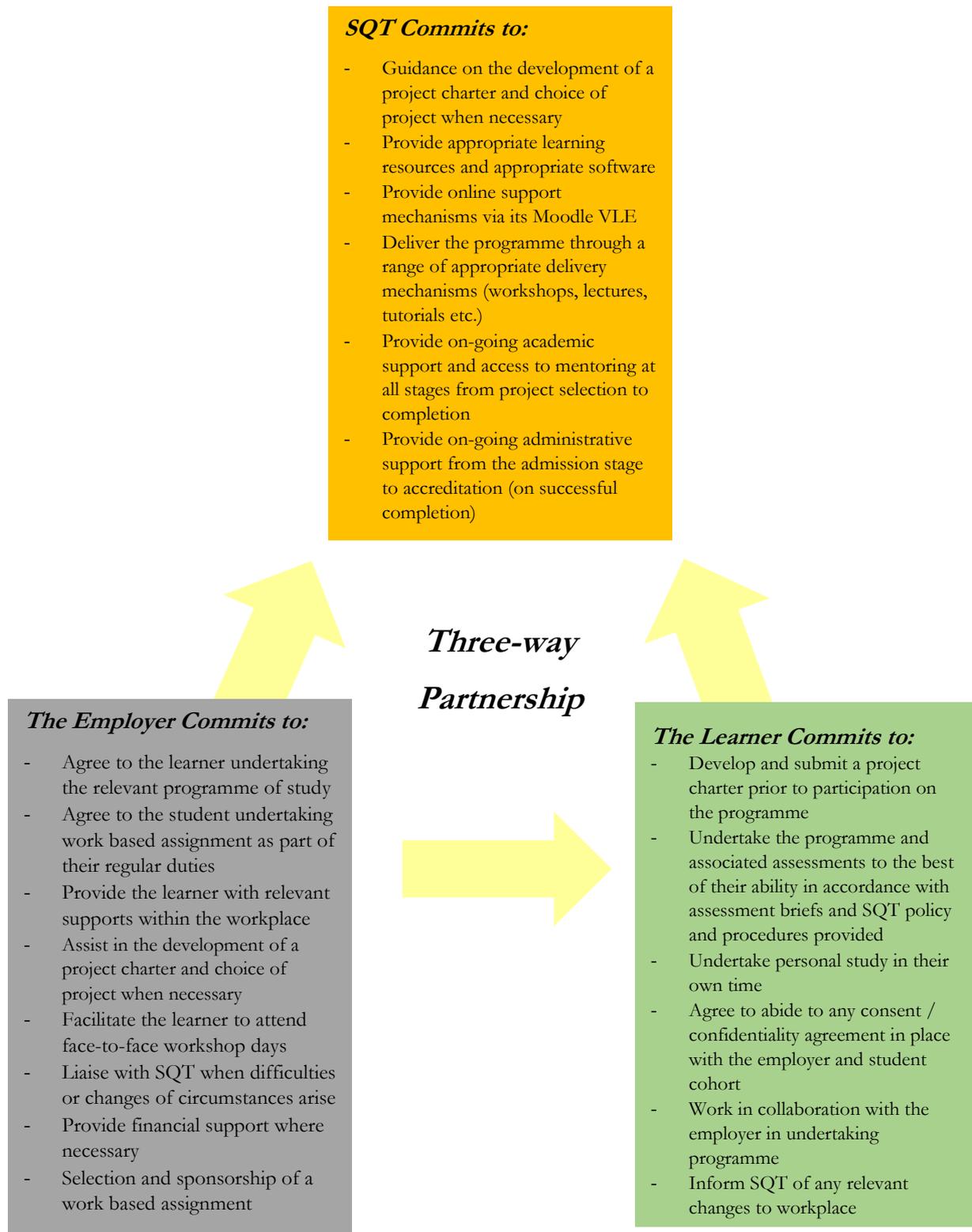


Figure 6: Three-way Partnership Commitments

6.3 The Learning Environment

Programmes are delivered at public locations (nationwide subject to demand) or at onsite training facilities in the case of in-house programmes.

6.3.1 Physical Learning Environment – Face-to-Face Delivery

The following set of quality guidelines (training room specification) applies to the physical learning environment for all programmes. Although this cannot always be fully adhered to at onsite training facilities, venue managers are nevertheless made aware of the requirements and informed of the importance of such.

Health & Safety:

Management personnel and Tutors at the training venue are responsible for the Health & Safety of the student. All precautions must be taken to ensure their safety. Any issues that arise are escalated to the internal venue manager and the Course Manager at SQT for efficient resolution.

Room Layout and Equipment:

- Rooms should be set up in a U Shape style, unless otherwise instructed. Maximum space per delegate should be allowed in the U-Shape (min 2 ft).
- A top table is required for the Tutor(s) and their notes
- A table is required for the projector
- The chairs should be comfortable and suited to 6-8 hours of sitting
- The room should have natural light, air-conditioning and not be susceptible to any external noise disturbance
- A screen and flip-chart with markers are required
- An extension lead for projector with lead secured to the floor for safety
- Access to power sockets for students electrical devices
- Internet access must be available

Special Requirements:

- The venue (including the training room and other facilities) should have accessibility for wheelchair users and others of limited mobility
- The venue should also cater for special dietary requirements. Special dietary requirements will be advised by SQT in advance of a programme

Security:

- The room should be left set-up and locked overnight. If this is not possible, the Tutor should be informed on the first morning
- Where possible, the Tutor should have a facility to lock the room during breaks

Programme Materials:

- The venue manager / contact will be advised by email when programme material is shipped by courier from SQT. An email should be sent to SQT to confirm receipt of materials
- This material should only be signed for by relevant staff
- The material should be stored in a secure location
- The material should be placed in the training room the night before the programme or by 8am on the first morning of the programme and the room should be locked
- Programme materials are to be opened by Tutors only

Programme Display:

- The programme location (specific conference room) must be clearly displayed at the hotel/company reception from 8am on the morning of each programme
- Programmes generally run from 9am to 5pm. Should this vary, the venue will be notified
- Students are asked to provide feedback regarding the physical environment on course evaluation forms (CAFs) and Tutors are formally advised that any deviation from the standard must be reported to the Course Manager immediately

6.3.2 Virtual Learning Environment

SQT successfully deployed a Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle VLE) which was rolled out for all QQI/HET programmes in 2014 following a successful pilot phase. The platform provides a secure resource repository and allows for the upload of assignment submission and subsequent capture of tutor feedback. All QQI/ HET students also have access to a wide variety of up to date resources via the Lean Six Sigma support library.

6.4 Supports for Students with Disabilities and Specific Learning Difficulties

SQT is fully committed to complying with relevant policies and legislation with respect to equality and disability. Registered and potential students with verified disabilities or specific learning difficulties may be given special consideration and reasonable accommodation to enable them to successfully complete their programme. A reasonable accommodation is any action that helps to alleviate a substantial disadvantage due to an impairment or medical condition. Such accommodations are put in place to help reduce these barriers in order to provide equality of access and opportunity for all.

The steps below are followed when processing requests from applicants with disabilities and/or specific learning difficulties:

- Step 1: Applicant advises SQT** of that he/she has a disability and / or specific learning difficulty at the initial application stage
- Step 2: Verification by health professional**
- Step 3: Documentation reviewed** and where possible appropriate **supports are agreed and implemented**

Step 1: Student Application

All applicants are requested to disclose details of any learning or medical support requirements they have when applying for a programme.

In cases where a student develops or discovers a support requirement during the course of their studies, the student is advised to contact the Tutor or Course Manager as soon as possible and the same procedure (steps 2 and 3) is followed.

Step 2: Verification by Health Professional

Following disclosure / discovery by the student, verification of the indicated support requirements must be provided by an appropriate health professional as per Table 12 below⁷.

Step 3: Support Arrangements

Following verification of a support requirement, a support meeting or telephone call is arranged with the potential or registered student and relevant member(s) of SQT. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the student's requirements in more detail and possible

⁷ DARE (Disability Access Route to Education)

reasonable accommodations which could be offered. Below is a list of supports provided for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties.

Supports available for students with a physical / sensory disability

- Venue check to ensure accessibility and appropriate facilities
- Physical modifications to the training and examination environment e.g. seating arrangements, sound amplification etc.
- Learning materials provided in accessible format where possible
- Additional time allocated to complete assessments
- Alternative assessment formats
- Support of a scribe to complete examinations

Supports available for students with specific learning difficulties

- Alternative assessment formats
- Support of a scribe to complete examinations
- Additional time allocated to complete assessments
- Spelling and/or grammar waiver for assessments
- Extended individual support

Type of Disability	Accepted Medical Consultant/Specialist	Age of Report
Asperger's Syndrome	Appropriately qualified Psychiatrist OR Psychologist OR Neurologist OR Paediatrician who is a member of his or her professional or regulatory body	No age limit
Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Appropriately qualified Psychiatrist OR Psychologist OR Neurologist OR Paediatrician who is a member of his or her professional or regulatory body	Must be less than three years old
Blind/Vision Impaired	Ophthalmologist OR Ophthalmic Surgeon	No age limit
Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students may apply under ONE of the following categories: (A) Applicants who have an Audiogram (B) Applicants who attend a School for the Deaf (C) Applicants with a Cochlear Implant	(A) Applicants who have an audiogram: Professionally Qualified Audiologist (B) Applicants who attend a School for the Deaf: Principal of School for the Deaf (C) Applicants with a Cochlear Implant: Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) Consultant OR Cochlear Implant Programme Coordinator	No age limit
DCD - Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia	Applicants with DCD - Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia must provide a full psycho-educational assessment completed by an appropriately qualified psychologist AND a report from an Occupational Therapist OR Neurologist who is a member of their respective professional or regulatory body.	Report from Psychologist must be less than three years. There is no age limit on the report from the Occupational Therapist /Neurologist
Mental Health Condition	Psychiatrist	Must be less than three years old
Neurological Conditions (incl. Epilepsy, Brain Injury, Speech & Language Disabilities)	Neurological Conditions: Neurologist OR other relevant Consultant. Speech & Language Disabilities: Speech and Language Therapist	No age limit
Physical Disability	Orthopaedic Consultant OR other relevant Consultant appropriate to the disability/condition.	No age limit
Significant On-going Illness	Diabetes Type 1: Endocrinologist Cystic Fibrosis (CF): Consultant Respiratory Physician or Paediatrician Gastroenterology Conditions: Gastroenterologist Others: Relevant Consultant in area of condition or Consultant Registrar/Registrar	Must be less than three years old
Specific Learning Difficulty (incl. Dyslexia and Dyscalculia)	Appropriately qualified Psychologist.	Must be less than three years old

Table 12: Verification Requirements from Health Professional

6.5 Customer / Student Complaints

SQT is committed to providing a high quality service for all its students. Complaints are taken very seriously and are considered an important source of information for continuous improvements in the specific area. A complaint is viewed as an expression of dissatisfaction concerning the provision of a service or services by SQT.

6.5.1 Informal Complaints

SQT endeavours to deal with all complaints on an informal basis using appropriate mechanisms such as meetings or telephone calls with the complainant and other relevant personnel such as Tutors, Programme Leaders, Course Managers, Senior Course Manager, Director of Quality and Academic Affairs, Managing Director. If the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint, the procedure below is followed.

Informal complaints are documented and monitored. Corrective action is taken using the PIN system, when necessary, which is outlined in section 6.6.2 below.

6.5.2 Formal Complaints

The following procedure is adhered to when dealing with formal complaints. All complaints are treated promptly, fairly, impartially and in confidence. SQT will always ensure that no complaint made in good faith will be used to disadvantage any person in the future.

- i. Formal complaints must be documented and sent to the Course Manager, Managing Director or Director of Quality and Academic Affairs via email within 1 week of the complaint arising.
- ii. All complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days
- iii. Formal complaints will be investigated and a response will be issued to the complainant within 15 working days or, where this is not possible, an interim response will explain the position and advise when a substantive response will be made
- iv. On receipt of the substantive response, if the complainant is dissatisfied with the findings, they may wish to appeal the matter, all appeals must be made within 5 working days of receipt of the substantive response been sent.

Formal Complaint Appeal

- i. The complainant must outline in writing why they wish to appeal the decision of the formal complaint, this should be sent to the Managing Director
- ii. The appeal will be acknowledged within 3 working days
- iii. A meeting will be convened by the Appeals Committee within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal

- iv. The findings of the committee will be binding (save judicial review) and will be issued to the complainant within 5 working days of the Appeals Committee

6.6 Monitoring, Review and Improvement of Resources and Support Services

6.6.1 Quarterly and Annual Monitoring and Review

The Quality Committee reviews the effectiveness of associated policies and procedures in line with an annual QA audit schedule and findings are presented to the Programme Board (where relevant) and Academic Council.

6.6.2 On-going Review – PIN System

When necessary, issues associated with resources and support services associated with the provision of SQT programmes are recorded and monitored through a formal PIN (Potential for Improvement Notice) process which is outlined below.

Potential for Improvement Notice (PIN)

Below is the process used by SQT for a structured approach to problem solving (identify a problem clearly, work out the cause and then take corrective action). Corrective actions are also followed up to ensure they are effective. The PIN form is used to record all the steps. The PIN is a 4 step process:

- i. Details of Non-Conformance
- ii. Immediate Follow-up action
- iii. Corrective Action
- iv. Corrective Action Follow Up and Close Out

Preventive Action

Preventive action is action which may be taken to prevent a problem arising. Preventive action may be taken before and to prevent the measure going outside specification e.g., if there is a negative trend observed in KPIs. The PIN (Potential for Improvement) system is used to record all actions.

Corrective Action

When a problem is identified from any source e.g., tutor and student course assessment forms (CAFs), the PIN (Potential for Improvement Notice) system is used to record all actions taken as above.

7 INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The following sets out SQT's policy statement in regard to its policy and procedures for its Information Systems:

SQT is committed to reviewing, maintaining and continuously enhancing its knowledge based information system to allow for the collection, analysis and use of relevant information to ensure effective management support and development of its programmes and other activities. Critical quality indicators are maintained and reviewed on an on-going basis and used to inform continuous improvement within the organisation.

Table 13 puts this statement in context by summarising the European standards for policy and procedures for quality assurance in higher education. It also incorporates supporting documentation including reference to on-going monitoring mechanisms and continuous improvement.

STANDARD: INFORMATION SYSTEMS

European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions: Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.

<p>Supporting Policy Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HETAC (2011) Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education and Training ▪ ENQA (2005) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 	<p>On-going Monitoring Mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systematic QA audits and resulting report ▪ On-going monitoring and review of management information system through day to day use ▪ Monthly communication meetings ▪ Biannual IT meetings with external IT providers ▪ Monthly IT report ▪ Biannual IT Staff Satisfaction Survey 	<p>Relevant KPI's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. Failed Backups ▪ Website and Moodle statistics ▪ System downtime ▪ Website downtime ▪ Biannual IT Staff Survey Results ▪ No. Open IT Issues
<p style="text-align: center;">Continuous Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On-going updates to management information system as necessary ▪ Implementation of recommendations arising from monthly internal staff communication meetings and quarterly IT meetings with relevant external IT personnel ▪ Implementation of recommendations arising from relevant internal QA audits. 		

Table 13: Information Systems

7.1 Management Information System

SQT have implemented a customised management information system (MIS) which has been built using Microsoft Access and is accessible to all management and administration staff. The system, which was initially developed in 2000, is updated on a regular basis and provides an excellent data repository and reporting function for all organisational activity. The system is monitored through day-to-day use and various other forums, such as IT meetings and staff communication meetings as well as a systematic QA audit process. Identified improvements and necessary updates are carried out in a timely manner by an external IT support company, who are contracted to support and maintain the system. A bi-annual IT-staff satisfaction survey is carried out internally and a quarterly formal system and IT review is carried out by the support company. This review ensures that the physical and network infrastructure and supporting services are working to maximum performance. An IT performance report is subsequently emailed to the relevant internal personnel and necessary actions taken to ensure the on-going maintenance and continuous improvement of the entire IT infrastructure.

7.2 Data Collection and Sources

SQT collect a wide range of data which is captured within the MIS and consequently used for relevant analysis and reporting within all functional areas. The data which is captured can be organised into the following five categories:

- i. Personal data (Tutors, Students and Staff - queries, student admissions, assessment information)
- ii. Programme specific
- iii. Assessment
- iv. Financial and operational
- v. Student, Tutor and Programme Organiser feedback

Data is collected through various methods such as application forms, telephone conversations, financial documents, student and tutor course assessment forms (CAFs), programme assessment cover sheets and other appropriate means. Survey Monkey, a web based data collection and analysis system is also utilised when necessary.

7.3 Backups and Disaster Recovery

SQT's backup system is managed by a local external IT support company. Backups are carried out by a specialised company who back up data and exchange on a remote on-line server. Daily

notifications of successful / failed backups are received by both SQT and the external company and are dealt with as necessary.

In the case of an emergency, where it is not possible to gain access to SQT's physical office, a disaster recovery box is maintained off site. The box contains information required to ensure that the company can operate on a temporary basis and includes essential software disks etc.

7.4 Quality Indicators and KPI's

A KPI summary report is generated and reviewed on a weekly basis by the Managing Director, Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and other relevant personnel. The report provides vital information for monitoring strategic performance, operational aspects of the organisation as well as the quality of programme provision and supporting services offered by SQT. Table 14 below provides a summary of the key performance indicators categorised by each chapter of this manual.

Chapter	Relevant KPI	Frequency of Review:	Reviewed By:
2. Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance	KPI Summary Report – This report is generated on a weekly basis and includes quality indicators and KPIs relating to both programme provision and the day to day running and strategic objectives of SQT.	Weekly	Managing Director Director of Quality and Academic Affairs
	Internal Audit Improvement Plan (quarterly completion rate)	Quarterly	Academic Council Quality Committee
	No. QA Audit Actions Open	Quarterly	Academic Council Quality Committee
	% High Priority QA Audit Actions Open	Quarterly	Academic Council Quality Committee
3. Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes	Completion Rate (%)	Twice Yearly	Examination Board Programme Board Academic Council
	Withdrawal / Non Submission Rate (%)	Twice Yearly	Examination Board Programme Board Academic Council
	No. Registered Students	Twice Yearly	Examination Board Programme Board Academic Council
	Student Course Assessment Form (CAF) Ratings (review period, annual and cumulative)	Weekly (KPI summary Report)	Managing Director Director of Quality and Academic Affairs
Interim and End of Course		Tutor Course Manager Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	
Twice Yearly		Programme Board	

Chapter	Relevant KPI	Frequency of Review:	Reviewed By:
	No. Potential for Improvement Notice (PIN)	Weekly Twice Yearly	Relevant Internal Personnel Managing Director Director of Quality and Academic Affairs Programme Board & Academic Council
	No. New Programmes Offered	Twice Yearly	Academic Council
4. Assessment of Students	Assessment Results	Twice Yearly (or more often if required)	Examination Board Programme Board Academic Council (high level detail only)
	No. Certified	Twice Yearly (or more often if required)	Examination Board Programme Board Academic Council (high level detail only)
	Pass / Fail Rate	Twice Yearly (or more often if required)	Examination Board Programme Board
	Completion Rate (%)	Twice Yearly (or more often if required)	Examination Board Academic Council
	Withdrawal / Non Submission Rate (%)	Twice Yearly (or more often if required)	Programme Board Academic Council
	APEL Statistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ % students admitted on basis of APEL ▪ Comparison of assessment results for those admitted on basis of APEL vs Educational History 	Twice Yearly (or more often if required)	Examination Board Programme Board Academic Council
	No. Reviews, Rechecks and Appeals	Twice Yearly (or more often if required)	Examination Board Programme Board Academic Council
	No. Extension Requests / Deferrals	(or more often if required)	Examination Board Programme Board Academic Council

5. Quality Assurance of Academic Staff	Tutor Rating	Interim and End of Course As necessary	Course Manager Director of Quality and Academic Affairs Individual Tutor Meetings
	Course Rating	Interim and End of Course As necessary	Course Manager Director of Quality and Academic Affairs Individual Tutor Meetings
	No. Academic Staff Retired from SQT	Twice Yearly	Managing Director Board of Directors
	No. New SQT Tutors	Twice Yearly	Managing Director Board of Directors
	No. Potential for Improvement Notice (PIN)	Weekly	Relevant Internal Personnel Managing Director Director of Quality and Academic Affairs
		Twice Yearly	Programme Board & Academic Council
6. Learning Resources and Student Support	Student Course Assessment Form (CAF) Ratings – wrt student support and relevant resources	Interim and End of Course As necessary	Course Manager Director of Quality and Academic Affairs Individual Tutor Meetings Programme Board
		No. Health and Safety incidents in SQT (Callan Centre)	Weekly Managing Director Health and Safety Officer
	No. Health and Safety incidents in SQT (on Courses)	Weekly	Managing Director Health and Safety Officer
	No. Students with disabilities / specific learning difficulties	Twice Yearly	Academic Council
7. Information Systems	No. Failed Backups	Weekly	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs

	IT Statistics (website, Moodle etc.)	As necessary	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs Marketing Manager (website statistics)
	Bi-Annual IT Staff Survey Results	Bi-annual	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs
8. Public Information	Satisfaction with public information rating - Survey to students who have withdrawn (This is also reviewed as part of the student CAF's which is monitored as above)	Annually	Director of Quality and Academic Affairs Managing Director Marketing Manager Programme Board

Table 14: KPI Indicators per Chapter

7.5 Data Protection

Data protection is the safeguarding of the privacy rights of individuals in relation to the processing of their personal data. The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 provide rights to individuals relating to this personal information and impose obligations on organisations who collect and use personal data.

7.5.1 SQT Privacy Policy

The following privacy policy is available on the SQT website www.sqt-training.com.

7.5.2 Collection of Personal Data

In accordance with its function, SQT is required to collect, use and retain (for as long as is necessary for the purpose or purposes for which it was obtained) personal data and information for a variety of necessary purposes about its staff, students and other relevant individuals. Data is collected for the following purposes:

- Organisation and administration of programmes including processing of assessment results
- External evaluation activities
- Recruitment and remuneration of staff
- Compliance with legal obligations to funding bodies etc.

If the purpose for which the information was obtained has ceased and the personal information (such as PPS numbers) is no longer required, SQT discards / deletes the data in a secure manner.

SQT may also provide promotional and marketing materials to individuals who have provided personal information such as email addresses. Individuals may also remove themselves from all mailing lists generated by SQT.

7.5.3 Disclosure to Third Parties

Sensitive information may in some cases be disclosed to third parties such as QQI where it is legally required (for example, when necessary to register students and process assessment).

Information may also be provided to bodies from which individuals seek funding. In the case of students who have enrolled on programmes through their employer data (such as attendance and assessment results) may be shared with the employer.

In the case of students who are enrolled on programmes through their employers, programme attendance and assessment results are shared with the employer.

7.5.4 Review and Correction of Personal Data

Personal data which has been provided to SQT can be reviewed or corrected by emailing info@sqt-training.com.

8 PUBLIC INFORMATION

The following sets out SQT's policy statement in regard to its policy and procedures for the provision of information to the public:

SQT Training are committed to providing accurate, impartial, objective and readily accessible information about the programmes and services which they offer.

Table 15 puts this statement in context by summarising the European standards for policy and procedures for quality assurance in higher education. It also incorporates supporting documentation including reference to on-going monitoring mechanisms and continuous improvement.

STANDARD: PUBLIC INFORMATION

European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions: Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

Supporting Policy Documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ HETAC (2011) Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education and Training▪ ENQA (2005) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area▪ QQI (2013) Protection of Enrolled Learners: Protocols for Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act	On-going Monitoring Mechanisms: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Systematic QA audits reports▪ Feedback from students and other relevant stakeholders▪ Programme Board▪ Annual programme review report	Relevant KPI's: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Satisfaction rating with public information provision
Continuous Improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Implementation of recommendations arising from programme board meetings, feedback from relevant stakeholders and annual programme review report▪ Implementation of recommendations arising from internal QA audits		

Table 15: Public Information

8.1 Provision of Programme Information

Information which is published on programmes offered by SQT Training include the following:

- Programme Title
- Award Type
- NFQ Level (if applicable)
- Credits (if applicable)
- Awarding Body
- Programme Background
- Profile of Applicable Students
- Entry Requirements
- Detailed Programme Outline
- Teaching and Learning Mechanisms and Relevant Supports
- Assessment Information
- Tutor Details
- Student Testimonials
- Programme Schedules
- Programme Pricing

Some of the information above is provided to potential students and other stakeholders through the following channels:

- SQT Website www.sqt-training.com
- Social Networking Sites such as Facebook
- Annual Calendar
- Prospectus
- Newsletter
- Promotional Email

8.2 Publication of Information

SQT publishes the following information with respect to the quality of its programmes:

- Student Assessment Statistics
- Programmatic Review Reports (Self-Evaluation and Reports of the Expert Panel and or relevant awarding body)

- Institutional Review Reports (Self-Evaluation and Reports of the Expert Panel and or relevant awarding body)
- External Examiner Reports
- Student / Employee Testimonials

8.3 Freedom of Information

SQT recognise its responsibility under the Freedom of Information Act 1997 and 2003 and the right of students to gain access to information held by them by SQT and will comply with any reasonable request under the Acts.

8.4 Protection for Learners

SQT Training has learner protection arrangements in place with respect to enrolled learners on all QQI (HET) validated courses in accordance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. The arrangements are with two other Colleges in respect of each QQI course, whereby learners will complete their award through one of these providers. This guarantee ensures that learners will be facilitated to complete their award in the event that the organisation unexpectedly ceases trading.

Transfer and Progression options are set out in the SQT Student Handbook (Section 3.4).