



**HIBERNIA
COLLEGE**

**Annual Quality Report Hibernia
College Reporting Period 2019-2020**

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Hibernia College
2021

Annual Quality Report Hibernia College
Reporting Period 2019-2020

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Reporting Period 2019-2020

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PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
1.0 - Internal QA Framework	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review				
5.0 - Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	2.4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment	2.5	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 - Learner Resources and Supports	2.7	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 - Information and Data Management	2.8	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 - Public Information and Communication	2.9	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 - Programme Delivery and Development	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
9.0 - Details of Arrangements with Third Parties				
2.0 - Programme Development and Delivery	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 - Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 - QA of Research Activities and Programmes	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for Hibernia College for the reporting period 1 September 2019 to 31 August 2020. It is to be submitted by Friday, 26 February 2021. The AQR has been approved by the Academic Board and is submitted by the Registrar, Aisling Reast.

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

The College's offerings have had a strong focus on professional education and practice-based learning for regulated professions with a particular focus on teaching and including the health sciences. Since its establishment, it has grown to a position where its School of Education now provides a significant proportion of Ireland's teacher education and produces the largest number of primary school teachers annually from any HEI. The College also offers an extensive suite of continuing professional development (CPD) programmes for education professionals.

To date, there have been approximately 10,000 graduates of the College and currently, there are an estimated 1,939 students enrolled across two programmes. Hibernia College is approved by QQI for the provision of a range of validated programmes leading to QQI awards. The following Hibernia College programmes are currently validated by QQI:

- Professional Master of Education in Primary Education
- Professional Master of Education in Post-Primary Education
- Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing

Our initial teacher education programmes are accredited by the Teaching Council of Ireland and our nursing programme is approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI).

As this is Hibernia College's first AQR, it includes all updates made to the College's quality framework since re-engagement.

Process for Development and Approval of the AQR

Preparation for the submission of this AQR began in late 2019 following a QQI briefing on the introduction of the AQR to private HEIs. This included provision of regular briefings to the Academic Board and the Executive Management Team (EMT) on the preparations required for engagement with this process.

The draft templates provided by QQI were reviewed on each iteration and the information needed to complete the report was identified. Cross-institutional engagement supported the gathering of the required data and staff were encouraged to identify case studies for inclusion. The Quality Office then oversaw the completion of the report using information supplied from across the College.

The report was reviewed and approved by the College's EMT and Academic Board in February 2021.

Internal QA Framework

1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

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

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

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

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

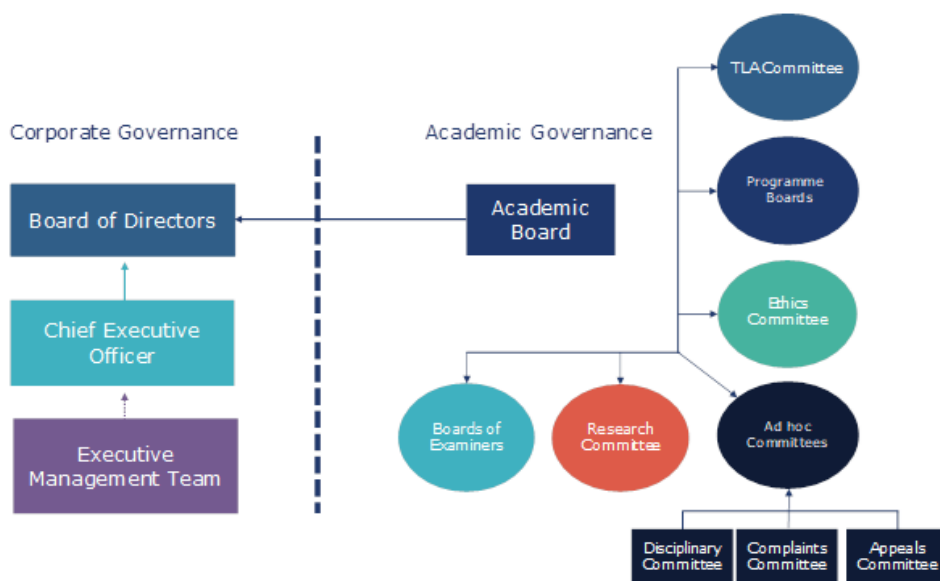


Figure 1

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

1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

Quality Assurance requirements for transnational and collaborative provision are integrated throughout the HCQF and are subsequently accounted for in the documents outlined in the following table. However, please note that Hibernia College does not currently engage in transnational and collaborative provision.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
Design of Programmes and Curricula for a Blended or Online Environment Policy Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Online Environment Policy Full Development and Final Approval of a New Programme Procedure Obtaining Initial Approval to Develop a New Programme Procedure Ongoing Monitoring of Online or Blended Learning Programmes Policy Public Information, Promotion and the Recruitment of Students Policy The Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF) Policy		Engagement and Management of Adjunct Faculty Policy

2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

2.1 Programme Development and Approval

The HCQF was developed in the context of current QQI Policy related to the validation and review of programmes, for example, [QQI's Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training](#). The development of new programmes is conducted systematically in line with the College's approved HCQF policies and procedures, including mechanisms for timely consultation with internal and external stakeholders.

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

2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

The HCQF includes an Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) Policy, Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and various policies and procedures that support matters related to progression such as deferrals and withdrawals. Widening participation through ensuring inclusivity and equality of opportunity for prospective and current students and alumni is an explicit aim of the College's Access, Transfer and Progression Policy.

The College's policies and procedures related to admissions were updated during this reporting period to ensure ongoing relevance and appropriateness, with particular regard to planning for new programmes.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
Access, Transfer and Progression Policy Assisting Failing Students to Exit Programmes Procedure Recognition of Prior Learning Policy Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure Withdrawal from Studies Policy Student Initiated Withdrawals Procedure College Initiated Withdrawals Due to Non-Engagement Procedure Temporary Suspension of Studies Policy Temporary Suspension of Studies Procedure	Admissions Policy Admission Application Procedure Admission Interviews Procedure Admission Offers Procedure Orientation Policy Terms and Conditions (non-HCQF) Student Charter	Garda Vetting Procedure

Public Information, Promotion and the Recruitment of Students Policy		
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2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

Not applicable.

2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The HCQF includes a range of policies, procedures and additional resources to ensure the ongoing quality assurance of the teaching, learning and assessment environment. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, three new supporting documents were developed to support the quality assurance of assessment in an online learning environment, as outlined below. The existing Regulations for Written Examinations were also reviewed during this period.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy Assessment, Grading and Certification Policy Grade Moderation Procedure Grading Student Effort Procedure Discussion of Examination Scripts (or Equivalent with Assessors) Procedure Review of a Provisional Assessment Decision Procedure Academic Good Practice Policy Academic Impropriety Investigation in a Formal Examination Procedure Academic Impropriety Investigation in Coursework Procedure	Regulations for Written Examinations	Engaging in Online Communication Guideline Regulations for Online Oral Examinations Regulations for Synchronous Online Examinations

3.0 Learner Resources and Support

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

Administrative support is provided by programme administrators for each programme and additional central administrative support is provided by the Assessment and Awards Office. The College also has a full-time Student Support Officer who provides pastoral support to students as required throughout the duration of their studies. Furthermore, students have access to a professional counselling service. Learners and staff are additionally supported by an established technical support team who control and administer access, content, calendars and technical support.

The College continuously invests in applications and infrastructure to enhance the learning environment. Existing infrastructure includes MyHELMS (Virtual Learning Environment), InPlace (Student Placement Management

System), Quercus (Student Information System), Dynamics CRM, Office 365, Zoom and Access Dimensions. Data resilience and security are supported by regular off-site backups, full replication of internal infrastructure, centralised AV/malware protection and advanced email protection. Programme delivery is supported by the College's virtual learning environment (VLE), which features access to media-rich digital learning content; discussion forums; blogs and other collaborative tools; personalised calendars and submission deadline countdown timers; announcement feeds; facilities for uploading, grading and providing feedback on assessments; text-matching software; access to administrative, placement and support resources; the digital library; and a live chat facility for technical support. Live programme delivery is facilitated via Zoom professional accounts for all students and faculty.

Hibernia College students have access to an extensive digital library that is integrated into the VLE, which provides them with secure, direct access to all resources by means of a discovery search engine. A major library upgrade was completed in 2020, facilitating further personalised access to online resources. The College subscribes to an ever-increasing electronic resource collection that is regularly reviewed by the Librarian and faculty members. Students receive support and training from the Librarian. New students receive library induction training at the beginning of their programme and all students have access to one-to-one support from the Librarian when they have specific library-related queries.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
Student Charter Student Support Policy Establishing Overarching Standards for Student Conduct Policy Breaches of Standards for Student Conduct Investigation and Management Procedure Extenuating Circumstances Policy Extenuating Circumstances Procedure Reasonable Accommodation Policy Reasonable Accommodation Procedure Appeals Policy Appealing a College Decision Procedure Appeals of Decisions on Evidence Excusing Non-Engagement Procedure Review of a Provisional Assessment Decision Procedure Student Complaints Policy Student Complaints Investigation Procedure Appeal Application Form ¹	Orientation Policy	Engaging in Online Communication Guideline

¹ All application forms are available for download directly from the [HCQF](#)

Deferral Application Form		
Extenuating Circumstances Application Form		
Reasonable Accommodation Application Form		
Assistive Technology (AT) Conditions of Use Form		
Review Application Form		
Extension Request Application Form		

4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

The Research Committee is a subcommittee of the Academic Board that guides the Academic Board and the College community in strategy, policy and the approach to research activity in the College. Research Activity is supported and overseen via the College's overall academic governance system.

The Ethics Committee is an additional subcommittee of the Academic Board that provides guidance on approaches to ethical teaching, research and scholarship. The Ethics Committee grants ethical approval for research conducted by staff, faculty and third parties seeking to conduct research in the College community.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
	Governance and Management Policy Academic Board Terms of Reference Ethics Committee Terms of Reference Research Committee Terms of Reference	

5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

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

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

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

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

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

Following re-engagement, the College finalised and published a HCQF policy specifically related to the engagement and management of adjunct faculty in the College community. The College's Erasmus Policy Statement was also reviewed and updated during this reporting period, which is a component of the College's overall staff development opportunities.

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

6.0 Information and Data Management

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

The College's [Document Retention Schedule](#) is scheduled for review in the academic year 2020-21. This review has been prioritised due to the increasingly digital nature of College records due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The information and data management infrastructure includes MyHELMS (VLE), InPlace (Student Placement Management System), Quercus (Student Information System), Dynamics CRM, and Access Dimensions. The Records and Data Manager is responsible for managing compliance with data protection legislation, overseeing record management and providing data and statistics to support decision-making.

Freedom of information (FOI) does not apply to non-public bodies and so the College does not have an FOI policy.

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

		Implementing Data Protection Principles in Research Guidelines Data Subject Access Request Form
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7.0 Public Information and Communication

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

The Marketing Director oversees the management of the College website and social media channels, including [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). The Marketing Director regularly liaises with the Registrar and Head of School or Academic Lead when drafting communications. During the reporting period, regular open days were migrated online to comply with the public health restrictions.

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

8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

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

A new resource was developed during this reporting period to specifically support staff in their preparation for external peer-review panel processes.

Summary of QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Policy Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Procedure Cyclical Review of Hibernia College - An Institutional Review Policy Cyclical Review Procedure Ensuring and Maintaining the Quality of Physical Learning and Assessment Environments Policy	End-of-Programme Report of the Programme Board to the Academic Board (Internal template-formerly annual report)	Preparing for External Quality Assurance Peer-Review Panel Reviews Guidelines

<p><u>Approval, Monitoring and Review of Venues Procedure</u></p> <p><u>External Examining Procedure</u></p> <p><u>Monitoring and Review of the Hibernia College Quality Framework Procedure</u></p>		
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9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	2
Awarding bodies	1
QA bodies	2

1. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	The Teaching Council
Programme titles and links to publications	Professional Master of Education (PME) in Primary Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final report- July 2014 • Progress report- April 2016 Professional Master of Education (PME) in Post-Primary Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final report- May 2014 • Progress report- April 2016
Date of accreditation or last review	2014
Date of next review	To be confirmed, The Teaching Council have indicated that they will commence the next cycle of review and accreditation in September 2021 with a view to all revised programmes commencing delivery from September 2022.

2. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI)
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing
Date of accreditation or last review	August 2020
Date of next review	August 2025

3. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	QA Body
Name of body:	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Reengagement Panel Report
Date of accreditation or last review	Reengagement took place December 2018 with recommendation to PAEC 7th February 2019.
Date of next review	TBC

4. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	Awarding Body
Name of body:	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing Professional Master of Education in Post Primary Education Professional Master of Education in Primary Education
Date of accreditation or last review	Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education - 10/09/20 Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing - 19/07/17 Professional Master of Education in Post Primary Education - 19/11/14 At the December 2019 PAEC meeting, a request for a one-year extension of validation period for this programme was approved. Professional Master of Education in Primary Education - 19/11/14 At the December 2019 PAEC meeting, a request for a one-year extension of validation period for this programme was approved.
Date of next review	Periodic review occurs cyclically for individual programmes

5. Type of arrangement (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	QA Body
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Name of body:	Department of Education and Skills Qualifications Advisory Board for the Early Learning and Care Sector
Programme titles and links to publications	Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education Published list of approved programmes for adherence to the Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines available on gov.ie
Date of accreditation or last review	May 2020. Determined that the programme meets the requirement of Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines (PACG)
Date of next review	TBC

9.2 Collaborative Provision

Not applicable, Hibernia College does not have any collaborative provision to note for the reporting period.

9.3 Articulation Agreements

Not applicable, Hibernia College does not have any articulation agreements to note for the reporting period.

Annual Quality Report Hibernia College
PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE
ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT
Reporting Period 2019-2020

PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

1.1 Strategic QA Updates

A number of key strategic developments took place during the reporting period, contributing to the overall quality assurance and enhancement of the learning environment and experience, for staff and students of Hibernia College. This section outlines a number of developments in areas including:

- Staff development
- College validation activity
- Digital learning architecture project
- Implementation of a new QA platform
- New College strategy
- Further QA developments

Staff Development

During the reporting period, a project to design and implement a new Performance Management Model/Process in the College was commenced to enhance staff development opportunities in the College. The Performance Development Programme (PDP) is one of the major elements within the new Performance Management Model. A PDP cross-institutional project team was established to support this project with broad and diverse staff membership. A number of enhancements emerged as part of this project and these began to be rolled out during this reporting period. The impact of these projects will be evaluated during the next reporting period.

One of the outcomes of this project was the publication of a revised Hibernia College Human Resources Staff Development and Continuing Education Policy with a renewed central mission that recognises the need to find a balance between individual and institutional development needs. This policy aims to develop and improve individual and team performance by increasing and honing the skills and knowledge of staff members through activities aligned with both organisation and individual needs. The revised policy explicitly recognises the value of informal and formal development. It has also incorporated three dedicated training days per annum for all staff members and has led to the adoption of a College institutional license for LinkedIn Learning to enhance staff training opportunities.

A second outcome was the development of a formal Performance and Development Process facilitated by People HR. This will be a four-stage process beginning with the identification of learning and development needs and identifying appropriate opportunities followed by completion of selected learning activities and evaluation of impact. This process will be rolled out during the next reporting period.

Finally, a Learning Hub was developed as a central repository on the College's VLE that aims to support staff in developing their skills and knowledge as they progress in their roles. It brings together all the learning and development opportunities that are available to staff and is a place where every staff member can share their knowledge and learning with colleagues.

Validation Activity

The QQI Programme and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) approved the validation of the Level 8, 240 Credit, Major Award, Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education on 10 September 2020. This followed a QQI panel site visit on 2 July 2020.

As the Teaching Council were not in a position to accept an application for re-approval of PME programmes during the reporting period, Hibernia College was unable to engage with QQI on the review and revalidation of its PME programmes. Therefore, the College requested an extension to our validation period; the QQI PAEC approved this extension in December 2019 to a last intake of August 2021.

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) approved the Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing, subject to conditions, at its meeting on 22nd July 2020.

During the reporting period, the College was recommended for funding for a Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Data Analytics under the Human Capital Initiative Pillar 1. It is intended that the first intake of this programme will take place in the 2021/22 academic year and so validation will be sought in the next reporting period.

Digital Learning Architecture Project

The planning and research phase for a new College digital learning architecture commenced during this reporting period. In autumn 2019, the Digital Learning Department organised and hosted a series of six workshops with College staff to discover requirements for the Next Generation Digital Learning Platform (NGDLP). Each workshop focused on a specific theme related to current needs in the provision of online systems to support teaching, learning and assessment in the College. The workshop series focused on finding solutions within a teaching, learning and assessment context to identify technologies that could make a difference to the College today. In each workshop, an experienced member of the department presented relevant topics and conducted an open discussion exploring these topics in a brainstorming format. The Head of Digital Learning asked the participants two core questions at the outset of the workshop series:

- What should teaching and learning look like at Hibernia College in the next 5-10 years?
- What digital technologies do we need to support this?

Other key areas included the exploration and testing of a number of new tools for potential inclusion in the new architecture, including Zoom, Moxtra, Aula and Seats software. A further update on this project will be provided in the next reporting period.

Implementation of a New QA platform

The HCQF is the source of all Hibernia College quality assurance documents and was formally approved by QQI in 2019. Hibernia College recognises that the HCQF is a suite of living documents that are subject to change and development over time. This ethos was communicated during reengagement and the panel welcomed the College's understanding of the HCQF *"as an iteratively evolving suite of documents and an organic mechanism, and its commitment to continuous incremental improvement based on stakeholder experience of application."*

In this spirit of continuous improvement, the College sought to identify the next phase of development for the HCQF with a view to researching, establishing and implementing best practice in policy management that would support the long-term sustainability of the HCQF. The case study included in this AQR details the rationale, research process and implementation phase that underpinned this core quality enhancement project that began in July 2019.

New College Strategy

In early 2020, the College's EMT commenced a process to develop a new College Strategy. This included the convening of a strategy workshop in February 2020, facilitated by Mazars. This process was postponed following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The EMT intend to recommence this process in due course.

Further QA Developments

Details on improvements and enhancements arising from re-engagement are detailed in Section 1.2 of Part B. Specific changes to the QA system (policies and procedures) during the reporting period are outlined in Part A

1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR) Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Update on Status Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.
1	That the relationship between the roles of the Academic Dean and Registrar be clarified in the documentation.	The College's Governance and Management Policy was updated in 2019 to ensure clarity on the overall governance structure of the College.
2	That the organisation chart be dated.	The College's organisational chart is managed through Sharepoint; this ensures that versions and dates of change are automatically recorded.
3	That the outsourcing arrangement for the HRM and Legal functions be outlined in the documentation.	In the period following this review, the College implemented an in-house HRM function. This arrangement, and the outsourced legal functions, are internally documented.
4	That the structural nature of the relationship between Hibernia College and Adjunct Faculty as service contractors rather than employees be clarified in the documentation.	This relationship is now clarified within the new Engagement and Management of Adjunct Faculty Policy .
5	That the role of the Faculty Manager in contracting and managing Adjunct Faculty be clarified in the documentation.	This role is now clarified within the new Engagement and Management of Adjunct Faculty Policy .
6	That provision is made for the inclusion of student membership and learning designers on the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee.	Terms of References for all committees were reviewed and approved by the College's Academic Board in 2020 to account for this feedback; representation of these and other groups was updated accordingly
7	That the title Directors of Discipline be changed to Programme Board Directors in the documentation.	Role titles were reviewed in drafting the College's Governance and Management Policy
8	That the documentation be amended to incorporate the changes that have been made in the academic governance and management structure following the appointment of the Head of the School of Education in August 2018 (5.1).	The College's Governance and Management Policy was updated to ensure clarity on the governance structure of the College.
9	That summary mapping sheet documents be prepared for blended and online learning, collaborations, plagiarism and assessment 'marks and standards', identifying the policy documents within HCQF across which the related QA procedures are distributed and embedded.	The College adopted a new policy management system to facilitate mapping between documented and ease of referencing related procedures across the HCQF.

10	That a policy for Intellectual Property be formulated as an addition to the HCQF.	The College's Intellectual Property Policy was developed and approved in 2019. This document does not sit within the HCQF specifically.
11	That the College prepare flow diagrams to illustrate the inter-related processes of programme design, development, delivery, on-going monitoring and periodic review.	As part of the HCQF, College policies and procedures include flow-charts to support the different processes of programme design, development, delivery, on-going monitoring and periodic review. As part of future development, the College will continue to develop mapping documents, where appropriate, to facilitate ease of understanding and navigation of the HCQF.
12	That the systematic ways in which feedback loops are closed be clarified further in the documentation.	This action will be considered in review of relevant documents as they arise in the HCQF review schedule on an ongoing basis.
13	That the scheduled review of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy be undertaken and completed as a matter of urgency.	The scheduled review of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Strategy was underway throughout 2019. Covid-19 restrictions disrupted the scheduled completion of this strategy which will be reported on in the next reporting period.
14	That the application of the Universal Design approach be more clearly reflected in documentation.	The College welcomes the acknowledgement of its commitment to the Universal Design for Learning approach and has committed to incorporating this feedback in the revised TLA Strategy, when published.
15	That the College revise the Compendium of SOPs and Guidelines document to improve its form and presentation.	The SOPs and guidelines provided to the panel were in PDF format for review purposes, which is not their practical presentation format. The College operates as a blended learning provider and is satisfied with the presentation and form of SOPs and guidelines documents. These are maintained and navigated via the College's internal SharePoint library, which uses a meta-data filtering tool, rather than a traditional book format with a table of contents and page-numbering structure. Consequently, no further action is required.
16	That consideration is given to developing and incorporating further opportunities for formative assessment into programmes as part of the review of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy.	Review of assessment mechanisms forms part of the ongoing review of the College's TLA strategy. During programme review and revalidation, programme assessment strategy will be reviewed. No revalidation processes have taken place during this reporting period.
17	That the mechanisms used for formative assessment be clarified in the strategy and the programme documents.	
18	That a systematic approach be taken to harvesting feedback from collaborative partners and other external stakeholders.	The College is reviewing its systematic approach to harvesting feedback at all stages of the programme lifecycle from initial proposal to validation and review. This will be reported on in the next reporting period.

1.3 Governance and Management

1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Academic Board	11 th September 2019 21 st November 2019 20 th February 2020 27 th March 2020 16 th June 2020 18 th August 2020
Board of Directors	27 th September 2019 6 th February 2020 20 th March 2020 29 th May 2020 15 th July 2020

1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

The academic and corporate governance structure as reflected in the College's Governance and Management Policy has not structurally changed during the reporting period.

As reported in the College's re-engagement process, the College's School of Education was formed in September 2018 with the appointment of a Head of School of Education. Throughout the first 12 months, a significant body of work went into restructuring the work of staff across the two existing Professional Masters of Education programmes and preparing for future developments in the department. Following the transitional period, the new structure has been successfully embedded in the College and new programmes are under development to continue the growth of the School. Academic leads were appointed in 2020 to delegate responsibility from the Head of School of Education for the management and operations of each programme within the school.

A noteworthy change to the overall organisational structure during this reporting period was the College's transition from externally outsourcing Human Resources to resourcing and developing its own in-house Human Resources department.

1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
QQI Reengagement	Reengagement took place December 2018 with recommendation to PAEC 7 February 2019.	Reengagement Panel Report
Erasmus+ Programme: Monitoring & Audit Visit - HEA	Site visit 18 December 2019.	This site visit report is not published but concluded that "Overall this was a very positive visit."

1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels² involved in IQA

Non-applicable

2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

A number of key developments and enhancements have occurred during the reporting period. These include:

- The governance and management of quality
- Reporting
- Quality Assurance in the response to the impact of Covid-19
- Impact of reengagement
- Sectoral engagement related to quality assurance.

The decision to implement a new policy management system was also a core project during this reporting period as described in case study 1.

The Governance and Management of Quality

HCQF Review and Development

The 'scale and scope of the work undertaken in transforming the QA framework' was commended by the College's re-engagement peer review panel who considered it to be 'comprehensive, integrated, coherent and user-friendly' and that the style of writing provided 'clarity and intelligibility for users, including students'.

It was anticipated that refinements would be required following lived experience of the revised framework. It was decided to provide a period of implementation and adjustment before launching a review schedule. After a period of implementation, a HCQF review and development schedule was developed and published internally in Q3 2019. This schedule incorporated the College's own identified priorities and matters arising through implementation and also the specific advice arising from the re-engagement panel. This schedule is kept under continual review to ensure that priorities are addressed in line with changes in the internal and external environment.

Building on the momentum of engagement during re-engagement, staff and students have been systematically involved in consultation on the review of HCQF documents; 21 documents have been reviewed and 13 new documents have been developed in line with this schedule, resulting in 34 documents overall. Both reviewed and new documents are detailed in Part A of this AQR.

Below are some samples of feedback related to this review and development process.

Related to the review of the Appropriate Use of ICT Policy and Engaging in Online Communication Guideline, *"These are very clear so commendations to those who collaborated to develop the policy and guidelines... Very useful and timely."*

A member of the consultation group for the suite of data and records documents reviewed during this period noted to the Academic Board *"the extensive work that had been undertaken to review and develop these documents."*

"The review of the terms of reference was extremely comprehensive. It took place over an extended period and was approached thematically. There was excellent engagement with all stakeholders and ultimately approval was given by the Academic Board."

Launch of Student QA survey

During the reporting period, the Quality Assurance Office undertook an anonymous survey on the quality assurance of student processes. This preliminary survey was open for a two-week window between 30 June and 14 July 2020 using Office 365 Forms. All current students were invited to participate in this survey; 290 students responded. Students were asked to submit feedback where they had engaged with one or more of the following six College processes: change of personal details, reasonable accommodation, deferrals, extensions, extenuating circumstances and review of provisional results.

A robust internal report containing a combination of quantitative and qualitative data was produced based on this survey and circulated to the Academic Board, EMT and a number of key administrative managers for consideration. Qualitative student feedback was thematically coded and presented as key issues and associated recommendations for process implementation – many of which have been completed already or are in progress. An executive summary was also produced and made available to both students and staff via the Registrar's notice board on the College's intranet.

At the beginning of the survey, students were asked if they had heard of the HCQF and if they knew where to find information on College policies and procedures. Of the respondents (N=290), 68% or 197 of them had both heard of the HCQF and knew where to find information on College policies and procedures. This highlighted a need to increase awareness of the HCQF in the student population. At least 60% of respondents in all policy areas indicated that they sought staff support to engage with a College process. This indicates a need to maintain high levels of policy literacy across the College community to support staff in the provision of information to students.

A number of key quality enhancement recommendations were identified for implementation based on this student feedback, including:

- The Registrar's section of the College's VLE was redeveloped to increase the overall visibility of HCQF, and to highlight appropriate support staff and policy information for core processes.
- All student feedback provided on specific processes will be considered as documents are reviewed in line with the HCQF review schedule. In all instances this will include a review of language to improve clarity and readability of documents and will also consider timelines for processes.
- College communication templates are being reviewed on a rolling basis in response to student feedback calling for more individualised correspondence to complement standardised templates where possible.
- Staff training opportunities are under review to ensure consistency of approach in management and implementation of quality assurance processes.

The outlined recommendations that are being implemented following analysis of the qualitative survey data indicate the immediate impact of student feedback on the aforementioned College processes. Further iterations of the survey will facilitate systematic analysis of quantitative data against this benchmark data and evaluation of the ongoing impact of recommendations on quality assurance processes for students.

Redevelopment of internal QA Support Site

A core responsibility of the QA Office is facilitating the management and operation of governance committees. The College's internal Quality Assurance SharePoint site was significantly redeveloped in 2019/20 resulting in many positive impacts, including:

- Enhanced visibility of and engagement with internal and external QA activities
- Easier access to all committee-related documentation
- Streamlined administrative processes and governance committee management
- Provision of a single source of truth for collaboration on any governance-related document, which in turn enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of our collaborative processes

As part of this project, a dedicated SharePoint group was developed for each subcommittee of the Academic Board. These pages facilitate administration and enhanced oversight of governance activities because of the following attributes:

- They have dedicated document library(s) storing all committee related files.
- They use consistent naming conventions for locating documents easily.
- They support the administrative management of committee membership.
- They allow easy dissemination of committee communication using the dedicated group email address and permit the sharing of files as direct links to the relevant document library. Committee members, therefore, access files directly from the document library.

There are several positive impacts that arise from this development, including: committee documents are no longer required to be attached as copies, all communication is centrally accessible, committee members access all committee information centrally and collaborate online in this format.

Reporting

The College QA Officer undertook an enhancement project on annual programme reports. New templates were developed to streamline reporting requirements and to ensure alignment to QQI programme review requirements. In this new reporting model, data, data visuals and objective descriptive summaries are prepared centrally and pre-populated in the templates before they are circulated to the appropriate Head of School or Academic Lead. The intention is that in completing these consistently, the data will be continuously gathered and analysed and ready to inform programme review processes as required.

Academic leads have welcomed the approach for simplifying the reporting process, the useful visuals and overall quality of the templates.

Quality Assurance in the response to the impact of Covid-19

Hibernia College is a leader in the delivery of blended learning programmes with over 20 years' experience. Accordingly, the College was particularly well positioned to respond to changes to the external higher education environment as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Overall, only minor modifications were required to be made for organisational processes as the College's approved QA framework is already designed to support blended learning delivery. These included:

- Establishment of a dedicated webpage for Covid-19 and provision of regular updates for learners via the student noticeboard on the VLE.

- Regular communication with students including emails, webinars and drop-in clinics to outline alternative assessments.
- Regular communication with staff including virtual town hall meetings.
- Moving certain processes fully online including assessment, admissions and governance processes.
- Approval of detailed contingency plans by the College Academic Board, following development in consultation with students, faculty and administrative staff supported by the EMT and the College Board of Directors.

Key challenges identified by the College included:

- Significant planning, training and administrative support was required to move processes online at short notice.
- The College specialises in the delivery of professional programmes where practice forms the kernel of teaching, learning and assessment. Programmes of this nature are obviously greatly impacted by the public health restrictions. Significant modifications in respect of placement provision had to be agreed with the Teaching Council and Department of Education and Skills. Hibernia College consulted with stakeholders including the Teaching Council, the Department of Education and Skills and Quality and Qualifications Ireland in developing its contingency plans.
- Moving oral examinations online was a new experience for the College and ensuring academic integrity was of paramount importance. Guidelines for Online Oral Examinations were written to support both students and assessors and to ensure that the academic integrity of the examination process was preserved. Case studies 2 and 3 provide further details on the College's approach to assessment during Covid-19 and how it was fundamentally supported and underpinned by principles of QA and governance.
- Conducting admissions interviews fully online was also a new experience that required extensive planning to ensure the integrity of the process. Guidelines for conducting online interviews were developed to quality assure the interview process.
- Increased online engagement and the shift of certain processes online led to the prioritisation of a review of College policies and procedures related to Data Protection and the development of [Engaging in Online Communication Guidelines](#) to enable successful communication in online settings by Hibernia College faculty, adjunct faculty, staff and students.

Modifications to Teaching, Learning and Assessment were evaluated through engagement with students, staff and faculty; this contributed to the QQI evaluation of [The Impact of COVID-19 Modifications to Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Irish Further Education and Training and Higher Education](#). Evaluations were used in the continuous quality improvement of these contingency processes.

Impact of reengagement

Hibernia College recognises that measuring impact is “inherently complex and ‘messy’”, is linked to ongoing change and needs to be sustainable to be meaningful (National Forum, 2019³). Importantly, it is not simply the outputs of processes but the journey that has been taken where impact can emerge rapidly or gradually overtime.

As noted in the College’s application for reengagement, the reengagement process itself was a complex and intricate process that took place over several years and involved significant participation of all staff in the College. Perhaps most notably arising from reengagement was the staff’s enthusiasm and shared ownership of the HCQF, which was specifically commended during the peer review panel visit:

“The panel is satisfied that the College has demonstrated its continuing capacity to meet QQI criteria for QA through its documentation and particularly through the nature of the engagement of College staff with the panel during the site visit. This was commendable and engendered panel confidence in the integrity of the documentation and the College’s capacity to deliver on its commitments. The panel were impressed by the openness, honesty, enthusiasm, dedication, competence and coherence evidenced by the staff team; the awareness and shared ownership of QA demonstrated by staff across all functions; and by their manifest pride in, and commitment to, a culture of continuing self-reflection and continuous improvement clearly focussed on enhancing the quality of the learner experience which is at the heart of all staff activities and the College identity.”

A number of quality enhancements arose from the implementation of specific advices received by the College during reengagement related to policies. The College’s [Governance and Management Policy](#) was updated to ensure clarity on the overall governance structure of the College. Terms of References for all committees were reviewed and approved by the College’s Academic Board. The panel’s advice in relation to committee membership informed a review of learner representation across all governance committees and representation was updated accordingly. The College’s TLA Strategy is under ongoing review, an IP policy was developed and published and the College’s Engagement and Management of Adjunct Faculty Policy was finalised and published.

As referenced in the College’s [Governance and Management Policy](#), mechanisms for student engagement are embedded throughout its governance structure. The review of the College’s [Governance and Management Policy](#) and associated Terms of References prompted by the outcomes of reengagement led the College to critically assess the engagement of learners in formal governance processes and prioritise learner engagement in committees, for example, by ensuring meetings are scheduled to facilitate learner attendance and allocating agenda time in meetings for learner feedback.

³ <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/publication/evidence-based-insights-about-impact-in-teaching-and-learning/>

Sectoral Engagements related to Quality Assurance

Hibernia College is committed to sectoral engagement with the wider higher education community to contribute to the dissemination of knowledge and sharing of practice to enhance the teaching and learning environment. This section outlines some of the College's high-level sectoral engagements during this reporting period.

QQI

- The College has nominated two members of staff as members of the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN). One of those members also contributes to a NAIN working group. The College has supported ongoing work of NAIN, including the collation of baseline data of academic impropriety and engagement with NAIN consultations. More details on academic integrity is provided in section 2.1.
- Contributed to QQI's recently published ['The Impact of COVID-19 Modifications to Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Irish Further Education and Training and Higher Education'](#)
- Contributed to QQI's research on re-engagement [QQI Re-engagement Survey Report](#)
- Contributed to a consultation on the revised AQR template
- Involved in QQI's Professional Development Symposium through the provision of speakers.
- Engaged with QQI Programme Review Working Group

National Forum for Teaching and Learning

- The College has two staff associate members and a student associate member
- Contributed to consultation on the VITAL research project
- Participated in the INDEX survey
- Led two National Forum seminars:
 - Support, Success and Strategy: Three Institutional Journeys into Implementing Learning Analytics Policies and Practices for Student Success, 5 February 2020
 - Engaging with the Professional Development Framework: User Perspectives, 23 April 2020
- Contributed an article to the National Forum eZine
- Attended National Forum Events

Other

The Head of School of Education is a member of the Teaching Council.

The College is a member of the Higher Education's College Association (HECA) and contributes to outputs and consultation responses submitted as part of this group. The College also currently holds the chair's seat for HECA's Academic Quality Enhancement Forum.

The CEO of the College acts as the HECA Representative on the NStEP National Advisory Group.

The College has made submissions to the DES in relation to:

- Legislative proposals to reform the HEA Act, 1971.
- Policy Statement on Initial Teacher Education.

Contributed to public consultation on The Nurses and Midwives (Amendment) Rules 2020

Contributed to [NMBI Statement of Strategy Consultation](#) process in 2019

Attended conferences and events including the QAA Conference 'Learning from disruption, exploring what counts in higher education' and NStEP events.

College staff contributed two articles to [Ireland's Yearbook of Education 2019-2020](#).

- Murphy, T. and Ní Bheoláin, R. (2020) 'Common goals and PD planning: Bridging the gap between staff and institute needs', *Ireland's Yearbook of Education 2019-2020*. Dublin: Education Matters.
- O'Síoráin, C.A. and Shevlin, M. (2020) 'Inclusion or containment? A reality for learners with autism in mainstream primary schools', *Ireland's Yearbook of Education 2019-2020*. Dublin: Education Matters.

College research collaboration with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI):

- McCoy, S. and Lynam, A.M., 2020. Video-based self-reflection among pre-service teachers in Ireland: A qualitative study. *Education and Information Technologies*, pp.1-24.

2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

Hibernia College is committed to the promotion and embedding of an 'academic integrity first' approach across the College community. Key developments include the College's involvement in the NAIN, updates to the College's Academic Writing Toolkit, awareness building, recording and reporting of academic misconduct and planning for developing an academic integrity enhancement project across the College.

NAIN

In 2019, the National Academic Integrity Network was formed. The College Registrar and Director of Research are members of this network and the Registrar also sits on a NAIN working group. The College has contributed to ongoing work of NAIN including the collation of baseline data of academic impropriety and engagement with NAIN consultations.

Academic Writing Toolkit

The College's [Academic Good Practice Policy](#) emphasises the role of high-quality academic writing in relation to academic good practice. Accordingly, one significant project was an update to the College's Academic Writing Toolkit for students.

The Academic Writing Toolkit is an online resource that was developed in the College's VLE to provide students with accessible and timely guidance on key aspects of academic writing. The design was informed by a 'bite-size' ethos to encourage continuous, formative and self-motivated use over time. However, patterns of student engagement with the first iteration suggested that following an initial peak of activity there was little evidence of students returning to the Toolkit for help on key topics at crucial points in their programmes. 2019 saw the evolution of the Toolkit's content and positioning in response to, firstly, findings from an initial engagement study and, secondly, increased awareness of the Toolkit's potential among College faculty. Specific design and dissemination enhancements were implemented in the areas of faculty-to-student communication and positioning, calendar notifications, content updates and LMS navigation improvements. The impact of these enhancements on student engagement was evaluated via inferential analysis of learning analytics data collected from activity logs for pre- and post-update iterations combined with survey feedback on students' user experience. The findings of the study are published [here](#).

Awareness Building

During the reporting period, awareness building focused on highlighting the legislative changes in this area arising from the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 and their implications for students. The College also made plans to engage with the National Academic Integrity Day through provision of a student webinar and a social media poster competition.

Recording and Reporting of Data

During this period, instances of academic impropriety were recorded and reported to the Board of Examiners and Academic Board. Furthermore, the College contributed to QQI's project to collate baseline data of academic impropriety.

The Colleges Ethics committee

The Ethics Committee Terms of Reference set out that the role of the Ethics Committee is to guide the Academic Board and the College community on approaches to ethical teaching, research and scholarship. One of its explicit functions is that it:

Reviews, discusses and shares good practice internationally in the oversight of ethical academic practices and translates international effective practice into recommendations and advice for all departments in Hibernia College.

With that in mind, the Committee's work plan for 2020/21 is to undertake a scoping exercise of academic integrity practices in the College, with a view to developing a strategy to enhance overall College approaches to embedding a culture of academic integrity and academic good practice across the College.

3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	Relevant objectives Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Planned actions and indicators Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation. If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).
1	Continued follow-up from reengagement	<p>The scheduled review and development of the College's TLA Strategy will continue including clearer articulation of universal design approaches and assessment mechanisms, as set out in the specific advice in the College's re-engagement report. This is overseen by the Chair of the TLA committee.</p> <p>Systematic feedback from stakeholders and closing the feedback loop with students will continue to be reviewed during the ongoing review of policies and procedures in line with the HCQF review and development schedule. This is overseen by the College's QA Officer.</p> <p>See section 1.2.</p>
2	Academic Integrity	Continue to build awareness through engagement with National Academic Integrity Day and national campaigns. This is overseen by Registry and schools/departments. See section 2.1.
3	Digital Learning Architecture	This is overseen by the Digital Learning Department. See section 1.1. Research and implement digital technologies required to support the College vision of teaching, learning and assessment in the coming 5-10 years.
4	College Strategy	This is overseen by the EMT. See section 1.1. Initial work had commenced in Q1 2020 on the development of a new strategic plan for the College for the period 2021-2025. This work was put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic and it is hoped to recommence it in Q2 2021.
5	Performance Development Plan	Implementation of the performance development planning process will commence and be overseen by HR Manager. See section 1.1.

6	QA Survey	Continue with implementation of QA Survey. This is overseen by QA Officer. See section 2.0 'Launch of Student QA survey'.
7	HCQF Review and Development	Continue to implement scheduled review and development of the HCQF. This is overseen by QA Officer. See section 2.0 'HCQF Review and Development'.

3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Professional Master of Education in Primary Education revalidation	2021	2014
Professional Master of Education in Post-Primary Education revalidation	2021	2014

3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education revalidation	2025	2020
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing revalidation	2025	2017
Annual Quality Review	2022	2021
Institutional Review	TBC	N/A

4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

In this section, three case studies have been included that reflect core activities that took place in the College during the reporting period:

Case Study 1: Implementing a New Policy Management System for the Hibernia College Quality Framework

Case Study 2: Oral Irish Examinations During COVID-19

Case Study 3: Alternative Assessment of Work-based Placement During Covid-19

CASE STUDY 1: IMPLEMENTING A NEW POLICY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR THE HIBERNIA COLLEGE QUALITY FRAMEWORK

The Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF) is the source of all Hibernia College quality assurance documents and was formally approved by QQI in 2019. Hibernia College recognises that the HCQF is a suite of living documents that are subject to change and development over time. This ethos was communicated during re-engagement and the panel welcomed the College's understanding of the HCQF 'as an iteratively evolving suite of documents and an organic mechanism, and its commitment to continuous incremental improvement based on stakeholder experience of application'.

In this spirit of continuous improvement, this case study outlines a core quality enhancement project that began in July 2019. It sought to identify the next phase of development for the HCQF with a view to researching, establishing and implementing best practice in policy management that would support the long-term sustainability of the HCQF.

The HCQF Context

The existing HCQF was developed in tandem with QQI's pilot re-engagement and ultimately the College's re-engagement with QQI throughout 2017-2019, replacing a former structure of seven volumes of QA manuals. This redevelopment of the entire quality assurance suite was completed to ensure ongoing relevance and sustainability of the College's QA infrastructure into the future. The HCQF provided a new infrastructure for the College's QA documents. This provided greater ease of ongoing review and revision as documents were presented individually rather than their former presentation within large manuals that were saved locally. The 'scale and scope of the work undertaken in transforming the QA framework' was commended by the College's re-engagement peer review panel who considered it to be 'comprehensive, integrated, coherent and user-friendly' and that the style of writing provided 'clarity and intelligibility for users, including students'. Accordingly, there was a strong positive base to build upon in terms of the QA infrastructure in the College.

The HCQF system infrastructure was initially based on a document library in which documents were managed via Office 365's SharePoint (SP) system with customised workflows called flows. Once documents were approved, documents were then automatically published as PDFs to a public server and then displayed on Hibernia College's WordPress website. This was an innovative and effective system for document development and management. However, it was limited in terms of what could be customised for the public interface without any additional customised development work for WordPress. To improve user engagement with the HCQF, a full HCQF search engine, better integration between related documents and meta-data functionality were required in line with staff and student feedback.

Identifying and Selection of a System

A research phase followed the identification of the need for a better integrated system that could facilitate a search engine. This research resulted in the production of an internal report featuring a sample of public Irish and international QA frameworks, findings of discussions with other quality assurance units regarding document management infrastructures and desk-based review of commercial policy management systems.

The following core desirable attributes for a policy management system were identified; ultimately, these were facilitated by the Tweek system:

- Dedicated platform/website with an intuitive interface and navigation
- Search function/key words to enhance discoverability of documents
- Metadata underpinning system, for example, a central glossary linked to all documents
- Summary of amendments and historical versions maintained by system
- System-facilitated collaboration
- A-Z navigation and category navigation, for example, categories aligned to QA core guidelines
- System reporting mechanisms

The majority of commercial systems identified during the discovery phase of this project were tailored for the management of internal documents within an organisation (that is, non-public) and were therefore unsuitable for the College's requirement for a publicly published framework. Two commercial systems were ultimately identified

and following systems demonstration, Tweek was identified as the system most appropriate for the College's needs.

Implementation

The investment in Tweek as a policy management solution was presented to and approved by the College's EMT in September 2019. A large volume of work was undertaken between September 2019 and October 2020 to populate the system's base data, for example, glossary and individual document information and the migration of all QA documents into the new system. The migration of documents involved the wide-scale reformatting and restructuring of documents within the system. The College's Executive Management Team and Academic Board were given updates throughout this time.

All staff were initially informed of the new system 12 months prior to its launch. In the lead up to the live launch, staff were given a live demonstration and received regular communication to highlight the transition and to promote the new website. The College website was updated, the VLE featured notices to highlight the transition to students and the launch was promoted on Twitter and LinkedIn to increase visibility. Additionally, all committees related to the Academic Board were formally notified of the new platform and requested to highlight same to students, staff, faculty and adjunct faculty in their respective areas, as appropriate.

Initial Feedback Following Launch of Framework

Initial feedback on the new HCQF has been overtly positive, including the following statements:

'much of my experience with Hibernia was based as an Adjunct Faculty member, the recourses you have developed will be invaluable to the group'.

'Just wanted to let you know that I am really 'enjoying' is not quite the word!! But you can get a sense of what I mean when I am using this new framework. It is so much easier and clearer to use and so much more detail'.

'This is a master class in how all providers should present their policies, well done'.

'This is a fantastic platform. So easy to use and navigate. Will make a big difference to students I'm sure!'

Feedback will be sought from staff and students on the new HCQF platform over the coming months.

Key Outcomes and Learnings

A significant body of research underpinned the decision to invest in a commercial policy management solution for the HCQF. Initial feedback has been positive and related to the implementation and launch of the new system. The following key learnings have been identified to date:

- Support of and ongoing communication with senior management is important for initial investment and ongoing resourcing of a system.
- Having an existing strong suite of documentation and IT infrastructure in place supported the vision for ongoing enhancement and continuous improvement.
- Populating a new system and migrating an existing suite of documentation takes a huge investment of time that requires resourcing.

Overall impact will be evaluated using mechanisms such as formal surveys and data reports following a longer period of implementation. These will be reported on in the College's subsequent AQRs.

CASE STUDY 2: ORAL IRISH EXAMINATIONS DURING COVID-19

Introduction

Hibernia College has over twenty years' experience in the delivery of blended learning and so the requirement to amend programme delivery due to the Covid-19 pandemic was minimal. The strong emphasis on continuous assessment within the College's programmes also ensured that many assessments did not require modification, but alternative mechanisms were required for some.

This case study describes the steps taken by the College to operationalise one of these assessments in an online environment and the quality assurance mechanisms introduced to safeguard assessment integrity.

Oral Irish Examinations

Typically, over 600 students undertake oral Irish examinations each year in three centres around the country. To move these examinations online, a project group was established between the Registry Department, the School of Education and the IT Department, with close liaison with other key College functions such as student support, the quality office and faculty management. The QQI [Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes](#) and [Guiding Principles for Alternative Assessments](#) guided this project.

Technical Requirements

Individual Zoom meetings were scheduled for each candidate's examination to reduce the risk of a candidate attending the wrong session. Waiting rooms were enabled for assessors to prepare before admitting candidates and so that students could log in ahead of time, thus reducing the risk of last-minute technical glitches. An excess number of sessions was scheduled allowing the Assessments and Awards Office to move candidates and assessors to later sessions should a technical or other difficulty arise. Additional time was allocated between exams in case of delayed starts and to allow assessors adequate time to consult in the marking of performance. Examinations were recorded so that contingencies could be implemented and so that sessions could be reviewed where queries regarding examination integrity were raised.

The College reviewed the examination process between the Spring and Summer sessions and recognised that it would be beneficial for students to choose their own examination time; a scheduling tool (OnceHub) was introduced to facilitate this improvement.

Governance

To safeguard academic integrity, students and assessors were provided with support documentation. [Regulations For Online Oral Examinations](#) is the key student resource. This document opens with an academic integrity statement and sets out how candidates should prepare for the examination, including testing their equipment against the technical requirements and preparing their examination environment. The regulations for this form of examination are detailed, including those in relation to attendance, candidate verification, recording of examinations and steps to be followed in the event of technical difficulties. Measures to secure the examination environment are described, including how students may be asked to move their laptop or web camera to demonstrate their compliance with the examination regulations. Finally, the procedure to be followed where a candidate is suspected to be in breach of examination regulations is set out.

An online declaration required students entering the virtual examination room to agree that they accepted certain conditions, for example, that they had familiarised themselves with the regulations, had removed unauthorised materials, would not communicate with anyone other than the assessors and had closed all applications other than Zoom.

For the first time, many of the College's assessors were also going to be carrying out an invigilation role and so Guidelines for the Invigilation of Online Oral Examinations were developed. These guidelines have a strong emphasis on academic integrity and assessor support. In addition, guidance on assessor preparation, completion of required training, assessor roles and responsibilities, candidate verification and management of examination incidents were set out.

External examiners were consulted in relation to the approach taken, including at Exam Boards and Programme Boards. Contingencies were approved by the College's Academic Board and QQI were notified.

Support

To further support the transition to this new mode of oral assessment, additional support mechanisms were provided. Helpdesk phone lines and emails were highly resourced and monitored over the duration of the exams.

Technical supports included the scheduling of Zoom drop-in sessions. Training sessions were held to ensure familiarity with the guidelines and regulations and the School of Education provided academic and assessment support to students and assessors.

To accommodate the large candidate numbers in the summer session, some new assessors were introduced to the panels. These new assessors were paired with experienced assessors to support them in their roles.

Incident Monitoring

As part of the College's quality assurance mechanisms, incidents and their resolutions were recorded across both examination settings. Incidents included technical difficulties, inability to present student cards, student welfare matters and academic integrity queries. There was a lower proportion of incidents (3% versus 7%) in the second session, which may have been due to the increased experience of the assessors, increased student familiarity with the technology and modifications being made to the College training and supports based on evaluations of the spring session.

Key Outcomes and Learnings

Assessment outcomes were compared with the examinations held in live venues in 2019. There was no change in the pass rate (94%) with grade band outcomes largely consistent.

After evaluation, the following key learnings were identified:

- Significant planning, training and administrative support is required to move processes online at short notice. However, these processes appear to be acceptable to students and staff.
- There may be a role for continued online or mixed provision of those processes not previously delivered online.
- Having excellent technical support and an IT infrastructure are key factors in the success of moving online, and gives the ability to respond swiftly.
- Providing detailed guidelines supports the delivery of new assessment methodologies.

Feedback continues to be sought from staff and students on the effectiveness of the new assessment arrangements.

CASE STUDY 3: ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT OF WORK-BASED PLACEMENT DURING COVID-19

Introduction

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes (where practice forms the kernel of teaching, learning and assessment) were greatly impacted by Covid-19. Typically, specific regulations pertain to the assessment of this aspect. However, with schools forced to close due to Covid-19 the assessment of placement required significant innovation. Moreover, it was crucial to ensure that any new assessment mode would balance the needs of the professional body with programme accreditation and internal provision requirements. This case study describes the approach taken to assessing practice-based learning and considers matters of quality assurance.

Re-imagining the Assessment of School Placement

School Placement was adapted to suit the new restrictions and as such the assessment pivoted to a fully online process. As with all good assessment design, a number of assessment types were used to determine the achievement of learning outcomes and the awarding of grades in the School Placement module. Assessment types included: reflective logs, microteaching, community of learners' forum and virtual reflective discussions. When considering assessment types, we were also mindful of providing opportunities to grade assessment OF, For and As learning.

Assessment Tools

Online Community of Reflective Practice

Building on the notion of the Reflective Practitioner, as part of the revised assessment process for placement, the College incorporated a new form of online reflection; namely, an online forum called Community of Learners. The aim of this reflective task was to provide the students with an opportunity to participate in an online community of learners based on shared beliefs, values and experiences of placement. Students' feedback suggests that they regarded this as a highly collaborative and beneficial opportunity to engage in professional discussion with peers and tutors and to deepen their learning.

Video assessment

The use of Zoom allowed for video to be introduced into the assessment process. Students attended a reflective discussion/interview assessment based on their portfolio of work. The use of video allowed the student to share resources using the shared screen option and helped create a personal link between the student and assessor. Students were afforded the opportunity to reflect on their work, articulate learning outcomes they had achieved, seek feedback and plan for their continuing learning.

Micro-teaching

Microteaching sessions, where students present to a small group of their peers, were incorporated into the assessment process. Students were asked to plan for and present a lesson to their peers. They then received constructive feedback from their tutors and peers.

Quality Assurance Measures

Key to ensuring the success and accountability of this assessment process was the rigorous review of learning outcomes, grade descriptors and marking schemes. It was imperative that there was clarity around the new assessment format and that procedures and expectations were clearly outlined for students and assessors. As such, guidelines and regulations for these new assessments were written to support and ensure that the academic integrity of the examination process was preserved. All changes to this new format of assessment were approved by the External Examiner and the College's Academic Board. Alternative assessments were also signed off by both the Teaching Council of Ireland and notified to QQI.

As the online assessment involved video interactions, it was important that assessors adapted to new understandings of time management, the use of visual materials and cues, and were comfortable with their online communication and presence (Paloff and Pratt, 2002; Hodge, Bosse, Faulconer and Fewell, 2006; Simonson, Smaldino, Albright and Zvacek, 2012; Richardson and Swan, 2003). Significant training was given to faculty to support the transition to this form of online assessment. Having technical support and an ICT infrastructure is a

key factor in the success of moving assessment online. Technical Support staff monitored and were available to assist students or tutors with any technical issue during the live online assessment.

Outcomes

Over 1,000 students across both the primary and post-primary education programmes were assessed using the alternative assessment methods highlighted above. Tutor feedback included some of the following comments;

'The overall commitment and dedication of students was noteworthy. For a new system it worked exceptionally well thanks to the planning, preparation and foresight of the Hibernia SP team'.

'A more 'relaxed' environment in that the interview was outside school environment and the student was more open to feedback and open to seeking and asking for advice'.

Statistical analysis was carried out across all grades and a robust moderation process was conducted. Grades were in line with previous cohorts and all grade bands were represented in overall results. All grades were ratified by the External Examiner and Board of Examiners.

Key learnings include:

- A robust QA framework, which can respond to contingency plans particularly in light of alternative assessments is crucial.
- Quality teaching, learning and assessment occurs when there are diverse opportunities with appropriate mentoring, feedback and constructive dialogue.
- Assessors need to be carefully selected and trained with clear expectations given on all sides.
- Assessment practices should ideally exploit the capacity of technology to promote active and participative learning.
- Ongoing review and evaluation, drawing on a range of perspectives, helps ensure quality experiences for both staff and students.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the Covid-19 crisis fuelled the debate on online learning and, in particular, on appropriate modes of online assessment. Critics of online education have questioned the value, effectiveness and quality of online education with much written on the integrity of online assessment. Drawing on our own experiences, it is clear that effective online teaching, learning and assessment requires the skills of a team of people who can contribute their knowledge of content, pedagogy, assessment methods and technology – each going hand in hand.