QQI
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
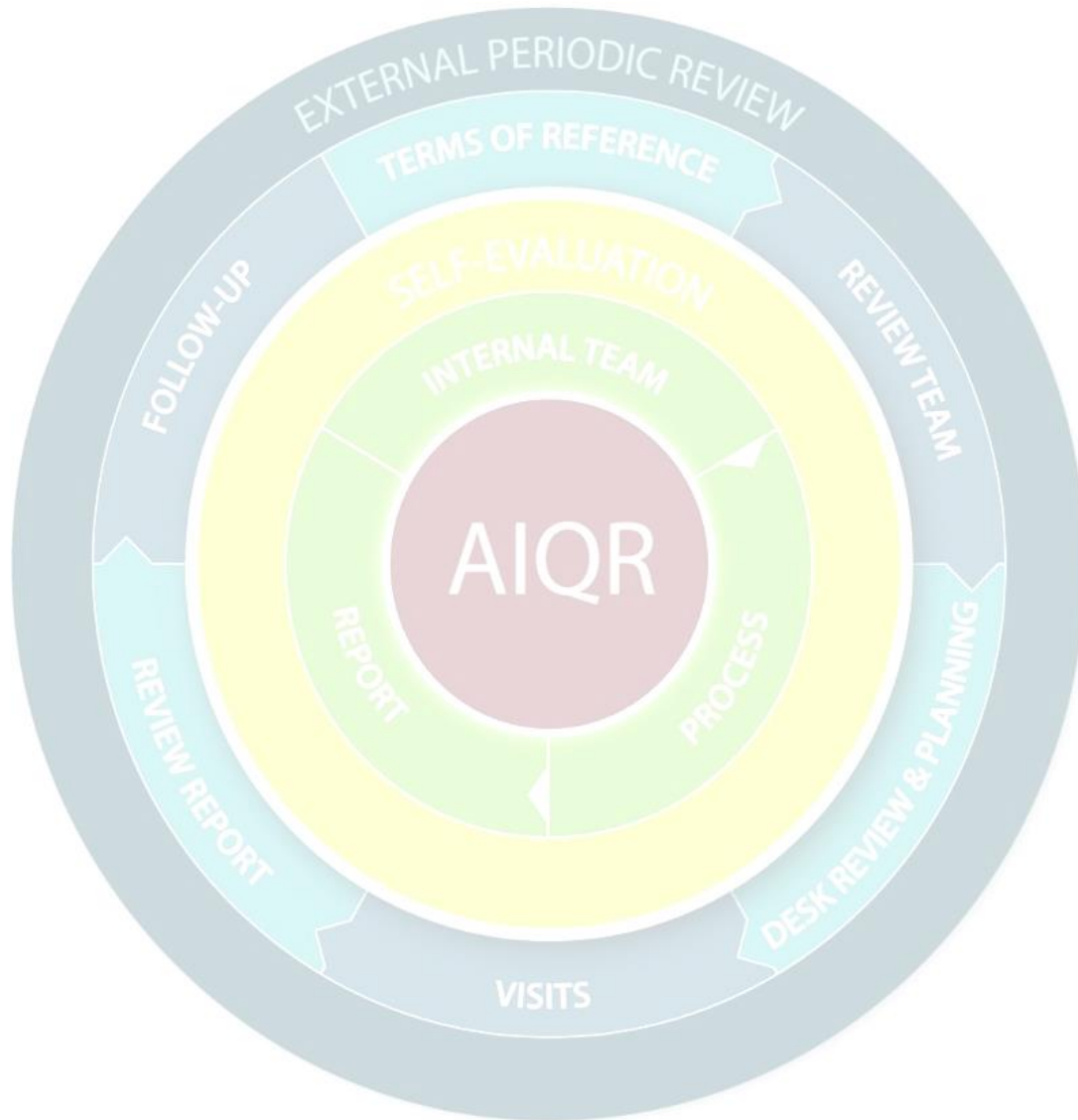Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

CARLOW COLLEGE, ST. PATRICK'S

Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR)

ADAPTED PARTS 2-6 SUBMITTED 30 JUNE 2020

REPORTING PERIOD AUGUST 2019 – MARCH 2020

PREFACE

The **Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR)** forms part of Quality and Qualifications' Ireland (QQI) QA framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions.   The AIQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's quality system.

It gives QQI an assurance that QA procedures and improvements are being implemented, and that regulatory requirements, consistent with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), and QQI's own QA Guidelines, are being met.

The AIQR provides transparency on the assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders and the general public. At a national level, collectively the AIQRs provide a single national repository of quality assurance in higher education institutions.

Part 1

The AQIR is a repository of the institutional internal QA Framework, policies and procedures. Institutions are required to update relevant sections of Part 1 of the report **only** if there have been changes within the reporting year.

Parts 2- 6

Institution-led QA – Annual Information

For each institution the AIQR documents and captures QA activities, developments, enhancements and impacts during the reporting year. These are documented in Parts 2-6 of the report. Parts 2-6 are normally completed annually with information pertaining to the preceding academic year.

This AIQR template (Parts 2-6) has been adapted to reflect the quality reporting context of private higher education institutions, post their reengagement with QQI.

This version of the template will be used in the transition to a systematic and periodic annual institutional quality reporting process with the sector in February 2021.

Please specify the reporting period to which this report applies for your institution. Within this transition phase, this may be the full or part of the preceding academic year, 31 Aug 2018-1 Sept 2019 or part of the current year to submission on 30 June 2020.

This AIQR has been approved by the Academic Council and is submitted by Dr Eric A. Derr, Quality Assurance Officer.

Part 2: Institution-led QA – Annual

Part 2 provides information relating to institution-led quality assurance for the reporting period.

Section 1: Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Developments

> **1.1** How quality assurance procedures and enhancement systems have supported the achievement of strategic objectives in the reporting period.

Carlow College, St. Patrick's (hereafter Carlow College) opened in 1793 and is the second oldest third-level college in Ireland and the oldest third-level Catholic College. It is situated, since its foundation in 1782, on its parkland in the centre of Carlow town. Carlow College is a private college with charitable status governed by a Board of Governors. Carlow College is a College of teaching and research in the Humanities with the following stated mission: 'In the shared enterprise of education, through teaching, learning, practice placement and research activity, Carlow College prizes excellence in all it does and endeavours to respond creatively to the changing needs of its learners, of potential employers and of society.' As such, the vision of the College is to 'educate, engage and inspire its learners through the provision of transformational learning and teaching experiences; it will enable a diverse learner and graduate population to achieve their academic and career potential and enable them to contribute to the ethical development of society at local, national and global levels.'

The core values of Carlow College are its guiding principles which are built on our rich heritage as a Catholic higher education institution. They inform our day-to-day pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning. The integrated college learning experience includes formal classroom instruction, critical engagement with ideas, exploration of links between theory, professional practice and lived experience. This develops the learners' capacity for academic excellence, leadership, social justice, career development and scholarship.

Our core values are:

- Truth and Integrity – We aim to create a research-led teaching and learning environment that is interdisciplinary in nature, that inspires openness to new ideas and critical thinking and that is ethical in practice.

- Respect and Justice – We recognise the diversity of our college community and seek to promote actively a spirit of inclusiveness, mutual respect and equality of opportunity and access.

- Collaboration and Social Awareness – By creating opportunities to work together, both internally and externally, we believe that collaboration and partnership can best contribute to the ethical development of local, national and global communities and society.

- Friendliness and Service – We are committed to maintaining a hospitable, learner-centred environment that recognises each learner's individual learning journey, and that promotes, values and supports their personal, social and cultural development.

- Creativity and Innovation – We believe that learning is about being open to new ideas and possibilities both in what we learn and how we learn. We are committed to be an educational

space which promotes creativity and innovation as a way of responding to the contemporary world.

Carlow College is committed to maintaining and developing an organisation that can deliver its mission according to the values of the College. We have developed a Quality Assurance Framework that is based on these values and enhances the College's ability to meet our strategic objectives. Carlow College is committed to developing and embedding a quality culture in all our endeavours: a culture that embodies planning, defining, encouraging, assessing and improving practice. We believe that the learners, staff and external stakeholders of our College are the pivotal actors in the process of embedding a quality culture. The College's Quality Assurance Committee is responsible for the maintenance and development of this Quality Assurance Framework. This Committee reports to the Academic Council, which in turn reports to the Board of Governors. All activities related to quality assurance at Carlow College are found on our [website](#).

In compliance with Section 29 or 30 of the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*, Carlow College formally applied to have its quality assurance procedures approved by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). As part of the application process, a comprehensive internal gap analysis study of the Carlow College Quality Assurance Framework was conducted, and the following revisions were made to the *Quality Assurance Policy*: development of an organisational reporting system and enhancement of the academic monitoring / evaluation reporting system; review and development of data and information policies; development of templates for inter-institutional agreements and the development of a template for implementing external panel recommendations. The College had its quality assurance procedures formally approved by the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) of QQI on 12 September 2019; PAEC made its decision based on the [report](#) submitted by the QQI Re-Engagement Panel that visited Carlow College on 17 June 2019.

In their Report, the Re-Engagement Panel commended Carlow College on:

- the comprehensive review and re-structuring that had taken place with an authentically collaborative approach across the College community;

- the calibre of directors the College has appointed;

- the support provided to staff to engage in research, external engagement activities and ongoing professional development;

- the broad range of assessment methodology employed across the College;

- the College's obvious dedication to learner support which was evident throughout the day's panel discussions and in particular in discussions with the Head of Student Services; and

- the College's approach to self-review and the extensive and authentic scope of collaboration it demonstrated in relation to the re-engagement process.

In addition to these commendations, the Panel made seven quality enhancement recommendations that the Quality Assurance Committee is monitoring for implementation (see [Monitoring and Implementation Plan](#)).

1.2 Significant specific changes (if any) to QA within the institution.

Quality Enhancement (Policy Development)

Carlow College has a robust quality assurance framework that is focused on quality enhancement and transparency throughout the organisation. The key objective of our *Policy on Policies* is to have a consistent policy development system and have policies that are:

- appropriately developed and regularly monitored / reviewed;
- accessible to staff and the public (as required) in usable formats;
- consistent with the Mission of Carlow College;
- compliant with applicable laws and national / international benchmarks of best practice; and
- promote a culture of quality across the College community.

During the reporting period, the Quality Assurance Officer completed a master version control document of every policy, this document is published on the Carlow College website. Moreover, during the reporting period there were fifteen policies that were reviewed / revised / approved.

Name of Policy	Version	Reason(s) for Change
Annual Leave Policy	2	Policy revised to include changes to processes around booking annual leave and when annual leave can be taken.
Assessment Re-Check, Review and Appeals Policy	2.1	Appendix 1.2 added to the Policy.
	2	Policy reviewed to revise procedures for academic re-checks, reviews and appeals along with a new application form.
Critical Incident Policy	3	Policy revised to include alignment with CCSP *Policy on Policies*; defined procedures / guidelines; and updated roles and responsibilities.
Data Protection Policy	3.1	Policy updated to reflect the finalised *Data Protection Act 2018* and new guidance documentation.
Dignity and Respect Policy	2	Policy reviewed and revised to align with legislation, specifically GDPR legislation and to better distinguish the practices and procedures for both learners and staff; the role of Contact Persons was better defined; Policy Owner changed from the President's Officer to the Office of the Registrar and Human Resources.
Fitness to Practice Policy	1.1	Appendix 1 revised to include a reference to learners not meeting the programme attendance requirements.
Grievance Policy (Staff)	3	Policy revised to include a statement that Line Managers must adhere to stated timeframes and procedures amended

		to include the principles and natural rules of justice / mediation; Appendix 1.1 added.
Learner Admission, Progression and Recognition Policy	3.1	The following changes were made: the addition of references to CAO application fees (Appendix 1); revision to application process (Appendix 2); scope of RPL added (Appendix 5); terminology updated (Appendix 9) and list of approved tests updated (Appendix 10).
Learner Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy	3	Policy revised to include reference to the Learner Information and Retention Officer, addition of referenced policies; addition of Appendix 1.4 and low-level stylistic amendments.
Learner Disability Policy	2	Policies related to learner disability and learning differences reviewed and amalgamated to ensure that guidelines and procedures are fit-for-purpose. The *Learners with Disabilities and Specific Learning Needs Policy* (11 January 2011) and the *Assistive Technology and Supports Policy* (11 January 2011) were made obsolete by this policy.
Learner Grievances and Complaints Policy	3	Policy revised to include a clearer reference to the Learner Information and Retention Officer.
Maternity and Adoptive Leave Policy	2	This Policy was updated to include new Maternity Leave Guidelines for employees going on maternity leave and returning from maternity leave. This Policy was also cross-referenced with GPDR regarding new amendments to legislation.
Parental Leave Policy	2	Policy revised to reflect legislative changes brought in by the *Parental Leave and Benefits Bill* (2019); Appendix 1.1 added to the policy.
Research Ethics Advisory Policy	3	The appendices were revised, namely: the process for applying to the Research Ethics Advisory Committee was clarified (Appendix 1); Ethics Checklist revised (Appendix 2) and Data Management Guidelines added (Appendix 3).
Sickness Absence Management Policy	2	Policy revised to reflect amendments to processes around sickness absence management. Amendments were also made to reflect GDPR, records management and payroll requirements.

Quality Enhancement (Personnel)

College Vice President

Carlow College appointed its first female vice president in its 226-year history in August 2019. The primary responsibilities of this new appointment are strategic projects and collaboration with overall responsibility in furthering the strategic objectives of the College.

IT and Student Systems Manager

This role was created to blend all departments who regularly engage with inputting / analysing learner data in the Student Records Management System (SRMS); Carlow College brought in a new SRMS in the 2018 / 2019 Academic Year. This role will also streamline support services cross the College. The departments impacted are IT, Admissions, Learner Information and Retention Officer and Reception.

Learner Information and Retention Officer (LIRO)

A Progression and Retention Working Group was established in the 2018 / 2019 Academic Year to examine learner progression and retention in the College. This Working Group drafted a Progression and Retention Report that was submitted to the Management Board for discussion / approval. A new role was approved by the Management Board to be piloted during the 2019 / 2020 Academic Year. Its primary function is to maximise the retention of learners at Stages 1 and 2 of all undergraduate programmes by proactively communicating with learners and monitoring 'at risk' learners by initiating follow-up contact and providing links to academic, pastoral, counselling and administrative resources and support within the College.

1.3 The schedule of QA governance meetings.

Committee Structure within Carlow College, St. Patrick's
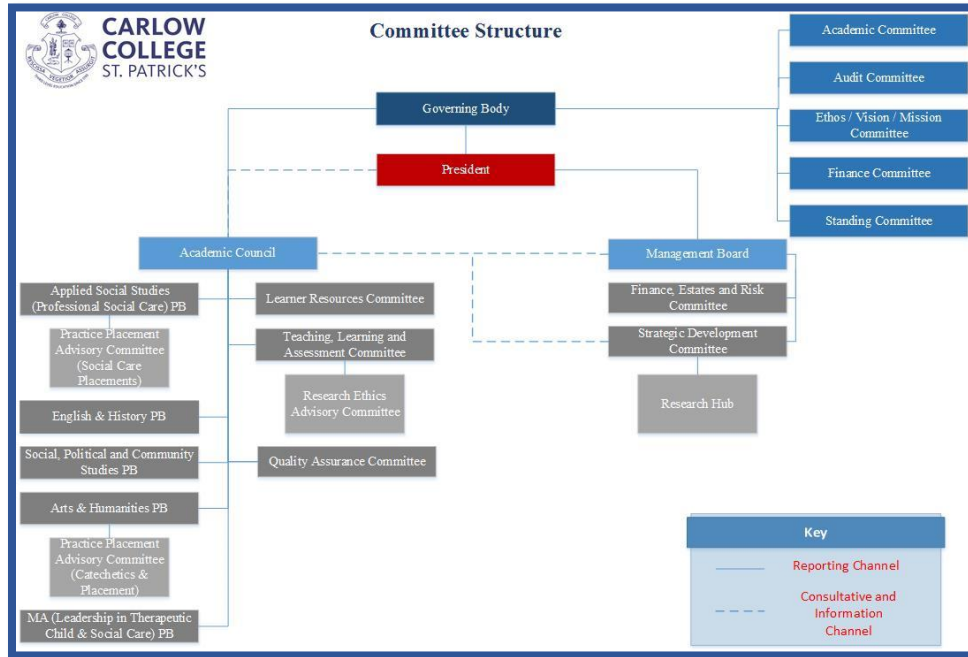
Table of Meetings Schedule

Name of Forum	Date of Meeting
Management Board	4 September 2019
	25 September 2019
	16 October 2019
	22 October 2019
	6 November 2019
	18 December 2019
	15 January 2020
	12 February 2020
Finance, Estates and Risk Committee	9 March 2020
Strategic Development Committee	6 November 2019
	19 December 2019
	16 January 2019
	19 February 2019

Academic Council	28 August 2019
	16 September 2019
	2 October 2019
	13 November 2019
	11 December 2019
	22 January 2020
	19 February 2020
	11 March 2020
Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee	27 August 2019
	30 September 2019

	18 November 2019
	16 December 2019
	29 January 2020
	19 February 2020
Learner Resources Committee	12 February 2020
Quality Assurance Committee	9 October 2019
	18 December 2019
	6 March 2020
Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care) Programme Board	6 September 2019
	5 November 2019
	3 – 4 March 2020 (CORU Site Visit)
Arts and Humanities Programme Board	4 September 2019
	13 November 2019
	4 December 2019
	30 January 2020
English and History Programme Board	6 September 2019
	10 October 2019
	6 December 2019
	25 January 2020
Social, Political and Community Studies Programme Board	13 September 2019
	15 November 2019
	3 March 2020
MA in Leadership in Therapeutic Child and Social Care Programme Board	24 October 2019
	6 February 2020
Exam Board Meetings	21 August 2019 (2018 / 2019) (Internal)

	16 January 2020 (Arts and Humanities / English and History) (First Semester Modules)
	17 January 2020 (Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care) / Social, Political and Community Studies) (First Semester Modules)

Changes to Committee Membership

- Learner Information and Retention Officer became an *ex officio* member of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee and the Learner Resources Committee.

- Data Protection Officer became an *ex officio* member of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee.

- Applied Social Studies (Profession Social Care) Programme Board made changes to its Terms of Reference as a result of their preparation for CORU Approval.

Section 2: Reviews in the reporting period

2.1 Internal reviews that were completed in the reporting period.

CORU

The Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005 provides for the establishment of Registration Boards, to establish and maintain registers for a range of health and social care professions. The Social Care Workers Registration Board was established in 2015. Their intent is to open the Social Care Workers Register in 2022. Carlow College applied to CORU for its B.A. in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care) Programme to be named as an approved programme for the education and training for the registration of Social Care professionals. As part of the CORU programme approval process, a CORU Review Panel conducted a site visit 3-4 March 2020; Carlow College is still awaiting the CORU Review Panel Report, which was delayed due to COVID-19.

Review of the *Academic Workload Allocation Policy*

Carlow College established its *Principles for Academic Workload* (Version 1, 2011). Informed by the college-wide *Listening Exercise* (2015) and the *Participatory Staff Workshop* (June 2016), and in keeping with best practice in Ireland, the College approved its *Academic Workload Allocation Policy* (Version 2, 2017). This Policy sought to reflect and strengthen a College environment underpinned by the principles of equity, transparency and flexibility. It was intended that the operation of the policy would allow academic workloads to be managed in a way that was most effective in achieving Carlow College and staff objectives. In the Spring 2019 the *Academic Workload Allocation Policy* was reviewed in the context of the QQI Re-Engagement process. This revised version of the *Academic Workload Allocation Policy* (Version 3, 2019) was approved by the Academic Council subject to the following conditions of Monitoring and Review: 'This Policy will be implemented for the 2019-20 Academic Year beginning in May 2019. In Autumn 2019, the Office of the Registrar, the HR Officer and Director of Operations will

initiate a review which will include an examination of academic workload allocation by an independent, external reviewer.'

The College sourced an independent, external reviewer of the Policy to conduct a comprehensive review of the current policy, including: a data review of policies employed under consideration elsewhere and provide some insight into models of cost allocation at HEIs in Ireland. The reviewer was also invited to provide commentary on the fit between the College's current *Academic Workload Allocation Policy* and the strategic direction of the College. The final element of the request was for the development of findings and recommendations including proposals regarding the communication of the review and its results to the staff of the College and for the implementation of any changes identified. A report was prepared and submitted to the President and the independent, external reviewer presented their findings to the Board of Governors (February 2020). An action plan is currently under development to respond to the report, this will be led by the Office of the Registrar.

Section 3: Other Implementation Factors

3.1 Factors (internal and external) that have impacted on quality and quality assurance in the reporting period.

IT Carlow (Landscape Funding)

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* established a vision for higher education institutions working collaboratively in an integrated, coherent, inter-related system of higher education, underpinned by quality and efficiency. IT Carlow and Carlow College signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on 11 February 2019 to 'strengthen existing co-operation and collaboration' and 'enter into a partnership agreement on a process for collaborative engagement and shared activities of mutual interest, in line with their respective organisational strategic aims and objectives.' The MoA specifically recognises the synergy and opportunities in the applied, academic and research fields of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and the significant potential to bring added value and benefit for almost 2,000 learners and 100 staff in these areas in both institutions.

To further this Project, IT Carlow and Carlow College submitted an application to the Higher Education Authority Landscape Funding Programme to: establish a joint project office to support and drive a range of new collaborative initiatives across teaching and learning, further education and higher education progression, research, learner engagement, engagement with community and local authorities, staff development, EDI and internationalisation. The application was awarded €60,000 and a Project Programme Partnership Manager role was advertised and filled in April 2020.

Collaborations

A MoA was signed with the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (University of Missouri) to facilitate their short-term faculty-led programmes.

Cooperation Agreements were signed with the Carlow Institute of Further Education and Training and Ormonde College (Kilkenny) to ensure greater access to Higher Education by offering progressive pathways onto a degree programme at Carlow College for learners from a linked course at either of the two institutions.

Athena SWAN

Carlow College commenced the application process for the Athena SWAN Bronze Award in the Autumn 2019. The Athena SWAN Charter, an initiative supported by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), recognises work undertaken to address gender equality in the higher education sector. The Carlow College Athena SWAN Project is sponsored by the President and a Self-Assessment Team (SAT), Chaired by Helen Maher, College Vice President, has been established to progress the application. It is the responsibility of the SAT to gather and reflect on a range of quantitative and qualitative data to identify both challenges and opportunities with regard to gender equality, establish gender-based priority areas and develop a comprehensive action plan to underpin advancement against these agreed priorities. The SAT has already compiled a series of data and has undertaken a Staff Survey to gather views from staff as to how they feel the College is progressing in the area of gender equality. The survey results are being collated and will, in addition to the data gathered, inform the College's Action Plan which is part of the overall application. Carlow College anticipates it will submit its application for the Athena SWAN Bronze Award in the Autumn 2020.

National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

In furthering the objectives outlined in the [Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, 2018 – 2023](#), Carlow College has engaged in a number of activities promoted by the National Forum.

[Irish National Digital Experience (INDEx) Survey](#)

The purpose of the INDEx Survey was to understand more about the digital experiences and expectations of learners and staff who teach in Irish higher education. Carlow College was one of the thirty-two HEIs to participate in this Survey and was completed by 31 members of the teaching staff and 114 learners of Carlow College. The data has been received and a data management plan has been approved; a Working Group was established to draft a report based on the survey results and the preliminary report will be issued to all staff and learners in the Autumn 2020.

Enhancing Intercultural Communication in Teaching and Learning Practice

Carlow College hosted a seminar / workshop sponsored by the National Forum, as part of their National Seminar Series, on Wednesday (11 December 2019) titled *Enhancing Intercultural Communication in Teaching and Learning Practice*. The seminar discussed the relationship between culture, communication and language, and identify practical approaches to developing intercultural teaching practices.

Part 3: Effectiveness and Impact

Part 3 provides information relating to the effectiveness and impact of quality assurance policy and procedures for the reporting period.

1. Effectiveness
Evidence of the effectiveness of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

Review and Revalidation Panel Recommendations (2018)

The Panel made eleven recommendations across the entire institution, eight programme-specific recommendations for the undergraduate programmes and one programme-specific recommendation for the postgraduate programme. These recommendations are a standing item on the weekly agenda for the Office of the Registrar which is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the recommendations; the Recommendations and Implementation Plan is also a standing agenda item at Academic Council. Following an internal audit in the Autumn 2019, it was recommended by the College's internal auditor to add dates to the Plan to better capture progress; these were accepted and added to the Plan.

Organisational and Academic Monitoring / Evaluation Reports

In 2016, QQI introduced a number of new policies and procedures related to the review and revalidation of programmes, namely: *Core Policies and Criteria for the Validation by QQI of Programmes of Education and Training* (2016); *Programme Review Manual 2016/2017* (December 2016) and the *Programme Validation Manual (2016) for Programmes of HET and Apprenticeships (FET and HET)* (Pilot Version, edition 2.15). Coinciding with the publication of these new policies and procedures, every programme at Carlow College underwent a review and revalidation, all of Carlow College's programmes were revalidation by QQI in Q2 2018.

However, during the Programme Review Phase of the Review and Revalidation Process, the Programme Design Teams encountered significant delays in sourcing, collating and analysing programme data, many of these datasets were new requirements introduced by the Pilot Version of the *Programme Review Manual*. To ensure that all of our academic programmes were gathering the necessary datasets required by the *Programme Review Manual*, Carlow College used the Re-Engagement Gap Analysis as an opportunity to streamline all organisational and academic monitoring / evaluation reports within the College (these revisions are reflected in the *Quality Assurance Policy* (Version 3), Appendices 40, 40.1, 40.2 and 41). The Office of the Registrar, in collaboration with other key internal stakeholders, revised the templates for the Programme Board Monitoring Report (PBMR), this revised template was fully utilised for the first time in the 2018 / 2019 Reports, which were approved by the Academic Council on 13 November 2019. It was noted in the Cross-Programme Monitoring Report (CPMR), approved by the Academic Council on 11 December 2019, that the availability of detailed and systematic data from the Admissions Office greatly facilitated the production of consistent reports across programmes. Moreover, the CPMR also noted that the new processes which require the Programme Directors to produce monthly reports for the Academic Council and assessment reports three times during the academic year also assisted in the production of comprehensive and consistent reports. Although the revised templates significantly enhanced the effectiveness of the PBMRs, the Assistant Registrar for Academic Affairs made a number of recommendations for the PBMRs for the 2019 / 2020 Academic Year:

- Programme Directors to liaise with other college functions regarding the configuration of data for their monitoring reports;

- Programme Directors to establish more uniform layouts for the display of data in graphs and tables;

- broader analysis of non-acceptances of CAO offers along with an examination of the courses accepted by learners who did not accept an offer from Carlow College;

- some consideration of part-time learners in the PBMRs; and

- the inclusion of feedback from Programme Administrators.

During this Reporting Period, the Academic Administration began producing an attendance report through the SRMS every four weeks which is circulated to the relevant Programme Director.

The effectiveness of these changes will be examined further in the 2019 / 2020 AIQR, to be submitted in February 2021.

Green Paper – Review of the Remit for the Management Board and the Academic Council

The QQI Review and Revalidation Panel for the review and revalidation of all programmes (March 2018) commended the high standard of education at Carlow College and the QQI Re-Engagement Panel (June 2019) similarly commended Carlow College for the capacity and expertise in embedding an extensively revised systemic approach to governance and quality at all levels of the College.

Although much progress has been made in the areas of governance and quality assurance, as validated by the two above mentioned external review panels, internal discussion on further enhancement has continued since the revision of the Terms of Reference and Constitution for both the Academic Council and the Management Board (2017 / 2018 Academic Year). At the heart of this discussion was the delineation of the remit for both the Management Board and the Academic Council. Progress towards the production of a Green Paper has been slowed owing to other institutional priorities. However, a Working Group was established by the Management Board (28 November 2018) to review the organisational structures within Carlow College to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose; the Working Group established by the Management Board had a scheduled completion date of 2019 / 2020. The scope of this Working Group was extended somewhat by the first recommendation made by the Re-Engagement Panel: '[g]iven the size of the College and its existing staffing, the panel recommends reviewing the quantity of dedicated committees and their memberships with a view to streamlining committee activities'. The Working Group accepted that a review should be conducted to streamline committee activities, but priority should be given to further delineating the remit of both the Academic Council and the Management Board.

The Green Paper was completed and submitted for comments / feedback to both the Management Board (8 April 2020) and the Academic Council (6 May 2020). The Working Group responsible for drafting the Green Paper has requested that some of the changes will require extensive work and areas of responsibility will be revisited in September 2020 to transition to a White Paper with concrete proposals for change.

Research Ethics

The *Research Ethics Advisory Policy* (Version 2) underwent significant changes in 2017 that were implemented during the 2018 / 2019 Academic Year. During the implementation of this policy, new procedural barriers emerged that caused significant angst amongst final year dissertation learners on the BA (Hons) in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care Programme). The Programme Director noted in the Programme Board Monitoring Report that:

> There was no mention of research and dissertation at this point in the year [when the learner evaluations for Semester 2 were conducted], although issues were emerging in relation to research ethical approval through class representation and at Programme Board level. Significant discussion took place at programme board level in the second semester and this resulted in (a) accommodations being made to allow students to complete their research and dissertation and (b) an overall review of the roles, function and processes of the Research Ethics Advisory Committee.

During the Summer 2019, the newly appointed Chair of the Research Ethics Advisory Committee (REAC) reviewed the *Research Ethics Advisory Policy* and proposed the following changes to REAC, the appendices were revised, namely: the process for applying to the Research Ethics Advisory Committee was redesigned and clarified (Appendix 1); Ethics Checklist revised (Appendix 2) and Data

Management Guidelines added (Appendix 3). Version 3 of this Policy was approved by the Academic Council 16 September 2019.

To ensure clarity around the new procedures, REAC held workshops to both staff and learners during Semester 1. For this Academic Year, REAC processed 47 applications for ethical approval and encountered very little procedural issues that were problematic with Version 2 of this Policy.

Moreover, as part of its quality assurance process and to check compliance with its recommendations, REAC has a system of checking learner dissertations after submission. The Committee checks all dissertations that were submitted to the Committee for ethical approval to ensure the learner complied with the Committee's recommendations; and a spot checking process for those dissertations that did not go to the Committee but were given ethical approval through the signature of two lecturers in the area. It was envisaged that this checking would be done with the physical copies of the dissertations once they were submitted to the Administrative Office. However, that was not possible this year, since all dissertations were submitted in electronic form only, due to the college building closing and work moving online during COVID 19. It was agreed that the electronic versions of the dissertation would be checked. REAC has representatives from each degree programme who have access to the Dissertation Moodle page of their respective degrees. These members checked the relevant dissertations on Moodle to see that they had complied with the recommendations the committee made to their proposals. The results showed that all of the learners on the BA (Hons) in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care) Programme (which accounted for 96% of the dissertations receiving REAC Approval) had completed the relevant policy forms correctly and incorporated the relevant ethics and GDPR guidelines into their documents.

2. Impact
Evidence of the impact of QA policies and procedures during the reporting period.

Learner Information and Retention Officer (LIRO)

A strength of our Quality Assurance Framework is in the area of learner supports. This was an area commended by the QQI Re-Engagement Panel and Carlow College continues to explore ways it can more fully maintain a learner-centred environment that recognises each learner's individual learning journey and that promotes, values and supports their personal, social and cultural development. During the 2018 / 2019 Academic Year, a Progression and Retention Working Group was established to:

- investigate, record and analyse the details of historical and current progression and retention rates at the College;

- identify factors that impact progression and retention rates in Carlow College;

- compare progression and retention rates with those that pertain nationally and elsewhere;

- consult the national and international literature on the factors which impact progression and retention rates;

- investigate the type and range of initiatives or interventions, their operationalisation and impact, which have been undertaken in other institutions nationally and elsewhere; and

- propose recommendations regarding the future management of progression and retention rates at Carlow College

One of the key outcomes of this Working Group was the appointment of the LIRO for the 2019 / 2020 Academic Year. This new role commenced in September 2019 and had a dual purpose: to provide information and resolve issues for learners and to put in place interventions and provide support 'at risk' learners. 'At risk' learners were identified using data analytics from the SRMS / VLE / Library Systems through the analysis of data patterns. During Semester 1, LIRO communicated with sixty learners and developed a Discussion Report detailing both short-term and long-term recommendations in the area of retention and attrition; these are currently being considered by the Academic Council. One of the key statistics from the Discussion Report is that 40% of Stage 1 learners achieved leaving cert points of less than 250 and the national average attrition rate for these learners is 43%; the current attrition rate for these learners at Carlow College is 8%. Although this attrition rate is exceptional, as the College doubles down on its efforts to provide greater access to third-level education, the system and supports available to this cohort of learners is of paramount importance.

Peer Mentoring Pilot Programme

A recommendation by the Programme Review and Revalidation Panel (2018) encouraged Carlow College to develop a Peer Assisted Learning Model across all programmes. The Learner Resource Committee led on this initiative and determined that the Levels 7 and 8 Arts and Humanities Programmes were best placed to pilot this initiative. The Peer Mentoring Programme was managed by the College Chaplain who coordinated the training of mentors and:

- acted as a contact-point;

- provided continuity and stability for mentors;

- managed the day-to-day queries that arose; and

- ensured that the mentors were recognised and rewarded.

The Chaplain reported through Head of Student Services to the Office of the Registrar. Moreover, there was a defined clear start and end point (Semester 1 2019 / 20) and initially there were a total of fifty-four learners across both programmes. Recruitment of Peer Mentors took place during April (2019) and were drawn from the Arts and Humanities Programmes Stages 2 and above. A training workshop for mentors took place 23 May 2019 after having first received Garda Vetting.

The initial contact with the "Mentors" and "Mentees" took place during Orientation & Registration Week. Here the mentors introduced themselves, briefly discussed their own course of studies and some of their concerns and difficulties they experienced as "Freshers" in a third-level college. During the second week of the term, a meeting was held for the learners and their mentors. Here the learners were divided into their individual groups, this gave the learners the opportunity to introduce themselves to each other. This meeting was well attended, and it gave the Chaplain the opportunity to explain in detail the purpose of the programme. The mentors explained to the leaners how and where they can be contacted. An email was sent from the Chaplain to those learners who were unable to attend this meeting.

The first week of October an email was sent to all learners on the programme by the mentors seeking feedback and inviting them to share their college experience to date. There was no response to this request and the following week the mentors met with the Chaplain to discuss the non-response to this request. It was the consensus of those present that there was no evidence to suggest that the learners were not settling-in – and it was noted that learners were availing of existing Student Services within the College. In an attempt to give some clarity, it was agreed that a survey would be carried out among the learners. The survey had a return rate of 64% from the learners enrolled on both programme; of those learners that responded, 72% of the learners indicated that they did not avail of the Programme.

The Chaplain submitted to the Learner Resources Committee a Review Report of the Peer Mentoring Programme. The Learner Resources Committee discussed the Review Report and the value of the programme to learners in a small college vis-à-vis the time and resources required to implement it. The

Learner Resources Committee agreed that more time and resources should be given to the learner-led and very popular Social Network Initiative rather than continuing with the Peer Mentoring Programme. As such, the Learner Resources Committee recommended to the Academic Council that the Social Networking Initiative, organised and led by learners, should replace the Peer Mentoring Programme, this proposal was approved by the Academic Council 11 March 2020.

Part 4: Quality Enhancement

Part 4 provides information which goes beyond the description of standard quality assurance procedures. Quality enhancement includes the introduction of new procedures but also extends the concept of quality assurance to other initiatives, activities and events aimed at improving quality across the institution.

1. Improvements and Enhancements for the Reporting Period
Improvements or enhancements, impacting on quality or quality assurance, that took place in the reporting period.

Learner Information

One of the QQI Re-Engagement Panel's recommendations was 'to build on a strong culture of face-to-face training and sign-posting to student services via e-mail by creating more formal materials and including signposting on the student gateway.' Carlow College engaged in several new initiatives to respond to this recommendation during the 2019 / 2020 Academic Year. A communication plan was developed in September 2019 that ensures access to information in a variety of formats for learners. Fortnightly briefs through MailChimp were sent to all learners highlighting key academic information, resources, points of contact and other relevant information to create an effective link between learners and the College's administrative, academic and pastoral supports.

Example: MailChimp

Another key action was the addition of a Quality Assurance Section to all learner handbooks to better signpost the Student Gateway. The Student Gateway enables learners to have access to all information relating to their academic record (i.e. exam results, finance details and elective choices) and it acts as an online repository of all learner policies and procedures. Moreover, the Quality Assurance Officer meets annually with members of the Students' Union to explain the basic principles of quality assurance and stress the importance of the learners' voice in the Quality Assurance Framework at Carlow College.

Revised Registration Processes

During the 2018 / 2019 Academic Year, Carlow College had a dedicated Working Group that implemented the new SRMS. As part of the implementation of this system, and the ongoing monitoring of our Admission processes, Carlow College introduced a two-phase registration process that has improved the integrity of our data around registered learners. Learners (new and returning) must register online which will note the learner as pre-registered in the SRMS. The registration status of the learner is not changed to 'fully registered' until they attend registration in the College. This information has greatly helped in forecasting and creating follow-up reports tracking learners through the registration process. It further has eliminated any calculation errors where learners are considered registered prior to turning up to the College.

Documenting Extensions and Absences

An issue that emerged during the 2018 / 2019 Academic Year was that the procedures for granting extensions were not consistent across stages / programmes. After extensive discussion with the relevant stakeholders, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee approved (12 June 2019) revised procedures for granting assignment extensions and procedures regarding absences from class. These recommendations were officially approved by the Academic Council on 28 August 2019 for the 2019 / 2020 Academic Year; subject to a discussion on storage and retention of forms / information supplied by learners. After further discussion, it was agreed that Academic Advisors would enter details of extensions granted on the SRMS so that lecturers can access this information. Moreover, it was agreed that the Academic Advisors and Academic Administration would enter details of approved absences on the SRMS so that this information can be accessed by lecturers, Programme Directors and the Learner Information and Retention Officer. These changes were published prior to Semester 2 commencing in January 2020.

Internal Moderation

One of the Re-Engagement Panel's recommendations to Carlow College was to develop and implement a formalised internal moderation process to further ensure fairness and standardisation of assessment across and within programmes. The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee discussed this recommendation at length during the 2019 / 2020 Academic Year and agreed that adopting a procedure of second-reading, all or a sample, of assessments worth more than 15% of total module mark would place too much strain on resources and would be unfeasible given the timescale for correction and input of marks ahead of exam board meetings / delivery of material to external examiners.

The Academic Council approved on 2 October 2019 the following change to the dissertation section of the *Regulations in Relation to Assessments and Standards*: all dissertations will have a second reader and, in the event of a significant difference in marks allocated, the dissertation was submitted to the External Examiner. The Academic Council further approved that the dissertation marking rubrics to retain the category of 1.1 (80+%). Criteria to indicate that this mark is reserved for exceptional dissertations which are publishable in their present form. This mark to be agreed by first and second readers and the view of the External Examiner to be sought.

The effectiveness of the revised internal moderation of dissertations will be examined further in the 2019 / 2020 AIQR, to be submitted in February 2021.

Repeat Arrangements / Late Submission / Extenuating Circumstances

Another recommendation made by the Re-Engagement Panel was that the processes in relation to repeat arrangements, late submission and extenuating circumstances be documented clearly within the College's assessment policies and related documentation for students to ensure transparency and consistency in these processes. The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee reviewed the processes in relation to repeat arrangements, late submission and extenuating circumstances. A new section titled, '2.3.5 Information for Students on Repeating Assessments' was added to the *Regulations in Relation to Assessments and Standards* and Section 3.1.5 'Procedures for Granting Assignment Extensions and Procedures for Absence from Class' were updated (both approved by the Academic Council on 22 January 2020). The Academic Council further approved on 11 March 2020 revisions to the 'Late Submission Penalties' and the 'Procedures for Extenuating Circumstances', both of which will be implemented in the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year.

2. Quality Enhancement Highlights
Analysis of quality enhancement activities that were initiated during the reporting period and which would be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination.

Here Together: Reflections on the South-East Project

In 2018 every programme at Carlow College were revalidated by an external QQI Review and Revalidation Panel. One of the recommendations of that Panel was that Carlow College 'should develop a stronger profile and status for community-related group creative projects, interlinking their practice and research dimensions.' An important collaborative project that has furthered this objective is the *Here Together: Reflections on the South-East Project*. This Project is a collaborative venture that gathers together a series of writings and events that reflect on what it means to live in the South-East of Ireland today, to be published on-line and in a paperback anthology. The Project has various strands, drawing on Philosophy, Theology, Creative Writing, Social Partnership, Filmmaking, Photography, and Music, and sees colleagues and learners in Carlow College collaborate with colleagues and learners in IT Carlow, Waterford IT, VISUAL, and other local and regional bodies.

Two collaborative projects took place during the 2018 / 2019 Academic Year:

- *Debate in the Agora* – The first collaborative project took place in December (2018) at IT Carlow when Dr Sarah Otten (Philosophy Lecturer, Carlow College) and the Third Year Philosophy learners at Carlow College and the Public Relations and Media Relations learners at IT Carlow debated matters of public importance in the 'Debate in the Agora'; the event was filmed live by learners of the BSc in TV and Media Production at IT Carlow.

- *The Carlow Song Cycle* – The second collaborative project took place in January (2019) at VISUAL involving two members of the Carlow College staff: Dr Morgan Cawley-Buckley on classical guitar and a song cycle based on poems by Dr Derek Coyle. This new commission, 'The Carlow Song Cycle' was performed in the second half of a diverse musical programme, including a medieval song, a 2012 work from composer Gráinne Mulvey, and a set of contemporary classical guitar works performed by Cawley-Buckley solo and in duet with Eoin Flood. The 'Carlow Song Cycle' was commissioned by Cawley-Buckley and sponsored by the Arts Council of Ireland. The music for the commission was created by one of Ireland's leading contemporary composers Gráinne Mulvey, an award-winning artist of international renown.

The concert also featured Elizabeth Hilliard, a leading Irish, Dublin born soprano. Prior to the concert, a pre-concert workshop took place that focused on the inter-disciplinary and collaborative nature of the creative process. The concert was filmed and recorded by learners of the BSc in Film and Media at IT Carlow.

The third collaborative project is titled *A Theology of Space: The Architecture of Belief and Rhythms of Ritual*, that includes a three-part series of events:

- Part 1 –This element of the project explored the construction and realisation of religious space in contemporary culture. Taking ancient and contemporary religious sites in County Carlow as its subject matter, the project looked at questions that arise around spaces and places that are marked out and celebrated as sacred. Participants in the project analyse and critique a number of such sacred sites that have been set a-part in order to ritualise significant moments of life. This project began in the second semester (January – April 2019) and was a collaborative project with IT Carlow TV & Media Production learners. The first stage of the project involved a tour to religious places around County Carlow that included: Holy Wells, Monastic Ruins, Graveyards, Churches, and other contemporary sites of worship. Cork based poet James Harpur and local Carlow artist Bridget Flannery joined the group for the tour of local sites that brought together word, vision, and place.

- Part 2 – This element of the project included a Podcast on the visit (detailed above) by the learners of TV and Media Productions at IT Carlow.

- Part 3 – This element of the project included an Art Exhibition that was officially launched on 10 February 2020 and available to the general public at Carlow College for the entire Spring 2020 Term. The exhibition comprised the artwork of three local artists (Anne Martin Walsh, Bridget Flannery and Bob Frazier) and explored the themes of place, ritual, spirituality and cultural identity in the South-East of Ireland today. The art pieces included paintings, stone and glass carvings, mixed media paintings, and photography.

Research Hub

Carlow College formally launched the Research Hub in the Spring 2020 Term to bring shape and coherence to research activity within the College by acting as a support for current research and related activities and by driving and enabling research agendas. Carlow College has been a leading centre in the Southeast for research inquiry for over 200 years. Current research activities are grounded in the College's ethos, vision, and mission to foster openness to new ideas, to build civic engagement and social awareness, and to promote creativity and innovation. Our researchers shape and contribute to evolving contemporary discourses in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences across a variety of inter-disciplinary contexts and partnerships.

The primary objectives of this approach are outlined in our framework document and are summarised here as follows:

- to support and promote staff research;

- to foster a research agenda that aligns with College Strategy, Mission and Ethos;

- to connect the College's research expertise with local and national organisations, communities and institutions; and

- to play a supporting role in College programme development by identifying, utilising and enhancing existing and potential areas of College research and expertise.

Research at Carlow College is organised by the College's Research Hub into six distinct areas of focus and expertise:

- Politics, Society and Sustainability

- History, Literature and Culture of Ireland

- Ideas and Beliefs

- People, Places and Cultures

- Mind, Memory and Behaviour

- Theory, Education and Practice

College Colloquia

During the Academic Year, Monday afternoons are set aside in the Academic Timetable for College Colloquia, which are open to the entire College community and public. For the 2019 / 2020 Academic Year, the College Colloquia were designed to target greater engagement with local secondary schools.

Below is a schedule of the College Colloquia:

Date	Title of the Public Lecture	Presenter(s)
7/10/20	*Coping and Resilience in Your Life: The Latest Insights from Psychology*	Dr Susan Ní Chuileann and Dr Candice Condon
23/10/20	*Ireland and Europe, 1918-1920: World War I, Versailles Peace Treaty, and Partition*	Dr Elaine Callinan and Dr Ida Milne
25/11/20	*Finding Your Voice: A Guide to Writing A Short Story*	Dr Derek Coyle and Colm Keegan, Writer in Residence
2/12/19	*Unwrapping Oppressive Attitudes to Children (in time for Christmas)*	Dr John McHugh and Damien McLellan
20/1/20	*Time for Action: Climate Change & Our Future*	Helen Maher and Stephanie Hanlon
27/1/20	*Nazi Concentration Camps to Mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day*	Dr Thomas Mc Grath
2/3/20	*Should I Eat Meat?: Learning to Explore, Form and Express Moral Judgements (Without Shouting, Slamming the Door or Throwing Things!)*	Dr Sarah Otten

Collaboration and Social Awareness

One of the core values of Carlow College is to create opportunities to work together, both internally and externally, to contribute to the ethical development of local, national and global communities and society. Furthermore, Carlow College is committed to providing an inclusive working and learning environment, valuing diversity and fostering a culture where the rights and dignity of all its staff and learners are respected. Below are events that Carlow College led, or participated in, that promoted one of its key strategic objectives:

- *International Women's Day*

- This year's celebrations for International Women's Day comprised a week-long schedule of events. Celebrations commenced with the launch of a book *From Global to Local - Women's Narratives* which was a Carlow College collaboration with The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, St Catherine's Services, Carlow County Development Partnership, Carlow Further Education and Training College and Rohingya Action Ireland.

  - Learner's on the BA (Hons) in Social, Political and Community hosted a number of events throughout the week to raise awareness on gender equality as part of their community-based practice for the Community Arts module.

- *Rohingya Action Ireland*

  - This organisation was founded by staff members Stephanie McDermott and Helen Maher, together with Haikal Mansoor, Rafique Mohammed and Michael Clinton.

  - The College hosted events for International Rohingya Remembrance Day in August 2019 which involved celebrations of the Rohingya culture and also included the research launch of 'Welcome to Carlow: Ten years of Rohingya Refugee Settlement in Carlow' which is a collaboration with Carlow County Development Partnership.

  - In December 2019 staff member Stephanie McDermott travelled with other delegates from Rohingya Action Ireland to join the 'Mass Rohingya Solidarity Rally' at the International Court of Justice in The Hague to support the case lodged by The Gambia to call Myanmar to account for the crime of Genocide against the Rohingya people.

- *Voices from Direct Provision and the State that We Are in Conference*

  - This one-day conference was held at Carlow College on Friday (8 November 2019) to provide an opportunity to learn about the State's asylum system from people who are or have been through the asylum process.

- *County Carlow Migrant Integration and Intercultural Strategy, 2020 – 2024*

  - College Vice President, Helen Maher, is an active member of the Steering Committee that developed the County Carlow Migrant Integration and Intercultural Strategy, 2020 – 2024. The Strategy was officially launched in January 2020 and the Steering Committee will continue to oversee implementation of the strategy.

Writer-in-Residence

During this Reporting Period, Carlow College's Creative Writing Partnership ('Write Here Write Now') with the Arts Office of Carlow County Council and Carlow County Library continued with the presence of two Writers-in-Residence on campus: poet, short-story writer and spoken word artist Colm Keegan, and poet and dramaturge Jessica Traynor. The Writer-in-Residence delivered The Writing Room every week in the College as well as creating a unique capstone performative event from work generated by the participants. These performances enhance the confidence and experience of the participants, and this programme has been consistently popular with members of the wider community, along with learners and staff of the College.

Part 5: Objectives Review and Planning

Part 5 provides information progress regarding objectives from the previous year, or more recent review, or post reengagement; and plans for quality assurance in the institution for the next reporting period (in this instance 1 September 2019 – 31 August 2020).

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1. Quality Assurance and Enhancement System Plans
Review of objectives arising from previous year, and update on plans for quality assurance and quality enhancement relating to strategic objectives for the next reporting period.

Review of Objectives Resulting from the QQI Re-Engagement Panel

The QQI Re-Engagement Panel made seven quality enhancement recommendations that the Quality Assurance Committee is monitoring for implementation (see Monitoring and Implementation Plan).

Quality Enhancement for the Next Reporting Period

The reporting period for the next AIQR will include the quality enhancement activities for the entire 2019 / 2020 Academic Year. As such, the next Report scheduled to be submitted in February (2021) will include, in addition to this Report, the following amendments:

- Revision / approval of the revised *Quality Assurance Policy* (Version 4), which will include the following changes:
  - revised high-level statements related to Section 4.11;
  - updates to the following appendices: 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 15 and 40; and
  - direct links to all policies on the CCSP website to assist with document control;
- the College's response to reflections on contingency planning and the adaptability of our Quality Assurance Framework in light of COVID-19; and
- policy development taking place over the summer, namely in the area of blended learning.

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2. Review Plans
A list of reviews within each category (module, programme, department/school, service delivery unit or faculty), as per the internal review cycle, planned for the next reporting period.

When the College's Quality Assurance Framework was re-established in 2017, in addition to annual monitoring, programmes at Carlow College are now required to conduct an internal Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation and Review every two and a half years. All of the programmes at Carlow College were revalidated by QQI in June 2018 and all programmes will conduct the first internal Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation and Review commencing in November 2020 following the approval of the 2019 / 2020 Cross-Programme Monitoring Report.

This self-evaluation and review process include, but is not limited to:

- ensuring that programmes remain appropriate;

- ensuring that programmes achieve their objectives set for them and respond to the needs of learners and the changing needs of society;

- reviewing learner workload;

- reviewing learner progression and completion rates;

- reviewing the effectiveness of procedures for the assessment of learners;

- informing updates of the programme content, delivery modes, teaching and learning methods, learning supports, and resources and information provided to learners;

- updating third party, industry or other stakeholders relevant to the programmes; and

- reviewing quality assurance arrangements that are specific to that programme.

Upon completion of the internal Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation and Review, Carlow College programmes will publish a Self-Evaluation Report and an Improvement Plan which will be considered by the Academic Council and the Board of Governors.

Part 6: Periodic Review

Part 6 provides information that acts as a bridge between the AIQR and periodic external review. As independent and private providers have not undergone a review cycle with QQI, the approval of institutional QA procedures through reengagement is considered the base line to which annual institutional quality reporting and periodic review will refer.

1. The Institution and QA Evaluation
A description of the impacts of reengagement within the institution.

Carlow College found the Re-Engagement Process to be a valuable / rewarding experience. Moreover, the Re-Engagement Panel Report validated the significant work undertaken within the College since its Quality Assurance Framework was re-established in 2017 and provided recommendations for improvement that the College continues to monitor and review for quality enhancement purposes (see Monitoring and Implementation Plan). As part of Quality Assurance Framework, the Office of the Registrar is also monitoring and reviewing the recommendations made by the Programme Review and Revalidation Panel (2018). In preparation for both of these external reviews, significant resources were extended to develop, review and / or revise all College policies and their associated documents in the College. As illustrated in the table below, the number of new / revised policies increased significantly in the lead-up to Re-Engagement. As the Quality Assurance Framework at Carlow College matures, the number of new policies developed should decrease and the revisions to existing policies will be done in accordance with internal policy review periods. For many of the policies approved in the 2017 / 2018

Academic Year, they are completing their three-year cycle and will be reviewed in the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year.

Academic Year	New Policies Developed	Policies Revised
2017 / 2018	9	20
2018 / 2019	23	10
2019 / 2020	0	14

The next external review is scheduled for Q1 2023 when every programme in the College is up for Review and Revalidation. QQI is currently updating the Review and Revalidation Manual, of which the Quality Assurance Officer at Carlow College was a member of the Working Group assigned with updating this document. One of the key quality assurance objectives for this summer is to update Appendices 9 and 10 of the *Quality Assurance Policy* to align with this revised manual.

2. Self-Reflection on Quality Assurance
A short evaluative and reflective summary of the overall impact of quality assurance in the reporting period.

As the Quality Assurance Framework at Carlow College matures, defined policies and procedures continue to be more fully embedded across all areas of the College. Significant developments during the 2018 / 2019 Academic Year were the introduction of semesterisation across all programmes and the introduction of the SRMS. Carlow College approached these two projects in a similar manner by developing implementation working groups and utilising standard project management principles. During this reporting period, which was the second cycle for both semesterisation and the SRMS, the College is quickly identifying areas where future quality enhancement is required whilst also demonstrating significant scalability to meet new challenges. A significant development this reporting cycle was the appointment of the IT and Student Systems Manager which was a new role created to blend all departments who regularly engage with inputting / analysing learner data in the SRMS. The area of Technology Enhanced Learning is an education space that Carlow College is currently developing, and the IT and Student Systems Manager has drafted a preliminary report titled *Key Elements of a Strategy for Technology Enhanced Learning*. This report outlines the fundamental components of a Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy under the following areas: Technological Infrastructure; Student Feedback and Engagement; National Policy and Funding; Internal Staff Training and Awareness; and Delivering Technology Enhanced Learning. As stated in this preliminary report, Carlow College has the tools and opportunity to deliver and build in further technology usage into our existing and new programme design. Moreover, digital skills and literacy are critical for Carlow College's capacity to respond to learner and employer requirements in relation to the provision of accessible and flexible education. The Strategic Development Committee is currently progressing this strategy.

Carlow College's contingency planning and the adaptability of our Quality Assurance Framework in light of COVID-19 will feature prominently in the February 2021 AIQR submission. To assist in determining the effectiveness of this contingency planning, Carlow College is conducting a survey of its staff and learners to capture their experience of online teaching and learning over the last three months; this will assist in developing contingency plans for the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year.

3. Themes
1. Developmental themes of importance to the institution which will be relevant to periodic review.

The following are developmental themes that Carlow College will be progressing in the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year:

- Strategic Positioning: continued engagement with the HEA / DES on Carlow College's integration into the higher education system;

- Programme Development: exploring how Carlow College can maximise its existing expertise and capacity through the development of a range of BA degree specialisms that are largely drawn on existing programmes / modules and continued collaboration with IT Carlow in harnessing academic synergies;

- Teaching and Learning: continued engagement with the National Teaching and Learning Forum and the continued implementation of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy;

- Research: building on the successful launch of the Research Hub, the College will continue to encourage and promote staff research; and

- Learner Records: continued development of the SRMS and greater use of data analytics in our overall Quality Assurance Framework, and the development of a more comprehensive plan to create, maintain, use and dispose of physical and electronic records; and

- Community Engagement: continued engagement with national, regional and local institutions / organisations to further our commitment to social inclusion and equality of access to higher education.