



GALWAY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Annual Quality Report

Reporting Period 2019-2020

1.1 Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for Galway Business School for the reporting period 1st September 2019 – 31st August 2020. The AQR has been approved by Academic Council and is submitted by Dr Eva McMorrow (Registrar).

1.2 General overview of the institution

Galway Business School was established in 1999 to provide business and related, full and part-time programmes to both local and international markets. As an independent third-level educational institution Galway Business School aims to deliver its Quality Assurance policies and procedures in compliance with those required by external validating bodies. The necessary QQI publications on Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures and Standards 2016 have acted as a framework for the establishment, development, and ongoing enhancement of Galway Business School's Quality Assurance policies and procedures.

Galway Business School has committed itself to embracing an inclusive Quality Assurance and Enhancement culture in order to underpin, maintain and improve the quality of education offered to learners. The Quality Assurance Handbook underpins all academic and support activities within the school.

The Quality Assurance Handbook formalises policies and procedures for all Galway Business School staff. It also provides information for other stakeholders, both internal and external, including learners and employers. Additionally, it provides evidence that Galway Business School satisfies the national and European standards required of a higher education provider.

The Quality Assurance Handbook and related documents are reviewed by the Quality Assurance committee which meets once per semester. The Handbook details the annual systematic quality assurance procedures for a range of data collection and analysis, identifies the appropriate forum for monitoring the data and requires both a recording of actions to be taken and a review of the effectiveness and impact of these actions. All changes are recorded and updates are circulated to management and faculty. This ensures quality management processes at Galway Business School are up to date and fit for purpose. In addition, its monitoring and governance is strictly observed to ensure it always underpins and supports Galway Business School's Strategic Plan (2018-2022).

1.3 Process for development and approval of the AQR

The following are procedures relevant to annual monitoring and review of quality assurance in GBS (as illustrated by Fig. 1.3.3):

- Data collection
- AQR Development
- AQR Approval

1.3.1 Data Collection

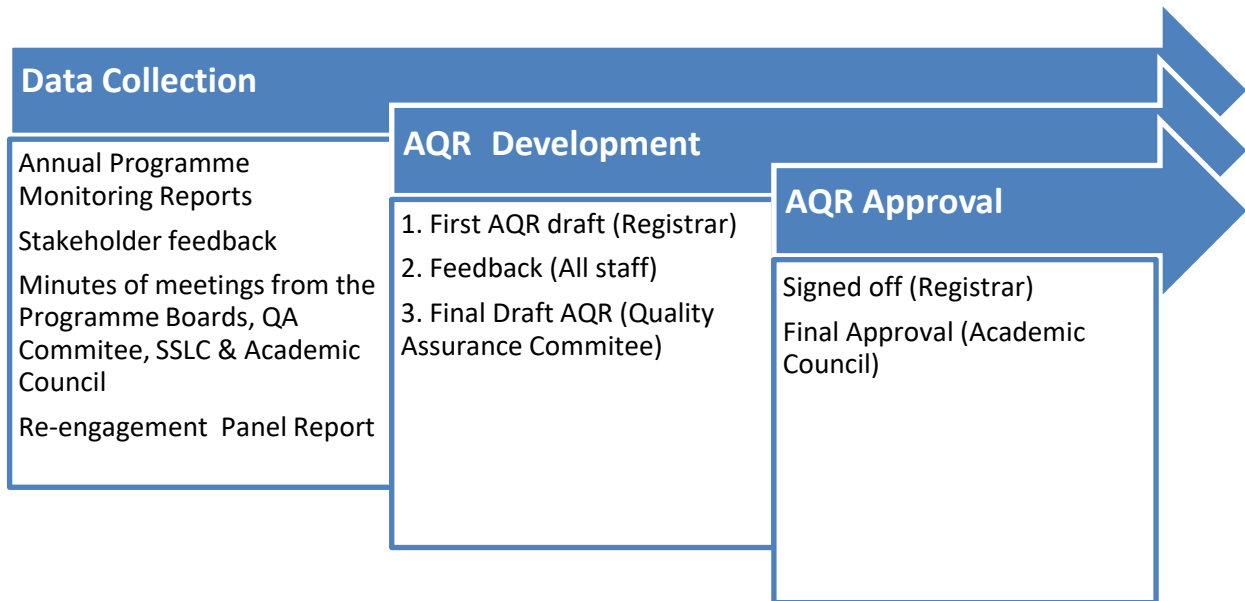
Galway Business School is committed to self-evaluation which enables the completion of the Annual Quality Report. Galway Business School collates all its standard annual monitoring processes and necessary data electronically collated and the information provided within this report is drawn from the findings of those review mechanisms. The information needed for this report has been collected from the following critical quality indicators:

- Committee Reports & Meeting Minutes
- Re-engagement Panel Report
- Annual Self Evaluation Report (SER)
- Annual Programme Monitoring Report
- Stakeholder Feedback
- Self-evaluations (carried out by the QAC)
- Periodic and Institutional Review

1.3.2 AQR Development & Approval Process

The Registrar is responsible for drafting the Annual Quality Report. The AQR is managed, from its initial development to its final approval ensuring the necessary input from all relevant staff. A draft of the AQR is discussed at the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) meeting. Once the Report has been finalised by the QAC it is brought for final approval to the Academic Council.

Fig. 1.3.3: AQR Development & Approval Process



2 Part B: Internal Quality Assurance Enhancement & Impact

2.1 Quality Implementation and Developments

2.1.1 Strategic QA Updates

During the reporting period of 2019-2020, GBS's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 has been reviewed to ensure that strategic objectives are relevant to the current development in the higher education sector and in line with QQI requirements. Consequently, GBS had completed an extensive self-evaluation against QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines in preparation for Re-engagement.

The independent review panel, appointed by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), was scheduled to visit GBS in February 2020 to undertake the site visit as part of the re-engagement process by QQI. In preparation for the site visit, the school had completed an extensive self-evaluation against the QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines, with input from a broad range of stakeholders and utilising information sources to evidence the findings. The changes to the Quality Assurance Handbook and individual policies arising from the internal self-evaluation are listed in Table 2.1.1 below.

Table 2.1.1: Changes to the QA Handbook

Structural Changes to QA Handbook	
QA Handbook has been restructured to reflect the structure of QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines	
Policies Updated & Restructured	
Governance & Management of Quality	<p>Structure of the Boards & Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the separation of the commercial and academic decision making within the organisation • External Academic Advisor – Chair of Academic Council & Member of the Board of Directors <p>Risk Management Committee & Risk Management Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership of the committee • Roles and Responsibilities of the committee • Risk Register <p>Structure of the Organisational Chart</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Roles reviewed • General Manager’s duties and responsibilities transferred to Managing Director, Registrar, Academic Co-ordinator & Office Management.
Documented Approach to Quality Assurance	<p>Policy Review & Restructuring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring Transparency & Accountability • Updated documentation for policy development • Data Collection & Monitoring • Module Reports • Policy Dissemination & Communication
Programmes of Education & Training	<p>Policy restructured to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Development, • Learner Admission, Progression & RPL • Programme Monitoring & Review • Programme Development Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy enhanced in greater detail including a process map • Learner Admission, Progression & RPL • Data Storage – Information & Data Management Policy • Programme Monitoring & Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Module Reports ○ Policy updated to reflect current QQI procedures and guidelines
Staff Recruitment, Management & Development	<p>Policy restructured to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amalgamate relevant policies into one overarching Policy (e.g. Grievance Procedures, Respect & Dignity, Disciplinary Process) • Process Maps included for a greater clarity • Opportunities for lecturing staff to provide comprehensive feedback enhanced through Module Reports

Teaching & Learning	<p>Policy Review & Restructuring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development & relevant diagram • QA in Teaching & Learning • Monitoring the learning experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Learner Complaint Procedures policy enhanced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Informal & Formal complaint Procedures including relevant process map for clarity ▪ Relevant Form ○ Learner Appeals procedures for an unresolved complaint <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Process Map • Learning Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incorporated into the policy ○ Work Experience
Assessment of Learners	<p>Policy Reviewed & Restructured</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Integrity & Plagiarism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Process Maps & Relevant Forms ○ Sample offences & Possible Penalties
Support for Learners	<p>Individual Policies related to Support for Learners (e.g. Refunds & Cancellations, Learner Induction) not included in the QA Handbook. Policy developed to amalgamate relevant policies into one overarching Policy.</p>
Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review	<p>Policy Restructuring & Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Self-Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relevant Reports ○ Relevant Data ○ Individual Responsibilities • Improvement Plan
Policies Developed	
Support for Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Support • Learner Code of Conduct and Discipline • Disciplinary Committee • Disciplinary Appeals Committee • Social Media Policy
Information & Data Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Systems • Data Classification • Data privacy • Records Maintenance and Retention • Data Protection
Public Information & Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures for approving public communication content
Other Parties Involved in Education & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GBS first provider

2.1.2 *Specific changes to the QA system arising from Re-engagement with QQI*

The proposed mandatory changes were identified after the site visit on Friday, 7th February 2020 by the panel. As these changes were discrete the panel deferred its decision to allow Galway Business School an opportunity to address these issues within six weeks. GBS reviewed the QA Handbook and implemented the proposed mandatory changes as required by the panel. The details of the changes made to the QA Handbook are presented in Table 2.1.3 below.

The formal confirmation of QQI's approval of Galway Business School's quality assurance policies and procedures were issued in June 2020. The School commenced implementing the panel's mandatory changes and recommendations from the beginning of the 2020/2021 academic year.

Table 2.1.3: Proposed Mandatory changes by panel addressed in GBS QA system

Proposed Mandatory Changes	
The visibility of the Board of Directors within the governance structure needs to be made clear within the documentation, and the delegation of authority to the Governing Body from the Board of Directors needs to be formalised.	The Board of Directors is now visible in the school's organisational chart, and the role, terms of reference, duties and responsibilities of the Boards and Committees are detailed in full in the QA Handbook. The delegation of authority to the Governing Body from the Board of Directors was formally recorded and presented to the panel during the site visit.
GBS must review the Governance Structure to include details of the Management Team including terms of reference, membership, frequency of meetings, etc.	The Governance Structure has been reviewed and the QA Manual now includes details of the Management Committee including its role, terms of reference, membership and meeting frequency. It is also clearly depicted in the boards and committee structure chart.
Terms of reference and operating procedures of the Governing Body and Academic Council must be reviewed to ensure that no undue influence can be exercised by the commercial side of the operation over the academic decision making	Terms of reference, operating procedures & membership of the Governing Body and Academic Council have been reviewed to ensure that there is no overlap of function and that undue influence cannot be exercised by the commercial side of the operation over academic decision making.
GBS must review the appropriateness of the inclusion of the Managing Director on subunits of governance.	The Managing Director's membership on various subunits of governance has been reviewed and it was deemed appropriate to exclude the MD from membership of the Academic Council, the Programme Board(s) and the Board of Examiners to further underpin the independence of academic decision making within the organisation.
GBS should ensure there is a student representative on their Programme Board(s).	A learner representative has been included in the membership of the Programme Board(s).

<p>The panel advises that GBS reconsider its current process in relation to appeals, taking into account that standard practices in the sector is to only entertain appeals on the ground of procedural irregularities and not on the basis of dissatisfaction of grades.</p>	<p>The Policy on appeals, re-checks and reviews has been reviewed and benchmarked to best practice in the sector. The policy was also enhanced to specify in greater detail the grounds for an appeal.</p>
<p>Review and revise to reflect current procedures.</p>	<p>All policies have been reviewed to ensure that they reflect current procedures. Specifically, they were benchmarked to other private and public providers to confirm their future feasibility and applicability.</p>
<p>Ensure escalation in review and appeals policy involves external consultation.</p>	<p>The External Academic Advisor chairs the Academic Council meetings where appeals are considered, hence externality and independence are guaranteed during the appeals process.</p>
<p>Lecturers involved in assessments should not be involved in the review process.</p>	<p>The Review Policy has been updated and enhanced to reflect that lecturers whose assessments are under review are not involved in the review process.</p>
<p>Review Data Protection to reflect Irish Law (FOI is not applicable to GBS)</p>	<p>The Data Protection Policy has been reviewed and all references to Freedom of Information Acts are removed. The policy now clearly states the relevant GDPR legislation it reflects.</p>
<p>Benchmark policies against others in the sector.</p>	<p>All policies have been reviewed and benchmarked to other providers (i.e. Griffith College, ICHAS, DCU, Trinity College, and GMIT). These institutions were chosen to ensure the benchmarking exercise was both sound and appropriate and resulted in a holistic approach as they are a mix of public and private third-level institutions of varying size and structure.</p>
<p>GBS must review its QA documentation to ensure accuracy and consistency of terminology and include appropriate versions as well as tracking the history of policies to reflect the development, consultation and approval process. A move away from descriptive content in places and toward a more procedural tone in the document would facilitate this.</p>	<p>Each Policy has a cover sheet that reflects the development of each policy trajectory. This cover sheet tracks policy development and records all the consultation that has taken place. In addition, process maps have been developed that illustrate the policy development process in each instance. GBS also commits to developing more process maps to illustrate the process and make them more user-friendly.</p>
<p>Specific Advice</p>	
<p>GBS should review documentation to ensure it is reflective of current legal requirements.</p>	<p>The Data Protection policy was enhanced to include GDPR and references to Freedom of Information Acts have been removed from the QA Handbook.</p>
<p>Consider expanding the membership of the Governing Body</p>	<p>The membership of the Governing Body has been expanded by a Public Interest Advisor.</p>

2.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
1	N/A	N/A

2.3 Governance and Management

2.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

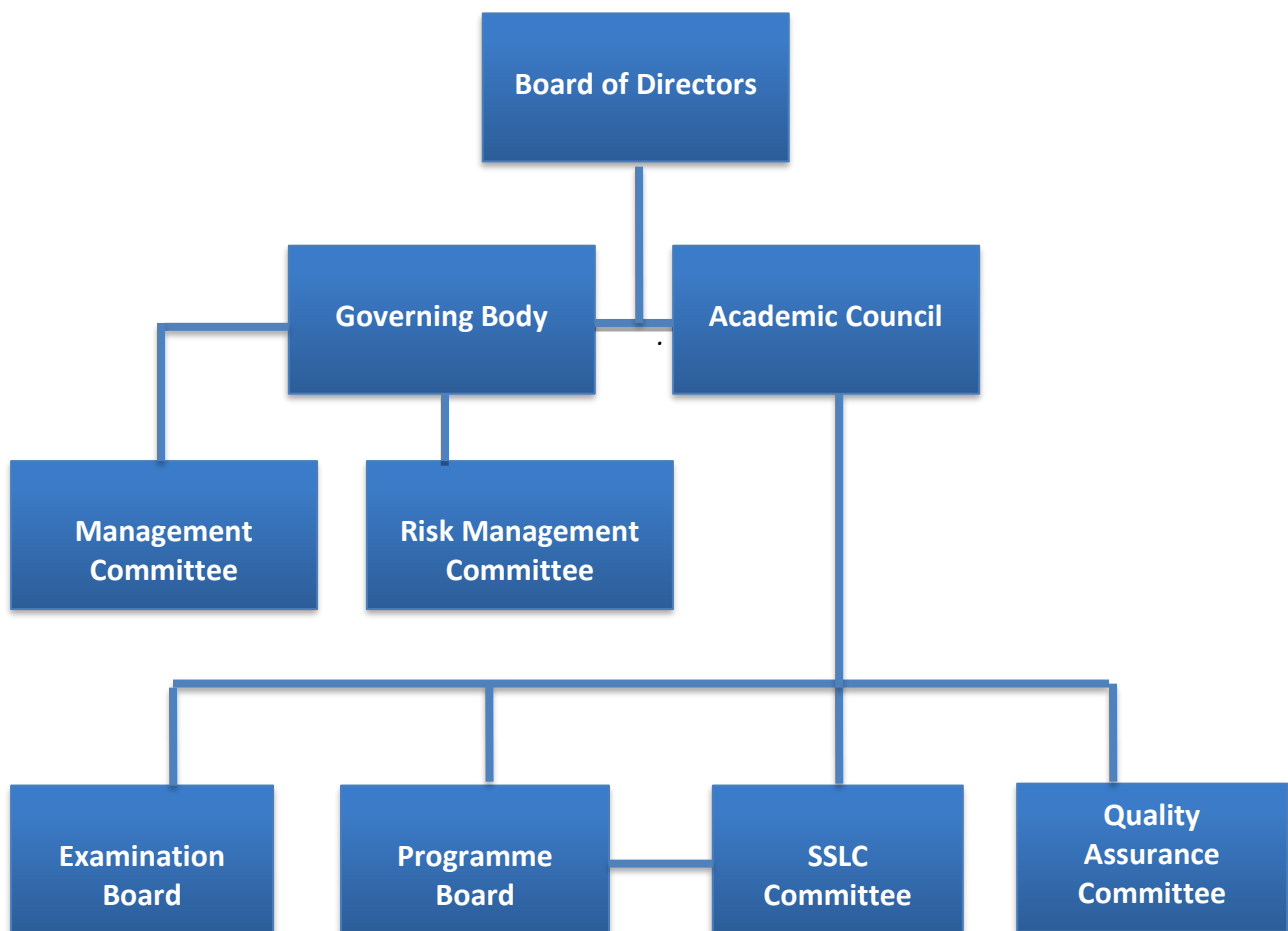
Body	Meeting Dates
Governing Body	10.12.2019 01.07.2020
Academic Council	03.12.2019 30.06.2020
QA Committee	12.11.2019 06.02.2020 30.06.2020
Programme Boards	20.02.2020 25.06.2020
External Examination Board	20.02.2020 25.06.2020
Student Staff Liaison Committee	24.10.2019 03.03.2020
Staff Induction/Faculty Meeting	10.09.2019 06.12.2019
Risk Management Committee	12.11.2019 01.07.2020

2.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

The reporting period of 2019/2020 saw structural changes to GBS's governance resulting from the Re-engagement process. Based on the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016) and the mandatory changes and recommendations of the independent review panel, GBS reviewed the following committees (Fig. 2.3.2) and specified more clearly their terms of reference, duties and responsibilities, membership and meeting dates and times:

- Board of Directors
- Management Committee
- Risk Management Committee

Figure 2.3.2: Boards and Committees Structure



2.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

2.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review	Date of completion	Links to relevant publications
Re-engagement with QQI	25.06.2020	https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Galway%20Business%20School%20Combined%20final%20reengagement%20report%20and%20response.pdf
Re-validation of programmes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Bachelor of Business (L7, 180 ECTS)- Certificate in Business Communications (L6, 20 ECTS)- Certificate in Business & Entrepreneurship (L6, 20 ECTS)- Certificate Sales & Marketing (L6, 30 ECTS)- Certificate in Marketing Management (L6, 30 ECTS)- Certificate in Strategic Management (L7, 10ECTS)	12.09.2019	https://www.qqi.ie//sites/docs/PanelReportsLibrary/ProgID-41171_Panel_Reports_PG24154.pdf

3 IQA System – Effectiveness and Impacts

A full review of the QA policies and procedures was undertaken in June and July 2019 with engagement from all stakeholders. GBS identified changes required to the QA policies and procedures in preparation for the re-engagement process and submission to QQI of revised QA documentation. Each policy has been reviewed and evaluated in terms of its effectiveness and impacts. To identify the effectiveness of each policy, GBS QA review team identified a need for better clarity of language to ensure greater accessibility, a need for process maps and diagrams, and updating of several policies in line with best practice or new legislation (GDPR).

A full review of the appropriateness of the language employed across the QA policies resulted in the identification of some unintentional consequences not foreseen by in the initial development of the policy. The feedback was then used to implement changes to the relevant policies. In addition, the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines were reviewed to identify gaps in the QA system.

The review identified that both learners and staff find it easier to understand graphically explicit policies-that include process maps and diagrams. Therefore, GBS employed a combined approach of written and diagrammatic description and depiction of policies and procedures. In particular, the process maps illustrate a named point of contact for students and the steps involved in the policy process. The potential for increased use of visuals to support QA documentation will remain under review as part of the school's annual and cyclical review of QA policies and procedures. After consultation with staff and learners, GBS created a QA folder on its VLE Moodle, where learners and staff can find all relevant forms. The folder is clearly visible on the Programme page and both learners and staff are provided with a comprehensive overview of the QA policies and procedures during induction and at relevant points throughout the academic year.

The Reengagement Panel identified mandatory changes and recommendations to GBS's QA Policies and Procedures which are detailed in 2.1 of this report. The reengagement process allowed for greater engagement of all staff members in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement of internal policies as well as benchmarking those policies to other institutions of various size and scope. The reengagement process gave additional impetus to the continual and annual enhancement of these policies and the need to review and monitor changes and track implementation.

To further enhance the development of quality assurance and during the next reporting period, GBS aims to provide opportunities for learners and staff to increase their awareness and engagement with GBS's QA policies. This will be done through making policies more accessible and transparent by dividing the QA Handbook into individual sections which allows learners and staff to engage and access relevant sections more easily. It also allows for manageable downloads from our Moodle platform and website.

During this review process, it was noted that certain policies within the Institution were found to need further examination as their effectiveness fell short of expectation and intended outcomes. These included particularly academic integrity and plagiarism which are under constant and consistent review nationally and internationally. Additionally, as part of the re-engagement process GBS has re-developed and further enhanced the assessment policy for both staff and learners, particularly in relation to appeals, rechecks and reviews so that the processes and policies involved are understood and followed. This policy is being rolled out in the next reporting period and will see additional training events to ensure engagement and compliance. Further development on our Moodle platform and website will also allow for greater ease of access to targeted information.

Impacts

Governance and Management of Quality

The impact of the implementation of the Reengagement Panel's mandatory changes has given additional impetus to the continual and annual enhancement of these policies and the need to review and monitor changes and track implementation. The reporting structures of the Management Team now feed into other committees where appropriate. This includes issues surrounding infrastructure developments including the use of technology and other resources, training and development, staff allocation or changes in the CRM which impact other committees.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The move to online learning from the last quarter of the academic year resulted in rapid and appropriate changes to the teaching, learning and assessment strategies. This included the development and deployment of an online and blended learning policy to take account of the government's directive to move completely online. Zoom was purchased and deployed as well as integration within the Moodle platform. Video use and additional interactive resources were developed by lecturers to ensure that learners were informed of all requirements in relation to lectures, materials and assessments. Additional equipment was given to lecturers; additional screens, desks, chairs etc., as needed. There is continued development in this area including researching additional and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning.

Supports and resources for learners

The semester was extended by two weeks to allow learners to become more familiar with the use of online technology. Provision was made for safe spaces in the school for learners to access the internet successfully when this was not possible in their own homes. Learner support mechanisms as well as reporting structures were reviewed and upgraded to ensure that there were additional personnel employed in contacting and supporting learners and ensuring that they were engaging with the changes needed to finalise their academic studies. Much of this had to be deployed quickly and these initiatives will be more formally documented in the next reporting period. Online examination policies were created, and training given to all learners and staff.

Additional personnel were commissioned to support learners doing online examinations as well as invigilator training to ensure that the integrity of the examination process was preserved. The Academic Coordinator and the Registrar were in constant communication with other colleges and with QQI to ensure that best practice was implemented quickly and appropriately.

3.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

As a part of the Re-engagement with QQI, GBS's policy on Academic Integrity & Plagiarism has been benchmarked to other providers and re-developed. It became apparent, through stakeholder feedback at this time, that while most existing policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and plagiarism were effective, some gaps were identified particularly in relation to a perceived lack of understanding among some learners and those accessing the QA documentation information on the school's VLE Moodle platform or website. To further enhance and embed the concepts of academic integrity and plagiarism in the student body, and ensure that lecturers are aligned, GBS has since engaged with evolving policy developments in this challenging area by QQI and by NAIN (the National Academic Integrity Network).

The policy now outlines more clearly:

- Defining plagiarism (including collusion)
- The requirements for using others work (i.e. referencing and paraphrasing with quoted sources in the bibliography)
- Practices that breach standards of academic integrity
- Dissemination of policy (learner induction, referencing, workshops and the academic integrity week in the next cycle)
- Relevant forms
- Process maps
- Process for reporting cases of alleged breaches of academic integrity and/or plagiarism
 - Learner interview process
 - Penalties
 - Outcome and right to appeal
 - Process in respect of learner's business research project
 - Retrospective detection of plagiarism and/or breaches of academic integrity

To further enhance this process internally, GBS is planning an Academic Integrity Project which will include a week of academic integrity activities in the next reporting period to embed more widespread awareness and identification of the requirements and risks involved of non-compliance.

3.2 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

3.2.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

The Re-Engagement Panel advised proposed mandatory changes (*Table 2.1.3*) that Galway Business School addressed from the outset of the 2020/2021 academic year. The reporting period for the next AQR will include the quality enhancement activities for the entire 2020/2021 Academic Year. As such, the next Report scheduled to be submitted will include the following amendments.

Quality Enhancement for the Next Reporting Period

- The publication of Galway Business School's Online and Blended Learning Strategy and its integration into to the core QA Document. An action plan for online and blended learning will also form part of this development.
- GBS aims to provide opportunities for learners and staff to increase their knowledge of policies and their accessibility by separating the QA Handbook into individual policy sections and creating links on our website and VLE (Moodle) to assist with document accessibility and control.
- GBS commits to developing more process maps in the future to illustrate the QA policies and procedures to ensure they are user friendly to both staff and learners.
- Galway Business School response and reflections on contingency planning and the adaptability of our Quality Assurance Framework in light of COVID-19.
- Launch of an Academic Integrity Project for all learners.
- Within the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the college identified its strategic objective to continue to enhance its digital infrastructure with the provision of cutting-edge digital capability within the school.

No.	Relevant objectives	Planned actions and indicators.
1	Online & Blended Learning Policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development and review of Galway Business School's Online & Blended Learning Policy by the Programme Board and the Quality Assurance Committee. ▪ Review of the Online & Blended Learning Policy by the Academic Council.
2	Inclusion of explicit graphical embedding and representation to further illustrate the QA policies and procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plans for the Quality Assurance Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of stakeholder feedback on the operation of QA policies and procedures. - Review and inclusion of further process maps for both staff and learners.
3	Contingency planning and the adaptability in light of COVID-19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Galway Business School response and reflections on contingency planning and the adaptability of our Quality Assurance Framework.
4	Academic Integrity Project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The project will be driven by the Head of Teaching and Learning and the Academic Coordinator in 2020/2021.
5	Investment in digital infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Within the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, GBS has identified its strategic objective to continue to enhance an evolving digital learning environment, with the provision of cutting-edge additional digital capacity. On-going refinement and upgrade of the GBS Moodle VLE is planned in 2021. This project will be driven by the Academic Coordinator.

3.3 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

Galway Business School is planning the Re-validation of the Bachelor of Business (Hons) with International Business in 2021. All modules of the current programme leading to an Honours degree will be reviewed.

All other annual review activity will be undertaken for current approved programmes and services in accordance with Galway Business School's QA policies

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Re-validation of Bachelor of Business (Hons) with International Business	2021	17 th February 2017 Validation date.

3.3.1 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

N/A

4.0 Themes

It has become clear that the major themes for Galway Business School to pursue in the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year are:

Quality Assurance Enhancement

Extensive development has taken place during the reporting period through the Re-engagement process. This will remain a priority for GBS for the next academic year and will include extensive use of internal data to inform quality enhancement activities including embedding the mandatory changes and recommendations in the culture of quality assurance and enhancement in the institution

Online and Blended Learning Strategy

Galway Business School is committed to developing an online and blended learning policy to ensure best practice in online delivery.

Continued Learner Success

To provide a high-quality, student-centered educational experience by focusing on continuous improvement and development by supporting learners in all aspects of their student journey and by creating a strong emphasis on academic excellence.

Information to stakeholders

Continued enhancement of our Moodle platform, website, QA documents and handbooks. Additional engagement with stakeholders particularly industry partners.

Strategic Review

Internal review of the strategic direction of Galway Business School and its sister school, Galway Cultural Institute and maximizing and coordinating the linkages in both organisations. While both schools share the functional aspects of finance, marketing, administration etc., additional sharing of policies and procedures need to be reviewed particularly in the areas of programme development, teaching and learning and assessment. A strategic review of both brands also needs to be undertaken to maximise synergies.