HIBERNIA COLLEGE

Institutional Self-Evaluation
Report 2024

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Abbreviations

AAO	Assessment and Awards Office
ALS	Adaptive Learning System
ALT	Academic Leadership Team
AQR	Annual Quality Report
BOE	Board of Examiners
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CoP	Community of Practice
CPC	Clinical Placement Coordinator
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DLD	Digital Learning Department
DSAR	Data Subject Access Request
EMT	Executive Management Team
ETB	Education and Training Board
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GenAI	Generative Artificial Intelligence
HEI	Higher Education Institute
HCQF	Hibernia College Quality Framework
IR	Institutional Review
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
JPC	Joint Programme Committee
LJWG	Local Joint Working Group
LMS	Learning Management System
MIPLO	Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes
NLP	Natural Language Processing
NMBI	Nursing and Midwifery Board Ireland
PEL	Protection of Enrolled Learners
PSRB	Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body
QA	Quality Assurance
RA	Reasonable Accommodation
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SP	School Placement
SPT	School Placement Tutor
SSO	Single Sign-On
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
TLA	Teaching, Learning and Assessment
TOR	Terms of Reference
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
WIL	Work-Integrated Learning
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UX	User Experience

Chapter 1
Introduction to the Hibernia College Institutional Self-Evaluation Review

This is the 2024 Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) of Hibernia College. The ISER is the product of a sustained period of internal self-reflection within the College. As such, it represents an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of institutional quality assurance procedures. This is for the purposes of ascertaining, enhancing and maintaining the educational, research and related services of Hibernia College. Hibernia College welcomes the opportunity to engage with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the appointed review panel. The process of self-evaluation facilitates Hibernia College in considering the quality of its programmes and services and its institutional effectiveness in supporting and enabling learners to reach their full educational potential. Alongside the Annual Quality Review (AQR) reports, the ISER is a key aspect of self-evaluation and reflection, co-ordinated by QQI.

The ISER was developed collaboratively with participation from all College departments, under the guidance of the Institutional Review Steering Committee (IRSC). It serves as a reflection on the Hibernia College Quality Assurance Framework (HCQF) and the associated processes and policies. The HCQF, as the sole authoritative source of College quality assurance documents, in effect since November 2020, is consequently core to the ISER process. In addressing the effectiveness of the HCQF, the ISER also presents some of the challenges faced by Hibernia College and within the rapidly developing higher education setting more broadly, and highlights actions taken or underway to enhance and test the internal quality activities.

The ISER is broadly structured according to the three objectives outlined in the QQI Independent and Private Providers Terms of Reference (2023):

- **Chapter 3**
  Objective 1: Governance and Quality Management (Structures and Framework)

- **Chapter 4**
  Objective 1: Governance and Quality Management (HCQF, Information and Communication)

- **Chapter 5**
  Objective 2: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research

- **Chapter 6**
  Objective 3: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Under each of these objectives, subcategories were drawn from the indicative matters outlined in the Terms of Reference. As an exercise in self-evaluation, Hibernia College availed of the opportunity to conduct a SWOT analysis of each of these areas, guided by cluster groups comprising of staff, faculty and other relevant stakeholders (learners, alumni or adjunct faculty). Case studies were drawn from those SWOT exercises to demonstrate examples of good practice, highlight examples of quality review or assurance processes or note areas for enhancement. For the purposes of the ISER, case studies are specific descriptions of processes, records of activities or forms of research. They can also refer to examples of practice focusing on a group, activity or event.

Peer review and collaborative practices played a significant role in the development of the ISER. Every opportunity was taken to involve a wide array of staff and stakeholders in the process in a variety of roles from key contributors to peer-reviewers. These practices are described in greater detail in Chapter 2. It is noteworthy that they build upon the reflective practices the College seeks to engender in graduates and serve to close a wider feedback loop.

Describing and documenting the review process itself provided an opportunity to further embrace a culture of quality assurance and enhancement in all aspects of the College, championing and celebrating those areas of excellent practice evidenced within the case studies. Furthermore, it facilitated a juncture from which to critically evaluate practices against the quality assurance framework and implement changes as highlighted. It is envisaged that this, in turn, will enhance public assurances of the transparency of Hibernia College processes, decision-making practices and guiding principles.

The ISER seeks to honestly and transparently report its key findings in order to support further enhancements. Embracing honesty in the College review mechanisms is a sign of the institutional maturity required for Hibernia College to progress to the next stage in its development. This 'next stage' focuses on the provision of a wider suite of programmes, nationally and internationally. The review process, inclusive of the construction of this ISER, will inform the development and review of the HCQF and further quality enhancement initiatives. It is also envisaged that it will assist in the promotion of a shared institutional understanding of the importance of quality assurance and review.

The 2024 ISER of Hibernia College encapsulates a comprehensive and reflective journey through the College's quality assurance landscape, guided by the objectives set out in the Terms of Reference. Through meticulous self-assessment, collaborative effort across departments and a deep commitment to continuous improvement, the report not only underscores the College's achievements and areas for enhancement but also signifies a pivotal step towards reinforcing its educational excellence and institutional integrity.

Chapter 2
The Institutional Review Process

2.1 Context

Preparing for Institutional Review (IR) is an extended, college-wide process that necessitates the establishment of a collaborative and supportive approach, driven by a clear understanding of the purpose and scope of review and review outputs. A framework to guide this was established within Hibernia College under the following headings:

- Planning and Facilitation
- Drafting and Reviewing
- Communication and Engagement

The purpose of this framework is to guide and provide structure to the process and to act as a supporting and contextualising document for those engaged with IR. The existence of the framework facilitates knowledge sharing, communication and transparency. This chapter summarises the content of that framework and the process that emerged from it.

The College approach to the IR process is informed by and adheres to the Cyclical Review of Hibernia College — An Institutional Review Policy and the Cyclical Review Procedure. The objectives of this Hibernia College policy align with the Terms of Reference provided by QQI, and are as follows:

- To encourage a quality culture and the enhancement of the learner environment and experience
- To provide feedback to the College about College-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of quality assurance
- To improve public confidence in the quality of the College by promoting transparency and public awareness
- To contribute to systems-level improvement within higher education of the quality
- To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and feedback from stakeholders

2.2 Planning and Facilitation

2.2.1 QQI Engagement

QQI Office, Tuesday, 19 September 2023, Initial Meeting with QQI

Initial engagement with QQI on IR comprised of a meeting of senior QQI staff with the Registrar, the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager and the Assessment and Awards Manager, alongside other private providers engaging with the process. This was an opportunity to discuss and give feedback on the Terms of Reference for IR, the purpose of IR and to broadly identify possible timelines.

Hibernia College, Wednesday, 18 October 2023, Follow-Up Meeting with QQI

This was followed by a meeting with QQI at Hibernia College, inclusive of a presentation by QQI to the Executive Management Team (EMT) and Programme Directors. This presentation provided an opportunity to initiate IR with senior management actively engaged in the process from the beginning. An indicative timeframe was established, and further clarity was brought to the details of the process, specific to the size and composition of Hibernia College.

Online, Tuesday, 21 November 2023, QQI Peer Learning Event

QQI facilitated a peer learning event with contributions from institutions that have engaged with IR. This provided invaluable insights as to the practicalities around facilitating the panel and writing the required documentation. Peers ranging from Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to universities were present, and the diversity of experience provided useful information for Hibernia College due to size, mode of delivery and position within the wider context. Peer learning is an important aspect of the IR process, and Hibernia College continued to engage informally with members of peer institutions on their experiences and preparations for IR.

Online, Monthly from March 2024, QQI/Hibernia Check-in

There was a monthly meeting with the QQI team facilitating the IR process. This afforded the College an opportunity to seek guidance and support in an informal setting while providing feedback to QQI on their experience thus far. The content of these meetings evolved dependent on the pending deadlines/milestones.

2.3 Institutional Review Steering Committee (IRSC)

Tuesday, 26 September 2023, IRSC Inaugural Planning Day

IR is a detail-driven process and as such requires a focused and sustained approach. An initial 'think in' day was conducted by the Registrar, the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager and the Academic Dean to enable early considerations of how best to facilitate a comprehensive approach to IR.

Key considerations were:

- Key Contributors: Who should be involved in guiding the process?
- Structure: How can a sustainable and inclusive approach be ensured?
- Record Keeping: How can the process be tracked and recorded?

The decision was made to propose to the Academic Board the establishment of an Institutional Review Steering Committee (IRSC) in order to provide oversight and guidance to the process. As a small group, the IRSC can be agile in its fulfilment of purpose and in shifting priorities.

The IRSC was established to guide the planning process. From early engagements with QQI, the importance of establishing a cohesive approach to IR to facilitate the extensive body of work, was apparent.

The primary purposes of the IRSC are to:

- Ensure adherence to the Terms of Reference of Institutional Review
- Facilitate and monitor a collaborative approach
- Enable a cohesive strategy for the development of the required documentation (Institutional Profile and ISER)

The IRSC recognises the value in bringing members of the College community together for robust and challenging dialogue. Therefore, IR is as much a process as an end result and a priority of the IRSC is to facilitate comprehensive engagement.

As a small institution, the decision was made by senior management to keep the permanent membership of the IRSC compact and to draw other members of staff into the process as appropriate through cluster groups. The permanent committee members were invited to join the IRSC based on the professional knowledge and experience they could contribute. In addition to the overall purpose of IRSC, each member had a specific role that supported efficacy. Each of the three key objectives of IR are reflected in these specific roles.

2.3.1 Roles within IRSC

Institutional Coordinator, Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review:

Dr Robin Flynn, Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager, undertook the role of 'first contact point' with QQI in order to facilitate ongoing communication. He also acted as a contact point within Hibernia College to staff across the College. Key to this role was the review of all documentation with a focus on quality assurance, quality standards, process improvements, the HCQF and quality enhancement.

Academic Leadership:

Dr Mary Kelly, Academic Dean, undertook this key role within the IRSC. At the peer learning event, the need to actively engage with all staff, including academic faculty on the programmes, and avoid IR being seen as a 'quality assurance task' was made apparent. The academic leadership role facilitated the IRSC in seeking sustained and willing participation at programme level and as a link with EMT and Board of Directors.

Digital Learning/Design Co-ordinator and Stakeholder Engagement Facilitator:

Irene O'Dowd, Researcher, Digital Learning, was well positioned for this role that recognises the importance of presenting substantive documents in a user-friendly and engaging format using visual supports and multimedia approaches. The role is also a recognition of the opportunity to engage in targeted and specific stakeholder engagements and research for the purpose of IR.

Assessments and Awards Co-ordinator:

Michael O'Leary, Assessment and Awards Manager, facilitated a structured approach to reviewing assessment practices across the College, with a specific focus on the assurance and maintenance of academic integrity.

Editor, Reviewer, Governance and Management Structures:

Elva Casey, College Registrar, engaged in an ongoing editing, writing and review process to facilitate consistency across the documentation. She ensured that the documentation retained a sustained focus on how the management structure facilitates quality assurance of the College and worked with members of the College community across all departments to ensure a substantive and inclusive process.

2.4 IRSC Meetings and Work Plan

The IRSC met at three-week intervals, both online and in person, from Wednesday, 13 December 2023. Up to the point of ISER submission, they had met on 14 separate occasions. Meeting minutes and an action log for all meetings were maintained throughout. A work plan and Terms of Reference were established and approved at the first meeting of the IRSC.

These meetings provided an opportunity for the IRSC to discuss the logistics and operations underlying the development of the ISER, with reference to deadlines and an agreed project plan. They also served as an opportunity to maintain editorial oversight of the developing ISER, its content, the evidence being incorporated, and crucially served to identify potential gaps. One such gap identified during these meetings was the need to ensure that SWOT analysis (Appendix 1) resulted in actionable improvements where weaknesses or threats were identified and that these were incorporated into the relevant sections. Over the development of the ISER, commonalities and themes emerged that served as the basis for the ISER conclusions.

2.5 Drafting and Reviewing

A robust drafting and review process is crucial to ensuring quality, accuracy and effectiveness of written content. The challenges of producing documentation with multiple contributing authors include consistency of tone and content, avoiding unnecessary repetition, ensuring pertinent areas are included and completing tasks in a timely fashion. However, it was essential to balance these challenges with the need to include contributions from across the College community in the development process. The drafting and editing followed the following structure:

Outline Planning

- Review of purpose of documents
- Establishment of an outline plan

  Tuesday, 26 September 2023, IRSC Inaugural Planning Day

  The IRSC met for a planning day to discuss the strategic approach to IR. It agreed on a cluster group structure, whereby each cluster group would be assigned a sub-category within the three objectives of IR. The composition of these cluster groups was decided upon to provide a balance, where possible, between faculty and staff composition.

Initial Drafting

- Development of templates and support documents
- Allocation of tasks to cluster groups
- First drafts

  See sections 3.1 and 3.2.

Revision and Editing

- Initial review by IRSC — for clarity, coherence and relevance
- Peer Review Groups — consistency in tone, style and approach, constructive criticism and quality of evidence
- Final IRSC review — for gaps in content
- Academic Board review and Student Engagement Committee review
- Editing — grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure

  See sections 3.3 to 3.6.

Approval Process

The ISER document was submitted for approval to the following College bodies: the Academic Board, EMT and the Board of Directors. Approval and feedback were received from both the Academic Board and EMT, which was incorporated into the ISER. For the final approval step, the Academic Dean presented the ISER document to the Board of Directors for comment and approval.

2.5.1 Institutional Cluster Groups

November – December 2023, Cluster Group Briefings

Each group was invited to a meeting with two members of the IRSC to discuss the brief assigned to them. A short presentation giving an overview of IR was shared, followed by a Q&A session. A SharePoint area was set up for each cluster group, inclusive of a template and supporting documentation. Additionally, a SWOT analysis process was outlined for each cluster group. A timeframe for the completion of first drafts was agreed upon with each group. A mechanism for review, peer learning and feedback was set up with the facilitation of three sessions across the cluster groups. Feedback was captured through Microsoft Forms and used to inform the editing and review process.

Wednesday, 17 January 2024, ISER Cluster Group Feedback Session

The majority of cluster groups had met with either the Registrar and/or the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager prior to this meeting. Each group had been advised as above. Prior to this meeting, a survey was shared to capture groups' intended date of submission for a draft SWOT and cluster response.

During this meeting, the following topics were discussed:
- Recap of the process
- Review of timelines for the review
- Uniform effectiveness rating scale
- Design/production process for images, figures, tables for cluster responses
- Cluster group requirements for evidence
- Feedback from cluster groups on their experiences thus far

Discussion in the feedback session was largely concerned with the types of evidence cluster groups were using and the scope of the individual cluster groups themselves.

The meeting was recorded and the recording shared.

2.5.2 Evidence Gathering

As part of the feedback session held on Wednesday, 17 January, the requirements of cluster groups with regard to evidence yet to be gathered was collated via Microsoft Forms. Two separate surveys were conducted — one targeting all College employees and one targeting College learners. The surveys were conducted to ascertain staff perspectives on development opportunities and learner feedback on the support infrastructure, respectively.

2.5.3 Editing Cluster Group Responses

Cluster groups submitted their responses under one of three objectives via the project SharePoint site. These responses then underwent a series of editing steps to produce a coherent response in a single narrative voice.

2.5.4 Peer Review

Following the editing of cluster responses, a round of peer-review of the ISER objectives was performed. Members of faculty and staff were identified as peer-reviewers based on their experience and current role profiles and seniority to ensure an even representation of the College community was achieved. Four individuals were asked to review each objective and up to two individuals were asked to review all objectives to ensure a consistent approach to critical appraisal. The terms of reference for the peer-review were set out by the IRSC as follows:

- Has the document addressed the specific Institutional Review objective and guiding questions?
- Are statements made throughout the document supported by relevant evidence, where presented? If you feel more evidence is required in certain sections/areas, please specify.
- Is there a single, coherent narrative voice within the document?
- Is the tone of the document appropriate, i.e. academic and formal?

Peer-reviewers were asked to provide feedback on their specific objective within seven working days via Microsoft Forms (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Peer-Reviewer Response Collection Template

This feedback was collected, collated and discussed by the IRSC, identifying areas for improvement and amendment. Core themes that emerged from the peer-review exercise included:

- Consistency, or lack thereof, in procedures and practices
- Absence of evidence to support known good practice
- Clarity in reporting and communicating structures

Subsequent to the peer-review and drafting processes, the nascent ISER document was then subject to a final editing and review. This editing and review phase was monitored by members of the IRSC, who interacted with members of the editing team daily to address emerging issues or any queries requiring resolution.

2.6 Communication and Engagement

Communication and engagement are integral to developing an ISER that accurately represents Hibernia College and the College community. A robust and inclusive system of communication ensures good and equitable representation. Guiding principles for this communication were:

- Transparency
- Inclusivity
- Clarity
- Consistency
- Collaboration
- Responsiveness

2.6.1 Academic Board

IR was placed as a standing item on the Academic Board agenda to facilitate robust discussion of content and approval of final documentation. A member of IRSC provided an update at each board. There was robust discussion of the IR process, the work involved and the scope of the review during these updates.

2.6.2 Student Engagement Committee

IR was placed as a standing item on the Student Engagement Committee agenda. The Quality, Enhancement and Registrations manager, as a member of IRSC, co-chairs the committee, facilitating regular updates. Learner feedback and input was also sought after each presentation.

An e-learning object was developed in Articulate Rise 360 to share with and inform learners of the progress in the IR process and the associated documentation in development. The development and circulation of these resources was timed to coincide with the submission of the College Institutional Profile. Feedback was encouraged in these communications with the learner community.

In addition to this, a learner feedback session was held on Friday, 26 April 2024 to update learners on progress in the IR process and to solicit feedback on the content, tone and development of the ISER. Feedback from comments collected during the session and immediately afterwards by email submission was used to edit and refine the ISER documentation.

At the point of ISER submission, a further learner engagement session/webinar was scheduled to update the learner community on the purpose and logistics of the main review visit and the role of learners in this step of the IR process.

2.6.3 Staff Engagement

While staff across departments were involved in the cluster groups, early on in the process the IRSC identified the need to keep all staff informed and seek input from across the College. For this purpose, a dedicated SharePoint was set up. This included three videos introducing the process and their role and possible contributions. It was updated by the IRSC throughout. The information on this SharePoint was presented using clear, accessible language and supplemented by images and diagrams.

A number of College-wide engagement events were conducted to ensure that all members of the Hibernia College community were aware of the IR process and work underway by the Staff and Faculty contributing to the IR process:

- Friday, 8 March 2024: Webinar to inform on the progress in developing the Institutional Profile and ISER and the next steps in finalising and submitting these documents
- Friday, 19 April 2024: Webinar to update on the submission of the ISER document and plans to prepare for the panel visit

At the point of ISER submission, two further staff engagement events were scheduled to take place prior to August 2024. These webinars were scheduled to update and inform the College community of the purpose of the planning review visit and the main review visit.

2.7 Conclusions

Undertaking the IR process has allowed members of the Quality Assurance Unit, an assembled IRSC and the wider College community to engage in an in-depth period of review and reflection across a range of topics pertaining to all aspects of the teaching, learning and assessment undertaken by the College. The IR allowed and challenged all members of the College community to expand their perspectives on the scope and potential of a review process beyond programmatic-level reviews. College engagement was positive throughout, and crucial to this was developing a regular and routine means of communication tied to key milestones. This was supported by the development and sharing of permanent resources. Furthermore, a nuanced approach to communication and engagement with the learner community was required and this is reflected in the resources developed for this element of the IR process.

Chapter 3
The Governance System and Quality Management

3.1 The Purpose and Value of Governance

The following two chapters address quality assurance through the lens of governance and the associated policies, procedures and code of practice. The first of these chapters begins by asserting the core ethics and values that guide governance at Hibernia College and details the framework and structures of good governance. It concludes with an outline of how the efficacy of governance can be assessed and assured within the institution. The relevant policies and procedures are presented throughout the chapter. The second governance and quality chapter begins with an overview of the HCQF and the process for developing new policies. The chapter concludes with a focus on areas of significance to the good functioning of the College, including marketing, human resources and learner supports. To illustrate these points, several case studies are provided, with the frequency of these increasing as the narrative shifts from a broad overview of governance to a detailed examination of its practical applications at the granular level.

Good governance arrangements are essential to all institutions of higher education. Governance comprises the systems and procedures, guided by robust policies, by which institutions are organised, directed and controlled. A robust system of governance is vital to ensuring that institutions operate effectively and transparently in the discharge of their duties. Good governance is particularly important in the context of higher education, where the fairness and accountability of practices have an impact on wider society. Governance, supported by the appropriate administrative and quality assurance practices, helps to ensure the College's operations align with best practice. As part of a governance structure, compliance is crucial to ensuring the legal, ethical and effective nature of those practices, the integrity of academic awards and the assurance of public trust. This chapter provides an overview of the governance structure, reporting mechanisms and associated quality management of Hibernia College. In reviewing the structure in place, the cluster review groups have also taken the opportunity to analyse the effectiveness of current practices, to highlight case studies of good practice and to note areas for enhancement or improvement.

3.1.1 The ISER Process for Governance and Quality Management

Governance impacts on all aspects of the College and the performance of duties in relation to learners, staff, faculty and other stakeholders. This chapter highlights the efficacy of good, quality-assured governance arrangements in facilitating appropriate and efficient programme development and review, marketing, engagement with third parties, staffing and recruitment.

The Institutional Review process for Objective 1 included representation from several different College departments, including Academic Faculty, the Marketing Department, the Quality Assurance Unit, the Department of the Registrar, the Assessment and Awards Unit and the Admissions Unit. Student voice, specifically learners involved in governance through the Academic Board, was also actively sought out. For further details on the Institutional Review process, please consult Chapter 2.

3.1.2 Governance Grounded in Ethics

Good governance is governance grounded in ethical underpinnings. Ethics have a foundational role in guiding the practices and policies that characterise effective and responsible governance. The ethical underpinnings of the governance structure of Hibernia College are guided by the College mission statement, values, philosophy and strategic priorities. The Hibernia College Academic Strategy for 2023-2028 outlines these values and priorities and is in line with and supports the governance framework of the College. It offers a clearly articulated ethical foundation to the leadership, strategy and direction of Hibernia College.

The fundamental values espoused by the College and guiding the ethical governance of Hibernia College are:

- Innovation
- Flexible Learning
- Inclusive Practice
- Student-Centred Practice

The mission statement further scaffolds the ethical compass of the College:

> *At Hibernia College, our mission is to empower learners by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, competencies and confidence to become active, agentic and motivated members of society. Through the use of transformative educational approaches in developing and delivering programmes of higher education, the College mission is to make high quality education widely available to a diverse learner population.*

Finally, the College's strategic priorities for the period 2023-2028, outlined below and detailed in the College Academic Strategy, developed in response to the ongoing monitoring, review, and evaluation process, have impact on good governance:

- Technology in Education Integration
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Accreditation
- People, Diversity and Sustainability
- International Profile and Expansion of Programme Portfolio

The impact of strategic priorities (Figure 2) on governance is as follows:

Figure 2: The Impact of Strategic Priorities

Direction Setting: The strategic priorities facilitate the setting of goals for the College, and this influences governance by aligning the efforts and decisions of governing authorities with the priorities to ensure the College's mission and values are realised.

Decision-Making: Governance involves critical decision-making about College operations, the provision of academic programmes, learner engagement and staffing requirements. Strategic priorities guide these decisions to ensure they are made in line with best ethical practice.

Resource Allocation: Strategic priorities influence how resources are allocated, budgets planned for and where investment should be prioritised. The focus on technology in education and internationalisation in the strategic priorities, guides governing authorities towards allocating funding in the direction of transformative technology, research projects and collaborations on technology and generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in education. Training for staff on supporting international learners is also prioritised based on the strategic priorities.

Risk Management: Strategic priorities enable Hibernia College to identify and manage risks that may have an impact on the pursuit of those priorities. Mitigation against those risks is prioritised by academic governance through the Academic Board in the pursuit of projects such as the development of the Framework to Support International Learners.

Accountability and Compliance: Governance is responsible for ensuring that Hibernia College operates in compliance with legal, statutory and ethical standards. Strategic priorities related to quality assurance, enhancement and accreditation in tandem with priorities regarding people, diversity and sustainability can influence governance practices and the policies to uphold these values.

The ethical grounding of the College is suitably and transparently established in the College Academic Strategy and strategic priorities to support the system of governance.

3.2 Policies and Procedures Mapped to Strategic Priorities

The College has also developed policies that ensure both institutional and programme-level review. The quality framework (HCQF) is discussed in the next chapter; however, specific policies and procedures relevant to the strategic priorities are noted here. Enhancement is undertaken in a coherent, timely and effective fashion contributing to new activities designed to meet the goals of the College's strategic priorities while also safeguarding ongoing activities.

Several quality assurance policies and procedures can be mapped to each of the identified strategic priorities. As part of this ISER process, the cluster group considered the efficacy of each of these in the context of strategic priorities and reviewed the version history of each to assess changes made as part of the HCQF review process. The cluster group considered efficacy in relation to whether the policies and procedures were SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) and ranked each policy and/or procedure on a scale of 1 to 5 from 'not at all effective' to 'extremely effective' (Appendix 2). Furthermore, outside of the ISER process, these policies and procedures were all brought to the Academic Board for discussion and approval and were subject to a thorough review process. Oversight and approval of all policies and procedures by the Academic Board are fundamental tenets upon which transparent and ethical governance is maintained.

Integration of Technology into Education

Relevant QA policies and procedures to ensure goals under this priority are met include:

Ongoing Monitoring of Online or Blended Learning Programmes Policy

Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Policy

Open Access Self-Archiving of Research Policy

Procedure for Open Access Self-Archiving of Research

Regulations for Synchronous Online Examinations

Design of Programmes and Curricula for a Blended or Online Environment Policy

Principles for the Acceptable Use of Generative AI in the Assessment Process

Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Online Environment Policy

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Strategy, as approved by the Academic Board, serves as an underpinning framework for this priority. Multiple relevant QA policies and procedures can be mapped to this priority to ensure that goals are met. These include:

Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Policy

Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Procedure

Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Extenuating Circumstances Procedure

Appeals Policy

Appealing a College Decision Procedure

Assessment, Grading and Certification Policy

Access, Transfer and Progression Policy

Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Accreditation

Relevant QA policies and procedures to ensure goals under this priority are met include:

The Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF) Policy

Preparing for External Quality Assurance Peer-Review Panel Reviews Guidelines

Monitoring and Review of the Hibernia College Quality Framework Procedure

Governance and Management Policy

Cyclical Review of Hibernia College - An Institutional Review Policy

Cyclical Review Procedure

Corporate Governance Code

Academic Board Terms of Reference

People, Diversity and Sustainability

Relevant QA policies and procedures to ensure goals under this priority are met include:

Academic Board Terms of Reference

Admissions Policy

Appeals Policy

Governance and Management Policy

Establishing Overarching Standards for Student Conduct Policy

Student Charter

Student Complaints Policy

Student Support Policy

Engagement and Management of Adjunct Faculty Policy

International Profile

Ongoing work within the Academic Board and the Department of the Registrar has given rise to the Framework for Collaborative and Transnational Provision. This has been granted conditional approval by the Academic Board subject to QQI approval. This framework was developed with consultation from the Executive Management Team (EMT) to help meet this strategic priority.

Expansion of Programme Portfolio

Relevant QA policies and procedures to ensure goals under this priority are met include:

Design of Programmes and Curricula for a Blended or Online Environment Policy

Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Online Environment Policy

Obtaining Initial Approval to Develop a New Programme Procedure

Full Development and Final Approval of a New Programme Procedure

As above, the Framework for Collaborative and Transnational Provision, when fully implemented, will be crucial to delivering this strategic priority.

3.3 The Governance Context and Structure

This section outlines the legislative context of Hibernia College as a private institution, the governance structure, framework and the principles upon which it is built. All institutions of education have ethical, moral and societal responsibilities to be guided by appropriate and proportionate governance structures. As a private institution of education, Hibernia College also has responsibility to the Board of Directors and all stakeholders to continue to function as a viable and sustainable company.

3.3.1 The Legislative and Statutory Context

Irish company law regulates how the company, Hibernia College Unlimited, functions and it underpins the Hibernia College Corporate Governance Code. As a company established for the primary purpose of designing and providing programmes of education and training, some of which lead to awards of the Irish State as well as professional bodies, its governance infrastructure is designed to reflect this distinctiveness and associated regulatory requirements. The Companies Act 2014 (revised 2018) is the primary piece of legislation with which Hibernia College Unlimited must comply.

As a provider of higher education leading to awards of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), Hibernia College Unlimited must also comply with policy and regulation developed by QQI under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

Hibernia College fully adopts the governance and management requirements as identified in QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) and in QQI's Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016). These principles form the basis of Hibernia College's approach to governance and management and are manifested in the HCQF.

3.4 The Governance Framework

The governance framework is built around two key policies within the HCQF — the Governance and Management Policy and the Corporate Governance Code. These are supported by a range of area-specific policies and procedures, documented below.

The Governance and Management Policy

This policy describes the Hibernia College management structure and outlines the structures in place to effectively enable the interrelationship between corporate and academic governance functions. It also articulates the principles by which Hibernia College is governed and identifies the key boards, committees and positions and their regulatory context.

The Corporate Governance Code

The Corporate Governance Code sets out the governance infrastructure of Hibernia College Unlimited, including the role of the Board of Directors, matters for decision of the Board, the statement of strategy and relationships with shareholders. It specifically states that there should be a dialogue with shareholders based on the mutual understanding of objectives and that the Board has responsibility for ensuring that a satisfactory dialogue with shareholders takes places. Key stakeholders include professional bodies, such as the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) and the Teaching Council, learners and potential educational collaborative partners.

3.4.1 Principles for Good Governance

Comprehensive and robust arrangements to ensure management and governance structures are proportionate and appropriate to support education and training activities and the general operations of Hibernia College are based on the principles (Figure 3) of:

Figure 3: The Principles of Good Governance

Separation of Responsibilities

The separation of academic and corporate management and oversight is a fundamental aspect of the governance structure of Hibernia College. This governance structure ensures separation of responsibilities between those who produce and develop material(s) and those who approve them (enforced via the [Hibernia College Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Online Environment Policy](#)). Within the governance structure of the College, there are distinct units whose responsibility it is to make decisions and other units whose responsibility it is to approve them.

Consequently, there is a clear division of responsibilities between leading and managing the Board of Directors, the Academic Board and the executive responsibility for running the company as fulfilled by the Executive Management Team (EMT). Distribution of responsibilities extends to the Board of Directors formally delegating all authority of academic decision-making to the Academic Board. The nature of the decisions is provided in the [Academic Board Terms of Reference](#) approved by the Board of Directors.

Separation of responsibilities is fundamental to the governance of Hibernia College. In completing the review of the governance structure for the ISER process, the cluster group makes the recommendation for ongoing review of the efficacy of separation and communication between the Academic Board, the EMT and the Board of Directors, as well as the implementation of more formal reporting structures. In response to this recommendation, an initial and detailed review proposal, following expert external consultation was presented to the EMT by the Academic Dean. The next step will be to develop a detailed implementation plan and timeframe.

Transparency

The HCQF, inclusive of [Academic Board Terms of Reference](#), is publicly accessible, thus facilitating full transparency of policies and procedures including the [Corporate Governance Code](#) and [Governance and Management Policy](#). All learners are given at least one cohort group session by a member of the Department of the Registrar team, outlining the purpose, content and accessibility of the HCQF and the mechanisms for giving feedback on it. Clear decision-making and follow-up and systematic formal decision-making procedures are built into the College's various evaluative mechanisms, including the procedures for oversight of such mechanisms by the governance system or equivalent. Management acts on the self-evaluation findings. This cluster group has recommended that learners are offered additional sessions throughout their studies on the HCQF and its role in their learner journey. This recommendation has been accepted and enacted with the Department of the Registrar offering all Programme Directors the opportunity to nominate multiple points of engagement across their programmes of study.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance procedures for governance, management, recruitment and staff progression are developed in the context of all education and training activities and related services provided by Hibernia College. This includes those education and training activities leading to awards of awarding bodies other than QQI, such as professional bodies and local provider provision, so that the overall commitments of staff are taken into account by the College.

Quality assurance systems include procedures that ensure:

Procedures	Example from Hibernia College
A system of governance where governance objectives are aligned with strategic objectives/priorities	[Corporate Governance Code](#) Hibernia College Strategy 2023-2028 [Governance and Management Policy](#)
A quality assurance system that is owned by the College and with appropriate quality assurance procedures that support the College as a legal entity	[Hibernia College Quality Framework](#) [Corporate Governance Code](#)
A system of governance that protects the integrity of academic processes and standards	[Academic Board Terms of Reference](#) [Corporate Governance Code](#) [Governance and Management Policy](#)
A system of governance that considers risk	[Governance and Management Policy](#) Risk Register Risk Register Training and SOPs Risk Register approved by the Academic Board work plan
A system of governance that considers the results of internal and external evaluation	[Academic Board Terms of Reference](#) [Cyclical Review of Hibernia College - An Institutional Review Policy](#) [Cyclical Review Procedure](#)

Table 1: Quality Assurance Systems and Governance

Learner Engagement and Participation

Learner participation in the Academic Board across academic programmes as ex officio members further supports transparency of proceedings and provides a structure for accountability and collaborative decision-making practices. While this is deemed highly appropriate by the cluster group, there is significant potential to increase and incentivise learner participation in the Academic Board. Initial steps to do this are underway, as exemplified in the case study below.

Case Study
Learner Engagement at the Academic Board

Sustaining and attracting learner engagement in matters outside of their programmes of study can be particularly challenging in a blended or online environment. There are multiple reasons for this, including the fact that the more mature learner, who often favours this form of study, may experience conflicting priorities due to other commitments. Learner representation at the Academic Board is key to ensuring that the learner voice contributes to decisions that impact on Hibernia College and programmes of study. Consequently, an enhancement measure identified by the Academic Board through the review process was the need to encourage attendance and participation by learners. The Quality Assurance Unit has prioritised the development of supports for learners who may have an interest in taking on a role on the Academic Board but lack the confidence to do so. The College recognises that this lack of confidence can come from learners feeling that they do not have the formal language, experience or knowledge required. The Quality Assurance Unit reaches out to learners, using accessible and plain English, on a regular basis to welcome contributions and conversation. Learners are offered training, supports and advice on taking on a role in the College, including one-to-one communication. After discussion at the Academic Board of what could make the Academic Board more quantifiable, tangible and, therefore, appealing, consensus emerged that an in-person element could lead to better engagement. A very successful pilot in-person meeting was held in December 2023. Following that, a full-day, in-person meeting of the Academic Board is scheduled twice per year at which learner representation is actively sought.

Feedback from learners attending the Academic Board included the following from Hannah, a learner on the PME in Primary Education programme:

'I found the Academic Board very interesting and insightful. I found it great as it showed me how the College works on a level, we, as students, don't often see. I learned a lot from the experience. I enjoyed being able to share my experiences in the College and give my opinion and share my voice about different matters. It was a great experience that I would sign up to again.'

3.4.2 Governance Structure and Reporting Mechanisms

Good governance is enabled by the facilitation of a dispersed but defined structure of governance with a clearly articulated body responsible for academic matters (the Academic Board) and a separate body with responsibility for corporate functions (the Board of Directors). For the Academic Board and the Board of Directors to be effective, the maintenance of a constructive and challenging working relationship is essential. The Board of Directors, as the governing authority of the College, is responsible for the resources, general business and corporate strategic direction of Hibernia College. It delegates to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) the day-to-day running of the College. The EMT is appointed by the CEO to assist and advise in decision-making on matters not reserved to the Board of Directors or the Academic Board. These relationships are illustrated in Figure 4.
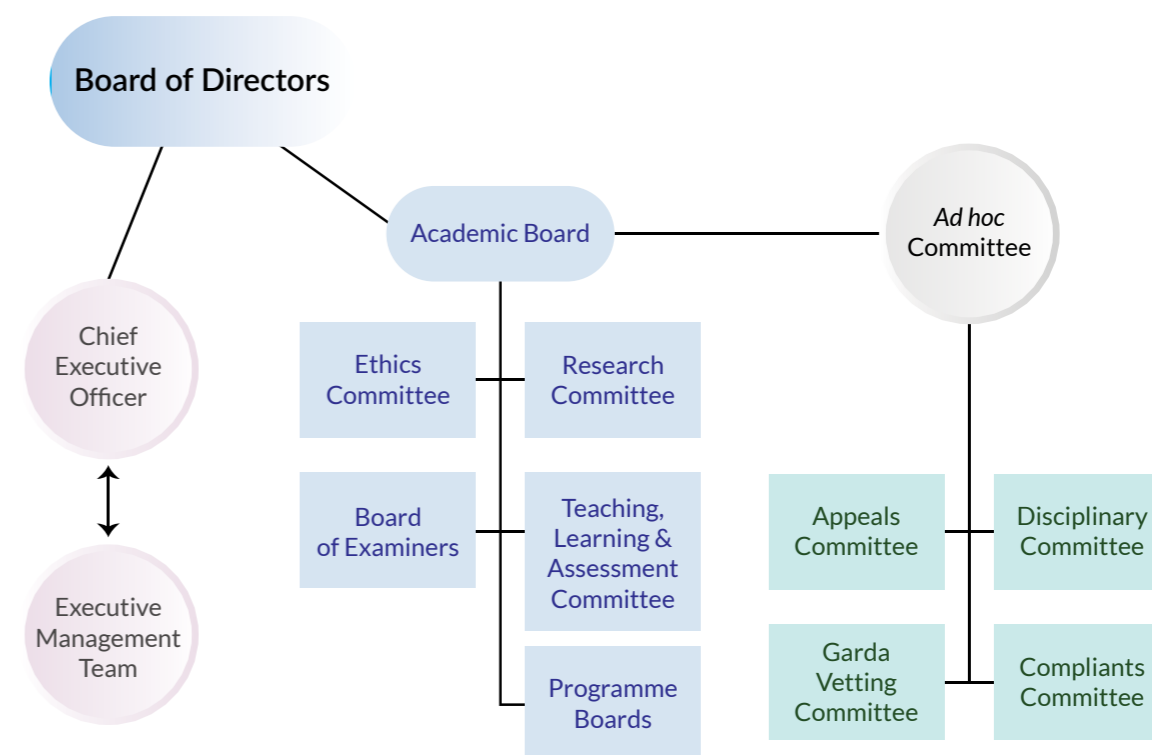
Figure 4: The Governance and Management Policy

Whilst the maintenance of separation is integral to the integrity of the College and its decision-making processes, it is acknowledged that academic decisions impact corporate governance and vice versa; therefore, effective structures for formalised interactions between these bodies are crucial. This is achieved by ensuring membership of the Academic Board is represented on the EMT (the Academic Dean) and regular and formal communication between the CEO and the Chair of the Academic Board is maintained. The use of joint committees for specific tasks, e.g. Joint Programme Committees (JPCs), further enables the delicate balance between academic autonomy, delegated responsibility and management oversight.

The separation of responsibilities with respect to governance is important to ensure that the Academic Board remains focused on delivering the academic and educational mission of the College, while the Board of Directors and the EMT remain focused on the corporate and fiscal responsibilities of the College. During the establishment and delivery of programmes, especially through collaborative provision, there will be a need for regular and clear communication to ensure operation tasks can be completed in a timely fashion. The JPC enables shared decision-making across the corporate and academic spectrum. The newly proposed Master of Science in Corporate Governance programme, delivered jointly by Hibernia College with the Accountancy School, is required to establish a JPC. In preparation for a validation panel review and in advance of the admissions cycle commencing for the first cohort, the JPC has been formed and the membership confirmed. At the first meeting of the Corporate Governance JPC, co-Chairs were elected, terms of reference were discussed and approved, a schedule of meetings was agreed, and a committee work plan was agreed and approved. A clear remit and function of the committee has been established to enshrine shared governance for the programme between the two partners and assure that the balance of academic autonomy and corporate responsibility is fair, honest and transparent.

3.4.2.1 The Academic Board

The Academic Board is the primary academic decision-making body in Hibernia College and has responsibility for the formulation of strategy and policy to meet the College's education and research objectives, learner enrolment, programme design, development and review and assessment of learners, as well as maintenance of academic standards and quality. It fulfils the regulatory requirement set out by QQI to establish appropriate academic governance. Members of the Academic Board are elected, appointed or nominated, as outlined in the Academic Board terms of reference. An expectation of full attendance is made clear to all members. The composition of the Academic Board includes senior academic representation (Academic Dean, Programme Directors), quality assurance leadership (Registrar, Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager), representation across all subcommittees, Faculty, Adjunct Faculty, Digital Learning, Student Support, and learner representation. The Academic Dean chairs the Academic Board. The role of Secretary of Academic Board is held by the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager.

When a new member is appointed to the Academic Board, they receive clarification of their duties. However, a survey conducted by the Quality Assurance Unit of Academic Board members (March 2024) has revealed that training and induction is an area for development. Consequently, the Quality Assurance Unit has developed training material and is in the process of developing a training schedule.

The Academic Board provides annual reports to the Board of Directors and EMT and requires annual reports from all subcommittees (Appendix 1). Detailed minutes are maintained by the board secretary and circulated for approval to all members. Agendas and associated documentation are distributed at least five working days prior to meetings and made available to all members. An annual work plan is agreed at the commencement of every year (Appendix 1). This process is rated as highly efficient by this cluster review process due to its efficiency and streamlined nature, supported by documentation.

As per Section D of the Terms of Reference, the Academic Board must undertake an evaluation and review exercise on a cyclical basis. As part of this, a survey instrument was designed for completion by members of the Academic Board (Appendix 2). The survey was distributed via Microsoft Forms, and board members were given a two-week period to complete. As the survey period coincided with the election of new members to the Board, both members stepping down from seats and those assuming new seats were surveyed. Board members were asked to anonymously rate their satisfaction or perception of effectiveness with the Academic Board across 24 statements covering the following areas:

- Role and Function of the Academic Board
- Oversight by the Academic Board
- Effectiveness of the Academic Board

Although the overall survey response rate was modest, satisfaction was high with 100% of board members expressing their satisfaction with 9 of 18 statements related to the function, role and oversight that the Academic Board has.

Areas where the Academic Board functions appropriately and is recognised as positive include:

- Follow-up by the Academic Board in relation to matters or issues that arise during the meetings or business of the Academic Board

- Awareness of relevant internal and external information to support Academic Board decision-making
- Compliance with both internal and external Quality Assurance requirements
- Maintenance of academic standards and quality in existing programmes
- Delivery of appropriate learner experience
- Setting and maintaining the correct tone and culture of the College

Areas identified as requiring improvement, include:

- Delineation of the function of the Academic Board with regard to the role of the CEO/EMT
- Demarcation of the modes of communication between the Academic Board and the Board of Directors
- The role of the Academic Board in overseeing the development or approval of new programmes of study
- The role of the Academic Board in setting, promoting and implementing the College strategy, mission and vision

The outcomes of the survey inform enhancements of the functioning, oversight and effectiveness of the Academic Board. A summary of the anonymised results of the survey was presented to the Academic Board for consideration and several actions were proposed and approved, including:

Action 1: Arrange for an external party to undertake focused interviews with members of the Academic Board and a cross-section of subcommittee members to gain a deeper understanding of the trends that are evident in this survey.

Action 2: An induction session will be held on an annual basis moving forward for new or continuing board members and the relevant material made available to all board members through the appropriate SharePoint site.

Action 3: Development needs assessment to be undertaken with a view to identifying specific areas in which Board Members may feel they are lacking certain skills and arrange for outsourced training where skills are absent and essential to the performance of the Board.

Action 4: Prepare a comprehensive introduction to the Academic Board and its functions for presentation to the CEO of Hibernia College.

3.4.2.2 Committees of the Academic Board

Committees of the Academic Board (Figure 5) undertake their functions in line with the Academic Board Terms of Reference and committee-specific terms of reference.
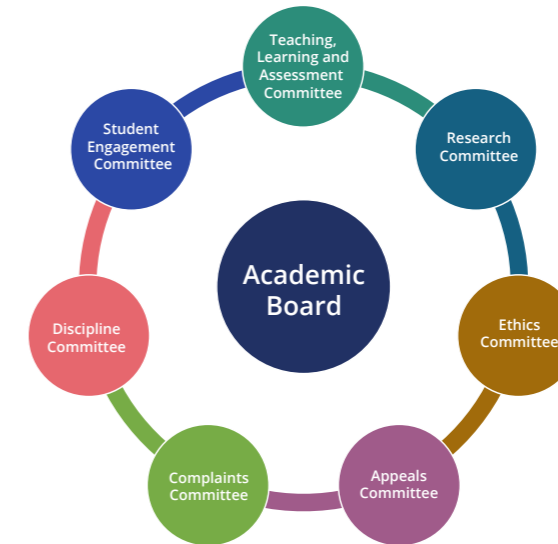
Figure 5: The Committees of the Academic Board

The Academic Board committees are:

Board of Examiners: The committee with responsibility for decision-making for summative assessment decisions, as well as decisions related to the recommendations of assessors. Supported by standard operating procedures (SOPs) and minutes recorded and documented. Guided by the Board of Examiners Terms of Reference.

Ethics Committee: The committee with responsibility for guiding the College community and the Academic Board on approaches to ethical teaching, research and scholarship. The Ethics Committee grants ethical approval for research conducted by Staff, Faculty and third parties seeking to conduct research in the College community. Guided by the Ethics Committee Terms of Reference.

Research Committee: The committee with responsibility for guiding the Academic Board and the College community in strategy, policy and approach to research activity in the College. Guided by the Research Committee Terms of Reference.

Programme Board: The committee with responsibility for academic decision-making and design of a specific programme. There is a single programme board per programme and this is chaired by the Programme Director. Guided by the Programme Board Terms of Reference.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Committee: The committee with responsibility for guiding the Academic Board and the College community in strategy, policy and approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Guided by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee Terms of Reference.

Appeals Complaints, Garda Vetting and Discipline Committees: These are distinct committees with responsibility for overseeing the appeal, complaints, garda vetting

as well as discipline policies and procedures. They are convened as required by the Academic Dean or the Registrar as prescribed within their own specific policies or procedures. Guided by the [Appealing a College Decision Procedure](#), [Student Complaints Investigation Procedure](#), [Garda Vetting Procedure](#) and [Breaches of Standards for Student Conduct Investigation and Management Procedure](#).

Training for committee members is delivered by the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager on a regular basis. A recent self-assessment exercise facilitated by the Quality Assurance (QA) Unit asked committee members to rate their own efficacy. This has been utilised in developing more targeted and user-friendly training and supports.

Case Study
Hibernia College Governance Elections

Biennially, Hibernia College reviews its academic governance committee structure. This review identifies seats that are currently available and those seats expiring on the academic governance committees that are eligible to hold elections — the Academic Board, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee, Ethics Committee and the Research Committee. Each committee is composed of members of the College's adjunct faculty, faculty, staff and learner bodies. The most recent elections, in 2024, focused on the committees' adjunct faculty, faculty and staff representatives.

The first notification distributed to the College's adjunct faculty, faculty and staff bodies was an open invitation calling for nominations. There were 27 responses of interest from 660 candidates, giving a response rate of 4%. The breakdown of the response was 21 adjunct faculty members, three faculty members and three staff members. Six members of adjunct faculty were nominated for appointment to the Academic Board, thirteen nominated for appointment to the TLA Committee, three nominated for appointment to the Research Committee and one nominated for appointment to the Ethics Committee. Two members of Faculty and two staff members were nominated for appointment to the Academic Board.

As the number of adjunct faculty nominated to the TLA Committee exceeded the number of available seats, an election was called, as per the College's Elections and Appointments to Governance Committees Procedure. The online election was held over a seven-day period in February 2023 with a voter turnout rate of 17%.

Following the election period, the College successfully filled all available seats on its academic governance committees.

3.4.2.3 The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors has a clear mandate, functions, roles and responsibilities. It is collectively responsible for leading and directing the company's activities. The Board is also responsible for holding the Chief Executive Officer and EMT accountable for the effective performance of their responsibilities.

Key functions include:

- Reviewing and guiding the strategic direction of the College
- Creating and monitoring action plans for any significant changes
- Risk management oversight
- Annual budgets and business plans
- Setting performance objectives
- Monitoring implementation and company performance
- Overseeing major capital expenditure and investment decisions
- Overseeing the Executive Management Team
- Monitoring and reviewing effectiveness

The Board is responsible for the following oversight and assurance responsibilities:

Leadership: Prudent and effective leadership that enables risk to be assessed and managed

Ethical Standards: Ensuring that leadership and management practices are credible and trustworthy

Compliance: Retains responsibility to ensure that academic decision-making is independent of commercial considerations through the maintenance of separate entities of the Academic Board and the Board of Directors with clearly defined functions

Collective Responsibility: All Board members are afforded the opportunity to fully contribute to Board deliberations and, where necessary, to provide constructive challenge.

Board Oversight: The Board of Directors takes all necessary steps to make themselves aware of any relevant information and to access all information as necessary.

The Board of Directors maintains a formal schedule of matters specifically reserved for it to ensure that the direction of the Company is clearly formulated.

This schedule includes:

- Significant acquisitions, disposals and retirement of assets of the company or its subsidiaries, as well as investments and capital projects
- Delegated authority levels, treasury policy and risk management policies
- Approval of terms of major contracts

- Approval of annual budgets and corporate plans
- Approval of annual reports and financial statements
- Consideration of periodic reports from the Academic Board
- Appointment, remuneration and assessment of the performance of, and succession planning for, the CEO
- Significant amendments to the staff remuneration and other benefits

3.4.2.4 The Executive Management Team (EMT)

The EMT is appointed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to assist in decision-making on College matters not reserved to the Board of Directors or the Academic Board. This includes the implementation of the strategic plan and resource planning.

Membership of EMT:

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The CEO has the responsibility of ensuring that the day-to-day running of the College and its performance is in accordance with the strategic goals that the Board of Directors has determined. Working with the EMT, the CEO monitors and directs the College's activities for business development, College performance, quality, culture, risk and compliance. The CEO works with the support of the EMT and is accountable to the Board of Directors.

Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

The CFO is responsible for overseeing all financial planning, transactions and reporting activities, and has responsibility for compliance with statutory fiscal requirements such as audit, accounting records, tax management and planning. The CFO also acts as Company Secretary on behalf of the Board of Directors.

Academic Dean

The Academic Dean is the senior academic leader of the College and has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the College's academic strategy. The Academic Dean takes lead responsibility for effective academic governance to ensure compliance with legal and statutory requirements in respect of the provision of programmes and services to students.

As a member of the Executive Management Team, the Academic Dean works with all departmental heads and the Registrar in the promotion of the quality of developed programmes and assuring and maintaining standards in College services to students.

Director of IT

The Director of IT is responsible for all technical areas of the College — internal and external. Responsibilities include management of internal and external IT applications, licencing and purchasing within the IT department, and the use of technology to enhance the e-learning quality of College programmes.

Head of Digital Learning

The Head of Digital Learning ensures that the student learning experience is prioritised within the College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy through the ongoing evaluation and implementation of new technologies and online pedagogies.

The Academic Leadership Team

The Registrar is a member of the Academic Board and reports to the Academic Dean as part of the Academic Leadership Team (ALT). The Programme Directors are also members of the ALT. The Registrar is responsible for ensuring the academic integrity of the College and leading the development and overseeing the implementation of the HCQF. Responsibilities include College-wide developments such as policy review, strategic collaborations, organisational change and consulting on national policy.

3.5 Assessing Efficacy of Governance

Assessing governance effectiveness addresses the question: Does the governing structure support and add value to the institution's effectiveness? Value added by the governing structure is not synonymous with institutional performance. It is specific to the assurance of stability, the attainment of strategic objectives within a financially sound framework and the assurance, internally and externally, of sound practices. Hibernia College is aware of the centrality of periodic review and self-evaluation to effective practices. The College prioritises the continual enhancement of its governance system and welcomes external input. This is exemplified by practices such as the holding of a workshop for Academic Board members (February 2023) with Dr Deirdre Stritch, Director and Senior Consultant at ThreeSixtyInsights focused on enhancing practices. Further recent examples of confidence in self-evaluation and remediation practices include the surveying of Academic Board members to determine their levels of confidence and preparedness in relation to their roles and responsibilities of the Academic Board.

3.5.1 Categories of Efficacy

The efficacy of governance has been considered by the cluster group under the categories of characteristics, outcomes and enablers.

3.5.1.1 Characteristics

In good governance structures, the culture, behaviours and values of the institution guide the practices and decision-making of the Board of Directors, the Academic Board and the EMT. These determine the characteristics of the institution.

The Hibernia College Academic Strategy 2023-2028 was approved by the Academic Board and shared with the EMT and the Board of Directors for comments and discussion. It clearly sets out the culture, values, philosophy and mission of the College. The characteristics of the College are transparently conceptualised and communicated both internally and externally.

3.5.1.2 Outcomes

Outcomes of good governance include good management of performance and associated risks. Thus, within a good governance structure, risks are managed appropriately and transparently to assure positive outcomes. As outlined in the Governance and Management Policy and Corporate Governance Code, Hibernia College maintains a risk register subject to cyclical review. The purpose of the risk register is to identify, agree and record potential risks that could impact the effectiveness and compliance of the College and to plan to mitigate those risks going forward. It is used to record risks and priorities, allocate ownership and identify current controls in place and future actions required.

Case Study
An Outcome: The Risk Register
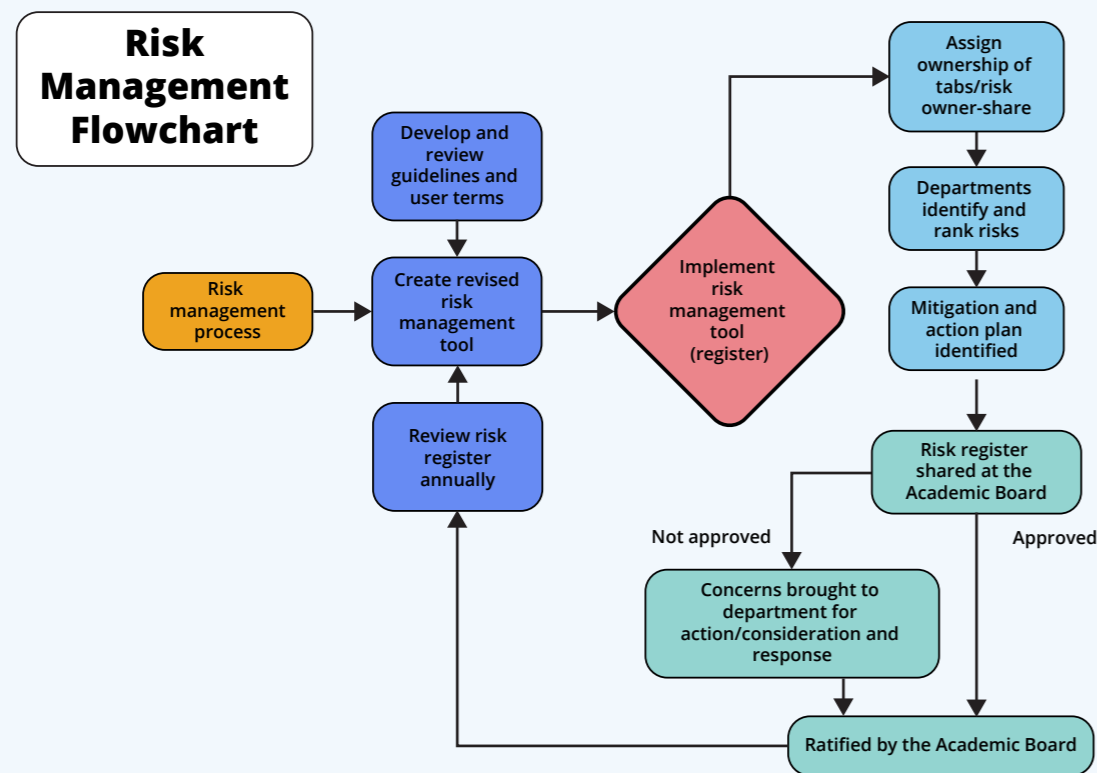
Figure 6: The Institutional Risk Management Process

Risk management (Figure 6) involves a cyclical approach to identifying, assessing, prioritising risks and developing and implementing action plans. Following external consultation with ThreeSixtyInsights, a recommendation was made to review the risk process within Hibernia College. The COVID-19 pandemic and adaptions made over this time have had an impact on risk factors within institutions and it was, therefore, timely to review the process.

The Registrar and Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager developed standard operating procedures, a new risk template and training and support material to enhance the risk process. They also delivered risk sessions to all risk managers. Roles in the risk process were clarified and responsibilities outlined in more detail. The risk reporting mechanism to the Academic Board was reviewed and made more specific, with particular risk reporting sessions written into the Academic Board work plan and agendas.

The Risk Register specifically addresses the following areas:

- Registry
- Finance and Corporate Governance
- Digital Learning Department
- Programme Level
- People and HR
- Student Support
- IT Infrastructure
- Business and Marketing
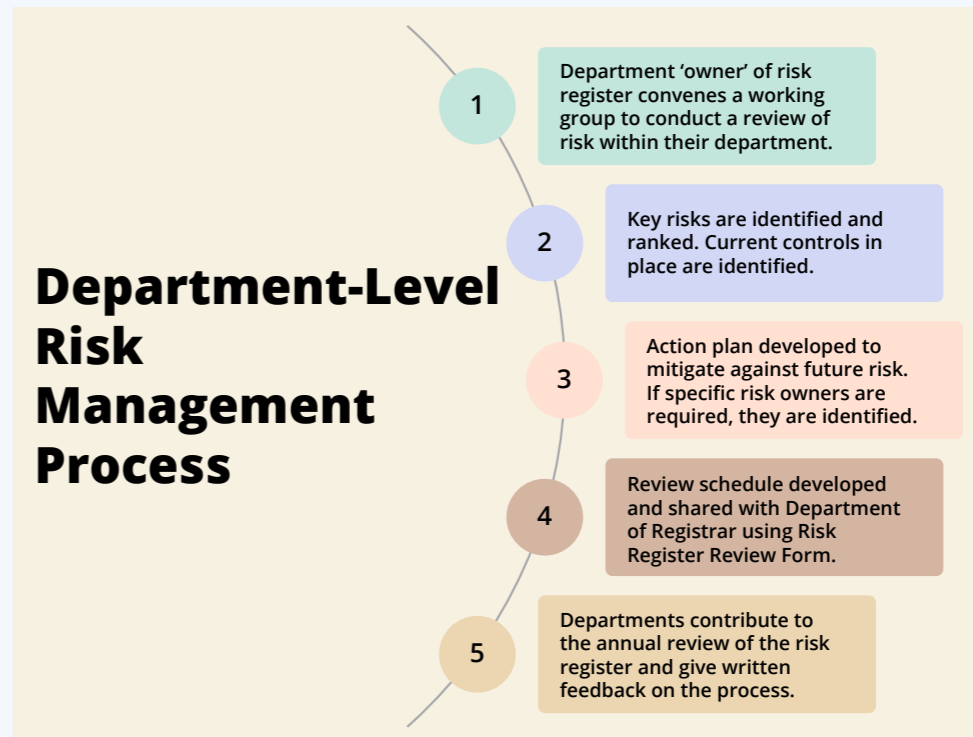
Figure 7: Department-Level Risk Management Process

Within each department, ownership of the risk management (Figure 7) process is assigned to a senior manager. Working alongside key members of staff, they identify and rank the different risks within their department and update the register accordingly. Each department is required to decide

upon a regular review and updating schedule to ensure the information within the risk register is relevant and appropriate. This schedule is shared by each department with the Department of the Registrar, using the Risk Register Review Schedule Form. An annual review of the register itself, the information therein and the guidance provided, facilitated by the Department of the Registrar, is also conducted and shared with the Academic Board. An established SOP guides best practice across departments. Due to the comprehensive nature of the supports, training and documentation as well as improving reporting processes, this newly developed risk management process is rated highly effective by the review cluster group.

3.5.1.3 Enablers

The primary enablers of governance are well-established and enacted policies, structures and processes. This section looks at the policies, procedures and supporting documents that act as enablers to good governance. Consultation, collaboration and co-design of these policies and procedures aid transparency and visibility in governance. The comprehensive review of the HCQF, detailed below, exemplifies the inclusion of enabling indictors. Policy concepts inform the setting of parameters and discourse. Stakeholders, including learners, faculty and staff across all departments and collaborative partners, were widely consulted using cluster groups across the review process. Following the extensive review of a given policy or procedure and approval of amendments by the Academic Board, learners were immediately informed of any updates and access is maintained to previous versions through the publicly accessible HCQF and version tracking.

Case Study
An Enabler: the Process for Developing Policies and Procedures to Address GenAI Challenges

The subject of academic integrity and the promotion of cultures of good and sustainable academic practices has moved from the realm of academics and administrators to the public forum in recent years. This is due in part to widespread and often sensationalist media coverage of advances in generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), particularly the launch of ChatGPT in 2022. For policies and procedure in academic integrity to be impactful, a move away from generalised concerns and towards mutual recognition by faculty, administrators and students that there is a problem in the status quo is required. Hibernia College recognises that all stakeholders must be in possession of a shared motivation to solve that problem. Furthermore, Hibernia College has made use of the processes for developing policies and procedures within the College to address these challenges.

Academic integrity is more than the avoidance of academic misconduct. When reduced to this simplistic interpretation it is likely to continue to remain within the domain of the 'enforcers' rather than engage the interest of all stakeholders, including students, in the creation of cultures of integrity. For academic integrity to enhance cultures of integrity and justice, a balance of the pursuit of fairness and justice with humanity, compassion and empathy is essential. This rationale, that academic integrity belongs to the culture and community of institutions, informs the approach the College has taken to collaboratively developing polices through a community approach.

Unfortunately, policies and procedures informing and guiding academic integrity within institutions are often perceived as inaccessible and confusing by the very students who need to engage with them. In devising policies on academic integrity, they are only beneficial when interwoven with the institutional culture and further connected to the learning and growth outcomes of students. This leads to the vision of a system that supports all students, particularly those who are vulnerable. Even when students contravene policies or act without integrity, the intent is to continue to help and support the students back onto the pathway to academic success.

In response to the emerging challenges and opportunities presented by GenAI, Hibernia College embarked on a highly collaborative and inclusive process to develop principles for the use of GenAI in the assessment process. This involved a Community of Practice (CoP) with representation from across all College departments and the learner body (Figure 8) discussing the challenges and sharing opinions and learning. The CoP is aimed at fostering a

mutual, collaborative and sustainable approach to the emerging challenges to academic integrity in the face of GenAI. The primary purpose of the CoP is to foster a network within the institution to enable culture enhancement, with a specific focus on the need to support and include more vulnerable students. Some of the considerable outputs to date of the CoP include the development of an Academic Integrity Champions Network, new policies and principles to guide best practice in academic integrity and the development of the Case Investigator role.
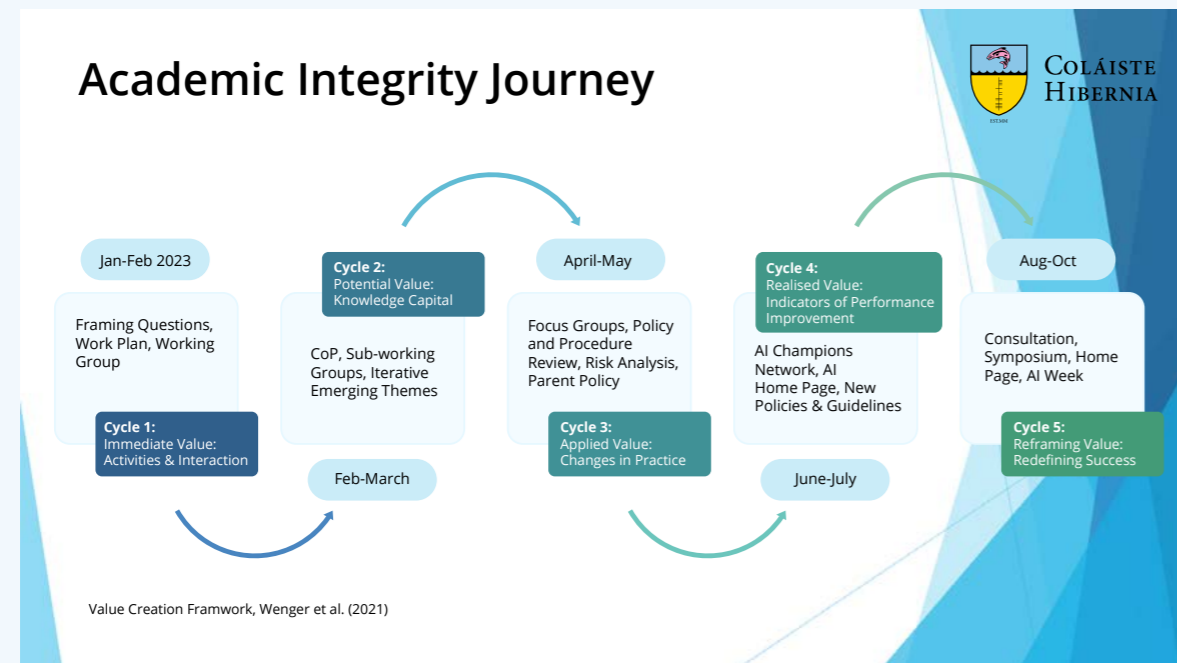
Figure 8: The Community of Practice

A subgroup of the CoP was tasked with developing draft wording for a new GenAI policy and principles, which was reviewed by the CoP and shared with the learner body for discussion. This was finally presented to the Academic Board for discussion and approval.

3.6 Conclusions

In this first exploration of the College governance system, the ethics and ethos of governance are introduced and positioned relative to both the position of the College within a wider sectoral context and the internal management structures of the College. The policies and procedures grounding and providing a quality framework that supports and enables the College Academic Strategic Plan are introduced. The separation of responsibilities and identification of bodies and roles specific to academic and corporate governance are described. **On balance, the effectiveness of these arrangements is rated as Highly Effective**.

A review of efforts to promote inclusive and balanced governance is provided and details of how shared decision-making can be conducted while remaining sensitive to the separation of responsibilities. Self-assessment and external assessment of the efficacy of the Academic Board and risk management, respectively, are presented. The outcomes of these exercises demonstrate the College capacity for self-evaluation and continuous enhancement.

Concentrated efforts will be made to increase involvement of all College community members in the governance structures. This will be supplemented by improvements in the training provided and increasing the skill sets of all governance committee members. This process is already underway.

Elsewhere, required improvements are noted in the communication between individuals with decision-making responsibility and the decision-making bodies of the College.

Chapter 4
Governance and Quality Management, the HCQF, Information and Communication

The integrity of the governance system is closely linked to the quality, standard, review and maintenance of the HCQF and the processes in place for developing policies, procedures and programmes of study. This chapter consequently begins with a focus on these areas. It then progresses to a discussion of the specific areas where the protection of learners, through a well-governed College and appropriate quality assurance system, is key. These include arrangements with third parties; data protection; access, transfer and progression; and marketing and communication.

4.1 Policies and Procedures

Public confidence, accountability and compliance are supported by a transparent governance system built on clearly documented policies and procedures for effective, timely and responsive governance. Both explicitly and implicitly, quality assurance policies, procedures and arrangements underpin all aspects of the Hibernia College mission, strategy and governance.

The HCQF provides an infrastructure of strategy, policy and procedure complemented by documentary resources, forms, guidelines and handbooks. It functions as the sole authoritative source of all Hibernia College quality assurance documents. It enables transparent decision-making and the provision of quality services. As such, the HCQF is subject to review to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of standards within Hibernia College. While the Department of the Registrar and the QA Unit oversee the maintenance, review and implementation of the HCQF, the Academic Board holds ultimate responsibility for approving and monitoring the policies and procedures therein. It is also the responsibility of all members of the College community to fully engage with and contribute to this review process.

The Hibernia College Quality Framework Policy outlines the principles and standards for the creation and maintenance of the HCQF. The principles established therein have guided the review process (see Table 1: Quality Assurance Systems and Governance).

4.1.1 The HCQF Review Strategy

Policies and procedures are systematically evaluated within the College. The HCQF Review Strategy provides comprehensive documentation of this process. The HCQF Review process is informed by national policy on quality assurance procedures, which require that such procedures should be comprehensive and related to the activities of the institution.

This includes due consideration of:

ESG 2015: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

QQI Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers

Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines

National Framework of Qualifications

The HCQF Review Strategy thematically divides the HCQF into review clusters. A review cluster represents a thematically chosen group of policies, procedures and documented elements that are reviewed as one group and presented to the Academic Board as such. This facilitates the review process by enabling stakeholder consultations to address more than one policy, procedure and/or documented element at a time.

The following represent the Review Cluster themes:

- Quality Assurance, its governance and management
- Design and approval of programmes
- Undertaking research
- Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment
- Learner admission, progression, recognition and certification
- Staff, faculty and adjunct faculty recruitment, management and development
- Learner supports and the provision of learning resources
- Information and data management
- Public information and communication to stakeholders
- Collaborative and transnational education
- Online and blended learning

4.1.2 Standard Operating Procedures

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) play a crucial role in ensuring adherence to the HCQF. SOPs provide detailed, written instructions designed to achieve uniformity in the performance of specific functions across the College. SOPs enable the College

to uphold high procedural standards and integrity by providing clear instructions that foster quality and accountability amongst staff and transparency for internal and external stakeholders. The Department of the Registrar made the decision to prioritise a SOPs project aimed at supporting all departments in attaining consistency and sustainability in their practices. Consequently, a comprehensive SOPs review process is currently underway in the College. This is supported by a series of SOPs workshops, accompanied by a recorded presentation for ease of access as well as the development of a new SOPs template (Appendix 1) with version control.

4.1.3 Developing New Policies and Procedures

In line with the Policy for Strategy, outlined in the Hibernia College Quality Framework Policy, the objective of strategy review is to ensure that policies and procedures are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound. Policies and procedures are developed and renewed using a collaborative, co-design process based around subject-matter expertise and a stakeholder cluster group system.

Policy Design refers to the act of defining policy aims and the policy tools to deliver them. Approaches to policy design should be complementary and mutually informative. The Developing New Elements of the HCQF Procedure sets out the comprehensive steps for the development of new polices and/or procedures. Ensuring that policies and procedures are both coherent and comprehensive is supported by an understanding of the purpose and scope of both. Broadly, HCQF policies outline the 'what' and 'why', and procedures detail the 'how'. Both are specific to the achievement and maintenance of high-quality standards across the organisation. Where specific instructions for operations are required, SOPs are developed.

There are several reasons why a new policy or procedure may be required:

- A change in the regulatory environment
- The outcome of an internal or external quality assurance event
- Developments within the College, such as the approval of a new programme
- Issues raised by members of the College community, through the members of the Academic Board, relating to any policy and procedure
- As determined by the Executive Management Team

If a new policy/procedure is deemed necessary, the following process is actioned and managed by the Quality Assurance Unit:

- Appointing of key author
- Impact of Development Outline (Appendix 1)
- Stakeholder consultation process
- Timeline for production and bringing to the Academic Board
- Drafting of policy by key author, with the assistance of the Quality Assurance Unit
- Draft policy or draft procedure recorded (Appendix 1)

- Plan for communication of the policy developed
- Draft Policy presented to the Academic Board for approval
- Draft Policy/Procedure may be approved/approved pending changes/not approved
- Record of new policies/procedures maintained on the Review Tracker
- HCQF update

The development of a new policy or procedure always starts with the formulation of clear objectives and a defined scope. Authors consult with the quality assurance Unit and Department of the Registrar on the use of language and structure to ensure consistency across the HCQF. Stakeholder consultation ensures input from various perspectives, which helps to maintain a focus on potential impacts to end users. Policies and procedures are always research informed. All policies are circulated to the Academic Board members in advance of the Academic Board for consideration and presented in full at board for discussion and approval. Finally, one of the key principles of the HCQF (Table 1: Quality Assurance Systems and Governance) is that all policies and procedures are user-friendly. They are cross-checked by the Academic Board against the User-Friendly Checklist (Appendix 2) to ensure that they are written in plain English, clearly articulated, include a review schedule, are implementable and consistent with the HCQF. This comprehensive and consultative process ensures that policies are both robust and fit for purpose.

4.1.4 Implementation of Academic Processes

The integrity of academic processes is safeguarded, and institutional-wide oversight of quality assurance maintained by a well-structured system of governance and a comprehensive quality assurance framework. Examples of policies and procedures that support the implementation of academic processes are:

Academic Integrity and Good Practice Policy

Academic Misconduct Investigation in Coursework Procedure

Academic Misconduct Investigation in a Formal Examination Procedure

Appeals Policy

Appealing a College Decision Procedure

Cyclical Review of Hibernia College - An Institutional Review Policy

Monitoring and Review of the Hibernia College Quality Framework Procedure

Ongoing Monitoring of Online or Blended Learning Programmes Policy

Programme Board Terms of Reference

Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Policy

Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Procedure

Principles for the Acceptable Use of Generative AI in the Assessment Process

Review of a Provisional Assessment Decision Procedure

Approving New Programmes

The College has a staged approach to the development, approval and submission of any new programme. The overarching policy that governs this is the [Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Online Environment Policy](#). The stages that are specific to ensuring programme alignment with the College mission, strategic goals and learner needs are captured through the [Obtaining Initial Approval to Develop a New Programme Procedure](#), the due diligence process and the final approval to develop a programme process.

In the first instance the need for a programme is established, whether a cohort of target learners exist, and what benefits to these learners would be realised through the delivery of the programme. There must also be an outline financial model to support the delivery of the programme, ensuring its own viability and that it would not impinge on the resources of existing programmes or their learners. Finally, the proposed programme must fit within the overall portfolio of the College or, where this does not occur, align with the strategic goals of the College. This will ensure alignment with the College's Educational Ethos and Conceptual framework.

This information is presented in a sequential fashion (Figure 9) to the Academic Board and the EMT for approval, with the potential outcomes including: not approved, approved subject to amendments, and approved.
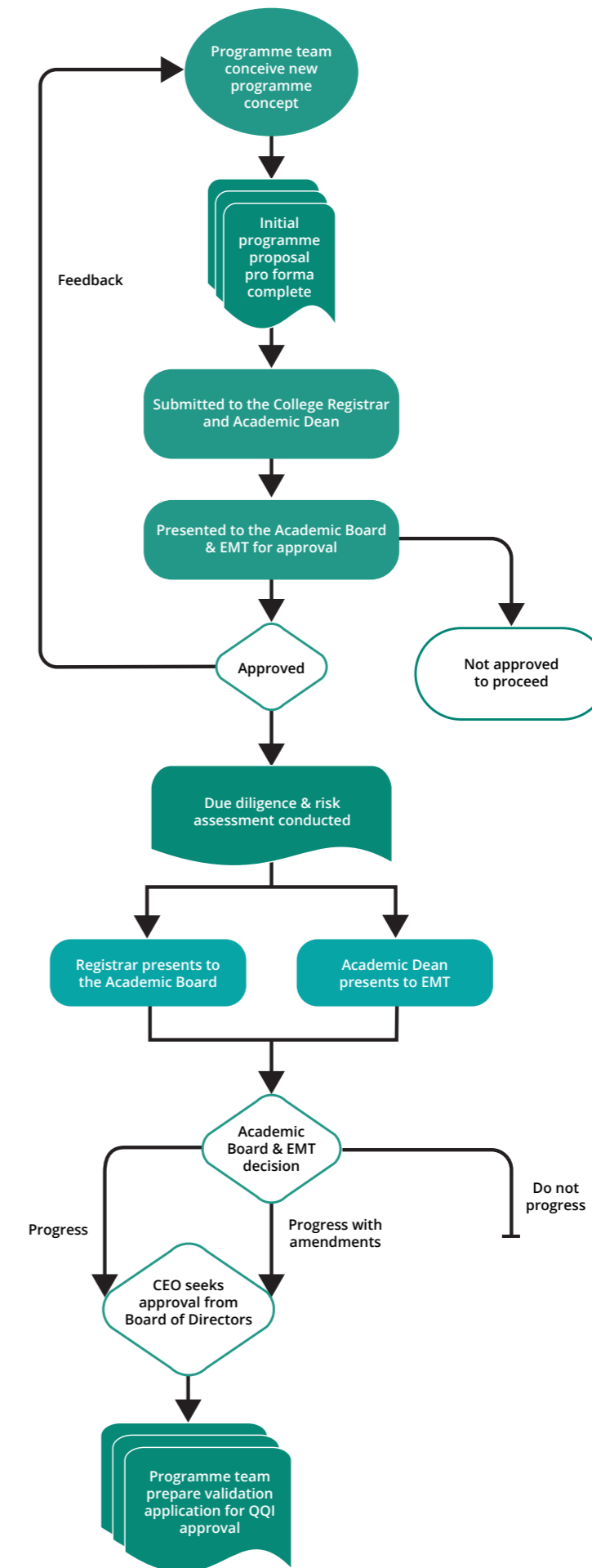

Figure 9 : New Programme Development

Thereafter, a due diligence and risk assessment process is undertaken as guided by the process outlined in the Collaborative and Transnational Framework. This is undertaken by a wide team of College staff and faculty with expertise in the diverse areas required to fully assess the implications of the programme and ensuring College compliance with internal policy and external policy. Risks identified within the due diligence process are scored and mitigations are developed before this phase of the process is completed. The completed due diligence is presented by the Registrar to the Academic Board and by the Academic Dean to the EMT.

Consideration of the due diligence and risk assessment outcomes by the Academic Board and the EMT can have the same outcomes as above before the programme development group progresses to phase of obtaining final approval for development of a programme as per the published procedure. A programme development team is formally constituted for this phase, consisting of:

- Subject matter experts
- Learning designers
- The Programme Director, and a nominee

The programme documentation is prepared by the programme development group and this documentation is presented in a phased approach, outlined below:

- Phase 1 – Internal Registrar Review and Approval
- Phase 2 – Independent Peer Review, conducted by external subject matter experts
- Phase 3 – Registrar consideration of Peer Review outcome
- Phase 4 – Presentation to the Academic Board for consideration

Each of these phases represents a stop/go juncture and can act to provide feedback and recommendations for approval to the proposed programme presented within the documentation.

4.2 External Engagements and Third Parties

Third parties refer to those organisations or individuals with whom Hibernia College has established practices and engagements. These include collaborative partnerships and engagements with review panels and validating and accrediting bodies. Collaborative partnerships between educational institutions and third parties have become integral components of modern education, offering learners diverse learning experiences and enhancing institutional reach and impact.

4.2.1 Engagements with Review Panels

The College has established External Quality Assurance Peer-Review Guidelines to aid staff and faculty engaging in external quality assurance (EQA) processes leading to validation, revalidation or accreditation of a programme. Engagement and preparation for EQA meetings is coordinated by the Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Registrations Manager

with oversight of the Registrar. For College members, the guidelines outline three principles central to participation in EQA meetings:

- Preparation
- Availability and Flexibility
- Responding to Requests and Questions

The guidelines offer clarity on the process:

Availability and Flexibility: The Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Registrations Manager arranges the dates, timing and logistics of any visit, virtual or otherwise, and advises with advance notice staff and faculty of their obligation to attend. However, the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager also advises staff and faculty that timings may change due to panel requests or overall delays in individual sessions.

Responding to Requests and Questions: The Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager advises those participating in EQA meetings of the relevant College quality assurance documentation and its location within the HCQF. The Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager advises and encourages EQA participants to have prepared evidence and supporting information with which to supplement answers.

Preparation: The Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager and the Registrar arrange a minimum of one preparation/mock panel/session for each EQA participant. This follows a similar format to that of the official EQA meeting. College participants engage with practice questions, using a regularly reviewed list of possible questions, and present prepared overviews of specific sections for which they have responsibility. The core outcome of these preparatory sessions is to provide constructive feedback to College participants and ensure all participants have had an opportunity to discuss the proposed documentation in advance, highlighting strengths and weaknesses. Throughout this preparatory phase, an emphasis is placed on evidence that supports assertions that the programme team or other participants may make.

4.2.2 Engagements with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

Hibernia College has a track record of designing and implementing programmes that both meet requirements of external validation bodies (QQI) and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, namely, the Teaching Council and NMBI. This form of engagement has been required since the inception of the College and the first programme developed and delivered by Hibernia College — the Higher Diploma in Arts in Primary Education. To date, the College has placed a strategic focus on the development and delivery of programmes that lead to professional recognition and registration for graduates. In this regard and with reference to recent applications for the Teaching Council accreditation, the College is highly effective at meeting the standards required by relevant PSRBs. This is evidenced by the reports from these bodies as part of accreditation processes, which highlight several examples of excellent practice. Furthermore, the College occupies a rotating seat within the primary grouping on the Teaching Council executive; the College is nominated into this position by the Colleges for Education.

More recently, the College has made it a strategic goal to expand its portfolio of professional programmes with the development of an undergraduate programme in General Nursing. This programme was successfully validated through QQI in 2017 and received NMBI accreditation in the same year. This provides further evidence that the processes for seeking accreditation from PSRBs are both robust and highly effective. The College engages with PSRBs in an ongoing basis through planned NMBI site inspections and visits, in 2024, and the yearly process of registration of PME graduates with the Teaching Council, providing opportunities for feedback and recommendations from the PSRBs to the College where necessary.

4.2.3 Engagements for Work-Integrated Learning

Work-integrated learning (WIL) represents an educational strategy that leverages practical work experiences to enable learners to blend theoretical knowledge with real-world application, deliberately woven into the curriculum. WIL stands as a cornerstone within the professional programmes taught in Hibernia College. In the case of the Professional Master of Education (PME) programmes, school placement is a period of intensive development for the learner that enables them to acquire the teaching skills and professional dispositions required in the modern classroom. During school placement, learners have the opportunity to become involved with, and actively participate in, all aspects of school life. Through these experiences, they learn to link theory and practice and acquire the understanding and skills necessary for teaching effectively in a range of classroom situations. They are guided and assisted towards this end by the Hibernia College Placement Tutors through systematic observation, assistance, guidance and advice.

The PME programmes are designed, through the immersion of the learner in foundation studies, professional studies, research and school-based experiences, to iteratively develop the learner's competencies as teacher, researcher and leader. All elements of the PME programmes are theoretically informed and emphasise relevancy to real-world teaching and learning challenges. Learners are scaffolded to build their capacity to teach as active, engaged and responsive citizens and foster these characteristics in pupils by engaging with relevant stakeholders and members of the community. The PME programmes aim to equip new entrants to the teaching profession with the knowledge, creativity and reflective practice required to fulfil the primary role of the teacher — to educate. Learners engage with three periods of school placement across their programme, including one extended period for 10 weeks, within one school context. Each placement is given a focus with a thematic approach, enabling learners to identify relationships and connections between their learning across the placements.

In the General Nursing programme, clinical placements form distinct modules at each stage of the Nursing programme. They are prepared for during the theoretical modules, and the personal tutor assists learners in both planning for them and debriefing after them. The programme is one of integration, where reflection is central. The thread of nursing and the theory praxis nexus is always at the forefront in the approach to module learning. Distinct types of learning occur during the programme, where the learner's path from beginning learner to beginning professional is one that allows them to have internalised a culture and value around nursing as well as having attained skills, competences and understandings. There are three key roles involved in ensuring that placement is an effective learning experience for the student nurse: the Head of Practice Experience, the Clinical Placement Coordinator, and the Preceptor. All learners work with or under the supervision of their preceptor, ensuring safe care within the clinical care environment. In addition to the responsibilities assigned to the roles above for supporting learners, both academically and pastorally, the College has formal quality assurance procedures in place for the oversight of the relationship with the Associated Healthcare Provider, the learners' learning and the effectiveness of the programme in general.

4.2.4 Engagement with WIL Partners

Hibernia College has significant experience of engaging formally and informally with partners who host learners for the purposes of WIL and assessment. Placement co-ordinators have the interpersonal skills, training and experience to ensure communication is precise, specific and informative. When hosts have queries regarding how best to support or facilitate a learner, staff are available to address these queries in a timely manner.

Across the PME programmes Hibernia College collaborates with host schools, principals and Treoraithe (formerly known as cooperating teachers) to ensure placements are effective and supportive for learners and host schools. Partnerships have been fostered and continue to develop with a diverse range of schools nationwide. The significance of further developing and formalising links with schools into systematic and sustained communication, is embedded into the school placement process. This includes:

- Host School Webinar: Conducted prior to each school placement with principals and teachers, with a focus on themes such as classroom management, collaborative planning, involving learners in whole-school activities and the role of the school

- Post-Placement Written Feedback: Treoraithe and principals invitation to complete a feedback survey after every placement

- Enhanced Communication with Partnership Schools: Annual survey of principals and cooperating teachers; bi-annual focus group

- Treoraí Handbook: A handbook detailing the requirements and expectations of learners and the role of the Treoraí during the school placement is made available to schools in advance of each placement. Furthermore, it is reviewed by host schools on a regular basis to ensure a collaborative approach to designing the content.

- Treoraí Continuing Professional Development (CPD): Following consultation and feedback from Treoraithe, Hibernia College has collaboratively designed an accessible online course that meets the demands of the Treoraí's role. Upon completion, the Treoraí is awarded a Digital Badge having met the learning objectives and developed their competency in mentorship, leadership and guidance.

Good collaborative working relationships have been nurtured by the dedicated School Placement team and visiting placement tutors. Placement tutors engage with and seek feedback from the Treoraí and the school principal during school visits and there are mechanisms in place for principals to report concerns to the School Placement team.

Although many innovative approaches have been taken to ensuring a high standard of engagement with partners, there is a need for a sustained and formalised approach going forward. The management of the partnership process is essential to ensuring consistency for the learner experience.

Case Study
The Local Joint Working Group for Nursing

A Local Joint Working Group (LJWG), comprising representatives from Hibernia College and associated healthcare providers, actively oversees and monitors the implementation of the programme at the local clinical level. This ensures timely identification and resolution of any issues that may arise. The LJWG membership is diverse, including representatives from both academic and clinical backgrounds in placement settings. Additionally, the LJWG remains adaptable to programmatic changes aligned with the Department of Health's reform agenda and population priorities. The General Nursing Programme Director chairs a meeting with all clinical partners, provides a mechanism for feedback and identifies areas for improvement. Feedback gathered from all learners at the end of each practice placement is also presented at the meeting. This information informs any changes that need to be addressed.

4.2.4 Collaborative Engagements

Hibernia College is fully aware of the benefits and challenges of collaborative provision of programmes of study. Consequently, a detailed Collaborative and Transnational Framework has been developed to ensure the process is suitably structured and supported from the initial expression of interest all the way through to the development and delivery of a programme of study. Collaborations must be meaningful, purposeful and beneficial to the College and the learner body and within the overall strategic priorities of Hibernia College. The MA/PG Dip (Arts) in Inclusive and Special Education programme represents an example of good collaborative engagement with partners (Institute of Child Education and Psychology (ICEP) Europe) for the purposes of programme development and provision. However, Hibernia College also recognised, in reviewing the implementation of the programme, the benefit of establishing a more comprehensive collaboration framework and finessing the role of the JPC. These steps have been taken as enhancements to practice and are more formally established for any forthcoming collaborations under the Framework for Collaborative and Transnational Provision. The JPC is guided by clear Terms of Reference and an annual work plan (see case study — The Joint Programme Committee).

4.2.5 Transnational Collaboration and Provision

The governance of collaborative and transnational provision is guided through the Hibernia College Policy on Design of Programmes and Curricula for a Blended or Online Environment Policy and the Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Online Learning Environment Policy. Furthermore, in 2023, the Academic Board provisionally approved the Framework for Collaborative and Transnational Provision. This framework includes a policy to govern the procedures for initial approval and subsequent monitoring and renewal of programmes.

The framework outlines the primary considerations for the development and approval of collaborative programmes, including Academic Concerns, Quality Assurance, Learner Support and Cultural Context, Governance and Management of the Programme, Legal and Regulatory Compliance of the Partner(s), and Financial Standing of the Partner(s). Each proposed programme will be managed by a JPC.

Programmes for consideration must first demonstrate initial feasibility of the proposal to the EMT and the Academic Board before proceeding to the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the partner(s). Following this, a due diligence team is assembled to undertake this task and perform a risk assessment for review and approval by the EMT and the Academic Board. Only when the EMT and the Academic Board approve this can the Board of Directors consider and approve the proposal. After this is completed, a collaborative agreement is produced and signed by all parties involved.

The following areas are formally agreed upon:

- Ongoing monitoring of the programme
- Arrangements for the periodic review of the programme
- The adopted quality assurance framework that governs the programme
- Programme teaching and assessment strategies, including modalities of assessment, rechecks, reviews and appeals
- Learner support and welfare mechanisms
- Financial arrangements
- Governance arrangements for the consortium
- Mechanisms for appeal or complaint by learners or staff

- Mechanisms to resolve any differences between consortium members
- The proposed approach to staff recruitment and development
- Projected learner intake and recruitment plans
- Marketing and media management
- Responsibility for liaising with QQI and any other relevant bodies (regulatory or government departments)

Hibernia College has also established a Framework for International Student Support (provisionally approved by the Academic Board) that informs this process.

The challenges specific to international provision have been addressed in the Framework for Collaborative and Transnational Provision through the Policy on the Principles and Circumstances for Transnational and/or Collaborative Provision of Programmes/Partnerships.

The following principles are established:

Principle 1: The proposed programme conforms to the College mission, strategy, vision and Conceptual Framework.

Principle 2: Learners enrolled on collaborative and/or transnational programmes that lead to awards of an Irish awarding body (QQI) receive an equivalent learning experience to that of learners studying in Ireland.

Principle 3: Due consideration is given to the academic and pastoral support of learners enrolled on transnational programmes, with consideration given to cultural and ethnic sensitivities.

Principle 4: Hibernia College is committed to respecting the rights of staff, faculty, adjunct faculty, partners and learners in ventures, and recognition is given to the ethical considerations of working and learning environments in a transnational provision context.

Principle 5: Hibernia College has institutional approval and quality assurance processes in place for collaborative and transnational provision, which include the conduct of appropriate due diligence checks and ongoing monitoring and review to assure standards and quality while minimising associated risks.

Principle 6: Formal written agreements, containing details of programme delivery and associated quality assurance procedures, are put in place for all collaborative and transnational arrangements.

Principle 7: The potentially higher level of risk associated with collaborative and transnational provision is acknowledged by Hibernia College, and specific procedures for the continuous approval, monitoring and review of such programmes and institutional partnerships are in place to mitigate this risk.

Principle 8: On consideration of new transnational and collaborative arrangements, due consideration is given to the context-specific issues associated with provision in that context, including cultural, teaching, learning, resources and legal issues.

Principle 9: Serial franchising within Higher Education is recognised as poor practice and Hibernia College does not enter into such arrangements with partners.

Principle 10: A clear business justification that demonstrates the viability and sustainability of the programmes is provided and evidenced.

Principle 11: Oversight of the programme is retained through established governance structures and all collaborative and transnational programmes are legal and authorised and comply with the relevant international legislative requirements as deemed applicable.

Principle 12: Marketing shall include clear and unambiguous information about the intended purpose of the provision and be compliant with information for learner requirements set out in Section 67 of the 2012 Act. Details of arrangements for Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) will be provided where appropriate and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression followed.

Principle 13: International learners have opportunities to provide input on programme delivery, learner environment and support mechanisms.

4.3 Access, Transfer and Progression

Hibernia College has several overarching policies that govern the approach to Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP), including:

- [Assessment, Grading and Certification Policy](#)
- [Access, Transfer and Progression Policy](#)
- [Admissions Policy](#)

These policies are designed and implemented within the external frameworks provided by QQI's [Policy and Criteria for Making Awards](#) (2017), [Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training](#) (2017), [Assessment and Standards](#) (2022) and the [Policy Restatement: Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training](#) (2015). Furthermore, Hibernia College is cognisant of the guidance incorporated by QQI and provided by European Standards and Guidelines and the AHEAD Charter for Inclusive Teaching and Learning.

The implementation of these policies is the responsibility of the Registrar with the Academic Board. The centralised nature of these responsibilities ensures a consistent approach within and between programmes and, through the involvement of the Academic Board, a systemic context is brought to bear on all reports made to the Academic Board. Irrespective of programme, cohort or learner type the above policies are applicable and allow for an evidence-based approach to quality assurance and enhancement.

4.3.1 Monitoring Learner Progression and Completion

Learner progression, performance and learner completion rates as measured through the successful completion of either stages/assessments or qualification award are formally monitored and approved through the Board of Examiners (BOE), guided by the Terms of Reference. Examination broadsheets are the instrument used to collate and share this data with members of the BOE. The Assessment and Awards Manager oversees and manages the processes to produce the examination broadsheet and acts as Secretary to the BOE. The BOE formally reports statistics and data related to the performance and completion of learners to the Academic Board following approval of examination broadsheets. Here, a summary of the statistics and learner performance is presented for the Board and this presentation affords an opportunity to the members to interrogate any trends, or emerging trends, that can be a cause for action or commendation. These actions are recorded in the Academic Board minutes for follow-up, implementation and reporting.

The second mechanism for the monitoring of progression and completion is the End-of-Programme/Stage report. This report is produced as a shared enterprise between the Programme Director, Quality Assurance Unit, and the Assessment and Awards Manager. The Assessment and Awards Manager compiles module grading data, award classification data and external examiner reports. The Quality Assurance Unit provides ongoing feedback compiled from end-of-module surveys completed by learners. This draft report is then shared with the Programme Director, who will comment on the data presented and decide what, if any, actions are required. Throughout, reference is made to previous cohorts to identify either positive or negative trends and the End-of-Programme/Stage report is presented to the Academic Board for discussion and approval.

4.3.2 Learner Diversity in Access, Transfer and Progression

Within the broader ATP framework in Hibernia College, several approaches exist to ensure flexibility in learner diversity. These approaches include the:

- Student Support Policy
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy
- Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

The Student Support Policy and Reasonable Accommodation Policy

These policies set out the support and accommodation available to learners who may require help in successfully completing their programmes. The College asserts its intention to enhance the learner journey of all learners and to afford them the best possible chance to complete their programme of study successfully. The principles of accessibility, impartiality, caring, comprehensiveness and collaboration are enshrined within. Specific reference is made to the adoption of:

- The Charter for Inclusive Teaching and Learning
- DAWN: Everything you wanted to know about RA
- DARE: Disability Access Route to Education

The Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy establishes the principles for Hibernia College to offer admission or advanced academic standing to applicants who may have already completed relevant learning. RPL, when applied to the admissions of applicants, supports the access of individuals to programmes of learning where they may not meet the standard entry requirements. For example, the entry requirement for the Master for Inclusive and Special Education programme requires a Level 8 degree in a cognate area. However, through RPL application, an individual holding a relevant Level 7 qualification and experience in the area can be deemed eligible to apply. All RPL applicants are subject to review by the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager, the Registrar and the Programme Director. Therefore, the use of RPL for admissions purposes can afford access to education to a more diverse group of learners.

At a programme level, there are specific approaches to ensuring learner diversity within Hibernia College. At programme design stage, consideration is given to promoting and assuring diversity, in line with the Hibernia College strategic priorities. Admissions criteria are developed with due consideration of supporting access to a diverse range of learners.

> **Case Study**
> **Entrance to the Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing**
>
> There are multiple admissions pathways for applicants to this programme. A feature of this Hibernia College programme is the demarcation of three entry pathways:
>
> - Leaving Certification Pathway
> - Further Education Pathway
> - Mature Learner Pathway
>
> Internal findings highlight that the proportion of mature learners comprising the cohort for two separate intakes, 48% and 35%, was significantly higher than the previously reported 15% national average for the General Nursing specialty. The proportion of mature learners engaging with the Hibernia College Nursing programme is more similar, 44.5%, to those reported for undergraduate Adult Nursing programmes in the UK (Office of Students, UK, 2019). Moreover, the proportion of the cohort composed of Mature Learners was higher than the overall participation rate for public higher education institutions (HEIs) recorded in 2018/2019, which was between 8-10% (Higher Education Authority, 2021).

Publicly available data suggest that for mature learners' financial costs, family responsibilities and commitment, and timing of study are the top three barriers to engagement with participation in education. The implementation of a blended learning programme is likely an intervention to circumvent this last barrier while also aiding in overcoming issues arising from family responsibilities and commitment. Further evidence in support of blending learning modes of delivery in improving access to education stems from findings suggesting that 47% of mature learners found online/distance learning a suitable or very suitable option (Higher Education Authority, 2021).

Case Study
Professional Master of Education Curriculum Shortfalls

Hibernia College provides the opportunity to complete curriculum shortfalls in teacher education by a modular approach, where identified by the Teaching Council. This flexible approach allows those who trained overseas to register with the Teaching Council to engage with specific elements of the Professional Master of Education to satisfy conditions of registration. In the years 2023, 2022 and 2021, 100% of learners who were enrolled as modular learners for this purpose had obtained their initial teacher education outside of the State.

4.3.3 The Admissions Process

The admissions process is governed by:

Admissions Policy

Admission Interviews Procedure

Admission Application Procedure

Admission Offers Procedure

Appealing a College Admissions Decision Procedure

Garda Vetting Procedure

The Admissions Policy establishes the Hibernia College principles for learner recruitment, which include the provision of accurate and impartial information. This policy also establishes the principles for application and admissions, including clear entry criteria, fair entry procedures, equality of opportunity, reasonable expectation

of success, applicant suitability and the College position on repeat applications and canvassing. Moreover, the policy governs the College approach to Garda vetting and appeals in an admissions context.

These documents are supplemented by programme Terms and Conditions, which are published specifically for each intake of every programme and/or cohort and contain the specific details related to each programme.

Case Study
Admissions Process Review

A recent internal review of the admissions process as applied to PME Spring 2023 cohorts took place between June and August 2023.

The review examined if:

- Actions were taken in a timely fashion
- Effective controls were in place to monitor procedures
- Admission decisions were compliant with established criteria, policies and procedures
- Redundancy exists within the AdmissionsTeam

The findings and recommendations can be summarised as follows. A review of the redundancy within the admission team demonstrates that there was little redundancy within the team. This is evidenced through monitoring the interactions between applicants to specific programmes and members of the Admissions Team. Targeted efforts were made to ensure all members of the Admissions Team were trained in all programme requirements and provided with opportunities to gain experience in the basic functions of all admissions processes across all programmes.

A review of compliance with established procedures and policies suggests that those examined clearly demonstrate a culture of compliance. However, it should be noted that minimum eligibility criteria used in decision-making are not contained specifically within the approved policy or procedure. Upon reflection, it was decided that it was not necessary, or suitable, to add programme-specific minimum eligibility criteria to the Admissions Policy. A new SOP was developed in line with an ongoing College SOP review project to monitor the inputting of interview scores/outcomes onto the student information system (SIS). This has enabled regular review of outcomes before issuing to applicants.

There was no evidence of a failure in procedure when measured through receipt of appeals related to the sample applications reviewed. However, at the time of the audit, it was noted that the appeals process for applicants referred individuals to the appeals process for registered learners. As part of the ongoing scheduled and tandem review of the HCQF, a review of the appeals process in place for applicants resulted in the Admissions Policy being amended to reflect the principles for an appeal as related to the admissions specifically within the Admissions Policy document and create the Appealing a College Admissions Decision. Previously, these had existed as part of the Appeals Policy pertaining to registered learners. This review also resulted in the development of a new appeal procedure specific to applicants — Appealing a College Admissions Decision Procedure.

4.4 Information and Data Management

Data protection is the means by which the privacy rights of students, faculty and staff are safeguarded in relation to the processing of their personal data. All students have privacy rights in relation to the processing of their personal data, which are protected by a suite of policies and procedures. The policies include a statement of the College's commitment to protect the rights and privacy of individuals. As a controller of personal data, Hibernia College is responsible for demonstrating compliance with data protection law and when processing personal data, in line with the principles set out in the Personal Data and Records Policy. Staff and Faculty who process data within the College must engage with the relevant policies and procedures, guided by the Records and Data Manager, to ensure best practice in the fulfillment of their duties. Mandatory training and upskilling are conducted on a regular basis. Training also focuses on ensuring that all staff and faculty are fully aware of the risks and the need for vigilance within the online space. All staff were required to complete a mandatory data protection training course (through an external consultant — PrivacyEngine) and to complete and pass an assessment at the end of the course.

There are also a number of specific policies and procedures that inform the Hibernia College approach to Information and Data Management.

These include:

Data Protection and the Handling of Student Data Guidelines

These guidelines set down the seven principles underpinning data protection:

- Lawfulness, fairness and transparency
- Purpose limitation
- Data minimisation
- Accuracy
- Storage limitation
- Integrity and confidentiality
- Accountability

The guidelines detail how staff and faculty should take care when verifying student identity and the process to follow when concerns exist as to the verification of a particular student's identity. The notification process and timeline for data breaches is also detailed. In the event of a data breach, such breaches are reported to the Data Protection Commission within 72 hours of first becoming aware of the occurrence. A plan for mitigation is developed under the guidance of the Records and Data Manager.

DSAR Management Procedure

This procedure outlines the steps involved in managing a Data Subject Access Request (DSAR) received by Hibernia College to fulfil the College's obligation to provide individuals with access to data being held by the College pertaining to them. The parent policy is the Personal Data and Records Policy.

Implementing of Data Protection Principles in Research Guidelines

Collecting personal data can be a large part of research data collection. Consequently, it is important that safeguards are in place when conducting research in order to protect an individual's personal data. Responsibility for implementation of data protection principles extends to learners and supervisors during placements and research. These implementation guidelines set out the process for this.

Personal Data and Records Policy

This policy sets out the principles and responsibilities of all members of the Hibernia College community in relation to the collection, storage, processing and retention of personal data. This policy relates to the use and processing of all personal data that identifies or is capable of identifying any individual, and which therefore requires compliance with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Personal Data Security Breach Management Procedure

Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR, Hibernia College is obliged to keep personal data safe and secure and to respond promptly and appropriately in the event of a personal data security breach. This procedure lays out the steps to be followed by the College if a personal data security breach or suspected personal data security breach occurs. The Personal Data and Records Policy is the parent policy.

There are several formal arrangements in place to ensure correct and appropriate information and data management. Initially, a 'checking system' is integrated into the learner data. Learner data is entered directly by students into the student information system (SIS) — Quercus — as part of the application process and then validated by the Admissions Team against supporting documentation. This helps to ensure accuracy.

Quercus acts as the primary learner data source, with other systems synchronised and reconciled to it.

Learners, adjunct faculty, faculty and staff use single sign-on (SSO), authenticated against Azure Entra ID to access all relevant College systems. A full login audit trail is available and there is automated monitoring of risky sign-on attempts. Learners are allocated to appropriate security groups within Azure, ensuring access is restricted to relevant applications and content. All online systems are accessible only via secure HTTPS. In the event of an issue, disaster recovery procedures are in place. Endpoint security, full encryption and Group Policy security controls are implemented on all laptops and portable devices.

Data from various systems like Moodle, InPlace and Microsoft Dynamics 365 are used to monitor learner progress, placements, assessments, etc. as part of quality assurance. A monthly reconciliation report compares learner data across the four core learner systems to Quercus data. Any gaps or discrepancies are investigated and corrected.

Arrangements are in place to ensure the integrity of learner records. These include:

- Validation of application data submitted by learners
- Reconciliation of data across systems with Quercus being the primary source
- Access controls to ensure only authorised alteration of records
- Full audit trail of learner record changes within Quercus

Compliance with data legislation, under the Records and Data Manager, is ensured in the following ways:

- Collecting and retaining as per the Privacy Policy and Data Retention Schedule
- Purpose limitation and data minimisation
- Honouring rights of data subjects and responding promptly to any subject access requests (SARs)
- Updating and notifying any changes to names/addresses notified by learners and verifying this against third-party documents
- Data protection impact assessments (DPIAs) conducted where necessary to ensure GDPR compliance
- Recording of processing activities as per GDPR requirements
- Reporting to the Data Protection Commission (DPC) of any errors/breaches, investigation and remediation
- Retaining and deleting schedule review and execution
- Periodically inspecting digital and non-digital files — in College and off-site (data storage)
- Utilising the PrivacyEngine platform for the recording and management of all data protection activities identified as relevant from the HCQF

4.5 Public Information and Communications

Public accessibility and transparency of information are first and foremost assured by the provision of the fully publicly accessible HCQF. It provides a user-friendly framework and includes an easy-to-use 'search' option, FAQs, helpful information section and an A-Z list of all policies and procedures. However, potential learners seek information in a variety of ways and the College is aware of the need to ensure that all communication with the public is conducted in an ethical manner, based on sound policy. The College takes account of the European Standards and Guidelines and the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, in conjunction with internal policy, to regulate information put into the public domain.

4.5.1 Marketing and Promotion

Marketing is conducted in an ethical and accurate manner, with oversight by the Director of Business Development. While the College makes use of a variety of marketing material and media to suit the needs of prospective learners, the use of social media is accurate, respectful and aligned to the College's mission. There are secure structures in place internally to ensure that all marketing is conducted safely and securely, with a particular focus on monitoring engagements on social media. The Marketing Department makes use of detailed SOPs to ensure consistency of practices. Social media reports are developed to track engagements, analyse user statistics, enhance quality and develop insights to inform practice.

The Public Information, Promotion and Recruitment of Students Policy sets out the principles for the ethical and effective public communication about and promotion of Hibernia College and its programmes, as well as for the recruitment of learners to Hibernia College programmes. The policy affirms that information the College makes publicly available must include:

- The legal name of the College and the company
- Profiles of the company directors, senior managers and key academic staff
- Details of the College's legal and accreditation status with all professional, regulatory and statutory bodies
- The full Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF)
- Outcomes of external quality assurance and accreditation engagements
- The Hibernia College Erasmus Charter 2014-2020
- Key publications
- Information about the College's research activity
- Information about the use of personal data and a person's right to privacy
- Contact details for the College
- Respectful us of social media that aligns with the College's mission

Where a programme leads to an award, Hibernia College specifies:

- The award title
- The awarding body/bodies
- Whether it is an [NFQ](#) award and at what level, and award class
- Any professional recognition or approval
- Its recognition within the countries of the programme's target learners
- Any collaborative partners involved in the provision of the programme
- Details of the arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners, where relevant

Specific to information for promotional purposes and the recruitment of learners to programmes of study, Hibernia College commits to providing information that is:

- Accurate and truthful
- Up to date
- Complete

In order to assure the 'complete' nature of the information, the following items are included:

- Accreditation(s)
- Qualification/award title(s)
- [National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)](#) (if any)
- European Credit Transfer System Credits
- Intended learning outcomes
- Modules
- Modes of provision and assessment
- Available exit and/or embedded awards
- Arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners (where relevant)

It is essential that all communication with potential learners is both honest and transparent. It should provide all the relevant details on any associated professional registration requirements and clearly explain the qualification available and its recognition status. Hibernia College has established a comprehensive system to ensure queries are responded to efficiently. All access, transfer and progression information is provided in a transparent manner.

Hibernia College and, specifically, the Marketing and Enrolment Department are aware that a varied audience comes to the Hibernia College website and that it is important to have the required College information in an accessible format. Therefore, the website has been updated and reviewed in 2023 as part of a collaborative process to ensure and assure transparency with clearly labelled menu options and curated information about the College and its services.

The Application Process and Information

Prospective Learners

The Marketing and Enrolment Department clearly articulates the requirements of the programme and keeps information concise, accurate and transparent. Digital brochures are used to provide prospective earners with information. They are reviewed and amended where necessary. These brochures are supplemented by webinar events for all programmes, which enable prospective learners to ask questions and access information in an alternative format. It is also possible for prospective learners to arrange a call back to speak with a member of the enrolment team.

Enrolment and Admissions

The Admissions Unit, under the Department of the Registrar, assesses applications against specific eligibility criteria for each programme, progressing applications, scheduling interviews, where required, and maintaining the accurate recording of applicant data and interview scores. This unit also communicates with applicants and responds to queries throughout the application process.

The Admissions Unit attends information sessions with regulatory bodies to keep published information updated in line with any revisions and to further improve the communication provided to applicants on the website and through the application process. They collaborate with the Marketing and Enrolment Department after each intake to action improvements in communication to applicants. Standard communication and FAQs are reviewed, and efficiencies are introduced to ensure each applicant's experience is consistent along their application journey. The Admissions Unit maintains standard communications regarding orientation, garda vetting, confirming places and postponements to ensure consistent messaging.

Once an applicant becomes a learner, the programme administrators are available to support learners in accessing relevant policies, procedures and programme specific information.

4.6 Staffing and Recruitment

4.6.1 The Human Resources Department

The Human Resources (HR) Department is dedicated to fostering a supportive work environment that aligns with the College's mission and ethos. It leads the recruitment process and plays a significant role in ensuring the cultivation of a workplace where staff feel valued, respected and empowered. The maintenance of consistent processes and high standards in the hiring of staff is a key priority for the department.

Hibernia College acknowledges that staff, faculty and adjunct faculty are at the heart of the success of the institution. It is an identified priority that the College hires and retains a knowledgeable and diverse workforce. Consequently, the recruitment process is a highly structured one, with a rigorous, candidate-based interview process. A member of HR staff sits at each interview panel to ensure adherence to best practice and consistency.

PeopleHR is the human resources management system utilised by the College for recruitment purposes. This is underpinned by a suite of HR Policies and an Employee Handbook available internally with the College.

4.6.2 Management and Development of Staff

The management and development of staff within Hibernia College is generally effective. Well-established systems and resources are in place, such as HRDuo (an automated cloud-based HR system) and a centralised Human Resources site (SharePoint-based, with policies and procedures, manuals and resources).

The HR Department seeks to ensure that new staff are inducted into the College efficiently and through a holistic process that prioritises the welfare of the individual. An Employee Orientation Programme has been developed for all new staff to engage with. This includes general information about the College, the organisation of teams and departments, the blended learning model and the IT supports available. It also includes access to the Employee Handbook and Policies and Information on Health and Safety. However, the College knows that personal connections with staff are also important. Therefore, all new staff attend an in-person induction day. They have an opportunity to meet staff from across the College and foster new relationships.

An Employee Assistance Programme is in place, which offers a confidential counselling service to support employees and their immediate families. Supports are offered in a variety of areas, including general counselling, life coaching and grievance supports.

Case Study
Survey of Informal and Formal Development Opportunities

The College provides staff with both formal and informal development opportunities. A recent survey completed by the cluster group in preparation for this ISER asked staff and faculty about their experiences of development opportunities. The survey included questions on formal and informal development opportunities under defined criteria. Participants were asked to review their calendars, meet with line managers and consider in advance the different forms of development opportunities they may have engaged with.

The survey covered the period 2022-2023. Of the 65 respondents, the significant majority indicated an overwhelmingly large uptake of informal opportunities, notably, in training course attendance, job shadowing or rotation opportunities, involvement in networks and professional associations. Specific examples of these informal development opportunities include presenting at educational and quality assurance conferences, including QQI events and HECA conferences, and mentoring new members of faculty in roles involving engagements with partners or external bodies. This involvement with informal development opportunities was seen across all departments, with engagement particularly high in the DLD, the Department of the Registrar and Academic Faculty.

More formal development opportunities were also tracked by the cluster group through this survey. Again, strong engagement across the College was notable. Specific examples include two members of staff currently undertaking doctoral studies (partially funded by Hibernia College) and engagements with internal development events such as the Academic Integrity panel and Academic Integrity Community of Practice.
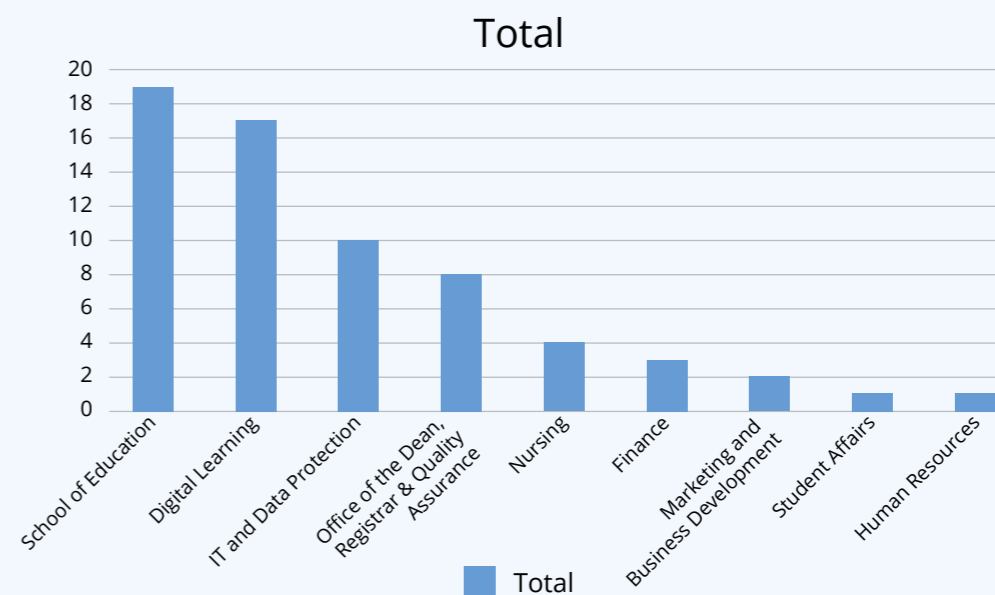
Figure 10: HR Survey Response Rate

An analysis of the data indicates good engagement with the survey (Figure 10) across the College, with participation across all departments. The numeric spread of participants also broadly reflects the size of departments, with the larger departments having higher numbers of participants. The data reveals a strong willingness to engage in development opportunities, with a balance between formal and informal opportunities. Almost all participants in the survey had engaged in some form of internal or external training course. This speaks to a highly engaged and motivated workforce (Figure 11).

Assuming Additional or New Tasks in Existing Role

No 30%
Yes 70%

■ Yes ■ No
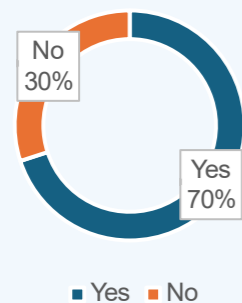
Attended Internal or External Upskilling Events

No 25%
Yes 75%

■ Yes ■ No
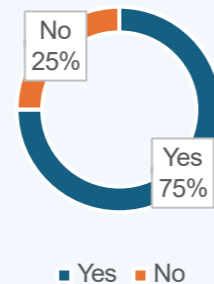
Engaged in Mentoring

Yes 45%
No 55%

■ Yes ■ No
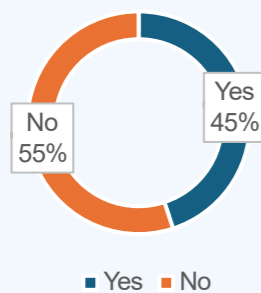
Involved in Networks and Professional Associations

No 42%
Yes 58%

■ Yes ■ No
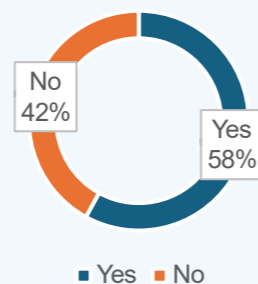
Involved in Information-Sharing Events

No 43%
Yes 57%

■ Yes ■ No
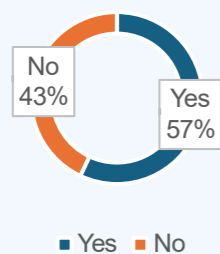
Participated in In-House or External Training courses

No 2%
Yes 98%

■ Yes ■ No
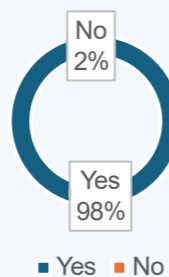
Figure 11: HR Survey Findings

There are regular opportunities for staff growth and development within Hibernia College. Over the past three years, roles have opened for 10 management roles available for staff progression. The College is conscious of its obligation to ensure those interested in progressing their careers with Hibernia College have the skillsets and experience to do so successfully. In the past five years, within Continuing Education, specialist people management training was provided to managerial staff. Currently, the College is focusing on these skills for those who are interested in future managerial roles.

The College recognises the need to introduce a formal performance management system beyond the 6-month probation period. Currently, line managers provide written and oral feedback at several points, including at the end of the probation period. The right to respond is included in this feedback and collaborative goal setting is encouraged. Informal processes and opportunities, supported by regular one-to-one meetings between line managers and staff, could be formalised and supported through a performance management system. The College recognises the advantages of introducing more quantifiable measures to evaluate performance and to drive the achievement of objectives. Plans are well progressed in the development of this system. It is foreseen that mentoring opportunities, part-time study and engagement in further professional development would be addressed through the system.

AI technologies may facilitate efficiencies to be found in many roles. The College is exploring how AI could offer personalised, scalable and data-driven solutions to staff development and management issues. This may include the development of personalised learning paths, skills assessment and gap analysis, as well as mentoring and coaching supports. Due to the internal expertise in adaptive learning, the College is well positioned to cautiously explore potential.

4.6.3 Adjunct Faculty

Hibernia College engages adjunct faculty to fulfil academic roles in the College in the delivery of programme content, assessment, development of content and placement tutor roles. These members of adjunct faculty work alongside colleagues who are members of permanent academic faculty. This model facilitates the provision of teaching, learning and assessment in a distributed capacity around Ireland. As the adjunct faculty model is one which is not shared by all or many institutions, the cluster group tasked with reviewing performance in this area conducted a SWOT analysis, the results of which are detailed below.

Recruitment

Hibernia College notes that the adjunct faculty model works well in blended and online programmes. The rolling application process (adjunct faculty can apply as/when suits them) offers flexibility to applicants, ensuring the College captures all suitable interested applicants rather than being limited to on/off advertisement of roles. The adjunct faculty model allows people to work in their own geographical area, ensuring that is not an obstacle to attracting the very best of candidates. It also facilitates people in scheduling around their other commitments.

In instances where there are no suitable candidates amongst the applicants, a targeted recruitment drive for particular subject specialisms is implemented. This rolling application process does mean that there may be a time delay between submitting the application and the applicant being contacted for an interview. To mitigate this, an automated email is issued to the applicant, acknowledging receipt but also advising them of the potential timelines involved in their application.

Management and Development

There is a strong structure for training and supporting adjunct faculty. For example, the College provides training in advance of each block for School Placement Tutors, including regional training (at least twice yearly) and training both in advance of and mid-way through each placement are provided. Support materials such as rubrics, assessment guides and academic integrity resources are also made available. Specific training is provided to all new School Placement Tutors and adjunct faculty, supplemented by opportunities for shadowing experienced colleagues. Ongoing technical support is given while engaged in their roles. They also have the opportunity to advance in their roles and expand their portfolios across teaching, learning and assessment. Adjunct faculty receive ongoing feedback while engaged in their roles. To monitor these supports, focus groups are conducted with adjunct faculty at various times, e.g. the School Placement Tutor Focus Group Summer 2023.

There is scope to develop quality assurance processes in the ongoing performance of these roles, and the College is currently trialling changes to the moderation process, whereby feedback can be provided by the assessor prior to the end of the assessment period.

4.7 Conclusions

The HCQF has been designed to support the College in the fulfilment of its mission and strategies in an ethical and transparent manner. The governance structure, guided by the appropriate policies and Code of Governance, provides Hibernia College with a coherent leadership structure. The findings of this review process can be summarised as follows:

The HCQF and review process facilitate a comprehensive quality assurance mechanism. The use of plain English is appropriately emphasised, and the review process is experienced as collaborative and inclusive.

The strategic priorities are aligned with the mission statement and are appropriately mapped against several quality assurance policies and procedures.

The governance structure and division of roles, responsibilities and decision-making structures are clearly articulated. The Academic Board and the subcommittees function well and include good self-evaluation mechanisms, with evidence of responsiveness. However, there is an opportunity to develop the reporting mechanism and interactions between the Academic Board and EMT. In the short term, this can be addressed by formalising the process with an agreed SOP.

The provision of information to learners and prospective learners is carefully considered, monitored and reviewed. The digital capabilities within the College support transparent and timely communication. Learner engagement is prioritised by the College and incorporated into the governance structure through the Academic Board. There is potential for enhancement of learner engagement; however, it is recognised that an incremental approach is most likely to be attainable. The inclusion of in-person Academic Boards is a small but a positive first step in the right direction.

Training and upskilling of staff are recognised as a key priority. Recruitment strategies are in place to ensure good practices. There is a recognition of a need for development of performance review processes within the College.

The adjunct faculty model supports the provision of high-quality teaching and assessment that is geographically dispersed, thus facilitating access. It is well-managed, with a dedicated team responsible for the management of adjunct faculty, led by the adjunct faculty and Venue Manager. Ensuring consistency of practices and quality is a challenge that is met by comprehensive training and supports.

Chapter 5
Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to capture the multifaceted nature of teaching, learning, assessment and support within the academic community, emphasising the College's commitment to continuous improvement and academic excellence. This encompasses both virtual and physical teaching and learning spaces, highlighting their significance in the educational process. A key focus is on assessing the robustness of the College's assessment methods, including summative and formative processes, along with mechanisms for gathering student feedback. Additionally, this chapter examines research practices within the College, looking at how they contribute to the overall educational mission.

The Hibernia College [Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Strategy](#) is the roadmap through which the College lives its commitment to education. The goals of the strategy are reflected in the day-to-day undertakings of the College; they are the foundation for efforts at enhancing the learner experience across the TLA spectrum and are coherent with the Hibernia College guiding philosophy and conceptual framework for teaching, learning and assessment as described in the Institutional Profile. At a programme level, the College seeks to combine a blended learning model, the implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), learner wellbeing and professional identity with the concepts of trust, care, respect and integrity. This informs approaches to ensuring that TLA practices are robust and amenable to enhancements where they provide a benefit to all.

5.2 The Learning Environment

The environment for learners at Hibernia College is designed to ensure that the virtual and physical spaces operate as an integrated ecosystem within which a symbiotic relationship exists between:

- Online discussion forums
- Synchronous online lectures, tutorials and webinars
- Face-to-face lectures, tutorials and practical workshops and work placements

This approach to teaching and learning is achieved through the blended design of programmes, wherein learners are provided with the scaffolds to become self-directed, reflective learners in a mixture of online, face-to-face and professional practice contexts.

This ecosystem ensures that there is a robust constructive alignment between programme content, learning and teaching activities, assessment and feedback processes implemented across programmes.

5.2.1 The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

Virtual learning has become increasingly popular in recent years, with more learners recognising the benefits afforded by a flexible model of learning. Nationally, the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Department of Education and Skills, 2011) articulates the role which technology should play in the provision of teaching and facilitating the learning experience. It specifies that technology should support enhanced responsiveness to the needs of an increasingly diverse learner population. Hibernia College recognises that the needs of students in an online environment can be different to traditional teaching models. Therefore, the work of the Digital Learning Department (DLD), in collaboration with Academic Faculty, is focused on providing comprehensive and consistent services which support easy navigation of the VLE and good user experiences. This is scaffolded by relevant policies, procedures and SOPs including:

- Design of programmes and curricula for a Blended or Online Environment Policy
- [Engaging in Online Communication Guideline](#)
- [Ongoing Monitoring of Online or Blended Learning Programmes Policy](#)

Recent research, [Ademola (2021)](#), indicates that a VLE can have a beneficial influence on learning outcomes when they are successfully developed and implemented. They can ultimately support the fostering of student participation and academic achievement. According to a 2017 report, in Ireland, the use of VLEs within and beyond formal teaching environments has become normalised and an expected dimension of teaching. According to a 2017 report by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, a report Hibernia College contributed to, all Irish institutions report usage of VLEs in excess of 80% by academic staff. The DLD places an emphasis on contributing to and analysing reports and research like this to keep abreast of developing and best practice.

The Hibernia College VLE combines all the benefits of accessibility and flexibility inherent in good online education and allows learners to interact with their lecturers and fellow learners through webinars, online group activities and through the recently developed mobile collaboration app, Hibernia College Cohort. The features of the VLE include:

- Access to media-rich digital learning content
- Discussion forums, blogs and other collaborative tools
- Personalised calendars and submission deadline countdown timers
- Announcements feed
- Facilities for uploading, grading and providing feedback on assessments
- Text-matching software

- Access to administrative, placement and support resources
- A digital library
- A live chat facility for technical support
- A technical support helpdesk with searchable knowledge base articles
- Access to live online tutorials in Zoom

As well as hosting the highly interactive digital learning content, the VLE features a comprehensive digital library and personalised calendars and announcements — providing learners with a sense of campus community.

The VLE offers a fully secured online learning environment that ensures user confidence and adheres to national and international data protection standards. At the core of the VLE is the Moodle learning management system (LMS). Moodle is widely used by thousands of educational institutions with millions of users around the world and provides an organised and central interface for e-learning. Based on an open-source model, it is supported by an active global community of educators and technologists, leading to a feature-rich, secure and pedagogically sound platform for programme delivery. It has a range of functions, which combine and enhance blended learning in an online environment. The College has invested significantly in making the VLE as secure, user-friendly and interactive as possible. It allows staff and faculty to monitor learner progress closely, providing detailed reports on engagement with digital learning content and attendance at live events. This provides the opportunity for synergy between educators and proactive deployment of the Student Support Team, where appropriate.

5.2.2 Monitoring the VLE

As the VLE is essential to the learner experience, it is monitored continuously in a number of areas to ensure a reliable, secure and intuitive digital learning environment. These areas include:

- Load Testing
- Security Testing and Support
- Data Management
- User-Centred Design

Load Testing

The Hibernia College VLE is hosted on a high-performance, high-availability server cluster, located in an EU Azure data centre. It has been designed and load-tested to operate with high user concurrency and a page load time of under two seconds. The site performance is monitored 24 x 7 x 365, both by the hosting partners and by the internal analytics service.

Security Testing and Support

All server and application security updates are applied to the VLE as required by the hosting partner. The College maintains the VLE at the latest long-term security release. Network services have been configured with restricted access to the host environment. Access to the VLE is by single sign-on (SSO) only.

Data Management

Data storage is monitored by an SLA with hosting partners, and alerts are raised at 80% capacity. Additional storage can be added to the cluster with zero downtime to users. Daily full backups are performed to Azure backup services for speedy disaster recovery. An additional full daily database and weekly file backup to AWS storage provides redundant backups.

Case Study
User-Centred Design

The College VLE underwent a complete redesign prior to 2021. This redesign aimed to enhance the learner experience by focusing on improved navigation, modularity and interface design. The project adopted a comprehensive approach, starting with extensive user experience research, involving both learners and staff. The aim was to transform the VLE into a more learner-focused, efficient and modern platform. The discovery phase of the project involved two broad questions:

- What should teaching and learning look like at Hibernia College in the next 5–10 years?
- What digital technologies are needed to support this?

The results of the engagement, design and consultation were that the key aspects of the VLE redesign centred on:

- **Learner-Centred Focus:** The goal was to make the platform more aligned with the needs and expectations of learners, facilitating easier access to educational resources and activities.
- **Accessibility Features:** New accessibility features were introduced to make the VLE more inclusive and usable for all learners and staff, addressing previous limitations in the platform's design.
- **User Experience (UX) Research:** The redesign process was informed by detailed UX research, including website analytics, learner interviews and mapping of user journey flows.

- **Information Architecture:** An information architecture was established to better match the academic structures of the programmes with the software platform, providing a simplified foundation for the technical development of the new platform.

The result was the simultaneous launch of four platforms to cater to the needs of the learner community for the first day of the Spring 2021 programmes. Each of these aspects continues to be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Digital Learning Department (DLD), in alignment with the College's [Design of Programmes and Curricula for a Blended or Online Environment Policy](#). A case study describing this work was submitted as part of the [Hibernia College Annual Quality Report](#) to QQI in 2022.

**Case Study
Online Communities of Practice**

A vibrant online learning community supported by the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000) is a key element of all Hibernia College blended programmes. This is a theoretical framework that guides the creation of a collaborative, deep and meaningful learning experience through a focus on three interrelated elements: social presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence. The College recognises that such a community is a key source of help and support for learners and invests considerable effort in ensuring that College lecturers possess the knowledge and skills to effectively facilitate online discussion and community building.

Communities of Practice are groups of interested people who get together on an informal basis to discuss areas of common interest. They can work particularly well within an educational environment. Their membership can consist of a mix of learners, tutors, employers or indeed others and there is no compulsion on anyone to become a member or remain a member of a group. The group membership is fluid, so people can leave or join depending on whether they perceive that it is valuable. There are a number of examples of the use of Communities of Practice within the College. These include the Academic Integrity Community of Practice and the more informal communities supported by the Cohort App. Learners can access learning materials, calendars and other resources on mobile devices using the app but can also have online conversations around different topics of interest.

The use of software such as Zoom has greatly enhanced the establishment of Communities of Practice. Zoom is an appropriate vehicle where, previously, a physical, face-to-face presence was required to participate. Meeting in a virtual environment is now much easier and more likely to lead to their creation.

5.2.3 The Physical Environment

As a blended learning programme, the physical environment differs intrinsically from a traditional classroom situation. At Hibernia College, the educational offerings are delivered in three distinct locations:

- Online or digital (e-learning environment)
- Physical, face-to-face (classrooms, lecture theatres)
- Work placement (where applicable)

Face-to-face days are workshops that are designed to integrate the learning from the online sessions and the tutorials. They are highly practical and interactive, providing opportunities for simulated practice. To maximise the impact of these days, the appropriate learning materials are normally made available to learners well in advance — thereby allowing them to review them so that they have a better understanding before attending.

For face-to-face days, the usual practice is to hire specialised teaching rooms (lecture theatres, classrooms). The specifications of all physical resources required to run programmes are subject to the established [Ensuring and Maintaining the Quality of Physical Learning and Assessment Environments Policy](#) and any specific programme requirements as set out in validation documents.

5.3 Ensuring the Quality of the Learning Experience of Learners Engaged in Work-Integrated Activities

In addition to the virtual and physical learning spaces identified above, the professional nature of some programmes includes the element of work integrated learning placements. WIL has been discussed in relation to the quality assurance and management structures previously. This section focuses on the assurance of supports of a suitable standard to maximise learning potential. The effective integration of workplace experience into academic programmes provides valuable opportunities for learners to combine theory and practice in work environments, to deepen their knowledge and understanding, and to enhance their work-readiness and employability. The success of such experiences depends on the quality of a wide range of factors and inputs, including pedagogical design, selection and preparation of the work setting, as well as supervision and support provided during and after the experience.

Examples of support on WIL

School Placement (PME)

Formative feedback is provided throughout WIL in school settings in a timely, regular and individualised manner. Using digital reflective portfolios, learners are encouraged to reflect and adapt their practice, where necessary, to develop their expertise. This ensures that, while the learning outcomes for a particular placement are achieved, the placement also offers the opportunity for cross-modular, -stage, or -placement learning.

While on school placement, student teachers are provided with a placement handbook and are given the opportunity to observe experienced teachers. As well as support from School Placement Tutors, the Module Lead and the Student Support Officer, learners work in collaboration with Treoraithe, who provide ongoing feedback, support and mentorship. The Treoraithe are supported through the newly designed Treoraí CPD course, which is freely available to Treoraithe and schools to improve their competency in guiding student teachers. Further support and resources are available in the online School Placement Hub, School Placement modules and preparatory live events. The College adheres to the Teaching Council's Guidelines on School Placement and the CÉIM: Standards for Initial Teacher Education, which give a clear blueprint for all involved in facilitating quality school placement experiences.

Reflection plays a large role in ensuring the quality of learners' work placements. For example, learners upload weekly reflections to the VLE, and a reflective element and action plan are embedded within each lesson plan, which must be addressed and assessed by the School Placement Tutor. Final reflective report documents, which all learners must complete, are used to inform future placements and are referred to during the student teachers' learning journeys by the assessor and module lead. Taisce, a professional learning portfolio, is developed over time by student teachers to support the process of reflection on their practice. Following each school placement visit, tutors complete a feedback form, and learners are given an opportunity to respond to the feedback, thereby closing the feedback loop effectively.

Clinical Placement (Nursing)

In the Nursing programme, clinical skills development occurs in specialist learning environments designed and equipped to resemble and simulate clinical care areas. This facilitates hands-on clinical learning in safe and supported environments. The programme team also conducts small group tutorials that support preparation for placements. During clinical practice placement experiences, learners work with an experienced nurse (a preceptor) with support from clinical education teams and placement providers. Furthermore, learners can find tools, support materials and clinical policies/procedures in the online Nursing Hub. Support materials for clinical partners are available on the College's practice placements website. The College adheres to required external mandates, for example, those outlined in the NMBI programmes standards and requirements and national quality clinical learning environment resources.

For further information on processes related to workplace integrated learning, please see Section 6.7.

5.4 Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Activities

5.4.1 Developing and Designing Learning Material

Although the physical and online learning environments are recognised as essential aspects of the learner experience, the content of modules, setting of attainable but challenging learning outcomes and development of appropriate and engaging programme content are also key priorities for the College. Academic faculty, under the guidance of the Academic Dean and Programme Directors, work collaboratively to develop content of a high standard. The policies and procedures (previously detailed in this ISER) for the approval, development and monitoring of programmes help to ensure that high standards are maintained. The regular feedback sought from students in a variety of formats (focus groups, surveys, integrated into online content) also informs the refreshing and review of programme content. The Academic Leadership Team, meeting on a fortnightly basis, share peer learning on best practice in developing and reviewing programme content. Academic faculty work alongside adjunct faculty and members of the DLD Department in the process of writing content for modules. This detailed process is supported by a number of key process documents, including the style guidelines and authoring guidelines. Learning designers work closely with academic faculty to ensure consistency in approach and standards.

5.4.2 Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Activities

Hibernia College makes use of several internal forums at which enhancement activities can be discussed, agreed and implemented. These include the Academic Board, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee, Programme Boards and the Research Committee. The cross-cutting nature of the governance structure at Hibernia College ensures that there are diverse internal stakeholders represented during these discussions, and benefits can be seen in resultant activities. Enhancement of the learner experience is central to the Hibernia mission and the College makes use of its own internal design, digital and IT expertise to complement the deep pedagogical expertise in place. A selection of activities and projects described below outline the approach and results of the College enhancement efforts.

5.4.2.1 Cohort App

Hibernia College's Cohort app, developed with Moxo Inc., enhances collaborative learning experiences. It includes messaging, conferencing, meetings and document sharing capabilities. It is accessible across multiple devices and has seen high usage among staff, faculty and learners in over 200 groups.

To monitor the impact and effects of Cohort, Hibernia College collaborated with Learnovate to research the impact of the new app on learners' and teachers' collaborative learning practices. The College gathered feedback through focus groups, and the faculty sentiment was positive, finding that the app held benefits for conduct of research and placements while the need for further training was identified. Learners were more cautious in their opinions and highlighted privacy as their primary concern. However, there was a positive trend regarding adoption of the app with usage

increasing from 53% to 76% (Figure 12). Learners rated the app as either excellent or good with regard to communication but still did not report benefits with regard to completing assignments. Development work is ongoing with Moxo to improve the adoption and learner utility of the app based on these interim findings. A presentation of these findings can be found in the College research repository, IASC.

2021-2022

Have you used the Cohort app in your studies?

46.3% / 53.7%

Yes / No

2022-2023

Have you used the Cohort app in your studies?

23.33% / 76.67%

Yes / No
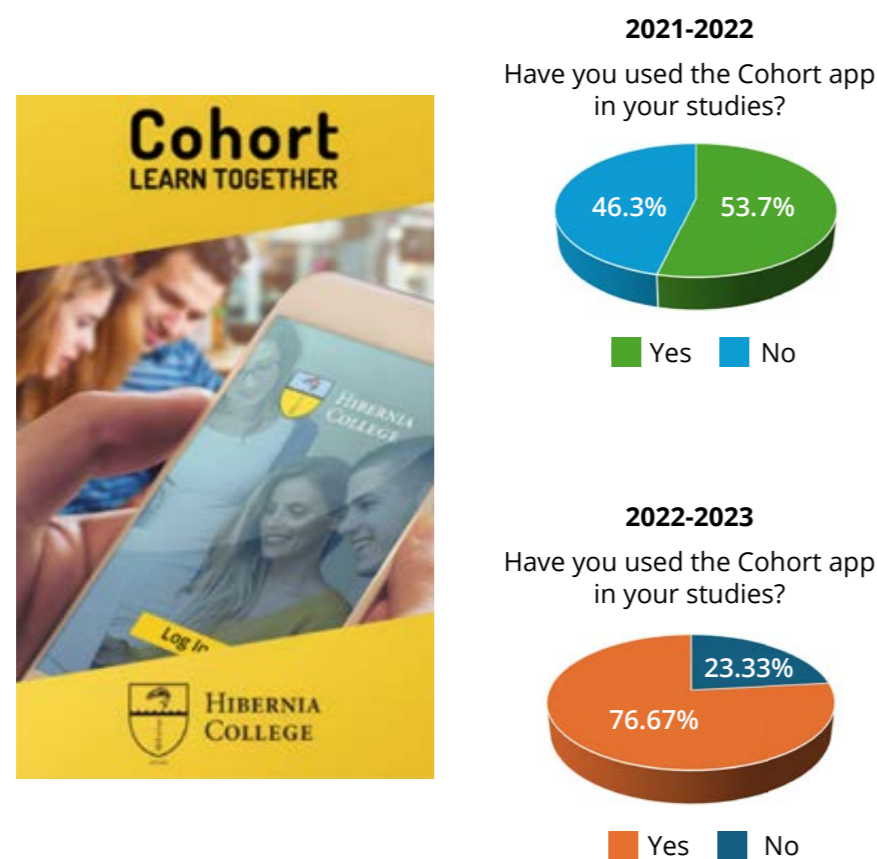
Figure 12: Cohort App Uptake

5.4.2.2 Microlearning Project

The Nursing Faculty in collaboration with members of DLD are investigating the use of the 7taps microlearning tool to develop microlearning courses for nursing students, which are delivered to them via the Cohort app. Microlearning platforms hold the potential to deliver learning content with increased ease of use and practicality through focused and easily absorbed content (Figure 13). The aim of these is to supplement the core nursing content and provide learners with immediate opportunities to recall and revise content in areas such as pharmacology.
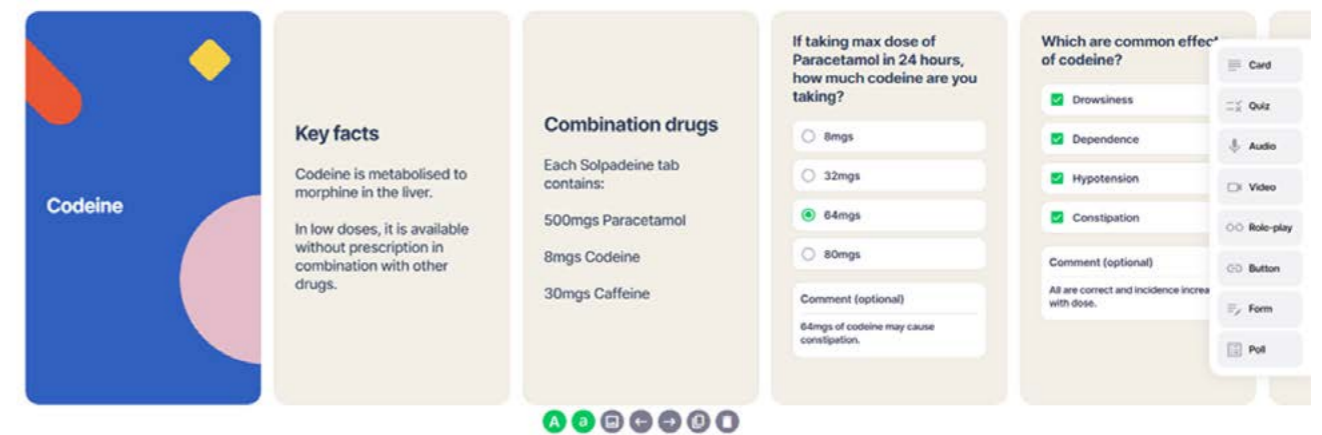
Figure 13: Microteaching Interface

So far, two examples for pharmacology have been developed, focusing on learning related to codeine and aspirin. Learner feedback has indicated that the tools increase ease of access and contribute to knowledge reinforcement, thus benefiting retention where ongoing learning is essential, e.g. workplace/placement.

5.5 Learners' Assessment Experience

There has been significant work undertaken in Hibernia College in recent years to address the emerging challenges from transformative technology such as GenAI. The challenges faced by HEIs in identifying, supporting, facilitating and enhancing good academic practices are growing exponentially. This is due in part to rapid and unprecedented advances in GenAI and the speedy manner in which these have become part of the discourse around academic integrity. While institutions move at different paces and with varying degrees of caution to regulate assessments, develop policies and initiate procedures to support best practice, students are faced with increasing temptations to take shortcuts to academic attainment. Those temptations are particularly alluring to students who may be classified as 'vulnerable'. Although the potential for abuse, misuse or avoidance of the benefits of AI is a cause for trepidation across all areas of academia, it is arguably of graver concern in relation to professional qualifications, where shortcuts in assessment responses may lead to the dilution of professional competencies. Therefore, Hibernia College has prioritised addressing the area of best practices in assessment support through a cross-departmental collaborative approach to creating workable and sustainable practices and policies. The aim is to move the focus away from punitive penalties and towards enabling and recognising good academic practice, particularly in relation to students who have experienced challenges to date with their academic journeys.

All assessment is conducted in line with the College's Assessment, Grading and Certification Policy and the following associated procedures:

- Academic Integrity and Good Practice Policy

- Appeals Policy

- [Grading Student Effort Procedure](#)

- [Grade Moderation Procedure](#)

- [Discussion of Examination Scripts (or Equivalent with Assessors) Procedure](#)

- [External Examining Procedure](#)

- [Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#)

- [Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#)

- [Principles for the Acceptable Use of Generative AI in the Assessment Process](#)

5.5.1 Ensuring Integrity, Consistency, Quality Assurance and Security of Assessment and Assessment Records and Data

The College ensures that all assessment and examination instruments are created in a timely manner and are subject to a rigorous review process both within programmes and across programmes. With the growth of the portfolio of programme offerings, the College has recognised the need to prioritise a collaborative approach to assessment monitoring, design and evaluation. This has been facilitated by the Registrar, working closely with Programme Directors to design a new assessment development process and creating a bank of resources. The Registrar has presented on a regular basis to Academic faculty, adjunct faculty and learners on the emerging challenges to assessment practices and has shared resources including:

- PowerPoint Presentations for Assessors on their Role and Duties

- Assessment Design Process Supports

- PowerPoint Presentations for Learners on Feedback, Literacy and Assessment

- SOP for Detecting and Reporting Suspected Academic Misconduct

- A New Academic Misconduct Tracker System

- Academic Misconduct Case Investigator Guidelines

The assessment design process has been radically reviewed to enable programme directors to have oversight of the assessment experience across each programme, rather than on a module-by-module basis. Academic faculty are, in the new model, tasked with presenting assessments for peer review prior to the commencement of each programme. This facilitates an assessment review process that focuses on providing learners with a good balance of different types of assessment (Figure 14).

A Robust Assessment Process
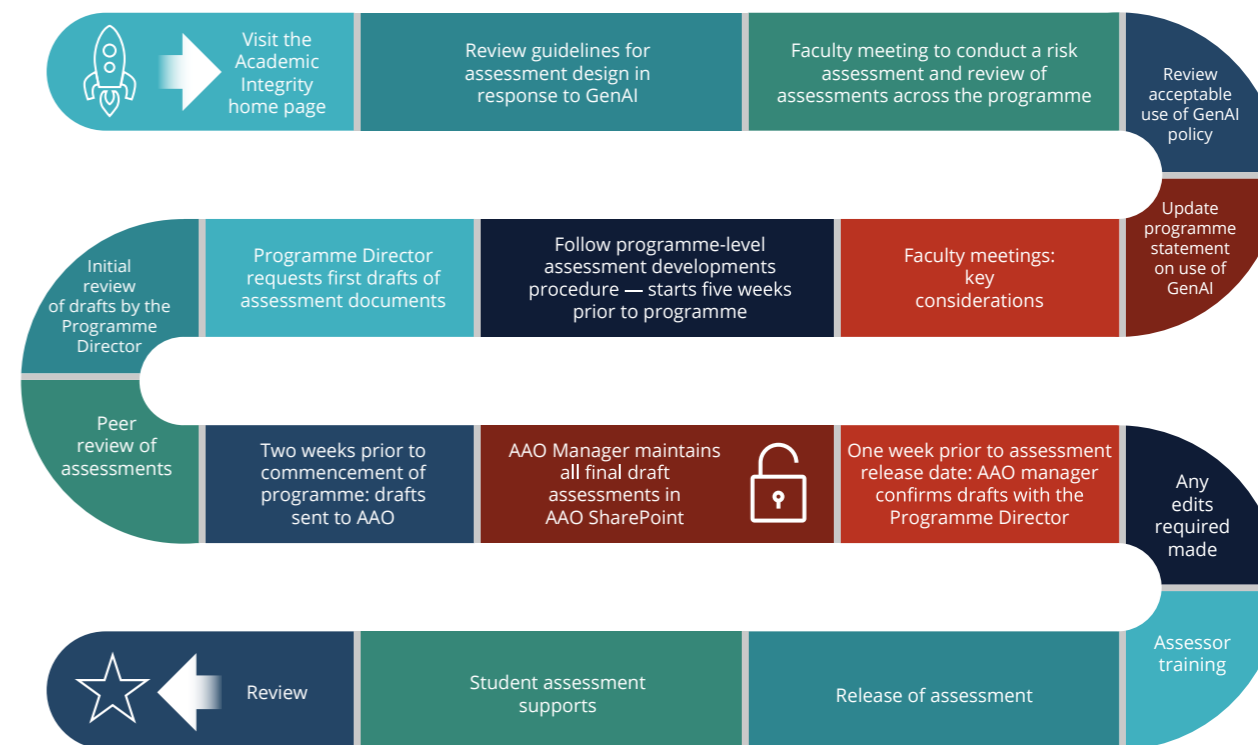
Figure 14: Assessment Process Map

Another development in the approach to assessment design is to offer students a choice within assessments. For example, if the required submission is to be accompanied by supporting documentation, the tutor discusses the production of alternative forms with the class (e.g. a basic Word document, a PowerPoint presentation with embedded video, the use of publishing software). An assessment brief template is used for all assessments across all modules to ensure consistency in the issuing of assessment instructions. Assessors are provided with an assessment rubric to facilitate consistent assessment practices, and these are subject to regular review within and across programmes. All assessors are required to engage with training prior to the release of each assessment.

Hibernia College recognises that the practical execution of the assessment process, including the submission of assessments responses by learners, should not be overly burdensome. Learners are required to upload their work via the VLE and IT support is available to assist with any issues that may arise in doing so. The process for submitting assessment responses is clearly outlined to learners in written form on the assessment and during the assessment briefing. Learners have multiple opportunities to ask questions or seek support. This process facilitates consistency in assessments across programmes as regards appropriate assessment in terms of module weightings. Furthermore, each assessment is created in respect of both programme and module learning outcomes, and replication or reuse of assessments is not permitted. This ensures the integrity of the assessment process is maintained. Dedicated assessment libraries for each programme are hosted securely on SharePoint folders. There is tracked and limited access for selected staff members, ensuring security of assessment instruments. DLD conducts an on-screen review (OSR) of each assessment or examination before they are approved and released to learners.

The management and integrity of learner assessment outcomes, and overall award results data, is the core function of the Assessment and Awards Office (AAO), which operates under the auspices of the Department of the Registrar. AAO discharge their duties in accordance with the publicly available policies for the [Assessment, Grading and Certification Policy](#), the [Grade Moderation Procedure](#), [External Examining Procedure](#) and [Board of Examiners Terms of Reference](#). Data from learner assessments arrives with AAO starting with the assessment of continuous assessments. Continuous assessments are graded by module tutors and as per the [Grade Moderation Procedure](#), and results and feedback for these submissions are issued to learners through the VLE.

Learners are afforded the opportunity to challenge an assessment outcome as outlined in the [Appeals Policy](#). Learners can apply for a review of their provisional assessment outcome or appeal the assessment outcome. The distinction between these two routes of challenge is based in the review of an outcome taking place at programme level, while an appeal affords the learner the opportunity to challenge decisions made at the programme level via recourse to an Appeals Committee. Regardless of the route chosen by a learner, they must apply for either a review or an appeal within a specified five-day timeframe from the release of their assessment outcome. Documented guidance to support these procedures is available as follows: [Appealing a College Decision Procedure](#) and [Review of a Provisional Assessment Decision Procedure](#).

Once this period is completed, and any amendments as a result of review or appeal are finalised, results are uploaded to Quercus by the Programme Administration (PA) Team. Separately, results are transferred from the PA Team to AAO, where the assembly of the final broadsheets for each programme takes place. Board of Examiners (BOE) meetings take place either following end-of-stage examinations and assessment or at the award stage. Before each BOE, a final data reconciliation meeting is held to cross-check assessment outcomes from each of the sources outlined above. This serves to identify and correct anomalies, should they arise. At each BOE meeting, documents supplied to those in attendance include broadsheets, component mark sheets and external examiners reports. A SOP on the running of a BOE meeting captures the management, integrity and retention of learner results. These documents, along with BOE minutes, are retained in accordance with the College data retention schedule. Learner results are stored permanently in Quercus and broadsheets are stored on the College's shared drive, in addition to a secure SharePoint folder and copies of learner transcripts that are also retained on shared drives.

There is a very comprehensive and recently reviewed process in place to support the process around investigating learners suspected of having engaged in misconduct. These include, initially, supports to develop a culture of academic integrity and mitigate the temptations to engage in misconduct. Examples of supports are the Academic Integrity Community of Practice and the Academic Integrity Champions Network. A comprehensive review of the Academic Integrity and Good Practice Policy included the introduction of key changes made to the policy, such as the inclusion of reference to GenAI, the development of a support structure for students identified as engaging with

misconduct and the inclusion of a rating system for levels of misconduct. The policy was reviewed for the use of plain and accessible English. A new policy on Principles for the Acceptable Use of Generative AI in the Assessment Process was also developed by the CoP and approved by the Academic Board. This policy sets out the principles for the acceptable use of GenAI within the College in response to summative assessments for the purpose of grading student effort. It sets out the context for the responsible use of GenAI by College staff, faculty, adjunct faculty and students, with particular consideration of ethical consequences, transparency and fairness in assessment design, development and response.

Case Study
The Academic Integrity Champions Network

The Academic Integrity Champions Network (AICN) is an innovation that has been piloted in Hibernia College through the work of the CoP. The overarching purpose of this role is to foster and promote a culture of academic integrity at College level and to facilitate the sharing of resources, learning and good practice at programme level. Furthermore, the Academic Champion (or nominee on their behalf) provides one-to-one support for students found to have engaged in academic misconduct and co-plans a pathway to better and sustainable academic practices. Finally, the Academic Champions work with Peer Champions (students) to discuss issues of relevance with students and provide an opportunity for co-creation of supports and resources. The Champions work collaboratively as a network across the College to:

- Discuss and propose improvements and developments in academic integrity and plan towards Academic Integrity Week

- Consult on the decision-making process in complex or challenging cases of suspected misconduct

- Develop cross-department programme level knowledge and expertise in academic integrity

- Consult with the Programme Director on their programme on assessor training and supports

An area of concern in supporting vulnerable students identified by the CoP was the investigative process when students were brought to the College's attention as suspected of having engaged in misconduct. The occasional nature of the investigator role led to concerns regarding consistency and decision-making processes. The CoP tasked a working group with responsibility for researching and developing the role of the case investigator. Taking advantage of recent National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) guidelines on the investigative process, this working group developed a comprehensive set of guidelines, Terms of Reference, training materials and samples of good practice.

To support the maintenance of the integrity of results data, the College implements the Data Protection and the Handling Of Student Data Guidelines and Personal Data And Records Policy, where relevant.

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure are available on the HCQF. Applicants for RPL communicate with the College via a dedicated email account. There is a published procedure and application form for those wishing to avail of RPL for the purposes of academic standing, i.e. module exemptions; this requires the submission of official transcripts, diploma supplements and module descriptors and learning objectives. These data are stored along with individuals' application forms in a secure SharePoint site. Information is provided to those involved in decision-making via a link. The outcomes of applications are communicated to applicants/learners via SIS and, where appropriate, exemptions from a named module(s) are recorded in SIS. This is available for transfer to broadsheets upon their creation.

5.5.2 Maintaining Assessment Standards for Learners Engaged in Work-Integrated Learning

Across many of the Hibernia College programmes, work-integrated learning is an essential element in the development of suitably qualified professionals and it has been discussed across this ISER. In Hibernia College, the assessment of work-integrated learning is supported by a range of policies, procedures and guidance documents at institutional and programme level to ensure alignment with the academic and professional requirements of its programmes.

For example:

- On the Nursing programme, work-integrated learning accounts for 50% of the overall programme, as required by the NMBI Nurse Registration Standards and Requirements (Fifth Edition) (2023). This standard lays out the requirements for learner outcomes and the delivery standards for providers.

- In both PME programmes, the practicum element of the programme accounts for 50 credits out of the total of 120 credits, as stipulated by the Teaching Council of Ireland in Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education (2020).

To support adherence to both professional body standards and the standards required of validated programmes, faculty make use of both College-level policies and programme-specific guidance.

5.5.3 Fostering Learners' Understanding of Assessment

From the beginning of their programmes, learners are introduced to the assessment principles and practices of the College, with a focus on the particular assessment instruments used in their own programme. This information is present in programme handbooks available to potential learners and is reinforced at orientation when learners are clearly signposted to assessment (Figure 15).

About Assessments
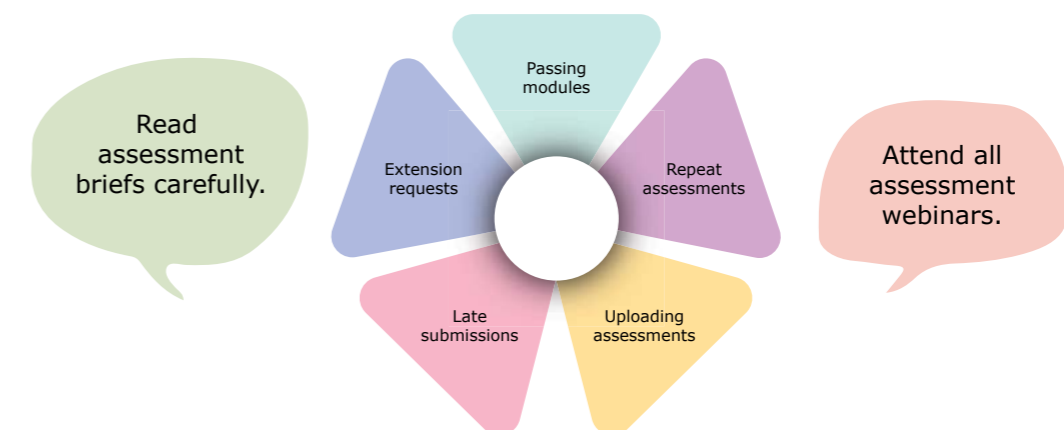
Figure 15: Assessment Background

In following the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, programme teams monitor the richness of the proposed assessment instruments. Furthermore, in keeping with the ambition to ensure that the programmes meet the needs of the modern learner, programme teams ensure that learners undertake both individual work and collaborative (group work) assessment activities.

The following applies to the development of assessment:

- An assessment brief template is used for all assessments across all modules to ensure consistency in the issuing of assessment instructions.

- Learners are provided with a detailed marking scheme or rubric (consistent with the assessment criteria), which will be used to mark the work.

- Assessment forums and drop-in webinars are provided to supplement the initial assessment support webinar or class. These allow learners the opportunity to clarify any queries around the assessment.

ESS Assignment Brief: Assessment Methodology

This module is assessed by an **academic essay** or **recorded presentation** (100%).

- You are required to complete an essay to demonstrate your achievement of the learning outcomes in respect of this module.

Figure 16: Assessment Briefing
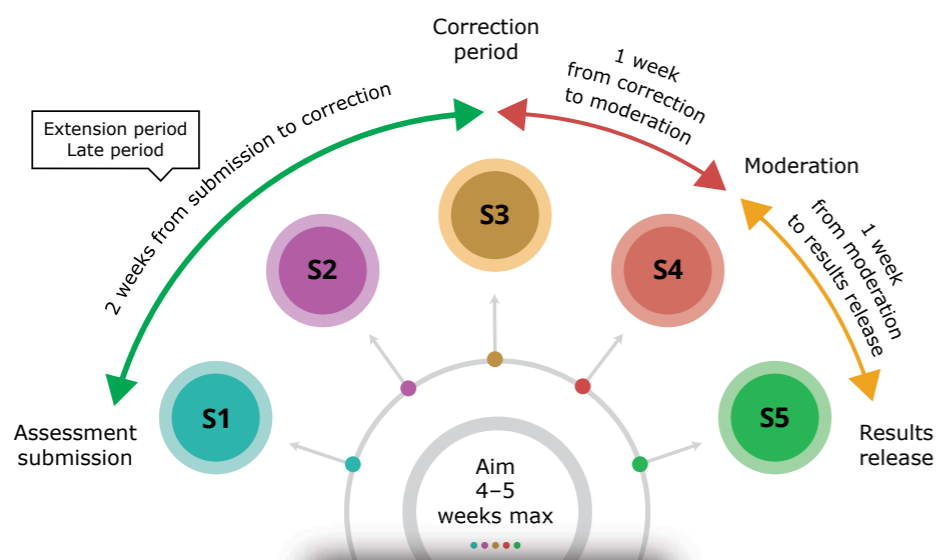
Figure 17: Assessment Timeline

Regarding summative assessment, learners are informed of the credit weighting for each module and the assessment mode or method. Assessments at module level are linked to the minimum intended learning programme outcomes (MIPLOs) and are designed to consolidate and integrate learning. Learners are invited to attend assessment briefings (Figure 16) timed to coincide with the release of assessments themselves, where this information is repeated, and learners are afforded the opportunity to raise concerns and ask the module lead questions. To enable learners to plan effectively, manage their workload and time (Figure 17), and to fully benefit

from the feedback that accompanies assessments, they are also provided with a clear outline of the timing of the entire assessment process from submission through to feedback and marks release.

In line with Hibernia College's [Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy](#), a range of assessments are employed across modules to provide learners with experience of a variety of assignments and modes of assessment, in line with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). These include portfolio assignments, posters, essays, case studies and presentations. The guiding principles are that diversity and flexibility are embedded in the assessment strategy for each programme, with the aim of ensuring learners have access to equitable learning opportunities and opportunities to demonstrate their learning. A roadmap of the assessment opportunities and types presented to learners of the PME in Post-Primary Education programme (Figure 18). This clearly identifies the mode of assessment, the timing and the relationship of each assessment with the preceding assessment and modules.
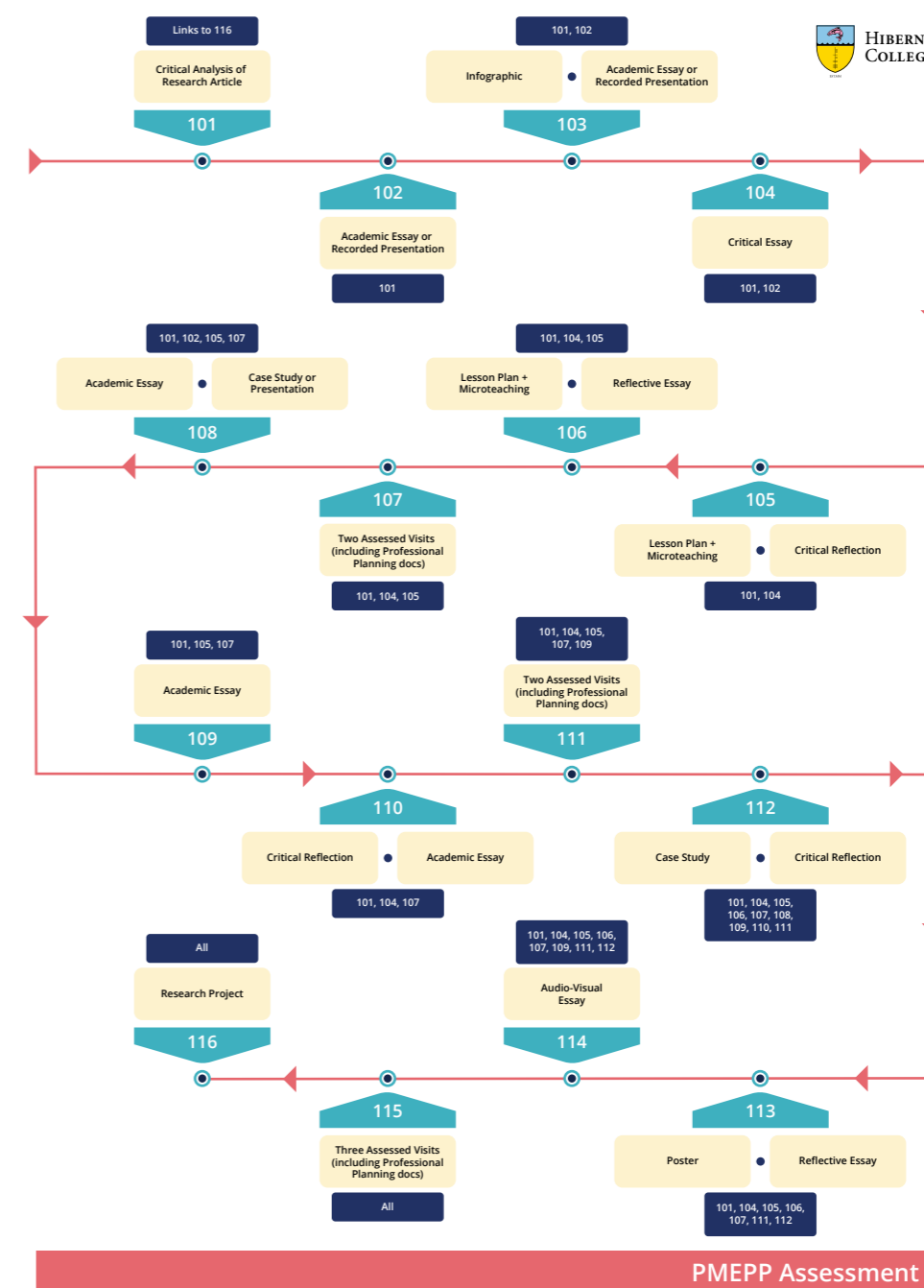
Figure 18: Whole-Programme Assessment Overview

Formative assessment is integral to programmes and to enabling the development of learners' skills and knowledge base. Formative assessment is embedded across modules through specified learning tasks designed to enhance learning, motivate and empower learners, and encourage creativity and innovation. All modules use formative work to promote learner attainment of learning outcomes; tasks are timed and delivered to support progression and scaffold learning. Clear and constructive formative feedback is provided by tutors in a timely manner to actively improve learner outcomes and empower learners to become more autonomous and self-regulating. For example, an Interim Assessor Feedback form has been piloted to provide interim feedback to learners between modules while awaiting formal individualised feedback. Feedback is also encouraged between peer learners on learning tasks and in discussions. The use of formative microteaching on the PME in Post-Primary Education programme is a clear example of this.

5.5.4 Using Learner Feedback to Enhance Assessment Methodologies

With regard to assessment practice, Hibernia College promotes principles drawn from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Enabling Policies to Support Assessment OF/FOR/AS Learning in Irish Higher Education. These include the following:

- Assessment and feedback should empower learners to become self-regulated learners.
- Assessment and feedback should be clear and understandable by staff and learners.
- Decisions on assessment and feedback should be guided by a programme-level approach.
- Assessment and feedback approaches should foster partnership between staff and learners.
- Learners should experience a diverse range of assessment methods, including, where relevant, authentic and school-based assessments.
- Assessment and feedback should be manageable for staff and learners.

Importantly, these guidelines are embedded into the Assessment, Grading and Certificate Policy, ensuring these principles are implemented across all programmes and that there is continuity and consistency throughout the assessment process.

Tools deployed by Hibernia College to implement these guidelines and ensure compliance with the College policy include the use of end-of-module surveys, as conducted across all modules on programmes. As a result, feedback on assessment is gathered on a rolling basis, analysed and used to inform future practice in this area. This feedback is aggregated along with external examiner feedback in the end-of-programme report for each programme. Where concerns are apparent, programme directors and Faculty are required to prepare an actionable response to this. Importantly, the collection of this feedback allows for real-time enhancements to the assessment methodology for the benefit of learners.

Case Study
Sequencing of Modules

As part of an initial delivery iteration of the PME in Primary Education programme, the first three modules on the programme incorporated an academic essay response whilst the fourth module offered learners the opportunity to submit a recorded presentation. Learner feedback collected via end-of-module surveys and through the use of the Wooclap tool (Figure 19) at in-person teaching and tutorial sessions indicated that learners felt a range of assessment types would be beneficial to their learning while also having an impact on learner wellbeing. In response to this learner feedback, the sequencing of the modules will be altered so that the fourth module will now be delivered second. This change will provide learners with more variety in their assessment types and has the potential to have a positive impact on learner wellbeing through changes in workload.
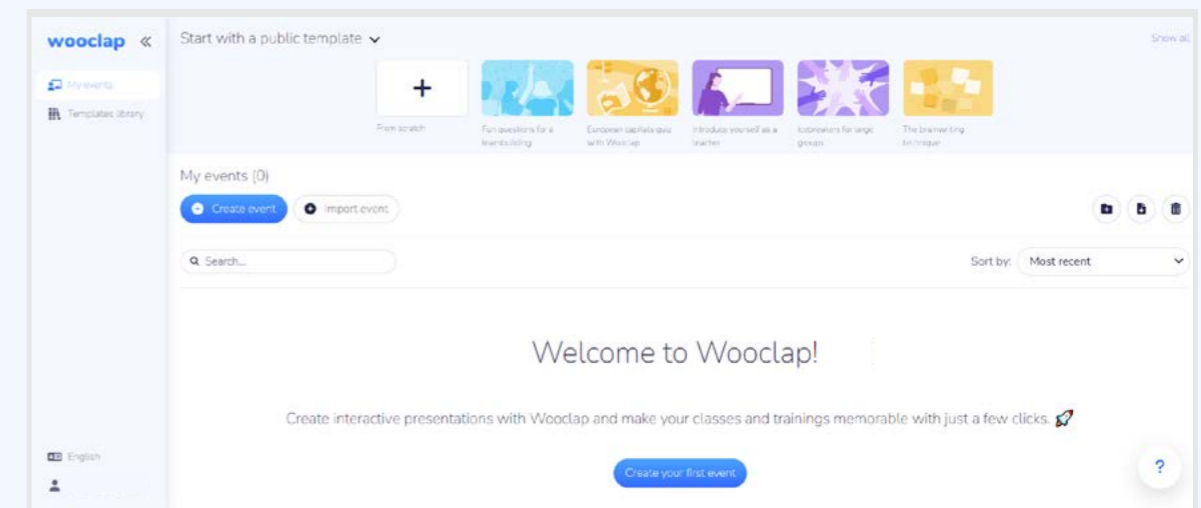

Figure 19: Wooclap Interface

5.5.5 Maintaining Assessment Standards for Learners Engaged in Work-Integrated Learning

Across many of the Hibernia College programmes, work-integrated learning is an essential element in the development of suitably qualified professionals. In Hibernia College, the assessment of work-integrated learning is supported by a range of policies, procedures and guidance documents at institutional and programme level to ensure alignment with the academic and professional requirements of its programmes. For example:

- On the Nursing programme, work-integrated learning accounts for 50% of the overall programme, as required by the NMBI Nurse Registration Standards and Requirements (Fifth Edition) (2023). This standard lays out the requirements for learner outcomes and the delivery standards for providers.

- In both PME programmes, the practicum element of the programme accounts for 50 credits out of the total of 120 credits, as stipulated by the Teaching Council of Ireland in Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education (2020).

To support adherence to both professional body standards and the standards required of validated programmes, faculty make use of both College-level policies and programme-specific guidance. The Programme-Specific Rules and Assessment Regulations for Nursing is an example of this and is available to both staff and learners through the Student Hub area of MyHELMS. This practice ensures that learners are aware of the work-integrated learning requirements. The College delivers training for and the support of workplace supervisors for all programmes, for example, the Nursing Preceptorship Course is provided to all clinical partners. Importantly, this programme was reaccredited by NMBI in 2023. For the PME programmes, school placement tutors are provided with assessor training and updates prior to each placement block to ensure consistency for all learners. Furthermore, on the PME in Primary Education programme, school placement tutors are supported throughout the placement period using drop-in webinars, the Cohort app and peer mentor support. There is a permanent base for supporting resources for school placement tutors in the School Placement Tutor Hub. There is also an ongoing effort to improve practice through the Community of Practice, where best practice in teaching and assessment can be shared and discussed. In addition, academic faculty conduct quality assurance visits across the cohorts and programmes, with an emphasis on standards, appropriate use of feedback, grade descriptors and consistent grading approaches. The use of dedicated software (InPlace) by all programmes to monitor and record workplace learning, verifying attendance and delivering feedback assists in the maintenance of high standards across work-integrated learning.

5.6 Support for Learners

Hibernia College is committed to enhancing learner support through various measures. This includes a significant investment in and design of assistive technologies.

Providing Reasonable Accommodation (RA) support, including digital technologies and laptops during exams, also ensures an inclusive environment for all learners. Learner support extends to exam format and waivers, such as incorporating support during the Irish grammar component to assist learners with dyslexia and neurodiverse learners. The provision of learning materials 24 hours in advance of sessions is also a cornerstone of the support infrastructure for all learners, empowering learners without the explicit need on their part to request support. Support demonstrates continuous flexibility in design approaches for learners with RA, tailoring solutions to individual needs. Ongoing communication with learners is a crucial aspect, involving collaborative efforts to identify suitable approaches through policies and procedures, including lesson plan design, content uploading, School Placement Tutor support and embracing UDL principles in representation of learning through lesson plans, feedback and reflection. Moreover, including accessible Wooclap templates in live events adds an interactive dimension to support accessibility and provides us with an additional option to capture authentic assessment of those events.

Support for learners is provided by a number of distinct but interconnected teams across the College; these include the library support, learner support, technical support and programme administrator teams. Hibernia College approaches provision of support for learners in a holistic fashion, aware that establishing a positive environment that values self-care is important for all learners and none more so than those pursuing programmes leading to registration as teachers or nurses. Support for the learner begins during the admissions process and continues throughout the learner journey with support available throughout a programme and reemphasised at key junctures, e.g. orientation (Figure 20) and placement (see 4.2.1).
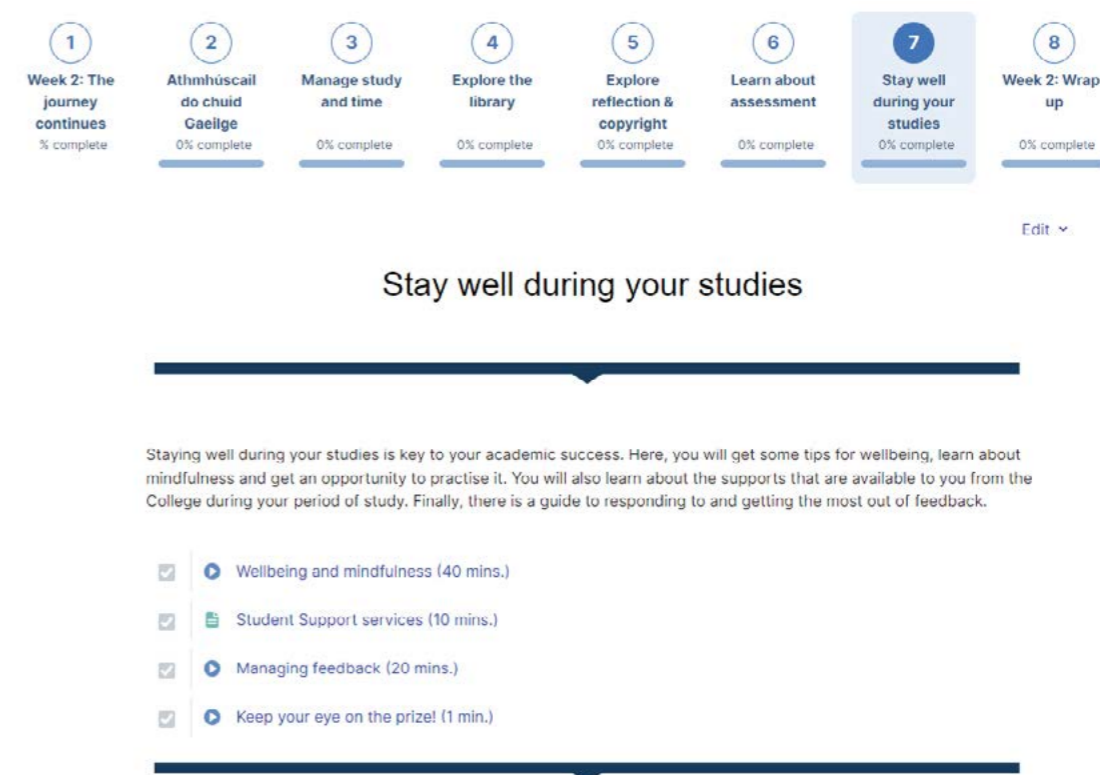

Figure 20: Orientation Support

5.6.1 Monitoring and Responding to Learner Needs

Across the different learner support services offered by the College, multiple approaches are used to capture how College services meet the needs of learners and how these services can be adapted and improved. These include both formal feedback methods such as surveys and more informally through focus groups and direct communication with learners. Regular surveys capture the learner perspective on library services, the counselling service and the quality assurance survey on learner experience of use of the HCQF. Detailed and focused data has been gathered through tailored events such as library referencing workshops, time management workshops and wellbeing events. Verbal and written feedback collected during and after these sessions, respectively, enables support services to respond quickly and effectively. Importantly, this approach centres the learner voice. Direct outcomes of these surveys have given rise to the production and implementation of mindfulness webinars, learner-friendly videos on wellbeing and self-care, a series of time management webinars and adding placeholders to learners' calendars for digital cafés. Further monitoring, addressed elsewhere, includes the built-in feedback mechanisms and resultant analytics of the VLE.

Case Study
The Responsive Library

The annual library survey gathers data on how learners are using library services and to obtain an understanding of which library services and tools are effective or which services and tools can be further developed for the benefit of learners. This is supported through a direct data-gathering approach, whereby the library monitors monthly statistics on the usage of library resources and discrete aspects of the service, such as web page views and email queries. Example feedback included: '**Referencing information for each book or resource**' and '**Some referencing information**'.

Direct outcomes of these monitoring exercises include the enhancement of referencing and academic writing support services in response to the volume and nature of referencing queries. Feedback from participants in a recent referencing workshop rated the session 8.9/10 while feedback was largely positive '**It was very clear.**', '**Very informative**' and '**Very helpful — questions answered**'. The same participants identified scope for further enhancement, targeting both content and mode of delivery ('**Maybe show a References page from an assignment.**' and '**I found it hard to click on the links in the chat box for the activity.**'). Additionally, the library knowledge base on the library site is developed in line with the kind of searches learners perform.

5.6.2 A Central Student Support Team

Fundamental to the mode of learner support at Hibernia College is continuous communication and liaison amongst all staff and faculty, allowing the College to build an effective and responsive learner support service. The Student Support Team, led by the Head of Student Affairs and supported by the Student Support Officer, work directly with the faculty and programme administrators in addition to teams across Registry, including the Assessment and Awards Office and the Admissions Office. These teams meet regularly, thereby ensuring that each learner is supported appropriately and that teams are not working in isolation. This can be illustrated through the interaction of the Student Support Team with the Admissions Team. Learners with disabilities or needs that require support can self-identify early and before registering with Hibernia College. Potential learners have the option to declare such disabilities and the need for support from the learner support services during their application to the College. Importantly, where consent to share this information is obtained, the Admissions Team liaise directly with the Student Support Team to ensure relevant information is shared and that learners are contacted in a proactive fashion to receive a needs assessment and prepare an application for reasonable accommodations where necessary.

5.6.3 Consistency in Learner Support

Through its Student Support Team, Hibernia College offers a comprehensive and holistic support system that aims to create an environment that promotes learner success, engagement and a sense of belonging within the educational community. These services are inclusive for all learners and work is consistently undertaken to ensure consistency of access is maintained. Importantly, through the use and adoption of online platforms, physical barriers to access have been removed. Consistency is ensured in several ways because the Student Support Team are not programme-specific. This is exemplified by the manner in which programme administrators respond to learner queries. Through a Microsoft Dynamics platform, learner queries and requests are received centrally, thereby removing reliance on a single individual and providing redundancy over and above that of a traditional shared email inbox. Where some members of the programme administrator team have duties specific to a programme, e.g. the allocations coordinator for the Nursing Programme, they use and are part of the same Microsoft Dynamics query queue.

Where tailored supports are aimed at specific cohorts, e.g. academic writing webinars or advanced library skills, support staff ensure that all academic faculty are aware of the supports offered so that similar supports can be developed and scheduled for other cohorts of learners. All academic governance committees are cross-sectional with cross-team and learner composition. Regular programme team meetings with representatives from each support team in addition to the academic programme team ensure a consistent approach to learner support.

5.6.3.1 A Technologically-Enhanced Approach

All learners have access to the learner VLE 'Student Home', where each learner support service has its own area that includes a Meet the Team and contact details as well as key resources. This ensures that all learners can access this information and can reach out to support services as and when they need it (Figure 21).
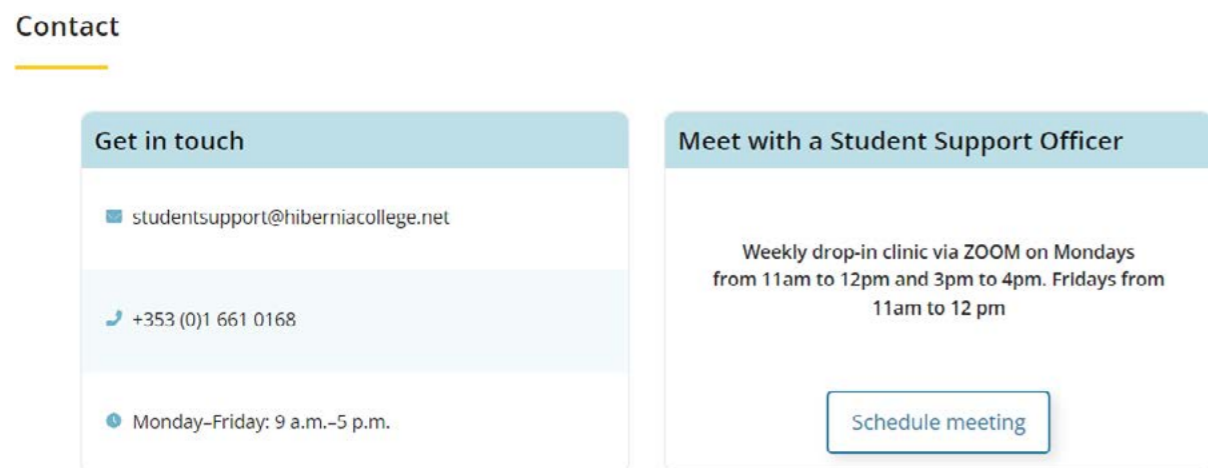

Figure 21: Mechanisms of Student Support

Through the news post feature, the VLE allows support services to communicate service updates and information to all learners simultaneously. Similarly, the option to send bulk emails to learners ensures that all learners receive the same information, e.g. when a support webinar is scheduled. Support services often schedule regular drop-in webinars in various support areas, e.g. wellbeing and referencing. These are communicated to learners via shared channels such as news and email and they are also scheduled strategically to maximise attendance and support learners at crunch times during their studies. The repetition of webinars throughout the year is another approach to maximising learner engagement and mitigating scheduling conflicts due to programme commitments. The online nature of the College resources and services ensures that learners can avail themselves of support services even when on placement. While on placement, learners still have full access to support services, for example, the Student Support Officer and the Student Counsellor, should they need it. Learners continue to interact regularly with the VLE, receive regular communication from the College support teams and benefit from placement-specific communications through the InPlace app.

5.6.4 Learner Uptake of Supports

The visibility of learner services and supports is key to their usefulness and utilisation by learners. A variety of means are employed to ensure that all learners are made aware of and have access to learner services. All Hibernia College programmes commence with an orientation programme, where learners are introduced to the practicalities and logistics of learner life on a Hibernia College programme. Other means of ensuring learners are aware of the existence of the supports available to them throughout their studies include meeting with learners at scheduled in-person

days, at webinars organised by individual support teams (e.g. Library and Student Support) and regular email contact. As part of the learner support service provision, routine assessment of uptake is monitored. For example, monitoring engagement with and effectiveness of the learner counselling service is undertaken on an annual basis. Most recently, 76% of learners were aware of the service; yet, only 51% of learners were aware of how to access contact details for the same. Of those survey respondents accessing the service, 78% reported self-referral. This would indicate that awareness of and confidence in self-referring to learner support services is good, but the availability of necessary information may be lacking.

5.6.4.1 Support Services Availability and Learner Satisfaction

To determine if a wider issue existed affecting the accessibility and availability of support services, a College-wide survey was conducted in February 2024 for a seven-day period to determine learner opinion on mode of access and satisfaction with a range of College support services; the survey received 81 responses. Of those who have contacted the Student Support Officer, Programme Administration Team, Library Team and Technical Support Team, the primary mode of contact for all teams was via the VLE learner home page (Figure 22). Furthermore, the majority of all learners surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that identifying the most appropriate service to contact was easy, as illustrated.

% of learners engaging with services via VLE learner home page

Figure 22: Student Support Survey — Engagement via the VLE
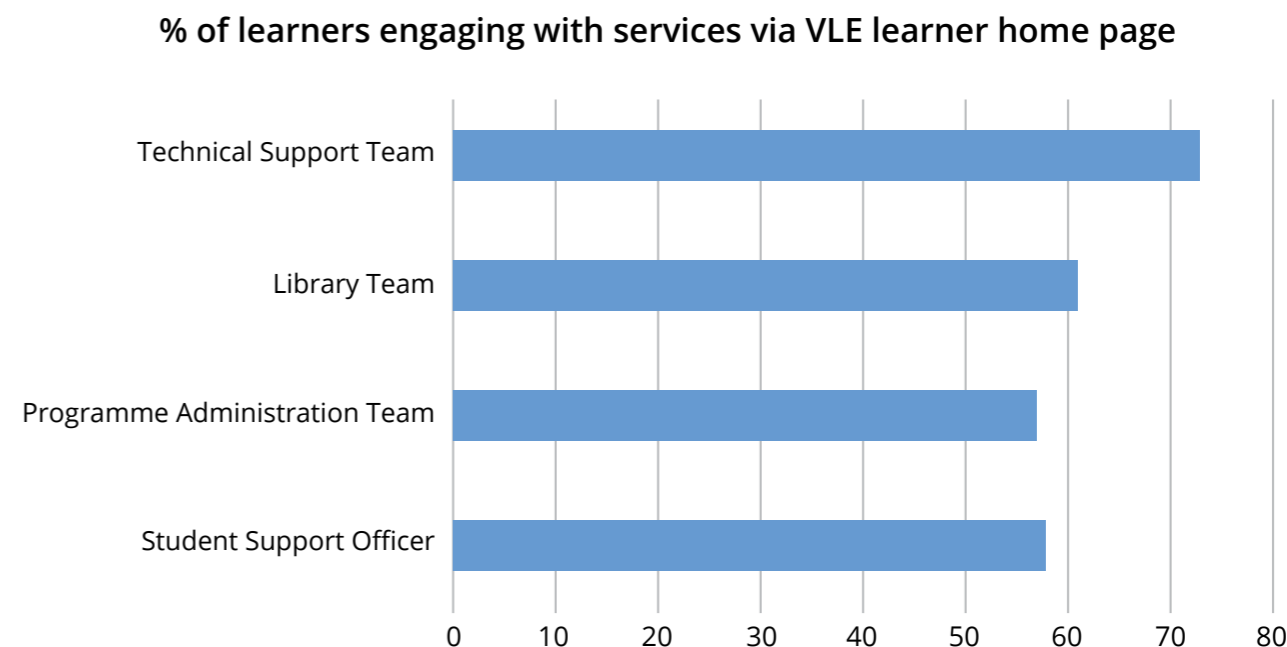
Learner satisfaction was assessed through response to the question 'The support provided met my needs'. For all support service teams, the majority, >50%, of responding learners reported that the response of any particular support team met their needs (Figure 23). The degree of satisfaction varied with the Technical Support Team receiving the highest satisfaction rating.

I could easily identify the student support service to contract for my query
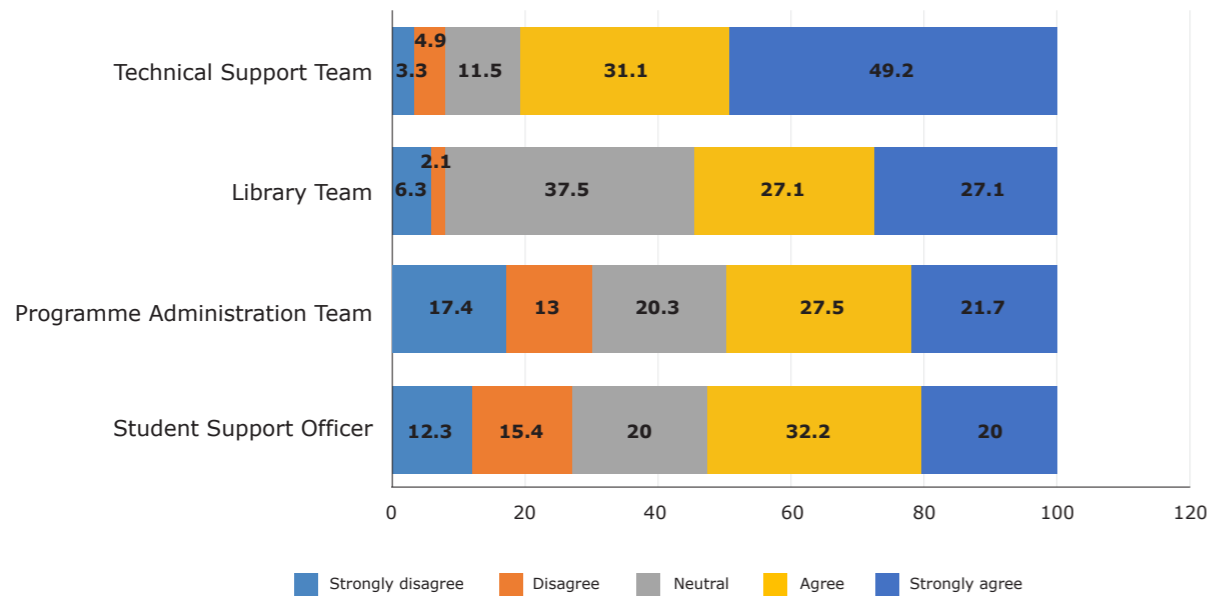
Figure 23: Student Support Survey — Identifying the Correct Service

This would indicate that where learners seek to engage with support services, they are able to access the appropriate service with relative ease and the majority of learners did so via the same route. Further work may be required to ensure those who do not regularly use the VLE home page or access only limited elements of this VLE page have the requisition information provided in a repeated and accessible fashion. The satisfaction of learners taking up these services was on the whole positive (Figure 24); however, where perceived boundaries of particular support teams begin to blur, learner satisfaction may decline due to time taken to resolve a particular query, e.g. where the incorrect service is initially contacted and a redirection is required.

The support provided met my needs
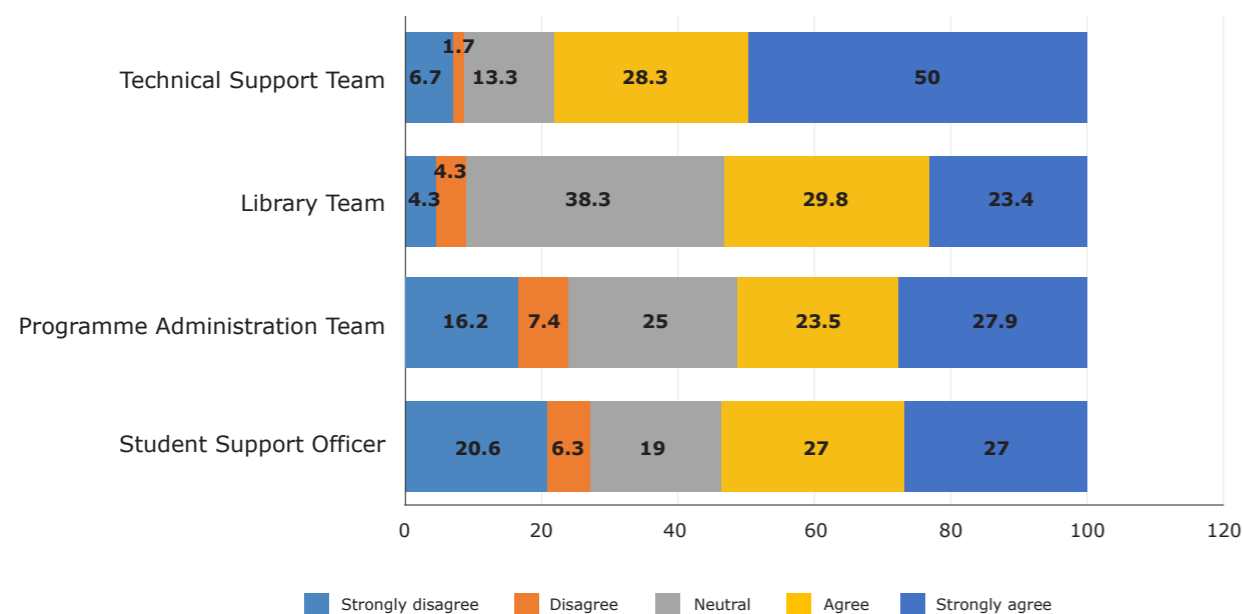
Figure 24: Student Support Survey — Meeting Student Needs

5.7 Quality Assurance and Management of Research

Quality Assurance (QA) at Hibernia College is an essential element that underpins the integrity, credibility and effectiveness of research activities. While good individual ethical practices are important, it is also essential that the management and leadership structure supports, requires and facilitates best practice. As a relatively small, private institution, research is conducted on an appropriately sustainable scale. However, recruitment processes in recent years have been adapted to prioritise academic attainment and qualification as well as evidence of an active research profile in candidates for academic roles. The effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the governance and management of quality throughout Hibernia College are central to ensuring that research aligns with Hibernia College institutional goals and strategic priorities, maintenance of high standards and contributes meaningfully to best educational research practice. This section underscores the arrangements in place to guarantee an integrated system of quality assurance that supports and reinforces Hibernia College research activities.

5.7.1 The Research Committee and Ethics Committee

The Research Committee provides guidance on strategy, policy and the approach to research activity in the College. The Ethics Committee also guides the Academic Board and the College community on approaches to ethical teaching, research and scholarship. The Ethics Committee grants ethical approval for research conducted by staff, faculty and third parties seeking to conduct research in the College community. Additionally, a number of Hibernia College staff members have full membership of the British Educational Research Association (BERA).

The Research Committee

The Research Committee:

- Guides the Academic Board and the College community in strategy, policy and the approach to research activity in the College
- Reviews College policies, procedures, strategies and resources in relation to research and recommends changes and executes development on behalf of the Academic Board
- Advises the Academic Board on the management of College research activity
- Promotes excellence and development in research in the College
- Considers and makes recommendations on issues related to research
- Liaises with the Ethics Committee on the monitoring and review of research activity
- Oversees the analysis and benchmarking of research activity and impact

Case Study
Research Seminar Series

The Research Seminar Series is an annual series of research presentations held online across the academic year. In 2022, there were four presentations and three were hosted in 2023. The presenters are both members of Hibernia College faculty who are research active and guest academics from other Higher Education institutions, both national and international. Attendance is open to Hibernia College staff and learners and to guest institutions.

Case Study
IASC Repository

IASC (Institutional Archive of Scholarly Content) is an open access repository designed to store, archive and disseminate the work of Hibernia College faculty, staff and learners. IASC was launched in July 2022 as an open-access repository for research items. It includes peer-reviewed publications, conference papers, research reports, presentations and examples of learner work. It is currently hosting over a hundred items across 10 communities and 14 collections. An open-access self-archiving policy and procedure were developed, approved and added to the HCQF as part of quality assurance as a consultative process with the Department of the Registrar.

The Ethics Committee

The Ethics Committee guides the Academic Board and the College community on approaches to ethical teaching, research and scholarship. It also grants ethical approval for research conducted by staff, faculty and third parties seeking to conduct research in the College community.

According to the Terms of Reference, it:

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

b. Reports to the Academic Board on issues regarding alignment of the code of conduct and guidelines with policy and process in Hibernia College

c. Consults with the Academic Dean and/or the Registrar in relation to specific causes for concern in relation to ethics

d. Considers items referred to them by the Academic Board in relation to ethics

e. Considers research proposals undertaken in the College's name

f. Liaises with the Research Committee on the monitoring and review of research activity

Case Study
Ethics in Action Series

The Ethics Committee invites both in-house and international speakers to the Ethics in Action Series: An Exploration of Ethical Practice in Staff Practice. The three-part online series has included areas such as ethical dilemmas in the primary school classroom, first generation learners in higher education, and 'The Ethics of Good Housekeeping'. Contributors range from College staff, adjunct faculty, faculty and the Windesheim University of Applied Sciences in Almere in the Netherlands.

One of the roles of the Ethics Committee is to review internal but also external research projects.

A sample of approved projects are outlined below:

Research Projects

- Formative Assessment Project: This project, funded by QQI under the Assessment and Confidence in HE Qualifications research funding scheme, centres around the design and investigation of the use of a technology-enhanced simulation as an integrative authentic assessment approach on a blended learning professional programme. The Hibernia College academic team, DLD and the Department of the Registrar designed and implemented a technology-enhanced scenario-based virtual site of practice (VSoP) to support the assessment of learning outcomes on a professional programme. This simulation acts as a bridge between assessed experiences in real sites of practice and academic and professional studies. It provides learners with the opportunity to develop skills and competencies before entering the placement setting. Learners are assessed on these skills in a simulated environment, enabling consistency, efficiency and transparency in assessment practices. Principal investigators: Dr Mary Kelly and Elva Casey.

- Wellbeing Intervention Project: This research project is a pilot study conducted by researchers at Hibernia College and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) of whole-school (post-primary) wellbeing interventions. Post-primary learners and teachers will participate and be assessed in various wellbeing interventions, including positive psychology activities, lifestyle medicine activities, pro-environmental activities, pro-environmental activities with positive psychology. Principal Investigators are Dr Annemarie Doran (Hibernia College) and Dr Jolanta Burke (RCSI).

- Ubuntu Network Funding for the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) into Hibernia College's modules on the PME Primary programme. The project is being led by Caroline Hogan. It aims to impart knowledge to academic tutors and College learners as future educators; to develop the skills necessary for the teaching of GCE in everyday practice; to reflect on the values and attitudes of academic tutors and PME learners to progress GCE integration and to share the methodologies and teaching approaches to facilitate GCE.

- John Coolahan Research Funding for the development and piloting of an online CPD course for the Treoraí on the PME Post-Primary programme.

- PME Post-Primary and PME Primary Research Co-Authoring Initiative

- In 2024, Hibernia College commenced a research co-writing initiative. The top-performing PME research dissertations are developed by the learner, their supervisor and an academic as co-writers for submission for a journal article. This will develop, grow and promote research in the College.

Case Study
HECA Research Committee

Hibernia College staff are represented as members of the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA) Research Committee. Set up in mid-2021, the aim of the Committee is to highlight the importance of research across the HECA institutions by spotlighting key research by staff and learners. The Committee seeks to foster an awareness of the need to promote an inclusive approach to work-based learning in a post-COVID-19 world. Best practice is part of the research plan, one that assists in the development of the VLE and promotes academic standards in the VLE. The Committee forefronts awareness of the digital divide amongst students in respect of ethics and integrity. One of the first aims of the Committee in 2021 was to set up the HECA Student Research Awards (HSRA), which have included prize-winners from Hibernia College learners.

Now, in its fourth year, this hybrid annual conference provides opportunities to meet, share knowledge and showcase HECA staff and learners' contributions to the national and international research landscape in a variety of academic disciplines.

The HECA Research committee aims to facilitate research collaborations and knowledge sharing between its constituent colleges by hosting the annual research conference and conducting surveys of researchers across HECA institutions to identify potential collaborative opportunities.

HECA Conference Working Group

Three Hibernia College representatives are active in this group and have contributed to planning and hosting the inaugural HECA research conference (November 2022) and the second conference (November 2023). Tasks include assisting conference organisation, peer review of submissions and judging of HSRA (learner poster awards, awarded at conference). Several members of Hibernia College faculty and the Department of the Registrar have presented papers and delivered workshops at these conferences.

5.7.2 Assurance, Monitoring and Opportunities for Enhancement in Research

The cluster group focusing on research within Hibernia College for the purposes of the Institutional Review has noted the potential for development in the area of research education and training programmes. These programmes help to raise awareness regarding peer review processes for research funding. These could include education regarding various funding agencies, their requirements and the importance of peer review in the evaluation of research proposals.

The cluster group also noted the opportunity for funding proposal writing mentorship. This could include the provision of 'hands-on' assistance and consultation while writing competitive proposals that may also address peer reviewers' expectations and concerns. Additionally, mentorship and guidance opportunities where experienced faculty members or external providers give guidance on navigating the peer review process successfully as well as identify suitable funding opportunities and amend proposals accordingly, would be highly supportive and the College is well positioned to start exploring these areas. The cluster group finds that these opportunities have presented themselves due to the leadership strategy to hire research-aware and research-active Faculty. It is now timely to build on this momentum by establishing formalised supports for staff engaging in research and building upon the good structure currently in place through the Ethics and Research Committees.

Case Study
The Publication Process

As a step towards the recommendations above, on 6 December 2023, researchers were given guidance from an experienced colleague on the publication process. Director of Nursing, Dr Philip Hardie, delivered a presentation to academic faculty and active researchers in the College, which covered academic publishing, the peer review process, how to select appropriate journals, submitting manuscripts and responding to reviewer comments effectively.

Case Study
Funding Further Qualifications

Hibernia College supports staff in pursuing further training and/or qualifications related to research or their research interests. The College funds up to 70% of the cost towards the specified course if it provides the College and the employee with benefit in their current role or if it will benefit both parties in the future. Please see Further Education in the Hibernia College Staff Handbook for additional details.

Case Study
PME Post-Primary and PME Primary Research Co-Authoring Initiative

In 2024, Hibernia College started a research co-authoring initiative. The top-performing PME Research Dissertations are developed by the learner, their supervisor and an academic as co-authors for submission for a journal article. This is a new initiative within the College intended to grow and further promote a research community within Hibernia College and a research-active alumni population.

5.8 Conclusions

This chapter documented the policies, procedures and practices that support the highly effective teaching, learning and assessment provision for all learners. This is underpinned by a living Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, which acts as a guide to these endeavours. This chapter identified the mechanisms by which provision is monitored for quality and this aligns with the College-level governance structures to oversee these activities at a programme level described elsewhere.

Importantly, this chapter has shown that there are multiple areas of excellence across the College and ensuring that these are shared and implemented in a consistent fashion in all programmes where appropriate will be a future goal; the use of the microteaching app and approach is a key example here.

While the support services for learners are viewed positively, communication remains an area in which improvements can be made, and this is an area under active review within the Quality Assurance Unit and the wider College. Through enhanced communication, greater transparency can be achieved and the resultant learner experience improved.

As the College positions itself as a high-quality provider of blended programmes and seeks to expand its scope of provision to the online space, constant monitoring of the learning environment and performance of College digital architecture will remain a strategic focus. Multiple mechanisms for achieving this are in place, and ensuring consistency in their deployment is key. However, it is important that the College response to this feedback and data remains dynamic and learner-centric while ensuring academic standards and achievements are not negatively impacted.

The College is placing a growing emphasis on establishing its research profile, which is evident from recent priorities in the recruitment of academic faculty and the significant increase in active research and conference participation. However, the College will continue to practically support in addition to encouraging research; this includes specific researcher training.

The commitment to a high standard of teaching, learning and assessment is evident through the track record of the College, which is underpinned by the policies and procedures in place and evidenced here. Ensuring that innovations and enhancements are made available in a consistent manner across all programmes and for all learners will be crucial in securing the success of College teaching, learning and assessment endeavours, both in future programmes and for continued cohorts.

Chapter 6
Monitoring, Review, Reporting and Self-Evaluation

6.1 Introduction

The importance of quality assurance in governance, management and teaching, learning and assessment has been emphasised throughout this ISER thus far. However quality assurance in higher education is also critical for maintaining and enhancing standards within and across programmes of education and promoting confidence in individual institutions/providers. This necessitates a systematic process to monitor, review, self-evaluate and report on education, training and related services. Hibernia College adopts a thorough approach to ensuring the effectiveness of these processes in completing the quality assurance cycle, which includes identifying and promoting effective practices while also addressing areas for improvement. At institutional level, key to this quality cycle is the comprehensive HCQF and the work, and reporting on that work, of the Academic Board. At programme level, the Programme Boards and policies and procedures for ongoing monitoring and review guide the implementation. Third-party arrangements, including the processes for reviewing and monitoring formal agreements, partnerships or relationships, are comprehensively informed by a framework for collaborative agreements. Many of the areas covered within this chapter have already been discussed in detail at the relevant points across the ISER. This chapter serves the purpose of presenting those elements in a cohesive format and as part of an overall and institution wide monitoring, reporting and evaluating culture.

6.1.1 The ISER Process for Monitoring, Review, Reporting and Self-Evaluation

As part of the Institutional Review process, the cluster groups assigned to this objective considered the efficacy of existing practices by assessing how these processes contribute to continuous improvement of teaching, learning and overall institutional performance. As with the other objectives, the clusters comprised of representation from different departments but in this instance was primarily conducted by the Department of the Registrar and Quality Assurance Unit. This assessment started with a SWOT exercise to identify the status of existing practices. In considering the response to the SWOT, the cluster members paid particular attention to the following areas:

- Alignment with Hibernia College Strategies, Goals and Vision
- Comprehensiveness and Rigour of Existing Practices
- Stakeholder Engagement

- Transparency and Accountability
- Validation Processes
- Emerging or Escalating Risks

6.1.2 Review-Informing Practice

Institutional Review and the self-evaluation process should contribute towards ongoing improvements of practice at all levels of the College — from programme level to management and governance. A structured and effective way of assuring review informs practice is to maintain a live risk register (see Chapter 3: 3.5.1). The risk register is updated quarterly to incorporate emerging knowledge and understanding from the monitoring, review, self-evaluation and reporting mechanisms described below. A spectrum of managers and senior staff contribute to the risk register ensuring that operational, academic and strategic risks are identified and mitigations captured; as the risk register is maintained by the Department of the Registrar, this is performed in a quality assurance context. Quarterly reports are presented to the Academic Board and are guided by a regularly reviewed SOP.

6.2 Processes for Quality Assurance Planning, Monitoring and Reporting

The primary mechanism that drives quality assurance planning, monitoring and reporting is the Academic Board and, specifically, the Academic Board Annual Work Plan and Annual Academic Board Report, which includes reports by its subcommittees.

As per the [Terms of Reference](#), the Academic Board:

- Establishes the principles underpinning quality in Hibernia College and approves the Quality Framework
- Ensures that a fit-for-purpose academic administration system is in place and applied consistently to the entire learner experience and lifecycle
- Approves implementation plans following regulatory events and quality assurance engagement and monitors progress towards their implementation
- Ensures that appropriate academic standards are consistently adopted, applied and maintained in academic programmes, partnerships and all educational arrangements, and, where relevant, effectively incorporates professional standards and codes of practice

6.2.1 Planning and Record-Keeping

Plans and planning records for quality assurance activities are drafted, discussed and approved through the Academic Board Annual Work Plan. The work plan is drafted through a collaborative process by the Academic Dean, Registrar, and Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager.

Drafting the work plan involves:

Establishing Objectives and Goals

Ensuring that these align with College strategy and identifying specific goals for the academic year

Developing a Timeline

Reviewing the calendar from previous years and identifying any changes that may be needed, as well as setting milestones for specific tasks, if required

Allocating Resources

If a specific budget, personnel or additional time is required, this should be identified at this point.

Communicating

To support full attendance at the Academic Board, the calendar and work plan are circulated in a timely fashion by the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager. The work plan is presented for discussion and approval at the final Academic Board meeting of the year for each subsequent year.

Once approved, this document is published online on the Academic Board SharePoint to ensure and facilitate transparency and accessibility.

The Academic Board Annual Report, presented for approval at the first meeting of every year for the previous year, describes the action of the Quality Assurance Unit in carrying out and overseeing the work plan from the previous year. The report is discussed in detail at the Academic Board, and relevant aspects are shared more widely across the College community.

6.2.2 Annual Quality Report (AQR)

The second mechanism for quality assurance planning, monitoring and reporting is the use of the Annual Quality Report (AQR) submitted to QQI. This document reports on outcomes in terms of quality assurance activities, e.g. internal reviews, and highlights developing best practices in quality enhancement activities, e.g. through case studies. The AQR also provides an opportunity to develop the College's short- and long-term plans for quality assurance and enhancement. This may include activities within the Academic Board work plan but also activities that are crosscutting, including development and improvements in the IT architecture and improvements in VLE design. Preparation for the submission of this AQR is ongoing throughout the year and is a standing item for all Quality Assurance Unit meetings. This includes provision of regular briefings to the Academic Board, and senior academic faculty about the preparations required for annual engagement with the process. Cross-College engagement supports the gathering of required data, and staff are encouraged to submit relevant information for inclusion. Areas of good practice that may contribute to case studies are identified through the Academic Board and the ALT. Relevant individuals are asked to collaborate with the Quality Assurance Unit in this process. The Quality Assurance Unit compiles all available information to produce the report for

submission to QQI. The final report is reviewed internally by the Quality Assurance Unit and the Registrar. The final report is approved by the Academic Board. The timeline of the preparation of the AQR 2024 is included here as Figure 25 to illustrate the process.

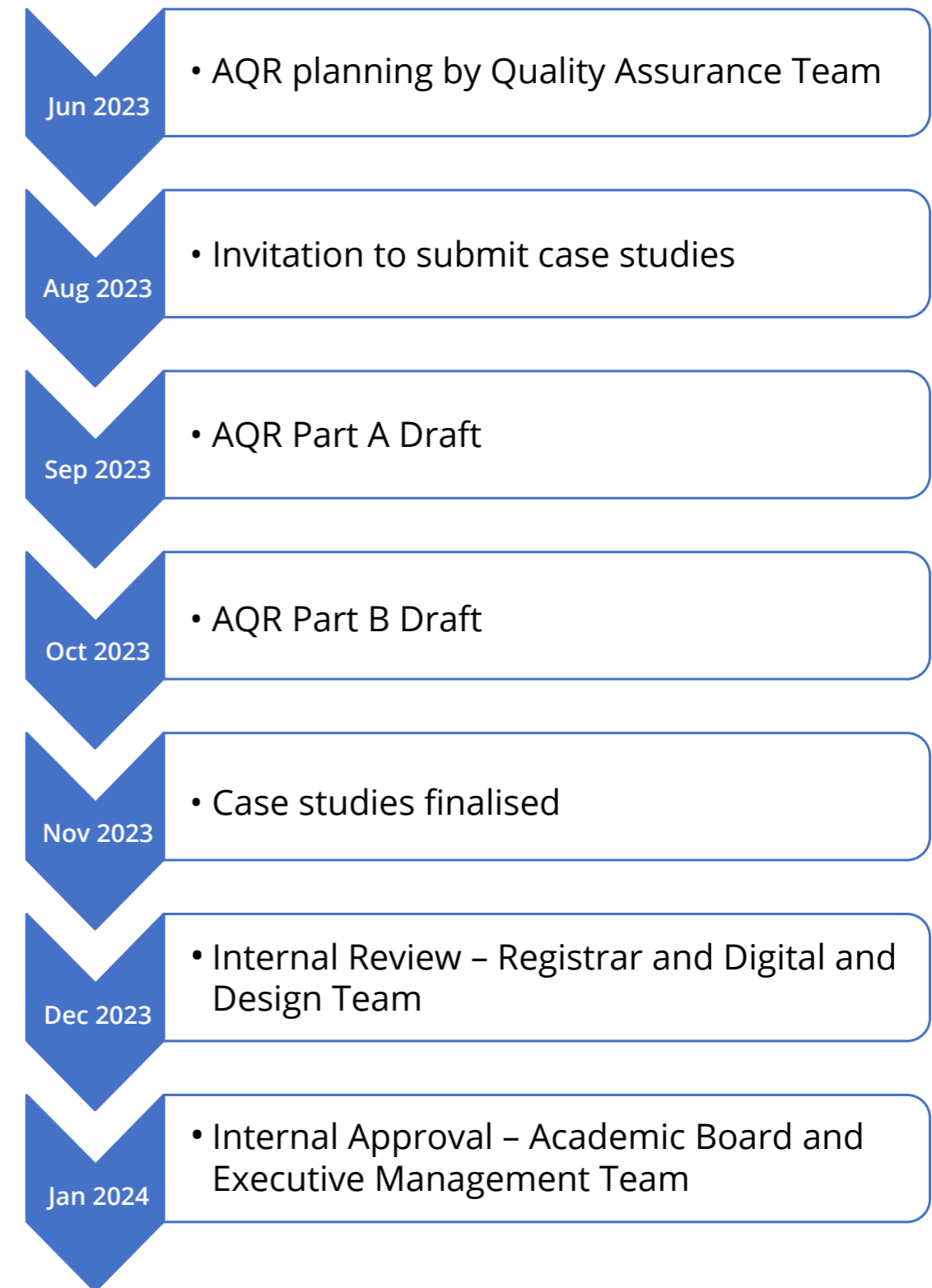| Date	Activity
Jun 2023	• AQR planning by Quality Assurance Team
Aug 2023	• Invitation to submit case studies
Sep 2023	• AQR Part A Draft
Oct 2023	• AQR Part B Draft
Nov 2023	• Case studies finalised
Dec 2023	• Internal Review – Registrar and Digital and Design Team
Jan 2024	• Internal Approval – Academic Board and Executive Management Team

Figure 25: Timeline for the Preparation and Approval of the AQR

6.3 Programme-Level Review and Revalidation

6.3.1 Mechanisms for Programme Review and Revalidation

Academic programme review encompasses the strategic and planned evaluation of the performance of a programme, its curricula, teaching, learning, assessment and continued quality of the awards gained. Programme review runs in tangent to and is supported by the institutional-level quality review processes described above. The facilitation of robust internal evaluation at programme level is a priority for Hibernia College as it supports strategic decision-making and enables the College to determine the viability and effectiveness of a given programme. It is facilitated and co-ordinated by the Quality Assurance Unit; however, it is an inclusive process that calls upon academic Faculty and supporting departments to reflect, self-assess and plan accordingly.

The primary mechanisms for periodic review and revalidation of programmes are:

- Internal Review and Monitoring Policies and Procedures
- End-of-Module Reviews and Feedback from Learners
- External Examiner Reports
- Programme Boards
- The Academic Board Reporting Structure
- QQI Revalidation Process and Documentation
- Annual Quality Review (AQR) Case Studies

6.3.2 Policies and Procedures for Programme-Level Review

These formal review and revalidation mechanisms are supported by a comprehensive bank of policies and procedures for the monitoring, review and evaluation of programmes of study, housed within the HCQF. It is noteworthy that less formalised review opportunities are also availed of and feed into these formal processes, including the holding of focus groups with stakeholders and Programme Director/Learner Representative meetings.

6.3.2.1 Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Policy

The Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Policy sets out the principles and requirements for the formal periodic review of a programme of study, which is overseen by the Academic Board, with responsibility for producing the periodic review report falling to the Programme Director and Academic Dean. This occurs at a minimum every five years, or earlier if required due to concerns arising during the ongoing monitoring (Appendix 2). It includes critical self-evaluation by the programme team, the use of ongoing monitoring reports and the collation of stakeholder feedback.

6.3.2.2 Programme Boards

All academic programmes have a Programme Board, guided by the Programme Board Terms of Reference. These allow for frequent review and monitoring through the Programme Board meetings, held at least twice per year. Programme Boards fulfil both oversight and strategic functions. An annual report (Appendix 1) is produced following the Programme Board and presented to the Academic Board for consideration. Stakeholder engagement, both submitted reports and verbal feedback, informs the Programme Board process, with attendance and participation by faculty, adjunct faculty, external examiners and learners. In particular, programme responses to the reports and recommendations of external examiners are a critical element of the Programme Board report.

6.3.2.3 Ongoing Monitoring

The Ongoing Monitoring of Online or Blended Learning Programmes Policy seeks to confirm that programmes continue to meet the regulatory criteria for approval where a programme is validated by a third party (e.g. QQI) or accredited by a third party (e.g. the Teaching Council or NMBI).

The nature of monitoring is facilitated by ongoing opportunities for feedback from staff, faculty, adjunct faculty, stakeholders and learners through surveys, focus groups and synchronous webinars. Learners are encouraged to avail of the opportunity to give written feedback at the conclusion of each module in the form of the end-of-module feedback survey. The MyHELMS VLE is designed to give learners frequent opportunities to provide feedback on their experiences of learning by rating activities, completing quizzes or posting on forums.

Additionally, the Department of the Registrar and the Quality Assurance Unit meet regularly with faculty, staff and learners to gather feedback on programme delivery and assessment standards. Hibernia College recognises the value of a balanced approach to monitoring, including systematic, rigorous and recorded monitoring and informal, oral and open dialogue. A formal mechanism for learners to contribute to the review of programmes is through learner representation at Programme Boards and the Academic Board.

A specific example of an external or third-party feedback mechanism is the co-design of supports and engagements with Treoraí, facilitated by regular online engagements between Treoraí, school staff and faculty.

The Professional Master of Education in Primary Education and the Professional Master of Education in Post-Primary Education were successfully revalidated with QQI in 2023 and accredited by the Teaching Council. The College embraced the opportunity afforded by the programme authoring process to integrate transformative and adaptive technology into the online material provided for learners. However, it was important to know that any changes made were evidence-based, primarily in response to the needs and requirements of learners and faculty. Oral feedback at face-to-face days, end-of-module surveys, focus groups and consultation at assessor training events with tutors informed the development of content and pedagogy. Specific changes related to the management of content volume and the timing of release. Learners were provided with access to content in a more manageable volumes and the timing of release was altered to empower learners to regulate their own learning schedules.

6.3.3 Monitoring and Maintaining Quality of Venues

The blended learning model of delivery is enabled by the hiring of suitable venues for in-person days, facilitated by the Ensuring and Maintaining the Quality of Physical Learning and Assessment Environments Policy and the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Venues Procedure.

This process is overseen and monitored by the Faculty Manager with input from the Programme Director, Head of Student Affairs, Assessment and Awards Manager and Quality, Enhance and Registrations Manager. The founding principles for assessing the suitability for teaching and learning of external parties that may provide physical venues seeks to ensure that physical environments are:

1. Safe
2. Conducive to learning
3. Accessible

The Faculty Manager completes an assessment of all proposed venues prior to their inclusion in the College Database of Approved Venues and their first use. A venue assessment is completed (Appendix 1) for all potential venues, and a site visit occurs where deemed appropriate. When considering accessibility, both geographical location of learners and the environment are considered but also the environments suitable for learners who may have reasonable accommodation requirements.

Feedback is sought from learners, faculty and hosts on the quality of services and suitability of venues. Where venues are deemed unsatisfactory or to have not met the minimum standards required, those venues are removed from the database until such time as they are proved to be suitable again (based on an extensive site visit and consultation). At every rebooking of an existing approved venue, the Faculty Administrator confirms that they continue to meet the minimum standards. Learners, faculty, examiners and invigilators are advised to notify the Faculty Administrator at the earliest opportunity to raise any concerns relating to a venue and its facilities.

6.4 Analysis and Action from Reviews and Monitoring

Evidence of analysis and follow-up of quality assurance reviews and monitoring can be found in the College re-engagement application, subsequent AQR submissions and through internal reports submitted to the Academic Board.

An internal review of learner support and the reasonable accommodation process was undertaken. This was identified as a planned activity within the College's AQR. The review examined the types and nature of cases or queries the Student Support Team deal with and clearly identified that the Team supports learners with multiple processes across their studies, including those over which they have no ownership. This highlighted the need to strengthen internal communications and SOP developments in this area. The review identified that the number of applications for reasonable accommodations was increasing year on year, and that the complexity of these applications was also increasing. This is evident when the support provided to learners was examined, learners were awarded multiple supports when applying for reasonable accommodations. After submitting the reasonable accommodation report, it was recommended that a wider mode of evidence gathering should be used beyond analysis of quantitative metrics and existing survey data. This work is being undertaken to determine in greater detail the lived experience of learners following award of reasonable accommodations. This has resulted in planned focus group being conducted throughout 2024. This further review is captured as an action in the Academic Board work plan for 2024, demonstrating the capacity for ongoing review, monitoring and enhancement.

6.4.1 Re-Engagement Recommendations and Actions

Through the previous QQI-led re-engagement submission (2018) and report (2019), several recommendations were made that were acted on and have been action points for continuous enhancement activity since. Specific examples include:

1. That the scheduled review of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy be undertaken

    The Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) strategy was initially updated following this re-engagement activity and subsequently reviewed and updated again in 2023. The ongoing review and monitoring of the TLA strategy remains an action in the TLA Committee work plan.

2. That a systematic approach be taken to harvesting feedback from collaborative partners and other external stakeholders

The College has dedicated significant resources to standardising and harmonising the approach to feedback collection from external stakeholders and collaborative partners. This can be evidenced through the supporting information supplied as part of the PME Primary and Post-Primary revalidation exercises. This also includes the Local Joint Working Group meetings that take place as part of the General Nursing programme.

6.5 Monitoring and Review: Programme Enhancement

Programme monitoring and review inform programme modification and enhancement. The Academic Board considers the Annual Reports provided by the programmes, and this ensures that academic decisions are guided and informed by the monitoring and review process.

Case Study
Engagement-Informing Decisions — The Professional Master of Education in Primary Education Programme

The comprehensive review of the Professional Master of Education in Primary Education programme, conducted in preparation for revalidation, included focus groups with learners and faculty and a SWOT analysis by faculty of the existing programme. The review found that learners felt overwhelmed by the complexity of the assessment structure for modules with two or more composite parts. In response to this, the reimagined programmes now include a simplified assessment structure. A major focus of this was the change in module structure — moving from a 10 ECTS-module model to one where modules had a value of 5 ECTS. In addition, this exercise saw the introduction of elective modules into the Professional Master of Education in Primary Education programme. The review also found that faculty, learners and staff considered the burden of written work during school placement as having a negative impact on some learners. Lesson planning templates were reviewed to reduce this burden. The desirability of enhanced communication with host schools was noted and a more formalised communication structure was put in place. These include the development of a pre-placement webinar for all host principals and cooperating teachers and a Treoraí Handbook. They also included the development of systematic 'check-in' points via written feedback from host schools.

6.6 Promoting Quality and Enhancement

The duty for promotion of quality and enhancement falls within the remit of the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager under the Registrar's auspices. The primary approach for engagement of staff, faculty and learners in this discussion is through multiple modes of communication with repeated or common themes within each communication to act as means of reinforcement for key messages. Current methods of bulk communication include:

- The Quality Digest Bulletin
- The Student HCQF Survey and Report
- Regular College-Wide HCQF Update Emails

In addition to this, consultation via working groups or focus groups is routinely used to discuss, and seek opinion on, quality and enhancement developments. This can include the development of new policies or policy amendments or the development of

resources to support learners, e.g. the Community of Practice working group focused on the development of the Academic Integrity home page. Where possible, these groups have a cross-sectional composition, but where learners may feel inhibited discussing topics in the presence of faculty, learner-only groups are assembled.

Case Study
Academic Integrity Week
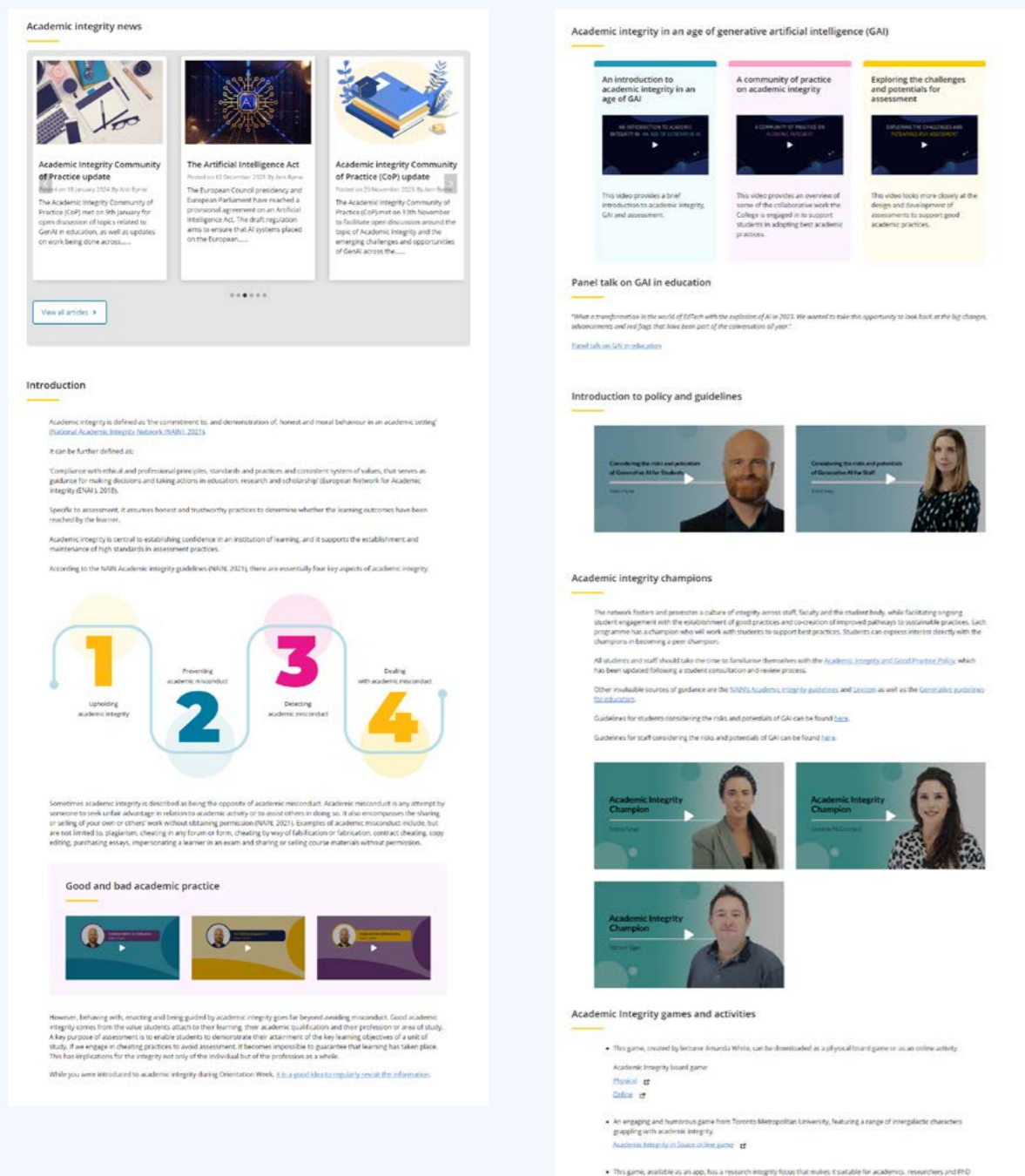
Figure 26: Academic Integrity Home Page

A recent example of a College-wide activity to promote quality and enhancement was the series of activities held for Academic Integrity Week 2023. These included:

- An all-College digital café on the implications of academic integrity and misconduct
- A week-long online quiz
- A digital discussion panel with external representation
- The launching of the Academic Integrity home page (Figure 26)

These events were supported by daily communications with faculty, staff and learners throughout the week, highlighting events, resources and examples of good or best practices in the area. Importantly, the digital cafe event included Faculty, Staff and learners collaborating, working in breakout rooms together and sharing experiences.

6.7 Monitoring Work-Integrated Learning

Hibernia College has extensive experience of work-integrated learning on professional programmes of study. The College ensures that work-integrated learning is facilitated through:

A Framework for Work-Integrated Practice

Although Hibernia College has guidelines and established good practice in place regarding work-integrated practice, this review process revealed the benefit of establishing a more formalised College-wide framework. A work plan has been developed to support this process and work is currently underway.

Administrative and Management

The effective management and co-ordination of work-integrated learning is enabled by the clear delineation of responsibilities and the adequate provision of resources. The appointment of 'placement co-ordinators' as part of the programme administration team facilitates a structured and methodical approach to sourcing hosts, monitoring placements and assessing the progress of learners on placements.

Partnership and Collaboration

First and foremost, the College is guided by the requirements of the relevant professional bodies. Hibernia College has established strong professional networks amongst work placement settings and seeks feedback from staff and learners on their experiences. As part of the Folens Group, Hibernia College has forged strong relationships with peer institutions. As a member of HECA, Hibernia College continues to work collaboratively with fellow institutions.

Preparation and Training for Learners

The quality of preparation and training of learners for placements is continuously monitored at programme level through learner and staff feedback mechanisms. Workshops are also held with school placement tutors to gain feedback on the assessment process. Treoraithe and principals are invited to give written and/or oral feedback of their experiences of facilitating learners.

Risk Management

Work-integrated learning is monitored through the risk register and reported to the Academic Board at the four reporting points across the year.

Assessment of Learning

Assessment of work-integrated learning is meticulously monitored through the moderation process (Grade Moderation Procedure). Assessors are trained on the specific requirements of assessing work-integrated learning and do so using detailed rubrics that are subject to regular review through the Assessment Working Group. Members of faculty of the PME programmes also make 'float' visits to hosts to observe learners in practice and monitor the assessment process in action. Appropriate SOPs and guidelines are in place for this.

Within the Nursing programme, all learners are assessed on placement utilising National Competence Assessment Documentation (NCAD) and medication and skills logbooks. Learners provide feedback through anonymous surveys. The programme team also seek regular input and feedback from clinical partners and host Local Joint Working Group stakeholder meetings three times a year. Each clinical site is allocated a link lecturer in frequent contact with the clinical partner. Learners' clinical hours and adjunct faculty notes are captured in InPlace. Hibernia College has an NMBI Category 1 approved preceptorship course that is available to all adjunct faculty and all nurses who supervise and assess learners on placement (Figure 27).
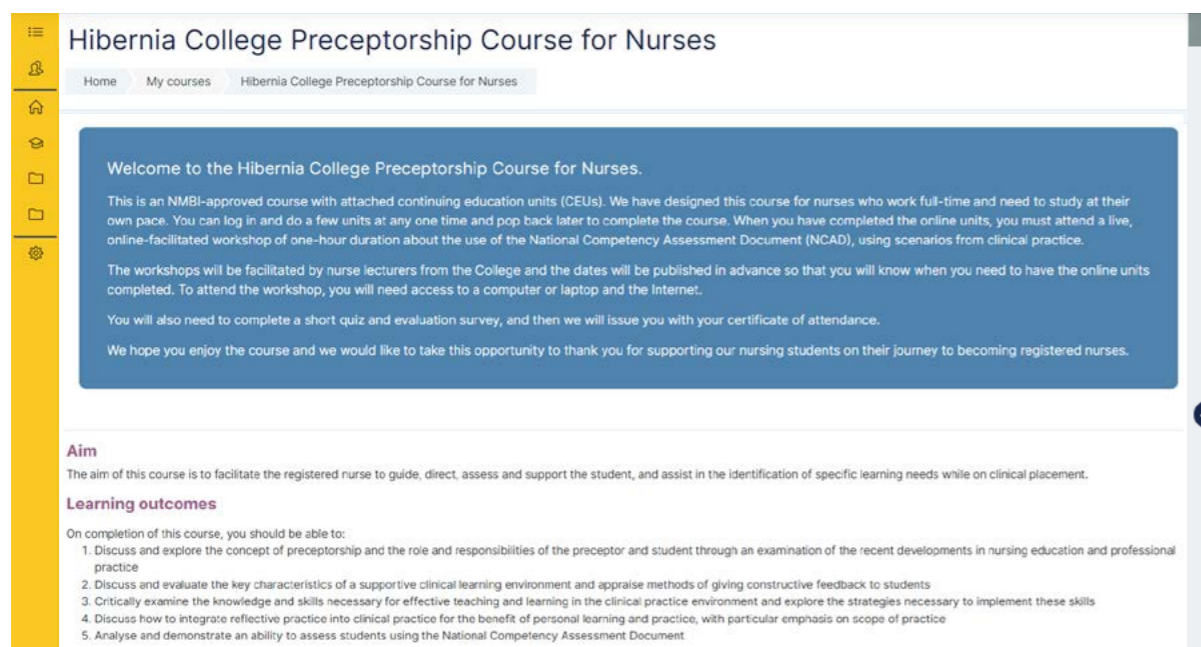

Figure 27: Nursing MyHELMS Page — Preceptorship

6.8 Monitoring Arrangements with External Parties

Hibernia College engages with a number of external parties; these can be categorised under the following headings:

- Facilities Provision
- Non-Teaching Service Provision
- Academic Teaching Partners

The processes for assessing the suitability and monitoring the effectiveness of these arrangements are varied and will depend upon the individual category.

6.8.1 Facilities Provision

Please see Section 3.3.

6.8.2 Non-Teaching Service Provision

The College makes use of external parties for the provision of non-teaching services such as occupational health screening or Garda vetting. For the purposes of Garda vetting, the suitability of the external party is defined by the College Admissions Policy and Garda Vetting Procedure. Furthermore, the ability of the vetting service to undertake its duties is assessed in the context of the National Vetting Bureau Acts (Children and Vulnerable Persons) 2012–2016, which are embedded within the Admissions Policy. The use and suitability of external parties to undertake occupational health screening are defined by the requirements of the HSE as per HR Circular 12/2009. Where relevant ISO standards exist, the College will review potential external parties for their achievement of these standards, in particular achievement of ISO 9001 and ISO 27001 implementation of a Quality Management System and Information Security Management System, respectively.

It is the responsibility of the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager to review and assure the College that these services remain compliant with the overarching legal frameworks and the College-specific policies. This review takes place at the conclusion of each admissions cycle and the findings are presented to the Academic Board and EMT on an annual basis through the Admissions Debrief process. Further, these services are reviewed as part of the periodic review process that reviews all aspects of programmes.

6.8.3 Academic Teaching Partners

The College has scope to engage in collaborative provision and in selecting partners, guided by the Collaborative and Transnational Provision Framework. This outlines the due diligence process for selecting external academic teaching partners. Partners are assessed under the following headings:

- General and Academic
- Quality Assurance

- Student Support and Cultural Context
- Governance and Management
- Legal and Regulatory Compliance and Standing
- Financial Standing

Areas of concern are scored via a risk framework and mitigations, where possible, developed. Resulting due diligence assessments are presented to the Academic Board for approval before external partners are approved. Where external partners are involved in the delivery of externally validated programmes, the due diligence process is carried out during the self-evaluation of the programme prior to submission for revalidation.

The Hibernia College members of a JPC are responsible for conducting the due diligence and this is presented by the Registrar to the Academic Board for approval.

6.8.4 External Arrangements

Members of the College may occasionally engage with external parties due to their experience or background. This could include involvement with panels responsible for programme validation through QQI, programme accreditation, review or oversight with PSRBs such as the Teaching Council or NMBI involvement with external parties at this level is initially reviewed and agreed between an individual and their line manager. Summaries of these engagements are recorded in both the Quality Bulletin and the minutes of the Academic Board under the standing item, Professional and External Bodies Update. Recent examples of this type of engagement include: 1) The Academic Dean is currently involved in a Government-initiated review of the Teaching Council co-ordinated by PwC Ireland, and 2) The Nursing Programme Director is involved with the NMBI in establishing a research project on preceptorship.

6.9 Publication and Reporting of Third-Party Arrangements

Outside of the reporting arrangement outlined above, the sensitive nature of commercial agreements in place between the College and external parties may prohibit the publication of full details of each arrangement. However, where an external party is responsible for the delivery of a service, this is made clear and signposted to either potential learners, current learners or any impacted stakeholder. This may include occupational health services as provided by a third party for the screening of learners in the Nursing programme, and Garda vetting services are provided by a third party for the applicants to PME Primary, Post-Primary and Nursing programmes. This information is communicated to potential and current learners through multiple means. These include Admission Offer notices sent to applicants, in-programme information brochures sent to successful applicants and through email orientation correspondence between the applicants and the Admissions Team.

6.10 Conclusions

This section has outlined the arrangements for monitoring, review, evaluation of, and reporting on, Hibernia College's academic programmes and related services, with specific reference to the quality cycle. The evaluation of these arrangements concludes that a robust quality framework ensures consistency of practices at institutional and programme level. **Overall, the effectiveness of these arrangements is classed as Highly Effective**. Through the conduct of this review, two areas for improvement have been identified. Firstly, work-integrated practice can be improved and enhanced through the development of a College-wide work-integrated learning framework. This is scheduled for completion in 2024-2025 and will be led by the ALT working alongside the Department of the Registrar. In line with the College Academic Strategy as the number of programmes on offer expands, many of which include work-integrated elements, the development of one College-wide framework will be beneficial to ensuring equitable treatment of all learners, adherence to College policies and procedures, and compliance with external bodies, including QQI and PSRBs. Specific examples will include the further development of supporting documentation and embedding a culture of feedback.

Secondly, there are processes in place to support the internal and constructive review of College functions and services, e.g. Student Support, and ensuring these are applied in a periodic fashion to all aspects of the College will remain a priority action arising from this review process (Appendix 2). The College's mission to empower learners by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, competencies and confidence to become active, agentic and motivated members of society is well supported by the sound processes in place.

Chapter 7
Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Conclusions

Throughout this IR, Hibernia College has engaged with an open and iterative process, actively seeking collaborative input from staff and faculty with domain-specific knowledge. Stakeholder engagement, including learner voice, has also informed this self-evaluation process to ensure that this ISER represents an accurate and authentic presentation of Hibernia College. The rigorous oversight provided by QQI has facilitated a robust process, through which it has become evident that Hibernia College is adhering to high standards of quality assurance as a prerequisite for achieving the strategic priorities set by the College and ultimately maintaining public trust and confidence. This process has generated multiple benefits, including providing an opportunity for the College to undertake an institution-wide evaluation for the first time, thereby producing a blueprint for future similar exercises. The process has also created an additional opportunity for sharing best practice across the College through cluster groups, community feedback and the sharing of draft versions of the ISER documentation. Significantly, IR has provided the College with clear insights into future enhancement opportunities. These have been summarised in the conclusion of each preceding chapter. However, they can be further consolidated as follow.

7.1 The Hibernia College Quality Framework

The HCQF has been referenced on multiple occasions across this ISER. It functions as the backbone of the College, providing rigour, accountability and consistency across all programmes and departments. The IR has provided a welcome opportunity to engage with staff, learners and faculty across the College around their interactions with the framework. A strong sense of appreciation for the importance of the framework has emerged and been further enhanced by engagement with IR. The review of the HCQF and the structures in place to support such a review process, are confirmed as fit for purpose, ensuring that the framework remains a living, responsive source of quality assurance.

7.2 Strategic Growth and Development

The importance of a clear and well-articulated growth strategy for the College has been evidenced throughout this IR. Supporting that growth strategy through robust quality assurance measures based on the HCQF will enable enhancement of programme offerings and support sustainable growth.

By aligning with the HCQF, the College can continue to establish standardised and effective quality assurance practices. Through these quality assurance measures, the College can identify areas for enhancement within its programme offerings, ensuring they remain relevant, impactful and of high quality.

7.3 Technology-Enhanced Learning

The innovative and creative approaches to supporting online and blended learning through a variety of adaptive, interactive and UDL-informed technologies has been confirmed as a strength of Hibernia College and one which positions the College to engage further with fully online and international learning. The development of frameworks to support international students and fully online learning has enhanced the College's offerings and provided the quality assurance to support continued innovation.

7.4 Continued Review and Enhancement

Continued review and enhancement should build on the momentum established here, using the skills and tools that are in place for enhancement monitoring and improvement exercises. Using tried and tested procedures for these activities, the College should continue to engage all members of the community in these undertakings.

7.5 Learner Experience

The development, monitoring and review of programmes that meet the high standards required by learners in a variety of contexts, whether blended, fully online or international, are crucial to ensuring that Hibernia College continues to be seen as a good option for discriminating learners. Consistency is key to the learner experience, and this includes consistency in processes around programme delivery, learner supports and research. Central to the delivery of the College strategy will be maintaining consistency in processes and practices such that the learner experience continues to improve and the same positive experience can be guaranteed for all future learners.

7.6 Communication and Transparency

An advantage of the IR has been the sustained nature of communication it facilitated and necessitated across the College. A key priority going forward is to ensure that our learner-staff interactions are encouraged and facilitated through regular formal and informal engagement in an online and in-person capacity. Internally, a key area for development identified has been the need to increase and support transparency in the interactions amongst decision-making bodies of the College.

Through this IR process and the reflection it enabled, an understanding has developed of the importance of increased and consistently recorded communication. This will support the development of a culture that centres around quality assurance and provides all members of the community with a voice that reaches from programme level to that of the Board of Directors.

7.7 Workplace-Integrated Learning

As the College continues to deliver professional programmes and seeks to expand its portfolio of programmes into the same space, the significance of facilitating, supporting and authentically assessing workplace-integrated learning (WIL) is a key priority. Hibernia College recognises the importance of continuing to develop a coherent approach to the delivery and assessment of WIL. The opportunity now exists to build upon the excellence already in place across both the teaching and nursing programmes and share best practice at an institutional level.

As Hibernia College looks forward, the insights gained from this IR will be crucial in shaping the future quality assurance and enhancement activities of the College. This review process not only strengthens the integrity of the institution but also ensures that it remains dynamic and responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities in a rapidly changing educational landscape. Furthermore, it enables the College to achieve its strategic goals effectively and uphold its reputation as a leading institute of education.

Appendix 1

SWOT Template

SWOT Analysis
Objective: Cluster:

Strengths   Weaknesses

Opportunities   Threats

Academic Board Annual Report Template
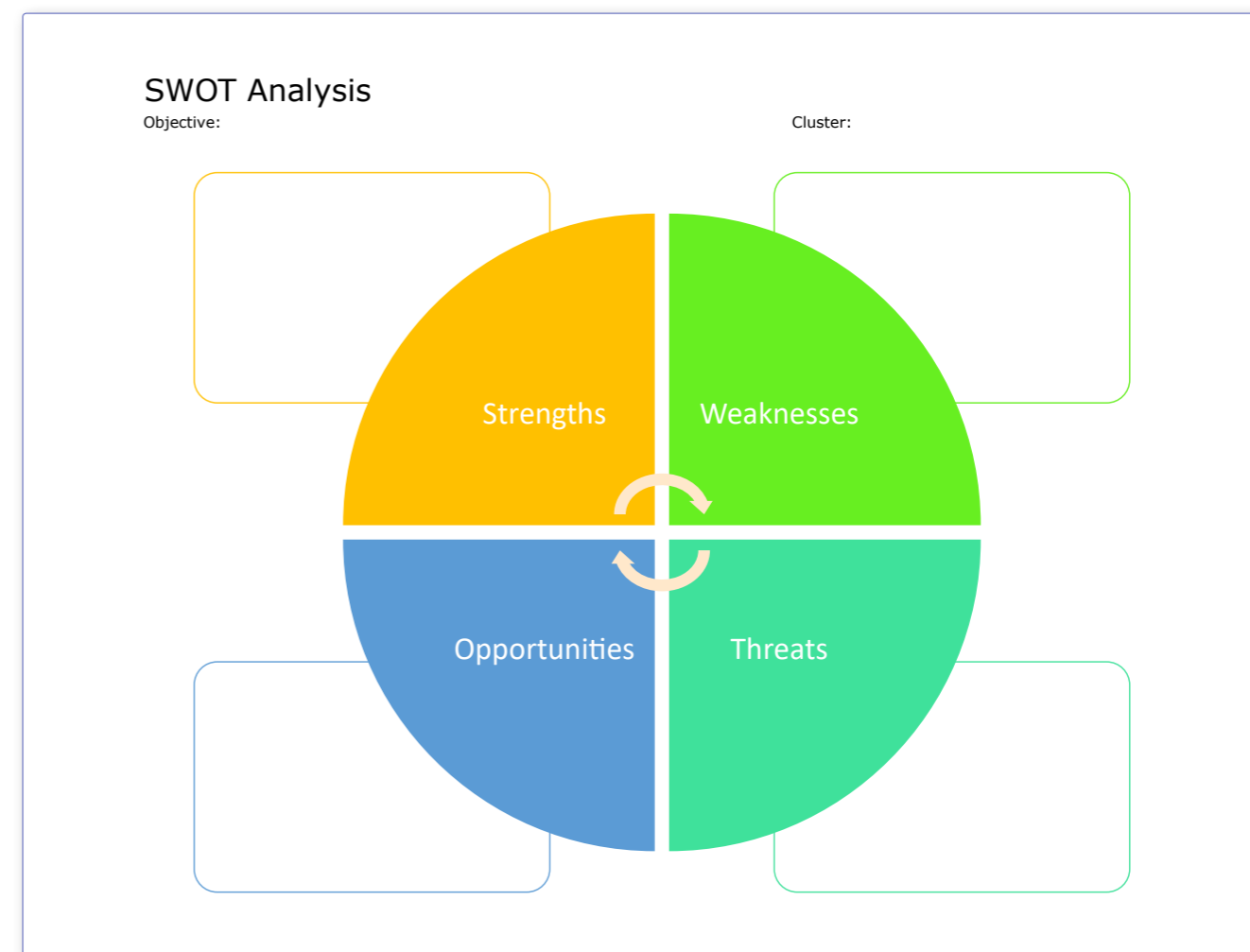
Hibernia College Quality Framework
Academic Board Annual Report 2023

HIBERNIA COLLEGE

Committee:	Academic Board
Chair:	
Secretary:	
Report Period:	
Report Date:	

1. Membership

Membership table

Composition and Membership	Role description	Seat filled/vacant (person/vacant)
Ex officio members		
External members		
Nominated members		
Elected members		
Co-opted members		
In attendance - by invitation		

1.1. Expected Membership Elections

2. Summary of Committees and Reporting

The following subcommittees of Academic Board met as scheduled during the period:

- The Teaching Learning and Assessment Committee
- The Research Committee
- The Ethics Committee
- The Student Engagement Committee
- The Erasmus Committee

The following ad hoc committees of Academic Board met during the period:

Committee	Date of 2023 Meetings	Notes – Agenda and Minutes

3. Summary of Committee Activity

Please outline and summarise the major tasks undertaken as part of the agreed committee workplan for 2023.

No.	Action	Description of Actions to be taken	Responsible Person	Status
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

4. Internal Quality Assurance

4.1 Internal Quality Assurance Reporting

As part of the internal quality assurance process......

4.2 HCQF Updates

Please outline any proposed amendments and their status to policies or procedures contained within the HCQF in the table below.

Meeting Date	Policy/Procedure Reviewed	Status	Amendments

5. External Quality Assurance

5.1 Annual Quality Report (AQR)

6. Sectoral Engagement

6.1 QQI

6.2 HECA

6.3 Other

7. Recommendations and Future Actions

Based on the content this report please provide an indicative action plan for the coming year 2024 and highlight where an action will be incorporated into the committee workplan.

No.	Recommendation	Actions to be taken	Responsible Person	Deadline

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Academic Board Work Plan Template

Academic Board Annual Work Plan 2024 DRAFT

Introduction to Academic Board Work and Engagement Plan 2024

The Academic Board (AB) is the primary decision-making body in Hibernia College for all academic matters. It is also the body responsible for assuring academic quality and ensuring academic integrity and standards in teaching, learning, assessment and research. Among its many responsibilities, the AB:

1. Establishes the principles underpinning quality in Hibernia and approves the Quality Framework and/or any changes to that framework
2. Ensures that a fit-for-purpose academic administration system is in place and applied consistently to the entire student experience and lifecycle
3. Considers the development, management and enhancement of all academic affairs and advises the Executive Management Team (EMT) of their resource requirements
4. Requests reports from any College departments or the Board's subcommittees reports relating to any aspect of academic activity
5. Approves a public-facing Annual Report, which includes reports of its subcommittees
6. Provides a voice for students and a venue for student involvement in academic decision-making

At all times the AB acts with integrity to actively participate in institutional agenda setting.

The below schedule of meetings and activities has been drafted for consideration by AB members, in line with the following core structure:

Agreeing a schedule that has distributed ownership across members of AB and also invited members of the College community as appropriate

Devoting the first hour of each AB to workplan activity (as outlined here) including presentations on core updates with a forum for robust discussion facilitated afterwards

Second hour devoted to ongoing business and important updates

Proposed meeting Schedule

Proposed Academic Board Engagement Plan

SOP Template

Department/School	Assessments and Awards
Prepared By	INSERT initials of role of person who initially drafts the document
Reviewed By	Insert range of roles of persons who reviewed
Approved By	Insert role
Title	Standard Operating Protocol – insert description
Issue Date	Insert date of approval
Pages	Insert x of y pages
Number	SOP/insert initials of Department or School/insert numerical count of SOP – next number in sequence – ask QA officer/ Insert version number

Ensure that each paragraph is numbered. Where screen shots are used to complement ensure that they too are numbered in sequence.

Ensure that each SOP includes text under the headings of Purpose, QA Reference – if none, or overarching state this. Not all SOPs will have a direct QA Manual link, and Process. See below for some sample text.

1.0 PURPOSE:

To provide a student with the appropriate means to seek a review or recheck of an assessment decision in relation to a component of a module. (Note that the review or recheck of a module or programme result following a meeting of the Board of Examiners is a different process).

2.0 QA Reference

The relevant binding Quality Assurance procedure is in QA document, e.g. *Academic Regulations, Assessment and Standards* paragraphs 6.8 and in 6.9.

(Here is a link to all the QA docs: QA docs)

3.0 PROCESS:
E.g.

'A recheck of an examination or continuous assessment (including teaching is..

Impact of Development Outline

Impact of Development Outline

Working Group on New Policy

Key Author:

Secretary:

Members of Group:

Stakeholder Consultation Schedule:

Brief Development Process Outline:

Timeline for Production and bringing to Academic Board

Please keep minutes for every stakeholder consultation. You may copy them into this document. Please use the Draft Policy/Procedure Document to record the final draft.

Draft Policy Template

Hibernia College

Draft Policy Document

Date:

Author:

Section 1-Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish-

Scope

To whom does the policy apply?

In what situations does the policy apply?

Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

Definitions

Section 2-Context

Legal and Regulatory Context

Section 3-Policy Statements

Principles

College Responsibilities

Staff and Faculty Responsibilities

Student Responsibilities

Draft Procedure Template

Hibernia College

Draft Procedure Document

Date:

Author:

Section 1-Introduction

Purpose and Parent Policy

    (1)   This procedure outlines the steps taken..

Responsibilities

Applicant Responsibilities

Staff Responsibilities

Section 2-Procedure

RPL Application Form

Hibernia College Quality Framework
Recognition of Prior Learning Application Form

Read this form carefully, then complete sections 1–3 and submit as a Word document along with any supporting evidence to rpl@hiberniacollege.net.

PRIOR TO SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION, YOU MUST CONTACT RPL@HIBERNIACOLLEGE.NET FOR ADVICE AND SUPPORT ON THE COMPLETION OF YOUR APPLICATION.

THIS FORM WILL BE USED BY THE COLLEGE AND RETURNED TO YOU WITH NOTIFICATION OF THE OUTCOME OF YOUR APPLICATION.

As set out in the College's Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure, Hibernia College, through the recognition of prior learning, can offer a learner:

1. **Entry to a programme or course of study** — Learners who wish to apply for recognition of prior learning (RPL) for this purpose should complete sections 1–3 of this application form and submit them along with their application to their chosen programme of study.

2. **An award of advanced academic standing** (entry to a programme beyond the normal standing point) — Learners who wish to apply for RPL for this purpose should complete sections 1–3 of this application form and submit them along with their supporting documentation prior to commencing their chosen programme of study.

3. **Exemption from a requirement to complete certain modules of a programme** — Learners who wish to apply for RPL for this purpose should complete sections 1–3 of this application form and submit them along with their supporting documentation prior to commencing their chosen programme of study.

Note: All applications must be supported by verifiable evidence. Applications for RPL relating to a particular module or stage should be submitted as early as possible and, preferably, several months in advance of the module or stage. Applications made after the third week of the module or stage commencement will only be accepted at the discretion of the Programme Board.

1. Learner information and declarations (to be completed by the learner)

1.1 Learner information

Learner information	
Name:	Click to type your name here.
Applicant/student number:	Click to type your applicant/student number here.
Programme:	Choose an item.
Programme cohort:	Click to type your cohort here.

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1.2 Checklist and declaration

Note: Do not submit this application until you have completed this checklist and signed below. Applications for RPL will incur a fee. Before preparing your application, please contact rpl@hiberniacollege.net for information on the applicable fee. The application will not be considered until payment is received.

Statement	
I have read and understood the *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy* and the associated *Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure* before completing Section 2 below.	☐
I authorise a member of the Hibernia College Finance Team to contact me to charge my credit/debit card the notified payment fee for this application.	☐
I understand that I must provide evidence of having attained the learning outcomes identified and understand that if my application does not satisfy the criteria, the fee will still be charged.	☐
I have included verifiable evidence in support of my application.	☐
I understand that submitting an application without verifiable evidence of satisfying the learning outcomes will result in my application for RPL being denied.	☐
I have completed this form to the best of my knowledge and included all relevant information.	☐
I understand that it is my responsibility to demonstrate that I have met the learning outcomes required for my application for RPL to be successful.	☐
I confirm the information provided is accurate per my knowledge.	☐
I understand that I may be requested to undertake academic assessment(s) in the determination of my application.	☐
I understand that my application may not be successful, or I may not receive RPL for all learning for which I applied. Therefore, I will attend and participate in the module(s)/programme fully until I am informed of the outcome of my application.	☐
I understand that by supplying evidence of RPL, Hibernia College may contact an institution or referee to verify the information provided.	☐
I understand that, if successful, an application for RPL may give rise to circumstances affecting the overall grade awarded. Should this occur, this will be communicated to me in the outcome of my application.	☐
I understand that it is my responsibility to inform employers and/or lecturers that any statement(s) I share as part of this application are being shared with Hibernia College.	☐
Date:	Click or tap to enter a date.
Name:	Click to type your name here.

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2. RPL application (to be completed by the learner)

2.1 Reason for RPL application

Please select the reason for your RPL application.	
A. Entry to a programme	☐
B. Advanced academic standing	☐
C. Exemption from programme modules	☐
Please outline the specific entry requirement, programme stage or module(s) for which you are seeking the recognition of prior learning. *Click or tap here to enter text.*	

2.2 Basis of prior learning application

Please tick all that apply.	
A. Accredited programmes of education with associated ECTS, or equivalent, credits (formal)	☐
B. Non-accredited but structured education or training (non-formal)	☐
C. Work experience/experiential learning (informal)	☐

2.3 Evidence of prior learning

Evidence of prior learning may be demonstrated through a portfolio, which could include, but is not limited to, the following:

a. *Evidence of prior formal learning*

Certificates, transcripts and other programme documents such as module descriptors and past exam papers — evidence of prior formal learning should include an outline of the learning outcomes achieved.

b. *Evidence of prior non-formal learning*

Certificates; transcripts; other course documents such as a course curriculum document or statements detailing the learning; reflective accounts; and statements from trainers/course providers.

c. *Evidence of prior informal learning*

Statements detailing the learning acquired, reflective accounts, statements from employers, curricula vitae (CVs), job descriptions, etc.

Please tick those that apply to your application.	
A. Certificates, transcripts and other programme documents	☐
B. Statements detailing the learning acquired	☐
C. Reflective accounts of the experience and learning gained through that experience	☐
D. Statements from employers and/or lecturers	☐

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E. Other	☐
Please itemise all documentation submitted as part of this application.	
Please briefly outline/summarise below the basis for your application for RPL.	
Click or tap here to enter text.	

2.4 Notes in relation to evidence of prior learning

- Learners must not include personal data (e.g. name, contact details) of a data subject other than themselves in their application without first seeking the consent of that person. Furthermore, special category personal data (e.g. data relating to racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, data concerning health) must not be included in any submission.

- Prior formal learning must normally be at the same level or above the academic level as the exemption sought. However, if you have significant informal learning that enhances your formal learning, an exception may be considered.

- The College will not consider applications that are not supported by verifiable evidence. Evidence should not normally be more than five years old to ensure the currency of knowledge and learning. The evidence provided should show sufficient proof of the learner having achieved the learning outcomes/award standard to meet the entry requirement of the programme stage or module for which the application was submitted. However, additional documentation that does not support the application should not be provided, e.g. certificates for programmes that do not relate to the learning outcomes.

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3.   Mapping (to be completed by the learner)

Those seeking RPL for programme entry are required to map their prior learning to the l entry requirement(s) of the programme for which they wish to enter.

Those seeking RPL for advanced academic standing or for exemptions from programme modules are required to map their prior learning to the learning outcomes of the module or stage for which they are seeking exemption; they should request a copy of the learning outcomes for their intended programme from rpl@hiberniacollege.net.

Additional mapping templates can be provided to learners who wish to seek RPL for more than one module.

Stage/module or entry requirement for which RPL is requested:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Please map the learning outcomes of the entry requirement, module or stage (for which you wish to apply for RPL) against the previous learning/experience achieved. Add additional learning outcomes to this form as required.	

Learning outcome 1:
Paste in the learning outcome.
Describe where in your previous learning you achieved this.
Learning outcome 2:
Paste in the learning outcome.
Describe where in your previous learning you achieved this.
Learning outcome 3:
Paste in the learning outcome.
Describe where in your previous learning you achieved this.
Learning outcome 4:
Paste in the learning outcome.
Describe where in your previous learning you achieved this.
Learning outcome 5:
Paste in the learning outcome.
Describe where in your previous learning you achieved this.
Learning outcome 6:
Paste in the learning outcome.
Describe where in your previous learning you achieved this.
Learning outcome 7:
Paste in the learning outcome.
Describe where in your previous learning you achieved this.
Learning outcome 8:
Paste in the learning outcome.
Describe where in your previous learning you achieved this.

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4.   Verification and determination (to be completed by the College)

4.1 Verification checklist

Question	Tick
Received within required time frame for review?	☐
Supplementary fee paid?	☐
Learner declaration complete?	☐
Sections 1–3 completed in full?	☐
Supporting evidence received?	☐
Verification completed by: Click or type your name here.	☐

4.2 Initial review of application

Question	Y/N
Is an application for RPL possible in respect of the relevant programme and learner?	
Is additional assessment required? If so, does this include: • The submission of a portfolio for assessment • Participation in examinations • Completion of a piece of project work	
Initial review completed by: Click or type your name here.	

4.3 Decision on RPL application

When assessing a claim for prior learning, examiners must be assured of the quality of the assessment. Consideration should be given to the:

- Appropriateness of the evidence to the learning outcomes
- Equivalence of the award level of the learning gained
- Currency, reliability and validity of the evidence provided
- Learning gained as opposed to the experience gained

Question	Y/N
Has the learner provided verifiable evidence of having achieved the learning outcomes/award standard for the entry requirement or programme stage/module for which the application was submitted?	
Was assessment required in making this determination?	
Has the application for RPL been approved?	
Please list the exemptions granted:	

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Left page

Rationale for decision:

Implications that any exemptions offered may have on the learner's career, regulatory or statutory body requirements, awarding of credits, grading, classification etc.

5. Learner confirmation (to be completed by the learner <u>following determination by the College</u>)

This section is to be completed by the learner to whom an exemption has been offered following assessment and determination by the College.

Statement	
I have read and understood the exemption(s) offered and the implications of accepting the exemption(s) as outlined in Section 4.	☐
I confirm that I wish to accept the exemption(s) offered.	Choose an item.
Date:	Click or tap to enter a date.

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Right page

HR Interview Template

HIBERNIA COLLEGE

- Each member of the interview panel should make notes (on a separate sheet) and score each candidate. Scores should then be added up and used when making a decision.
- The panel should also decide which questions will be asked by each member of the panel.

Scoring — candidates answers should be scored as follows:

0	No answer given or answer completely irrelevant. No examples given.	2	Some points covered, not all relevant. Some examples given.	4	Good answer. Relevant information. All or most points covered. Good examples.
1	A few good points but main issues missing. No examples/irrelevant examples given	3	Some points covered. Relevant information given. Some examples given.	5	Perfect answer. All points addressed. All points relevant. Good examples.

The Interview

Introductions

Person/Job specification criteria	Related Question	Use this column to provide evidence for score	Score (0–5)	Total
Experience in a similar role in education	Can you provide us with a brief overview of your role(s) to date that is most relevant to this role and why you are interested in working as a XXXXX in Hibernia College?			
Administrative and organisational skills	How do you organise your daily schedule and prioritise your activities?			
Excellent attention to detail and analytical skills	Tell me about your research skills and a time you have had to engage in data analysis.			

Policies and procedures	Give me an example of a time that you had to engage with policies and procedures in your daily work.			
Enthusiastic and student-centred	Students are at the centre of all quality work. Give me an example of a time you advocated for the needs of a student or similar.			
Team player	Tell me about a time you worked on a group project with diverse personalities and how you managed your communication.			
Motivation	Some administrative work can be repetitive. What motivates you to excel in this type of role?			
Communication Skills – Oral & Written	Written – as presented in application Oral – As demonstrated in ability to answer questions asked and effectiveness of communications during interview			

Total Score:

- Ask for names of Referees (if not provided on CV or cover letter)
- How much notice do they have to give?
- When can they start?
- Holidays?
- Salary Expectation

Now give the candidate an opportunity to ask any questions that they might have and answer them.

Ending the interview:

- Thank the candidate for attending the interview.
- Let them know what happens next i.e. when you will be making your decision and how you will be letting them know the results (candidates who have attended the interview should be made aware of your decision either way).

End-of-Programme Report Template

Hibernia College Quality Framework
End of Programme Report

HIBERNIA COLLEGE

PROGRAMME YEAR

Programme Details	
Programme(s):	
Head of School/Director of Programme(s):	
Report Period:	
Report Date:	
Cohorts:	

Module titles for	
Abbreviation	Full Module Title

Overview of first sitting module results for

Comparison of Module Results on First Sitting						
Module	70 and above	60–69	50–59	40–49	35–39	0–34	Total

Comparison of Module Results on First Sitting PMEPP SP21

Overview of module data

Head of School/Director of Commentary

Overview of repeat sitting module results

Total Module repeat instances		
	2nd Sitting	**3rd Sitting**

Head of School/Director of Commentary

Distribution of Awards Classifications Awarded in

Award Classification	Grade	1st Sitting
First Class Honours (1st)	70 and above	
Second Class Honours (2nd)	60 - 69	
Pass	50- 59	
	40 - 49	
	Total	

Comparison of Borderline Grades in Final Awards		
Original Grade	Increased	Decreased
69		
59		
49		
39		

Comparison of Borderline Grades in Final Awards		
Original Grade	Increased	Decreased
69		
59		
49		
3		

Overview of Award Classifications

Student Feedback received

- From students via end of module surveys on content, environment, assessment, teaching
- From students via end of programme and end of stage surveys (where applicable) on content, environment, assessment, teaching
- From elected student representatives via feedback at Programme Board
- From ad hoc feedback sent via ticketing
- From any focus groups conducted with students

Summary of Student Feedback from End of Module Surveys

Feedback Source	Respondents (N)	Summary

Faculty and Staff Feedback received

- From surveys
- From faculty via feedback at Programme Board
- From ad hoc feedback sent via ticketing
- From any focus groups conducted with faculty
- During performance reviews

Feedback Source	Respondents (N)	Summary

Feedback from External Examiner

Training Required
Response to Feedback

Staff and Faculty Training

Describe training undertaken and/or required.

Programme / Event/ Achievement Undertaken	Year	Organising Body

Training Required

Key changes within the programme in the past academic year Outline any key changes within the programme in the past academic year.

Key changes within the programme in the past academic year (i.e. amendments to or implementation of new policies, procedures, regulations, practices, appointment of new personnel, restructuring of roles and responsibilities, etc.)

Overall Recommendations and Action Planning

Venue Assessment Template

Site Visit and Risk Assessment Checklist	
Site Visit Venue	Venue
Exam Date:	dd/mm/yyyy
Exam Name:	Exam Name
Site Visit Date	dd/mm/yyyy
Site Visit Attendees (Hibernia College)	Attendees List
Site Visit Attendees (Venue)	Venue Attendees List

Category	Requirements	Response
Venue Location	Dublin	
Venue Location	Parking - Costs	
Venue Location	Parking - Availability	
Venue Location	Public Transport Options	
Space - Main	xxxsqm	
Space - Main	Layout	
Space - Main	AV	
Space - Main	Noise Levels	
Space - Main	Air Conditioning	
Space - Main	Accessibility	
Space - RA - Shared 1	xxxsqm	
Space - RA - Shared 1	Layout	
Space - RA - Shared 1	AV	
Space - RA - Shared 1	Noise Levels	
Space - RA - Shared 1	Air Conditioning	
Space - RA - Shared 1	Accessibility	
Space - RA - Shared 2	xxxsqm	
Space - RA - Shared 2	Layout - laptops for each student	
Space - RA - Shared 2	AV	
Space - RA - Shared 2	Noise Levels	
Space - RA - Shared 2	Air Conditioning	
Space - RA - Shared 2	Accessibility	
Space - RA - individual rooms	xxx no. required. 3.5sqm minimum	
Space - RA - individual rooms	Layout	
Space - RA - individual rooms	AV	
Space - RA - individual rooms	Noise Levels	
Space - RA - individual rooms	Air Conditioning	
Space - RA - individual rooms	Main room student no.	

Timings	Access to staff and contractors	
Timings	Student Access to Tea/Coffee, etc.	
Onsite Services	Staff available on day	
Onsite Services	Scheduled Fire Drills	
Onsite Services	Access to water stations	
Onsite Services	Toilets within easy walking distance of Main Room.	
Miscellaneous		

Appendix 2

Effectiveness Scale

Effective Scale for Self-Assessment

Numerical Rating	Verbal Rating	Description	Linked Position in SWOT Analysis
1	Not at all Effective	• The action or process rarely happens in required instances. • If the process/action is carried out/happens it rarely resolves issues and/or is unsuccessful in completing a process	Threat +++ Weakness ++ The process/action rarely benefits the College or the Community and/or it negatively impacts the College. Active measures must be taken to improve/enhance.
2	Somewhat Effective	• The action or process happens in some required instances. • Where the process/action is carried out/happens it sometimes resolves issues and/or is moderately successfully at completing a process	Weakness ++ Threat ++ The process/action has some benefit but in equal parts can negatively impact the College. Measures must be taken to improve/enhance and mitigate again negative impacts.
3	Effective	• The action or process is carried out and or happens in most required instances. • Where the process/action is carried out/happens it mostly resolves issues and/or is mostly successfully at completing a process	Weakness + Opportunity ++ Strength + The process/action is effective but must be enhanced to increase the benefit to the College and its Community.
4	Highly Effective	• The action or process is carried out and or happens in all required instances. • Where the process/action is carried out/happens it resolves issues and/or successfully completes a process	Strength ++ Opportunity ++ The process/action benefits the College and its Community and can be enhanced
5	Extremely effective	• The action or process is carried out and or happens in all required instances. • Where the process/action is carried out/happens it always resolves issues and/or successfully completes a process in a timely fashion	Strength +++ Opportunity +++ The process/action always benefits the College and its Community and is a benchmark for how to operate.

Academic Board Efficacy Survey Instrument

Hibernia College Academic Board Self-Assessment 2024

As per the Academic Board Terms of Reference Part D - Evaluation and Review, the members of Academic Board must undertake a self-assessment exercise in respect of its terms of reference. The outcomes of this survey will be used to improve where necessary the function, oversight and effectiveness of Academic Board. Survey outcomes will be compiled and subject to external review before an action plan is prepared.

Responses to this survey are anonymous, but a summary of the survey will be provided to Academic Board members for approval before circulation to the College community.

Section 1   . . .

The role and function of Academic Board

1. Please score your satisfaction with the role and function of the Academic Board of Hibernia College as described in the statements below. Please scroll left to right to see the full range of responses.

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Are you satisfied that the Academic Board has clearly documented, within its Terms of Reference, its role and responsibilities, such as compiling a formal schedule of matters specifically reserved to it for decision?	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that the formal schedule, workplan, of matters reserved for decision by the Academic Board is up-to-date and reviewed regularly?	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that the Academic Board, as a group, understands its role and responsibilities including its stewardship role?	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that the Academic Board ensures that the Chairperson keeps the Board of Directors advised of matters arising in respect of the College?	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that the Academic Board has reviewed the controls and procedures, e.g. the risk register, adopted by the College to provide itself with reasonable assurance that such controls and procedures are adequate to secure compliance by the College with statutory and governance obligations?	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that the Academic Board has taken all necessary steps to make themselves aware of, and have accessed all relevant information relating to, the College, and the Higher Education sector as necessary?	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that Academic Board members have a sufficient understanding of the College and the sector within which it operates?	○	○	○	○	○

Are you satisfied that the Academic Board has put in place a formal process for setting strategy including the preparation of a strategic plan?	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that the College's mission and vision have been defined and communicated to all levels within the organisation?	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that the Academic Board spends the correct proportion of its time on strategic issues and not day-to-day management responsibilities?	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that the respective roles of the Chair of the Academic Board and Chief Executive Officer of the College have been established and documented by Academic Board?	○	○	○	○	○

2. Please provide any comments you feel necessary to support your scoring

Enter your answer

Section 2   . . .

Academic Board Oversight

3. Please rate your satisfaction for each of the following as it relates to the oversight function of Academic Board. Please scroll left to right to see the full range of responses.

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Are you satisfied that the Academic Board of the College has a robust oversight mechanism in place to clearly report to and maintain compliance with the relevant statutory bodies, e.g. QQI, NMBI, The Teaching Council.	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that the Academic Board has adequate controls in place to monitor and manage potential conflicts of interest and confidential information?	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that there is appropriate monitoring of and compliance with internal and external Quality Assurance requirements?	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that Academic Board ensures there is a fit for purpose infrastructure to support delivery and the student experience?	○	○	○	○	○
Are you satisfied that the Academic Board has fulfilled its role in establishing the correct tone and culture of the College, not only by its own actions, but also in overseeing management and staff at all levels of the College?	○	○	○	○	○

Are you satisfied that Academic Board has appropriate oversight of the overall academic performance of College programmes?

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Are you satisfied that Academic Board has appropriate oversight of the development of new academic programmes?

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

4. Please provide any comment which may support your scoring or improve oversight.

Enter your answer

Section 3   . . .

Academic Board Effectiveness

5. Please rate the effectiveness of the Academic Board in relation to the each of the following statements. Please scroll left to right to see the full range of responses. The effectiveness scale is as follows:

- Not all effective - The action or process rarely happens in required instances. If the process/action is carried out/happens it rarely resolves issues and/or is unsuccessful in completing a process
- Somewhat effective - The action or process happens in some required instances. Where the process/action is carried out/happens it sometimes resolves issues and/or is moderately successfully at completing a process
- Effective - The action or process is carried out and or happens in most required instances. Where the process/action is carried out/happens it mostly resolves issues and/or is mostly successfully at completing a process
- Highly effective - The action or process is carried out and or happens in all required instances. Where the process/action is carried out/happens it resolves issues and/or successfully completes a process
- Extremely effective - The action or process is carried out and or happens in all required instances. Where the process/action is carried out/happens it always resolves issues and/or successfully completes a process in a timely fashion

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
In respect of time, skills and knowledge does Academic Board discharge its duties and responsibilities effectively?	○	○	○	○	○
Are Academic Board members provided with an effective inductions, mentoring and assistance with ongoing professional development by the Secretary of the Board, as required?	○	○	○	○	○
Are all Academic Board members afforded the opportunity to fully contribute to Board deliberations and meetings, resulting in effective decision making?	○	○	○	○	○
Are Academic Board provided with meeting agendas and other related material in a timely manner to enable full and effective consideration be given to important issues?	○	○	○	○	○

Are Academic Board papers and minutes effective in relation to their function (e.g. not overly lengthy, clearly explain the key issues and priorities, consistent, timely)?

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Is Academic Board effective at follow up with regard to issues that arise during the course of its business?

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

6. Please provide any comments which support your scoring OR may improve the effectiveness of academic board.

Enter your answer

+ ◉ Choice   T Text   👍 Rating   📅 Date   ⌄

User-Friendly Checklist

Academic Board Checklist for User-Friendly HCQF

Is readable, plain English used?	
Is the format clear?	
Is this appropriate for the intended audience?	
Is this implementable?	
Is this consistent with the HCQF?	
When is the next review of this scheduled for?	

If you would like to record comments, concerns or issues for development, you may do so here and return to the QA office:

Periodic Review Timetable

Programme Review Data

Notes

Notes

Notes