

# Ongoing Monitoring of Fully Online or Blended Learning Programmes Policy

## Section 1 - Introduction

### Purpose

(1) The purpose of this policy is to:

- a. Ensure that the College manages and makes appropriate changes to ensure programmes irrespective of mode of delivery continue to:
  - i. Be viable
  - ii. Be fit for purpose
  - iii. Meet their conditions of validation and, where relevant, professional approval
  - iv. Be up to an acceptable academic standard and meeting the award standard to which the programme has been designed
  - v. Provide a high quality of teaching and learning experience for learners in an online or blended learning environment
- b. Enable the College to identify good practices in the provision of higher education programmes for wider dissemination
- c. Provide vital information to inform strategic decision-making at programme and College level to include the development of new programmes or the discontinuation of current programmes

### Scope

#### To whom does the policy apply?

(2) The policy applies to all Staff and Faculty involved in the design, provision and support of a Hibernia College programme.

#### In what situations does the policy apply?

(3) The policy applies throughout the life cycle of a programme, following development and approval and runs in between periodic reviews.

#### Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

(4) The Academic Board has ultimate responsibility for the monitoring of programmes for the purposes identified.

(5) The Academic Board delegates responsibility for the implementation of measures to fulfil this policy to the Programme Board, under the leadership of the Programme Director.

(6) The Programme Board implements monitoring mechanisms and reports findings through the Programme Director to the Academic Board.

(7) The Programme Director has responsibility for convening meetings of the Programme Board as prescribed in the Terms of Reference for the Programme Board.

## Section 2 - Context

### Legal or Regulatory Context

#### QA Guidelines

(8) This policy has been designed with regard to the [European Standards and Guidelines](#) and the [Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#); both of which specify the need for Hibernia College to implement policies and procedures setting out how programmes are monitored on an ongoing basis. Other QQI policies which have relevance include [Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes](#), [Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards](#) and [Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training](#).

#### Policies, Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Development and Approval

(9) Ongoing monitoring seeks to confirm that (amongst other things) a programme continues to meet the regulatory criteria for approval of a programme where the programme is accredited by a third party. This means that the legal and regulatory context set out in the Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Online Environment Policy are relevant here.

#### Transnational and Online Provision

(10) Ongoing monitoring of fully online programmes must also remain cognisant of the College Frameworks for [Transnational and Collaborative Provision](#) and [International Student Support](#).

## Section 3 - Policy Statements

### Part A - Principles for Ongoing Monitoring of Blended or Online Programmes

#### Continuous Improvement - Ongoing Monitoring and Improvements Over Time

(11) The programme including course materials and intended learning outcomes shall be regularly reviewed, updated and improved using feedback from stakeholders.

(12) Programmes are not static — they evolve over time — and College procedures must be used to capture and reflect on possible changes required.

(13) Accredited programmes are subjected to systematic oversight, as documented in the relevant procedure, to ensure that they continue to meet the regulatory criteria for their approval. Where relevant, this includes both academic and professional approvals.

(14) Ongoing monitoring identifies areas for change and prompts incremental improvements to the programme over time.

(15) Specific consideration is given to:

- a. The standards of learner engagement within an online environment ensuring that there is equivalence in standards where an in-person programme also operates

- b. The recognition of qualifications in all locations in which learners are based
- c. Emergent technologies and educational developments in the field of online learning and considers their integration in the learning environment
- d. Access to digital resources is fair and equitable to all learners

## **Instruments for Ongoing Monitoring**

(16) The following must be used by all programmes under the auspices of the Programme Board:

- a. The preparation of a detailed Annual Programme Report for consideration by the Academic Board. A template is provided and it includes, amongst other things, the consideration of feedback from the External Examiners; the consideration of learner feedback; the consideration of staff feedback; the collation of data on appeals, complaints and disciplinary hearings, and thematic analysis arising from same.
- b. The consideration of reports required from External Examiners and reports required from External Chairs of Appeals Committees, or any other committee externally chaired
- c. Implemented models of systematic learner, Faculty, Adjunct Faculty and Staff feedback (Models are described in a procedure on the collection of feedback.)
- d. A minimum of two meetings a year of the Programme Board for each programme, to include learner and Faculty representatives from all programme variants where such exist (A variant may exist where there are multiple versions of a validated programme with slight provision or curricular differences to cater for particular audiences or within particular countries. A Programme Board exists for the parent programme, but with representation from all variants.)

## **Outcomes of Ongoing Monitoring**

(17) Ongoing monitoring may lead to:

- a. Normal day-to-day operational changes to the management and provision of the programme as deemed necessary by the Programme Director or nominee
- b. Proposed minor changes to the programme for consideration by the Academic Board, and where deemed appropriate by the Registrar, for the relevant accrediting bodies
- c. Reports to the Programme Board in relation to the performance of the programme
- d. Ad hoc reports (Where ongoing monitoring gives rise to an academic issue which is urgent or of particular significance and pertains to the validation, an ad hoc report can be made to the Chairperson of the Academic Board.)
- e. Recommended changes to HCQF policy or procedure

## **Information Sources for Effective Monitoring**

(18) Ongoing monitoring draws on information from a variety of sources, including:

- a. Systematic learner feedback to include survey outcomes, focus groups, ad hoc feedback and so on
- b. Systematic feedback from Adjunct Faculty and Faculty
- c. Marketing and learner recruitment information
- d. Programme resources information — including in relation to human, physical, virtual and educational resources
- e. Third-party stakeholders input — including by (prospective) learners, alumni, placement providers, accrediting bodies, other providers and representative bodies and so on
- f. Progression, retention and academic engagement information — including from the virtual learning environment
- g. Information about use of all student support services

- h. Reports required from External Examiners and reports required from External Chairs of Appeals Committees, or any other committee externally chaired
- i. Previously completed due diligence or risk assessments should be reviewed and updated as necessary

### **Link to Programmatic Review**

(19) Where an outcome of ongoing monitoring includes a concern about the programme in relation to any of these principles, it may trigger a review of the programmes in line with the Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Policy where this is deemed appropriate by the Academic Board. A proposal shall be made by the Programme Board to the Academic Board.

### **For Collaborative and Transnational Provision**

(20) For collaborative and/or transnational programmes, ongoing monitoring seeks to confirm that:

- a. There is equivalency of the teaching and learning experience across locations, programmes and modes of delivery
- b. There is equivalency of the rights and experience of staff and learners
- c. There is ongoing awareness of and sensitivity to cultural diversity that may exist amongst staff and learners
- d. Where a collaborative programme exists, there is effective oversight and governance arrangements with appropriate allocation of responsibility, ensuring that Hibernia College retains full academic oversight where it is the lead provider
- e. Where there are a number of programme variants, i.e. a parent programme with variants based on it, that there is a single Programme Board and a coherent mechanism to collate feedback and information on the effectiveness of the variants so that the information can be considered as a whole
- f. There is transparency of recognition of qualifications in all locations in which learners are based
- g. There is ongoing review of any memorandum of agreement in place to support the provision of the programme and/or the provision of work placements associated with the programme

## Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	5th March 2025
Review Date	5th March 2028
Approval Authority	Quality Assurance Officer
Approval Date	5th March 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Enquiries Contact	Eoin Crossen Quality Assurance Administrator <hr/> Quality Assurance

## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"Appeal"** - An appeal is where a learner formally requests that the decision or judgement of a lower authority is referred to a higher authority (i.e., the Appeals Committee) for the reconsideration of the decision or judgement in the light of concerns expressed by the appellant under one or more of the three grounds of appeal.

**"Policy"** - Policies are principled statements adopted by the College at a high level to enable decisions about actions and desired outcomes to which the College is committed. They clearly articulate the formal position of the College on specific issues in order to guide internal decision-making. Policies set out 'what to do' on a given issue. They have a medium- to long-term review cycle.

**"Programme"** - A programme of education and training refers to any process by which learners may acquire knowledge, skill or competence. It includes courses of study or instruction, apprenticeships, training and employment. A programme offers learners the learning opportunities by which they may attain educational goals (expressed as the intended programme learning outcome) by learning activities in a learning environment. A programme is normally comprised of modules. A programme leading to a major award will normally require a 'cohesion generating' process which integrates constituent modules so that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes are supported. The cohesion generating process should establish the epistemological and cultural identity of the programme. It should also coordinate alignment of activities with the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and introduce learners to the broader community of practice to which they aspire. (QQI (2013) Assessment and Standards Revised)