

The Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF) Policy

Section 1 - Introduction

Purpose

(1) This policy sets out the principles and standards for the creation and maintenance of the Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF). This means it is the College's Quality Assurance Policy. It establishes the College's policy for building and distributing a quality culture throughout all of its activities.

The HCQF aims to demonstrate transparency to all stakeholders. The structures establish the criteria for transparent decision-making to ensure the provision of quality services and encourage enhancement at all levels within the College. The operation of quality assurance contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of public confidence in the College's activities.

Scope

To whom does the policy apply?

(2) This is an overarching policy that applies to all members of the College community, students, Staff and Faculty in relation to policy, procedure and other elements of the HCQF.

Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

(3) The Academic Board is ultimately responsible for the development, approval, monitoring and review of the policies, procedures and other elements of the HCQF.

(4) The Registrar is responsible for the oversight and implementation of the HCQF.

(5) The Programme Director or their nominee have specific responsibility for the implementation of the HCQF in relation to their programmes.

(6) All members of the College community have responsibility for implementing the HCQF in their respective studies and work.

Definitions

(7) The HCQF is an infrastructure of strategy, policy and procedure complemented with documentary resources, which include forms, guidelines and handbooks. Together, these documents inform and support decision-making and day-to-day activity in the College.

- a. Strategy
- b. Policy
- c. Procedure
- d. Resources

Section 2 - Context

Legal and Regulatory Context

QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines

(8) This policy is designed with regard to QQI's [Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#) requirement that the College has and implements a policy for, and a documented approach to, Quality Assurance.

(9) It also has regard to a more specific set of sector and topic-specific [Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#) and [Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes](#).

Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012

(10) This policy is the College's overarching approach to fulfilling its legal requirement to have policies and procedures in place for Quality Assurance under the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#).

Professional, Regulatory, Statutory Bodies

(11) Hibernia College provides programmes leading to professional awards. In as far as those awards are governed by legislation of any type, the College shall have regard to regulations therein.

The European and Irish Higher Education Landscape

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of European Higher Education

(12) Hibernia College is conscious of its place as a stakeholder in both the European and Irish Higher Education landscapes. As such, we ensure that we are guided by the [European Standards and Guidelines](#) in the creation and dissemination of the HCQF. We are also a member of, and a contributor to, the policy discourse that shapes the regulation of higher education in the area of quality assurance. This means that our approach to the HCQF will continue to develop along with the evolution of this landscape.

Erasmus+

(13) As the holder of an Erasmus+ Charter, Hibernia College is cognisant of its obligations under the various associated measures.

Section 3 - Policy Statements

Part A - Principles for the HCQF

(14) In developing, monitoring and reviewing the HCQF, the College will be:

a. Collaborative

- i. We include students, Staff, Faculty and external stakeholders in deliberations about the HCQF.
- ii. Any person or group who are particularly affected by or responsible for a policy area are consulted in relation to that area as a priority.

Evidence-based and expertise-led

- i. Each document in the HCQF is drafted and maintained drawing on appropriate expertise (internally and externally) and on effective practice.

c. User-friendly

- i. When developing, monitoring and reviewing the HCQF documents, we ensure that each:
 - Is written in readable, plain English and clearly laid out in a standard format
 - Clearly articulates its purpose, intended audience, authority and review cycle
 - Has a clear schedule for review and is kept up to date
 - Is realistic, relevant and 'implementable'
 - Is consistent with the rest of the HCQF (i.e. that policies and procedures do not contradict one another)

Part B - Policy for Policies

(15) Policies are:

a. Documented

- i. A policy is only a policy insofar as it is documented.

b. Binding

- i. Policies must be observed by everyone to whom they apply.

c. Future-proofed where possible

- i. Policies are documented to apply generally, allowing for things to change and improve over time.

d. Formally adopted

- i. By the Academic Board where they relate to academic matters, student support and programmes of education and training
- ii. By the Board of Directors where they relate to corporate affairs and governance

e. Owned

- i. By a named responsible person or committee

f. Criterion-based

- i. Policies always include specific, clear criteria by which decisions are taken.

g. Thoughtful

- i. Policies reflect:

- Core Higher Education concepts
- b.
 - Issues of fairness and justice for students, Staff and Faculty
 - Current effective practice

h. Implementable

- i. Policies must be designed to enable effective decision-making.

i. Periodically reviewed

- i. Each policy has a clear schedule for review at least every three but no later than five years.

Part C - Policy for Procedures

(16) Procedures are:

a. Documented

- i. A procedure is only a procedure insofar as it is documented.

b. Implementable

- i. Procedures must be designed to be effectively implemented as documented.

c. Implemented

- i. Procedures must be implemented as documented.

d. Formally adopted

- i. By the Academic Board where they relate to academic matters, student support and programmes of education and training
- ii. By the Board of Directors where they relate to corporate affairs and governance

e. Owned

- i. By a named responsible person or committee

f. Periodically reviewed

- i. Each procedure has a clear schedule for review at least every two years.

Part D - Policy for Strategy

(17) The structure and development of documented strategies to guide the College's actions are not specified here. However, in general, they set out objectives that are:

- a. Specific
- b. Measurable
- c. Achievable
- d. Realistic
- e. Time-bound

Part E - Specific Policy Areas

(18) At a minimum, the College will ensure that policies address the following key areas in higher education:

- a. Policy for quality assurance, its governance and management
- b. Design and approval of programmes
- c. Undertaking research
- d. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
- e. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
- f. Staff, Faculty and Adjunct Faculty recruitment, management and development
- g. Student supports and the provision of learning resources, including international students
- h. Information and data management
- i. Public information and communication to stakeholders
- j. Collaborative and transnational education
- k. Fully online and blended learning
- l. Self-evaluation, monitoring and review of programmes internally and externally
- m. Self-evaluation, monitoring and review of the institution internally and externally

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	5th March 2025
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Approval Authority	Quality Assurance Officer
Approval Date	5th March 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Enquiries Contact	Quality Assurance

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Blended Learning" - QQI adopted a Garrison and Kanuka (2004) definition of blended learning, which defines it as 'the integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences'. Hibernia College complements this broad definition by an understanding that blended learning should be characterised as falling along a continuum as proposed by Jones (2006). Such a conception can accommodate a range of blended learning approaches.

"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.

"Procedure" - Procedures are the broad actions that must be carried out to implement a policy. They set out 'how to do' what the policy specifies must be done.

"Resources" - The HCQF includes other supporting documented resources. These comprise a set of practical, detailed, up-to-date resources to assist staff, faculty and students in implementing or complying with policies and procedures. These are developed as required by any unit or department of the College. They can be public-facing or internal-facing and may or may not be publicly available on the website.

"Strategy" - Strategies are time-bound, specific statements of objectives the College sets to meet high-level goals. They are specific action plans to achieve key goals. There is always an overarching College strategy in place. It can be complemented with diverse topic-specific strategies, such as a strategy for teaching, learning and assessment. Strategies are established for no more than a five-year period.