

Full Development and Final Approval of a New Programme Procedure

Section 1 - Introduction

Purpose and Parent Policy

- (1) This procedure sets out the steps for the development and approval of programmes to be provided by Hibernia College in a blended learning or online learning mode.
- (2) This procedure is followed after the Executive Management Team (EMT) and Academic Board (AB) have given initial approval for the development of a new programme.
- (3) The [Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Fully Online Environment Policy](#) and the [Design of Programmes and Curricula for a Blended or Fully Online Environment Policy](#) are the parent policies.

Responsibilities

Staff Responsibilities

- (4) The Executive Management Team (EMT) is responsible for resourcing programme design and for the approval of programme development from a strategic perspective.
- (5) The Academic Board is responsible for the approval of programmes prior to submission to accrediting bodies for consideration.
- (6) In the context of transnational provision and collaborative provision, the Executive Management Team (EMT) is responsible for ensuring the findings of any due diligence and risk and opportunity assessment are considered when making a decision whether to approve or not.

Faculty Responsibilities

- (7) The Programme Director or nominee is responsible for the development of the programme and the preparation of the Validation Documentation.

Section 2 - Procedure

Part A - Procedure for Programme and Curriculum Development

Preliminary Meeting and Initial Steps

- (8) Following the approval by the EMT, and subsequently by the AB, of a proposal to develop a new programme, the following process occurs.

Meeting with Registrar

(9) The proposed Programme Director or nominee meets with the Registrar to establish:

- a. A full understanding of the requirements of the internal programme approval process
- b. The external validation process
- c. The process for the approval of a programme by a professional body (where relevant)
- d. This will include agreeing a timeline for development and clarifying the stages in the process to include:
 - i. Dates for first and final consideration by the Academic Board
 - ii. Documentation requirements
 - iii. Ensuring a full understanding of award standards and appropriate QQI policies
 - iv. Any additional requirements for programmes leading to professional registration
 - v. Internal consultation meeting requirements with key staff
 - vi. Critical self-assessment by the Programme Team against the programme approval criteria established in the [Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Fully Online Environment Policy](#) which reflects both QQI and Hibernia College programme approval criteria
 - vii. Departmental self-evaluation
 - viii. Independent expert peer review process
- e. The Programme Director or nominee will develop a proposed timeline for the project based on the relevant QQI policy and guidance documents and templates.
- f. The Programme Director or nominee will ensure any professional regulatory requirements which apply to the programme are included.
- g. The timeline is approved by the Registrar, subject to minor amendments which may include Staff availability and resourcing or QQI/Academic Board scheduling.

Establishment of a Programme Development Team

(10) A programme development team is established by the Programme Director or nominee which will be given responsibility for completion of the validation documentation and will include:

- a. Subject matter experts
- b. Learning Designers
- c. The Programme Director or nominee appoints members to the team who are:
 - i. Suitably qualified
 - ii. Available to complete the required workload commitment within the specified timeframe
 - iii. Available for engagement with the development team as appropriate
 - iv. Familiar with the overall programme proposal, the structure of the programme and where their module fits within this, the credit weighting of the programme, their module and the associated student learning hours, learning outcomes and assessment strategy for the programme, and the relevant award standards
 - v. Ideally available to continue in the role as Tutor and Examiner for the modules they develop
 - vi. Available to provide a detailed handover and support to an alternative Tutor and Examiner where required
- d. The Programme Director or nominee is responsible for ensuring the cohesive development of the programme and should seek to prevent isolated module development without engagement with and consideration of the programme as a whole.

Additional Guidance

(11) Where additional guidance or support is required throughout the process, it is the responsibility of the Programme Director or nominee to make arrangements for this.

(12) This includes using other Faculty and Adjunct Faculty as critical friends, as well as seeking input from the Academic Dean, Registrar, Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager, academic colleagues and departmental managers as required.

(13) Where appropriate, on the recommendation of the Programme Director or nominee and/or the Registrar, the College may appoint an external advisory board.

Programme Development Process

(14) The programme development team undertakes the programme development in line with relevant policy requirements and internal procedural matters. In particular, alignment with the [Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Fully Online Environment Policy](#), which reflects both QQI and Hibernia College programme approval criteria, should be ensured.

Independent Research and Consultation

(15) The following must be provided:

- a. Target learners
- b. Need for the programme
- c. Demand for the programme
- d. Comparative programme benchmarks in Ireland and abroad
- e. Legalities around programme provision
- f. Recognition of the programme and the award it leads to in the countries where there may be learners
- g. Cost to develop the programme
- h. Cost to provide the programme
- i. Potential student fees
- j. Potential numbers of students in cohorts
- k. Number of annual intakes
- l. Mode of provision – blended or fully online
- m. Any available student-staff ratio requirements or norms

Programme Curriculum Detail Including Assessment Strategies and Staffing Requirements

(16) The Programme Director or nominee organises an academic planning meeting with the team of Authors and the Digital Learning Department (DLD).

(17) The research-informed curriculum structure proposal and the general aims and objectives of the programme are provided to Authors in advance to allow them to consider the overall programme structure and the proposed component modules and, thus, plan proposed content and assessment requirements relevant to their area of expertise.

(18) At the outset of the planning meeting, the Programme Director or nominee seeks to agree the minimum intended programme learning outcomes. It is essential that this is undertaken in the context of the appropriate award standards and professional standards as appropriate. From this, the team should seek to agree on the assessment strategy in light of whether the programme is either online only or a blended learning programme.

(19) On completion of the academic planning meeting, individual Authors are allocated specific responsibilities to complete the drafting of module descriptors and module requirements, within an agreed timeframe.

(20) On completion of the module descriptor authoring, the Programme Director or nominee will ensure that the module learning outcomes, module teaching and learning strategy, and module assessment strategy are in line with those proposed for programme level. Where this is not the case, appropriate corrective action should be taken to bring these in line. It is the Programme Director or nominee in collaboration with the development team that should determine the appropriate course of action.

College Planning

(21) The full programme development team, including representatives from all relevant departments of the College, meets following the Academic Planning meeting. All parties should be provided with all information in advance. All parties should be asked to consider how their teams will support the delivery of the proposed programme, including factors such as the admissions processes, assessment regulations and procedures, timetabling, content development and so on.

(22) On conclusion of this meeting, individuals from the programme development team should have the responsibility for providing information to enable the Programme Director to draft the relevant sections of the documentation appropriate to the different areas of responsibility, as appropriate. These individuals also review the final draft.

(23) The Programme Director or nominee completes the final version, giving consideration to the requirements of all parties and stakeholders, but ensuring cohesion and a sense of single authorship to the document overall.

Additional Steps Where a Collaborative and/or Transnational Programme Is Being Developed

Due Diligence

(24) A Due Diligence Team will be appointed by the Academic Board to undertake the collection of relevant information and the drafting of a report to include a Risk and Opportunity Assessment.

(25) The Due Diligence Team will normally comprise the Registrar or nominee, the Chief Financial Officer or nominee, and a third person, not involved with the programme appointed by the Academic Board. Additional members may be added to the team where the EMT deems it beneficial to the nature of the collaboration or the intended location of the provision.

Legal Matters

(26) The EMT will seek the professional services of a solicitor for all legal matters and may, on the recommendation of the Registrar or the Chief Financial Officer, appoint external consultants to undertake specialised research.

Matters to Consider

(27) The nature of potential collaborations and transnational arrangements is wide and varied. Therefore, each proposal should consider the conditions required for it to succeed. Due diligence should be tailored to these. The College will seek to be assured of the following:

- a. The benefit to the College of the proposal
- b. The reputation and suitability of the proposed partner
- c. The financial standing of the proposed partner
- d. The legal status of the proposed partner
- e. Internal and external quality assurance requirements

- f. Any legal restrictions or requirements relating to delivery by an outside provider
- g. The monitoring and review activities involved
- h. Any implications the proposal may have on programmes that are accredited, approved or recognised by professional and statutory regulatory bodies
- i. Future opportunities the proposal may present

Due Diligence Report

(28) The Due Diligence Team will prepare a report under the following headings for consideration by the Academic Board and the EMT:

- a. General and Academic
- b. Quality Assurance
- c. Legal Standing
- d. Financial Standing
- e. Risk and Opportunity Assessment
- f. A template is provided for writing the Due Diligence Report.

Risk and Opportunity Assessment

(29) The following areas will be addressed:

- a. Reputational Risk and Opportunity
- b. Operational Risk and Opportunity
- c. Risk and Opportunity for Learners

Sharing of Information

(30) The College is also committed to disclosing all relevant information to facilitate a due diligence investigation by a potential partner.

Outcomes of the Due Diligence and Risk and Opportunity Assessment

(31) If at any point during the conduct of the Due Diligence, the Due Diligence Team are concerned that their provisional findings may impact on the ability to provide the programme, the team will immediately advise both the EMT and the Academic Board, who will act in response to the information.

(32) The EMT, informed by the Academic Board for academic and quality assurance matters, will consider the due diligence findings and the risk assessment and make an informed decision on how to proceed with the proposed collaboration and programme.

(33) The EMT may request further information prior to a final decision on approval.

(34) The EMT does not approve the proposal and the process is terminated at this point.

(35) The EMT will approve the progression of the proposal based on the following criteria:

- a. Potential partner is of good reputation and standing, both academically and ethically
- b. Proposal is in line with the College mission, vision and strategy
- c. Satisfies the requirements and limitation of the College policy for collaborative and transnational provision
- d. Is likely to enhance the reputation of the College
- e. Is based on a sound legal and financial footing

- f. Is able to retain the best interest of the learners as paramount
- g. Is sustainable and does not potentially negatively impact existing provision of the College
- h. The Due Diligence Report and Risk and Opportunity Assessment will be used to inform the content of any Memorandum of Agreement required to underpin a collaborative relationship, which shall be prepared by the Registrar with appropriate input from other College departments, in particular, the Finance Department.

Documentation Development

(36) All completed/reviewed documents, including any relevant Memorandum of Agreement, are returned to the programme coordinator, who coordinates the compilation of the final draft and supports the Programme Director or nominee in sourcing and recording evidence to support the submission.

(37) The Programme Director or nominee ensures all relevant parts of the validation submission, including all relevant appendices, are addressed and satisfy the requirements of QQI policy and procedure.

Departmental Peer Review of the Programme Proposal

- a. The Programme Director or nominee leading the development should agree an appropriate date for the critical review of the validation submission by relevant academic colleagues from across different programmes.
- b. In that regard, detailed scrutiny of the following should be undertaken:
 - i. Satisfaction of award standards
 - ii. Programme learning outcomes
 - iii. Module learning outcomes
 - iv. Programme and module teaching and learning strategies
 - v. Programme and module assessment strategies
 - vi. Any programme-specific quality assurance
 - vii. Appropriateness of the arrangements documented in any Memorandum of Agreement

(38) The Programme Director or nominee leading the development provides clarification and responds to questions.

(39) The outcome of the review should provide formal feedback including recommendations for the development team to consider. Feedback should include views on:

- a. Satisfaction of award standards and how the teaching and learning and assessment strategies promote this
- b. Suitability of programme and module learning outcomes to the award level and the realistic attainment of same by students
- c. Experience of application of any of the proposed approaches and the effectiveness of same
- d. Any recommendations for enhancement
- e. Efficacy of any relevant Memorandum of Agreement, in particular, any bespoke quality assurance arrangements for the provision of the proposed programme
- f. The critical review will take place at least once and always in advance of the critical self-assessment undertaken by the programme development team.
- g. The Programme Director or nominee will advise the development team of the feedback received and agree and implement any necessary changes.
- h. On completion of the agreed changes, the development team proceeds to conduct a critical self-assessment against the Core Validation Criteria.

Critical Self-Assessment of the Proposed Programme Against Approval Criteria

(40) In accordance with the QQI policy, the College undertakes a critical self-assessment of any new programme

validation submission in advance of submission for validation. This is a formal critical review of the programme proposal undertaken by those involved in its development.

(41) The review meeting can be held virtually or physically but must include as many members of the development team as possible. The Programme Director or nominee should coordinate the review and seek the views of the team as to how each of the Core Validation Criteria has been satisfied. Again, the team takes a critical approach and considers how the programme could be further enhanced, identifying any weaknesses or risks. A template report form is provided and must be completed.

(42) The completed self-assessment must be submitted to the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager to form part of the validation submission.

(43) The Programme Director or nominee is required to address any recommendations stemming from the self-assessment prior to submission to the Academic Board.

(44) Consideration of recommendations does not require changes to be made. However, the Programme Director or nominee will be expected to provide a rationale for any action or non-action in relation to the findings of the critical self-assessment when questioned by the Academic Board at the appropriate point in the process.

(45) On completion of any recommendations from the critical self-assessment, the programme should be presented to the Department of the Registrar for the commencement of the internal approval process.

(46) Critical Self-Assessment of the Draft Memorandum of Agreement Against Approval Criteria

- a. Where a draft Memorandum of Agreement exists, it will be considered in light of QQI's [Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards](#) and associated Validation Policy.

Part B - Procedure for the Internal Approval of a New Programme

Internal Approval Step One

Review by the Registrar

(47) Following completion of the critical self-assessment, the Registrar will review the programme proposal to ensure that all required quality assurance processes have been adhered to and acted upon appropriately. It should also ensure that appropriate scrutiny and assessment of the proposal has taken place to confirm the programme is in line with the initial proposal and addresses the award standards and Core Validation Criteria. In that regard, specific attention will be given to the findings of the critical self-assessment and any subsequent action taken.

(48) The Registrar will also seek to confirm how the submission complies with the original proposal as agreed or the suitability of any changes implemented along the way and the rationale for same.

(49) The Registrar is not required to undertake a review of the submission against the Core Validation Criteria. This is because it is expected that this has been completed by appropriately qualified experts as part of the earlier quality assurance requirements. The Registrar may specifically consider how the programme has addressed the requirements of the [NFQ](#), including:

- a. Credit allocation, learning hours
- b. Award standards
- c. Learning outcomes at programme and module level
- d. Teaching, learning and assessment strategies
- e. Award structure including access, transfer and progression

- f. The Registrar may seek assurance that internal policies and procedures have been fully considered and satisfied in respect of:
 - i. Arrangements for the provision of placements or teaching/assessment venues and the associated roles and responsibilities
 - ii. Programme management arrangements
 - iii. Relevance to the Irish, European and international labour markets
 - iv. Physical and human resource implications of providing the programme
 - v. Impact on existing support facilities
 - vi. Timetabling
 - vii. Development of associated documentation, for example, student handbook
 - viii. Assessment scheduling, management and procedures
- g. On completion of the review, the Registrar may request for additional follow-up work on the documentation prior to its submission to a peer review panel.

Considerations in Respect of a Collaborative Programme

(50) To validate or revalidate a programme for collaborative delivery, the College will need to be able to assure satisfaction of validation requirements. Furthermore, the College will need to be able to stand over the collaboration and the collaborative arrangements for the running, delivery and management of the programme. This will include but is not limited to:

- a. Quality of the learning experience - that the collaboration is able, and continues, to provide a learning experience equivalent to that of comparable programmes delivered solely by the College
- b. Quality assurance - that appropriate arrangements are, and remain, in place to enable quality assurance, control and enhancement mechanisms to be effective
- c. Written agreement - that appropriate written agreements are in place that specify clearly the mutual arrangements agreed by all parties and signed by persons with authority to do so
- d. Provisions for the admission of students - that the arrangements for the admission of students onto collaborative provision satisfy the admissions procedures and comply with programme entry requirements
- e. Learner protection - that adequate learner protection arrangements are in place
- f. Transnational collaborative provision - that where approval of an overseas government is required, this is obtained or remains in place prior to registration of the students and delivery of the programme
 - i. The College will ensure that the experience and expectations of students studying overseas, in addition to the cultural norms of that location, are taken into account.
- g. Documentation - that an appropriate schedule of activity has been completed and is accompanied by a detailed collaborative operations manual outlining the specific roles, responsibilities and obligations of each party in relation to students and quality life cycle
- h. When the Academic Board and EMT are satisfied that the above factors have been met in addition to the standard validation requirements, it may then proceed to request validation.

Internal Approval Step Two

Independent Peer Review Process

(51) Following completion of the critical self-assessment, a competent independent peer review panel should evaluate the proposal by considering the documentation (which may include a draft Memorandum of Agreement) and meeting with the College management and the Programme Team, which includes Authors and Learning Designers.

(52) There shall be a minimum of three external panel members and a maximum of five.

(53) The peer review process models the QQI validation and should be conducted in the context of the Core Validation Policy and Criteria and, where relevant, the [Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards](#).

(54) A minimum of three panel members should be utilised. Panel members should have appropriate subject expertise and the Chair must be familiar and experienced with appropriate QQI policies and the validation process in order to guide the panel and reach informed conclusions.

(55) The panel must be provided with the full programme validation submission at least one week before the independent peer review evaluation to allow for full and proper scrutiny of the documents.

(56) The development team, including Faculty, should be available to meet with the panel and be prepared to respond to queries relating to their areas of expertise.

(57) The panel is required to compile a report of their findings and recommendations, including whether or not they would recommend that the programme goes forward for validation.

(58) On receipt of the panel report, the Programme Director or nominee is required to consider all recommendations and arrange for the completion of any subsequent action as deemed necessary and appropriate.

(59) When all actions have been completed to the satisfaction of the Programme Director or nominee, the full submission should be forwarded to the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager to arrange for consideration by the Academic Board.

Internal Approval Step 3

Follow-Up Review by the Registrar

(60) The Registrar will review the findings of the external peer review process and seek assurance that these have been addressed.

(61) On completion of the review, the Registrar may request additional follow-up work on the documentation prior to its submission to the Academic Board for an approval decision.

(62) Final and complete documents including all appendices are submitted to the Registrar for review prior to the validation being submitted to the Academic Board for approval.

(63) Draft documents will not be considered as the Registrar is required to submit a report on the final submission to the Academic Board with a recommendation to approve or reject the request for the submission to go forward for validation.

(64) Prior to submission to the Registrar, an initial quality check is undertaken by the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager.

(65) The initial quality check is undertaken by the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager. This check will confirm that:

- a. All required documents are submitted
- b. Each of the sections has been completed in line with the template guidelines
- c. All appropriate appendices are complete
- d. All appropriate personnel have informed the development

(66) In addition, the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager will ensure that the submission includes the

critical self-assessment and the independent peer review evaluation panel report.

(67) The initial check is not intended to confirm the appropriateness of the information provided to the proposal put forward.

(68) Upon confirmation that the above requirements have been met, the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager will put the documentation forward for review by the Registrar on behalf of the Academic Board.

(69) Incomplete documentation will be returned by the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager and may result in approval by the Academic Board not taking place as per the scheduled timeline.

(70) Programme Directors are advised to allow sufficient time for the submission to be reviewed by the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager or Registrar and shortfalls addressed in advance of the Academic Board meeting.

Internal Approval Step 4

Consideration by the Academic Board

(71) The Programme Director or nominee is required to attend the next scheduled Academic Board meeting and present a brief summary of the new programme as documented.

(72) Following the presentation, the Registrar summarises findings from the independent review of the programme.

(73) The Registrar provides a brief rationale for the recommendation.

(74) The Academic Board is required to support or reject the recommendation of the Registrar.

(75) The outcomes of the Academic Board are:

- a. Approval to submit to QQI
- b. Further work required

(76) In the event of approval, the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager, with the Registrar, makes all arrangements for submission.

(77) In the event of further work being required, the Quality, Enhancement and Registrations Manager will advise the Programme Director or nominee of the additional work required and the timeline for completion of this. In such circumstances, the Chair of the Academic Board may authorise approval to submit by Chair's Action following review by an appropriate member or members of the Academic Board.

Part C - Submission for Academic Validation

(78) On submission to QQI, the Registrar liaises with QQI throughout the external, QQI-owned validation process.

Part D - Subsequent to Academic Validation

(79) On receipt of the validation report, there are normally two outcomes, approval subject to changes or advised to make a full resubmission.

Approval Subject to Changes

Making Changes After a QOI Validation

(80) The Registrar sends the report of the validation to the Programme Team.

(81) The Programme Team studies the report and decides whether the recommended changes or conditions of approval are appropriate.

(82) The Programme Team establishes if there are financial implications for the changes advised. Where there are financial implications, the Programme Team establishes the possible cost and, through the Registrar, refers the matter to the EMT for approval to revise the programme in line with the advice of QOI.

(83) If the EMT grants approval to proceed, the EMT will advise the Programme Team through the Registrar.

Special Provisions for validation of Collaborative Programmes

Membership of Committees

(84) It is expected that the collaborating partners nominate members to join the programme development team and take an active role in programme development at every stage.

(85) The role of the Academic Board in reviewing and approving programme validation documents for the submission to the accrediting authority is extended to include consideration of the schedule of activity and the collaborative operations manual to ensure consistency and also to confirm the College's capacity to satisfy the academic obligations placed upon it. The Academic Board may delegate responsibility for some activities to specific Board members and request a report and recommendation.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	2nd November 2020
Review Date	2nd November 2023
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	23rd September 2020
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.

"Collaborative Provision" - This refers to two or more providers being involved by formal agreement in the provision of a programme of higher education and training.

"Due Diligence" - Undertaking enquiries about a proposed programme's regulatory context and viability, particularly in the context of a prospective collaborative and/or transnational arrangement to inform a decision whether to proceed or not

"Module" - A programme of education and training of small volume. It is designed to be capable of being integrated with other modules into larger programmes. A module can be shared by different programmes. Some modules are designed to lead to minor or special-purpose awards. In describing the educational formation provided by an independent module, it is sufficient to specify the learning outcome and (the assumed (i.e. minimum) prior learning (prerequisite learning)). Assumed prior learning is sometimes specified by listing prerequisite modules.

"Online Learning" - Online Learning refers to a type of programme where all teaching occurs entirely online, either synchronously or asynchronously, or in combination. Learners can complete their programme of study from a distance with no in-person or on-site requirements.

"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.

"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)

"Transnational Provision" - The provision or partial provision of a programme of education in one country by a provider that is based in another country (In the absence of State policy relating to the provision of blended learning and online learning, Hibernia College also applies the term transnational provision to accessing from one country a programme of education offered by a provider based in another country.)

"Validation" - The process by which it is confirmed that a programme of higher education will enable a registered learner who completes that programme to acquire and where appropriate be able to demonstrate the necessary knowledge, skill or competence to justify the award being made in respect of that programme in line with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.