

Governance and Management Policy

Section 1 - Introduction

Purpose

(1) In higher education, good organisational practices for management and governance are presented and conceptualised within Quality Assurance (QA) frameworks. This policy describes the Hibernia College management structure and outlines the structure in place to effectively enable the interrelationship between Corporate and Academic Governance. It articulates the principles by which the College is governed and identifies the key boards, committees and positions and their regulatory context.

Scope

To whom does the policy apply?

(2) This is an overarching policy that applies to all members of the College, reflecting the nature of the College as both an Irish State-accredited higher education institution and a private unlimited company.

Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

(3) The Academic Board (AB) and the Board of Directors (BoD) respectively are responsible for formally approving this policy and for overseeing its implementation.

(4) Persons holding corporate management roles and academic management roles are responsible for the implementation of this policy within their departments.

(5) All members of the Hibernia College community are responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

(6) Good academic management, quality assurance and the enhancement of the student experience are the shared responsibility of every Staff, Faculty and Adjunct Faculty member of Hibernia College.

Section 2 - Context

Legal and Regulatory Context

Irish company law

(7) Irish company law regulates how Hibernia College Unlimited Company operates. This policy illustrates the College's compliance with the law and regulations for companies operating in Ireland and the EU, in particular, the [Companies Act 2014](#).

Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012

(8) Hibernia College provides programmes that are validated by the statutory body Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). QQI, the national agency with responsibility for external quality assurance and qualifications across the further and higher education sector, was established under the provisions of the [Qualifications and Quality Assurance](#)

[\(Education and Training\) Act 2012.](#)

QOI Statutory QA Guidelines

(9) QOI awards qualifications to successful candidates of Hibernia College programmes that have been validated by QOI. Accordingly, a prerequisite to providing programmes leading to QOI awards is that Hibernia College 'have regard to' all provisions of QOI's [Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#) and QOI's [Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#). As Hibernia College was established to provide online and blended learning programmes, we also have regard to QOI's [Topic Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes](#). This [Governance and Management Policy](#) reflects our implementation of these requirements.

Professional Bodies

(10) Professional bodies accredit Hibernia College validated programmes leading to professional awards. Accordingly, the College is required to comply with relevant professional body accreditation requirements such as those published by the Teaching Council or the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI).

International Policy Context

(11) Within higher education, good governance and management practices are deemed to belong to an institutional QA infrastructure. In this context, the standards and guidance provided in key international texts on quality assurance have implications for governance and management and are considered by Hibernia College.

European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

(12) Both as a Europe-based provider of higher education programmes and a provider of programmes leading to QOI awards, Hibernia College will, at a minimum, adopt and fulfil the standards established in the 2015 policy [European Standards and Guidelines](#) (ESG). The ESG is the benchmark for reputable Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Quality Assessment for E-learning: A Benchmarking Approach

(13) The European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) is Europe's leading institutional network for open and flexible higher education. Its 2016 publication [Quality Assessment for E-learning: A Benchmarking Approach](#) guides Hibernia College.

Section 3 - Policy Statements

Principles for Governance and Management

(14) Hibernia College fully adopts the governance and management requirements as identified in QOI's [Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#) and in QOI's [Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines](#). These principles form the basis of Hibernia College's approach to governance and management and are manifested in the Hibernia College Quality Framework which is central to the promotion of quality culture within the College.

These principles, as delineated within the referenced statutory guidance documents, include:

Governance

(15) There is a system in place to oversee education and training, research and related activities to ensure their quality. 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 Fully Online Environment Policy](#)).

(16) Within the governance structure of the College, there are distinct units whose responsibility is to make decisions and other units whose responsibility is to approve them.

(17) Groups or units responsible for the oversight of education and training, research and related activities are identified in the documented procedures. The terms of reference for these groups or units are documented and published.

(18) Quality assurance systems include procedures that ensure:

- a. A system of governance where objectives are aligned with strategic objectives
- b. A quality assurance system which is owned by the College and with appropriate quality assurance procedures that support the College as a legal entity
- c. A system of governance that protects the integrity of academic processes and standards
- d. A system of governance that considers risk
- e. A system of governance that considers the results of internal and external evaluation

Management

(19) Quality assurance procedures form part of a coherent system that is central to the promotion of a quality assurance culture. The basic activities captured in the policies and procedures of the Hibernia College Quality Framework include, but are not limited to, the following:

(20) A clear description of all processes.

(21) Demonstration of how the Quality Framework complies with applicable laws and regulations in all jurisdictions in which it operates. The framework also demonstrates the College's general good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in all jurisdictions in which it operates or enrolls learners.

(22) Identification of roles and positions responsible for the implementation of quality assurance policies and procedures, which are clearly described and designated.

(23) Self-monitoring of processes; indicators are developed, and data is collected, which can be used to measure the effectiveness of policies and procedures and provide for corrective action.

(24) Systematic analysis of QA findings following self-evaluation involving stakeholders; layers of moderating and supervisory processes, as appropriate, are in place to enable strategic and coordinated analysis of information at appropriate levels

(25) Clear decision-making and follow-up; 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.

(26) A resource base that is sufficient to ensure sustainability, supporting and managing the quality assurance system and programmes of education and training, research and related services offered. The corporate infrastructure, including the financial solvency of the business, supports the sustainability of the teaching and learning environment and underpins the quality assurance system. The College is adequately resourced to undertake and complete the education and training, or research programmes proposed. Continuity planning procedures are developed to understand and anticipate events that could threaten the provider and to ensure that the College remains viable.

(27) Quality assurance procedures for the recruitment, management and development of staff are developed in the context of all the education and training activities and related services provided by the 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.

(28) Provision of required information to QQI in a timely manner.

(29) Ensuring that where its capacity is in any way reduced (for example, reductions in Staff, resources, other education and training aspects; capacity to uphold the conditions and standards of validation or any other significant matters) that QQI and other relevant stakeholders will be notified.

Student Participation in Governance

Hibernia College embeds principles of student engagement([Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision-Making](#))**throughout its governance structure:**

(30) Student representation structures are an essential part of the College's collegial environment.

(31) Appropriate and participative decision-making includes student representation within the academic governance structures and associated committees.

(32) The College seeks student feedback on their experiences, which it uses to inform academic decision-making.

(33) The College communicates with students about the HCQF and the governance and management of the College.

Section 4 - Management and Governance Bodies

Part A - Distributed Governance Responsibilities in Higher Education

(34) Within Higher Education Institutions, good governance means that there is a dispersed, but defined, structure of governance, with one body (the Academic Board) being responsible for academic matters and a separate body (the Board of Directors) being responsible for resources, with an executive head of institution (the Chief Executive Officer) with legal and fiduciary duties under the law*. This is the structure adopted by Hibernia College.

The implementation of structures to address this principle results in the establishment of distinct bodies with different responsibilities for the management of academic and corporate matters.

(35) In practice, academic decisions impact corporate governance and vice versa, and this means that how the Academic Board and the CEO and the Board of Directors interact, communicate and function together is important for effective institutional governance.

(36) Interaction between the Academic Board, the CEO and the Board of Directors is achieved by ensuring that membership of the Academic Board is represented on the Executive Management Team. The CEO also has a particular role in liaising with the Chair of the Academic Board and facilitating reporting to the Chair of the Board of Directors. Whilst respecting the different roles and responsibilities, ways to work together may include minutes and papers of Academic Board meetings being received by the Board of Directors and the use of joint committees for certain tasks.

This system of governance requires a delicate balance of academic autonomy, delegated responsibility and management oversight where academic governance is managed within the remit of the organisation's management structure, and where the corporate management structure does not undertake responsibilities which are appropriate to the Academic Board or a Programme Board.

Part B - Corporate Governance

(37) Hibernia College is a private unlimited company incorporated in Ireland, managed by its Board of Directors and a Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

(38) Corporate governance is distinct from matters of academic governance and relates to, but is not limited to, matters of finance and resources, which are the responsibility of the CEO and the Executive Management Team (EMT). The Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for corporate governance matters.

The Board of Directors

(39) The Board of Directors formally delegates all authority for academic decision-making to the Academic Board. These relationships are further illustrated in [Governance and Management Policy Figure 1](#).

(40) The Board of Directors is the governing authority of Hibernia College. The Board of Directors is responsible for the resources and the general business of the College, as well as setting its strategic direction. Collectively, these elements are sometimes referred to as corporate governance.

(41) The profiles of the members of the Board of Directors are set out in the Hibernia College [Corporate Governance Code](#), which outlines the role and function of the Board of Directors.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

(42) 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 has determined.

(43) 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.

(44) The CEO is accountable to the Board of Directors.

Executive Management Team (EMT)

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

(46) The EMT is also responsible for the operational running of the College, initiating new business activity and partnerships which includes setting, monitoring and revising student recruitment targets.

(47) Additionally, the EMT is responsible for the financial management of all academic initiatives and programmes.

(48) Membership of the EMT comprises:

- a. Chief Financial Officer
- b. Director of IT
- c. Head of Digital Learning
- d. Academic Dean
- e. Registrar

Corporate Management Roles

EMT Members

Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

(49) The CFO is responsible for overseeing all financial planning, financial transactions and financial reporting activities.

(50) The CFO also has responsibility for compliance with statutory fiscal requirements such as audit, accounting

records, tax management and planning. The CFO is accountable to the CEO and also acts as Company Secretary on behalf of the Board of Directors.

Director of IT

(51) 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, licensing and purchasing within the Information Technology Department, and the use of technology to enhance the e-learning quality of College programmes. The Director of IT is accountable to the CEO.

Head of Digital Learning

(52) 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.

(53) The Head of Digital Learning is responsible for managing the Digital Learning Department and providing leadership in all aspects of the development of online content and the use of technology to enhance the e-learning quality of College programmes. The Head of Digital Learning is accountable to the CEO.

Non-EMT Members

Marketing Director

(54) The Marketing Director, in consultation with the CEO, the Registrar, the Head of School and Programme Director(s), as appropriate, is responsible for ethical and effective public communication in relation to all College activities.

Schools and Departments

(55) Hibernia College organises the provision of its programmes within Academic Schools or Departments. A School is established by the EMT, when there is a critical mass of both students and academic activity. A Department is a smaller unit and may exist alongside a School, housing a smaller programme suite or student enrolment in distinct disciplines, or within a large School which has a range of interrelated departments.

Part C - Academic Governance

(56) Academic governance refers to the oversight of academic matters including student enrolment, programme design, development and review including programme curricula, assessment of students, academic standards and academic quality.

Matters of academic governance are the responsibility of the Academic Board, as delegated by the Board of Directors. While the Academic Board is the body with oversight of all academic matters, the Programme Board is the body with direct responsibility for oversight of all programme matters.

Academic Board

(57) The Academic Board is the primary decision-making body for all academic matters in the College. Along with its subcommittees, it makes decisions on the management and governance of academic programmes and the QA infrastructure supporting those programmes.

(58) Its decision-making powers have been delegated to it by the Board of Directors, and it reports to the Board of Directors.

(59) It provides annual reports to the Board of Directors and regular reports to the Executive Management Team.

(60) It is mandatory that detailed terms of reference, and defined membership, exist for the Academic Board and each of its subcommittees.

Subcommittees of the Academic Board

(61) Subcommittees of the Academic Board undertake their functions in line with the terms of reference for each as set out in the Hibernia College Quality Framework.

Programme Board(s)

(62) The committee for each programme, responsible for academic decision-making and design for the programme. QQI's [Programme Validation Manual for Programmes of HET and Apprenticeships \(FET and HET\)](#) (2018) requires that each programme must have an assigned Programme Lead who has academic competence in the programme's discipline area. The Programme Board is chaired by the Head of School/Programme Director.

Board of Examiners

(63) The committee with the responsibility for decision-making for summative assessment decisions, as well as decisions related to the recommendations of Assessors.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLAC)

(64) Guides the Academic Board and the College community in strategy, policy and approach to teaching, learning and assessment for all programmes.

Research Committee

(65) Guides the Academic Board and the College community in strategy, policy and the approach to research activity in the College.

Ethics Committee

(66) 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.

(67) Programme-level ethics is coordinated through the relevant Programme Board.

Appeals Committee, Complaints Committee, or Discipline Committee

(68) Distinct subcommittees convened as required by the Academic Dean or the Registrar as prescribed within the specific procedures.

Other committees

(69) The Academic Board may establish other committees to oversee areas of academic import, including the creation of various bodies to which decision-making powers may be delegated in respect of the management and governance of academic programmes.

Academic Management Roles

Academic Dean

(70) The Academic Dean is responsible for the academic leadership of the College, for the quality of the intellectual dynamic that underpins learning, teaching, assessment and research and for oversight of each of the schools within Hibernia College.

(71) The Academic Dean works closely with both the Programme Directors and the Registrar in the development of academic collaborations, new programme proposals, academic review and accreditation activity.

(72) The Academic Dean, accountable to the CEO is responsible for maintaining a panel of qualified external and internal members for appointment to subcommittees of the Academic Board.

(73) The Academic Dean is accountable to the Board of Directors and is a non-voting member of the Board of Directors.

Registrar

(74) The Registrar is responsible for ensuring the academic integrity of the College, leading the development and overseeing the implementation of the Hibernia College Quality Framework. Responsibilities include College-wide developments such as policy development, strategic collaborations, organisational change and consulting on national policy.

(75) The Registrar is a core contributor to the Academic Board and is the central liaison officer between the College and its various accrediting bodies or collaborating institutions.

(76) The Registrar is responsible for the management of student and programme records, and considers and takes initial action on student management and compliance matters. The Registrar is accountable to the Academic Dean.

Programme Directors

(77) Programme Director report to the Academic Dean. They have responsibility for ensuring the provision of academic leadership and strategic vision, for the quality of the student experience, and for the efficient and effective general management of their programmes. In addition, Programme Directors ensure that the programmes, staff and resources of the area are appropriately managed. Programme Directors are ex-officio members of, and core contributors to, the Academic Board.

Head of Student Affairs

(78) The Head of Student Affairs is responsible for the development, delivery and review of the student welfare and support programme that enhances the student experience. The Student Support Officer reports to the Head of Student Affairs. The Head of Student Affairs also has responsibility for the Graduation Ceremony and Alumni Association. The Head of Student Affairs is accountable to the Academic Dean.

Status and Details

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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"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)