



HCT Learning
Quality Assurance Manual
2020

Governance and Management of Quality

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1 Governance and Management of Quality

The governance structure within HCT Learning ensures there is separation between the commercial and academic sides of the company. HCT Learning is committed to providing a positive, ingrained quality system that is progressive, innovative and in line with an interactive approach to training. We are committed to supporting our learners in their academic experiences by ensuring we remain in line with all QA guidelines and legislative. HCT Learning's governance structure includes the following:

Name:	Frequency:
Board	Meets every six months
Academic Council	Meets every quarter
The Quality and Monitoring Committee	Meets bi-monthly
Programme Development and Review Committee	Meets when required

High standards of governance, quality and integrity of training are provided through the appointment of qualified staff and external persons to the appropriate committees. In order to ensure the quality and standards of academic provisions remain a priority over financial gain, HCT have appointed external personnel to sit on the different committees. These persons ensure that the academic decision-making processes are independent of any commercial or financial interests of the company. We have appointed:

- External Quality Assurance Advisor
- A Financial Advisor
- An External Educational Background Representative
- Human Resources (where required)
- Programme Heads (where required)
- Trainers (where required)
- Clients and Learner Representatives (where required)
- Pastoral Care Adviser (where required)

These governance measures have a responsibility to ensure that HCT Learning remains integral to the quality of its programmes and services whilst remaining financially sustainable. They will be responsible for monitoring and performing risk assessments for new opportunities and to monitor

and report on all activities for amendments and new developments. They shall complete and review findings of self-assessment to ensure that the appropriate risk management structures are in place.

All staff members who are involved in the quality assurance process will be aware of their responsibility to this and will be aware of their part to play in the improvement process. They will be aware of the procedures designed to implement all policies. HCT Learning will ensure the appropriate resources are available to ensure the implementation of the quality assurance procedures.

All external personnel will be required to furnish HCT, on an annual basis, with a signed declaration of integrity, position of interests to establish their full independence and absence of any vested interest.

Minutes are taken and reported on for all committee meetings. These are stored within our shared files and are protected in accordance with Data Protection laws.

1.1 Roles of External Individuals

Below is a brief description of the roles and responsibilities of the external individuals, who will form part of our Board and Academic Council, however the list below is not exhaustive, other descriptions of members can be found in our Staff Recruitment and Selection and Learners Resources and Supports sections.

1.1.1 External Educational Background Representative

The role of this person is to provide advice and recommendation in relation to enhancing our quality assurance practices. This is to facilitate improvement of the learners experience whilst in attendance on our programmes. The person appointed to this role must:

- Be highly qualified both academically and professionally within the provision of training and education.
- Have experience of working within a separate academic educational body in order to provide the centre with contrasting experiences and possible options.
- Have experience of delivering learner material and meeting learning outcomes through a range of assessment methods.

- Have experience of working within the educational framework and working towards achieving overall academic enhancement.
- Have no financial gain.

1.1.2 External Quality Assurance Advisor

The purpose of this role is to provide expert advice on the quality assurance framework and services to aid in the implementation, monitoring, review and evaluation process of the services offered and programmes delivered by the company. This person must:

- Have a minimum of 5 years' experience working with QQIs Quality Assurance Guidelines.
- Have experience in programme development and the validation processes.
- Have a background in providing independent confirmation of fair and consistent learning in accordance with national standards.
- Be highly experienced and familiar within the educational legalisation and QQI policy requirements.
- Be suitably qualified both academically and professionally within the provision of training and education.
- Be capable of providing impartial advice requiring the enhancement of quality assurance mechanisms.
- Act as Chair on the Academic Council meetings.

1.1.3 Financial Adviser

The role of the Financial Advisor is to give advice on the company's financial management ensuring programme costing, profits and budget requirements are sustainable and sufficient in order for programme integrity to be achieved to ensure sustainability. They will ensure that the centres financial stability is maintained throughout our academic practices, underpinning the quality assurance system. They will ensure planning procedures are continuously developed in order to understand and anticipate events which could threaten the company and to ensure that the company remains viable. The financial planning around programmes which initially may not be self-funding will be fully reported on by the Financial Advisor. This position must:

- Have a minimal of 5 years' experience within financial budgeting and analysing financial information.

- Have sound experience of working within the corporate or private sector and be capable of offering managerial advice.
- Be able to safeguard risk management controls of the centres business funds.
- Be suitably qualified within the financial or accountancy provision both professionally and academically.
- Be capable of providing impartial advice requiring the enhancement of quality assurance mechanisms.

1.1.4 Client and Learner Representatives

These roles will be an integral part of our governance system. They are to be listened to and provide feedback on both positive and negative experiences gained and overall represent learners opinions as a result of attending a programme delivered by HCT Learning. They will to help identify areas of improvements to our academic processes and influence important decisions by adding value to the development of our Quality Assurance within programme delivery. This person must:

- Have attended at least one programme delivered by HCT Learning.
- Be a point of contact between learners and HCT Learning.
- Be capable of providing honest and practical feedback on programme enhancements and learners experiences.
- Be confident in communication and negotiation skills.
- Be able to attend meetings in our head office in Kilkenny.
- Provide empirical advice on programme experiences to make a positive contribution for all learners.
- Contribute to the continuous learning process of our review and academic practices.

1.1.5 Pastoral Care Adviser

The role of this person is to provide feedback on support services available to our learners in all personal, social and academic areas. To help in the continuous development of our resources and support systems and to identify improvements to the overall needs of our learners in all academic, emotional and social needs. This person must:

- Have a minimum of two years' experience of delivering training in the field they hold their qualification in.
- Hold a training qualification (minimum Level 6).

- Have acquired a qualification in counselling, coaching or other relevant field of support.
- Have experience in providing confidential advice to learners, providing a listening ear and be capable of suggesting improvements based on experience gained.
- Contribute to the overall improvement of our learner's wellbeing matters.
- Be capable of providing impartial advice regarding the enhancement of quality assurance mechanisms.

1.1.6 Health and Safety Officer

A Health and Safety Officer will, where required, form part of our Board with the purpose of ensuring that the company is meeting its legislative obligations in relation to its responsibilities under health, safety and welfare at work for its staff and learners. This person must:

- Hold a qualification in Environmental Health and Safety or otherwise suitably qualified.
- Hold a training qualification (minimum Level 6).
- Have provided health and safety consultation within the manual and horticultural sector.
- Experienced in delivering training for 2 years.
- Be capable of providing impartial advice regarding the enhancement of quality assurance mechanisms and adhere to legislative requirements.

1.1.7 Human Resources

A member of our outsourced Human Resources management team will be asked where required to attend our meetings to discuss employment law, HR and employee wellbeing services to ensure that we are adhering to our employment legislative requirements. This person will:

- Carry out HR audits, review our documentation and update employee personal documentation to ensure compliance with current legislation and best practices.
- Communicate updates and amendments to legislative requirements.
- Ensure that the centre is in line with best practices for employment legislative.
- Contribute to the overall improvement of our staff wellbeing matters.

HCT Learning has boards and committees who manage these different aspects. These groups work collectively to form a framework which ensures that integrity and quality standards are maintained at HCT. Below describes the specific roles and responsibilities which are associated with each of

these groups. These roles and responsibilities are revised as appropriate and where necessary, training is provided.

1.2 Board, Council and Committees Duties

Below is a brief description of the Board, Council and Committees roles and responsibilities at HCT Learning. Outlined will be the staff members who make up each of these groups.

1.2.1 Board

The purpose of the Board is to determine the company's strategic plans. The Board will meet every six months or more frequently if necessary. Meetings will be held at HCT Learning's main office, unless unforeseen circumstances warrant otherwise. Arrangements for the Board meetings will be arranged at the beginning of each year, and agendas will be circulated from the Chair 4 weeks before the meeting in order to allow for appropriate planning and preparation. The role of the Board is to:

- Determine the company's strategic plans and monitor them to ensure they are in line with the company's agreed scope.
- Ensure that our quality assurance practices and procedures are being implemented throughout the company.
- Define and facilitate within the company a culture of excellence.
- Oversee the management structure of the centre, appointing new positions if required, ensuring clear management, monitoring and reporting structure are in place for academic and company operations which adhere to legislative and QQI policy requirements.
- Ensure that frameworks are in place in order to achieve academic development and amendments.
- Develop clear academic cultures and decision-making practices to ensure information is open, transparent and consistent through all departments within the company.
- Perform and review company risk registers every year to identify possible risks for consideration and implement control measures when required.
- Approve the appointment of new members to the Academic Council and identify their roles and responsibilities.
- Ensure that the Academic Council is operating effectively and is adequately resourced.
- Review the company's positions and set budget allocation.

- Set and review staff salaries and allocate timeframes for the completion for staff appraisals.
- Complete cost analysis of programme delivery and set programme pricing, minimum numbers of learners and trainers day rate ensuring it's in line with the Boards agreed financial provisions.
- Govern legislative obligations, requirements and reviews including Data Protection, freedom of information, human resources, insurance, health and safety and end of year accounts.
- Examine concerns presented by the Academic Council and set action plans and timeframes.
- Revise the company's academic capacity if required due to changes in market.
- Ensure that all councils and committees understand their responsibilities under the quality assurances practices agreed with QQI.
- Review and plan of the ongoing development of MyHCT to ensure our quality provisions are integrated into our daily operational activities.
- Establish the timeframes within which each council/committee are to meet and ensure that the agreed frequency of meetings are met.
- Identify pathways for learners to promote retention for learner progression.
- Setting clear agendas for meetings to ensure they are worthwhile.
- Approve new programmes proposed for development ensuring the programme is relevant and feasible to deliver.
- Complete a cost analysis and Statement of Programme Needs report for new potential programmes.
- Approve new resources required in order to improve programme delivery and assessment.
- Commission and invite experts to address the Board on a need to be basis on matters of strategic importance e.g. equality, Data Protection, legal considerations etc.
- Produce a report of meeting.

The Board consists of:

- Managing Director/Chair
- Financial Adviser
- External Quality Assurance Advisor
- External Educational Background Representative

When required:

- Human Resources
- Health and Safety Officer

1.2.2 Academic Council

The role of the Academic Council is primarily to make academic regulations at HCT Learning. They are tasked with ensuring that policies relating to learning remain compliant with HCT's mission and ethos. The council will meet every quarter or outside of published schedule on an impromptu basis. Meetings will be held at HCT Learning's main office, unless unforeseen circumstances warrant otherwise. Arrangements for the Academic Council meetings will be arranged at the beginning of each year, and agendas will be circulated from the Chair 4 weeks before the meeting in order to allow for appropriate planning and preparation. The role of the council is to:

- Follow the agenda set and ensure that the required preparation is facilitated for meeting.
- Approve and where required, further develop and amended academic and company procedures.
- Review and approve risk registers, feasibility and compatibility studies and where required adapt to ensure all aspects have been considered of new programme opportunities.
- Complete a Statement of Programme Design for new potential programmes.
- Set criteria for the Programme Development and Review Committee.
- Set Criteria for the Peer Reviewer for independent review of programmes as part of programme development.
- Ensure that frameworks are implemented to demonstrate ongoing monitoring, review and update of our quality assurance practices and policies to promote academic enhancements.
- Confirm timeframes and activities required for self-evaluation.
- Select criteria and approve an External Independent Evaluator for self-evaluation.
- Take part in formal annual monitoring and generation of the report.
- Set programme review schedule, people involved and tasks required in order to complete the review.
- Review where required protocols for RPL and review applications.
- Review all formal complaints made regarding programme delivery and implement actions and timelines required in order to complete a full examination. Advice will be sought from the Academic Council for unresolved complaints.
- Review feedback summaries on programme planning, delivery and assessment completed by learners, clients and trainers, prepare timelines for appropriate programme enhancements where downfalls are identified by the Red Flag system.

- Review all certification reports generated from the submission cycle and approve amendments where identified based on recommendations received from the External Authenticator and the Quality and Monitoring Committee.
- Commission research e.g. longitudinal studies deemed to be capable of delivering significant learning to the organisation.
- Consider the need for attendance of Learner/Client representatives and a Pastoral Care Advisor at the next Academic Council Meeting.
- Produce a report of findings to be reported on at the next Board meeting.
- Set criteria for selection of External Authenticators.
- Approve/Review list of EAs – where needed will use a recruitment agency.

Academic Council Members:

- Chair/External Quality Assurance Advisor
- External Educational Background Representative
- Training Manager
- QQI Programme Evaluator
- QQI Assessment Verifier
- Programme Head/Representative

When required:

- Learner Representatives
- Client Representatives
- Pastoral Care Adviser

1.2.3 Chair – Academic Council

A chair will be appointed/reviewed on a 2-yearly basis. The chair will be an External Quality Assurance Advisor. They will Chair the Academic Council meetings and report on findings at the Board meeting. The purpose of the chair will be to:

- Undertake the necessary preparation, induction and training to all members prior to meeting commencement.
- Prepare and circulate the agenda to required attendees.
- Keep the meeting on track based on the agenda agreed to.
- Promote a culture of openness and honesty.
- Allow each member to have a chance to speak without interruptions.

- Work towards a consensus within the Board and where required take votes from members in order to reach an agreement. All members will be required to accept the majority decision.
- Take minutes during the meeting and produce formal meeting minutes within 2 weeks after the meeting end.
- Provide advice and make their own recommendations on the subject being discussed.

1.2.4 The Quality and Monitoring Committee

This committee is responsible for the operational administration of the agreed quality assurance improvement measures. They will ensure the reporting mechanisms developed are being implemented and completed. This committee will meet bi-monthly or outside of published schedule on an impromptu basis. Meetings will be held at HCT Learnings main office, unless unforeseen circumstances warrant otherwise. Arrangements for the Quality and Monitoring Committee meetings will be arranged at the beginning of each year, and agendas will be circulated from the Chair 4 weeks before the meeting in order to allow for appropriate planning and preparation. The full role of the committee is to:

- Preparation of information required to be presented to the Academic Council.
- New programme needs identification.
- Complete the Feasibility and Compatibility studies and Risk Register.
- Implement academic enhancements approved by the Academic Council.
- Carry out ongoing monitoring on quality and standards procedures, prepare amendments to procedures and policies and updates where required for Academic Council consideration and approval.
- Implement new programmes that have been designed, developed and approved from QQI for programme delivery.
- Carry out internal review stage of our self-evaluation within the agreed timeframes specified from the Academic Council.
- Ascertain and make contact with an External Independent Evaluator for self-evaluation once approved from the Academic Council based on agreed criteria.
- Identify new resources required in order to improve programme delivery and assessment.
- Prepare required reports from annual monitoring which is completed by the Academic Council.

- Inputting feedback received onto MyHCT and summarise feedback received from learners, clients and trainers based on programme planning, delivery and assessment.
- Implement appropriate actions agreed for programme enhancements identified from programme feedback.
- Check monitoring of procedure/policy records undertaken since last meeting.
- Schedule routine monitoring of procedures/policies for the forthcoming period.
- Make recommendations for amendments to procedures/policies in light of red flags, monitoring, landscape changes in guidelines/legislation.
- Monitor learners admission, access and entry requirements onto our programmes.
- Prepare for approval the assessment plan for the Academic Council.
- Establish Assessors/Reviewers for review of assessments.
- Appoint External Authenticators for the submission cycle.
- Decide on programmes that will be going forward for External Authentication.
- Examine the completed External Authenticator Report and prepare actions required from recommendations received.
- Approve final results for submission to QQI for certification.
- Ensure that learner records are accurate and are stored securely within the agreed timeframe established and that they are destroyed six months after the certification period.
- Liaise with QQI regarding updates or amendments.
- Arrange and complete the Results Approval Panel Report for the submission cycle.
- Grant reasonable requests of accommodation.
- Approve accuracy prior to publication both hard and soft copy for information and programme material.
- Administer and process learners appeals, extension and repeat requests and provide feedback to the Academic Council.
- Develop a clear monitoring and report structure for centre practices, ensuring that they are in line with QQI regulations *Provider Monitoring Policy & Procedures 2010*.
- Implement academic management and administrative controls nationwide.
- Prepare a list of red flags for the Academic Council.

The Quality and Monitoring Committee Members:

- Training Manager
- QQI Programme Evaluator

- QQI Assessment Verifier/Chair
- Administrator
- Programme Heads
- Pedagogical Reviewer
- Staff Members

1.2.5 Programme Development and Review Committee

This committee will meet when it has been recommended by the Academic Council that a new programme has been identified as relevant and feasible to our portfolio of programmes delivered. They will also meet once an existing programme is identified as needing to be reviewed. They will be tasked with the design and development of the new programmes. The Chair for this will be the QQI Programme Evaluator who will be appropriately qualified and experienced in further education and training to ensure a focus is placed on pedagogical issues. Meetings will be held at HCT Learnings main office, unless unforeseen circumstances warrant otherwise. Arrangements for the Programme Development and Review Committee meetings will be arranged after the Academic Council has approved programme development upon review, and agendas will be circulated from the Chair two weeks before the meeting in order to allow for appropriate planning and preparation. The role of this committee is to:

- Review reports generated that have led to a programme being identified for review, this could include feedback, red flags, external authenticator recommendations, consider referrals from the Academic Council and the Quality and Monitoring Committee.
- Take part in new programme development by participation in the validation process.
- Where required, perform research on programme related matters in order to strengthen programme content.
- Make recommendations to the Quality and Monitoring Committee regarding programmes aims, objectives, duration and number of learners.
- Complete new programme registration template for new/review of identified proposed programmes.
- Complete lesson plans ensuring all learning outcomes identified in the component specification are included.
- Develop or change comprehensive documents which set out assessment requirements in line with QQIs component specification, ensuring that learning outcomes identified are mapped.

- Devise assessment briefs and or assessment booklets for learners completion.
- Develop clear marking criteria for assessments ensuring transparency of assessments are met and that they are fair and consistent between trainer delivery. This is to include a marking grid.
- In case of consistent inconsistency or trainers marking they will review the programme having previously issued a marking grid.
- Facilitate Group Assessors Meeting where inconsistency in marking remains.
- Establish exam questions based on a devised time allocation structure guide explained in our Assessment of Learners section and complete exam sample answers for assessment of learners.
- Devise a programme pack as part of learners support for the programme, making sure that all relevant and required information is included.
- Identify resources required in order for the successful completion of the programme.
- Clarify facility requirements for programme delivery for both classroom and practical elements of the programme.
- Take part in programme improvements process by participating in the full evaluation of programme reviews.
- Revise updates to lesson plans with updated content based on experience of delivering the programme.
- Alter marking criteria and marking sheets, ensuring that marks allocated are clear and easy to follow.
- Update assessment brief and or assessment booklets where required with improvements or more appropriate means of meeting learning outcomes.
- Check all assessment material to ensure it is clear, precise and level/literacy appropriate for the programme being delivered.
- Update content in programme pack if required as part of programme review procedures.
- Review the materials list and were required update or request extra materials or resources required for purchase.
- Alter where identified, updates to facility requirements in order to improve programme enhancement.
- Provide feedback and recommendations to the Academic Council in order to improve practices and procedures in relation to programme planning, delivery, assessment and review.

- Devise programme marketing material in line with approved Academic Council criteria.
- To vet and keep under constant review the user friendliness of all documentation regarding literacy skills.

Programme Development and Review Committee Members:

- QQI Programme Evaluator/Chair
- QQI Assessment Verifier
- Training Manager
- Administrator
- Programme Heads
- Trainers within the field developing or reviewing
- Peer Reviewer
- Pedagogical Reviewer

Where Required:

- Administrative Staff
- Class Representatives

Where a situation arises where a member of our Board, council or committee is unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances they must notify the Chair immediately. Where we can, we will try and rearrange the meeting within 3 weeks of the original date scheduled. Where the situation arises that the meeting can't be rescheduled, absences will be recorded in the minutes. Where a situation arises where a member fails to attend 70% of required meetings within a 2-year period their seat shall automatically cease.

1.2.6 Organisational Structure

