ICSE LEARNER HANDBOOK

'We Change Lives'
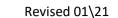
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Learner Handbook

Welcome to the International Centre for Security Excellence (ICSE) Learner Handbook

This handbook is designed to provide you, the learner, with information and details on ICSE policies and procedures. It will help you make the most of the programme you are undertaking with ICSE.

The handbook is part of our ongoing commitment to delivering a quality training experience to our learners. We hope you will find it a useful resource as you progress through your training experience with us.

If you are unsure about anything, don't hesitate to contact our head office on 091 534918 or to speak with your trainer. Our staff will always be happy to receive your call or to assist you with any aspect of your training experience.

ICSE is committed to providing learners with:

- Accessible, quality training programmes

- A learning environment and resources that support and stimulate learners to realise their full potential

- Accurate information about programmes and expectations

- Assessment of learning that is fair, valid and timely

- A skilled, qualified and supportive staff that will treat all learners with dignity and respect and be responsive to all learners' needs.

- A fair and consistent application of all rules and regulations

- A healthy and safe environment that promotes a positive learning experience.

We request that participants on our courses familiarise themselves with the content in this handbook.

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Mark Toner

Managing Director, ICSE

About ICSE

International Centre for Security Excellence (ICSE) is a QQI-accredited training provider, originally established in 2007 to meet the emerging needs of training in the private security sector. Our managing director, Mark Toner, set up ICSE after leaving his role as a national training manager at an international security provider. ICSE has since developed into Ireland's leading provider of security training programmes, as well as diversifying into other service industries in order to provide training solutions that meet our clients' needs.

Our courses are developed for a wide range of learners. They combine programmes open to the public with programmes designed for our private client base. ICSE's success is built on our commitment to consistent improvement in education and training, with a team of skilled and committed staff supported by an effective and experienced management team.

Company history and development

ICSE is Ireland's premier security and safety training organisation, having trained thousands of participants since its inception in 2007. The company comprises security and training professionals who are dedicated to raising the quality of training in Ireland. We seek to raise training standards in our sectors by giving our clients and participants a cost-effective and high-quality training experience.

We deliver training that is realistic, practical, and based on industry best practice. This ensures that our learners not only attain the QQI award they need but are equipped with the real-world skills that enable them to work immediately at their chosen level in industry.

To date, we have trained with over 10,000 professionals in programmes such as security, health and safety, and conflict management. This number rises every week, with many past students returning to complete additional courses, and clients requesting additional training programmes. We have also delivered training solutions to staff in other frontline sectors:

- County councils
- Railway stations
- Drug rehabilitation centres
- Homeless and asylum centres

- Catering companies
- Job clubs and employment services
- Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority
- Second- and third-level institution faculties, services, and student unions
- Light rail transport companies
- Outdoor education and activity centres
- Parking companies
- Housing organisations
- Healthcare and hospital staff
- Prison officers
- Security companies
- Pubs, nightclubs, hostels, and hotels
- Community groups
- Youth groups.

ICSE Company Charter

ICSE will make every effort to:

- offer a high standard of training from appropriately qualified tutors, whose work is reviewed and supported
- ensure courses are delivered on time and in training facilities that are well equipped within our remit
- assess your learning needs to plan a programme to meet your learning goals
- publish and make available up-to-date, accurate information on all of our courses, including home study material
- offer appropriate information, guidance, and advice on your work and progress before, during, and after your course
- promote a culture against any discriminatory practice, outlined by published policies and procedures
- deal with enquiries promptly, courteously, and accurately, whether by letter, email, phone, or in person.

Learner Charter

We expect learners to:

1. Respect the rights of all ICSE personnel and participants to be able to work in a cooperative manner and treat everyone with respect, regardless of differences in culture, disability, learning difficulties, medical conditions, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, or social class.

2. Play an active part in challenging discriminatory behaviour by:

3. Refusing to take part in any unacceptable activity that degrades others, such as bullying, harassment, or victimisation in any form and on any grounds, whether it relates to learners or staff. Any such behaviour will not be tolerated.

4. Behaving in a way that respects the needs of others to learn, teach, and work.

5. Comply with health and safety regulations by:

    5.1. Behaving in a way that does not put yourself or others in danger.

    5.2. Not attending programmes when under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

    5.3. Informing your tutor of any adverse impact on your behaviour resulting from prescribed medication.

6. Maintain a clean and tidy learning environment

7. Make every effort to be on time for a course and bring all the necessary equipment and documentation as directed.

8. Keep ICSE informed of any changes in your personal details, e.g., address, telephone number, etc.

9. Help us improve our service by giving us feedback and completing evaluation forms.

Booking terms and conditions

When booking any ICSE programme, you agree to the ICSE terms and conditions. These are set out below should you need to refer to them.

1. All bookings are made with **International Centre for Security Excellence** (ICSE), Registered Company Number 419712 (hereinafter referred to as The Company), whose registered office is 2nd Floor, 7 Saint Francis Street, Galway. A participant, candidate or learner is anyone scheduled to complete a training programme with ICSE.

2. The Company requires the course value to be paid in full to secure a place on any given course. You can pay by electronic money transfer, or by credit card or debit card via our website.

3. Once payment has been verified, you will receive confirmation of booking and course joining instructions via email.

4. Notice of cancellation must be given in writing by email (to info@securityexcellence.net) at least 24 hours before the scheduled start time for a short programme (one with a scheduled duration of six days or less).

5. We accept that circumstances sometimes happen beyond your control, and every effort will be made to relocate you onto another course where possible once you have given sufficient notice. Should you miss the second scheduled date, the course payment is forfeited to The Company.

6. Should you cancel on a long course (one with a scheduled duration of seven days or more), the following scale of charges will apply:

> (i) If you cancel 30 days or more before course starts: 10% of total course cost will be charged.

> (ii) 14–29 days before course starts: 50% of total course cost will be charged.

> (iii) Less than 14 days before course starts: 100% of total course cost will be charged.

Similar terms are adopted throughout the training industry and cover the costs of advance payments made by The Company.

7. We reserve the right to postpone or cancel any course if there are insufficient numbers. If the course you have booked is postponed or cancelled, you will be given the opportunity to transfer to another suitable date or location at no extra charge. We will make a full refund if other course dates or locations are unsuitable.

8. The Company or any of its representatives will not be held responsible for any loss incurred by the postponement or cancellation of any of its programmes.

9. It may be necessary to move your booking to another course so that our courses have an optimum number of students according to the instructor–student ratios stipulated for the

courses to be undertaken. You will not be charged for such a transfer instigated by us.

10. The instructing ratios for any course may be varied at the discretion of the Managing Director to allow for circumstances such as staff absence or illness.

11. Circumstances may arise where we are forced to alter dates, duration, or venue location before a course starts. We will try to inform you of any such changes as soon as we know of them.

12. Emergency circumstances may arise where, through no fault of your own, you have to leave a course after completing one or more days. In such circumstances you must cycle onto the next available course in that location and complete your training with this new class. The Company office will contact you with the new dates that you must attend to complete your training. You will not be required to attend training again for the days you have already completed. However, you must complete training on the very next available dates offered by The Company. Due to data protection responsibilities, The Company cannot hold your incomplete paperwork. Should you fail to attend these new dates, your fee is forfeited to The Company.

13. Should you leave a course at any stage after session 3, for whatever reason, you will not be entitled to any refund unless agreed by a Director of The Company.

14. You must always act with restraint and in accordance with instructors' requests.

15. Where English is not your first language, you are required to read, comprehend, and accept the ICSE Guidelines for English Language Proficiency, which can be found in the resources section of our website and later in this handbook. The minimum allowed standard for classroom-based security training programmes is B1 or intermediate-level English in reading, writing and speaking. The minimum for online training delivered through a virtual classroom is B2 English in reading, writing and speaking.

16. Some of our programmes require you to provide evidence of identity, address, Eircode, passport-sized photograph, PPSN, funding forms or other documents. You will be notified in advance of this requirement. Failure to supply the required items will result in you being prevented from joining the training programme.

17. As a participant on ICSE programmes, you permit ICSE to make any enquiry deemed necessary to verify the information you have supplied. You also permit ICSE to disclose and share any relevant information to relevant statutory bodies, for example, the Private Security Authority, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), or the Department of Education. You accept that ICSE reserves the right to withdraw approval of results in the event of any false or misleading statements that you made or information or documentation that you submitted. Other relevant statutory bodies may also be supplied with this information.

18. You accept that as part of your programme of learning, ICSE is required to collect and store your sensitive personal data in the form of pictures, identity documents, video and audio data for the purpose of verification, assessment and certification.

19. You must complete any pre-course registration, home study or pre-course requirements issued to you by ICSE in advance of the first training module.

20. Some online courses require you to attend an interview. This interview is an integral part of the training programme. If you do not attend your scheduled interview without prior notice, you forfeit your place on the course. You are permitted to reschedule an interview date with 48 hours' prior notice in writing (info@securityexcellence.net), in which case you are automatically moved on to the next available training course starting after the rescheduled interview.

21. For online courses with scheduled assessments, you are provided with the time and date of your assessment at least 7 days in advance. Assessment times or dates can only be changed if you request this in writing shortly after receiving the assessment schedule. This request must be emailed to martha@icse.ie. Any change to the schedule for assessment is only confirmed for you after you receive an email confirmation from the same email address. We will always try to assist you with a change to your assessment schedule, but it is not always possible.

22. Should you breach our Academic Integrity guidelines or attempt to plagiarise, cheat or in any way bring into disrepute our organisation or the integrity of our awarding bodies, you shall be removed from the training programme, not permitted to complete your assessments and not entitled to a refund. All relevant information on you and the

misconduct will be made available to relevant stakeholders, including QQI and the Private Security Authority where appropriate.

23. The use of any photographic, audio or video recording equipment by you during a programme is strictly prohibited. This includes the recording of any tutor, learner, activity or ICSE proprietary material.

24. All course notes, study materials, manuals and assessment materials are the commercial and intellectual property of ICSE and are supplied to you for reference and study use only. Any copying, sharing, lending or selling of any such items is strictly prohibited.

25. The Company or any of its representatives will not be held responsible for any illness, injury or harm sustained on our courses, nor will they be liable for any uninsured loss or damage of personal property.

26. The health and safety of our staff and learners are of paramount importance. Should you present on a course with an illness or injury, The Company may request you to leave the course and return later when you are better. In such circumstances The Company will liaise with you to schedule a return time and location that suits you, with no additional training fee.

27. The Company's 'Money Back Guarantee' as advertised on the website www.securityexcellence.net operates under the following circumstances:

  (i) If for any reason you are unhappy with the standard of training, tutor behaviour, programme standards or venue at any time in the first three days of training, The Company will offer you a full refund of all training fees.

  (ii) You must notify the tutor of your intention to leave the programme before the end of the third day of training. Notifications given to the tutor or the office after this time will not form part of the guarantee.

  (iii) The Company will retain all your training records and assessments undertaken prior to the time of leaving.

  (iv) The payment will only be refunded in the same method of purchase as the original sale, and in the case of credit card purchases onto the same card used to purchase the product.

(v) Should you decide to return to The Company at a later date to undertake the training, you are required to complete all training days associated with the new course.

(vi) Note that while ICSE shall process the refund payment immediately, it may take several days for the funds to reach the purchaser's card.

28. These booking conditions may only be waived in special circumstances, and in writing, by a Director of The Company.

29. The terms and conditions of all agreements made with The Company shall be subject to, and governed by, Irish law.

30. When making your booking, it is implied and accepted that you have read and understood all these booking conditions and agree to abide by them.

Equality Policy

ICSE seeks to ensure that the service provided:

- Is free from discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment or victimisation.
- Accommodates diversity across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation and meets needs that are specific to particular groups of customers.
- Makes reasonable accommodation for customers with disabilities.
- Seeks to benefit all customers from across the nine grounds by promoting equality and implementing positive action where necessary.
- ICSE will not tolerate discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment or victimisation of customers by employees or non-employees, such as other customers or business contacts. Such behaviour may lead to disciplinary action (in the case of employees) and to other sanctions such as suspension of contracts, exclusion from premises or expulsion from courses (in case of non-employees).

Ethos of learning

Our learners come from a diverse range of educational, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. ICSE seeks to encourage lifelong learning, as many of its learners are returning to education after a long time, with a wide range of work and life experiences which can be

used to enrich the overall teaching and learning. The broad range of experiences and life skills brought to the programme by our learners are embraced and used to enhance the learning experience of all learners. We promote group activities during programmes and provide space and time during breaks for learners to interact positively as a group and learn from each other.

ICSE creates a community of learning in our programmes which values and fosters personal and professional development for both learners and staff. We encourage critical evaluations of a learner's own performance, as well as learning from the performance of others during the programme. We focus on what learners do in their studies and how they interact with the teaching and learning resources provided to them. We welcome and accommodate learners with a variety of learning styles on all our programmes.

Safety Policy

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 imposes a statutory duty on employers to ensure the health and safety of their employees while at work. This duty extends to others who may be affected by that work. Learners should be aware that they also have a duty under the Act to help ICSE maintain a safe place to pursue their course and a specific legal duty not to interfere with anything that may compromise safety management in ICSE or any of our training centres or locations where training is being delivered. Learners also have a duty of care to ensure that they have a safe study environment when undertaking a virtual learning programme.

Health and safety affects everyone. Any lapse of care and attention can cause injuries and damage property. ICSE will treat any act that may compromise the management of health and safety as a serious offence that may be subject to disciplinary action, exclusion from premises or expulsion from courses.

Learners are responsible for the safe provision and operation of all equipment used in virtual learning programmes.

Learner Admissions

ICSE will only allow you onto programmes when we can be satisfied that you have the ability to succeed in such a programme. Where this is not possible, we may suggest other areas in which you may wish to educate yourself. To ensure that the learners we enrol are suitable for the programme, we will devise clear entry requirements and make them available to you prior to enrolling on any programme.

Entry requirements to all programmes are set out clearly in the fact sheets on the ICSE website. The fact sheets form the basis for all ICSE marketing and promotional activity and make the entry requirements clear to prospective learners. All learners admitted to programmes undertake the 'Learner's journey', outlined in Appendix 2, which ensures you are on a programme suitable to your ability and needs. Learner admission requirements will be developed by reference to a clear and consistent framework for all learners, based on:

- QQI award specification

- NFQ award level and required competencies

- course delivery method and media

- learners' existing competencies and suitability for the course (e.g., English language, IT skills, and recognition of prior learning).

If you are unsuccessful in gaining admission to an ICSE programme, you are informed in writing of the reasons for this and of the appeals process. You are also informed of alternative programmes if this is applicable. Where recognition of previous certification is required to access a programme, proof of this certification is retained on your file.

Procedures are in place for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) for access to all ICSE programmes. RPL requests are handled on a case-by-case basis by completing an RPL assessment with the Quality Assurance and Programme Development department. This includes recognition of:

- QQI awards

- non-QQI awards, including matching programme learning outcomes against previously completed qualifications and in some cases against previous life and work experience.

English language guidelines

ICSE has many learners whose first language may not be English. This is largely due to the nature and scope of delivery that we undertake. While we encourage learners of all nationalities and languages, we balance this against the English-language standards that are required for admission to the programme.

For classroom programmes at level 4, we require you to have B1 English. For blended learning programmes and our level 6 programmes, we require you to have B2 English. This means that you must be able to speak, read and write at the required level.

We have produced the guidelines below for learners and tutors. They are available to you on our website prior to booking any programme and must be agreed to in order to proceed.

1. Based on our experience, ICSE recommend that you have, as a minimum, a B1 level of English. If you are unsure of your current level, you can take a free test on a website such as: www.examenglish.com/leveltest/index.php

2. If, after undertaking this test, you believe your English is at a suitable level for you to attend, then you are entitled to book a place. However, ICSE may require proof of this level at a pre-course interview.

3. ICSE will accept the opinion of a tutor regarding your ability to effectively communicate in English to the standard required to pass the assessments.

4. If ICSE feel that your level of English comprehension is not good enough to pass the training programme, you will be informed by your tutor at the pre-course interview stage and will be removed from the programme.

5. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the right level of English before attending. Once you attend a training programme, you will not be refunded payment if your level of English is not at the required standard.

6. If you attend our programmes and your level of English does not meet the required standard, you will not be permitted to sit the course. You will be allowed to return and attend the course again free of charge at a later date when your level of English is at the required level.

7. B1 is the minimum level required. Holding a minimum of B1 is no guarantee that you will pass the programme. The higher your levels of comprehension, the greater potential you have to succeed.

8. If you are unhappy with your tutor's decision about your level of English comprehension, you can appeal the decision to the Managing Director of ICSE by contacting the office on 091 534918.

The English language guidelines above have been independently assessed as being within level B1. All learners are encouraged to test their English before booking a programme. The test is free and available via our website and via the sales emails sent to learners in advance.

Pre-course interview

You are required to attend a virtual pre-course interview before beginning a programme. The interview takes place before every programme and is led by the tutor. It is in a group setting and takes approximately 1–1.5 hours. On the pre-course interview, the tutor covers:

1. Introduction to the programme, its objectives, and assessments
2. Introduction to the tutor
3. Learner introduction exercise with the group to generate interaction and participation
4. Housekeeping, responsibilities and learner behaviours
5. Learner supports
6. Language requirements
7. Documents requirements
8. Technology requirements.

If the tutor has concerns about language levels, individual learners are invited to an individual meeting to check that they have a B1/B2 language certificate or to undertake a language assessment with a tutor. Learners who complete this assessment can progress to the programme. Learners who do not meet the requirements are referred to the Head of Centre to discuss their options for returning to the programme at a later date.

Course registration

Upon successful completion of a pre-course interview, you will be sent a link to an online form. You need to submit all the personal details required to be input for certification for a QQI programme. These details include:

- PPS number
- Date of birth
- Address (to post the certificate)
- Proof of identity
- Proof of address.

You will also be asked to read and agree to the ICSE's data protection policy and guidelines (printed in the online form) and consent to ICSE storing and processing your data for certification purposes.

Data protection

ICSE knows the importance of its responsibility under the Data Protection Act 2018. In our capacity as a data controller and a data processor, we have put in place robust control measures to ensure that all personal data that we come in contact with is treated in keeping with the Data Protection Commissioner's guidelines and principles.

Types of personal data

Due to the nature of the training and education industry, we naturally require some pieces of personal data from learners, employees, and prospective learners for the purposes of employment, access, and assessment. This information may include:

- personal information such as names, addresses, and dates of birth
- PPS numbers
- photo ID
- email addresses
- video or audio recordings
- financial information such as funding methods.

Fair obtaining of data

ICSE at all times obtains data in a fair and transparent way. We gather data in a number of ways from our learners. In the first instance we gather basic personal data over the phone from all prospective learners, including their name, telephone number, and email address, in order to send them essential information about the programme they are enquiring about. We inform every learner of the purpose of this information at the time of gathering it.

The main source of personal data we obtain from learners is our online course registration page, which every learner completes before beginning an ICSE programme. The registration form contains personal data such as the learner's name, address, date of birth, PPS number (QQI-accredited programmes only), and email address. We also ask the learner to provide

proof of identification as part of our risk-management procedures. Learners are advised on the registration sheet of:

- the name of the entity collecting the data
- the reason we obtain the data
- the authorised bodies to whom we may have to disclose the data in certain circumstances
- the existence of the right of access to their personal data
- the contact details for requesting access to data.

Video and audio data

As part of the assessment criteria for many of our programmes, we ask learners to demonstrate skills and complete online examinations. These demonstrations require learners to show skills required to achieve programme certification and are scored and graded by the programme tutor. As part of our quality control over assessment, we require these skills demonstrations to be recorded in video or audio format as evidence of achievement.

Learners are told before attending any programme where video evidence is recorded. They are also told the reason we obtain the evidence and process the data. All video and audio data is stored securely on a private cloud service with restricted access.

Processing of data

We ensure that all of our data processing is done for a legal and operational reason. The personal data of our learners is processed only for reasons required to achieve certification.

Postponing a course

If you decide to postpone a course, we try to offer you a range of options to ensure you are able to complete your preferred programme in a reasonable timeframe. These options may include:

- Returning to complete the programme on the newly arranged date.
- Returning on a later programme that suits you.
- Accommodating you on a similar programme in a different location.

The decision to postpone a programme lies with the Managing Director and is taken in consultation with the Business Manager. When a course is postponed, the process is as follows:

- The decision to postpone is taken no less than 2 days before the proposed start date of the programme.
- The administration team contacts each learner by telephone and offers them the alternatives. Any learner who is not initially reached on the phone receives a voicemail.
- Once all learners have been contacted, the administration team emails each learner with confirmation of the postponement and the alternatives discussed. Learners are asked to confirm by reply to the email which alternative they wish to avail of.
- Learners also receive a text message confirming postponement.
- Learners who are unhappy with the postponement can speak to the Managing Director upon request.
- Alternative arrangements for each learner are updated in the CMS, and new joining instructions are issued to the learners.

Joining instructions

For classroom programmes, you are sent joining instructions via email the day before the programme. These include:

- Dates and times of the programme
- Location of the venue
- Transport and parking arrangements
- Any materials or documents you are required to bring to the programme.

For programmes delivered in our virtual classroom, you will be sent our online programme joining instructions with your Home Study Pack.

Netiquette

We expect learners on a virtual programme to behave with the same respect for learners and tutors as on a classroom programme. We set out the following requirements to ensure that you and your fellow learners have the best experience possible:

1. You must be connected to a good Wi-Fi source for the duration of the course.

2. Use headphones while on the webinar to improve the sound quality and to limit disruption to others in your workspace. We recommend wired headphones. You can use Bluetooth headphones during the programme, but they CANNOT be used during assessment.

3. At the start of the programme, your tutor will take you through the functionality of Zoom and the features you can use. We expect you to participate in the programme and the group activities for the duration of the sessions.

4. You must leave your camera on for the duration of the session, apart from refreshment breaks.

5. When you connect to the session, your tutor will have both your camera and your microphone turned on. You may click to connect your audio in the bottom right corner of your screen.

6. You can check to see that your audio and microphone are working correctly before starting the meeting (see next section).

Testing your audio

When joining a meeting, it is best to ensure that your equipment is working properly. Your audio can come through via the computer audio from your device's microphone and speaker. When you first join the meeting, make sure you select Join Audio by computer.

To test the computer audio:

- Click on the arrow next to the mute icon to open the Audio options.
- Select Test Computer Audio.
- Click on Test Speaker to test your speakers (whether external or via headset)
- Click on Test Mic to test your microphone (whether external or via headset).
- Once you have completed the testing, close the window.

Waiting rooms

When you log into the course, you will be in a 'waiting room' – a holding area where the tutor can verify attendees and admit them to the webinar. Your tutor will admit people one at a time, and you will be waiting no longer than a minute.

During the course

During the webinar, you can communicate with the tutor and other participants in a number of ways:

1. Turn on your microphone and speak whenever you wish. This is done by clicking the mute/unmute microphone icon in the bottom left of your screen.

2. Type a message or question in the chat box. The chat box icon is located on the bottom toolbar. Click on the icon and the chat box will appear on the right-hand side of your screen. You can type your message there.

3. During the webinar the tutor may pose some polls, where you vote on the correct or your favourite answer. If presented with a poll, click on your preferred answer and press submit.

4. If you need to leave the session at any point, or when leaving at the end, use the 'Leave meeting' icon on the bottom right. You can rejoin at any time using your original method of joining.

5. Please do not shout, or speak over the tutor or other learners. If you wish to say something, wait for the other speaker to finish.

6. You should have a clear and clean study space to operate in, with appropriate lighting, heating and ventilation. We recommend using a chair and desk, not sitting in a bed.

7. There will be a 5–10-minute refreshment break every hour for the duration of the programme. Please ensure that you return on time.

Failure to attend

ICSE retains an attendance sheet for every programme. The administration team compares actual attendance to registered attendees, and identifies learners who have not attended the programme. The team contacts these learners by telephone and offers them one more opportunity to attend a later programme.

If a learner does not avail of this opportunity, or fails to attend a second programme, then their place is forfeit. Reasonable accommodation may be extended to learners in extenuating circumstances. This is on a case-by-case basis and in agreement with the Head of Centre.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

On 6 November 2012, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established as a new integrated agency replacing FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council), HETAC (Higher Education and Training Awards Council) and the NQAI (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland) and incorporating the functions of the Irish Universities Quality Board.

QQI is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training (including English language provision) and validates programmes and makes awards for certain providers in these sectors. QQI is also responsible for the maintenance, development and review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Since its establishment, QQI has been progressing the development of its qualifications and quality assurance services. QQI functions include:

- Making and promoting awards
- Validating programmes
- Monitoring and ensuring the quality of programmes
- Determining standards.

QQI awards

QQI is responsible for developing a new system of qualifications for the further education and training sector. This system is part of the overall development of the new 10-level NFQ that will, in time, include all awards available in the state, from the basic (level 1) to the most advanced (level 10) levels of learning. QQI has specific responsibility for providing a range of awards at levels 1–6 in the new framework.

For further information, see the QQI website: www.qqi.ie.

QQI certification fees

On 16 June 2014, QQI introduced additional fees for learners of €20 per certificate. These certification fees are included in our programme prices for all QQI-certified courses.

You may be exempt from the certification fee if you are receiving a social welfare payment or hold a medical card. To be refunded the certification fee, you must submit a copy of your

medical card, proof of social welfare payment or a referral letter from the Department of Social Protection n the first day of training.

If you are completing programmes with Technical Employment Support Grant (TESG) funding or similar through the Department of Social Protection, you will automatically be exempt from this fee and it will not be included in quotes or invoices.

Refunds will only be applicable to learners to pay ICSE privately the full amount and provide ICSE with proof of exemption on the day of training.

Access, transfer and progression

It is ICSE policy to ensure that learners are at all times informed of courses we have on offer and of their content. We will ensure that learners are facilitated in attending any future course, internally or externally.

We also recognise that prior learning and life experience may suffice as entry requirements for our courses, and we will try to remove any perceived constraints that learners may experience. It is important to us that everyone participates successfully in our courses, and so we continually seek learner feedback.

The Managing Director will facilitate the transfer of learners to other courses offered by the company or other programmes in the National Framework of Qualifications.

Learner progression

It is ICSE policy to inform, facilitate and accommodate all learners undertaking training and education programmes, in line with best practice, in order to progress to future programmes, either immediately on attainment of the award or at a later date. ICSE undertakes to enable learners to:

- Make informed choices about the programme(s) on offer.
- Enter into a programme with recognition of prior learning and without unnecessary barriers.
- Successfully participate in a programme.
- Transfer or progress to another programme offered by ICSE or another provider, leading to an award in the NFQ.

Learner Supports

All ICSE programmes are delivered with a range of available supports, which you may use in a way that suits your own learning needs. You can access these independently or through guidance from your tutor, depending on the circumstances and the programme.

Access to learner supports

As part of pre-programme information, you are given this Learner Handbook as a reference guide for your programme of study. Learner supports are designed to help develop learners' confidence and independent study skills, including:

- a clear explanation of the type of learning you will experience, and the time and effort commitment required of you to complete the programme
- prior knowledge and technological skills needed to participate in the programme
- types of assessments you will be expected to undertake, e.g. skills demonstrations and face-to-face group discussions
- programme terms and conditions and the expected behaviour of learners
- practical aspects of the course: opening and availability of support, hardware and software requirements
- quality of learner supports, and opportunities to avail of them.

Tutors and administrators will also respond to your queries during day-to-day programme delivery.

Generic learner supports

ICSE has built generic learner supports into the design of its programmes and facilities, to ensure that you have an optimum learning environment. These include:

- tutor assigned to classroom training
- suitable training venues for offsite training, identified in advance
- classroom layout and IT supports
- course content suitable for level and diversity of learners
- suitable breaks throughout the programme
- ongoing feedback from tutors, including summative and formative feedback on assessments.

Additional learner supports

If you feel you require additional or individual support during a programme, ICSE will do all we can to support you, within the confines of programme specification and award module descriptor. We will decide these supports on an individual basis and document them in your file. The supports will be agreed between the tutor, learner, and Quality Assurance and Programme Development Manager. Supports may include:

- Individual mentoring and support

- Additional access to tutor support

- Alternative assessment arrangements or assessment instruments

- Programme content or materials in different formats

- Other supports as agreed on an individual basis.

Identification of learning issues prior to training

As with all issues of equality of access, it is important that any issues or challenges in reading or writing are identified early. This ensures that we can provide the required support from the outset.

Prior to any ICSE programme, we provide guidance on our website to learners who may have reading or writing difficulties. This guidance is written clearly and unambiguously on our website and offers reassurance and advice to people with learning, reading, or writing difficulties. We advise all such learners to contact our administrative team to discuss the supports available to them.

It is important to us that you inform us of any learning difficulties you may have at the earliest possible stage, so that we can support you as best we can. All information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Reasonable accommodation

ICSE can provide reasonable accommodation to learners who require supports for their learning or due to other extenuating circumstances.

It is your responsibility to inform ICSE in sufficient time for a reasonable accommodation request to be processed and reviewed and for any necessary steps to be put in place. The process requires you to:

- Inform ICSE of your need for reasonable accommodation and the reason for the request.

- Liaise with your tutor on the suitability of the accommodation made.

- Provide any documentary evidence required by ICSE to support your request for reasonable accommodation.

Assessment

ICSE is committed to planning and undertaking all assessments in a way that protects the quality and integrity of the training programme and its learning outcomes. We have developed assessment procedures that ensure that arrangements are reliable and secure for each programme.

We recognise that we enrol a diverse range of potential learners, and so we ensure that reasonable accommodation provisions are available. Programme assessments form an important part of the overall learning experience with ICSE and point to learners' sense of achievement in a programme. It is therefore an essential part of our assessment strategy that we provide learners with appropriate feedback on their progress in a spirit of encouragement, dignity, and respect.

QQI assessment guidelines

ICSE's assessment policies and procedures are guided by the QQI document 'Quality Assuring Assessment: Guidelines for Providers', 2013 edition, available at:

www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Quality%20Assuring%20Assessment%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20Providers%2C%20Revised%202013.pdf

The procedures refer to QQI's 'Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines' and 'Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines – Independent/Private', available at:

www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf

www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Sector%20Specific%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%20V2.pdf

Assessment techniques

In order to provide QQI certification, most courses must have a form of assessment. This means that you, as learner, must submit work to your tutor for assessment. All of our tutors are excellent and will fully explain the assessment process at the start of every course. It is important to us that you feel comfortable with this process.

It is also important to say that the delivery of education has changed over the years. Assessment should not be feared – it is merely a validation of the skills and knowledge

learned on our training programmes. It allows you to measure how much new knowledge, skills and competencies you are learning and retaining on your training programme.

The type of assessment can vary with the course. For most of our programmes, assessment takes place in several ways. There may be an exam at the end, but there is often also some form of skill demonstration or assignment. Your tutor will make you fully aware of the assessment type that you will undertake and a breakdown of how it will be marked.

You will receive an **Assessment Brief** about each assessment. This is a set of instructions given to you by your tutor telling you:

- **What** you are required to do for the assessment of the module

- **How** the assessment will be marked, and

- **When** it must be submitted.

There are **six** possible QQI module assessment techniques:

- portfolio of work
- assignment
- learner record
- examination (theory)
- project
- skills demonstration
- case study.

Each of these assessment techniques is now described in more detail.

Portfolio of work

A portfolio of work is a collection of some or all of the work you have produced during the module. It is evidence that proves you have achieved specific learning outcomes (SLOs). Your tutor will give you a checklist of what is to be included if this is part of your assessment requirement.

Assignment

An assignment can take a number of forms: it can be research-based, a practical task or an evaluation of a particular subject. You are issued with a brief from your tutor, stating the

specific guidelines and deadlines. Your tutor will explain this to you fully if an assignment is part of the assessment for your course.

Learner record

A learner record is your review of your learning experiences, tasks you have completed, and the new skills you have gained over a specific amount of time. There are different types of learner records. Your tutor will explain this to you fully if a learner record is part of the assessment for your course.

Examination

An exam is used to test your ability to remember information, to prove you have knowledge of the topic. It also shows that you understand the information and have the ability to discuss a topic in detail, for example its advantages or disadvantages, or comparing and contrasting information. Exams can be written or oral, and may take place in person or virtually. Your tutor will explain this to you fully if an exam is part of the assessment for your course.

Project

Projects may involve research, investigating a topic, performing an activity or organising an event. (In the case of an event, multiple learners may be involved, and each must clearly state what they are responsible for.)

When learners are undertaking a project, they may be required to keep a personal diary to record learning gained and achievements of specific learning outcomes. Your tutor will explain this to you fully if a project is part of the assessment for your course.

Skills demonstration

Skills demonstration allows you to show your ability to achieve a wide range of practical skills. It may be assessed while you are on work placement. It may take place in person or virtually. There are different types of skills demonstration:

- Practical
- Observation
- Oral.

Your tutor will explain this to you fully if skills demonstrations are part of the assessment for your course. We may also have to produce evidence that you have demonstrated the skill, so we are required to record some skills demonstrations – but this will always be done with your permission.

Deadline policy

On certain programmes, it may be necessary to work to a deadline set by a tutor to complete an assessment. ICSE policy is to ensure that all tutors use fair and consistent assessment methods, in keeping with QQI Quality Assurance procedures. To ensure the correct implementation of this policy:

- Tutors will, if applicable, issue all assignments or projects with a completion or submission date, and it is vital that this date is adhered to.

- Wherever necessary or applicable, you must sign a declaration that all coursework (assignments, projects, records, collection of work, portfolios, etc.) submitted for assessment is your own original work. Material taken directly from the internet or other sources is not your own work and will be deemed as plagiarism.

Extension requests

A request for extension must be lodged with your tutor in writing. Granting an extension will be considered only in exceptional circumstances on the basis of compassionate consideration. Tutors can refuse to accept assessment material after the deadline has passed, subject to compassionate consideration being granted.

Virtual assessments

For virtual assessments, the following rules apply:

1. During the assessment, you need to show the required skills to perform the tasks you are asked to do. You cannot use notes, slides or supports of any kind during the assessment.

2. Your camera must remain on, and you must always maintain eye contact with the web camera during the assessment.

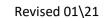3. The assessor may at any time ask you to pause the assessment and show your room and desk area on the webcam.

4. If the assessor feels you may be using notes or supports, they may warn you about your behaviour.

5. If the assessor is not satisfied with the integrity of your assessment, they may stop it at any point and refer you to the ICSE office for further information.

6. The assessor can only ask you the questions as they appear on their assessment paperwork. They cannot prompt or support you in any way.

7. If your webcam or microphone is not of sufficient quality for the assessor to see and hear you clearly, they may cancel the assessment and the ICSE office will reschedule your time.

8. If there is a communication or technical issue during the assessment causing you to lose connection, you can try to reconnect immediately. If you have not been able to reconnect after 5 minutes, you must contact the ICSE office by phone to tell them.

9. Before starting your assessment, the assessor will ask you to show your identity document to the webcam and state your full name. This will visually verify your name and identity with the document.

10. Finally, the assessor will give you brief feedback after each assessment. However, all aspects of the process are subject to processing and verification, so your assessor will not be in a position to give you your final results after your assessment.

Submission of assessments

All assignments and projects should be submitted to the relevant tutor before the end of the course, its assessment day or its deadline date. You may be asked to declare that it is your own work and contains no plagiarism. You will have to sign off on all work submitted.

You should keep a backup copy of completed work, as submitted assessments will not be returned.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of copying, including, or directly quoting from the work of another without adequate acknowledgement. Submitting plagiarised materials for assessment purposes is fraudulent, and all suspected cases will be investigated and dealt with appropriately by ICSE following the procedures outlined here.

All work submitted by students for assessment is accepted on the understanding that it is their own work and written in their own words except where explicitly referenced using the accepted norms and formats of the appropriate academic discipline. While some cases of plagiarism can arise through poor academic practice with no deliberate intent to cheat, this still constitutes a breach of acceptable practice and must be appropriately investigated and acted upon.

ICSE divides plagiarism into two forms:

- Accidental plagiarism – where a student inadvertently or accidentally plagiarises material through poor academic referencing but with no intent to gain advantage from doing so.

- Intentional plagiarism – where a student deliberately plagiarises material with the intent of gaining an advantage.

This procedure is made available to learners in the Learner Handbook. It is also discussed and explained to learners at the beginning of each programme and at the pre-course interview. Where assessment work is submitted to ICSE that was not completed in the presence of a tutor, the learner must complete and sign a certificate of authorship (Form ICSE 0054) declaring their work as their own and confirming their awareness of plagiarism procedures.

Suspected cases of plagiarism

Where a tutor suspects plagiarism in a learner's submission, they are first asked to decide where the plagiarism sits in terms of severity.

Type of plagiarism	Outcome or sanction
Low-level plagiarism: Instances in which the suspected plagiarism is a first offence and represents poor academic practice. Such cases include: • Innocent misuse of materials from other sources • Citation issues such as poor referencing, inappropriate paraphrasing • Heavy use of source material without sufficient work by candidate to support • The suspected plagiarism represents only a small part in a piece of work which makes a small contribution to the mark for the module.	Zero marks awarded for the particular portion where plagiarism has occurred. The rest of the assessment will be marked. Guidance to learner to ensure that a similar incident does not arise. A warning to the student about future instances.
High-level plagiarism: Major cases are those which may include, for example: • A second offence where the student has already received an earlier warning for a similar act • Reproducing multiple sections in full without acknowledging the source • Taking essays from the internet without revealing the source • Copying all or much of the work of a fellow student, with or without their knowledge or consent.	ICSE investigation. Zero marks awarded for assessment. Zero marks awarded for programme.

Investigating high-level plagiarism

In instances where high-level plagiarism is suspected, the tutor will complete a Noncompliance form and forward it to the Quality Assurance and Programme Development Manager, who will:

• Notify the learner of the issue in writing and that an investigation will take place.
• Appoint a regional lead tutor to investigate the incident.
• Notify the student of the outcome of the investigation in writing.

- Notify the learner of the appeals process.
- Raise the issue (with redactions) for discussion at the next Academic Committee meeting.

The investigating tutor will:

- Independently review the learner's work against the assessment criteria.
- Use available technology to assess plagiarism level.
- Assess whether plagiarism exists in their opinion and, if so, at what level.
- Make a recommendation to the Quality Assurance and Programme Development Manager.

The timeline for all investigations will not exceed 14 days from the first notification by the tutor.

Referencing

Throughout your assessments, you may be required to collect details, information or articles from third-party sources. These sources include:

- Anything from a magazine, book, newspaper, song, film/television programme, website, letter, advertisement
- Information you get from interviewing someone
- Exact words or phrases that you have copied
- Diagrams, pictures, charts, etc. which you have not produced yourself
- Audio or visual evidence which you did not produce yourself.

When you use any of the above sources for information, you must reference where that information came from to avoid plagiarism. You do not need to reference the following:

- Things that are common knowledge, such as historical events (e.g. Éamon de Valera was President of Ireland), or items which are generally accepted (e.g. global warming is a serious issue)
- Photos, pictures, videos, etc. which you produced yourself
- Your own life experience, thoughts, and findings
- Results of experiments which you carried out yourself.

Academic malpractice

ICSE must ensure that all learners have the same fair opportunity to complete an assessment and achieve certification. We have a range of measures in place to ensure that the chances for anomalies, malpractice and cheating are minimised.

During an assessment, an assessor may for any reason ask to view the learner's workspace or belongings for signs of anomalies or prohibited items. This does not mean that you have done anything wrong and is standard practice for our assessments.

Where prohibited items, materials, behaviour or people are observed prior to an assessment, you will be asked to rectify this before starting.

Identified malpractice during assessment

There are several levels of malpractice which may happen:

1. Unintentional malpractice: The accidental presence of other people or material that could help the learner with the assessment.
2. Potential malpractice: The intentional or unintentional anomalies in the assessment process, such as a learner repeatedly looking away from the screen, abnormal background sounds, or presence of papers in the assessment area.
3. Clear and definitive malpractice: A learner's intentional use of supporting material to gain unfair advantage in an assessment.

The level of malpractice will be determined in the first instance by the assessor.

Potential sanctions

There are a range of potential sanctions available to ICSE:

1. Unintentional malpractice: The assessor may warn the learner about the malpractice and continue with the assessment once the cause of the issue is resolved.
2. Potential malpractice: The assessor may pause the assessment and carry out a range of checks on potential anomalies. The assessor may allow the assessment to continue but notify the learner that they have concerns about the integrity and will be passing the recording to the ICSE office for review. The ICSE office will review the recording using specialist technology to address any concerns and will notify the learner of the outcome within 5 working days.
3. Clear and definitive malpractice: The assessor will stop the assessment and end the session. The assessor will send a report to the ICSE office immediately. The learner will be removed from the programme and will not be offered an opportunity to return. The learner will be notified in writing of this decision within 5 working days.

Regardless of the type of alleged malpractice or sanction, the learner may avail of the appeals process.

Resubmission, reassessment and re-sits

If a learner is unsuccessful in an assessment or overall programme, they are presented with two potential remedies:

1. Resubmission: The learner may choose to resubmit unsuccessful work for re-marking or to retake an examination within 4 weeks. The resubmission or reassessment will be administered by an new assessor. There is a €100 fee for resubmission or reassessment.
2. Re-sit: The learner may choose to attend the whole programme again within 4 weeks and complete the assessments again following the programme. There is a €250 fee for this service regardless of the programme.

Appeals

All learners are advised of the right to appeal their results should they feel they have grounds to do so. On the first morning of every programme, the course tutor discusses the right of appeal and the appeal process with you.

After your programme, you are sent a standard email accompanying your results form. This email contains the right of appeal and contact details should you wish to appeal your result.

Appeals process

You can appeal the assessment or result up to 14 days after receiving results. Appeals are made directly to the ICSE centre. You can lodge an appeal by completing an Appeal Form, available from our website.

The appeals procedure involves review of the assessment process, including, where appropriate, review of the learner evidence and the results. A different tutor and assessor will be assigned to review your appeal. The reviewer will check:

- The scores calculated on the marking sheet
- The scores allocated against the marking scheme
- Adherence to assessment processes by both the learner and assessor
- Any other evidence provided by you to support your appeal.

There is no charge to appeal your result.

Unsuccessful appeals

Where your appeal is unsuccessful, and no change of results is required, you will be informed of this in writing within 14 days of submitting the appeal. You have the right to an external review of the paperwork by the external authenticator. Please notify ICSE in writing if you choose this course of action following an unsuccessful appeal.

Successful appeals

Where the reviewer who reviews the assessment appeal discovers that a learner's mark has been awarded incorrectly due to a data input error or calculation error:

- We will inform the ICSE office of the required change in results.

- The reviewer will complete an incident report detailing the required changes to your results and the reasons for the changes.

- The ICSE office will inform you in writing of the result of the appeal and the new result within 14 days of the appeal being submitted.

- The new result will be entered into the results database, and you will be issued with a new Temporary Results Form (TRF)

- Should you wish to further appeal the new result, you will be informed of the process for doing so.

Where the reviewer who reviews the assessment appeal returns the assessment with a different result from the original and believes the learner was marked incorrectly or unfairly by the original trainer:

- We will inform the Head of Centre of the outcome of the appeal.

- We will complete an incident report detailing the outcome and the reasons for the conclusions.

- The Head of Centre will be the final adjudicator in all appeals and will decide if the appeal is valid and if the result should be changed, taking into consideration all factors in the appeal.

- Should the appeal be upheld, you will be informed by the Head of Centre in writing within 14 days of submitting the appeal.

- The new result will be entered into the results database, and you will be issued with a new TRF.

- Should you wish to further appeal the new result, you will be informed of the process for doing so.

- The ICSE Corrective Action Plan will be implemented to ensure the incident is fully investigated.

External review of assessment

All learners who submit an appeal, whether successful or unsuccessful, have the right to have their assessment further reviewed by the External Authenticator during his or her visit. Should you wish to use this option, you must inform ICSE of your decision in writing within 14 days.

Issuing of results

Provisional results will be issued to all learners via email 5 working days after you complete your final assessment. Please allow until 5pm on day 5 to receive your results.

Internal and external verification

Before being submitted for certification, all results are internally checked by ICSE for accuracy and externally reviewed by an independent expert. Results issued after the course are provisional and may be subject to change following external authentication.