INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR SECURITY EXCELLENCE

QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

QQI QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

# CONTENTS

Version Control

| Version | Date | Summary of changes | Updated by |
|---------|------|--------------------|------------|
| 1.1 | 06.05.2019 | | T O Brien |
| 1.2 | 13.09.2019 | Updated models and appendices | T O Brien |
| 1.3 | 20.12.2019 | Review of policy statement on Governance | T O Brien |
| 1.4 | 13.01.2020 | Update to learner pathway<br>Inserted Management Committee terms of reference in appendices | T O Brien |
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| 1.9 | 13.12.2020 | Addition of learner support sand 8.15.9 additional learner supports.<br>Addition of English language guidelines at 6.13.1 and 6.13.2<br>New visual of governance structure at Appendix 4<br>Updated internal verification procedure to reflect the role of the administrator as the internal verifier. | T O Brien |

# Foreword



Dear Stakeholder,

I am delighted to have this opportunity to welcome you to the operations and management of ICSE or the International Centre for Security Excellence.

ICSE are accredited by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and deliver specialist training programmes nationally through our training centres in Galway, Dublin and Cork.

ICSE was established in 2006 to meet the mandatory training needs of learners entering the private security sector in Ireland, hence the name! However, since then the company and our vision has grown. Our commitment to our learners and quality training has enabled us to expand into training provision in other service industry sectors.

At the heart of ICSE is the belief that nothing has a greater transformative power to enhance and change a person's life for the positive, then education. Many of our learners have previously had little prior education or perhaps even a poor and bruising interaction with learning experiences before contacting us.

ICSE believe we can assist our learners in having a better life, more rewarding career, feeling safer in their workplace through the provision of exceptional training experiences. This continual drive to enhance the learning experience for all is not easy. It can only be attained by continually investing in our team's education, our systems, our processes and our procedures and engaging with our learners and stakeholders.

Our approach is best defined through our company motto "We Change Lives". Our continual reminder that the provision of an excellent training service is transformative for the learner and echoes far beyond our training room walls.

This QQI Quality Assurance document is designed to outline and explain the Quality Assurance System in place for all ICSE QQI programmes. This QQI Quality Assurance System uses a framework based on the 11 core sections of QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines.

ICSE continually strive to be better, we look forward to your input in helping us to do so. Please feel free to contact me or any of our team members with any query, comments or advice that you may have. We very much look forward to working with you in the not too distant future.

Kind regards,

Mark Toner.

# 1   INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

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 has been built on our commitment to consistent improvement in education and training and around a team of skilled and committed staff, supported by an effective and experienced management team.

## 1.1   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 a variety of 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
- 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.

## 1.2    CONTEXT AND SCOPE OF THE QA SYSTEM

The Quality Assurance (QA) system at ICSE has been developed to support the development and delivery of high-quality training products for our learners, clients, staff, and other stakeholders, including external authenticators and members of review panels.

ICSE has taken steps to embed a culture of quality assurance throughout the organisation, encompassing both our business activities and our academic processes. Each committee, panel, and staff member at ICSE has a clearly defined role and responsibilities for quality assurance built into their job specification. These responsibilities are supported by a focus on our 'learner first' approach and by a recognition of the learner as the ultimate consumer of ICSE's products.

ICSE's management team and senior academic personnel also have a clearly defined responsibility for the ongoing monitoring and review of quality-assurance processes, through a variety of channels. These processes are outlined in this QQI Quality Assurance System manual, which we have designed to be the primary source of information on our quality-assurance policies and procedures as they relate to QQI training programmes.

The scope of this Quality Assurance system covers the 11 policy areas as described by:

- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines published by QQI (April 2016)
- Sector-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines – Independent/Private.

Our QA system has been designed as a comprehensive and embedded system, which meets the requirements of learners, the awarding body (QQI), and clients. Section 3 of this document provides an overview, while detailed breakdowns of each policy and its procedures are contained in the relevant sections later in the manual.

## 1.3 ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

### 1.3.1 Organisation Chart
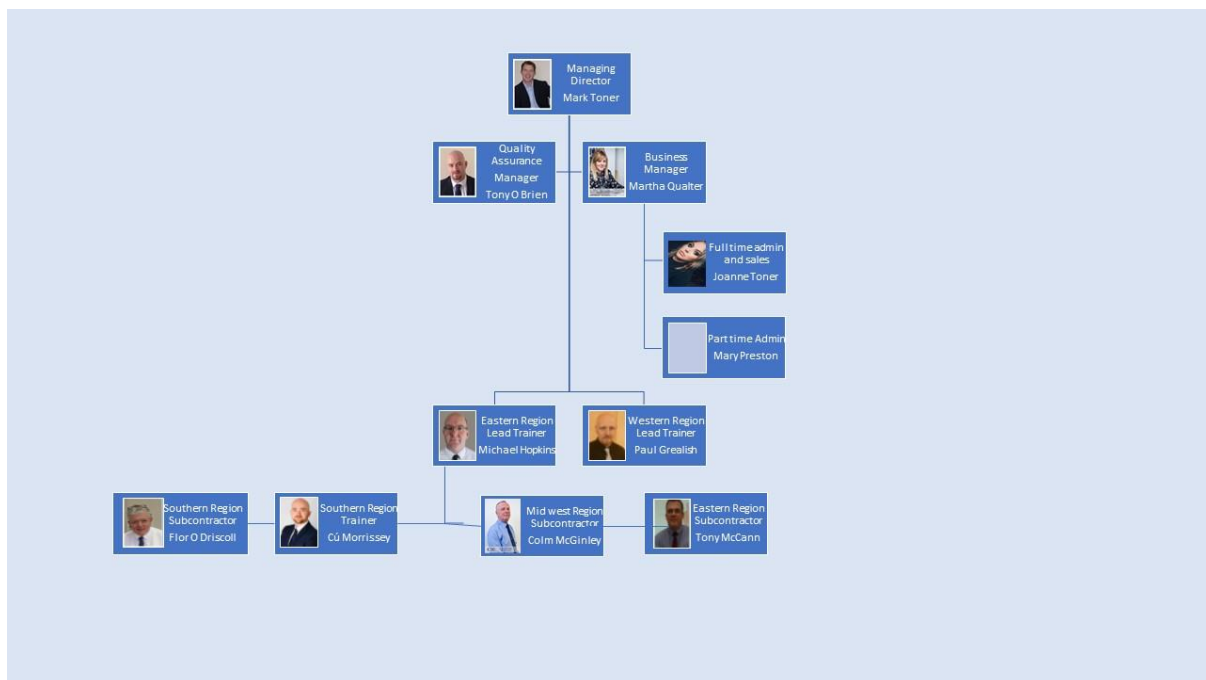


Figure 1: ICSE Organisation chart

### 1.3.2 Business Oversight

The ICSE management committee has responsibility for overseeing business strategy, commercial activity, and operations, ensuring the financial sustainability of the organisation as a business. Management's tasks include facilitating the delivery of products and services to meet learners' and clients' requirements, while ensuring that the organisation complies with all other stakeholder and legal requirements. The figure below identifies the two functional areas in the organisation:
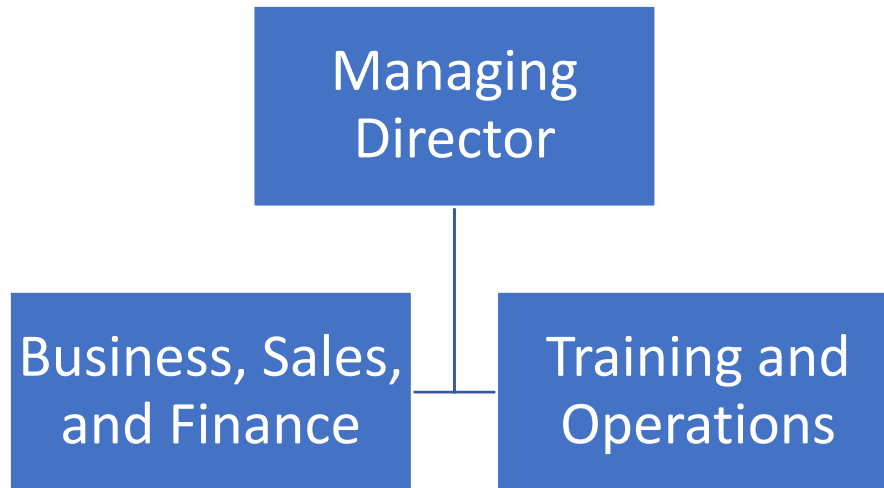
Figure 2: Business Oversight structure

The two core areas have the following remits:

- Business, Sales, and Finance: The day-to-day running of the organisation, finance, procurement, business support, administration, sales and marketing, and learner liaison.

- Training and operations: Programme design and delivery, assessment, learner supports, evaluation, health and safety, and staff development

### 1.3.3    Regional management

While ICSE have training centres in Cork and Dublin they are centrally controlled and managed from Head Office in Galway. The centres in Dublin and Cork are training faculties only. All administration and management functions are based in the Galway Head Office. Similarly, where ICSE deliver in regional areas such as Limerick, Athlone and Sligo we use hotel training facilities and the programmes are managed centrally from Head Office. There are regional lead tutors in each training centre who perform a general caretaking role at the centres but no administration take place there.

### 1.3.4    Management Committee

The current management committee consists of:

- Managing director/head of centre: Mark Toner

- Business manager: Martha Qualter

- Representative from academic committee: Tony O'Brien

The ICSE management committee meets quarterly, with a formal agenda covering financial reports, recruitment, sales and marketing, operations, resource allocation, stakeholder feedback, and opportunities for development and improvement.

Once a year a representative of Fitzgerald Grogan, Accountants, attends ICSE management board meetings to provide an annual financial report to the committee.

## 1.4 MISSION STATEMENT AND VISION

### 1.4.1 Mission Statement

We believe that the best way for a person to enhance their life is through education, and we aim to facilitate that for every stakeholder. Our mission is to enhance the lives of all stakeholders, including employees and learners, by facilitating the highest-quality learning experiences of all levels, enabling each person to achieve the highest possible level on their framework of qualifications.

## 1.5 COMPANY AND LEARNER CHARTER

### 1.5.1 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.

### 1.5.2 Learner Charter

We expect learners to:

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

  1. 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.

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

- Comply with health and safety regulations by:

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

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

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

  4. Maintaining a clean and tidy learning environment.

- Make every effort to be on time for a course and bring all the necessary equipment and documentation as directed.
- Keep ICSE informed of any changes in your personal details, e.g. address, telephone number, etc.
- Help us improve our service by giving us feedback and completing evaluation forms.

### 1.5.3 Service Delivery

While the ICSE management committee sets the organisation's strategy and business direction and goals, it also recognises that for the company to be successful, the training and operations elements need to be enabled and supported to focus on service delivery across the client and learner base.

Management recognises that independent oversight of teaching and learning activities is critical to achieving ICSE's goals and ensuring good governance. To support this, we have developed three levels of academic oversight in the organisation to monitor these processes:

| Area | Responsibility |
|---|---|
| Academic committee | QA and programme development |
| | Regional lead tutors |
| | External FE experts |
| | Learner representative |
| Programme and QA review | Regional lead tutors |
| | Tutors |
| | Business manager |
| Delivery | Tutors |
| | Administration team |

## 1.6 ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

ICSE has approved the terms of reference for an academic committee to be formed in the organisation. This development reflected the need to separate responsibility for academic decision-making to determine teaching policies, course approvals, and learning delivery, and to leave the management board to focus on business operations.

Education and training-related policies and procedures are developed and approved by the academic committee through their meetings. The committee is designed and intended to be dynamic, with an ability to respond to emerging opportunities for improvement, together with ICSE's commitment to ongoing development and improvement. The academic committee meets four times a year, monitoring academic activity and acting as the key organisation-level forum for monitoring quality assurance and decision-making.

Responsibility for quality assurance falls under the remit of the academic committee, which establishes quality-related policies and procedures in respect of the teaching and learning standards for all areas of programme delivery and assessment. This approach protects the overall integrity of the academic process, by maintaining a clear and consistent focus on the interests of learners, and by managing the potential risk of excessive influence from other stakeholders or management.

### 1.6.1 Programme Delivery

The QA and programme development manager has responsibility for the design and delivery of individual training programmes and for liaison and oversight with the lead tutors and tutor teams.

### 1.7 MONITORING OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM AND STRUCTURE

ICSE monitors the effectiveness of its QA policies and procedures, both formally and informally, through various processes at all levels of the organisation:

- Internal QA audits carried out by the business manager and QA manager throughout the year, and reporting to the academic committee.
- Identification of process constraints at tutor and administration meetings and reporting to the management committee.
- Verification of employee adherence to procedures through tutor and admin audits carried out by lead tutors and the QA manager, and administration audits carried out by the business manager.
- External input and feedback from stakeholders, including clients, QQI, external authenticators, and external experts.

### 1.8 RISK MANAGEMENT

Effective risk management is an essential element of good corporate governance in all businesses. Good governance is built on a platform of solid risk management and ongoing treatment of risk at all levels. A strategic approach to risk management is essential to ensure that the company is proactive, transparent and ethical in all of its commercial and academic activities. The risk management framework considers:

- The avoidance of any incidents of academic or business fraud associated with our education activities.
- The ongoing maintenance and improvement of our academic integrity and our reputation in this area.
- Proactive resource planning to ensure adequate capacity to deliver a high level of service to our learner population.

- Proactive contingency planning to ensure that the company can not only sustain economic shock but pursue growth in challenging economic times.

It is the aim of this policy to support a framework which ensures that risks to the delivery of ICSE's strategic objectives, vision and values, and the operational running of the company, should be identified, assessed, managed and monitored to support the demonstration of good governance.

### 1.8.1   Risk Categories

To effectively manage risk, it is important first to have a defined definition of risk and a framework in which to operate. According to ISO 31000 Risk Management, standard risk is the "effect of uncertainty on objectives", and an effect is a positive or negative deviation from what is expected. The risks faced by ICSE's business can be divided into several categories:

**Strategic Risks:** risks which affect the company's ability to achieve its strategic and business goals, or events which affect the company's implementation of its vision and values. Risks at a strategic level can be positive or negative. Negative risks present an inability to reach strategic goals, while positive risks present an opportunity.

**Financial Risks:** risks which expose ICSE to financial losses, either through poor business practices, external occurrences, criminal activity, or poor governance planning. Financial risks may be short-term, such as cash-flow issues, or longer-term structural issues such as national recessions.

**Operational Risks**: risks which arise from poor or inadequate operational processes in the company. These may present as academic integrity risks, safety risks or human resource risks, among others, but have a fundamental impact on the day-to-day running of the business.

**Reputational Risks:** risks which arise from adverse reflection on the company's brand or reputation. These may be in the press, online through social media or via word of mouth and could come from internal or external stakeholders.

## 1.8.2    Risk Management Framework

ICSE have based our risk management framework and risk assessment system on the ISO 31000 model. Our risk management framework refers to a coordinated set of activities and methods that is used to direct the organisation and to manage risks that can affect its ability to achieve objectives. It also refers to the architecture that is used to manage risk. This architecture includes risk management principles, a risk management framework, and a risk management process.



Risk Management Framework
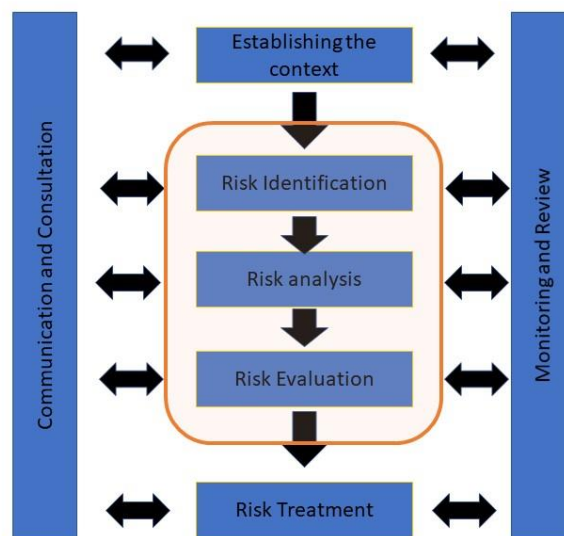
## 1.8.3    Risk assessment

Risk assessment is the central element of the risk management framework. It is formed by the three processes of risk identification, risk analysis, and risk evaluation.

**Risk identification** is the identification and acknowledgement of risk which affects the company's ability to realise its vision and live its values.

**Risk analysis** is the root-cause analysis of the risk which has been identified to determine the root of the risk. Once the cause is identified, the level of risk is measured against our risk methodology from the risk register. It is also used to study the potential impact of any risk and the consequences. The risk and impact can then be used to review the effectiveness of existing control measures in place.

**Risk evaluation** is the process used to compare risk analysis results with risk criteria from the risk register, to determine whether a specified level of risk is acceptable or tolerable and to explore whether risk will be avoided, transferred or treated.

### 1.8.4   Risk Appetite and Risk Tolerance

Risk appetite can be defined as "the amount of risk and type of risk that an organisation is willing to take in order to meet their strategic objectives". Risk appetite in ICSE will vary with the type and nature of risk and the opportunity presented by the risk. For example, certain risks will be managed at a local level by tutors, administration or finance departments. However, when risks reach a certain level as laid out in the risk register, they are escalated to the relevant Director or committee for review.

Following the risk assessment system detailed above, activities or processes conducted by ICSE may generate risks which fall into any one of three categories:

1.  Risks that are everyday, minor, and therefore acceptable and do not need to be managed. These are what we consider Business-as-Usual risks.
2.  Risks that are identified as acceptable but – due to their likelihood or impact – will need to be managed and monitored. These are what we consider Managed risk activity.
3.  Risks that pose a high level of uncertainty, with unacceptable associated negative impact. The company will avoid or eliminate activities which pose this level of risk.

### 1.8.5   Risk Management Controls

Based on the risk categories above, ICSE have a number of potential risk control options:

1.  Risk Avoidance: Avoid or eliminate the task, project or process associated with the risk.
2.  Risk Treatment: Use internal controls to manage the risk on an ongoing basis.
3.  Risk Transfer: Outsource or transfer the project and its associated risk to a third party or subcontractor or insure the business against the risk.
4.  Risk Tolerance: Accept the risk level with monitoring.

### 1.8.6   Governance of Risk Management Function

The Management Committee has the ultimate decision-making authority in ICSE on risk management matters. The Management Committee is responsible for the oversight of all areas of risk management and for providing strategic insight to the risk management framework section of the meetings. The company's risk-management measures and risk appetite are discussed considering internal and external factors at each meeting. The Management Committee will:

- Ensure that ongoing risks at an operational level are being managed effectively by the relevant Directors and committees which report into it.
- Ensure that risk management information provided by Directors and Departments and external/internal auditors is appropriate and is accounted for on the risk register.
- Keep under review, and advise on, the operation and effectiveness of the ICSE Risk Management Framework.
- Monitor the effectiveness of risk management in relation to risks identified as fundamental to the success or failure of ICSE's strategic objectives.

### 1.8.7   Local and Functional Risk Owners

ICSE have appointed a number of local or functional risk owners to oversee the process of managing a particular risk related to their local or functional areas. The risk owner's role in relation to risk management includes:

- Coordination of the relevant risk controls in their area of responsibility.
- Ensuring that staff are adhering to local risk controls and managing emerging risks in their area of responsibility.
- Overall management of the risk levels and advising management of increasing risk levels which take the risk outside of their control levels.

The owner of each risk is identified in the risk register.

### 1.8.8   Managing and Measuring Risk

Risks to successfully achieving the strategic objectives and running of ICSE are identified, assessed, managed and monitored on a predetermined basis. Ongoing risk is managed locally via the risk register and risk owners.

Emerging risks arising from new or changed strategic objectives shall be identified, assessed, managed and monitored as they arise and added to the risk register. Risk owners will be identified and resourced to manage new risks as they arise or risks with a significant change in probability or consequence.

Emerging risks may be identified from a range of sources, including:

- Non-conformances identified via the internal audit process
- Incidents or near-misses
- Complaints from internal or external stakeholders
- Changes in external environments such as economic or regulatory changes.

### 2.8.9.   Measurement

The risk-measurement methodology used to quantify and prioritise risk is contained in the risk register rubric. The risk will be assessed across two levels:

Inherent risk: Existing risk without control measures

Residual risk: Remaining risk after control measures.

### 1.9   REPORTING

All risks shall be reassessed on a predetermined basis so that an up-to-date risk assessment is available to support the management of risk. The risk register will be updated and communicated following our change management communication procedures.

The risk register is formally reviewed annually in full. However, reviews of the existing risk controls are carried our periodically and reported to the Business Committee at meetings throughout the year. These reporting levels are:

- Critical risks: Quarterly
- High risks: 6 months
- Medium and low risk: Annually.

The criteria for classifying these levels is contained in the risk register.

### 1.9.1  Risk Management Training

All employees and subcontractors receive risk management training as part of their ICSE employee or contractor induction package.

### 1.10  COMMITMENT TO EVOLUTION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

ICSE supports a learner-focused culture, with an ethos of constantly improving quality and efficiency. Goals and outcomes are reviewed by analysing learner feedback and tracking company performance against our strategic KPIs. This approach to ensuring a consistently high standard of learning helps ICSE to measure its ongoing performance and to identify additional learner or client needs or opportunities for service improvement.

### 1.11  COMMITMENT TO CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION AND A POSITIVE WORKPLACE

ICSE recognises that a key part of delivering quality throughout the organisation is openness, transparency, and positivity in our dealings with employees and learners. This is achieved by creating and resourcing a team that is adequately trained and aligned with ICSE's vision, strategy, and business processes. This approach by management ensures that staff have a strong sense of purpose that aligns with the company, and are customer-focused and customer-directed in their work through clear objectives and goals.

To achieve this goal, staff recruitment policies are designed to select people with the necessary personality traits, skills, and competencies, who will exceed learner expectations and embrace our quality-assurance standards. All new employees attend an induction session and receive in-service training on ICSE's business processes and values.

Communication in ICSE is two-way, with staff being in a position to freely share their views on service delivery, resources, and support needs through dialogue with managers. This feedback loop encourages constant transparency and improvement. In turn, all employees are responsible for peer-to-peer coaching, motivation, and performance monitoring.

## 2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 2.1 COMPANY ROLES

All roles and responsibilities in ICSE are designed to delegate authority to individuals in order to promote a culture of learner focus, individual responsibility, and continuous improvement. Each staff member has a clearly designated role in the organisation along with objectives and KPIs, allowing management to track performance at both individual and organisational levels though management reviews, staff evaluation, and appraisals.

The sections below outline the roles and hierarchy in ICSE. This structure provides clear managerial reporting lines for each employee and department. The Quality Assurance role also provides links to external partners, including external experts, authenticators, and accreditation bodies.

### 2.1.1 Managing Director/Head of Centre

The managing director also acts as the head of centre. Head of centre is the organisation-nominated person with overall responsibility for the delivery of quality and service in our QQI provider's agreement. They will be the nominated point of contact for all communications with QQI. In the event of the managing director being unavailable to fulfil his duties, the responsibility will fall to the business manager.

The head of centre's job specification shall include:

- The primary point of contact for all corporate correspondence with QQI.
- Final approval over all company risk assessments, and forms.
- Final approval prior to any new programme being applied for validation or delivered to learners, or for any significant changes made to existing programmes prior to those changes being delivered.
- Overall responsibility for quality control.
- Final point of appeal for all queries, complaints, corrective actions, or grievances made by employees, learners, or third parties about any aspect of our QQI service delivery.
- Prior approval for any payments or other financial commitments to QQI.

- Primary responsibility for the health, safety, and welfare of all employees, learners, and third parties while on premises.
- Overall responsibility for the supply and maintenance of sufficient resources, budgets, and equipment to allow the delivery of QQI-accredited programmes in line with our approved validations.
- Management of strategic and reputational risk within the organisation.
- Chairing the results approval panel.

### 2.1.2 Business Manager

The business manager has overall operational responsibility for ICSE's finance and administrative support elements. The role includes payroll, invoicing, and procurement services. Specific responsibilities for the role include:

- deployment of human and financial resources
- managing day-to-day office administration tasks
- working with the managing director in business planning and financial management
- maintaining company records on finance and learners
- procuring and booking training venues and accommodation as required
- managing invoices and cashflow in day-to-day business operations
- processing payroll and annual leave requests, debtor controls, and creditor management
- management of financial risk within ICSE

### 2.1.3 Quality Assurance and Programme Development

The quality assurance and programme development role has overall responsibility for the quality assurance procedures in the design and delivery of programmes, assessment, teaching and learning resources, and staff development. The role will take feedback from the tutors and report directly to the head of centre on matters of quality assurance. Role specifics include:

- organise and chair the quality assurance procedures committee and results approval panel
- final decision maker on changes to academic policy and procedure

- manage tutor development and monitor performance
- liaise with the head of centre and business manager
- liaise with regional lead trainers on academic and programme-related issues
- oversee new programme design and delivery
- organise and oversee programme reviews
- manage operational risk within ICSE
- undertake research and projects as requested by the managing director
- validate applications for new and revalidated programmes
- develop relationships with external stakeholders such as clients and awarding bodies
- provide a link between academic and management boards
- design procedures and documentation on all training and education programmes
- establish a culture of quality in QA standards, operational guidelines, programme content, and self-evaluation.

### 2.1.4  Regional Lead Tutors

ICSE has three regional training centres operating in Dublin, Cork, and Galway, all of which report in the Galway head office. Each regional office has a lead tutor who oversees the day-to-day running of the training centre:

- maintaining health, safety, and welfare standards in the regional training centres and home offices
- reporting KPIs in their regional centre to the academic committee
- safe maintenance of learner and assessment data while in the training centre
- be the initial point of contact for learners or tutors with academic or technical issues in the training centre
- liaise with tutors operating remotely or at client premises in their region
- oversee the implementation of all QA policies and procedures at course level
- mentor new programme tutors
- the management of local and regional risk issues as outlined in the risk management policy.
- The lead regional tutors also have the additional duties of tutors as outlined in 2.1.5.

### 2.1.5  Tutors

The ICSE tutor team are the main point of contact between learners and the organisation. Their contribution to the learners' experience is critical both to ICSE's quality assurance process and to the learner themselves. Specific priorities for the role include:

- Deliver the overall learner experience. This includes promoting learner engagement and group interaction during the programme.
- Deliver programme content, including classroom material, learner registration and induction, and mentoring
- Assess learners across a variety of formats in line with QA procedures and QQI best practice.
- Monitor learners' progress through the programme and highlight additional support needs to head office.
- Work as part of the ICSE team with other tutors, management, administrators, and other external partners.
- Organise and contribute to annual subject review and development meetings.
- Attend and contribute to monthly tutor calls.
- Assist with ongoing programme content updates and development.
- Engage in continual professional development (CPD) as planned by ICSE and through self-development and learning.

### 2.1.6   Administrators

The administration team is based in head office and handles the day-to-day operation of customer service functions. Role specifics include:

- Providing a first point of contact for learners and prospective learners who contact the office via telephone, email, or social media.
- Provide joining instructions and access details to learners for all programmes.
- Ensure the regional training centre has adequate course and assessment materials to run scheduled programmes.
- Submit learner results to the QQI database, and deal with invalid entries.
- processing QQI final certification inputs
- overseeing the internal verification process
- Store, process, and dispose of all learner- and assessment-related materials per QA procedures.

# 3. THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

ICSE's quality assurance system is based mainly on the criteria set out by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in the core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Private Providers; it also addresses our evolution into the blended learning area by considering the criteria set out in the QQI Guidelines for Private Providers on blended learning.

Both of these documents have been used to build upon and have our original QA system. The QA system covers the 11 policy areas set out by QQI in the 11 core areas, as set out below. Each area is subject to a policy section in this manual and has a policy statement and related procedures. Policy owners and revision dates are also included for ease of reference.

| Ref | Policy area | Responsibility | Revision date |
|---|---|---|---|
| QA 1 | Governance and risk management | Management committee Academic committee | March 2020 |
| QA 2 | Documented approach to training and quality | Management committee Academic committee | March 2020 |
| QA 3 | Programmes of education and training | Academic committee | March 2020 |
| QA 4 | Staffing: Recruitment, selection, management, and development | Management committee | March 2020 |
| QA 5 | Teaching and learning | Academic committee | March 2020 |
| QA 6 | Assessment | Academic committee | March 2020 |
| QA 7 | Learner supports | Academic committee | March 2020 |
| QA 8 | Data and information management | Management committee | March 2020 |
| QA 9 | Public and external communications | Management committee Academic committee | March 2020 |
| QA 10 | Other parties involved in training | Management committee Academic committee | March 2020 |
| QA 11 | Self-evaluation, monitoring, and review | Management committee Academic committee | March 2020 |

# 4.    Governance and Risk Management

## 4.1    QA 1: Governance Policy Statement

| Reference | QA 1 |
|---|---|
| Statement | ICSE regards its position as a provider of quality-assured training programmes with the utmost importance. To maintain a high standard of governance and quality management, we have designed a number of governance and quality-management procedures. These ensure the separation of academic and financial decision-making in the organisation. |
| Owner | Management committee

Academic committee |
| Responsibilities | Managing director

Business manager

Quality assurance and programme development

Regional lead tutors |
| Version | 1.1 |
| Revised on | October 2018 |

## 4.2    Governance Structures

As a small training provider, ICSE recognises the need for a governance structure that ensures quality and separation yet also suits the size, scope, and context of the organisation. Our governance structure allows for both internal and external inputs, to ensure that the quality of service provision to learners is not adversely influenced by commercial decision-making. We have involved internal employees and external experts where appropriate to support the governance structure.

ICSE recently formed a new academic committee to ensure that academic governance is separated from the management committee function. The academic committee terms of reference (Appendix 1) cover all areas of academic and trainer performance, as well as taking learner inputs and other KPIs relating to the overall quality of service delivery. The section below sets out ICSE's governance structure and the remit of each committee.

## 4.3  GOVERNANCE MANAGEMENT

The management committee has primary responsibility for corporate governance in ICSE. The managing director is responsible for the overall running of the organisation and for delivering a high-quality service to all learners and employees.

The management committee meets quarterly to formally review ICSE's operations and development. The committee oversees the strategic and operational running and development of the organisation. Its responsibilities include:

- Human resources: recruitment, staffing issues, employee relations issues, scheduling
- Resource allocation: budgets, investment, upgrades, pay issues, equipment
- Operations: policy approval, changes to programme or staffing structures
- Finance: profitability, budget control, and forecasting
- Risk management: compliance with legal, safety, and quality assurance requirements
- Process improvement: identifying policy and quality improvements; reviewing audits and feedback from tutors and learners; reducing or eliminating wastage in resources and allocation.

The management committee comprises the managing director, business manager, and quality assurance and programme development.

## 4.4  GOVERNANCE OF ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

The academic committee is responsible for governance and academic oversight of all teaching and learning activities in ICSE and is the ultimate authority on all academic matters. It provides independent oversight of ICSE's activities in the following areas:

- education, training, academic integrity and standards, and related teaching activities
- internal programme approval prior to any validation application
- all programme reviews, programme improvement plans, self-evaluations, and benchmarking reports.

The academic committee comprises the following people:

- quality assurance and programme development
- external further education expert(s)
- regional lead trainers
- learner representative
- administration

The academic committee is scheduled to meet quarterly with an agenda comprising a review of:

- overall quality of ICSE teaching and learning activities carried out both by tutors and in the administration team
- feedback from the IV, EA results approval panel and tutor meetings
- learner feedback and reports from programme reviews
- approval of new programme developments and validation status of existing programmes
- developments in the regulatory and accreditation areas as they relate to ICSE's activities and programmes
- academic standards and related issues as they apply to learners (e.g. plagiarism, complaints, non-attendance, and retention issues)
- quality policies and related quality-assurance matters
- tutor CPD and training.

The managing director, as beneficial owner of the ICSE business, is precluded from attending academic committee meetings, thereby ensuring a separation of responsibilities between the academic and the business decision-making functions.

## 4.5   GOVERNANCE AT PROGRAMME/REGIONAL LEVEL

Each regional training centre has a lead tutor in place. The lead tutor is responsible for ensuring that all tutors in that training centre adhere to the quality-assurance processes for the classroom section of the programme. These include:

- security of assessment-related material
- adherence to training timescales
- learner issues
- requests for learner supports
- ensuring that adequate resources are present in the training centre for the provision of the programme
- feedback to the academic committee on issues relating to teaching and learning activities in their regional centre.

## 4.6   GOVERNANCE OF PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL

ICSE takes input and ideas for new programmes from a variety of stakeholders and sources. These can include:

- tutor meetings or individual tutor recommendations
- client requests
- market research and industry needs
- feedback from learners.

Once a programme has been proposed, it enters the programme development cycle, which is outlined below in Figure3.
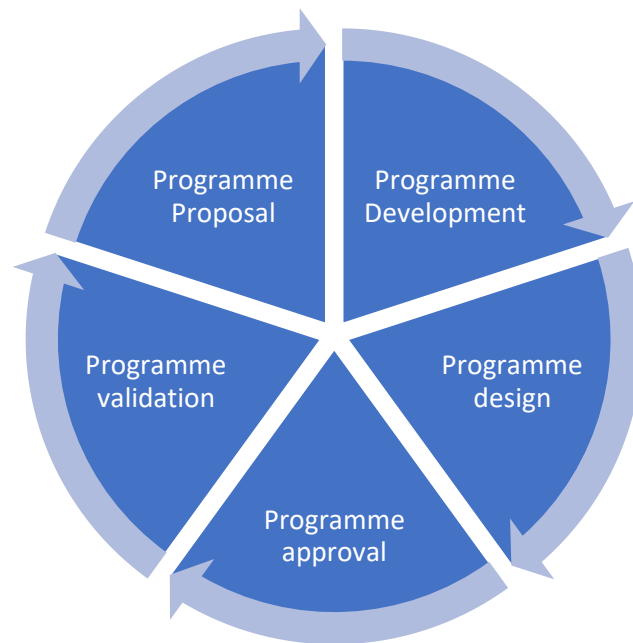


Figure 3: Programme development cycle

### 4.6.1   Programme Proposal

When a programme is proposed by a member of staff, they are asked to submit a basic proposal in writing outlining the programme idea and including:

- area or sector of learning
- potential level of award
- overview of potential learning outcomes
- overview of potential content
- any other specialised information which may be required.

Once this programme proposal is submitted to the quality assurance and programme development, it will build a programme development case that will include:

- potential costs and resources required

- level and award which the programme will be designed to meet
- method(s) of delivery
- competition analysis
- expected learner demand and learner profile
- potential legal or regulatory requirements
- any specialist knowledge or skills required to deliver the programme

### 4.6.2   The Programme Development Case

Once a programme development case is developed, it is sent forward for consideration in two channels:

- Academic committee – for the academic viability and suitability of the programme.
- Management committee – for the strategic and financial viability of the programme.

Depending on the urgency of the proposed programme (for example, a client request), the programme may be discussed at the next scheduled meeting of either committee, or a special meeting may be called to discuss it.

### 4.6.3   Programme Design Team

Both committees will be asked to give approval in principle to the programme. Once this is given, the quality assurance and programme development manager will assemble a programme design team consisting of:

- quality assurance and programme development manager
- regional lead tutor, who will be appointed as programme lead tutor for the project
- Tutor with subject matter experience
- The person who proposed the programme (if not one of the above)
- any external subject-matter experts who may be required for guidance or feedback.

The programme design team build the draft programme content and the validation application. These, along with all supporting documentation, are then resubmitted to the academic committee and the management committee. Supporting documentation includes:

- validation application pack
- programme content
- programme descriptors
- programme and award learning outcome maps

- any feedback from employers, industry, or other stakeholders
- programme costing, staffing, and resource budgets
- assessment materials.

The proposal will first be submitted to the academic committee for approval of the teaching, learning, and quality-assurance aspects of the programme. It will then be submitted to the management committee for budgetary approval.

Note: While the quality assurance and programme development manager will be a part of both the programme design team and the academic committee, they are the only person with a dual role in the process. This means that the lead tutor and the external expert engaged for programme design are not the same people as those who sit on the academic committee in those capacities. This ensures separation and impartiality in the design and approval process.

The programme is then submitted to the management committee for financial approval and adherence to ICSE's strategic vision. Once approved, it is submitted to QQI for validation, and the quality assurance and programme development manager becomes the point of contact for the awarding body.

## 4.7    MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

Staff induction and the staff handbook include information on ICSE's mission statement and values. During induction and training, all new employees are briefed on the quality-assurance aspect of their roles and on their responsibility for the overall integrity of the programmes they deliver. Tutors are given copies of all ICSE QA procedures and processes upon employment, and are briefed on the KPIs against which they will be measured. This ensures that ownership of QA processes exists throughout the organisation at every level.

The academic committee discusses quality assurance at its scheduled meeting each quarter and reviews performance against KPIs as well as the findings of all internal and external reports during that period.

The academic committee feeds its information on quality to the management committee in advance of its meeting, and addresses governance issues on the teaching and learning area.

The quality committee, which meets every certification period, feeds back the findings of the internal verification, external authentication, and results approval processes to the academic committee, and identifies areas for improvement from these reports.

The tutor panel also feeds back to the academic committee monthly with any recommendations or issues from their tutor calls.

Implementing all of these levels of ownership of quality assurance ensures that QA is managed at every level of the organisation.

# 5. DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO TRAINING AND QUALITY

## 5.1  QA 2 : DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO TRAINING AND QUALITY POLICY STATEMENT

| Reference | QA 2 |
|---|---|
| Statement | ICSE believes that a key part of ensuring quality is in documenting how we deliver that quality. To this end, we have a policy of documenting all of our policies and procedures in a format that is clear, transparent, and easy to understand. We believe that with our mission statement and commitment to quality as a template, all of our policies and procedures should be uniform and provide an easily read, understood, and fit-for-purpose quality control system. |
| Owner | Management committee<br><br>Academic committee |
| Responsibilities | Managing director<br><br>Business manager<br><br>Quality assurance and programme development<br><br>Regional lead tutors<br><br>Tutors |
| Version | 1.1 |
| Revised on | October 2018 |

## 5.2  QA PROCEDURE DEVELOPMENT

ICSE's academic committee approves all new QA procedures as required. As part of the review process, they also review existing procedures and amend as necessary to ensure they remain current and fit for purpose as the organisation grows. Any staff member or learner can make suggestions for new procedures or improvements to the QA procedures. The academic committee also benefits from the insights of the external FE experts, who are members of the committee bringing independent critical thinking and impartiality to the process. Where required, the academic committee may also invite specific individuals with particular knowledge or experience to help develop and review policies and procedures. Any

new or reviewed procedure will be added to the policy and procedure framework in the required format.

Once determined by the academic committee, final approval for all new and amended procedures is done by the management committee.

## 5.3 DOCUMENTATION FRAMEWORK

A QA framework requires a documented approach to provide structure and enable staff to deliver a proper QA system. All QA documents are owned and controlled by the QA and programme development manager and are made available to staff via Dropbox. This ensures that every staff member has access to the correct documents on their role in the organisation and in a wider context to all other QA procedures.

## 5.4 POLICY AND PROCEDURE TEMPLATES

ICSE recognises the need to have a consistent and uniform approach to designing policy and procedure. To do this, we have developed policy and procedure templates. Each policy and procedure is version-controlled and has a policy owner and revision date. The revision date will then fall in line with our overall monitoring process and ensures that each procedure is being regularly reviewed.

The quality assurance and programme development manager has overall responsibility for the control of the document framework. They ensure that each policy:

- contains a policy title and a reference number
- contains a policy owner and a policy statement
- contains a list of people with responsibilities under the policy heading
- contains a version number and a revision date
- is clearly written and easy to understand
- fits with ICSE's vision and values and aligns with our commitment to quality for QQI accreditation.

For each procedure the programme and quality assurance manager ensure that for each procedure there is:

- a procedure title and reference number
- a reference to the policy to which the procedure relates

- a step-by-step guide to follow for employees and/or learners
- contains a version number and a revision date
- is clearly written and easy to understand

## 5.5 DOCUMENT CONTROL FRAMEWORK

All documentation is numbered and version-controlled and held on a master document control spreadsheet, which is owned and controlled by the quality assurance and programme development manager. This master file contains a list of all ICSE policies, procedures, and forms.

Course material is also version-controlled and held on a master file. This documentation is stored on the shared Dropbox for employees to access, and is updated by the QA and programme development manager following recommendations from the tutor meetings, quality assurance committee, or academic committee. The version control and update log of this material is also kept in the Dropbox folder.

All documents necessary to deliver ICSE's training services are reviewed by the QA and programme development manager to ensure they remain fit for purpose and up to date. Access to the documents is via a shared Dropbox account, which ensures that staff can only use the current approved version of each document. Factors to be considered in making amendments to documents may include:

- changes in client or stakeholder requirements, including updates from the awarding body
- feedback from employees, learners, or external experts
- findings arising from internal audits
- regulatory or legal changes.

# 6.  PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

## 6.1    QA 3: PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY STATEMENT

| Reference | QA 3 |
|---|---|
| Statement | It is the policy of International Centre for Security Excellence (ICSE) to ensure a safe, enjoyable, and impactful learning environment. We do this by providing state-of-the-art training facilities and health and safety arrangements. The safety and well-being of our employees and learners are of paramount importance. We provide the facilities, resources, and support necessary to enable our employees to deliver a world-class learning experience for our learners. This ethos runs through the organisation and applies to our premises, our products, and our employees. |
| Owner | Management committee<br>Academic committee |
| Responsibilities | Managing director<br>Business manager<br>Quality assurance and programme development<br>Regional lead tutors<br>Tutors |
| Version | 1.1 |
| Revised on | October 2018 |

## 6.2    NEW PROGRAMMES

ICSE takes an open-minded approach to identifying needs for new programmes. We are open to suggestions and input on new programme development from a range of internal and external sources. Where a perceived need is identified, it will be explored and discussed openly in the organisation. Some potential sources of training needs may come from:

- external market research or emerging government data
- client requests
- learner evaluations and feedback
- meetings of the academic or management committee
- professional development seminars and conferences or activities of other training providers.

Any suggestion for a new programme will be subject to a business proposal per the programme development guidelines.

## 6.3 PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

The programme development process is carried out the same, regardless of the programme type, length, or delivery method. All programmes are based around the proposed learning outcomes for the learner. All of the programme design, delivery, and evaluation processes are designed to meet the learning outcomes identified and required by the learners.

ICSE delivers programmes by a variety of methods, including classroom, blended learning, and online learning. Regardless of the method, each programme of learning will be:

- learner-focused and designed to meet the needs of the learner
- structured and supported in a uniform manner
- influenced by the learning need firstly, and supported by the appropriate technology
- delivered to a high quality with consistency.

Preliminary approval of the business case is required from both the management committee and the academic committee. These groups review the organisational resources required and the overall suitability of the programme for learners and from an organisational perspective.

The programme development and quality assurance person will carry out the initial proposal in this area, as any suggestion put forward for approval must demonstrate that the factors outlined below will be met in order for the proposal to proceed.
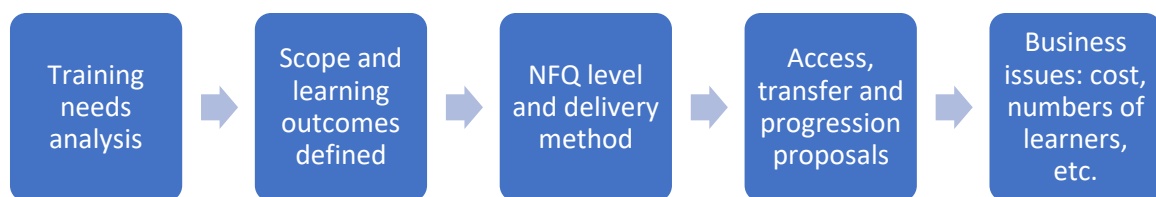


Figure 4: Programme development process

This process will rely on and generate a range of evidence, such as:

- potential QQI award module and programme descriptors
- proposed learning outcomes
- draft programme outline and module descriptor
- any external inputs, such as external expert input or market research reports.

Once preliminary approval has been granted by the management committee and academic committee, a development team is formed to begin designing the programme structure, delivery, and assessments. The development team will devise:

| Programme structure and layout | → | Learner entry criteria | → | Delivery methods and breakdown | → | Assessment tools |
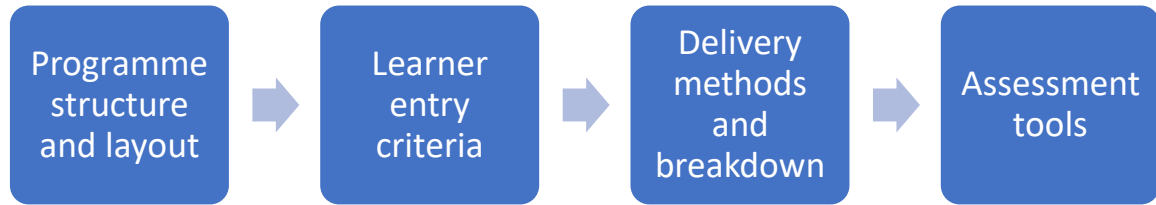
Figure 6: Programme development contents

When developing the a programme at this preliminary stage the programme development team will outline the following:

| Area | | Programme Design Team Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| Programme structure and layout | Classroom, blended or other | QA and Programme Dev |
| | Full time or part time | Tutors |
| | Duration | Tutors |
| | Directed and self-directed hours | Tutors |
| | Programme mapping to award | QA and Programme Dev |
| | Programme outcomes | QA and Programme Dev |
| | Award learning outcomes | QA and Programme Dev |
| Learner entry criteria | Learner profile | Tutors |
| | Language requirements | Tutors |
| | Technical requirements | SME |
| | Entry requirements | Tutors |
| | Access and Transfer | QA and Programme Dev |
| | Administrative supports | QA and Programme Dev |
| | Learner supports | Tutors |
| | Recognition of Prior learning | QA and Programme Dev |
| | Reasonable accommodation | QA and Programme Dev |
| Delivery methods and breakdown | Teaching and learning methods | Tutors and SME |
| | Technology | SME |
| | Content overview | Tutors |
| | Content delivery methods | Tutors and SME |
| | Tutor specification | QA And Programme Dev |
| Assessment tools | Map to award assessment | QA and Programme Dev |
| | Assessment breakdown | Tutors |
| | Assessment instruments | Tutors |

All documentation is reviewed by the academic committee, and this gives final approval before submitting the QQI validation application. The quality assurance and programme development will ensure that before submission, the programme file contains the following:

- programme outcomes map to award learning outcomes
- QQI module descriptor
- programme content
- programme assessments
- programme marking scheme
- guidance documents for tutors
- CV and job specification for tutors
- validation application forms
- relevant QQI policies and guidelines
- blended learning and technology guidance where required
- programme delivery schedule
- learner entry requirements
- letter or report of approval from the academic committee
- resource and equipment list.

### 6.3.1 Writing Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are written considering the level and nature of the programme and the learner profile. The programme design team are guided in this process by Blooms Taxonomy (Figure 5)
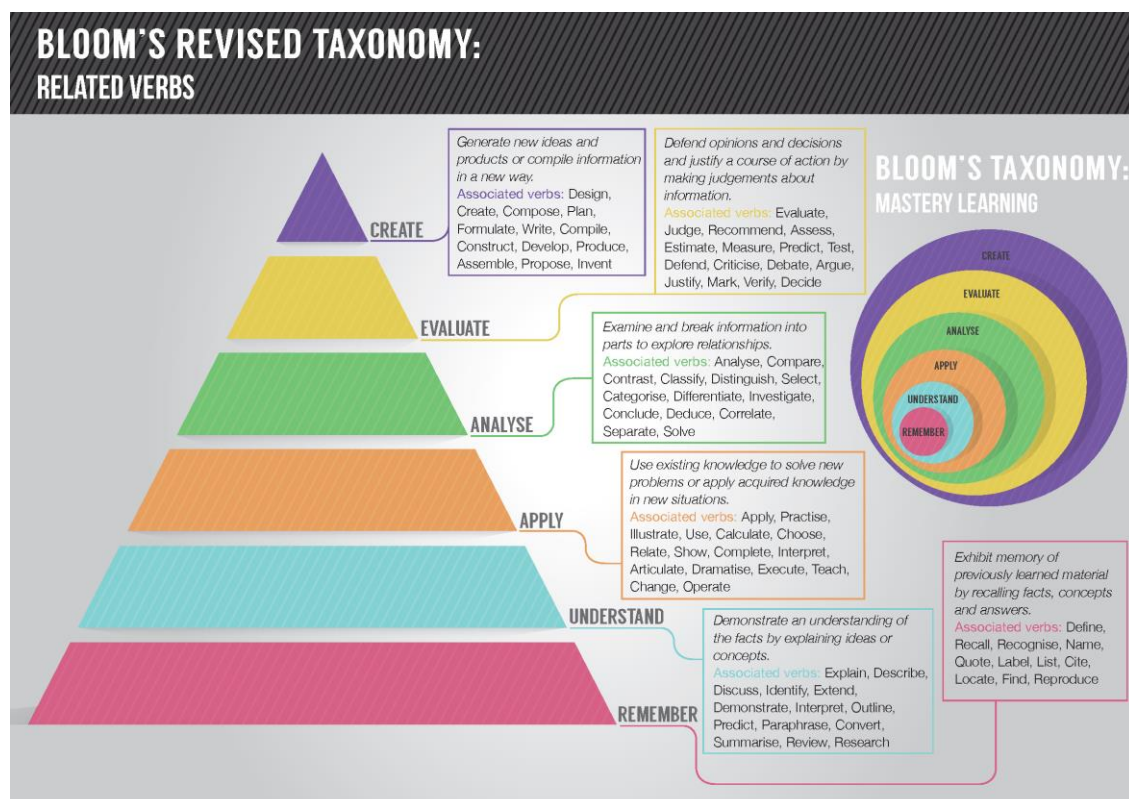


Figure 5. Blooms Taxonomy

## 6.4    PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Once a new programme has been approved through QQI's validation process and approved for the PAEC, the programme development and quality assurance compiles a panel of suitably qualified tutors from existing staff or newly recruited tutors. The regional lead tutors must identify the tutors required for their training centre from the panel and assist in local recruitment where required.

Once the validated programme is fully resourced, and per the programme delivery schedule, it is the responsibility of the business manager to schedule and market the programme to the public or to the specific client for whom it was designed.

## 6.5    CONSISTENCY OF DELIVERY

ICSE ensure a consistent delivery of our programme through a combination of thorough design of the programme material, tutor documentation and ongoing audit and monitoring of tutor delivery. We have a range of instruments in place to ensure consistent delivery across centres. These include:

- Detailed programme specification and lesson plans for each programme outlining timelines for delivery and content to be covered.
- Ongoing tutor audits carried out by QA Manager or senior tutors, leading to constructive feedback and monitoring of tutor performance, including delivery to the lesson plan.
- Delivery standardisation exercises at tutor meetings where tutors deliver sections to the group and are critiqued by their peers on consistency to the programme material.

### 6.5.1   Consistency of material

All programme material is held in a central secure file storage. Course material approved for delivery is uploaded to OneDrive and marked as approved by the Quality Assurance and Programme Manager. The following steps are in place to ensure consistency of delivery material:

- Tutors access the material on OneDrive prior to each session.
- All material is version-controlled, and only the most recent version is available.
- Changes to material are communicated via e-mail to inform all tutors nationwide who are delivering a single programme.
- Programme-delivery monitoring checks that the correct material is used.
- All learner support material is stored in the Downloads section of the ICSE website.
- All learners download the same material regardless of where they are attending the programme.
- Tutors are unable to make unilateral changes to programme material.

## 6.5.2 Monitoring of delivery consistency

ICSE have measures in place to ensure that where programmes are delivered in multiple locations, these programmes are consistently delivered to the same high standard and in a standardised way. These measures include:

- Centrally managed training delivery material
- Detailed and standardised lesson plans and delivery schedules for tutors across locations and delivery methods
- In-person and remote tutor visits to ensure adherence to lesson plan carried out by the QA and Programme Development Manager
- A reporting system (noncompliance form) for tutors to communicate non-adherence to lesson plans
- Where a tutor reports a noncompliance, they are contacted by the QA and Programme Development Manager by phone to provide the required supports to bring the programme back to standardisation.
- Where noncompliance to consistency of delivery is discovered during a tutor audit, the programme may be supported by additional tutors or have the delivery schedule extended to ensure ongoing compliance.

## 6.5.3 Noncompliance

Where a tutor finds that their delivery of a programme has moved outside of the delivery timeline or content, they should follow the procedure below:

- Attempt to bring the programme back in line by the end of the training day. This can be achieved by shortening of breaks (where appropriate), extension of training day or shortening of ice-breaker or group exercises.
- Report the noncompliance to the QA and Programme Development Manager using a noncompliance form at the end of the training day outlining the cause of the issue and the action taken to rectify it.

- Where a programme cannot be brought back into the prescribed timeline or delivery format by the end of the training day, the tutor will complete a noncompliance report outlining the issue and any support they require to rectify it.
- The QA and Programme Development Manager will review the report and organise support in the form of tutor resources or content resources as required.
- There is a no-blame policy for reported noncompliance's to schedule.
- The QA and Programme Development Manager collates all non-compliance reports and reports issues to the Academic Committee and tutor group.

## 6.6    LEARNER ADMISSION

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

Entry requirements to all programmes are set out clearly on the fact sheets on the ICSE website. The fact sheets also form the basis for all ICSE marketing and promotional activity and make it clear to prospective learners what the entry requirements are. All learners admitted to programmes undertake the 'Learner's journey', outlined in Appendix 2, which ensures they are on a programme suitable to their 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 a learner is unsuccessful in gaining admission to an ICSE programme, they are informed in writing of the reasons for this and of the appeals process. They 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 the learner's file.

Procedures are in place for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) for access to all ICSE programmes. Any 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.

### 6.6.1 English language guidelines

ICSE have a large cohort of 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 required English language standards required to be admitted to the programme.

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

We have produced the guidelines below for learners and tutors. The guidelines are available to learners on our website prior to booking any programme and must be agreed to in order to proceed. They are reproduced below as they are printed on the website and in the learner handbook.

1. Based on our experience, ICSE recommend that learners 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 number of sites like http://www.examenglish.com/leveltest/index.php
2. If after undertaking this test, a learner believes their level of English is at a suitable level to attend, then they are entitled to book a place. However, ICSE may require proof of your level at a pre-course interview.
3. ICSE will accept the opinion of a tutor regarding a candidate's ability to effectively communicate in English to the standard required to pass the assessments.
4. If ICSE feel that a candidate's level of English comprehension is not good enough to pass the training programme, they will be informed by their tutor at pre-course interview stage. If this happens, candidates will be removed from the programme.

5. It is a learner's responsibility to ensure that they have the right level of English before attending. Once a candidate attends a training programme, they will not be refunded payment if their level of English is not at the standard.

6.  If a learner attends our programmes and their level of English does not meet the required standard, they will not be permitted to sit the course. They will be allowed to return and attend the course again free of charge at a later date when their level of English is at the required level. The minimum level B1 is outlined below.

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

8. If a candidate is unhappy with their tutor's decision concerning their level of English comprehension, they can appeal any such 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 below 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.

### 6.6.2   Pre-Course Interview

All learners are required to attend a virtual pre-course interview prior to beginning a programme. The interview takes place virtually 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. An 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.

Where the tutor has concerns over language levels, individual learners are invited to an individual meeting to check that they have a B1 language certificate or to undertake a language assessment with a tutor. Learners who complete this assessment 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.

## 6.7 LEARNER PROGRESSION

All ICSE promotional material includes references to the transfer and progression options available to learners as applicable to each programme. The learner journey also contains information post-course on transfer and progression options for learners. Due to the short nature of ICSE programmes, a transfer option may not be applicable to the programme. In some cases the transfer option may include transfer to another ICSE programme of a similar nature. Transfer and progression options are available publicly on our programme fact sheets before and after registration.

## 6.8. PROGRAMME REVIEW

ICSE is committed to the ongoing review of its programmes in order to enhance the effectiveness of its service delivery to learners. This includes ensuring that the relevance of content is up to date and fit for purpose, and ensuring the availability of appropriate facilities and resources to deliver this content effectively. It also ensures that assessments are kept current and continue to reflect the updated content as required.

There is a documented review schedule for programmes delivered by ICSE and a documented process for completing these reviews. Each programme will be reviewed once every five years at a minimum or if significant changes are required by legislative or industry change in the relevant sector. New programmes will be reviewed within the first year of delivery. A programme review team will conduct the review. This team will consist of the most applicable internal experts for the programme as well as an external sector expert.

Evidence used in this review will include:

- programme validation packs
- programme descriptors
- programme content
- assessment instruments and assignment briefs
- feedback from tutor meetings
- relevant QQI policies and procedures
- relevant industry or statutory materials
- learner feedback and evaluations.

The programme review team will identify where programme objectives are being met or not, and where improvements can be made. They will then make recommendations in their report to the academic committee, who will approve or deny the relevant changes.

The programme review process is outlined in the figure below:

| Programme review team | Review | Recommendation |
|---|---|---|
| • Team formed<br>• Timeline established<br>• Data identified<br>• Data collected | • Programme assessed against objectives<br>• Tutor feedback<br>• Learner feedback<br>• Content reviewed<br>• Assessments reviewed | • Recommendations formed<br>• Report completed<br>• Academic committee decision<br>• Next review scheduled |
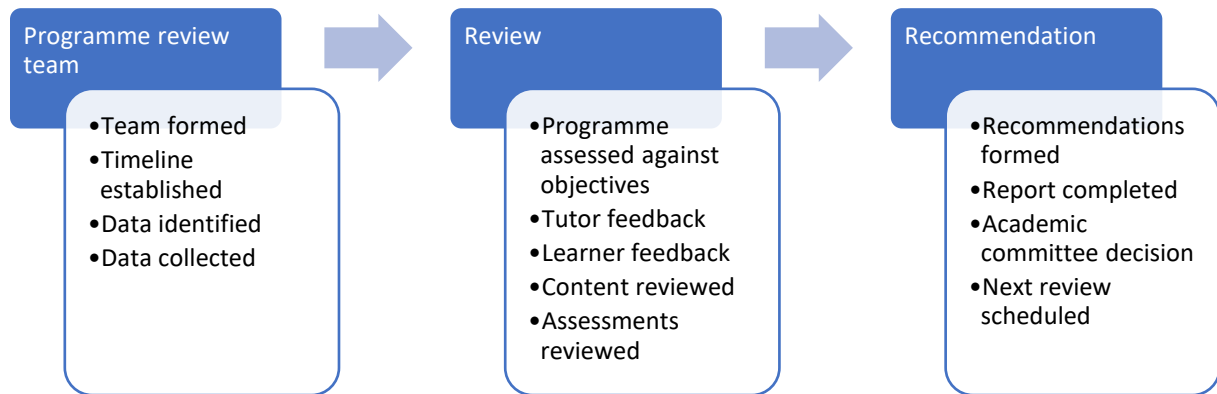
Figure 7: Programme review process

## 6.9. PROTECTION OF ENROLLED LEARNERS

Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) is a legal requirement for providers to put in place arrangements to ensure that if a programme of education and training ceases prematurely, learners will be able to complete a similar programme with another provider, or have their money refunded. Due to the nature of short courses provided by ICSE, there is no requirement to have PEL arrangements in place.

## 6.10. REVALIDATION OF PROGRAMMES

In addition to scheduled programme monitoring arrangements, the quality assurance and programme development manager and course administrators maintain a log of programme revalidation dates (normally every five years or such date as agreed between ICSE and QQI).

# 7. STAFFING: RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

## 7.1 QA 4: RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY STATEMENT

| Reference | QA 4 |
|---|---|
| Statement | It is the policy of International Centre for Security Excellence (ICSE) to provide the highest quality of training provision, which exceeds national and international standards. We will put in place a recruitment and staff development structure which ensures that all training staff possess the skills, knowledge, and qualifications necessary to deliver training to the required standard. Excellence in human resources management is vital to the success of ICSE. In recognition of this, the managing director will ensure rigorous staff recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that the correct candidates are employed.<br><br>Following employment, all employees will be encouraged to further develop themselves professionally through both formal and informal methods. ICSE will at all times facilitate and manage the professional development of its team.<br><br>In order to provide guidance and structure to ICSE employees in the implementation of this policy, we have designed a number of associated procedures which must be adhered to in all cases. |
| Owner | Management committee |
| Responsibilities | Managing director<br>Business manager<br>Quality assurance and programme development<br>Regional lead tutors<br>Tutors |
| Version | 1.1 |
| Revised on | October 2018 |

## 7.2 STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

The true value of any company is in its employees' ability to deliver on the company vision. With this is mind, ICSE recruits only those employees with the correct level of knowledge and skills we require to work in our company. We do this first through careful design of our

roles, definitions, and selection criteria. This is supplemented by a thorough application and interview process, including screening and probation. This ensures that all staff meet the academic, operational, and quality requirements of the organisation.

ICSE's recruitment and hiring process meets all legal and regulatory requirements, such as the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015.

Job specification and selection criteria have been designed for each job in the organisation. All applicants are judged objectively against these criteria. All interviews are carried out by suitably trained and subject-matter-specific staff. The selection criteria are outlined in the table below:

| Job Specification | Recruitment | Selection |
|---|---|---|
| Job specification designed | Applications received and reviewed | Interviews carried out |
| Specific qualifications defined | Applications scored against criteria | Candidates scored |
| Selection critieria decided | Candidates shortlisted | Results reviewed |
| Recruitment needs analysis | | Candidates informed |
| Job advertisement placed | | Contract offer |
| | | Induction planned |
| | | Development plan designed |

Figure 8: Candidate selection process

### 7.2.1   Recruitment Needs Identification

Recruitment needs are discussed at management meetings as and when any employee feels there is a requirement. Views will be brought to the meeting, and the head of centre will consider all parties' views.

The first part of the needs assessment is a feasibility check by the head of centre in relation to the position, taking into consideration:

- the tasks that need to be fulfilled
- existing employee resources in the company
- payroll budgets
- company forecast
- company structure.

If the head of centre decides that a vacancy exists and recruitment is necessary, we will design selection criteria based on the role definition, or design a new role definition should the position not exist in the company.

### 7.2.2 Role Definitions

Role definitions are in place for all company positions. They can be found in the role definitions procedure. Role definitions are subject to change only at the discretion of the head of centre or following a strategic review of the role.

### 7.2.3 Selection Criteria

Selection criteria will be drawn up for the role, taking into account:

- role definition
- qualification requirements
- number of hours
- geographical requirements.

Once some selection criteria have been established, the vacancy will be advertised in the most appropriate public forum.

### 7.2.4 Application Process

ICSE will request all applicants to supply a current CV and cover letter in reply to our advertisements in advance of an application deadline. Once the application deadline has passed, we will screen all applicants for suitability against our selection criteria. Only applicants who meet the selection criteria will be shortlisted for interview. All shortlisted applicants will be contacted and given a prescribed time for interview.

### 7.2.5 Interview Process

All applicants who attend for interview will be asked to complete an ICSE application form (Form 009) prior to attendance. Applicants will be interviewed by their direct reporting manager. All applicants will be given the same time frame for interviews and will be asked the same questions. ICSE is an equal opportunities employer and will give consideration to all applicants based on the selection criteria.

If the direct reporting manager feels that a candidate or candidates have met the selection criteria, they will be forwarded to the head of centre for final approval. Once the head of centre has approved the candidate, ICSE will conduct reference checks before making a formal job offer.

### 7.2.6 References

All ICSE employees are required to furnish two references on their prior employment record or character. These references may be written or in the form of contact details of parties who can provide the relevant information on the candidate.

### 7.2.7 Induction

All new hires receive induction training upon joining to enable them to integrate and become productive in their job roles from the start of their career with ICSE. The quality assurance and programme development manager organises an induction programme for tutors and support staff covering the first 1–2 weeks' activities, to familiarise them with internal systems and processes, together with on-the-job training. A staff handbook is also provided as a reference item for new hires.

### 7.2.8 Probationary Period

All ICSE employees are hired subject to a 6-month probationary period. This may be extended by the head of centre to 12 months in some cases. During this probationary period, the employee or the head of centre may terminate the employment with one week's written notice. When the probationary period expires, the employee becomes a permanent staff member.

## 7.3 Staff Development

ICSE is committed to the ongoing training and development of its entire team. It is only through continuous academic and professional development that we can continue to provide the highest-quality training. ICSE encourages, nurtures, and supports its entire training team to continually expand and increase both their professional and pedagogical knowledge base in any way which meets and enhances the company mission statement and ethos. We do this through a system of appraisal, goal setting, and monitoring of continuous professional development.

A budget for staff development is set aside each year by the managing director in the organisation's overall financial plan, to ensure that resources are available for staff training and development. Every staff member is encouraged to develop themselves academically and technically through advances in learning practices and technology.

### 7.3.1 Appraisal and Review of Staff Development

All staff will have a formal annual review with the head of centre to discuss their current performance, goal setting, KPIs, and development plan. The development of all employees will be driven by the employee themselves and will be supported and monitored by the head of centre. The basis of the formal appraisal will be the employee's appraisal document, which will be completed by the employee and the head of centre at each appraisal.

For new employees, the review process will take place every three months for the first year of service and then revert to annual reviews for the following year.

### 7.3.2 Planning for Development

Each employee will retain a personal development plan and continuous professional development log. All employees are expected to set out their yearly development goals prior to appraisal and to design a timeline for completion. This will be submitted to the head of centre for discussion at the employee's appraisal meeting. The head of centre and the employee will then design a development plan to support the employee and ensure there is adequate support from the company to achieve it.

During the course of the year, CPD will be discussed monthly as part of the trainers meeting. Trainers are encouraged to speak about development opportunities and resource material which may benefit themselves or other members of the team.

While the company will support employees in their development, overall ownership of the personal development plan will lie with the employees themselves.

### 7.3.3 Development Areas

ICSE is committed to developing all employees in their field of professional expertise. We are aware of our responsibility to ensure that our training team are developing their pedagogical and subject-matter knowledge, skills, and competencies. Our continuous professional development matrix has been designed to ensure that our training team are improving their knowledge, skills, and competencies in both areas. We also encourage trainers to keep up to date with emerging practice and research in their fields of expertise.

### 7.3.4 Continuous Professional Development

All employees must complete and document continuous professional development training in their areas of development on an ongoing basis. We have designed a weighting system for tracking CPD of all employees. The company recognises various methods of CPD, such as:

- formal accredited training courses leading to qualifications on the NFQ in a professional field
- formal accredited training courses not leading to qualifications on the NFQ in a professional field
- formal accredited training courses with international qualifications
- online and e-learning programmes
- conferences, seminars, and presentations
- relevant reading materials from professional field or pedagogical subject matter
- periodic subscriptions to professional journals
- memberships of trade or professional bodies.

The company may consider other forms of professional training and development at the discretion of the head of centre.

### 7.3.5 Weighting for CPD

| Type of Development | Professional Development Area | Pedagogical Development Area |
|---|---|---|
| • Formal accredited training courses leading to qualifications on the NFQ | 100 points | 100 points |
| • Formal accredited training courses not leading to qualifications on the NFQ | 50 points | 50 points |
| • Formal accredited training courses with international qualifications | 50 points | 50 points |
| • Online and e-learning programmes | 30 points | 30 points |
| • Conferences, seminars, and presentations | 10 points* | 10 points* |
| • Relevant reading materials from professional field or pedagogical subject matter | 20 points** | 20 points** |
| • Periodic subscriptions to professional journals | 10 points | 10 points |
| • Memberships of trade or professional bodies | 10 points | points |

*per day of attendance at conference or seminar
**per book or research paper

Each member of the team must complete CPD to the value of 100 points annually and must track their CPD on their appraisal document on an ongoing basis.

### 7.3.6 Company Support

As part of the company's commitment to staff development, we will endeavour to support employees in their studies. Company support may be financial or facilitation of time for study at the discretion of the head of centre. Each employee is responsible for seeking the support of the company with their development.

### 7.3.7 Key Performance Indicators

The head of centre, in conjunction with each employee, will set key performance indicators for their role during their formal appraisal. These KPIs can include meeting their CPD requirements. KPIs may be changed during the year by the head of centre, in line with business requirements.

### 7.3.8   Developing Staff for Blended Learning

ICSE has a recent emphasis on the future development of employees to design, deliver, and assess blended learning programmes. All employees are encouraged to attend programmes of training and conferences in this area.

### 7.4   COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF

The business manager is responsible for general staff communications via the staff group messaging and email systems. The regional tutor teams meet regularly to discuss local issues, and these are fed back via the lead tutor to the relevant managers. The management team have a regular team meeting on Monday morning, and minutes of this meeting are shared by email with all concerned. All staff have regular review meetings with managers, providing a forum for two-way communication and identification of any training and development needs.

# 8. TEACHING AND LEARNING

## 8.1 QA 5: TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY STATEMENT

| Reference | QA 5 |
|---|---|
| Statement | It is the policy of International Centre for Security Excellence (ICSE) to ensure a safe, enjoyable, and impactful learning environment. We will do this by providing state-of-the-art training facilities and health and safety arrangements. The safety and well-being of our employees and learners are of paramount importance. We will provide the facilities, resources, and support necessary to enable our employees to deliver a world-class learning experience for our learners. This ethos runs through the organisation and applies to our premises, our products, and our employees |
| Owner | Management committee<br><br>Academic committee |
| Responsibilities | Managing director<br><br>Business manager<br><br>Quality assurance and programme development<br><br>Regional lead tutors<br><br>Tutors |
| Version | 1.1 |
| Revised on | October 2018 |

ICSE is fully committed to monitoring and enhancing the learning experience of our students on an ongoing basis, with a view to improving the quality of its teaching and learning across all programmes. We use a process of continuous review and improvement which provides opportunities to improve the quality of delivery across the entire business.

## 8.2 THE 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 training centres 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 of our programmes. Processes are used to monitor learning experiences on an ongoing basis, both day-to-day and through formal review processes.

## 8.3 THE LEARNER PATHWAY

ICSE has developed a learner pathway (Appendix 2) as a standardised model to represent the journey that a learner takes before, during, and after their training programme with ICSE. This pathway allows both ICSE and the learner to visualise where they are in their journey and can highlight any areas to the learner where they may need support. It also allows learners to see the progress they have made and what the next steps are. ICSE have tried to automate much our pre-programme interaction with learners. The general steps in the learner journey are:

Step 1(a): Learner first contact via telephone or email with the office. Fact sheets are sent and the learner is directed to the registration site.

Step 1(b): Learner first contact with the office is via a funding body. Funding is processed and learner is registered

Step 1(c) : Learner first contact is via the website and they are automatically registered on the programme.

Step 2: Learners are registered on the programme and the LMS send pre-course materials and joining instructions to the learners

Step 3: Learners details assigned to programme and tutor

Step 4: Learners with specific needs or reasonable accommodation requests are contacted and engaged before the programme. Reasonable accommodation requests and other additional supports are agreed with the learner in advance.

Step 5: Learner induction takes place on the first morning of a programme. Every learner completes an online pre-course interview before starting a programme. English language assessments are carried out at this point with learners about whom tutors have concerns.

Step 6: Programme delivery and learner interaction. Ongoing monitoring and feedback on learner performance.

Step 7: Programme assessments (with learner supports where necessary)

Step 8: Marking of assessments and verification and authentication of results

Step 9: Results and certification (including appeals process if required)

## Figure: ICSE learner Journey



**Step 1**
Attendance List and contact details supplied to Administration

**Step 2**
Indirect Learning Resources sent to learners

**Step 3**
Leaners loaded into LMS system (if applicable)- Final joining instructions sent to confirmed attendees

**Step 6**
Programme Delivery

**Step 5**
Learner induction

**Step 4**
Stakeholder engagement: On site meeting with key contact

**Step 7**
Programme Assessments

**Step 8**
Marking of assessments

**Step 9**
Certifications posted to client contact

Figure 9: Learner Pathway

Learners who fall out of the pathway at any point after registration are diverted back to Step 3 and 4 for further engagement.

### 8.3.1 Postponed programmes

Where a decision is taken to postpone a course, we attempt to offer the affected learners a range of options to ensure that they are able to complete their 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 which suits the learner
- Accommodating the learner on a similar programme in a different location.

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

- The decision to postpone is taken no less than 2 days before the proposed start date of the programme.
- The Business Manager informs the administration team of the decision to postpone and of the proposed alternatives for the learners to avail of.
- The administration team access the CMS and contact each learner on the telephone. They speak to each learner and offer 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 email 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 conforming postponement.
- Learners who are unhappy with the postponement are passed to the Managing Director for resolution.
- Alternative arrangements for each learner are updated in the CMS, and new joining instructions are issued to the learners.

## 8.4 RETENTION OF LEARNERS

We have a high retention and completion rate on our programmes, for a number of reasons:

- Practical admissions and entry requirements
- Interactive and engaging training programmes

- High frequency of programmes, meaning learners have access to alternatives to complete the programme
- A wide range of learner supports and reasonable accommodation options to ensure learners have options to re-engage and complete a programme.

### 8.4.1   Failure to attend

The signed attendance sheet for every programme is photographed and sent to the office by 11:00 on the first morning of every course. The administration team compares the actual attendance to the registered attendees and identifies learners who have not attended the programme. Administration 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.

### 8.5   PEDAGOGICAL METHODS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

ICSE takes into consideration the correct pedagogical approach to teaching and learning for all of its programmes. This consideration is in place throughout the design, delivery, and assessment phases of the programme. It includes ensuring that the tutors selected to deliver the programme have the required subject knowledge and also the correct pedagogical skills to deliver that programme. The selection of appropriate pedagogical methods can be evidenced in:

- the programme validation documentation
- the programme module descriptor and lesson plans
- the programme assessment briefing and tutor instructions.

ICSE's approach focuses on aligning the teaching and learning methods used in designing the learning outcomes, delivering the programme, and assessing the learning outcomes, achieving a balanced approach to teaching and learning across these areas to accommodate a range of learning styles and methods.

## 8.6 Monitoring Learners' Experiences

ICSE outlines the learning process and requirements in the programme fact sheets provided on its website. This helps to inform learner expectations and supports prior to enrolment and commencement of any training programme.

Where learners register online for programmes, the system is designed to prepare them for autonomous, independent learning using technology supports; this includes online links to pre-course materials and study supports. Learners are also made aware that their engagement with the programme is a core part of the learning experience.

### 8.6.1 Setting Learner Expectations

Learner expectations about their teaching and learning experience are set prior to beginning any programme with ICSE. This is done in a number of ways:

- Programme outcomes, delivery methods, and assessment methods are delivered clearly to learners before the course.
- Learner supports and study guides are provided upon registration.
- Access to course administrators via phone and email is provided prior to attending a programme.

During the programme, the learning experience and learner expectations are monitored in a number of ways:

- consistent feedback from tutors on learner performance and assessment
- informal feedback from learners to tutor
- access for learners to course administrators to raise issues.

### 8.6.2 Post-Programme Monitoring

Following each programme, the learner's experience is gathered both on programme evaluation sheets and through our E-Komi feedback service:

- The learner evaluation sheet is designed for two purposes. First, questions are asked about the tutors' performance and adherence to quality procedures in areas such as information on assessment and appeals. Second, there are a range of questions to gain insight into the learners' overall learning experience while on the programme.

- ICSE also uses an independent online evaluation service, E-Komi, where learners can provide anonymous and independent feedback on their learning experience. This information is then published directly on the ICSE website, where potential learners can view the learning experiences of previous learners.
- ICSE also uses social media platforms such as Facebook to encourage learners to give feedback on their learning experiences.

### 8.6.3  Contingency Planning

There are contingencies in place for issues that may arise during a programme which may affect the learners' experience. These contingencies include plans for staff cover for illness or other absences, and learner supports for issues which may arise. There are also in-built contingency plans for technology issues and failures during a programme.

### 8.7  BENCHMARKING

To ensure that ICSE's teaching and learning meet best practice, ICSE does benchmarking exercises with the aim of comparing experience with other QQI providers of a similar size and scope of provision. The head of centre decides on these benchmarking reviews, which are designed to monitor alignment with best practice and to identify opportunities to improve. Comparison reports are shared with the partner provider, for mutual benefit, and with ICSE's academic committee to consider the findings.

### 8.8  LEARNER SUPPORTS

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

### 8.8.1  Access to Learner Supports

As part of the pre-programme information process, each learner is given a Learner Handbook as a reference guide for their programme of study. Learner supports are designed to help develop learners' confidence and independent study skills, including:

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

In addition, tutors and administrators will respond to queries from learners during day-to-day programme delivery, alerting the quality assurance manager to any areas of concern or potential areas for improvement. The academic committee will monitor feedback on learner supports as part of its academic oversight brief, making recommendations for enhancements to the management board via the training manager.

### 8.8.2   Generic Learner Supports

ICSE has built generic learner supports into the design of its programmes and facilities, to ensure that our learners have optimum learning environments. 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
- ongoing feedback from tutors, including summative and formative feedback on assessments.

### 8.8.3   Additional learner supports

Where it is agreed that a learner requires additional or individual supports during a programme, ICSE will do all that we can to support learners, within the confines of programme specification and award module descriptor. These supports will be decided on an individual bass and documented on a learners file.

The supports will be agreed between the tutor, the learner and the 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.

### 8.8.4   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 ICSE provides 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.

From the initial point of contact with the office, ICSE administrative staff ask appropriate questions to assess learners' reading and writing abilities and to uncover any potential challenges. This is done verbally with all learners who contact the office. Each learner also receives a joining instruction email detailing our access and supports for learners. The learner is again encouraged to contact the ICSE office with any concerns or for any support they may require. Where issues are identified to the administration team, they will be communicated to the course tutor prior to the programme via the Learner Group Summary Sheet.

### 8.8.5   Identification of Learner Issues during Training

Where learners enrol on an ICSE training programme without any contact to the office, i.e. via online application, they may have done so with the help of another person. On the first morning of any training programme, all learners are given a registration form to complete in writing. The programme tutor will speak to each learner individually at this time, and review their registration form for accuracy. Where the tutor identifies an issue with reading or writing ability, the learner will be offered support confidentially.

The programme housekeeping slide is discussed at the beginning of every day of each programme and covers our learner supports. Learners who require support are encouraged to speak to their tutors confidentially. Prior to each assessment on every programme, the assessment brief is delivered to all learners. This includes supports for learners with learning difficulties. Learners are again encouraged to ask for support if required. Where a learning, reading, or writing difficulty is identified by a tutor, this will be communicated confidentially to the administrator, who will update the Learner Group Summary Sheet and inform other tutors on that programme that the learner will require support.

### 8.8.6 Learning Support Training for ICSE Staff

All ICSE tutors and administrative staff receive training in assisting learners with learning, reading, or writing difficulties. All of our tutors have many years of experience and qualifications in teaching adult learners, including those with learning, reading, or writing difficulties. ICSE continue to provide our training and administrative teams with ongoing training and information in supporting learners throughout their time with the company.

All administrative staff are trained in identifying learners with learning difficulties during induction. Implementation of this training is then monitored on an ongoing basis by the business manager. All tutors receive specialist training in our policies at induction, including the supports available for learners with learning difficulties. The effectiveness of our learner supports are reviewed monthly by the training team at our tutor meetings or calls, and recommendations are fed back to the academic committee and management committee where required.

# 9 ASSESSMENT

## 9.1 QA: 6 ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT

| Reference | QA 6 |
|---|---|
| Statement | ICSE is committed to planning and undertaking all assessments in a way that ensures that the quality and integrity of the training programme and its learning outcomes are protected. 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 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. |
| Owner | Management committee

Academic committee |
| Responsibilities | Managing director

Quality assurance and programme development

Regional lead tutors

Tutors |
| Version | 1.1 |
| Revised on | October 2018 |

## 9.2 QQI ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

ICSE 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

## 9.3 THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The ICSE assessment process has five key steps that ensure the integrity of our assessment strategy:



Figure 10: Assessment process

| Process | Control measures |
|---|---|
| Planning and assessment | • Assessment instruments planned per the programme validation guidelines<br>• Assessment briefs and marking schemes clearly defined<br>• Assessment monitored by tutors in a controlled environment<br>• Security of assessment procedures in place<br>• Feedback on validity of assessments given to academic committee<br>• Assessment reviewed annually as part of the external evaluation of programmes |
| Internal verification | • Appropriate sampling strategy designed and implemented<br>• Marking monitored for accuracy through sampling<br>• Assessments reviewed for anomalies<br>• Feedback generated for EA and RAP |
| External authentication | • EAs selected and engaged with specific subject matter experience per award<br>• Cross-moderation of results checked across centres and tutors<br>• Appropriate sampling strategy designed to ensure fair reflection of results<br>• Results sampled against learning outcomes and assessment instruments.<br>• Feedback generated for RAP as required. |
| Results approval | • Results approval panel approves assessment results<br>• QA checks and sign-off on assessment results prior to certification<br>• Notify learners of assessment outcomes<br>• Provides feedback to academic committee and management committee |
| Appeals | • Appeal process notified to learners in advance of programme<br>• Appeal process highlighted with results to learners<br>• Appropriate time limits and conditions applied |
| Certification | • All results compiled, checked, and uploaded on QBS (QQI Business System)<br>• Any invalid learners or results under appeal are flagged to QQI<br>• QQI issue award certificates via ICSE to learners |

## 9.4    ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

The specific assessment techniques used will depend on a programme's specification and validation documents. ICSE has developed a range of assessment methods and instruments to reflect the programmes' validation requirements. These include hard-copy written assignments and practical sessions as detailed below. ICSE adopts a streamlined and consistent approach to assessment material. Each assessment will have tutor guidance, learner brief, and a detailed marking scheme as well as outline solutions to the assessment where appropriate.

Learners are required to complete various assessments throughout a programme, in order to demonstrate that they have reached the standards of knowledge, skill, and competence identified in all the learning outcomes. The various assessments ensure that the programme assessments cater for a range of learning styles, including theoretical and practical learners. The assessments may use one or more of the following techniques:

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

## 9.5    GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT DESIGN

All of our assessment methods are guided not only by the validation requirements but also by a number of other factors, detailed below, which are taken into consideration when designing assessment instruments:

- consistent with ICSE values and mission
- aligned with the validation and specification requirements
- clear in their design and purpose to tutors and learners
- designed to be fair, transparent, and reflective of the programme material
- evidence-based for ease of internal verification and external authentication.

## 9.6 ASSESSMENT PLANNING

When designing an assessment, the relevant information is taken from the validation documents and used as a framework to design an appropriate assessment instrument. The assessment instrument will include:

- assessment schedule
- information for learners on commitment and responsibility for assessment
- identification and accommodation of learners' special requirements to complete assessment
- marking details
- method of feedback
- appeals process for learners
- outline solutions
- risk assessment or safe system of work during assessment, where appropriate.

## 9.7 SECURITY OF ASSESSMENTS

The integrity and security of the ICSE assessment arrangements will influence the credibility of the programme and award and the confidence of learners in training with us. We recognise that all learning assessments may present different challenges in terms of integrity, plagiarism, and security. In order to ensure that the integrity and security of our assessments remain intact, we have designed:

- secure storage of assessment in training centres and training venues
- submission certificates for work completed outside of the classroom, verifying that the work is the students' own work
- examination rooms controls and guidance for tutors
- regular review and changes to assessment instruments
- learner records retained for review.

## 9.8 PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the act of copying, including or directly quoting from, the work of another without adequate acknowledgement. The submission of 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 purposes 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. Whilst 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 requires to be appropriately investigated and acted upon.

ICSE divides plagiarism into two forms:

- Accidental plagiarism – which arises when 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 having not been 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 an awareness of plagiarism procedures.

### 9.8.1   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:<br><br>Instances in which the suspected plagiarism is a first offence and represents poor academic practice. Such cases include:<br><br>- Innocent misuse of materials from other sources<br>- Citation issues such as poor referencing, inappropriate paraphrasing<br>- Heavy use of source material without sufficient work by candidate to support<br>- 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.<br><br>Guidance to learner to ensure that a similar incident does not arise.<br><br>A warning to the student about future instances. |

| High-level plagiarism:<br><br>Major cases are those which may include, for example:<br><br>• A second offence where the student has been in receipt of an earlier warning for a similar act<br>• Reproducing multiple sections in full without acknowledgement of the source<br>• Taking essays from the internet without revealing the source<br>• Copying all or much of the work of a fellow student with, or without, their knowledge or consent. | ICSE investigation<br><br>Zero marks awarded for assessment.<br><br>Zero marks awarded for programme. |
|---|---|

### 9.8.2    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 and that an investigation will take place in writing
- 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) at the next Academic Committee meeting for discussion.

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.

## 9.9  CONSISTENCY OF ASSESSMENTS

As a nationwide training provider, ICSE recognises the need to ensure that the implementation and marking of assessments are consistent across training centres and tutors. We ensure this in a number of ways:

- Assessment materials are consistent and specific across all programmes.
- Cross-moderation and standardisation exercises are completed by tutors at tutor meetings.
- Sampling strategies for internal verification and external authentication are designed to include cross-tutor and cross-centre samples.
- Marking scores are retained across centres to highlights issue or anomalies in marking and scoring.

## 9.10  INTERNAL VERIFICATION

We have procedures in place to confirm that our assessment procedures have been applied consistently across all our assessment activities and that our assessment results are recorded accurately. The administrator acts as our internal verifier. The head of centre is responsible for ensuring that the internal verifier(s) has adequate training, expertise, resources, and time to complete internal verification (IV) to a high standard. Our internal verifier carries out verification using our step-by-step IV and our sampling strategy. We sample 25% of the assessment portfolios.

We complete a checklist for internal verification for each certification period. When carrying out IV, the internal verifier checks for:

- missing or inappropriate evidence
- missing or inappropriate assessment briefs
- data omission, or transcription/calculation errors
- inaccurate data entry – award codes, name spelling, results, etc.
- provisional outcomes.

The internal verifier monitors for any discrepancies, irregularities, or deviations from the normal distribution of marks at the internal verification stage, paying particular attention to the work of recently recruited assessors, and highlights any discrepancies or irregularities in marking and grading to the quality assurance manager.

The internal verifier completes the process by completing the internal verification report, signs it, and makes it available to the external authenticator in advance of authentication. This report confirms the outcome of the IV. It captures evidence that the IV has taken place, acknowledges strengths, identifies any gaps and areas for improvement, and highlights areas of concern which may warrant corrective action:

- The internal verifier makes arrangements for external authentication and liaises with the external authenticator before, during, and after the authentication visit and makes sure that all is in order.
- Our internal verifier attends our results approval panel meetings to present the internal verification report and discuss issues highlighted in it.
- We record any issues identified by the internal verifier in the results approval panel report.

### 9.10.1 Internal Verification Process

QQI defines Internal Verification (IV) as the 'process by which the provider's assessment policies and procedures are checked by the provider itself'. ICSE uses IV for every period where we are submitting results for certification to QQI. This happens up to six times annually, in keeping with the QQI certification calendar. The internal verifier(s) will be appointed in advance of each certification deadline, considering the number of learners being submitted and the range of programmes to be verified. The IV process involves:

- verifying that our assessment procedures have been applied across the range of programmes
- confirming assessment results by checking that sufficient and reliable learner evidence exists and that marks and grades are recorded correctly
- checking that the required standards have been reached in terms of signatures, dating, and supporting evidence
- checking that sufficient and reliable evidence has been presented for all learner assessments, including video, oral, and projects
- identifying any irregularities following internal procedures
- identifying models of good practice; giving positive feedback where possible.

### 9.10.2  The Internal Verifier

The internal verifier is the administrator and is always independent of the tutors whose work is being verified. The internal verifier will receive specific training for the role from the quality assurance officer in areas such as:

- fair and consistent assessment of learners
- internal verification role and reporting
- external authentication process and timetable
- results approval panel function and report contents.

### 9.10.3  Internal Verification Documentation

The internal verifier(s) will be supplied with the following information by the quality assurance manager to facilitate their role:

- copy of component specification for the module or award
- the provider's validated programme from QQI
- assessment plan and lesson plan
- results by learner group by minor award report from QBS
- assessment briefs as given to learners
- examination paper
- marking schemes and outline solutions.

### 9.10.4  Internal Verification Procedure

After selection of an appropriate sample, the internal verifier will ensure that:

- Assessment procedures from our QA agreement with QQI have been followed for each learner group and component (module).
- All learner results are totalled correctly in the portfolio and transferred to the marking sheet.
- Results have been correctly transferred to the Results Summary Sheet.
- Evidence in each portfolio matches the techniques in the component specification or validated programme, and work is signed and dated by the learner, indicating that it is their own work, and signed by the tutor.
- Percentage marks and grades allocated are consistent with QQI grading bands.
- Sufficient and reliable evidence has been presented for all learner assessments presented.
- The internal verifier will indicate on the Provisional Results Sheet which portfolios have been internally verified by ticking the learners' names.

- All supporting materials, including photographs and copies of identification, are present for each portfolio.
- Any issues and areas of good practice are identified on the internal verification report, which is completed on the ICSE IV report template.
- Any major issues are communicated immediately to the head of centre.
- The IV report is made available to the external authenticator prior to their visit.

## 9.11  EXTERNAL AUTHENTICATION

The External Authentication (EA) process is an external review of ICSE assessments, to ensure its consistency with QQI standards, the module component specification, and best practice. EA provides independent and authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners, in line with national standards. ICSE's external authentication processes are designed with reference to:

- QQI Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for External Authenticators, revised February 2015
- QQI Quality Assuring Assessment: Guidelines for Providers, revised 2013

### 9.11.1  Role of the External Authenticator

ICSE engages an external authenticator for each certification period to:

- provide independent confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners
- ensure that assessments have been marked in a valid and reliable way, are compliant with the requirements for the award, and meet the national standard for the award.

The role of the authenticator includes:

- Confirm the fair and consistent assessment of learners, consistent with ICSE's procedures and with QQI's policy on quality-assuring assessment.
- Review the internal verification report and authenticate the findings and recommendations of the report.
- Apply the ICSE sampling strategy to moderate assessment results as they see fit but within the remit of the external authenticator's guidelines.
- Moderate assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the award specification.
- Carry out a site visit which can include meeting with appropriate staff and learners.
- Participate in the results approval meeting if requested by the head of centre.

- Identify any issues or irregularities in the assessment process and identify areas of good practice employed by the centre.
- Produce a report using ICSE's external authentication report template. The report will contain information in a clear and usable format to help the results approval panel in making decisions based on its contents.
- Recommend results for approval.

ICSE devises an external authentication plan for each certification period, which:

- establishes the number of awards on offer in its provision and the number of learners in each of those awards
- selects and assigns one or more external authenticator for each minor award or group of awards based on broad subject-matter expertise
- agrees a date and location for external authentication, and ensures that the relevant documentation (such as a confidentiality agreement and EA contract) is agreed in advance.

### 9.11.2  External Authenticator Selection Criteria

ICSE appoints an external authenticator against the following criteria:

- have technical/subject-matter expertise in the appropriate award area or field of learning
- have experience of delivering programme assessment or work in the industry or field in which they are authenticating
- have the qualities necessary to interact with learners, assessors, and senior staff members
- have administrative and IT skills, e.g. report writing, time-management skills
- undertake to operate within the code of practice and guidelines issued by QQI, [www.QQI.ie/QQI/documents/QA_Assessment_Guidelines_for_External_Authenticat ors_v1.0.doc](www.QQI.ie/QQI/documents/QA_Assessment_Guidelines_for_External_Authenticat ors_v1.0.doc)
- are available per agreed schedule and timescale
- are independent of ICSE and not from a provider or body competing with ICSE.

### 9.11.3  External Authentication Documentation

The quality assurance manager submits the following documents to the external authenticator to facilitate their role:

- copy of component specifications for the module or awards
- provider's validated programme from QQI

- assessment plan and lesson plan
- results by learner group by minor award report from QBS
- assessment briefs as given to learners
- examination papers
- marking schemes and outline solutions
- the internal verification report.

### 9.11.4  Moderation of Results

The external authenticator moderates assessment results across a number of awards in a specific field or sub-field of learning in which they have relevant expertise. This is done by judging the marked evidence presented according to the standards outlined in the award specification.

The external authenticator ensures that all learner evidence has been assessed both fairly and consistently and that ICSE is fulfilling its commitment to learners in terms of feedback on assessment, learner supports, and key steps including: :

- The head of centre is responsible for selecting, contracting, and quality-assuring a suitably qualified external authenticator.
- We contract an external authenticator based on their suitability for the role as outlined in the QQI policy 'Quality Assuring Assessment, Guideline for Providers', section 4.3.2, and based on the selection criteria (Section 7.2.3) we have in place.
- We have a contract and guidelines that we issue to our external authenticator prior to appointment, detailing what is involved and what our expectations are.
- The internal verifier makes their report available for review by the external authenticator prior to authentication.
- The external authenticator completes the external authenticator report, which is made available to the results approval panel.
- We maintain a panel of external authenticators, and we do not contract the services of the same external authenticator for more than three successive certification periods.
- We quality-assure the external authenticators we use and retain evidence of this for monitoring.
- We inform relevant staff and trainers that the external authenticator may need to contact them while they are authenticating.
- Authentication is carried out in line with our sampling strategy.
- The authentication report is retained and submitted to QQI upon request.

### 9.12 RESULTS APPROVAL

The purpose of the results approval process is to ensure that results are fully quality-assured and signed off by the provider prior to submission to QQI for certification. This involves establishing a results approval panel and includes systems for submitting learner data and results (QQI Quality Assuring Assessment: Guidelines for Providers, revised 2013).

### 9.12.1 The Results Approval Panel

ICSE has a results approval committee who meet in each certification period before results are submitted to the awarding body. This committee consists of:

- head of centre (who chairs the meeting)
- internal verifier
- quality assurance manager
- The external authenticator may also be invited to attend if their report has produced significant findings that need to be discussed at the meeting.

### 9.12.2 Results Approval Panel Meeting

The results approval panel (RAP) meets once the external authentication report has been received. The committee considers the findings of both the IV report and the EA report. The committee decides whether the findings of either report require action or not. If no action is required, this is documented by the quality assurance manager on the results approval panel report, and the results are submitted by the business manager for certification. If minor errors have been made, the RAP makes recommendations and these are passed by the quality assurance manager to the relevant departments in ICSE.

### 9.12.3 Corrective Action

Corrective action refers to an action taken or implemented by the provider to correct or deal with any errors, omissions, or deliberate acts by staff or learners which may impact on the validity of the assessment process (QQI).

The internal verifier highlights serious issues that affect the integrity of the results, notes any irregularities (e.g. learner results or evidence missing on the internal verification report), and makes recommendations for corrective action. The internal verifier raises the issues at the RAP meeting. The panel decides on an appropriate course of action and makes a plan for

corrective action if required. The internal verifier is responsible for ensuring that the plan for corrective action is implemented, and this is reviewed at the next RAP meeting.

When this happens, the RAP will withdraw the affected results from the submission and submit the remaining results for certification. If the submission has significant issues, it will not be submitted until the following period or when the investigation is complete. Affected learners will be made aware of this.

### 9.12.4   Result Approval Panel Documentation

The results approval panel will be supplied with the following information by the quality assurance manager to facilitate their role:

- agenda
- results by learner group by minor award report from QBS
- the internal verification report
- the external authentication report
- any other documents referenced in either report that may require action.

### 9.12.5   Results Approval Panel Report

The results approval panel will produce a report of its findings after each certification period which documents all findings from both the IV and EA and any corrective actions taken on these matters. It will also contain any recommendation to be forwarded to the relevant ICSE departments by the quality assurance manager. The report will be signed by the head of centre.

### 9.12.6   Issuing of Results

Following sign-off and approval of the results by the panel, the internal verifier immediately issues a statement of results to learners. Learners are informed about the ICSE appeals process in the cover letter and are given a minimum of 14 days from the date of issue of the statement of results in which to lodge an appeal. individual statements of results for learners are printed off from the QBS.

### 9.12.7  Submitting for Certification

The internal verifier submits all approved results to QQI via the QBS as soon as they are signed off by the results approval panel, and makes a request for certification. At the point

of requesting certification, the internal verifier confirms that ICSE has implemented all elements of the authentication process, including internal verification and external authentication, and has adhered to all agreed procedures. ICSE has checks in place to ensure that results submitted are correct.

## 9.13 LEARNER APPEALS

The ICSE appeals process enables the learner to appeal:

- the assessment process, if they perceive that there have been any irregularities or inequality in its implementation
- their assessment result.

ICSE will ensure the following:

- Information will be given to all learners on the appeals process, via the pre-course information available on the website and also as part of the course induction.
- The appeals process includes the procedures and deadlines for submitting an appeal.
- The learner must lodge their appeal in writing directly to ICSE. A minimum of 14 days will be allowed for a learner to lodge an appeal.
- A fee of €50 will apply per appeal and will be returned to the learner if the outcome of the appeal is successful.
- Only evidence that has previously been presented by the learner, and has been retained by ICSE following the initial assessment, can be considered as part of an appeal. No new evidence can be submitted.
- All assessment evidence as required by the component specification or validated programme module must be available for the appeal. Any evidence not available will be assumed not to have been completed or submitted.
- ICSE will process the appeal within a reasonable timeframe and will ensure that the appeal assessor is not the original assessor.
- As noted above, learners are notified of the Appeals Process in the Learner Handbook which outlines the following in relation to appeals:
  - o Learners are informed of their right to appeal the outcome of an assessment. Once final and approved results have been issued to the learner, a learner may initiate an appeal.
  - o Notice of an appeal must be submitted on the appeal request form.
  - o Learners who wish to lodge an appeal may do so on payment of the standard fee per appeal. This fee will be returned to the learner if the appeal is successful.

- The learner has 14 working days from the date of the provisional results being issued to lodge an appeal. Any applications for appeal received after that date is not considered.

ICSE will inform the learner of the outcome of the appeal within a reasonable timeframe.

Following completion of the appeals process, ICSE will inform QQI of any successful appeals (e.g. changes in the assessment grades awarded). QQI will then make any required amendments to grades on QBS and will reissue an award certificate for the learner.

# 10 SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

## 10.1 QA 7: SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS POLICY STATEMENT

| Reference | QA 7 |
|---|---|
| Statement | It is the policy of International Centre for Security Excellence to ensure that all learners are given the required amount of support to enable them to successfully participate in our programmes. This includes the provision of adequate physical resources, human support, and speciality resources to facilitate those with learning difficulties.<br><br>Where possible, ICSE will make reasonable accommodation for learners who require additional support to participate in programmes.<br><br>In order to provide guidance and structure to ICSE employees in the implementation of this policy, we have designed a number of associated procedures |
| Owner | Academic committee |
| Responsibilities | Managing director<br>Quality assurance and programme development<br>Regional lead tutors<br>Tutors |
| Version | 1.1 |
| Revised on | October 2018 |

## 10.2 RANGE OF LEARNER SUPPORTS

A comprehensive range of learner supports are available, with information being made available to learners in the Learner Handbook and also ICSE's website. Supports available to learners include:

- One-to-one mentoring support from programme tutors
- Work placement support
- Study Skills handbook
- Admin support
- Peer-to-peer support from other learners via social media forums.

ICSE also maintains an extensive network of contacts with employers in its training sectors and can provide general guidance on employment trends and skill requirements to learners on programmes.

## 10.3 Learner Supports during Programmes

ICSE ensures that the facilities we use are suitable not only for training but for a secure assessment to be undertaken, as far as is reasonably practicable. ICSE is committed to ensuring that our assessment practices facilitate all our learners, so we will take account of the diversity of our learners' needs. The following criteria may need to be adapted to meet our learners' needs:

- Physical access to facilities: Where possible, ICSE ensures that training facilities are wheelchair accessible. Where this is not possible, ICSE will inform potential learners of alternative arrangements where practicable.

- Scribes and readers: ICSE provides scribes and readers to learners where required and where suitable to the assessment.

- Sign language interpreters: Where appropriate, ICSE can provide access to sign language interpreters for learners.

- Adaptation of documents and materials: ICSE can adapt training materials and assessment materials to meet learners' needs . This may include large-format printing, etc.

## 10.4 Reasonable Accommodation

It is the learner's 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 for assessing and implementing reasonable accommodations for the assessment of learners with special requirements requires the learner to:

- inform ICSE of their need for reasonable accommodation and the reason for the request

- liaise with their tutor on the suitability of the accommodation made

- provide any documentary evidence required by ICSE to support their request for reasonable accommodation.

Once confirmed, ICSE will inform the learner of the reasonable accommodation made. Details of all reasonable accommodation requests and arrangements will be reviewed as part of the programme review and discussed at tutor meetings for feedback to the academic committee.

## 10.5 Review of Learner Supports

Feedback on learner supports is taken from a variety of sources, including:

- learner evaluation sheets
- Collect Review website
- feedback to tutors
- social media forums
- tutor meetings

This feedback is collated by the quality assurance manager and fed into the academic committee for review at their meetings. Changes recommended by the academic committee to learner supports are approved by the management committee and communicated by the quality assurance manager to the relevant ICSE departments.

# 11 DATA AND INFORMATION

## 11.1 QA 8: DATA AND INFORMATION POLICY STATEMENT

| Reference | QA 8 |
|---|---|
| Statement | It is the policy of International Centre for Security Excellence to ensure that all information and data in its possession will be maintained, transferred, and retained in a safe and appropriate manner and in keeping with the company's legal obligations as set out in the Data Protection Acts.<br><br>ICSE acknowledges that gathering and analysing information and data are critical for informed decision-making and forward planning. We also acknowledge the risks and responsibilities of gathering and retaining such data.<br><br>All personal data received, transferred, and retained by ICSE will be managed within strict protocols and access levels. Data that is disseminated for analysis outside of these controls will be anonymised, and no personal data will be shared with third parties.<br><br>In order to provide guidance and structure to ICSE employees in the implementation of this policy, we have designed a number of associated procedures which must be adhered to in all cases. |
| Owner | Management committee |
| Responsibilities | Managing director<br>Quality assurance and programme development<br>Regional lead tutors<br>Tutors |
| Version | 1.1 |
| Revised on | October 2018 |

## 11.2 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

ICSE recognises that information and data can be a powerful business resource when used correctly. There is also a significant risk associated with collecting and processing information and data that ICSE controls and manages. Protecting our learners' privacy and information is a key business objective for ICSE. The management committee has primary responsibility for information and data management, in line with the following principles:

- Ensuring the security and proper use of all learner data, business information, and other IT assets and infrastructure.
- Safeguarding the security of personal or sensitive information.
- Managing information and data covering a range of media and formats (created, received, stored, and disposed of) in a safe and legal manner.
- Selecting and engaging with specialist external service providers and consultants to maintain IT systems and their integrity and to ensure business continuity.
- Managing the complete lifecycle of all information in line with General Data Protection Regulations and the requirements of QQI and other interested parties.

The management board recognises that information is a key asset of the organisation and should be managed accordingly. Therefore, all staff and contractors are required to maintain and respect the integrity, security, and proper use of all data.

## 11.3 INFORMATION TYPES AND FORMATS

ICSE holds a range of personal data about our learners and potential learners. The types of information stored include:

| Electronic data | Emails |
| --- | --- |
| | Spreadsheets |
| | Electronic documents |
| | Online content |
| Hard-copy data | Registration sheets |
| | Programme paperwork |
| | Letters |
| | Assessment materials |
| Media data | Video files |
| | Photographs |
| | Audio files |

The information stored by ICSE is in a variety of formats, including:

| PCs and laptops | Mobile phones | Social media sites |
| --- | --- | --- |
| USB and CD drives | Voicemail records | Hard-copy documents |
| Internal servers | Cloud servers | Website database |

## 11.4 DATA PROTECTION

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

### 11.4.1  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.

### 11.4.2  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. We obtain this information in order to send the learner 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 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 a passport photograph and 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.

### 11.4.3  Video and Audio Data

As part of the assessment criteria for many of our programmes, we ask learners to demonstrate skills. 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 in the training centres.

### 11.4.4  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. This includes the transfer of written data to electronic means on a results summary sheet which is password protected. We also transfer the personal data of learners to QQI for certification through the QBS certification system, using a secure password and key fob. Access to our password and key fob is restricted to administration staff and the quality and training officer. The password and key fob are both stored securely and separately.

### 11.4.5   Retention and Storage of Data

ICSE retains only data which is necessary to achieve the stated aim for which we have obtained it. We retain learner records only for the period required to achieve certification. Following confirmation of certification, we securely dispose of all non-essential data such as video and audio evidence and learner assessment materials.

All hard-copy personal data is securely stored in locked-file storage at all times. All other data is retained securely in our learner information system for the purposes of accounting and reissue of results. Access to learner information systems is strictly limited to administration staff. All personal data stored in electronic form is password protected.

### 11.4.6  Disposal of Data

We periodically dispose of personal data which is no longer required for the purpose for which it was obtained. All personal data is disposed of securely. This is done in a number of ways:

- All hard-copy personal data, such as learner registration forms, is collected and disposed of by a licensed and regulated external contractor. Our external contractor securely shreds and disposes of all data in compliance with relevant legislation.
- All electronic data is disposed of using specialist data-destruction software packages.
- All video and audio is deleted from recording devices after recording and transferred to a computer for storage. The computer data is then disposed of using specialist data-destruction software.

### 11.4.7  Employee Data

ICSE retains an employee file for all members of staff, including subcontractors, in order to comply with legislation and contractual obligations. This personal data includes:

- personal details such as name, address, date of birth, and telephone number
- PPS number
- photo ID
- bank account details
- next-of-kin details
- educational and work history.

When this data is being obtained, employees are told the reason for it and the process and storage arrangements. All employee information is stored in hard copy in secure file storage. Access to file storage is strictly limited to company management and administration staff. All employees are told at induction of their right to access their personal data and to have incorrect data rectified and updated, and the procedure for requesting access.

Employees are also required to ensure that they keep the company updated with any changes in personal data to ensure that all data retained is accurate and up to date.

### 11.4.8  Access to Personal Data

Anyone from whom we collect, process, or store personal data is entitled to request a copy of this data. To access personal data, they must send a request in writing to the managing director of ICSE. Upon receipt of the request, ICSE will ask the data subject to complete an ICSE access request form detailing the type and level of data requested and the reason for the request. The managing director will respond to all data requests within 30 days of receipt of a data access request.

### 11.4.9  Marketing and Advertising

ICSE will from time to time use email advertising to inform past learners of upcoming courses. ICSE will never market or advertise to data subjects without their express consent in writing to be contacted for advertising. We achieve this through an opt-in-for-advertising area on the registration sheet, where a learner must read, sign, and date a request to be contacted via email for advertising purposes. Data subjects may opt out of this arrangement at any time via email or text message to head office.

### 11.4.10       Data Protection Training

All employees receive training on their data protection responsibilities at induction. ICSE will annually nominate a data protection officer to monitor all of our personal data processes. The data protection officer will do specialist training to prepare them for the role. They will undertake a quarterly review of personal data collected and stored, and advise the administration team on disposal.

### 11.4.11       Breaches of Data Protection Procedures

All breaches of the company data protection procedure will result in an investigation by the head of centre and the production of a corrective action plan. Breaches of data protection procedures may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

## 11.4.12       Reporting of Data Breaches

Where a data breach occurs, the management team will meet and carry out a detailed investigation of the facts. We will then design and implement a corrective action plan to ensure the issue does not recur. Only where a data breach may result in harm, injury, or loss to a data subject will ICSE notify the subject of the breach. If the data breach resulted from a criminal or malicious act, ICSE will contact An Garda Síochána. In both of the above circumstances, ICSE will notify the Data Protection Commissioner immediately in writing.

## 11.5   Service Providers

ICSE maintains a range of information management systems to support its operations, assist in decision-making across the organisation, and enable effective communication and sharing of information with learners and other stakeholders. The main data management platforms used by ICSE are cloud-based and include:

| System | Functions |
|---|---|
| Microsoft office 365 | Email, word processing, and spreadsheets to support both day-to-day office work and mobile working |
| Pipedrive | Customer management system |
| Microsoft OneDrive | Cloud-based file storage used to store video and audio assessment evidence |
| Dropbox | Cloud-based file storage used to store file backups for business continuity |
| E- Komi | Online customer evaluation platform for learners to submit feedback |
| Litmos | Cloud-based LMS used for e-learning programmes |

ICSE uses an external IT service provider to manage our IT system requirements, including:

- website hosting and management
- technical support to employees on IT issues
- backup and business continuity
- remote system integrity monitoring

- server maintenance.

## 11.6  SECURITY SOFTWARE

ICSE has active firewalls, anti-virus software packages, and malware-prevention software on all of its IT assets.

## 11.7  QBS CERTIFICATION DATA

ICSE also maintains access to QQI's QBS system through a password-protected link via www.qqi.ie. This is used by the business manager to upload learner data in support of learner certification and also to access other QQI systems, e.g. validation services and Q-help. The business manager inputs certification data to QBS on an ongoing basis. Access to QBS is strictly restricted to the business manager and quality assurance manager.

## 11.8  PRIVACY POLICY

The information on the storage and use of all personal information is published in ICSE's privacy policy. ICSE's data protection officer is responsible for the maintenance and ongoing review of this policy. It is available to learners and other interested parties on ICSE's website at: www.securityexcellence.net/privacy-policy/ to assist with subject access and similar requests. ICSE maintains and shares data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679.

## 11.9  INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR DECISION MAKING

As indicated in our data protection procedures, all learner information is stored securely in a range of CRM systems and online storage media. Together these platforms provide a range of quantitative and qualitative data to help inform academic and management decision-making. This information is used by both the academic and management committees to help them in their decision-making. Such information relates to metrics including:

- learners' numbers
- geographical performance
- completion rates
- award levels

- grade analysis
- learner feedback.

## 11.10 INFORMATION FOR FUTURE PLANNING

In order to constantly improve our programmes' systems and procedures, ICSE regularly uses statistical information from learners to provide data for future planning. While the use of this information is necessary for commercial reasons, we must ensure that all learner data used is done in a secure manner and not in breach of our responsibilities under data protection legislation.

ICSE uses information such as learner numbers, retention, grades, and programme timings to support future business and academic decision-making. We also use past feedback from tutors, learners, and other stakeholders to inform future changes and improvements to programmes and processes.

## 11.11 RETENTION AND DISPOSAL OF INFORMATION

Learner records are maintained in line with ICSE's privacy policy. In order to deliver its services to learners and to comply with regularity requirements, ICSE maintains learner records from initial engagement to certification from QQI. The types of information held include:

- attendance sheets
- learners' portfolios and exams
- proof of identity
- video, audio, and photographic evidence of assessments
- electronic contact details for learners who have opted into future marketing.

Learner evidence is stored only in hard copy for 1 week before being scanned and stored in OneDrive for inspection or authentication.

For the Level 4 Guarding Skills (4N114) and Door Security Procedures (4N1118) programmes, ICSE is required under the Private Security Authority TP1 training provider standards to retain all course records for 3 years. Individuals having the right to have their information removed on written request prior to expiry of this period.

# 12 PUBLIC AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

## 12.1 QA 9: PUBLIC AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY STATEMENT

| Reference | QA 9 |
|---|---|
| Statement | It is the policy of International Centre for Security Excellence (ICSE) to ensure effective communication with learners, staff, management, stakeholders, and customers who are involved in any aspect of our training programmes. We encourage, grow, and nurture all aspects of communications with these groups in order to deliver a product and service of an extremely high quality. We seek feedback from all parties to ensure our products and services are constantly evolving and improving. The information we provide is disseminated in a timely, accurate, and transparent manner at all times. |
| Owner | Management committee |
| Responsibilities | Managing director<br><br>Quality assurance and programme development<br><br>Regional lead tutors<br><br>Tutors |
| Version | 1.1 |
| Revised on | October 2018 |

ICSE communicates and publishes information about its activities through its website www.securityexcellence.net, social media pages, in hard copy, and through brochures and fact sheets. The website also contains a range of relevant QA policies and our privacy policy. ICSE also uses less formal communication channels, such as telephone, email, social media, and WhatsApp to communicate with learners and tutors.

## 12.2 INFORMATION FOR LEARNERS

ICSE makes it that clear and correct public information is an essential part of the company's brand and reputation. It is also essential to ensuring the learners are fully informed about their programme before enrolment. ICSE is responsible for ensuring that all communications on QQI programmes follow the QQI award and specific validation criteria and that the

information is up to date and correct. All potential learners have access to the following information:

- type of award and awarding body
- full name of the award, QQI code, and NFQ level
- any access, transfer, and progression procedures
- programme duration
- overview of the assessments
- course outline.

## 12.3 Prior Approval of Communications

The programme fact sheets containing this information are on our website and available from our office. The content of this communication is approved in advance by the head of centre.

Approval of public communications depends on the nature of the contents, its audience, and the level of risk to the business. These may include formal company emails, financial reports, monitoring reports, social media posts, and press releases. For most programme-related materials, the quality assurance manager will oversee the design and content, and the head of centre will have final approval. For business and finance-related information, the business manager will have responsibility for the content, and the head of centre will have approval. The table below outlines the type of public communication and the approval process. For lower-risk communications, approval may be granted by a manager.

| Document | Design and content | Approver |
|---|---|---|
| Fact sheets | QA manager | Head of centre |
| Joining instructions | QA manager | Head of centre |
| Learner handbooks | Tutor team | QA manager |
| QA policies | QA manager | Head of centre |
| Customer queries | Administration team | Business manager |
| Customer complaints | Business manager | Head of centre |
| Social media posts | Administration team | Head of centre |
| Business results | Business manager | Head of centre |

# 13 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN TRAINING

## 13.1 QA: 10 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN TRAINING – POLICY STATEMENT

| Reference | QA 10 |
|---|---|
| Statement | ICSE is committed to having an open and honest two-way system of communication with its stakeholders and other parties in the education and training community. We do this through building professional relationships and being supportive to peers and other stakeholders throughout the industry. |
| Owner | Management committee |
| Responsibilities | Managing director<br><br>Quality assurance and programme development<br><br>Regional lead tutors<br><br>Tutors |
| Version | 1.1 |
| Revised on | October 2018 |

## 13.2 BUILDING EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

ICSE recognises that building external relationships with other providers and bodies supports the organisation and its goals. We attempt to provide an open forum in which to discuss current issues and emerging trends in education. By sharing best-practice approaches, we try to enhance the credibility of learning outcomes and awards achieved by learners. Opportunities to develop peer relationships include:

- attendance at conferences, seminars, etc.
- contributions to White Paper responses and other requests from QQI and interested parties
- engagement with other education and training organisations, both in Ireland and abroad, to identify new trends
- benchmarking exercises with other Irish training providers, sharing best practice ideas and approaches
- working with Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and sharing experiences with ETB managers and tutors
- participating in Enterprise Ireland's international education initiatives to help develop global insights on training and education trends.

# 14 SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING, AND REVIEW

## 14.1 QA 11: SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING, AND REVIEW – POLICY STATEMENT

| Reference | QA 11 |
|---|---|
| Statement | ICSE is committed to continually monitoring and improving its training programmes, through the ongoing evaluation of its processes, programmes, and activities. This ensures that the quality assurance system and its processes undergo regular review, with areas for improvement being identified and implemented by the designated committee. |
| Owner | Academic committee<br><br>Management committee |
| Responsibilities | Managing director<br><br>Quality assurance and programme development<br><br>Business manager |
| Version | 1.1 |
| Revised on | October 2018 |

## 14.2 INTERNAL MONITORING OF PROGRAMMES

Our training programmes should prepare learners for the real-life workplace and enable them to tackle future challenges in their area of learning. ICSE achieves this by:

- promoting a culture of learning and discovery in its learner community
- offering learners access and progression opportunities to further education
- encouraging ownership of learning and a reflective-practice approach among learners and tutors.

During a cyclical five-year period, all programmes delivered by ICSE will undergo self-evaluation in order to monitor their progress against their validation objectives. An annual self-evaluation plan is developed by the head of centre in consultation with quality assurance manager and the regional lead tutors, with input from the administration team, before being submitted for approval by the academic committee. Once approved, the self-evaluation plan is implemented by the quality assurance manager. A self-evaluation team for each evaluation project is then formed, containing the QA manager, regional lead tutor, and any external experts required to assist the team.

The focus of the internal evaluation is on compliance with existing validation agreements and improvement of the existing programmes in line with educational or industry best practice.

On completion of each self-evaluation project, the QA manager updates the programme folder with the findings of the review, and, if necessary, implements a programme improvement plan. All self-evaluation reports are considered by the academic committee, which may provide further recommendations for corrective actions, as appropriate.

The steps in the process are:

- agree review plan
- appoint review team
- determine scope and terms of reference
- seek external expertise
- collate programme information and data
- review and prepare report
- team makes findings and recommendations
- develop programme improvement plan
- submit plan to academic committee
- send finalised report and programme improvement plan to QQI
- QA manager makes changes to policies and procedures
- implement programme improvement plan.

## 14.3 EXTERNAL EVALUATION

The value of an external self-evaluation process is also recognised as having benefits to ICSE from the insights of external evaluators (EEs). To ensure objectivity, the EE appointed must be knowledgeable or experienced (as appropriate) in the following areas:

- subject matter
- industry experience
- knowledge of QQI QA systems in education and training
- teaching or training experience.

The EE is independent of programme delivery and is expected to be objective in their recommendations for programme improvement and programme strengths. To help meet all of the above criteria, it may be necessary to engage more than one external evaluator.

## 14.4 Quality System Improvements

One of our key objectives when engaging in the self-evaluation process is to improve the overall quality of the ICSE service to learners and other stakeholders. Our additional external benchmarking exercises also have a role in quality-system improvement, as they provide comparisons with other providers in a similar position to ICSE.

In ICSE the separation of academic and managerial decision-making means that both committees must take individual ownership for their role in self-evaluation and feed back their relevant areas of responsibility into the overall quality-improvement process.

This means that reviews are carried out at a number of interdependent levels in ICSE:
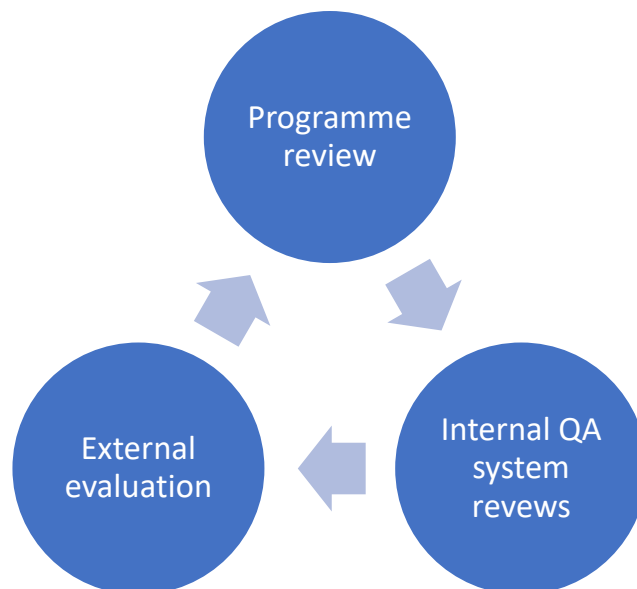


Figure 11: Quality systems structure

### 14.4.1 Programme Review

The programme review team contains the QA manager, tutors, regional lead tutors, and administration staff. They review:

- programme completion rates
- course modules and content
- learner feedback
- tutor feedback
- tutor CPD

- external examiner reports
- course administration
- previous programme improvement plan and implementation
- document controls.

Following this initial level of review, changes and recommendations are made to the ICSE internal review board, such as the academic and management committees.

### 14.4.2   Providers' Internal Reviews

Internally, the management and academic committees carry out a range of reviews at organisational level, reviewing the following areas:

- consistency with values and mission statement of ICSE
- review of QA reports and external reports
- academic strategy, policies, and curriculum development
- learner experiences and outcomes
- current programme portfolio and opportunities for development
- risk analysis, safety, and risk control
- human resources, staffing, and development
- finance allocation and budgets, including sales activity and trends
- upcoming projects, new clients, and process improvement opportunities.

### 14.4.3   External Input

The programme review, academic committee, and management committee take input from external sources in a variety of ways and feed it back into the overall self-evaluation. These inputs include:

- external authenticator reports
- review of external expert recommendations into programme review
- QA reports
- Stakeholder feedback and reports from awarding bodies and regulators, e.g. QQI and Private Security Authority.

# 15 APPENDICES

## 15.1   APPENDIX 1 : TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

**1. Purpose**

The academic committee acts as an independent oversight committee created by the management of ICSE to provide a separation of academic and business decision-making in the organisation and be the primary internal guidance on academic affairs.

**2. Format**

**2.1** Membership of the academic committee will comprise:

- an independent FE education professional (who cannot perform any other duties for ICSE while sitting on the academic committee)
- the quality assurance and programme development manager, who will chair the meeting and act as a liaison with the management committee
- two regional lead tutors responsible for course delivery in different areas
- a learner representative will also be invited to attend.

**2.2** The committee has the discretion to invite any person to attend its meetings to assist with the conduct of its business, including other tutors or with staff from the administration team.

**3. Terms of Office**

The term of office for the independent members of the panel will be 5 years. Independent members may serve two terms of office and will be rotated through so as not be required at every meeting.

**4. Terms of Reference**

**4.1 Teaching, Learning, and Assessment**

**4.1.1** To approve policies and procedures to support all aspects of teaching, delivery, and assessment in ICSE.

**4.1.2** To review and endorse frameworks and procedures for all programmes, appeals, and assessment offences.

**4.1.3** On behalf of ICSE management, to take responsibility for training and education strategy, policy, and procedures for all matters relating to the examination and assessment of students, including but not restricted to:

- ensuring comparability and standardisation of academic standards across regional training centres and programmes
- reviewing issues arising from the reports received from external authenticators, tutors, or learners, together with responses to these reports
- undertaking an annual review of programme completion rates
- preparing an annual action plan for the academic committee for submission to ICSE's management committee.

**4.1.4** To have oversight for the integrity of all assessment work.

**4.1.5** To approve procedures for admission and exclusion of learners.

## 4.2 Curriculum

**4.2.1** To define, monitor, and review ICSE curriculum strategy, together with the policy and procedure for the approval and review of all training programmes.

**4.2.2** To oversee the work of all regional lead tutors and tutors and the QA team, on any matters relating to new programme and course proposals.

**4.3** Quality assurance, process improvement, and enhancement.

**4.3.1** On behalf of the management committee, to define, monitor, and review training and education strategy, policies, and procedures for maintaining and improving academic standards, and for assuring and enhancing the quality of ICSE's educational provision.

**4.3.2** To be responsible for the procedures for internal processes and department reviews.

**4.3.3** To be responsible for the annual programme-monitoring process, by receiving an annual summary report of programme-monitoring outcomes, and considering and acting on any QA or enhancement matters arising from the annual summary report.

**4.3.4** To oversee ICSE's relationship with relevant external bodies. This will include responsibility for any organisation-wide academic review by external bodies. It will also include coordinating the development of ICSE's quality assurance manual in compliance with QQI's Core Quality Assurance Guidelines and any other relevant external requirements; and monitoring the implementation of these policies and procedures.

**4.3.5** To promote quality-enhancement initiatives across the organisation.

**4.3.6** To approve all programme self-evaluations.

## 4.4 Student Experience

**4.4.1** To develop and monitor student learning communities, student health, well-being, best practice, and academic integrity.

**4.4.2** To provide a forum for considering matters of students' personal security.

**4.4.3** To receive and review a report on and review all learners' complaints.

## 5. Conduct of Meetings

## 5.1 Frequency of Meetings

The committee shall meet at least three times per academic year. The exact frequency of meetings will depend on the volume and nature of business. Members of the committee may attend in person or by Skype link, at the discretion of the chair.

## 5.2 Quorum

**5.2.1** A quorum for the committee will be at least three members, with at least one independent education professional member present.

**5.2.2** In the event that they are unable to attend a meeting, a member of the committee may exceptionally arrange for a suitably qualified deputy to attend in their place instead, subject to the prior approval of the chair.

**5.3 Agenda and Minutes of Meetings**

**5.3.1** The agenda is divided into three sections:

a. Adoption of the agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, and matters arising from these minutes

b. Policy and strategy issues

c. Items for formal approval.

**5.3.2** In advance of each meeting (and by a specified deadline), the members of the committee will be requested to notify the QA manager of any agenda items which they wish to have discussed at the meeting.

**5.3.3** The QA manager will keep formal minutes of every meeting of the committee and will circulate these in draft form to all members prior to the next meeting.

**5.3.4** The agenda item 'any other business' will be used only (a) to inform the meeting of agenda items which are proposed for the next following meeting, or (b) to convey briefly other items of information of a factual nature.

**5.4 Decision-Making**

**5.4.1** Where a motion has been put to the meeting, the chair will ask the committee whether or not it assents, and the decision will normally be unanimous. Where there appears to be a division of opinion, the chair will call for a vote; such a vote may also be requested by any member. The results of voting will be counted and recorded by the QA manager.

**5.4.2** The number of votes for and against a motion, and the number of abstentions, will be recorded in the minutes of the committee.

**5.4.3** If the votes for and against a proposal are equal, the QA manager has an additional, casting vote as chair.

**5.4.4** All voting will be by majority vote, with all majority votes requiring the support of at least one independent education professional member to be carried.

**5.4.5** The chair of the committee is empowered to take action on behalf of the committee in any matters which are, in the chair's opinion, urgent (but not of sufficient importance to justify a special meeting of the committee) or non-contentious. The reasons and outcomes of such actions shall be the subject of a formal report by the QA manager to the next committee meeting.

## 15.2 Appendix 2: Learner Pathway

**Learner Pathway**

| 📞 | **First contact** | Admin team take phone calls and details for follow up. |

| ✉️ | **Pre-registration** | Fact sheets and course info sent via email<br>Pre-qualifying checks carried out<br>Directed to booking page |

| 💻 | **Registration** | Registration and booking done online<br>Pre-course material sent to learner |

| 📋 | **Programme** | Course materials<br>Learner supports<br>Mentoring<br>Assessment and feedback<br>Evaluation |

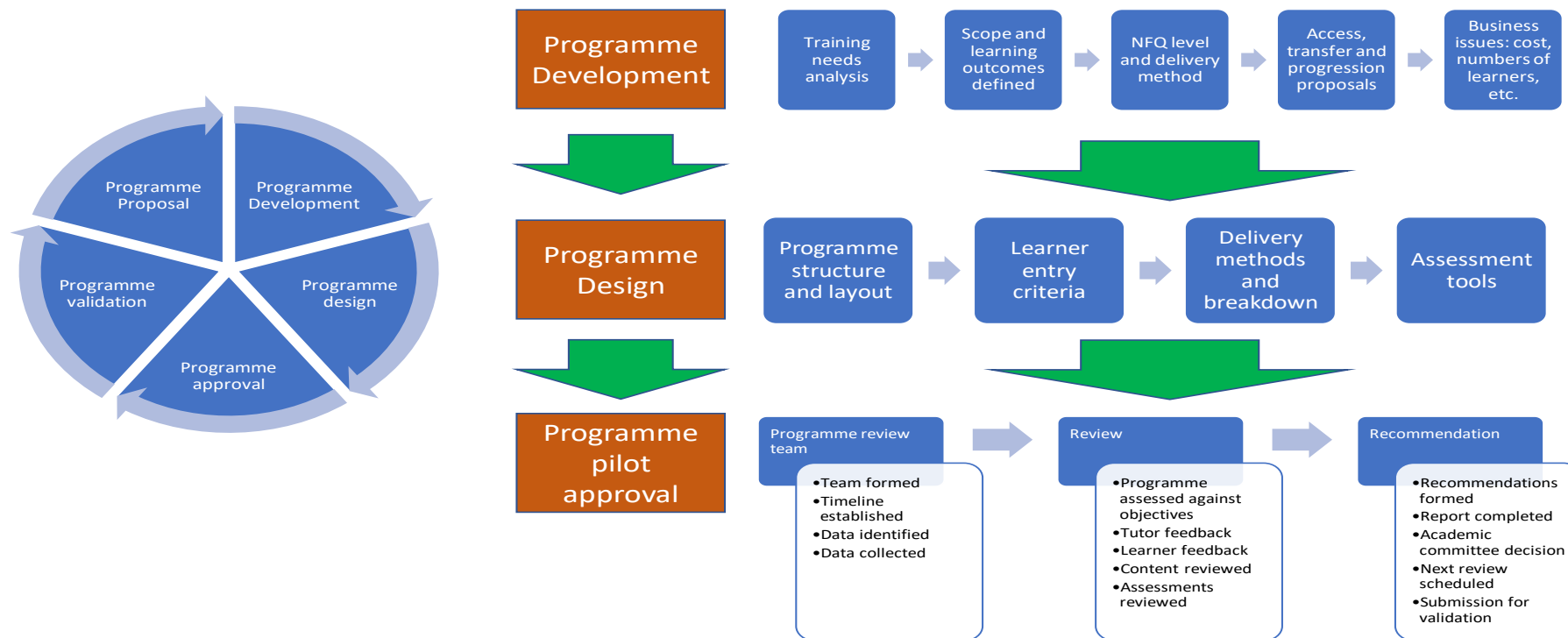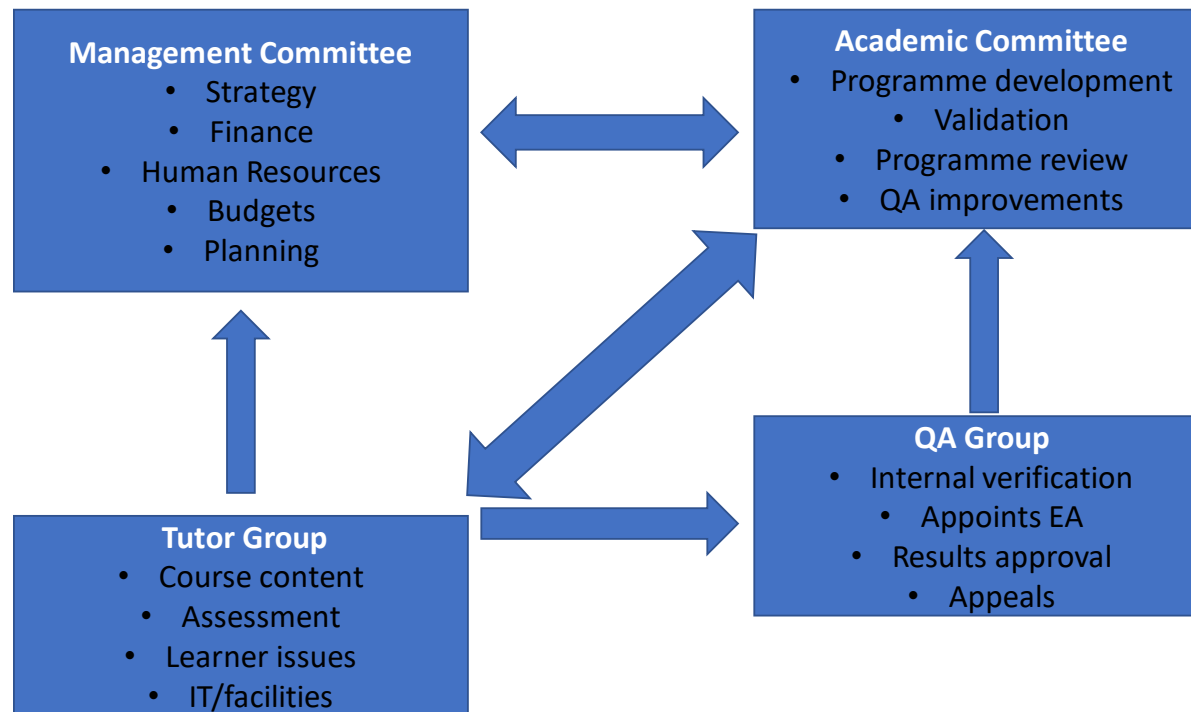| 🎖️ | **Certification** | Results issued<br>Input for certification<br>Certification issues |

### 15.3   APPENDIX 3: PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

## Programme Development Process

## Governance and reporting structures

**Management Committee**
- Strategy
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Budgets
- Planning

**Academic Committee**
- Programme development
- Validation
- Programme review
- QA improvements

**Tutor Group**
- Course content
- Assessment
- Learner issues
- IT/facilities

**QA Group**
- Internal verification
- Appoints EA
- Results approval
- Appeals

## 15.5 APPENDIX 5: ASSESSMENT PROCESS

# Appendix 5: Assessment process

| PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT | → | INTERNAL VERIFICATION | → | EXTERNAL AUTHENTICATION | → | APPEALS, RESULTS APPROVAL | → | APPEALS | → | CERTIFICATION |

| Process | Control measures |
|---|---|
| **Planning and assessment** | • Assessment instruments planned per the programme validation guidelines<br>• Assessment briefs and marking schemes clearly defined<br>• Assessment monitored by tutors in a controlled environment<br>• Security of assessment procedures in place<br>• Feedback on validity of assessments given to academic committee<br>• Assessment reviewed annually as part of the external evaluation of programmes |
| **Internal verification** | • Appropriate sampling strategy designed and implemented<br>• Marking monitored for accuracy through sampling<br>• Assessments reviewed for anomalies<br>• Feedback generated for EA and RAP |
| **External authentication** | • EAs selected and engaged with specific subject matter experience per award<br>• Cross-moderation of results checked across centres and tutors<br>• Appropriate sampling strategy designed to ensure fair reflection of results<br>• Results sampled against learning outcomes and assessment instruments.<br>• Feedback generated for RAP as required. |
| **Results approval** | • Results approval panel approves assessment results<br>• QA checks and sign-off on assessment results prior to certification<br>• Notify learners of assessment outcomes<br>• Provides feedback to academic committee and management committee |
| **Appeals** | • Appeal process notified to learners in advance of programme<br>• Appeal process highlighted with results to learners<br>• Appropriate time limits and conditions applied |
| **Certification** | • All results compiled, checked, and uploaded on QBS system<br>• Any invalid learners or results under appeal are flagged to QQI<br>• QQI issue award certificates via ICSE to learners |

| Process or Function Name: **Programme Delivery Process ICSE** | Date: 18/09/2018 |
|---|---|
| Scope:  Classroom Delivery | |

| Suppliers | Inputs | Processes | Outputs | Customers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tutors | • Course content<br>• Learner/tutor handbook<br>• Assessment materials<br>• Venue RA<br>• Evaluation forms | • Programme delivery<br>• Programme assessment<br>• Paperwork completed | • Completed module assesment Achievement of Learning Outcomes<br>• Learner feedback | • Learners<br>• Academic committee<br>• Programme review team<br>• QQI |
| Administration | • Programme paperwork<br>• Learner list | • Manages non attendance | • Results collated and checked | • Tutors<br>• Business Manager |
| QA Manager | • Designated tutor assigned | • Monitors adherence to programme delivery | • Review learner feedback<br>• Review tutor feedback | • Programme Review team<br>• Academic committee |

## 15.7 Appendix 7: National Framework of Qualifications Grid
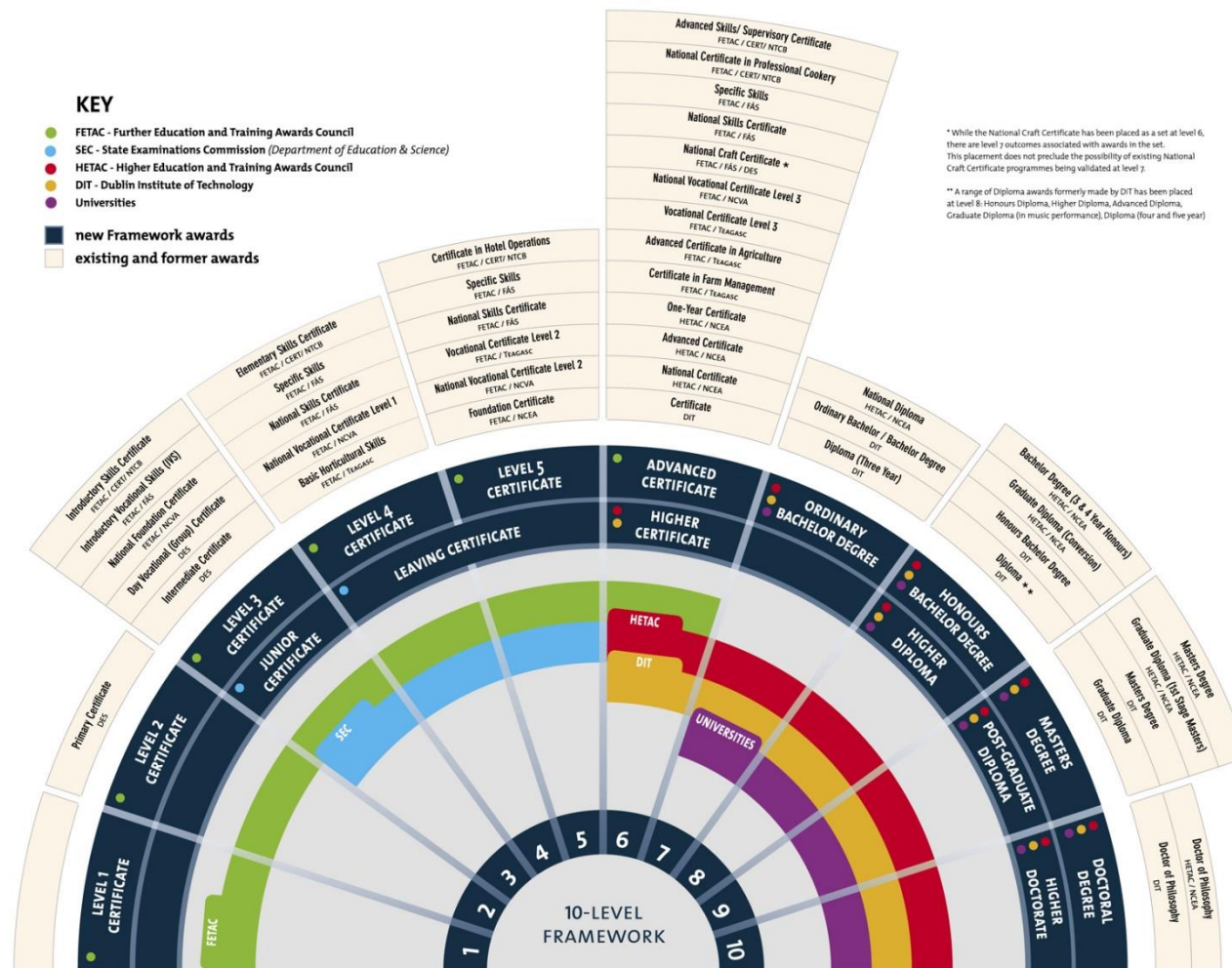


Source : QQI

### 15.8   APPENDIX 8 : TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**1. Purpose**

The management committee acts as an independent oversight committee. It was created by ICSE management and recruitment to separate academic and business decision-making in the organisation and to be the decision-making body for business and resource-related issues.

**2. Format**

**2.1** Membership of the management committee will comprise:

- the Head of Centre, who chairs the meeting

- the quality assurance and programme development manager, who acts as a liaison with the academic committee

- the Business Manager

- the company accountant will be asked to attend at year end to present the company accounts.

**2.2** The committee has the discretion to invite any person to attend its meetings to assist with the conduct of its business, including other tutors or staff from the administration team.

**3. Terms of Office**

The term of office for members of the panel will be 5 years.

**4. Terms of Reference**

**4.1 Finance and resourcing**

**4.1.1** To review previous periods' sales and forecasts for the following period.

**4.1.2** To review and endorse procurement of new products or services.

**4.1.3** To review budget and resource allocation for Head Office and training centres.

**4.1.4** To review upcoming service delivery in line with allocated resources.

**4.2 Staffing**

**4.2.1** To monitor and review current ICSE staffing levels in context with service delivery.

**4.2.2** To oversee the continuous professional development plans of tutors, and to approve costs for upcoming programmes of education for tutors.

**4.2.3** To approve recruitment and selection plans for new tutors.

**4.3 Programmes and procedures**

**4.3.1** To oversee, in conjunction with the academic committee, the education strategy, policies, and procedures for maintaining and improving academic standards, and for assuring and enhancing the quality of ICSE's educational provision.

**4.3.2** To approve any changes recommended by the academic committee procedures for internal processes.

**4.3.3** To approve any new proposed programmes prior to validation.

**5. Conduct of Meetings**

**5.1 Frequency of meetings**

The committee shall meet at least twice per academic year. The exact frequency of meetings will depend on the volume and nature of business. Members of the committee may attend in person or by Skype link, at the discretion of the chair.

**5.2 Quorum**

**5.2.1** A quorum for the committee will be at least two members, one of whom must be the Head of Centre.

**5.2.2** If they are unable to attend a meeting, a member of the committee may exceptionally arrange for a suitably qualified deputy to attend in their place, subject to the prior approval of the chair.

**5.3 Agenda and minutes of meetings**

**5.3.1** The agenda is divided into four sections:

a. Adoption of the agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, and matters arising from these minutes
b. Business and finance
c. Staffing and resourcing
d. Programmes and processes.

**5.3.2** In advance of each meeting (and by a specified deadline), the members of the committee will be requested to notify the Head of Centre of any agenda items which they wish to have discussed at the meeting.

**5.3.3** The Business Manager will keep formal minutes of every meeting of the committee and will circulate these in draft form to all members prior to the next meeting.

**5.3.4** The agenda item 'any other business' will be used only (a) to inform the meeting of agenda items which are proposed for the next following meeting, or (b) to convey briefly other items of information of a factual nature.

**5.4 Decision-making**

**5.4.1** Where a motion has been put to the meeting, the chair will ask the committee whether or not it assents, and the decision will normally be unanimous. Where there appears to be a division of opinion, the chair will call for a vote; such a vote may also be requested by any member. The results of voting will be counted and recorded by the Business Manager.

**5.4.2** The number of votes for and against a motion, and the number of abstentions, will be recorded in the minutes of the committee.

**5.4.3** If the votes for and against a proposal are equal, the Head of Centre is the casting vote as chair.

**5.4.4** All voting will be by majority vote.

**5.4.5** The chair of the committee is empowered to take action on behalf of the committee in any matters which are, in the chair's opinion, urgent (but not of sufficient importance to justify a special meeting of the committee) or non-contentious. The reasons and outcomes of such actions shall be the subject of a formal report by the Head of Centre to the next committee meeting.