

Carlow College, St. Patrick's

2022

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**Annual Quality Report**  
**(Carlow College, St. Patrick's)**  
**Reporting Period 2020-2021**

Carlow College, St. Patrick's

2022

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**Annual Quality Report  
(Carlow College, St. Patrick's)  
PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM  
Reporting Period 2020-2021**

## PREFACE

The **Annual Quality Report (AQR; formerly AIQR)** forms part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) quality assurance (QA) framework of engagement with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The AQR provides documentary evidence of the development and evolution of each institution's internal quality system. It provides QQI with assurance that internal QA procedures have been established and are being implemented consistent with regulatory requirements.

The AQR, particularly part A, should assist with **document management** in the institutional review process and will facilitate institutions in providing review teams with procedural QA documentation in preparation for the external review process. It is an important part of the evidence base considered by external **review teams** as part of QQI's CINNTE cycle of institutional reviews, demonstrating that the institution's internal QA system is aligned with QQI's Core and relevant Sector- and Topic-specific Statutory QA Guidelines, and with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). It enables the review team to satisfy itself of compliance with these requirements for the purpose of the institutional review process.

Each AQR is **published in full on QQI's website**, providing transparency on the HEIs' assurance and enhancement of quality to external stakeholders. (As such, institutions should ensure that their submissions do not contain any data that they consider to be commercially sensitive.) Collectively, the AQRs comprise a single national repository of quality assurance practice in Irish higher education institutions.

Each year, QQI produces a synthesis report of the key themes highlighted across the AQRs, primarily arising from Part B of the reports.

# CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Guidelines on Completing the Report</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction and Overview of Institution</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.0 Internal QA Framework</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Governance and Management of Quality	5
1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision	5
<b>2.0 Programme Development and Delivery</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Programme Development and Approval	6
2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification	6
2.3 Procedures for Making Awards	7
2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment	7
<b>3.0 Learner Resources and Support</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6.0 Information and Data Management</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7.0 Public Information and Communication</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties</b>	<b>11</b>
9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies	11
9.2 Collaborative Provision	12
9.3 Articulation Agreements	13
<b>PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Guidelines on Completing Part B</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments</b>	<b>16</b>

1.1 Strategic QA Updates	16
1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR	19
1.3 Governance and Management	21
1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review	24
<b>2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts</b>	<b>27</b>
2.0(i) Governance and Management of Quality	27
2.0(ii) Programmes of Education and Training	29
2.0(iii) Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	32
2.0(iv) Teaching, Learning and Assessment	34
2.0(v) Supports and Resources for Learners	40
2.0(vi) Information and Data Management	43
2.0(vii) Public Information and Communication	45
2.0(viii) Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review	45
2.0(ix) Quality Assurance of Research Activities and Programmes	46
2.0(x) Third-mission activities, societal and community engagement	48
2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity	49
<b>3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period</b>	<b>50</b>
3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives	50
3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods	53
3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period	53
3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period	53
<b>4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies</b>	<b>54</b>

## Guidelines on Completing the Report

The AQR is aligned with QQI's Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and with the ESG (2015). A mapping of the ESG to QQI Core QA Guidelines is included in Table 1 below; the structure of Part A of this report template aligns with the first column of the table. Additional guidance on completing this template and reference material is included in each section. Institutions should adhere to this guidance and have regard to QQI Core, Sector and Topic-specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. **The guide text within each section should be deleted before submission of the report.**

### Submission Process and Timeline

The deadline for submission of the AQR each year is in February of the relevant year, with the call for submission sent to institutions in November of the preceding year. Once the call for submission has been made, QQI will provide access to QQI's provider portal, QHub, to the designated institution contact(s) to facilitate submission of the report. Through QHub, each institution will have access to an editable version of its AQR for the previous reporting period. This document can then be amended/updated to reflect any changes or developments that occurred during the current reporting period before submitting the final report to QQI.

### Completing the AQR

- When completing the AQR template, all relevant colleagues in the institution should be consulted.
- Consider whether external audiences will be able to understand the terminology used (particularly local abbreviations and acronyms); it may be helpful to include a glossary.
- Aim to avoid duplication in the report – where information is relevant to more than one section, the first mention may be referenced in subsequent sections.
- Provide reflections on what worked well, but also what may have been tried but did not work.

### Report Structure

#### Part A: Internal QA System

Part A of the AQR comprises a record of each institution's current QA policies and procedures and should provide links to those policies and procedures. Private HEIs may provide links to the policies and procedures approved by QQI during initial access to validation (IAV) or reengagement. It is the responsibility of each HEI to ensure before submission of the AQR that all links are correct and functional, and that the policies and procedures referred to are the most up-to-date versions available. Given that the AQR is submitted in respect of a discrete reporting period, it may be helpful for institutions to establish a SharePoint/OneDrive folder (or similar) for each reporting period that contains the current versions of their policies and procedures, and that hyperlinks to these versions of the documents be provided in the AQR

Part A is to be completed only if there have been **material** changes to QA policies and procedures during the reporting period. Such changes may include the approval and implementation of new policies or procedures, or significant amendments to existing ones.

#### Part B: Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Enhancement (QE)

Part B of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**. Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR were progressed during the reporting period – these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

**Case Studies**

In each reporting period, QOI may request updates on specific thematic areas or may invite the institution to submit case studies in response to specific topics. Further, institutions may include case studies to share good practice on topics of their choosing, demonstrating QA and QE in action. In formulating case studies, institutions are encouraged to reflect on and highlight areas that may be of interest to other institutions and would benefit from wider dissemination. Further guidance is provided in Part B.

# Links to Reference Documents Cited in this Template<sup>1</sup>

## Legislation

- [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Technological Universities Act 2018](#)
- [Universities Act 1997](#)

## QQI Documents

### Statutory QA Guidelines (QAG)

- [Core QAG](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Independent/Private Providers](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Designated Awarding Bodies](#)
- [Sector-specific QAG for Institutes of Technology](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes](#)
- [Topic-specific QAG for Blended Learning](#)

### Other QQI Policy Documents

- [QQI's Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes, and Joint Awards, 2012](#)
- [QQI's Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners, 2015](#)
- [QQI Policy Restatement on Access, Transfer and Progression, 2015](#)

## Other National/International References

- [European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(2015\)](#)
- [IHEQN Guidelines on Collaborative Provision](#)
- [National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland](#)
- [Ireland's Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, 2019](#)
- [HEA National Framework for Doctoral Education](#)
- [The Salzburg Principles](#)
- [The Salzburg II Recommendations](#)
- [SOLAS Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices](#)
- [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

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<sup>1</sup> These links will be updated as further guidance documents are published.



## PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

Table 1

<b>Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)</b>				
<b>AQR Part A Section</b>	<b>QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.</b>	<b>QAG Core Sub-section Title</b>	<b>ESG Standard No.</b>	<b>ESG Standard Title</b>
1.0 – Internal QA Framework	2.1	Governance and Management of Quality	1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
	2.2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance		
2.0 – Programme Development and Delivery	2.3	Programmes of Education and Training	1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
4.0 – QA of Research Activities and Programmes			1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 – Monitoring and Periodic Review				
5.0 – Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	2.4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development	1.5	Teaching Staff
2.3 – Teaching, Learning and Assessment	2.5	Teaching and Learning	1.3	Student-centred Teaching, Learning and Assessment
	2.6	Assessment of Learners		
3.0 – Learner Resources and Supports	2.7	Supports for learners	1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
6.0 – Information and Data Management	2.8	Information and Data Management	1.7	Information Management
7.0 – Public Information and Communication	2.9	Public Information and Communication	1.8	Public Information
2.0 – Programme Delivery and Development	2.10	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 – Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
9.0 – Details of Arrangements with Third Parties				
2.0 – Programme Development and Delivery	2.11	Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review	1.9	On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
8.0 – Monitoring and Periodic Review			1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance
4.0 – QA of Research Activities and Programmes	QAG for Providers of Research Degree Programmes			

## Introduction and Overview of Institution

This is the AQR for **Carlow College, St. Patrick's** for the reporting period **1 September 2020 – 31 August 2021**.

It is to be submitted by **Friday, 25 February 2022**.

The AQR has been approved by the **Academic Council** and is submitted by **Dr Eric Derr, Quality Assurance Officer**.

Carlow College, St. Patrick's (hereafter Carlow College) opened in 1793 and is the second oldest third-level college in Ireland and the oldest third-level Catholic College. It is situated, since its foundation in 1782, on its parkland in the centre of Carlow town. Carlow College is a private college with charitable status governed by a Governing Body. Carlow College is a College of teaching and research in the Humanities with the following stated mission: 'In the shared enterprise of education, through teaching, learning, practice placement and research activity, Carlow College prizes excellence in all it does and endeavours to respond creatively to the changing needs of its learners, of potential employers and of society.' As such, the vision of the College is to 'educate, engage and inspire its learners through the provision of transformational learning and teaching experiences; it will enable a diverse learner and graduate population to achieve their academic and career potential and enable them to contribute to the ethical development of society at local, national and global levels.'

The core values of Carlow College are its guiding principles which are built on our rich heritage as a Catholic higher education institution. They inform our day-to-day pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning. The integrated college learning experience includes formal classroom instruction, critical engagement with ideas, exploration of links between theory, professional practice and lived experience. This develops the learners' capacity for academic excellence, leadership, social justice, career development and scholarship.

Our core values are:

- **Truth and Integrity** – We aim to create a research-led teaching and learning environment that is interdisciplinary in nature, that inspires openness to new ideas and critical thinking and that is ethical in practice.
- **Respect and Justice** – We recognise the diversity of our college community and seek to promote actively a spirit of inclusiveness, mutual respect and equality of opportunity and access.
- **Collaboration and Social Awareness** – By creating opportunities to work together, both internally and externally, we believe that collaboration and partnership can best contribute to the ethical development of local, national and global communities and society.
- **Friendliness and Service** – We are committed to maintaining a hospitable, learner-centred environment that recognises each learner's individual learning journey, and that promotes, values and supports their personal, social and cultural development.
- **Creativity and Innovation** – We believe that learning is about being open to new ideas and possibilities both in what we learn and how we learn. We are committed to be an educational space which promotes creativity and innovation as a way of responding to the contemporary world.

Carlow College is committed to maintaining and developing an organisation that can deliver its mission according to the values of the College. We have developed a Quality Assurance Framework that is based

on these values and enhances the College's ability to meet our strategic objectives. Carlow College is committed to developing and embedding a quality culture in all our endeavours: a culture that embodies planning, defining, encouraging, assessing and improving practice. We believe that the learners, staff and external stakeholders of our College are the pivotal actors in the process of embedding a quality culture. The College's Quality Assurance Committee is responsible for the maintenance and development of this Quality Assurance Framework. This Committee reports to the Academic Council, which in turn reports to the Governing Body. All activities related to quality assurance at Carlow College are found on our [website](#). The Quality Assurance Committee developed the AQR and it was approved by the Academic Council on 23 February 2022.

## 1.0 Internal QA Framework

### 1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

The Quality Assurance section of the Carlow College website can be found [here](#).

Name of Policy	Section(s)
<a href="#"><i>Quality Assurance Policy</i></a>	4.1: Governance and Management of Quality
	4.2: Documented Approach to Quality Assurance
<a href="#"><i>Quality Assurance Policy: Appendices</i></a>	Appendices 1 – 12
For a master list of all policies and procedures at Carlow College, please see the <a href="#">Master List of Policies and Procedures</a> .	

The following policies and procedures related to Governance and Management of Quality were revised and approved during this reporting period, see Part B, 2.0(i) for a summary of the policy changes.

Name of Policy	Version	Date Approved	Approving Body
<i>Child Protection Policy</i>	3	2 June 2021	Management Board
<i>Equality Policy</i>	2	21 April 2021	Management Board
<i>Health and Safety Policy</i>	1.1	12 May 2021	Management Board
<i>Policy on Policies</i>	4	23 June 2021	Management Board
<i>Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Assurance Policy: Appendices</i>	5	29 September 2021	Academic Council
		22 September 2021	Management Board

### 1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

There were no changes to policy and procedures related to Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision during the reporting period.

## 2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

### 2.1 Programme Development and Approval

Name of Policy	Section(s)
<u><i>Quality Assurance Policy</i></u>	4.3: Programme of Education and Training
	4.3.1: Programme Development and Approval
<u><i>Quality Assurance Policy: Appendices</i></u>	Appendices 13 – 15
For a master list of all policies and procedures at Carlow College, please see the <a href="#">Master List of Policies and Procedures</a> .	

For the changes made to the *Quality Assurance Policy* (Version 5), and its appendices, related to Programme Development and Approval, see Part B, 2.0(ii) for a summary of the policy changes.

### 2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

Name of Policy	Section(s)
<u><i>Quality Assurance Policy</i></u>	4.3: Programme of Education and Training
	4.3.2: Learner Admission, Progression and Recognition
	4.3.3: Programme Monitoring and Review
<u><i>Quality Assurance Policy: Appendices</i></u>	Appendices 16 – 24
For a master list of all policies and procedures at Carlow College, please see the <a href="#">Master List of Policies and Procedures</a> .	

The following policies and procedures related to Governance and Management of Quality were revised and approved during this reporting period, see Part B, 2.0(ii) for a summary of the policy changes.

Name of Policy	Version	Date Approved	Approving Body
<i>Fees and Refunds Policy</i>	5.1	25 August 2021	Management Board
<i>Garda Vetting Policy</i>	3	9 December 2020	Academic Council
		16 December 2020	Management Board

<i>Learner Admission, Progression and Recognition Policy</i>	4	27 January 2021	Academic Council
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## 2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

N / A

## 2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Name of Policy	Section(s)
<u><i>Quality Assurance Policy</i></u>	4.5: Teaching and Learning
	4.6: Assessments of Learners
	4.10: Other Parties Involved in Education and Training
<u><i>Quality Assurance Policy: Appendices</i></u>	Appendices 23, 24, 28, 36 – 42, 56 – 58
For a master list of all policies and procedures at Carlow College, please see the <a href="#">Master List of Policies and Procedures</a> .	

The following policies and procedures related to Teaching, Learning and Assessment were revised and approved during this reporting period, see Part B, 2.0(iv) for a summary of the policy changes.

Name of Policy	Version	Date Approved	Approving Body
<i>Assessment of Learners Policy</i>	2.1	11 November 2020	Academic Council
<i>Plagiarism Policy</i>	4	31 March 2021	Academic Council
<i>Research Ethics Advisory Policy</i>	4	30 September 2020	Academic Council

### 3.0 Learner Resources and Support

Name of Policy	Section(s)
<u><i>Quality Assurance Policy</i></u>	4.7: Supports for Learners
<u><i>Quality Assurance Policy: Appendices</i></u>	Appendices 9, 16.1, 43 – 44
For a master list of all policies and procedures at Carlow College, please see the <a href="#">Master List of Policies and Procedures</a> .	

### 4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

There were no changes to policy and procedures related to QA of Research Activities and Programmes during the reporting period.

## 5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

Name of Policy	Section(s)
<i>Quality Assurance Policy</i>	4.4: Staff Recruitment, Management and Development
<i>Quality Assurance Policy: Appendices</i>	Appendices 25 – 35
For a master list of all policies and procedures at Carlow College, please see the <a href="#">Master List of Policies and Procedures</a> .	

The following policies and procedures related to Staff Recruitment, Development and Support were revised and approved during this reporting period, see Part B, 2.0(iii) for a summary of the policy changes.

Name of Policy	Version	Date Approved	Approving Body
<i>Annual Leave Policy</i>	2.1	1 September 2021	Management Board
<i>Bereavement and Compassionate Leave Policy</i>	3	2 June 2021	Management Board
<i>Force Majeure Leave Policy</i>	2	23 June 2021	Management Board
<i>Garda Vetting Policy</i>	3	9 December 2020	Academic Council
		16 December 2020	Management Board
<i>Parental Leave and Parent's Leave Policy</i>	3	23 June 2021	Management Board
<i>Paternity Leave Policy</i>	2	1 September 2021	Management Board
<i>Performance Management and Development Policy</i>	2	2 June 2021	Management Board
<i>Recruitment and Selection Policy</i>	2	20 November 2020	Management Board
<i>Right to Disconnect Policy</i>	1	1 September 2021	Management Board



## 6.0 Information and Data Management

Name of Policy	Section(s)
<u><a href="#">Quality Assurance Policy</a></u>	4.8: Information and Data Management
<u><a href="#">Quality Assurance Policy: Appendices</a></u>	Appendices 45 – 53
For a master list of all policies and procedures at Carlow College, please see the <u><a href="#">Master List of Policies and Procedures</a></u> .	

The following policies and procedures related to Staff Recruitment, Development and Support were revised and approved during this reporting period, see Part B, 2.0(vi) for a summary of the policy changes.

Name of Policy	Version	Date Approved	Approving Body
<i>Records Management Policy</i>	4	12 May 2021	Management Board

## 7.0 Public Information and Communication

Name of Policy	Section(s)
<u><a href="#">Quality Assurance Policy</a></u>	4.9: Public Information and Communication
<u><a href="#">Quality Assurance Policy: Appendices</a></u>	Appendices 54 – 55
For a master list of all policies and procedures at Carlow College, please see the <u><a href="#">Master List of Policies and Procedures</a></u> .	

## 8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

Name of Policy	Section(s)
<u><a href="#">Quality Assurance Policy</a></u>	4.11: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review
<u><a href="#">Quality Assurance Policy: Appendices</a></u>	Appendix 59
For a master list of all policies and procedures at Carlow College, please see the <u><a href="#">Master List of Policies and Procedures</a></u> .	

## 9.0 Details of Arrangements with Third Parties

### 9.1 Arrangements with PRSBs, Awarding Bodies, QA Bodies

Type of arrangement	Total Number
PRSBs	1
Awarding bodies	1
QA bodies	0

<b>1. Type of arrangement</b> (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	PRSB
Name of body:	CORU
Programme titles and links to publications	BA in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care)
Date of accreditation or last review	2 October 2020
Date of next review	Not yet confirmed

<b>2. Type of arrangement</b> (PRSB/awarding body/QA body)	Awarding Body
Name of body:	IT Carlow
Programme titles and links to publications	Masters and Postgraduate Diploma in Irish Regional History
Date of accreditation or last review	20 January 2021

Date of next review	2026
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## 9.2 Collaborative Provision

Type of arrangement	Total number
Joint research degrees	0
Joint/double/multiple awards	0
Collaborative programmes	1
Franchise programmes	0
Linked providers (DABs only)	0

<b>1. Collaborative Provision</b> (Type of collaborative provision)	Collaborative Programmes
Name of body (/bodies):	IT Carlow
Programme titles and links to publications	Higher Diploma in Journalism and New Media Content
Date of last review	14 October 2020
Date of next review	2026

### 9.3 Articulation Agreements

<b>Articulation agreements - Total number</b>	N / A
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<b>1. Articulation agreement:</b>	N / A
Name of body (/bodies):	
Programme titles and links to publications	
Date of agreement/arrangement or last review	
Date of next review	
Detail of the agreement	

Carlow College, St. Patrick's

2022

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**Annual Quality Report (Carlow College, St. Patrick's)**  
**PART B: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**  
**ENHANCEMENT & IMPACT**  
**Reporting Period 2020-2021**

## PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

### Guidelines on Completing Part B

As outlined in the general guidelines for this template (p.5), **Part B** of the AQR documents and captures QA activities, developments and enhancements undertaken by institutions **during the reporting period** and their **impact**.

Insofar as is possible, institutions should demonstrate in Part B how plans set out in the previous AQR submission were progressed during the reporting period – these may be plans linked to strategic objectives, to reengagement advices, or to institutional review recommendations.

Part B of the AQR is an opportunity for self-reflection and critical evaluation of the effectiveness of QA activities over the reporting period. Institutions are encouraged to reflect both on what worked well and what did not work well, and to consider impact measures, using both quantitative and qualitative evidence (metrics, benchmarks and feedback/judgement) in how they led to specific QA improvements and enhancement.

Part B provides evidence of quality improvement and enhancement and impact<sup>2</sup> of QA activities within the totality of an institution's QA system.

**Section 1** pertains to internal quality assurance implementation and developments since the previous reporting period.

**Section 2** deals with institutional analysis of IQA enhancements and impacts including activities undertaken in respect of academic integrity, and the enhancements and impacts resulting from same.

**Section 3** relates to IQA developments and plans for the next reporting period.

**Section 4** provides an opportunity for institutions to illustrate IQA in action through case studies in relevant thematic areas.

Institutions are invited, if they wish to do so, to use case studies to demonstrate quality in action and to highlight areas of practice for dissemination at any point in this part of the report.

#### Case Studies

QQI recommends that written case studies should:

- Be between half a page and two pages in length;
- Relate to a specific time- and subject-bound issue;
- Include an introduction that sets out a brief overview of contextual matters;
- Include any relevant supporting data and data analysis;
- Include links to any sources cited;
- Include a clear concluding paragraph with overview of key outcomes/learning.

Although case studies will generally be in written form, institutions may also provide links to audio-visual/multimedia case studies. QQI does not prescribe a format for case studies.

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<sup>2</sup> The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education have considered impact and measures leading to development and improvement specifically in terms of teaching and learning. See: <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/NF-2020-Insights-from-Practice-About-Impact-in-Teaching-and-Learning-web-ready.pdf>. This is a very useful reference, though impact in the context of this report should be considered.

## **1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments**

### **1.1 Strategic QA Updates**

#### **1.1.1 Strategic Objectives of Carlow College, St. Patrick's**

The strategic objectives of Carlow College are encapsulated by two high level objectives: i) the macro-level objective of full integration into the higher education system, and ii) the strategic development and scaling of current capacity with the objective of increasing student enrolments, developing new programmes and research promotion. In furthering the macro-strategic objectives, the College has engaged in a series of discussions with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) in addition to a process of deepening collaboration with the Institute of Technology Carlow (hereafter IT Carlow).

##### ***1.1.1.1 Integration into the Higher Education System***

In the context of the strategy for integration into the higher education system in the South East region, members of the College executive and representatives from the Governing Body, have met with both senior officials in DFHERIS and with Minister Simon Harris on a number of occasions in the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year. The outcomes of this engagement included the completion of an independent Governance and Financial Review, which was undertaken by Prospectus Consultancy. This review involved a series of consultations with internal and external stakeholders, in addition to a comprehensive analysis of governance systems and structures and the College's financial position and growth projections. Discussions on the content of this review led to the recommendation from the Minister that the College would undertake a business case analysis for the proposed absorption of the College into the higher education system. This is a priority objective for the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year.

##### ***1.1.1.2 Strategic Development and Scaling of Current Capacity***

There is a multi-faceted approach to achieving the objective of scaling development, reliant on an internal process of new programme development in addition to enhancing our approach to digital marketing and communication. The related actions included the preparation of three new degree programmes in the fields of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Two of these programmes achieved QQI validation in 2021 (i.e. the BA (Hons) in Media, English and Culture and BA (Hons) in Philosophy, Politics and Sociology). In addition, the development of an MA/PGDip in Irish Regional History was validated by IT Carlow under guidance from QQI. The validation of this programme was discussed with representatives from QQI and IT Carlow prior to submission for validation. A detailed quality framework document was prepared to support the collaboration process and subsequent delivery of this post-graduate programme, which commenced in September 2021. Under the provision of the Memorandum of Agreement with IT Carlow, a joint HDip programme in Journalism and New Media Content, developed by faculty members in both Carlow College and IT Carlow, was also validated by IT Carlow. This programme was successful in securing funding from Skillnet and similarly commenced in September 2021.

Some of this collaborative work with IT Carlow was supported by the HEA funded Programme Manager who undertook a twelve-month funded position to support the ongoing collaboration between both institutions. Some priority projects for development in the next academic year include a BA (Hons) in Psychology and a HDip in Politics and Society (blended provision). The Partnership Programme Manager also worked with colleagues in Carlow College to complete an application for the Erasmus Charter in Higher Education (ECHE), which was successful.

With regard to institutional development, Carlow College's broad academic framework in the areas of Teaching; Research; Technology Enhanced Learning; Collaboration and Partnerships; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Public and Civic Engagement; and Labour Market and Employment Focus has been progressed in the context of specific initiatives. However, while there has been progress on a range of identified activities, personnel changes and absences had an impact on progressing all aspects of the implementation plan. Accordingly, the detailed targeted actions, indicators and timeframes was developed much later in the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year than had initially been envisaged. Nonetheless, as noted, the objectives within this framework were progressed in relation to:

- the progression of validation with IT Carlow at MA, Postgraduate and Higher Diploma level;
- the enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment approaches;
- the ongoing development and scaling of activities under the Research Hub;
- the development and implementation of civic initiatives such as the One Million Stars Project;
- enhancements to the technological infrastructure for both staff and learners and exploration of developments in relation to blended learning;
- progression of the commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion through practical projects, the College's Athena SWAN application participation and engagement with the HEA National Committee on EDI and Athena SWAN National Committee; and
- adaptation of student support services in an online environment.

### 1.1.2 Re-Engagement

As stated in the 2019 / 2020 Annual Quality Report, Carlow College had its quality assurance procedures formally approved by the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) of QQI on 12 September 2019; PAEC made its decision based on the [report](#) submitted by the QQI Re-Engagement Panel that visited Carlow College on 17 June 2019. Carlow College continues to progress and monitor the seven quality enhancement recommendations made by the QQI Re-Engagement Panel made (see [Monitoring and Implementation Plan](#)).

### 1.1.3 Specific Changes to QA Systems During Reporting Period

Carlow College has a robust quality assurance framework that is focused on quality enhancement and transparency throughout the organisation. The key objective of our *Policy on Policies* is to have a consistent policy development system and have policies that are:

- appropriately developed and regularly monitored / reviewed;
- accessible to staff and the public (as required) in usable formats;
- consistent with the Mission of Carlow College;
- compliant with applicable laws and national / international benchmarks of best practice; and
- promote a culture of quality across the College community.

During the reporting period there were twenty-three policies that went through our internal policy development system and were approved. As the Quality Assurance Framework at Carlow College has matured, the number of new policies developed has decreased and, to assist in the management of policy reviews, the *Policy on Policies* was revised to lengthen the review cycle of policies from a three-year cycle to a five-year cycle.



Academic Year	New Policies Developed	Policies Revised
2017 / 2018	9	20
2018 / 2019	23	10
2019 / 2020	1	23
2020 / 2021	2	21

There were two new policies developed during the reporting period, the *Right to Disconnect Policy* and the *Staff Code of Conduct Policy*. The *Right to Disconnect Policy* was developed in response to the introduction of the new *Code of Practice on the Right to Disconnect*, which was published by the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Employment in April 2021. Carlow College has a 'Teaching Code of Conduct', which is an appendix to the *Teaching and Learning Policy*. However, the College Management believed that this did not adequately address the *HEA Code of Governance (2007)* and that a formal policy was required to be fully integrated into our Quality Assurance Framework. As such, the *Staff Code of Conduct Policy* was developed and approved prior to the start of the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year.

#### 1.1.4 Contextual Strategic Impacts

##### 1.1.4.1 IT Carlow (Landscape Funding)

The Partnership Programme Manager for IT Carlow and Carlow College undertook several initiatives to support collaborations on new programme development in addition to validation documentation. This included working closely with personnel in various functions at both institutions such as the Registrar's offices, admissions, quality assurance, library, data protection and student systems. The outcome of this work was the completion of process documents and data sharing agreements to support the delivery of programmes in practice. The Partnership Programme Manager also initiated the development of shared initiatives between academic staff in both institutions as well as considerable engagement with the International offices. As the funding allocation was for a twelve-month period only, this programme of work was concluded in July 2021. It is intended that there will be an emphasis on collaborative provision / validation in the area of blended learning in in the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year.

##### 1.1.4.2 Institutional Alignment

A project examining quality assurance at each institution and suggestions for alignment commenced in August 2020. This project scoped out the areas of alignment and is on hold until further strategic objectives are realised.

##### 1.1.4.3 Athena SWAN

In May 2019, the College commenced the application process for the Athena SWAN Bronze Award. Although this initiative was put on hold towards the latter stages of the 2019 / 2020 Academic Year owing to workload priorities as a result of the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the work to progress the College's submission re-commenced in November 2020, resulting in further activities being undertaken by the Self-Assessment Team (SAT) to complete the application. The SAT compiled and analysed data which informed the College's Gender Equality Action Plan. The application was submitted to Athena SWAN Ireland in June 2020.

Following an Athena SWAN panel review of the College’s application, the College was advised that minor revisions were required by the panel to meet the level of the Bronze Award. The application with these minor revisions was resubmitted on 12 November 2021 and the College was informed in January 2022 of the successful outcome of the application and accordingly have attained the Bronze Award.

#### **1.1.4.4 Gender Equality Enhancement Funding**

A proposal was submitted to the Higher Education Authority by Carlow College, IT Carlow, Waterford Institute of Technology, Mary Immaculate College and Limerick Institute of Technology to undertake a collaborative training project for staff in the field of equality and diversity. The project, the development and implementation of a Gender Identity, Expression and Diversity Training Programme for staff in Irish HEIs, was successful in its application and the pilot phase commenced with the delivery of online training across the five institutions facilitated by ShoutOut. The aim of the training sessions was to provide a reflective space for staff to explore gender roles, unconscious bias, sexual orientation, and gender identity minority groups to foster gender balance, challenge stereotypes, tackle gender biases, and support inclusion for the LGBTQ+ within our educational community.

The training was completed in June 2021 and the project was positively evaluated. The project partners made another submission to expand the roll-out of the project under the next round of Gender Equality Enhancement Funding in September 2021.

#### **1.1.4.5 HEA / Athena SWAN Capacity Building Funding**

The College has been the lead on a project to advance equality in relation to gender and ethnicity in higher education in collaboration with IT Carlow. This successful application, which was led by Carlow College, resulted in a funding allocation of €7,500 to host a symposium and produce a good practice guide to equality, gender and ethnicity for all higher education institutions. The virtual symposium on ‘Gender and Race in Higher Education: Good practice and competing inequalities’ took place on 25 May 2021. Professor Kalwant Bhopal, Professor of Education and Social Justice, and Director of the Centre for Research in Race and Education at the University of Birmingham was the symposium speaker. An introductory guide for all who work and learn in higher education, including terms, strategies and recommendations for the workplace, will be launched in December 2021.

## **1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives identified in Previous AQR**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Planned objectives (Previous AQR)</b> <small>Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable</small>	<b>Update on Status</b> <small>Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress. If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.</small>
1	<i>Academic Workload Allocation Policy</i>	In progress. The Academic Council re-approved this policy for the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year. At the same time, the Academic Council further directed the Assistant Registrars and the Quality Assurance Officer to appoint a Policy Sub-Group. The Sub-Group’s remit is to review the policy, suggest revisions, invite and respond to academic staff feedback and have the policy ready for approval by Academic Council in January / February 2022.
2	White Paper – Review of the Remit for the Management Board and the Academic Council	Completed. See Part B, Section 2.0(i) of this report.
3	Academic Framework Strategy	In progress. The Academic Framework Strategy was developed in 2020 and an in-depth implementation plan

		with detailed targeted actions, indicators and timeframes was developed in the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year. However, the implementation plan was only finalised towards the end of semester two, owing to staffing challenges in particular functions. Nonetheless, there was significant progress in several of the seven identified areas of the framework strategy, which are elaborated in the AQR.
4	Review and Revise Processes for Module-Level Feedback	Completed. See Part B, Section 2.0(ii) of this report.
5	Formalisation of Union Recognition	Completed. See Part B, Section 2.0(iii) of this report.
6	Review of Processes Related to the SRMS	In progress. Personnel changes during the Spring 2022 Term delayed the commencement of this objective.
7	COVID-19 Contingency Planning	Completed. See Part B, Sections 2.0(iv), 2.0(v), 2.0(vi) and 2.0(vii) of this report.
8	Athena SWAN	Completed. See Part B, Section 1.1 of this report.
9	New Programme Development	In progress. The MA/PGD in Irish Regional History was validated by IT Carlow in January 2021 and has ten registered learners for the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year and the HDip in Journalism and New Media Content was validated by IT Carlow in October 2020 and has nineteen registered learners for the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year. The BA (Hons) in English, Media and Culture was approved by PAEC in June 2021 and the BA (Hons) in Philosophy, Politics and Sociology was approved by PAEC in September 2021; both programmes will commence in Autumn 2022. Carlow College is currently moving forward with the development of two new programmes.
10	Mid-Cycle Review	In progress. See Section 2.0(viii) of this report.
11	Societal and Community Engagement	In progress. See Section 2.0(x) of this report.
12	Review Flexible and Remote Working Policies and Procedures	In progress. The College developed a <i>Flexible Working Policy</i> and is piloting it with Professional Support Staff throughout the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year. The COVID-19 Remote Working Guidelines were extended until the end of the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year. The Policy Development Sub-Group was established to develop a new <i>Remote Working Policy</i> in Q1 and Q2 2022.
13	Review / Revise Policies and Procedures as indicated by the policy review schedule	In progress. See Section 2.0 of this report.

## 1.3 Governance and Management

### 1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
<b>Governing Body</b>	25 September 2020 4 December 2020 19 February 2021 14 May 2021
<b>Academic Council</b>	25 August 2020 30 September 2020 11 November 2020 9 December 2020 12 January 2021 (Extraordinary Meeting) 27 January 2021 24 February 2021 31 March 2021 28 April 2021 20 May 2021 16 June 2021
<b>Management Board</b>	28 August 2020 23 September 2020 8 October 2020 (Extraordinary Meeting) 14 October 2020 4 November 2020 25 November 2020 16 December 2020 20 January 2021 3 February 2021 24 February 2021 10 March 2021 (Extraordinary Meeting) 24 March 2021 14 April 2021 (Extraordinary Meeting) 21 April 2021 12 May 2021 2 June 2021 23 June 2021 28 July 2021

<p><b>Quality Assurance Committee</b></p>	<p>10 November 2020  27 January 2021  17 February 2021  24 March 2021  10 June 2021</p>
<p><b>Exam Board Meetings</b></p>	<p>28 January 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts and Humanities / English and History (First Semester Modules)</li> </ul> <p>29 January 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care) / Social, Political and Community Studies (First Semester Modules)</li> </ul> <p>25 May 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts and Humanities / English and History (Internal Exam Board Meeting)</li> </ul> <p>26 May 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care) / Social, Political and Community Studies (Internal Exam Board Meeting)</li> </ul> <p>3 June 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Exam Board Meeting</li> </ul> <p>23 June 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extraordinary External Exam Board Meeting (Extenuating COVID-19 Circumstances for 2nd and 3rd Year, Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care))</li> </ul> <p>24 August 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autumn Exam Board Meeting</li> </ul> <p>7 September 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autumn Exam Board Meeting (Extenuating COVID-19 Circumstances)</li> </ul>

### **1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments**

Planned QA Objective 2, as identified in the 2020 / 2021 AQR, was the result of a recommendation made by the Re-Engagement Panel (2019), ‘Given the size of the College and its existing staffing, the panel recommends reviewing the quantity of dedicated committees and their membership with a view to streamlining committee activities.’ A Green Paper was completed in May 2020 and a Working Group was established to complete the White Paper, its function was to review the remit of the Management Board and the Academic Council; this review was to be completed at the end of the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year, with changes to be implemented in the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year.

The findings of this review are documented in Part B, Section 2.0(i) of this report.

#### ***Management Structural Developments***

At the end of the reporting period, the individual occupying the position of Assistant Registrar for Strategic Development retired and the College decided that the responsibilities of this role could be undertaken by others within the College. The following reporting changes were made: the Admissions Office and the International Office now report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs / Registrar and the Student Recruitment Office and Digital Communications and Marketing Office now report to the Director of Operations.

## 1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

### 1.4.1 Overview of Periodic Reviews

Unit of review for which report has been published during reporting period	Date of completion/reason for conducting review (if not planned) or non-completion (if planned but not conducted)	Links to relevant publications
N / A		

### 1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels<sup>3</sup> involved in IQA

The following programme were reviewed by external review teams:

- PGD / MA in Irish Regional History
- BA (Hons) in Media, English and Culture
- BA (Hons) in Philosophy, Politics and Sociology

#### (i) Expert Review Team/Panel Size and Related Processes

	Total	Academic Schools/ Department	Professional Services/Support Unit	Approval/Review of Linked Provider	Programme Approval	Programme Review	Other
<b>Number of review/ evaluation processes</b>	3				3		
<i>of those:</i>							
<b>On-site processes</b>							

<sup>3</sup> QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

<b>Desk reviews</b>							
<b>Virtual processes</b>					3		
<b>Average panel size for each process type*</b>					7		

\* excluding secretary if not a full panel member



**(ii) Composition of Expert Review Teams/Panels involved in IQA**

Type of Expert/ Role on Panel	Total	Gender			Internal	National	International			Institution Type	
		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	3		3			3				1	2
Secretary	3	3				3				1	2
Academic/Discipline Specific	10	6	4			7	3			10	
Student Representative	3	1	2			3				3	
QA	0										
Teaching & Learning	0										
External Industry /Third Mission	3	2	1			3					3

## 2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

### 2.0(i) Governance and Management of Quality

#### *Policy Development and Enhancement*

For this reporting period, there were four policies that were reviewed, revised and approved that relate to governance and management of quality, the [\*Child Protection Policy\*](#) (Version 3), [\*Equality Policy\*](#) (Version 2), [\*Health and Safety Policy\*](#) (Version 1.1), [\*Policy on Policies\*](#) (Version 4) and the [\*Quality Assurance Policy\*](#) (Version 5) and its associated [appendices](#).

There were minor amendments made to the *Child Protection Policy* (Version 3) (e.g. links to national policy documents and references to Carlow College policies) and the *Health and Safety Policy* (Version 1.1) was re-approved with no changes of merit. The changes made to the *Equality Policy* (Version 2) largely related to the development of the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework. In particular, a new appendix was added to the policy that identified supports available to learners and staff members and a link was provided to the equality, diversity and inclusivity section of the Carlow College [website](#). The *Policy on Policies* (Version 4) was revised to include a new step in the process for policy approval. In previous versions of this policy, policies were developed by the policy sub-group and then placed on the Staff Gateway for feedback. Although this worked relatively well, some key offices in the College were commenting too late in the process. To rectify this, the following offices are now listed as Designated Offices: President's Office, Office of the Registrar, HR, Data Protection and Quality Assurance. The Designated Offices are notified when policies are in development and review the policy before the policy is placed on the Staff Gateway for wider consultation. The other significant change was the introduction of an 'action plan' for the implementation process of policies.

The *Quality Assurance Policy* (Version 5) is reviewed / revised annually by the Quality Assurance Committee. For this reporting period, the following appendices were added to the policy: *Equality Policy* (Appendix 1); *Dignity and Respect Policy* (Appendix 2); Annual Quality Enhancement Report (Appendix 9); Project Flowchart (Appendix 10); Guidelines for changes made to Programmes and / or Modules; Employee Handbook (Appendix 25) and Regulations in Relation to Assessment and Standards (Appendix 40.1).<sup>4</sup> Other changes included an update to institutional reports (Appendix 45) and the removal of the terms of reference for College committees.

#### ***White Paper: Review of the Remit for the Management Board and the Academic Council***

Since the 2015 / 2016 Academic Year, Carlow College has undergone significant internal organisational changes. The process of internal change was undertaken on a phased basis focusing on the transformation of the College's management and structure; strategic direction; institutional identity; staff and learner experiences. The outcomes to this process included a comprehensive review and restructuring of the existing governance structures and quality assurance framework oriented to Carlow College's strategy on system positioning and future sustainability.

At the end of the 2016 / 2017 Academic Year, work was completed on a revised Terms of Reference and Constitution for both the Academic Council and Management Board; commencement of all changes took effect at the start of the 2017 / 2018 Academic Year. Furthermore, since implementing the review and the restructuring of the existing governance structures and quality assurance framework, Carlow College underwent several external peer review processes, which were mandated under the *Quality and Qualifications Act* (2012) and implemented by QQI. These external peer reviews acknowledged and commended the quality model of higher education provision at Carlow College as noted by the QQI

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<sup>4</sup> Many of the appendices added to the *Quality Assurance Policy* were already approved documents of the College. After consultation with key stakeholders, it was decided they should be more firmly embedded in the *Quality Assurance Policy*.

external panel for the review and revalidation of all programmes of education in the College in March 2018. Similarly, the QQI Re-Engagement Panel in June 2019 commended Carlow College for the capacity and expertise in embedding an extensively revised systemic approach to governance and quality at all levels of the College.

Although much progress was made in the areas of governance and quality assurance, as validated by the two above mentioned external review panels, internal discussion on further enhancement had continued since the revision of the Terms of Reference and Constitution for both the Academic Council and Management Board. At the heart of this discussion was the delineation of the remit for both the Management Board and Academic Council.

Progress towards the production of a Green Paper was slowed owing to other institutional priorities. A Working Group was established by the Management Board (28 November 2018) to review the organisational structures within Carlow College to ensure that they were fit-for-purpose; this Working Group established by the Management Board had a scheduled completion date of 2019 / 2020. The scope of this Working Group was extended somewhat by the first recommendation made by the Re-Engagement Panel: *Given the size of the College and its existing staffing, the panel recommends reviewing the quantity of dedicated committees and their memberships with a view to streamlining committee activities.* The Working Group accepted that a review should be conducted to streamline committee activities but believed that priority should be given to further delineating the remit of both the Academic Council and the Management Board.

The Green Paper was completed and submitted for comment / feedback to both the Management Board (8 April 2020) and the Academic Council (6 May 2020). The initial findings of the Green Paper indicated that the Academic Council was largely operating within its remit. However, some areas were identified for further discussion, these centred on: the possibility of expanding the Academic Council to include representation from Academic Professional Support Staff; greater attention to gender representation and its relationship to the Strategic Development Committee. The Green Paper indicated that the terms of reference for the Management Board required a more in-depth review. In particular, the terms of reference required revision to include specific mention of ownership and oversight over the implementation of the College's Strategic Plan; clarity of role in the allocation of resources (human, financial, capital and non-capital); clarity of role in the effective management of the College and review of membership to match strategic scope and management of the College / allocation of resources. The review found that the two sub-committees of the Management Board required further consideration.

The Working Group responsible for drafting the Green Paper reported that some of the changes would require greater engagement with key internal stakeholders and it was decided that the transition to the White Paper would be revisited in September 2020. The Management Board discussed the White Paper on 14 October 2020 and appointed two of its members to form a Working Group; the Academic Council appointed one of its members to the Working Group on 11 November 2020.

The White Paper was approved by the Management Board on 12 May 2021 and the Academic Council on 19 May 2021.

#### *Management Board (Executive Summary)*

The Management Board terms of reference and constitution were extensively reviewed and revised by the White Paper Working Group. The high-level changes that were recommended and accepted included:

- greater delineation of its remit as distinct from the Academic Council;
- greater clarity of its overall strategic remit and decision-making authority;
- a reconfigured membership that better reflects its work; and

- a revised term of reference that will make the Management Board more effective and efficient in achieving its work.

#### *Academic Council (Executive Summary)*

The Academic Council terms of reference and constitution were extensively reviewed. It was the view of the White Paper Working Group that only minor amendments be recommended; in part, this was the result of the Academic Council already being closely aligned to sector standards. The high-level changes that were recommended included:

- greater delineation of its remit as distinct from the Management Board;
- a reconfigured membership that better reflected its work; and
- a revised term of reference that will make the Academic Council more effective and efficient in achieving its work.

The White Paper Report submitted and approved by the Management Board and Academic Council can be found [here](#).

#### *Annual Quality Enhancement Reports*

As articulated in the College's *Quality Assurance Policy*, Carlow College 'is committed to empowering all stakeholders to participate in the development, maintenance and improvement of a robust and fit-for-purpose quality assurance system'. To assist in achieving this stated objective, the Management Board approved the introduction of the Annual Quality Enhancement Report (AQER). Modelled after the AQR submitted annually to QQI, the AQER provides Carlow College offices and departments the opportunity to reflect on the objectives set for the previous academic year, document quality enhancement projects throughout the academic year and set objectives for the next academic year. The AQERs are submitted at the end of August to the Quality Assurance Officer, who is then tasked with collating the reports into a single report and identifying institutional projects for the coming academic year. The AQERs are submitted to the Management Board meeting in September for approval. The Management Board further determines which institutional projects should be prioritised by the College and identifies the project owners. Following the meeting, the Quality Assurance Officer meets with the project owners to complete the College's Project Management Template (*Quality Assurance Policy*, Appendix 10); the completed projects are submitted to the Management Board at the start of October for formal approval.

This reporting period saw the introduction of the AQER whereby the following offices and departments submitted a report: Admissions, Digital Marketing and Communications, Freedom of Information and Data Protection, Human Resources, International, IT and Student Systems, Library Services and Student Recruitment. For the next reporting period, Student Services will move from their current reporting system to the revised AQER. From a quality enhancement standpoint, the AQERs were welcomed by the Governing Body who at their meeting on 25 November 2021 commented that, '...this is an excellent report, both detailed and informative...' As the AQER becomes more firmly embedded in the quality assurance framework, these reports should have a positive impact on the quality of the AQR submitted to QQI in February.

## **2.0(ii) Programmes of Education and Training**

### *Policy Development and Enhancement*

For this reporting period, there were several important changes made to the [Quality Assurance Policy](#) (Version 5), and its [appendices](#), that related to Programmes of Education and Training. These changes included revisions to:

- Appendix 13 – programme development and approval processes amended to include the introduction of a mandatory Programme Development Workshop and Curriculum Development Workshop for Programme Design Teams; greater emphasis placed on academic integrity,

including a link to the National Academic Integrity Network; the requirement for a more robust market research plan earlier in the programme approval process and more structure around the relationship between the Office of the Registrar and the Design Teams.

- Appendix 17 – responding to ongoing programme development and changes to existing modules, the Quality Assurance Office developed a standardised system for making changes to existing module and / or programmes (see below for more information).
- Appendix 20 – responding to Recommendation 3, made by the Re-Engagement Panel, the College re-developed its ‘Procedures for Module-Level Learner Feedback’ (see below for more information).
- Appendix 40.1 – The *Rules and Regulations in Relation to Assessment and Standards* were added to the list of appendices for this policy.

The [Fees and Refunds Policy](#) (Version 5.1) was revised to include a separate payment schedule for postgraduate programmes. The [Garda Vetting Policy](#) (Version 3) was up for its three-year cyclical review. The policy was revised to include legislative changes since the policy was last passed in November 2017 (i.e. *Data Protection Act 2018*). One of the key changes made to the policy was that Garda Vetting Results were no longer shared with placement providers, which resulted in Appendix 1.1 being removed from the policy; Appendix 1.1 was a sample letter that the placement agency / school was to receive where a conviction was recorded.

The [Learner Admission, Progression and Recognition Policy](#) (Version 4) was extensively reviewed and revised. Many of the changes made to the policy were the result of programme development and the need for application forms to be more user-friendly and scalable. Regarding application forms, the most significant changes were related to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Guidelines which were amended to better differentiate between prior accredited learning and prior experiential learning (see Appendices 5, 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). Another important change was made to make the non-standard application process more transparent by attaching a marking rubric for interviews (see Appendices 5.4, 5.5 and 9.4). The final significant change was the addition of Appendix 17: Admission Guidelines and Procedures for Direct Entry. Carlow College has always had entry pathways to the College which are not processed by the Central Application Office. However, in the context of the College’s ongoing development of degree programmes at Levels 7 and 8, a new category of potential ‘direct entry applicant’ emerged whereby a new programme at Carlow College had been validated by QQI or by some other recognised body and had not yet been listed within the CAO system; this new pathway was called *Applicants Seeking Entry to a Validated Degree Programme for which a CAO Listing is Pending*.

### ***Changes to Modules and / or Programmes (Appendix 17)***

As per QQI’s *Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training* (November 2017), ‘[a] validated programme is not a static entity, frozen in time. It is expected that the provider will make necessary enhancements and adaptations to programmes from year to year.’ Additionally, as articulated in Carlow College’s *Teaching and Learning Strategy*, programme elements should be reviewed and adapted to ensure that programmes remain relevant and fit-for-purpose. The Annual Programme Monitoring Report provides the opportunity for the Programme Board and Programme Staff to reflect on current practice and, in doing so, propose new changes to improve the content and delivery systems; thus, enhancing the learning experience. To ensure that programme- and modular-level changes are appropriately recorded, Appendices 17 and 17.1 were added to the *Quality Assurance Policy* (Version 5). The purpose of these guidelines is to provide staff members with clear definitions regarding minor changes and major changes to modules and / or programmes. Minor changes can be made within the College’s internal quality assurance framework whereas major changes will need to be approved externally by the Validating Body. In both cases, the following documentation is required to be completed by the Programme Board:

- executive summary detailing the rationale for the modification and impact the modification will have on the existing programme;
- proposed changes to the certificate of validation;
- completed Module Modifications Document (Appendix 17.1) (if relevant);
- amended Programme Schedules (if relevant); and
- review by the External Examiner (if relevant).

Appendix 17.1 is the Module Modification Document which requires (if relevant) Programme Boards to list the name of the module(s) being revised, the section(s) to be changed to the module descriptor and a detailed rationale for the change.

Since being added to the *Quality Assurance Policy*, Appendix 17 was used during the reporting period by three programmes to introduce a new cross-programme elective, which was approved by PAEC in October 2021. Another significant reason for the creation of this appendix is that there are several cross-programme modules at Carlow College and the College needed a process to adequately capture changes made to these modules when new programmes are being developed and / or when programmes are completing cyclical programmatic reviews.

### ***Modular-Level Learner Feedback (Appendix 20)***

As stated in the 2019 / 2020 Annual Quality Assurance Report, Carlow College had its quality assurance procedures formally approved by the Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) of QQI on 12 September 2019; PAEC made its decision based on the [report](#) submitted by the QQI Re-Engagement Panel that visited Carlow College on 17 June 2019. Recommendation 3 made by the Re-Engagement Panel asked the College to consider ‘...its approach systematically to gathering feedback and closing the loop with stakeholders as to how issues raised are addressed.’ As part of this recommendation, the College began a process to revise its Module-Level Feedback Mechanisms. The Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Committee was tasked with reviewing and revising this process and submitted a proposal to the Academic Council on 11 March 2020 for an online-based Module-Level Feedback Questionnaire. To progress this proposal further, the Academic Council directed the TLA Committee to make a presentation to academic staff outlining the proposal and how it was arrived at. However, COVID-19 significantly disrupted progress on this project and it was effectively ‘side-lined’ until Spring 2021 when the TLA Committee held an Information Workshop on 15 February 2021 to explain how the online system for collecting module-level feedback would be set up and administered. This workshop also provided an opportunity for academic staff to ask questions about the proposed system. The TLA Committee brought the proposal for the new online module-level feedback system to the Academic Council for approval on 24 February 2021; it was approved and implemented in the Spring 2021 Term.

The *Procedures for Module-Level Learner Feedback* (Appendix 20) were drafted to outline the arrangements in respect of: the administration of module-level surveys; the analysis, management and sharing of survey data; and how information is provided to learners about survey results and modifications and enhancements which are implemented. For the Spring 2021 Term, the surveys were launched on 15 March 2021 whereby a link was placed at the top of each module Moodle page; the survey closed on 28 March 2021. To assist in promoting this important feedback mechanism, learners were encouraged via general email notices, lecturers, and class representatives to complete the survey. However, learner engagement with the Module-Level Feedback Questionnaire was very low with only 490 surveys being completed across all undergraduate programmes. From a programme perspective, below is the percentage of modules that had at least one survey result recorded:

- BA (Hons) in English and History – 53%;

- BA and BA (Hons) in Arts and Humanities – 53%;
- BA and BA (Hons) in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care) – 32%; and
- BA (Hons) in Social, Political and Community Studies – 33%.

In light of these disappointing figures, for the next reporting period, the TLA Committee will re-evaluate the module-level feedback mechanism and how greater learner engagement can be achieved; this is an objective for the next reporting period.

## **2.0(iii) Staff Recruitment, Management and Development**

### ***Policy Development and Enhancement***

For this reporting period, there were seven policies reviewed, revised and approved, one new policy developed and another policy re-approved with a minor amendment:

- [Annual Leave Policy](#) (Version 2.1): amended to reflect the introduction of the Bright HR System and HR personnel;
- [Bereavement and Compassionate Leave Policy](#) (Version 3): revised to include an increase of bereavement leave days from three to five days for immediate family members and from one to two days for non-immediate family members;
- [Force Majeure Leave Policy](#) (Version 2): revised to reflect updated legislation, College policies, amended procedures and contact information for staff;
- [Garda Vetting Policy](#) (Version 3): revised to include legislative changes since the policy was last approved (i.e. *Data Protection Act 2018*) and direction that Garda Vetting Results cannot be shared with placement providers, to comply with this last significant change Appendix 1.1 from Version 2 of this policy was removed;
- [Parental Leave and Parent's Leave Policy](#) (Version 3): revised to reflect legislative changes brought in by the *Parent's Leave and Benefits Act 2019*, amended by the *Family Leave and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2021*. The policy name was revised to include 'Parent's Leave', which resulted in two additional appendices being created: Appendix 1.4 (Notification of Intention to Take Parent's Leave Form and Appendix 1.5 (Notification to Cancel Parent's Leave);
- [Performance Management and Development Policy](#) (Version 2): revised to reflect changes to the Performance Management and Development Programme Form; and
- [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#) (Version 2): revised to reflect College practices (e.g. the introduction of new policies) and action points related to Athena SWAN, which were deemed eligible to be updated at this review (i.e. exit interviews).

The [Right to Disconnect Policy](#) (Version 1) was the only new policy developed for this reporting period related to staff recruitment, management and development. This policy was developed to encourage and support College employees in balancing their working and personal lives, whether they work traditional hours in the workplace, work remotely or flexibly. In particular, this policy relied extensively on the Workplace Relations Commission's *Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Right to Disconnect*.

Although not a new policy, or a current policy, the College re-approved the [Remote Working Temporary Guidelines](#) for the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year. At its meeting in September 2021, the Management Board approved the Hybrid Working Project to develop a *Hybrid Working Policy* at Carlow College; this is a stated objective for the 2021 / 2022 reporting period.

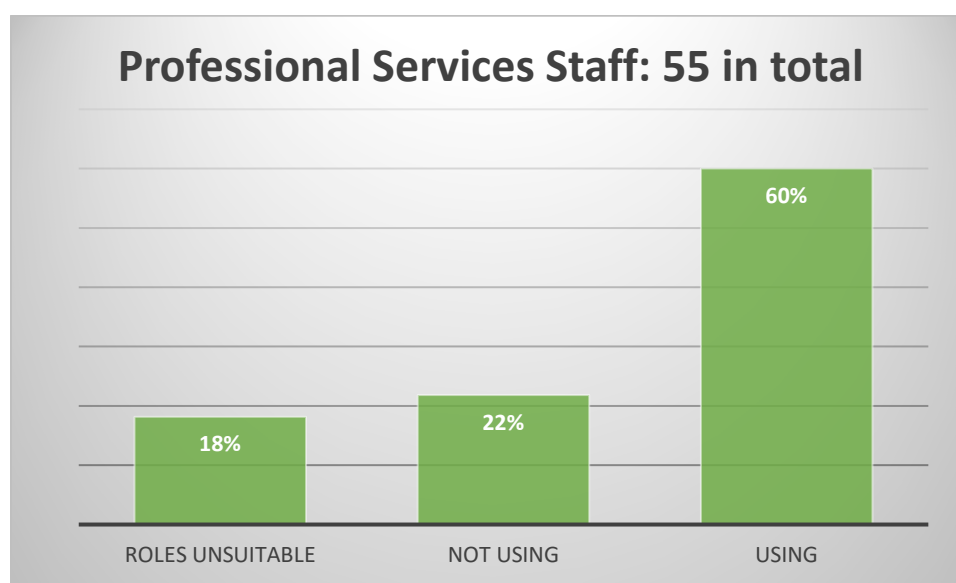
### ***Resources for Staff***

In addition to policy development, the Human Resources Office also developed an institution-wide [Employee Handbook](#) to facilitate and combine greater communication around the areas of policies and the College's standardised procedures for all new and existing staff. This handbook also serves as an informational tool for line managers and staff whereby they can directly refer to their employment rights, enabling a more streamlined approach to HR and people management issues and information. The handbook is communicated to all new employees and line managers at the induction stage of the employee lifecycle.

Another key resource that was developed further was the HR section of the Carlow College [website](#), which is available to both internal and external stakeholders. The upgrades included the provision of information related to benefits, policies / procedures and general information for employment at Carlow College. The page also linked in with all COVID-19 related information and resources.

### ***HR Systems***

The College also made investments in upgrading its current HROnline System to Bright HR. Aside from the greater functionality of the new system, the system had the capacity to use an application called Blip to record working hours; this system was also compliant with the *Organisation of Working Time Act 1997*. The introduction of Blip followed a detailed project management plan whereby HR tested the system for a period of three months and then held training sessions with senior management, line managers and staff. Following the training, the Blip application was trialled for a period of six months. The trial period was successful with a significant majority of professional support staff, 60%, moving from the use of manual timesheets to Blip. Another important impact of this new system is the introduction of new work life balance policies such as flexi-time, which is an identified objective for the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year. Throughout the project, HR collaborated with the IT & Student Systems Manager and the Data Protection Officer to create a Blip and Bright HR Information Guide to further support understanding around the use of Blip and Bright HR from a data management and security perspective.



### ***Formalisation of Union Recognition***

As stated in the 2019 / 2020 AQR, Carlow College officially recognised the Union in the College on 20 May 2020. Following this approval, it was agreed on 10 June 2020 to develop a plan to implement this



recognition. In collaboration with HR, the Director of Operations and the Union Shop Stewards, [Guidelines for Union Engagement](#) were developed throughout the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year; the Management Board approved version 2 of the guidelines on 24 February 2021. The scope of these guidelines centred on three key areas: the individual (i.e. representation of individual Union members on matters of concern, grievances, dignity and respect and disciplinary matters); the collective (i.e. representation of Union members collectively on terms and conditions of employment) and policy and procedures (i.e. representation of Union members collectively on matters of employment relevant to the development of new policies, changes to existing policies and associated procedures in either case). Significantly, the guidelines were informed by best practices in employee / employer engagement and representation, and by the national legislative context.

In addition to the guidelines, the Carlow College Union has a dedicated information folder on the Staff Gateway and the Shop Steward is an *ex officio* member of the Management Board. As part of the guidelines, an Employee Engagement Group was established, comprised of representatives of senior management, the Human Resource Manager and the designated Shop Steward and Deputy Shop Steward, to support the process of Union engagement in the College; the group meets monthly to consider issues of relevance to employees on an ongoing basis. Owing to the increased visibility of the Union within the College, it is estimated that Union Membership has increased 20%.

### **CPD Opportunities for Professional Support Staff in Higher Education**

Continual engagement in CPD in their respective professional roles is a key focus of the learner supports service team. During the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year, six team members achieved the maximum digital badges available for completion of the ‘All Aboard’ Digital Skills in Higher Education online resource. Further, one team member achieved the Universal Design in Teaching and Learning (Higher Education) digital badge. The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning hosted both courses. Another key focus is enhancing membership with external bodies, The College has had membership of Student Affairs Ireland (SAI) since 2017. The core of SAI’s mission is to provide professional development for Student Affairs Professionals and to advance policy and research in Higher Education in Ireland. Members can also become involved in special interest groups relevant to their role. Changes to institutional fees and SAI membership structure for 2020 provided the College with an opportunity to extend our membership of SAI from four to seven members of staff engaged in student affairs, services and / or experience. Consequently, colleagues from Admissions, LIRO and Academic Administration (Office of the Registrar) have joined representatives from student services and the International Office as SAI members. For CPD opportunities related to Teaching and Learning, see Part B, Section 2.0(iv) and Part B, Section 2.0(vi).

### **2.0(iv) Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

#### ***Policy Development and Enhancement***

For this reporting period, the [Assessment of Learners Policy](#) (Version 2.1) received minor changes (i.e. making reference to IT Carlow as being one of the College’s validating bodies and updated the list of referenced policies). The [Plagiarism Policy](#) (Version 4) was revised to include references to take-home exams and a new appendix was added (Appendix 3: *Cover Page for Take-Home Exams*). It should be noted that the *Plagiarism Policy* (Version 3) was used for take-home exams from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when exams were moved online for the Spring 2020 Term. Additionally, *Guidelines for Setting Take Home Exams* and *Guidelines for Marking Take Home Exams* were developed and included in the *Rules and Regulations in Relation to Assessment and Standards* (September 2020). However, following the semester take-home exams for the Autumn 2020 Term, and an acknowledgement that take-home exams may be required on a more long-term basis, the *Plagiarism Policy* was revised to reflect practice. The third policy revised was the [Research Ethics Advisory Policy](#) (Version 4), see below for more information.

There were also several important changes made to the [Quality Assurance Policy](#) (Version 5), and its [appendices](#), that related to Teaching, Learning and Assessment. As mentioned in Section 2.0(ii) of this report, the *Rules and Regulations in Relation to Assessment and Standards* were added to the list of appendices for the *Quality Assurance Policy*. The changes made to the *Rules and Regulations* during this reporting period were the result of amendment made to an existing policy (i.e. the *Plagiarism Policy* (Version 4), see above). Another significant change was made to the Academic Advisor role and processes for granting absences and extensions, see below for more information.

### **Research Ethics**

The more substantive changes made to the [Research Ethics Advisory Policy](#) (Version 4) relate to greater delineation between the application process for undergraduate and postgraduate taught research programmes as outlined in Appendix 1 and the creation of a new appendix (Appendix 12) that outlines the application process for postgraduate by research and staff research. Appendix 13 was also created which outlines the process for external research applications being assessed by the Research Ethics Advisory Committee. In addition to these changes, the policy was significantly revised to ensure that it is compliant with GDPR. In particular, the policy was revised to state that learners were responsible for the storage of their own raw data. The policy now states that hard copies should be stored in a safe and secure place and electronic data should be stored on the learner's college One Drive account (and wiped from any removable device). Data should only be stored for as long as was necessary for the purpose for which it was collected. The time will vary according to the different purposes for which it was collected and according to the different guidelines laid down by different fields.

During the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year, the Research Ethics Advisory Committee (REAC) continued to monitor the process brought in the previous academic year whereby quality control checks were conducted on 10% of Dissertations approved by two lecturers' signatures and checking all the Dissertations whose proposals were submitted to REAC to ensure that the Committee's recommendations were carried out. These checks were carried out by individual committee members who had access to their programme's Dissertation Moodle page. The findings were then reported back to the Chair of REAC. REAC found that compliance and completion of the Ethics forms had improved from the previous reporting period. However, it was noted by REAC that there remain certain problems which need to be addressed by both REAC and by supervisors.

To assist in continual quality assurance in research, REAC has recommended the following to be actioned for the next reporting period:

- revise the *Research Ethics Advisory Policy* and procedures to more clearly direct learners in relations to completing the application (e.g. a check-box system listing documents to be submitted; a check-box system for supervisors to indicate whether they regard the proposal as falling into the Green, Amber or Red category;
- a form to be sent out to all supervisors to indicate what student proposals have been approved as green, red or amber;
- prepare workshops for supervisors and fourth year Dissertation learners at the beginning of the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year;
- collect feedback from supervisors and learners about the application process;
- prepare a glossary book for terms used in the ethics process (e.g. confidentiality, anonymity); and
- develop a REAC page on the college website, to contain the *Research Ethics Advisory Policy* and forms as well as advice for filling in the different forms.

### ***Processes Related to the Academic Advisor Role***

The Quality Assurance Officer was directed by the TLA Committee to review and revise the Academic Advisor Role; this was necessitated as the current systems associated with this role pre-dated the introduction of the Student Records Management System (SRMS), which was introduced during the 2018 / 2019 Academic Year. The ‘uneven’ data generated by the Academic Advisor Reports also featured in the Annual Programme Monitoring Reports. For instance, the Programme Director of the English and History Programme noted the following, ‘As noted last year [i.e. 2019 / 2020], there is considerable unevenness in the level of feedback provided by AAs and this is partly a function of the Academic Advisor Report forms.’

The Quality Assurance Officer met with members of the Professional Learning Support Staff, the Data Protection Officer and the Academic Advisors of the College. Following feedback, the Quality Assurance Officer then engaged with revising the role and the associated processes. The role itself did not change significantly. However, the guidelines were revised to reference the Learner Information and Retention Officer (LIRO) as monitoring learner attendance across Stages 1 and 2. Regarding the extension request forms, the forms were modified to make them more ‘user-friendly’ and the process for granting extensions was standardised (i.e. the time for when extension request forms had to be submitted by learners and the time a formal response by the Academic Advisor was communicated were both standardised). As the information contained in the forms will be used in the Annual Programme Monitoring Reports, learners are now asked to document why they are requesting an extension (i.e. bereavement, health condition; personal / family reason; academic workload; technology issue or other). Where an extension request and / or absence request are granted, the Academic Advisor is now required to document these on the SRMS; prior to this, email communication was primarily used which proved problematic.

Regarding the Academic Advisor Report, which is due at the end of each semester, the pre-2021 form asked the Academic Advisor to document information that was not being collected (e.g. number of learners that changed electives; fail grades; penalties imposed and request for references). The revised forms asked for more meaningful data to be documented like reasons given for granting extensions / absences and reasons given for missing lectures / tutorials. The Quality Assurance Officer will engage with stakeholders at the end of the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year to review the revisions and see what further changes need to be made.

### ***Internal Moderation***

Building upon the development of a second-marking system for dissertations (see 2019 – 2020 AQR, Part B, Section 2.0(iv), pp. 37 – 38), the TLA Committee developed a proposal for the seconding marking of assessments. The assessments that will be subject to internal moderation are:

- Postgraduate Programmes
  - All theses, dissertations, essay / assessments contributing 20% or more to the overall award mark will be second-read; the Experiential Module on the MA in Leadership in Therapeutic Child and Social Care is exempt from this.
- Undergraduate Programmes (Award Years)
  - All written exams, essays, projects in award years that achieve a mark above 70% will be second-read.
  - A sample of assessments marked by new part-time or full-time lecturers will be second-read during the first year of their contract.

The process developed by the TLA Committee state that second readers will be nominated by Programme Directors or Dissertation Coordinators. Once a nominee is approved, they will second-read

the assessment before the mark is submitted to the exam boards and subsequently published for learners. The guidelines developed further provide direction as to when the assessors inform the second reader and the process that followed to complete the second marking process. In particular, where there is no agreement regarding the assessment mark, the Programme Director ensures that the assessment is sent to the external examiner; in the event of an irresolvable disagreement between the internal and external examiners, the board of examiners' decision is final.

The process for internal moderation was approved by the Academic Council on 24 February 2021 and will be implemented and reviewed in the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year.

### ***CPD Week 2021***

As part of the College's quality assurance framework, a week is set aside each June to deliver CPD workshops for academic and professional support staff. For the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year, the Teaching and Learning Centre at IT Carlow delivered twelve one-hour workshops. The focus of these workshops were:

- Teaching in a Pandemic: Advantages of a Flipped Classroom;
- Using the Rubric Function in Turnitin Feedback Studio;
- Teaching Online with MS Teams;
- Hear to Help Initiatives – Peer Support;
- Inclusive Pedagogies;
- Supporting Online Learning;
- Information Literacy Programme for Learners;
- Backward Design for Learning Experiences;
- MCQs, multiple choices of good design;
- Engagement, Assessment and Feedback of Learning Activities through Sound and Vision;
- Activating Active Learning; and
- Creating Educational Screencasts.

Eighteen lecturers attended at least one of the workshops, with most attending three or more sessions. The feedback from staff who participated in the workshops was positive and the staff that delivered the workshops referenced the '...enthusiasm and engagement demonstrated by the Carlow College staff.'

### ***COVID-19 and Teaching, Learning and Assessment***

Planning for the 2020 /2021 Academic Year began in May 2020 under the coordination of a working group of the Office of the Registrar, which comprised the Assistant Registrar for Academic Affairs (Chair), Administrator for Office of the Registrar, IT and Student Systems Manager, Head of Student Services and Director of Operations. This Group met regularly throughout the Summer (2020) and produced a detailed *Contingency Plan for the Delivery and Assessment of Academic Programmes, Sept – Dec 2020* which was approved by the Academic Council on 29 July 2020. The plan responded to and was guided by feedback from learners, lecturers and academic management as summarised below:

#### *Learners*

Feedback from learners identified the following requirements:

- consistency in the use of online learning platforms, with lectures delivered live to a structured timetable;

- enhanced and regular communication;
- access to adequate learning resources;
- access to personal devices for learning;
- access to reliable internet;
- training, where required, to provide learners with a good level of understanding of how to use the technology and support resources available to them; and
- opportunities for learners to interact with each other outside of classroom settings.

#### *Lecturers*

Feedback from lecturers identified the following requirements:

- more training in online teaching technology;
- more training in online pedagogies particularly in how to maximise learner engagement; and
- recognition of the increased workload associated with adapting material prepared for face-to-face delivery for online delivery

#### *Academic Management*

This group identified the three biggest challenges for the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year as:

- planning in a time of uncertainty and supporting our learners both academically and emotionally;
- delivering a ‘real’ College experience while ensuring that all health and safety guidelines are applied; and
- securing the requisite placements for our Social Care learners.

Academic management were also asked to identify the three most important things that could be done to improve online teaching, learning or assessment for 2020 / 2021 Academic Year:

- ensure a first-class and consistent delivery of online lectures and tutorials by teaching staff by providing support, training and enhancements of the VLE;
- work closely with learner representatives to monitor delivery and improve learner experience on an ongoing basis; and
- provide extensive information to learners about assessment and guarantee delivery of personalised and timely feedback to learners.

#### *Delivery of Teaching*

The Contingency Plan provided various blended learning timetable scenarios in line with guidance provided by DFHERIS in their July 2020 document *Guidance for Further and Higher Education for Returning to On-Site Activity in 2020: Roadmap and COVID-19 Adaptation Framework*. Certain cohorts were prioritised for in-College classes including incoming Stage 1 learners and Stage 3 Social Care learners. In particular, the Stage 3 Social Care learners were scheduled to spend the Spring 2021 Term on placement outside the College and the Autumn 2020 Term had a curriculum that included several practice-based modules which necessitated the explication and testing of practical skills and proficiencies.

All learners were brought into the College in small ‘pods’ for induction and orientation which included training in Office365, OneDrive and Teams virtual learning platform. In addition, Stage 2 Social Care learners, whose placement occurred in Semester 1, attended placement preparation workshops in the College. By the end of September, however, HEIs were requested to move learning online for a period

of two-to-three weeks. As the public health situation continued to deteriorate, the College was forced to abandon its plans for blended delivery and move to a fully online delivery model.

Over the Summer (2020), the TLA Committee developed guidelines for online teaching using the MS Teams platform in conjunction with the Moodle VLE. Staff training in Teams and enhanced Moodle 3.9 features was provided in September 2020 with the aim of ensuring a professional and consistent learning experience for learners (see Part B, Section 2.0(vi) of this report for more information on the training provided to staff). Guidelines were developed and provided to learners to supplement the in-person IT induction. This included a Netiquette guide and information for learners on some data protection and privacy considerations of online teaching and learning: [Learner FAQs - Carlow College](#). Breakout Rooms became available on Teams in January 2021 and further training and guidelines were produced for lecturers and learners.

The schedule of teaching was impacted by the late release of Leaving Certificate results. The teaching semester was reduced from twelve to eleven weeks and teaching continued over the mid-term. Stage 1 learners, who started their programmes four weeks later than planned, continued classes up to the Christmas break and sat their exams in January. A later start to Semester 2 was therefore necessary and again the teaching weeks were reduced from twelve to eleven. Extra tutorials for Stages 1 and 2 and the provision of additional asynchronous content on the VLE partially mitigated the reduction in contact hours.

Significant efforts were made by the College's management and staff to ensure that learners could continue to engage; communication was a key component of the strategy. A sub-group of the Office of the Registrar was set up to deal specifically with learner engagement and coordinate the work of the Learner Information and Retention Officer (LIRO), Academic Advisors and Programme Directors. Financial assistance was made available for learners to purchase or upgrade laptops and the IT function provided one-to-one assistance to learners who were struggling (see Part B, Section 2.0(v) of this report for more information on the Laptop Grant Scheme). There was a particular concern for Stage 1 learners making the transition to third level and several informal check-in sessions were arranged for this cohort.

There was increased lecturer utilisation of the Moodle VLE with many lecturers using the platform to provide additional resources, recorded videos and interactive features. A 'model' Moodle page was set up to provide examples and instructions on the platform's functionality and there has been a considerable enhancement of the use of the VLE by many lecturers. This has been welcomed by learners.

### *Assessment*

There were relatively few changes to continuous assessments with all written work continuing to be submitted and marked through Turnitin Feedback Studio. There was an increase in requests for extensions across most programmes with learners citing reasons relating to the ongoing COVID-19 situation. These included poor mental health and technological / connectivity issues. Some learners reported that they had lost motivation to complete assignments. Academic Advisors and Programme Directors applied the extenuating circumstances procedures sensitively to mitigate against any potential disadvantage.

As far as possible, practical in-class assessments were adapted for the online environment. Programme Directors and lecturers were guided by the [Guiding Principles for Alternative Assessment \(COVID-19\)](#) (QQI, 2020), [10 Points to Consider in Choosing Alternative Assessment Methods for the Online Environment](#) (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2020) and [Selecting Online Alternatives to Common Assessment Methods](#) (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2020). Learners' growing familiarity with the Teams platform allowed them to successfully complete presentations and debates and, with the advent of Breakout Rooms, facilitated collaborative work. Some practical skills such as roleplay and facilitation were more challenging to assess online but overall lecturers were able to make modifications

in ways that ensure learning outcomes were met. Some welcomed the opportunities for quick, formative assessments enabled by MS Forms and Menti.com

Take-home exams replaced in-College proctored exams. These exams, which allowed questions to be answered over a 24-hour period were popular with most learners and reduced stress levels during periods where many learners were experiencing anxiety caused by the pandemic and the economic and social impact of lockdowns.

### *Placement*

Placement was impacted significantly by the closure of placement agencies and programmes had to develop contingencies to ensure that learners achieved learning outcomes and standards of proficiency. Placement Coordinators and Programme Directors on the BA in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care) and the BA (Hons) in Social, Political and Community Studies programmes were innovative and resourceful in developing contingency plans and modifications. For many learners on the Applied Social Studies programme the normal block placement of 400 hours was not possible. A Placement Contingency Working Group was set up and worked closely with learners to develop bespoke models of placement structure and timing. Many learners had to complete their placements over the Summer (2021) months and additional sittings of exam boards were necessary to ensure that learners could progress to the next stage of their programme, or, in the case of final year learners, to graduate. There was a high level of engagement on a national level with CORU, IASCE and other key stakeholders such as THEA, QQI and USI regarding placement during COVID-19. A very small number of learners whose placements were particularly affected by COVID-19 were facilitated to complete placement by the development of a *Hybrid Placement Model*, which was developed by the Practice Placement Advisory Committee (Social Care). The ‘circumstances of use’ were narrow and required that all students be linked to a specific placement agency. This document was approved by Academic Council on 28 April 2021.

Learners at Stage 3 of the BA (Hons) in Social, Political and Community Studies completed a ten-week internship in a community development and / or non-governmental organisation. However, all placement organisations cancelled the internships due to the impact of COVID-19. Accordingly, the Programme Director and Internship Co-Ordinator undertook a process of consultation to establish an alternative and appropriate solution that met both the specified module and programme intended learning outcomes. The revised internship proposal was discussed with the external examiner and the QA Officer and was approved by Academic Council in January 2021 for commencement on 1 February (see Case Studies, below).

### *Summary*

Learners and staff displayed considerable resilience and resourcefulness and student learning and achievement was not significantly negatively impacted by the move to online teaching and assessment. This view is supported by feedback from learners, staff and external examiners who were generally happy with the functioning and delivery of programmes. The external examiners, in particular, recognised and commented on the significant effort made by all staff to adapt teaching and support services during the COVID-19 lockdown. Several examiners mentioned that they were impressed by how assessments were adapted to be implemented online and admired the improvisation that this required.

## **2.0(v) Supports and Resources for Learners**

### ***Learner Information***

A recommendation of the QQI Re-Engagement Panel was to ‘build on a strong culture of face-to-face training and sign-posting to student services via email by creating more formal materials and including signposting on the student gateway’. Carlow College continued to build on our 2019 / 2020 initiatives in this area by developing and enhancing our online resources. The structure of the learner support services section on our website was updated to ensure a more intuitive and user-friendly experience. The

addition of more FAQ sections enhanced the accessibility of information to current and prospective learners.

New online resources for induction and orientation were also developed such as our '[Discover Carlow College](#)' induction and orientation information guide to support our induction programme for our new and continuing learners. In addition, a dedicated learner information hub was created on our website which provided a central point for learners to access essential information such as safety protocols for COVID-19, accessing college facilities, IT and Office 365 systems, joining video lectures and accessing the Moodle VLE to ensure a smooth transition to college or the next stage of their programme. The continued development of online resources is a key objective for 2021 / 2022.

### ***Student Representation***

The College views its relationship with Carlow College Students' Union (CCSU) as one of partnership, which facilitates the enhancement of learner voice, representation and engagement in all areas of college life. Accordingly, CCSU has attendance and participation rights in all high-level meetings such as various college committees, Programme Boards, Academic Council, Management Board and Governing Body. In the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year, as part of our on-going commitment to work with CCSU to review the effectiveness of the current Students' Union structure, the SU President's contract was amended and extended to bring it in line with comparable positions in other HEIs. A full strategic review with CCSU will take place in 2021 / 2022 Academic Year with a view to enhancing existing structures for learner representation and engagement within the College.

As a partner institution with the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP), our learner representatives undertake online training programmes which help develop their capacity to represent their peers appropriately and to participate effectively in college fora. NStEP's annual training report noted that 17 of our 19 class representatives completed training in 2020 / 2021. In addition, all in-coming CCSU officers attended an induction morning with the Head of Student Services with input from the Quality Assurance Officer, Digital Communications and Marketing Manager, Digital Communications Co-ordinator, Student Recruitment Manager and Student Support Services. This induction serves to orientate our learner representatives to the resources and supports available to them within the College, the quality assurance system and the importance of their role within it.

### ***Library Services***

During 2020 / 2021 Academic Year, the PJ Brophy Library further developed the range of online resources available to learners. This included the addition of the multi-disciplinary EBSCO Academic Search Premier Research Database, while a planned upgrade to the JSTOR Arts and Science Package for Humanities and Social sciences is also in train.

Library staff continued to provide remote support to learners through email, phone and Facebook. Services were expanded at the start of COVID-19, and continued throughout the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year, to include a 'Click and Collect' Service whereby learners were able to reserve books from home and pick them up at the PJ Brophy Library. Additionally, Library staff created online support guides and 'how to' video tutorials which were placed on the Library Moodle page, and a supports section was added to the library section on the College website. Twice weekly online classes were delivered that introduced learners to library resources, conducting effective literature searches and using online databases; individual tutorials were also offered by appointment.

Through the Academic Resource Office (ARO), links were developed with the National Council for the Blind in Ireland (NCBI) to improve access to library material in alternative formats. The NCBI Library Access Services Manager led a Dolphin Easy Reader App information and training session for learners with print difficulties, ARO and library staff. The NCBI Dolphin Easy Reader App gives access via the NCBI Library to over 600,000 digital titles from national and international publishers and learners can browse and download books from NCBI Overdrive, Bookshare and Project Gutenberg. The NCBI sets



up the account and Bookshare access and can send books in a variety of formats to the learner's college email. This service is available to any registered learner with a print disability and includes learners with dyslexia, visual impairments / blind, ADD / ADHD, neurological conditions, or on-going illness.

### ***Out-of-Hours Text Support***

In the 2020 / 2021, the College partnered with 'text about it 50808' to provide a new mental health support for our learners. CCSP 50808 is a free 24 / 7 text service staffed by crisis volunteers who can provide everything from a calming chat to immediate support for learners going through a mental health or emotional crisis. This initiative extends the support options available to our learners, particularly out-of-hours and at weekends when our counselling service is not available. We also recognise that some learners are not comfortable talking about issues that concern them in a face-to-face setting. CCSP 50808 offers an alternative way to seek support, which may be more comfortable. Partnering with 'text about it 50808' will allow crisis volunteers to signpost CCSP texters to our Student Counselling Service for further support. Furthermore, the service will provide high level, anonymised data at the end of the year to our counselling service on the types of issues facing our learners, which in turn will help us to develop better mental health supports for our learners in the future.

### ***Supporting Learners During COVID-19 and Remote Learning Provision***

The closure of the physical college campus in March 2020 combined with the on-going COVID-19 pandemic meant the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year was conducted entirely online. Consequently, the College's Counselling, Chaplaincy, Health, Careers, Disability and Academic Support Services continued to provide advice, guidance and support by phone, email, 'what's app' messaging and live chat meetings via MS Teams. Our Student Support Services continued to build on the online supports initially provided in the pivot to a remote provision of services. For example, our Careers Officer extended employability resources to include virtual interview guides and online employability seminars. All services and supports offered a 'drop in' contact service via email, phone or text, while additional supportive resources were posted on service Moodle pages with links to external sources of support for self-care.

One of the strengths of being a small college is that our support services, in conjunction with our Learner Information and Retention Officer (LIRO), could continue to be proactive in maintaining personal contact with the majority of our student body on a regular basis. On-going feedback from learners about their experiences of remote learning enabled us to rethink how best our learners could be supported on their learning journey and to build more flexibility into our services such as offering group learning support and wellbeing sessions at night as well as during normal timetabled hours.

Some of the initiatives undertaken in the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year, which showcased this flexibility and received positive learner feedback were:

- The 'Be Well Hour': A twice weekly online session, hosted by our Counselling Service via MS Teams, which offered learners an opportunity to discuss any issues or challenges they were experiencing in relation to their emotional wellbeing while studying remotely. In offering a safe online space for students to explore their individual experiences, it provided a point of contact which allowed learners to connect with others facing similar challenges and to develop strategies to strengthen resilience and persistence. Up to 15 learners attended each session with the night session proving most popular. Feedback from learners indicated that the sessions enabled connections between learners where friendship groups developed and were maintained via WhatsApp.
- 'Let's Chat for 30': A twice weekly online learning support and assistive technology session offered to our learners with disabilities, learning differences and / or long-term illnesses by our Disability Service. These sessions were used to target both our Stage 1 learners and continuing learners who had recently disclosed a disability and applied for reasonable accommodations. Thematic sessions were offered to introduce learners to various assistive and educational technologies, which would assist with remote learning and Take-Home Exams. A 30-minute focused session facilitated learners to engage with key

elements of software, apps or learning strategies, with additional time made available for Q&As and / or group discussions as needed. There was a significant increase in learner engagement with the ‘Let’s Chat for 30’ online sessions when compared to the in-house workshops delivered during 2019 / 2020. Almost three times the number of learners chose to engage with the online provision.

- ‘Learning Links’: Our Academic Resource Office supported the cross-programme Stage 1 module ‘Academic and Digital Skills’ through the twice weekly online delivery of a suite of academic support workshops tailored to the needs of our new learners. These topic-based workshops focused on areas such as learning styles, academic writing, academic integrity and referencing, sourcing appropriate materials, exam writing and study strategies. Regular attendance at sessions helped learners adjust to a college learning and assessment environment, provided an opportunity to process module content through peer-facilitated learning and provided a connection between learners and the College.

In an end of year survey of the online learning support initiatives, feedback from learners was extremely positive. The following response from a Stage 1 learner was representative of the sentiments expressed:

‘When I felt overwhelmed I was offered the option to engage with online sessions at night which made a huge difference to my overall experience and gave me the strength and encouragement to carry on with my degree. Keep the sessions online when college resumes’.

The Students’ Union also continued to provide support and advice to learners through MS Teams, emails and official social media channels. Virtual events such as games night, quizzes, movie nights, online ‘bake-a-longs’ were organised. The popular weekly ‘Social Network’ initiative hosted by CCSU officers encouraged learners to get to know each other over refreshments and home bakes continued as a virtual coffee morning during 2020 / 2021 Academic Year. Each week the Welfare and Equality Officer, along with other SU officers and college support staff, led an informal discussion based on a series of general health, wellbeing and academic programme topics.

### ***Laptop Grant Scheme***

The College also invested in providing learners access to laptops so that they were not disadvantaged with the move to online provision. Carlow College was not in receipt of funding under the Government’s ICT Funding Scheme created to support digital teaching and learning through the provision of laptops for disadvantaged learners; it should be noted that Carlow College vigorously lobbied the Government, albeit to no avail, to allow its learners to have access to this funding scheme. Following media coverage of the ICT Funding Scheme, College services began to receive enquiries from both learners and parents. Since Carlow College has a very high number of learners in receipt of SUSI funding, in excess of 70% of the total learner population, the Management Board of the College began to explore ways to develop a system whereby Carlow College learners could apply for a laptop grant. College officials calculated that the average cost of providing a laptop to a disadvantaged learner was c. €500. Instead of funding the full cost of a laptop, a reduced payment of €100 could be applied for by a learner to be used towards the cost of purchasing a laptop. It was estimated that this would allow for 200 learners to avail of this scheme, resulting in a cost to the College of €20,000. To support this initiative, the Head of Student Services, in consultation with the Data Protection Officer, developed new procedures which included a learner information sheet and application form. In the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year, a total of fifty-four students received the grant, which ultimately was valued at €200; the total cost for the College was €9,940. The programme was rolled out for the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year as well.

## **2.0(vi) Information and Data Management**

### ***Policy Development and Enhancement***

For this reporting period, there was one policy reviewed, revised and approved that relate to information and data management. The [\*Records Management Policy\*](#) (Version 4) was up for its three-year cyclical review in September 2021. As such, work was undertaken by the Policy Owner, the Archivist. The policy

was amended to include the development of a robust [Records Retention Schedule](#); in turn, this resulted in the [Recordkeeping Manual](#) being revised.

### ***Investment in Technology***

For the 2020 / 2021 reporting period, all academic provision was moved online; the exception to this was the Practice Placement and Portfolio 1 module delivered in Stage 2 of the Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care) Programme, this module had a few weeks of in-class tuition at the start of the academic year. As was stated in the 2019 / 2020 AQR (pp. 41-42), planning for the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year began in May 2020. An important focus of these discussion was the anticipated move to online delivery and the investment in technology required.

The College continued to invest in hardware for both learners and staff to improve the standard specification of user devices on the network. The most significant investment, besides upgrades for online teaching and the ongoing maintenance of the Student Records Management System (SRMS), related to upgrading the technology infrastructure of Cobden Hall and its adjoining annex, James Doyle Room. Prior to the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year, Cobden Hall and the James Doyle Room was primarily used for large public lectures, meetings and College exams; together they can hold 160 people. With the introduction of social distancing requirements, these venues were fitted with a specialised audio / visual system which consisted of a laser projector, extended visual of TV screens, column speakers and a large electronic screen to facilitate delivery of on-campus lectures. By adding both Cobden Hall and the James Doyle Room as one lecture hall, the College's total seating capacity for lectures increased 44%.

### ***IT Training for Staff***

As reported in the 2019 / 2020 AQR (p. 47), IT Services undertook several learner and staff feedback initiatives to identify areas where people were struggling with technology and actioned the feedback by providing more online support tools and virtual training sessions. For the 2020 / 2021 reporting period, IT Services provided a robust training programme that focused on online delivery using MS Teams and making greater use of Moodle 3.9. Academic staff members had twelve hours of mandatory workshops devoted to MS Teams, these workshops were delivered online by MS Teams Education and online / on-campus by members of the professional support staff of the College. The focus of these workshops was: Teams Introduction for Educators and Staff; Transform Learning with Microsoft Teams; Review of Training Material through MS Teams Desktop App; Video for MS Teams in Teaching and Learning Day1; Video for MS Teams in Teaching and Learning Day 2; MS Teams Session with Instructors and Onsite Training (Technical and Pedagogical). In addition to these workshops, academic staff members also had two hours of onsite training for Moodle 3.9. All staff members were provided the opportunity to attend tutorials on using OneDrive; in particular, the sharing of online files and working in the Cloud. Non-teaching staff who use Moodle, were also given the opportunity to attend online tutorials provided by the vendor.

In addition to the above workshops, the IT Department also participated in the Orientation and Induction Programme at the College. After the initial presentation to all learners, these were followed up by one-to-one tutorials for the remainder of the academic year. These tutorials focused on the following IT services: Office 365 and Teams; Moodle; using OneDrive; and on-site systems (i.e. Library PC access and printer systems).

H5P, which is a Moodle Plugin, was used for online induction in addition to online support to both staff on learners during online teaching and learning throughout the academic year. The platform was managed by Marketing, Student Services, LIRO and IT to ensure that staff and learners had access to support tools to assist with remote learning.

## **2.0(vii) Public Information and Communication**

### ***Policy Development and Enhancement***

For this reporting period, the *Quality Assurance Policy* (Section 4.9) was reviewed and updated to identify the Digital Communications and Marketing Office's key responsibility for developing and maintaining the College website and social media accounts, as well as, having responsibility for production of the annual College prospectus. These changes were made to reflect the need for consistent messaging and branding across the College's marketing communications.

### ***Greater 'Visibility' Through COVID-19***

One of the stated objectives of the *Strategic Plan, 2017-2022* include 'Student Recruitment marketing material to reflect our strong focus on graduate employability, intellectual, personal and professional development', engagement with 'students and graduates to ensure their narratives are captured in our marketing material' and the use of 'innovative marketing techniques'. As such, the Digital Communications and Marketing Office created a suite of College videos promoting the unique experience of studying with Carlow College through four course spotlight videos for each undergraduate programme, four student testimonial videos for each undergraduate programme and a campus tour. Several improvements were made to the website including a section on key [Subject Modules](#) to promote that range of subject offering and the qualifications and experience of our lecturers. Furthermore, to showcase the supportive environment of the College the Student Supports section of the website was reviewed and updated to enhance the user experience and make information easily accessible.

Additionally, with no on-campus activity permitted due to COVID-19, the Digital Communications and Marketing Office supported the Student Recruitment Team in designing and promotion of two Virtual Open Days through the creation of video content, hosting of live sessions, online advertising campaigns and design of the virtual open day platform. This innovative use of technology allowed the College Student Recruitment Team to reach potential students during a time when school visits and on-campus activities were not permitted.

### ***Guidance Counsellor Newsletter***

The Guidance Counsellor Newsletter was a new initiative and was circulated to Guidance Counsellor's in Secondary Schools and FE providers in May 2021. The objective of this newsletter was to introduce the new initiative, promote greater awareness of the Change of Mind Facility and highlight new programme development for 2022. This communication through a regular newsletter allows for strengthened relationships and raises the visibility of Carlow College with this stakeholder group – the main access route to Leaving Certificate students. Evaluation and impact of the newsletter will be monitored through communications with Guidance Counsellor's by email, school visits and the Guidance Counsellor's Open Evening in the upcoming year. Immediate feedback indicated a welcomed formal communication channel resulting in three secondary schools and one FET Provider in Laois coming together for a virtual group information session, this was specifically focused on the new B.A. (Honours) in Psychology Programme; one local secondary school in Carlow participated in a virtual information session for three new programmes being launched in the College. For GDPR compliance, the College did not use MailChimp or any platform that stores data or creates analytics on engagement of readers of the newsletter. In working with the DPO and a new Digital Communications and Marketing Manager in the future, the newsletter format may change so as to allow for data analytics to be gathered in this way.

## **2.0(viii) Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review**

### ***Review and Revalidation Panel Recommendations***

Every programme at Carlow College underwent the revised QQI Review and Revalidation Process in the Spring 2018. The Independent Panel made eleven recommendations across the entire institution,

eight programme-specific recommendations for the undergraduate programmes and one programme-specific recommendation for the postgraduate programme. Additionally, during the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year, two new undergraduate programmes were validated, one programme received ten recommendations and the other programme received eleven recommendations. These recommendations are a standing item on the weekly agenda for the Office of the Registrar which is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the recommendations. Please click on the links to view the [Recommendation and Implementation Plan \(2018\)](#) and the [Recommendation and Implementation Plan \(2021\)](#).

### ***Mid-Cycle Review***

As part of Carlow College's Re-Engagement with QQI, the Mid-Cycle Review was introduced into the quality assurance framework. As the title suggests, the Mid-Cycle Review was a review of programmes at the mid-point of the five-year validation cycle. This desk review of the Annual Programme Monitoring Reports was to allow Programme Boards the opportunity to review how their programme is achieving the stated programme objectives and forward planning for the cyclical external review and revalidation. The first suite of programmes to conduct a Mid-Cycle Review were scheduled to commence in Q1 of 2021 and be completed in August 2021. The Quality Assurance Officer, in close collaboration with the Office of the Registrar, developed a Programme Self-Evaluation Report. However, owing to COVID-19 and the increase in workload across the College, the Office of the Registrar requested that the deadline be moved and that the report will be completed simultaneously with the completion of the 2020 / 2021 Annual Programme Monitoring Reports, this report is due annually by 15 October.

At the start of the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year, with the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mid-Cycle Review was postponed again to Q1 of 2022. However, when QQI published its new Programme Review Manual, the College made the decision that the Mid-Cycle Review for the suite of programmes validated in 2018 should not be completed and the programmes should move to Programmatic Review, which will be led by the Quality Assurance Office and the Office of the Registrar.

### **2.0(ix) Quality Assurance of Research Activities and Programmes**

Carlow College formally launched the [Research Hub](#) in the Spring 2020 Term to bring shape and coherence to research activity within the College by acting as a support for current research and related activities and by driving and enabling research agendas. Carlow College has been a leading centre in the South East for research inquiry for over 200 years. Current research activities are grounded in the College's ethos, vision, and mission to foster openness to new ideas, to build civic engagement and social awareness, and to promote creativity and innovation. Our researchers shape and contribute to evolving contemporary discourses in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences across a variety of inter-disciplinary contexts and partnerships.

The primary objectives of this approach are outlined in our [framework document](#) and are summarised here as follows:

- to support and promote staff research;
- to foster a research agenda that aligns with College Strategy, Mission and Ethos;
- to connect the College's research expertise with local and national organisations, communities and institutions; and
- to play a supporting role in College programme development by identifying, utilising and enhancing existing and potential areas of College research and expertise.

Research at Carlow College is organised by the College's Research Hub into six distinct areas of focus and expertise:

- Politics, Society and Sustainability

- History, Literature and Culture of Ireland
- Ideas and Beliefs
- People, Places and Cultures
- Mind, Memory and Behaviour
- Theory, Education and Practice

For the 2020 / 2021 reporting period, the Research Hub hosted two research events at the College: the book launch of *Electioneering and Propaganda in Ireland 1917–1921* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2020) written by Dr Elaine Callinan and the *Diaspora and Revolution Conference* (June 2021). Additionally, in June 2020 the Research Hub launched a research blog titled, ‘Spotlight on Research’. The research blogs are written by Carlow College staff and alumni and has proven successful with seven blog-posts published during the reporting period.

During this reporting period, the academic staff at Carlow College actively engaged with research projects, both nationally and internationally: one staff member published a book, seven staff members had articles published in peer-reviewed journals, staff members were asked to participate in seventeen launches / events / talks and staff members made eleven media appearances.

The Research Hub has proven to be invaluable in promoting the research activities of the College. However, there are quality assurance processes that require attention for the 2021 / 2022 reporting period; namely, the development of a coherent approval system for research events such as conferences, symposia and public talks. Tied to this is the development of policies and procedures around the recording and publication of research events at Carlow College.

### ***Political Rivalry: Votes, Violence and Victory Webinar***

Hosted by the Research Hub, and to launch the book written by Carlow College historian, Dr Elaine Callinan, the College hosted a webinar on 27 November 2020. The webinar was held in an interview format and focused on electioneering and propaganda during the 1917 by-elections, 1918 election, 1920 local elections and 1921 general election. The interview was conducted by Dr Ciaran Wallace, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Trinity College, Dublin. Owing to COVID-19, this event was live-streamed and placed on the College’s [YouTube Channel](#). In particular, this webinar illustrates the importance Carlow College places on scholarly activity being used to strengthen the link between education and research. On this point, there are two modules offered on the English and History Programme that directly relate to this research: *Ireland: Insurrection to Independence, 1891–1923* and *Ireland, Politics and Society, 1923–1980*.

### ***History Conference***

Hosted by the Research Hub, the College held a virtual conference titled, *Diaspora and Irish Revolution, 1916–23*. The conference was organised by Carlow College historians, Dr Regina Donlon and Dr Elaine Callinan. The aim of the conference was to consider the role played by the Irish Diaspora during the Irish Revolutionary period and examine the impact that Irish emigrants and / or their descendants had on events in Ireland during this time. The Irish diaspora, unlike the majority of other European diasporas at the turn of the twentieth century, maintained a strong link with the homeland. This connection with home facilitated, encouraged and directly influenced revolutionary activity in Ireland. All facets of the intersections between the diaspora and the Irish revolutionary period were eligible for exploration. The conference also afforded the opportunity to promote research within the College and attain existing skills and enable new learning skills in webinar / virtual delivery. Additionally, the conference also allowed for Carlow College lecturers to promote research within and outside of the academy.

Prof. Enda Delaney (University of Edinburgh) and Dr Jennifer Redmond (Maynooth University) were selected to deliver the keynote papers. Prof. Delaney delivered ‘A global history of the Irish Revolution, 1916–23’ and Dr Redmond delivered ‘Waging War Against Emigrants? Migration and the War of Independence’. Dr Martin Mansergh (Vice Chair of the Government’s Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Celebrations) delivered the evening keynote addressed titled, ‘Re-evaluating the contribution of the diaspora combined with other external factors to the Irish Revolution and beyond’. In addition to the keynote papers, there were three panels and ten papers delivered at the conference. There were 141 registrations and 100 unique attendees during the conference with attendees from Ireland (68%), the United Kingdom (20%), the United States (7%) and the other 5% from Switzerland, Australia and Serbia.

## **2.0(x) Third-mission activities, societal and community engagement**

### ***Writer-in-Residence***

During the reporting period, participants of the Writer-in-Residence Programme had the good fortune to work with two songwriters, Mick Hanly and Fiach Moriarty. Mick Hanly, formerly of Moving Hearts, is a writer of songs for Christy Moore and Mary Black, amongst others. Fiach Moriarty, a songwriter originally from Dublin but now based in Carlow, is a member of the Late Late Show Band and has two albums of his own compositions.

The group then worked with memoirist, Arnold Thomas Fanning. His first book, *Mind on Fire: A Memoir of Madness and Recovery*, a best-seller, was published by Penguin Ireland in 2018 and shortlisted for the Butler Literary Award, The An Post Irish Book Awards *Sunday Independent* Newcomer of the Year, and the Wellcome Book Prize 2019. The year finished out with participants working with filmmaker, Marc-Ivan O’Gorman. During these workshops the participants of the programme created a series of writings that were then developed to be broadcast on KCLR radio, this was done with the assistance of the Carlow Little Theatre.

The scheme has been very helpful for Dr Derek Coyle, who teaches Creative Writing in the College, as he sat in on a range of the workshops and they served as a type of professional development opportunity, as he had a chance to observe and learn from other creative professionals.

### ***Annual Literary Awards***

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the College’s 2021 Annual Literary Awards was held online on 20 April 2021. Even with this revised format, the event was successful with a large audience in attendance. The poetry longlist consisted of forty-eight entries, with three awards announced on the evening. The prose longlist consisted of nine entries, with three awards announced on the evening.

The keynote speaker and presenter of the Awards was the internationally renowned poet, Michael Longley. Michael Longley is one of the most distinguished poets of his generation having served as the Ireland Professor of Poetry from 2007 – 2010, recipient of the T.S. Eliot Prize, the Whitbread Poetry Prize, and he was awarded the Queen’s Medal for Poetry in 2001. He is the author of ‘Gorse Fires’ (1991) and ‘Snow Water’ (2004), and most recently, ‘The Candlelight Master’ (2020).

Members of the Second- and Third-Year Creative Writing classes presented a dramatic, moving, and varied showcase of their work. The winners of the 2021 Literary Awards saw their poetry and stories published on the College [website](#). As the event was held online, a new feature was the ability to publish the [Literary Awards](#) on the Carlow College, St. Patrick’s YouTube channel.

## 2.1 Initiatives within the Institution related to Academic Integrity

During the 2020 / 2021 Academic Year, Carlow College continued to promote an institution-wide culture of academic integrity. Stage 1 learners are introduced to the values of academic integrity in their mandatory Academic and Digital Skills Module and all learners are reminded of these values through programme handbooks and resources on the VLE. Workshops and one-to-one sessions are provided by the Academic Resource Office and the Essay Doctor Service. Learners are regularly emailed to remind them that it is in our collective interests to ensure that academic integrity is observed and upheld at all times across our institution so that everyone has confidence in the assessment results and the qualifications obtained by our learners. Resources produced by the National Academic Integrity Network are utilised and staff have attended events organised by the National Forum on the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

The College continued with the submission of all continuous assessments and online exams through Turnitin and corrections and feedback delivery was through Turnitin Feedback Studio. Mandatory cover sheets for all submissions contain an academic integrity statement and require learners to certify that their work does not contain any unacknowledged material from other sources.

The *Plagiarism Policy (Version 4)* was revised by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee in February / March 2021. Revisions were mainly concentrated in *Appendix 1: Procedures for dealing with Plagiarism* where explicit reference to take-home exams was included. The staged hierarchy of penalties was expanded to include different percentages of plagiarism and differentiation between single and repeat offences. It was proposed that a letter from the Registrar would issue after a number of offences in continuous assessment and after a single offence in a take-home exam. It was also proposed that the *Learner Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy* should be invoked at the final stage, in the case of a repeat offence following receipt of a letter from the Registrar. It was clarified that the percentages of plagiarism were not related to the Turnitin 'similarity score' but were based on a detailed examination of the answer by the assessor. The policy was approved by Academic Council on 31 March 2021. The same meeting approved an amendment to the amend the *Learner Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy* to include under Gross Misconduct the following: 'persistent failure to abide by College rules and regulations as may relate to academic matters such as; plagiarism or the use of unauthorised material during an examination, or other serious breach of Exam Regulations; or research misconduct.'

All learners were emailed the link to the new version of the *Plagiarism Policy* in April as they were completing their final continuous assessments and preparing for take-home exams. This also provided the opportunity to remind learners about new laws in Ireland prohibiting cheating and cheating services, and to include the link to the QQI video Academic Integrity #MyOwnWork.

Lecturers were also sent the revised policy and resources relating to essay mills and contract teaching services with helpful advice on how to spot when these services have been used and also suggestions on setting assessment titles that require a more personalised response from learners. The necessity of filling out report forms when plagiarism has been detected was also stressed as the Office of the Register maintains a plagiarism register.

The 2020 / 2021 Report of the External Examiner for History made special reference to the *Plagiarism Policy*, a copy of which was sent to all external examiners. The policy was praised for striking a very careful balance between the need to maintain standards and integrity on the one hand, and the role of educating students in relation to referencing etc. on the other.

It remains an objective of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee to develop an *Academic Integrity Policy*, of which detecting and dealing with plagiarism is just one part.



### 3.0 QA Improvement and Enhancement Plans for Upcoming Reporting Period

#### 3.1 QA and QE supporting the Achievement of Strategic Objectives

No.	<b>Relevant objectives</b> Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	<b>Planned actions and indicators</b>  <i>Note: Include details of unit responsible, and how planned action will address the relevant strategic priority and/or reengagement advice/CINNTE recommendation.</i>  <i>If the institution is preparing for cyclical review, include how the planned actions will address the relevant review objective(s).</i>
1.	Academic Workload Allocation Policy	Office of the Registrar – This objective relates to Recommendation 18 from the Programme Review and Revalidation Panel (2018). The Career Progression Working Group determined early on in its work that the <i>Academic Workload Allocation Policy</i> was the first identifiable objective to furthering this recommendation. The policy sub-group reviewing and revising this policy will need to complete its work in Q1 2022.
2.	Academic Framework Strategy	Strategic Development Committee – The Academic Framework Strategy identifies the core elements of Carlow College’s current expertise in teaching, research, public and civic engagement. The objective for the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year is to finalise the implementation plan for this strategy.
3.	Research Approval Process	Research Hub - This objective relates to Objective 1: Teaching and Learning of the <i>Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2022</i> . The aim of this objective is to develop a coherent approval system for research events such as conferences, symposia and public talks. Tied to this is the development of policies and procedures around the recording and publication of research events at Carlow College.
4.	Internal Moderation Implementation and Review	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee – This objective relates to Recommendation 4 (Reengagement Panel Report). The guidelines for internal moderation were approved in February 2021 for implementation during the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year; the impact of this new process will be analysed

		and published in the Annual Programme Monitoring Reports and Cross-Programme Monitoring Report.
5.	Review of Processes related to the SRMS	Information & Student Systems Manager – This objective relates to Objective 3: Information and Data Management Systems of the <i>Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2022</i> . There are three defined objectives for the next reporting period to review: changing further processes to electronic over paper forms; review of reporting / evaluation of reports / actioning reports and review of academic processes which are managed through the SRMS.
6.	COVID-19 Contingency Planning	Office of the Registrar (Academic) and Director of Operations (Facilities / Government Guidelines) – This objective relates to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic and the necessity of the College to adhere to Education Sector and Government legislation and guidelines.
7.	Athena SWAN	Steering Group of the Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team – This objective responds to Objective 2: College as Community of the <i>Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2022</i> and the Academic Framework objective of equality, diversity and inclusion. After successfully achieving the Athena SWAN Bronze Award, the objective for the 2021 / 2022 Academic Year is to progress the Action Plan.
8.	Student Success Strategy	Head of Student Services – This objective responds to Objective 2: College as Community of the <i>Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2022</i> . Using the framework of the NFETL's Seven Cs for embedding student success, a Working Group comprising learner and staff representatives will Initiate conversations around what student success means in the context of Carlow College. For the 2022 / 2023 Academic Year, initiatives to support and enhance learner success and engagement implemented.
9.	New Programme Development	Strategic Development Committee – This objective responds to Objective 1: Teaching and Learning, Objective 6: Collaborations and Partnerships of the <i>Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2022</i> and the Academic Framework objectives of teaching and research. This objective will be driven by the Academic and

		Research Development Project Manager, a new function within the College to drive new programme development.
10.	Flexi-Time Policy (Pilot Scheme)	HR Manager – This objective responds to Objective 2: College as Community of the <i>Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2022</i> . Key goal of this project is to develop a <i>Flexi-Time Policy</i> (Version 1) and develop a structured pilot scheme to implement the policy for relevant staff.
11.	Hybrid Working Project	HR Manager – The objective of this project is to establish the possibility of the College operating Hybrid Working in the longer term. The goal is to ascertain whether the current Remote Working Temporary Guidelines can expand into a finalised policy and practice. This project also supports feedback through Athena SWAN and the College’s commitment to flexible working for its staff.
12.	Website Improvement Project	Digital Communications and Marketing Manager – This objective responds to Objective 3: Marketing and Student Recruitment of the <i>Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2022</i> . Key goals of this project include: Increased lead generation by developing targeted landing pages; reduced bounce rate (<50%) by improving SEO and UX for ease of information access; support increased student recruitment across target audiences; support increased student engagement amongst student body; and support a collaborative study abroad recruitment strategy between Carlow College & IT Carlow.

## 3.2 Reviews planned for Upcoming Reporting Periods

### 3.2.1 Reviews planned for Next Reporting Period

Unit to be reviewed	Date of planned review	Date of last review
N / A		

### 3.2.2 Reviews planned beyond Next Reporting Period

Programmatic Review (five-year cycle) – Q1 2023

- Level 7 – BA in Arts and Humanities
- Level 7 – BA in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care)
- Level 8 – BA (Hons) in Applied Social Studies (Professional Social Care)
- Level 8 – BA (Hons) in Arts and Humanities
- Level 8 – BA (Hons) in English and History
- Level 8 – BA (Hons) in Social, Political and Community Studies
- Level 9 – MA (Leadership in Therapeutic Child and Social Care)

## 4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

### **Learner Internships and Achieving the Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes During a Global Pandemic**

The Internship Module at Stage 3 on the BA (Hons) in Social, Political and Community Studies is a module designed to enable learners to develop core skills in practice; building learner capacity to work effectively in community based civil society organisational settings. Moreover, one of the stated aims of the module is to support learners to develop their knowledge, skills and competencies through the practical application of principles and practices / methods through extensive observation and engagement in the field of community / voluntary / NGO work. As such, the learner internship is usually completed over a ten-week period in a community development and / or non-governmental organisation. Owing to the ongoing impact of COVID-19, the Programme Director, in consultation with the Programme Board, determined that learners were unable to undertake the internship in the normal manner. Accordingly, the Programme Director and Internship Coordinator undertook a process of consultation to establish an alternative and appropriate solution that ensure the specified Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs) were achieved.

The primary principle that was observed through the redevelopment process was that the internship mirrored, in as far as possible, the experience of the ‘face-to-face’ internship. Thus, in order to give learners a comprehensive understanding of what was involved in becoming a community practitioner, the Internship Coordinator scheduled 1.5-hour sessions via Teams and Zoom with professionals in the community sector and people with expertise in areas that make up the many dimensions of community-based work. In total, there were: nine community organisations that participated in the sessions, two community practitioners and four guest speakers. The focus of the sessions covering community organisations included: gender equality; policy, advocacy and the national context; funding (writing funding applications); engaging young people in the community; the role of network and links to local government and other stakeholders; working with minorities in community and building a community organization from a voluntary effort. The focus of the two sessions from the perspective of a community practitioner were becoming an effective and reflective community practitioner and responding to the needs of the Travelling community from a community work perspective. The focus of the four guest speakers explored data protection; Freirean concepts of community development and their application in practice; a day in the life of a Director of a Community Resource Centre and community challenges of COVID-19 in the community.

The second significant challenge in redeveloping the module was to ensure that all MIMLOs were achieved. The MIMLO that proved the most challenging was MIMLO 5, to ‘deconstruct theory in action’. To achieve this MIMLO, the first assessment was modified. Comprising 30% of the overall mark, learners enrolled on the module were asked to facilitate online workshops for Carlow College learners on ‘weaving a star’, the stars were then on virtual display for [International Women’s Day 2021](#). These workshops also contributed to a larger, more global movement, called the [One Million Stars Project](#) which started in 2012 with a vision to build more connected, resilient and violence free communities using the power of weaving the star.

The outcome of the modified Internship Module proved successful. This was noted by the External Examiner who commented there was excellent reflection on the learning over the twelve-weeks of alternative practice placement and clear learning was achieved to a similar standard as a face-to-face placement. Regarding the facilitated online workshops, the External Examiner noted that there was high learner motivation with engagement on the One Million Stars Project, this was evident in the quality of portfolios submitted by learners who reflected on their experiences. An unintended outcome of the revised module was the considerable consultation with other academic providers. In particular, the Programme Director noted that this proved beneficial in the building of networks and relationship within the sector.