

Hibernia College

2023

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**Annual Quality Report Hibernia College**  
**Reporting Period 2021-2022**

# Annual Quality Report Hibernia College

## **PART A: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM**

### Reporting Period 2021-2022

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## PART A: Internal QA System

Table 1 Mapping of ESG (2015) to QQI QA Guidelines (QAG)				
AQR Part A Section	QQI QAG Core Sub-section No.	QAG Core Sub-section Title	ESG Standard No.	ESG Standard Title
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 Hibernia College for the reporting period 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022. It is to be submitted by 24 February 2023. The AQR has been approved by the Academic Board and is submitted by the Registrar, Elva Casey.

Hibernia College was founded in 2000 to meet the growing demand for flexible, lifelong learning that would not be restricted by location or time. The College is driven by a passion to provide equal education opportunities to learners — particularly those who may have been excluded from various programmes or professions previously due to geography or life circumstances. It does this by delivering technology-enhanced and flexible programmes that are built around an e-learning model and that prepare students for today's complex professional roles. Today, the need and demand for access to flexible learning has never been greater, and Hibernia College is uniquely positioned to continue to respond to social and employment needs, offering learners uniquely flexible opportunities to study.

The College's offerings have had a strong focus on professional education and practice-based learning for regulated professions, with a particular focus on teacher education and, more recently, nurse education. Since its establishment, it has grown to a position where its School of Education now provides a significant proportion of Ireland's teacher education and graduates the largest number of primary school teachers annually from any higher education institution (HEI). The College also offers an extensive suite of continuing professional development (CPD) programmes for education professionals.

To date, there have been approximately 12,000 graduates of the College and, currently, there are an estimated 2,200 students enrolled across two programmes. Hibernia College is approved by QQI for the provision of a range of validated programmes leading to QQI awards. The following Hibernia College programmes are currently validated by QQI:

- Professional Master of Education in Primary Education
- Professional Master of Education in Post-Primary Education
- Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education
- MA/PG Dip (Arts) in Inclusive and Special Education
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing
- Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Business Data Analytics

Our initial teacher education programmes are accredited by the Teaching Council of Ireland. Our Early Childhood Education programme is accredited by the Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB) for

the Early Learning and Care (ELC) Sector, and our nursing programme is approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI).

## Process for Development and Approval of the AQR

Preparation for the submission of this AQR is ongoing throughout the year. This includes provision of regular briefings to the Academic Board and the Executive Management Team (EMT) about the preparations required for annual engagement with the process.

Cross-institutional engagement supports the gathering of required data, and staff are encouraged to submit relevant information and identify case studies for inclusion. The Quality Assurance Office compiles all available information to produce the report for submission to QQI.

The final report is reviewed and approved by the College's EMT and Academic Board.

## 1.0 Internal QA Framework

### 1.1 Governance and Management of Quality

The [Hibernia College Quality Framework \(HCQF\)](#) is the source of all Hibernia College quality assurance documents. This framework reflects the College's ongoing commitment to international best practice through a range of mechanisms that seek to continually monitor, review and enhance our programmes and our College. The Quality Framework is regularly reviewed for its effectiveness. Input from key stakeholders such as students, staff and adjunct faculty is an important dimension of the Framework. This ongoing involvement of internal and external stakeholders in various processes is emphasised throughout the policy and procedure documents.

[The Hibernia College Quality Framework \(HCQF\) Policy](#) sets out the principles and standards for the creation and maintenance of the HCQF. It establishes the College's policy for building and distributing a quality culture throughout all its activities.

The [Governance and Management Policy](#) describes the Hibernia College management structure and outlines the structure in place to effectively enable the interrelationship between corporate and academic governance. It articulates the principles by which the College is governed and identifies the key boards, committees and positions and their regulatory context. The Board of Directors formally delegates all authority for academic decision-making to the Academic Board.

Within the HCQF, terms of references are set out for each subcommittee of the Academic Board; these set out the functions, responsibilities, logistics and membership, including representation of external stakeholders and learners. Figure 1 provides a high-level visual overview of the College's governance structure.

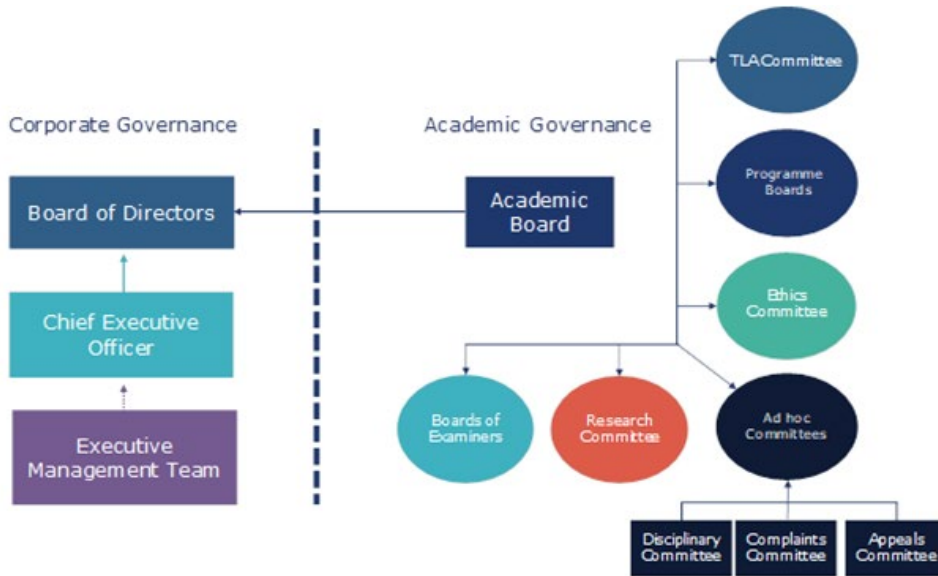


Figure 1: High-level overview of the College's governance structure

This table indicates the corporate and academic aspects of governance:

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<a href="#">Corporate Governance Code</a> <a href="#">The Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF) Policy</a> <a href="#">Monitoring and Review of the Hibernia College Quality Framework Procedure</a> <a href="#">Developing New Elements of the HCQF Procedure</a> <a href="#">Elections and Appointments to Governance Committees Procedure</a> <a href="#">Governance and Management Policy</a> <a href="#">Academic Board Terms of Reference</a> <a href="#">Board of Examiners Terms of Reference</a> <a href="#">Ethics Committee Terms of Reference</a> <a href="#">Programme Board Terms of Reference</a> <a href="#">Research Committee Terms of Reference</a> <a href="#">Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee Terms of Reference</a> <a href="#">Erasmus Policy Statement</a>	<a href="#">Conceptual Framework</a>  <a href="#">Fitness to Practice Policy and Procedure</a>	



## 1.2 Linked Providers, Collaborative and Transnational Provision

Quality assurance requirements for transnational and collaborative provision are integrated throughout the HCQF and are subsequently accounted for in the documents outlined in the following table.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<a href="#">Design of Programmes and Curricula for a Blended or Online Environment Policy</a> <a href="#">Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Online Environment Policy</a> <a href="#">Full Development and Final Approval of a New Programme Procedure</a> <a href="#">Obtaining Initial Approval to Develop a New Programme Procedure</a> <a href="#">Ongoing Monitoring of Online or Blended Learning Programmes Policy</a> <a href="#">Public Information, Promotion and the Recruitment of Students Policy</a> <a href="#">The Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF) Policy</a> <a href="#">Engagement and Management of Adjunct Faculty Policy</a>		

## 2.0 Programme Development and Delivery

### 2.1 Programme Development and Approval

The HCQF was developed in the context of current QQI policy related to the validation and review of programmes, for example, [QQI's Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training](#). The development of new programmes is conducted systematically in line with the College's approved HCQF policies and procedures, including mechanisms for timely consultation with internal and external stakeholders.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<a href="#">Design of Programmes and Curricula for a Blended or Online Environment Policy</a> <a href="#">Development and Approval of Programmes for a Blended or Online Environment Policy</a>		

<a href="#">Full Development and Final Approval of a New Programme Procedure</a> <a href="#">Obtaining Initial Approval to Develop a New Programme Procedure</a> <a href="#">Ongoing Monitoring of Online or Blended Learning Programmes Policy</a>		
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## 2.2 Admission, Progression, Recognition & Certification

The HCQF includes an Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) Policy, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and various policies and procedures that support matters related to progression, such as deferrals and withdrawals. Widening participation through ensuring inclusivity and equality of opportunity for prospective and current students and alumni is an explicit aim of the College's Access, Transfer and Progression Policy.

A resource was developed in the previous reporting period to specifically support the College to implement RPL and is proving effective.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<a href="#">Access, Transfer and Progression Policy</a> <a href="#">Assisting Failing Students to Exit Programmes Procedure</a> <a href="#">Recognition of Prior Learning Policy</a> <a href="#">Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure</a> <a href="#">Withdrawal from Studies Policy</a> <a href="#">Student Initiated Withdrawals Procedure</a> <a href="#">College Initiated Withdrawals Due to Non-Engagement Procedure</a> <a href="#">Temporary Suspension of Studies Policy</a> <a href="#">Temporary Suspension of Studies Procedure</a> <a href="#">Public Information, Promotion and the Recruitment of Students Policy</a> <a href="#">Admissions Policy</a> <a href="#">Admission Application Procedure</a> <a href="#">Admission Interviews Procedure</a> <a href="#">Admission Offers Procedure</a> <a href="#">Orientation Policy</a> Terms and Conditions (non-HCQF) <a href="#">Student Charter</a>	<a href="#">Reasonable Accommodation Application Form</a>	

## 2.3 Procedures for Making Awards

Not applicable

## 2.4 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The HCQF includes a range of policies, procedures and additional resources to ensure the ongoing quality assurance of the teaching, learning and assessment environment.

A new policy, procedure and application form was developed during the previous reporting period to specifically enhance the College's practices related to Fitness to Practise. The College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Strategy was also formally reviewed and updated prior to this period, illustrating the College's commitments to teaching, learning and assessment over the next number of years. The College Conceptual Framework was reviewed during this period to ensure that the TLA Strategy and Conceptual Framework function in tandem to provide an appropriate academic and learning framework. A full review of the TLA Strategy will be conducted following on from this in the next reporting period.

A process was approved by the Academic Board to ensure consistency in the conferral of advance awards and this has been reviewed as fit for purpose.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<a href="#">Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy</a> <a href="#">Assessment, Grading and Certification Policy</a> <a href="#">Grade Moderation Procedure</a> <a href="#">Grading Student Effort Procedure</a> <a href="#">Discussion of Examination Scripts (or Equivalent with Assessors) Procedure</a> <a href="#">Review of a Provisional Assessment Decision Procedure</a> <a href="#">Academic Good Practice Policy</a> <a href="#">Academic Impropriety Investigation in a Formal Examination Procedure</a> <a href="#">Academic Impropriety Investigation in Coursework Procedure</a> <a href="#">Regulations for Written Examinations</a> <a href="#">Engaging in Online Communication Guideline</a> <a href="#">Regulations for Online Oral Examinations</a> <a href="#">Regulations for Synchronous Online Examinations</a>	Conceptual Framework  Fitness to Practice <a href="#">Policy</a> and <a href="#">Procedure</a>  Advance Conferral of Awards Process	

### 3.0 Learner Resources and Support

Learner support and the College's commitment to students is fundamentally underpinned by the Student Charter and the College's Student Support Policy. Student conduct is also related to the Student Charter and, consequently, standards for student conduct are also dealt with in this group of HCQF policies and procedures. Additional supports for students are provided through formal College processes such as those for extenuating circumstances, reasonable accommodation, appeals and complaints.

Administrative support is provided by Programme Administrators for each programme, and additional central administrative support is provided by the Assessment and Awards Office. The College also has a full-time Student Support Officer and Head of Student Affairs who provide pastoral support to students, as required, throughout the duration of their studies and drop-in support clinics for students throughout the year. A wide and expanding range of online supports in pertinent areas such as time management courses, wellbeing webinars and study skills sessions are also available to all students. Furthermore, students have access to an online professional counselling service. Learners and staff are additionally supported by an established Technical Support Team who operate and administer access, content, calendars and technical support.

The College continuously invests in applications and infrastructure to enhance the learning environment. Existing infrastructure includes MyHELMS (our virtual learning environment (VLE)), InPlace (Student Placement Management System), Quercus (Student Information System), our Cohort messaging app, Dynamics CRM, Office 365, Zoom and Access Dimensions. Data resilience and security are supported by regular off-site backups, full replication of internal infrastructure, centralised antivirus/malware protection and advanced email protection. Programme delivery is supported by the College's VLE, which features access to media-rich digital learning content; discussion forums; blogs and other collaborative tools; personalised calendars and submission deadline countdown timers; announcement feeds; facilities for uploading, grading and providing feedback on assessments; text-matching software; access to administrative, placement and support resources; the digital library; and a live chat facility for technical support. Live programme delivery is facilitated via Zoom professional accounts for all students and faculty.

Hibernia College students have access to an extensive digital library that is integrated into the VLE, which provides them with secure, direct access to all resources by means of a discovery search engine. A major library upgrade was completed in 2020, facilitating further personalised access to online resources. The College subscribes to an ever-increasing electronic resource collection that is regularly reviewed by the Librarian and faculty members. Students receive support and training from the Librarian at orientation and across their programme of study. New students receive library

induction training at the beginning of their programme, and all students have access to one-to-one support from the Librarian when they have specific library-related queries. Furthermore, Hibernia College officially launched our Institutional Archive of Scholarly Content (IASC) during this period (July 2022). IASC is the College's open access research repository. Using IASC, employees can share academic papers, articles, book chapters and other research artefacts that they have authored or co-authored. IASC is integrated with Google Scholar, which makes items discoverable via Google search and considerably increases their potential reach and visibility. Google Analytics have also been integrated with IASC, which enables the College to view a range of data on user engagement with the repository.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<a href="#">Student Charter</a> <a href="#">Student Support Policy</a> <a href="#">Establishing Overarching Standards for Student Conduct Policy</a> <a href="#">Breaches of Standards for Student Conduct Investigation and Management Procedure</a> <a href="#">Extenuating Circumstances Policy</a> <a href="#">Extenuating Circumstances Procedure</a> <a href="#">Reasonable Accommodation Policy</a> <a href="#">Reasonable Accommodation Procedure</a> <a href="#">Appeals Policy</a> <a href="#">Appealing a College Decision Procedure</a> <a href="#">Appeals of Decisions on Evidence Excusing Non-Engagement Procedure</a> <a href="#">Review of a Provisional Assessment Decision Procedure</a> <a href="#">Student Complaints Policy</a> <a href="#">Student Complaints Investigation Procedure</a> <a href="#">Orientation Policy</a> <a href="#">Engaging in Online Communication Guideline</a> <a href="#">Appeal Application Form</a> <a href="#">Deferral Application Form</a> <a href="#">Extenuating Circumstances Application Form</a> <a href="#">Reasonable Accommodation Application Form</a> Assistive Technology (AT) Conditions of Use Form <a href="#">Review Application Form</a>		<a href="#">Reasonable Accommodation Form</a>

<a href="#">Extension Request Application Form</a>		
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## 4.0 QA of Research Activities and Programmes

The Research Committee is a subcommittee of the Academic Board that guides the Academic Board and the College community in strategy, policy and the approach to research activity in the College. Research activity is supported and overseen via the College's overall academic governance system.

The Ethics Committee is an additional subcommittee of the Academic Board that provides guidance on approaches to ethical teaching, research and scholarship. The Ethics Committee grants ethical approval for research to staff, faculty and third parties seeking to conduct research in the College community.

Summary of relevant QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<a href="#">Governance and Management Policy</a> <a href="#">Academic Board Terms of Reference</a> <a href="#">Ethics Committee Terms of Reference</a> <a href="#">Research Committee Terms of Reference</a>		

## 5.0 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

The majority of College documentation in this area is managed within the remit of Human Resources, and related documents are, therefore, published internally on the College's intranet. Human Resources policies are written with regard to the *Employment Equality Act, 1998*, as amended, and the *Equal Status Act 2000*, as amended. In accordance with relevant legislation, the College is committed to creating an environment that promotes equality where all members of the College community are treated equally regardless of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Travelling community.

The College has a detailed recruitment and selection procedure, which is implemented and monitored by the Human Resources Manager. All staff are required to comply with this in seeking to fill posts within the College.

All managers and personnel likely to be involved in the recruitment and selection of staff and faculty are required to complete the appropriate training provided by the College to ensure appropriate and consistent practice in the selection of applicants and making offers of appointment. The Human Resources Manager also participates in recruitment and selection activity to ensure consistent practice and compliance with College policy.

All new staff are inducted into Hibernia College by an appropriate manager or Academic Lead (depending on the role) in conjunction with the Human Resources Manager. As part of this process, staff and faculty are introduced to the key aspects of their role and any associated documentation, databases and systems, as appropriate. An induction period is set aside to allow the recruit sufficient time to familiarise themselves with relevant policies, procedures, working practices and role requirements. This also assures the College that each employee has been appropriately advised to enable them to work in a safe and secure manner. A formal induction process was also introduced during this period whereby new employees are invited to attend the Dublin office in person, meet leads, managers and executive management across the College and ask any questions they may have. This enables them to develop good working relationships and an understanding of the organisation structure early in their careers.

The College's Staff Development & Continuing Education Policy sets out Hibernia College's commitment to the development of its staff. As an educational institution, learning is seen as a core value within the College. It is recognised that continuous learning and development of staff offers benefits to both members of staff and the College as a whole, which ultimately contribute to the future growth of the College. The overall aim is to achieve a positive, innovative working environment where employees are encouraged to develop their skills so that they may improve their performance and/or prepare for future career progression. The College VLE hosts a dedicated Staff Learning Hub, which includes the 'Employee Orientation Programme', online learning opportunities, in-house training courses, information about international opportunities such as Erasmus+ and shadowing opportunities, staff wellbeing resources, and a knowledge sharing hub.

<b>Summary of QA documentation</b>		
<b>No change during review period</b>	<b>Documents reviewed during this period</b>	<b>New documents approved during this period</b>
<a href="#">Engagement and Management of Adjunct Faculty Policy</a> <a href="#">Erasmus Policy Statement</a>		

## 6.0 Information and Data Management

The quality assurance of information and data management is supported through the HCQF policies, procedures and resources related to personal data, appropriate use of digital technologies and public information. The College prioritised the review of existing documentation and the development of additional documentation in these areas during this reporting period.

The information and data management infrastructure includes MyHELMS (VLE), InPlace (Student Placement Management System), Quercus (Student Information System), Dynamics CRM and Access Dimensions. The Records and Data Manager is responsible for managing compliance with data protection legislation, overseeing record management, and providing data and statistics to support decision-making.

Freedom of information (FOI) does not apply to non-public bodies and, so, the College does not have an FOI policy.

Summary of QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<a href="#">Public Information, Promotion and the Recruitment of Students Policy</a> <a href="#">Personal Data and Records Policy</a> <a href="#">Personal Data Security Breach Management Procedure</a> <a href="#">Acceptable Use of ICT Policy</a> <a href="#">Engaging in Online Communication Guideline</a> <a href="#">Data Subject Access Request (DSAR) Management Procedure</a> <a href="#">Change of Personal Details Procedure</a> <a href="#">Data Protection and the Handling of Student Data Guidelines</a> <a href="#">Implementing Data Protection Principles in Research Guidelines</a> Change of Personal Details Application Form Personal Data Security Breach Report Form IP Policy (non-HCQF) Data Subject Access Request Form		



## 7.0 Public Information and Communication

The College has an explicit policy related to public information and communication, which sets out the principles for the ethical and effective public communication about and promotion of Hibernia College and its programmes, as well as for the recruitment of students to Hibernia College programmes.

Information related to evaluation and findings from quality assurance evaluations is also clearly referenced and linked on the College website and the [HCQF website](#) itself. Quality assurance policies and procedures are accessed on our dedicated [website](#).

The Marketing Director oversees the management of the College website and social media channels, including [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). The Marketing Director regularly liaises with the Registrar and Head of School or Academic Lead when drafting communications. During the reporting period, regular open days were moved online to comply with the public health restrictions.

Summary of QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period
<a href="#">Public Information, Promotion and the Recruitment of Students Policy</a> <a href="#">Acceptable Use of ICT Policy</a>		

## 8.0 Monitoring and Periodic Review

The HCQF sets out the principles and purposes surrounding the periodic review of Hibernia College and its activities — specifically, the effectiveness of its quality assurance policies and procedures and how the College’s internal quality assurance system engages with external quality assurance.

Furthermore, it details the principles and requirements for the formal periodic review of academic programmes. Critical self-evaluation underpins all of these processes. As this period was one in which the College engaged with QQI on the revalidation of programmes, this was the key priority for the Quality Assurance Office. The upcoming period will focus on a comprehensive HCQF Review.

Summary of QA documentation		
No change during review period	Documents reviewed during this period	New documents approved during this period

<p><a href="#"><u>Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Policy</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Periodic Review of Academic Programmes Procedure</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Cyclical Review of Hibernia College — An Institutional Review Policy</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Cyclical Review Procedure</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Ensuring and Maintaining the Quality of Physical Learning and Assessment Environments Policy</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Approval, Monitoring and Review of Venues Procedure</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>External Examining Procedure</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Monitoring and Review of the Hibernia College Quality Framework Procedure</u></a></p> <p>End-of-Programme Report of the Programme Board to the Academic Board</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Preparing for External Quality Assurance Peer-Review Panel Reviews Guidelines</u></a></p>		
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## **PART B: INTERNAL QA SYSTEM**

## 1.0 Quality Implementation and Developments

### 1.1 Strategic QA Updates

#### Strategic QA Developments

A number of key strategic developments were pursued during this reporting period, contributing to the overall quality assurance and enhancement of the learner environment and providing staff, learners and prospective learners with consistent, transparent and enhanced experiences. This section briefly outlines several areas of development under the following headings:

- College Validation and Revalidation Activity
- Digital Learning Architecture
- Return to Face-to-Face Classes
- Specific Changes to Policies and Procedures
- Universal Design for Learning and Content Development
- Academic Integrity and Referencing
- Student Engagement
- Review and Enhancement of the Hibernia College Quality Framework
- Development of an Internal Quality Assurance Support Site
- Committee Management
- Student Surveys
- The HCQF Quality Digest
- Data Champions Network
- Data Protection

#### College Validation and Revalidation Activity

This reporting period required a detailed and strategic approach to quality implementation and development, mainly due to the revalidation of two key programmes (the Professional Master of Education in Primary Education and Professional Master of Education in Post-Primary Education). The Quality Assurance Office, under the leadership of the Office of the

Registrar, had responsibility for providing support during the process including the facilitation and tracking of validation and revalidation documentation.

### **Revalidation of PME Programmes**

During this period, the College continued to engage with QQI on the revalidation of our two largest programmes. The Terms of Reference for the Programme Review and Revalidation of the PME programmes, agreed with QQI, set out the critical self-evaluation process, summarised as follows:

- Terms of Reference were agreed with the Academic Board and QQI.
- A process of critical self-evaluation of the programme was undertaken by the Programme Team and Programme Board, led by the Programme Director, and its findings were documented in a written report. This process was supported by evidence and informed by quantitative and qualitative data as appropriate to the objective being considered.
- The Head of School/Academic Lead wrote the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), with input from faculty and appropriate department heads, using the template provided for this purpose. The report was used to inform any proposed changes to the programme.

Ten objectives of a programme review, as set out by QQI, were explored and agreed as follows:

- Establishing what has been learned about the programme via a comprehensive review including internal and external stakeholder consultation and benchmarking with similar programmes
- Quantitative analysis of admission data, attrition rates by stage, completion rates and grades achieved by module, stage and overall; analysis of qualitative and quantitative data based on reports from the record-keeping systems employed by the College over the last five years
- Programme and provider reputation with stakeholders – consultation and ongoing engagement with the sector through professional and peer networks, communication and engagement with regulatory and professional bodies

- Identifying and addressing challenges and opportunities likely to arise in the next five years through SWOT analysis at programme review phase
- Consultation with current, past and prospective students to ensure explicit learning needs of target learners and society are addressed
- Necessary modifications, which have been ongoing throughout the lifecycle of the existing iteration of the programme, to be added to through the recommendations arising from the Programme Review
- Ensuring the programmes (modified or unmodified) meet the current QOI validation criteria (and sub-criteria)
- Capacity and capability to provide the programme as planned; considering all relevant aspects relating to capacity and future planning within the College's current planned remits and with respect to strategy which is being developed for the next five years (2022-27)
- Justification for continued provision of the programme
- Changes that need to be made to related policies, criteria and procedures through investigation of continued relevance of the HCQF

The virtual panel visit for the PMP programme occurred on 20 June 2022 and on 30 August 2022 for the PMP. In preparation for these, and to support the programme teams, the Quality Assurance Office developed a detailed Programme Review Tracker Process that set out the steps, allocated responsibilities and tracked the status of tasks. Because this was a revalidation process, a Programme Review process was required for each programme, which necessitated significant stakeholder engagement, facilitated by the Quality Assurance Office. A summary of the findings, commendations, recommendations and conditions made by the panel in relation to the programme review and application for revalidation were set out in the Independent Evaluation Reports. A draft programme review report and draft independent evaluation report (Phase1) were compiled and sent to the panel members for review. The agreed final reports were then sent to the College for fact checking and consideration of the conditions and recommendations made by the panel. These were responded to and documented as accepted by the panel.

Alongside this, documentation was sent to the Teaching Council in respect of professional accreditation under the new Céim Standards. An initial desk-based review of the documentation provided on a pro forma template subsequently commenced. The Quality Assurance Office is working with the relevant Programme Directors and Academic Dean to support this ongoing process, which should conclude in Q2 2023.

### **Validation of the Master of Arts in Inclusive and Special Education**

The Master of Arts in Inclusive and Special Education (MAISE) is a two-year, part-time blended programme designed to meet the growing demand for flexible postgraduate training in the area of special and inclusive education. The programme is a collaboration between Hibernia College and the Institute of Child Education and Psychology (ICEP) Europe. Both institutions worked collaboratively to present a Master of Arts in Inclusive and Special Education (Major, NFQ Level 9) with embedded Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Inclusive and Special Education for validation to QQI. The programme required an extension to the College's approved scope of provision in the area of collaborative provision. A comprehensive mapping exercise of minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs) against QQI standards took place and was guided by the Quality Assurance Office. An initial Critical Self-Assessment (CSA) took place in January 2022. In February 2022, an independent peer review panel was convened to review the documentation with a particular focus on the QA requirements and the validation process. The Master of Arts in Inclusive and Special Education and Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in Inclusive and Special Education QQI validation day took place on 20 June 2022. The Independent Evaluation Report (IER) was issued on 27 June 2022. A Certification of Validation was issued on 14 July 2022 with first enrolment in September 2022.

### **Validation of the Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Business Data Analytics**

This programme is a full-time, 12-month, 60-ECTS credit programme that was designed to meet a skills shortage in Data Analytics and related occupations in Ireland and internationally. The programme is underpinned by three pillars of knowledge domains: business analytics, technology and data science. The QQI panel onsite day took place on 3



June 2021. The IER was issued on 12 June 2021. A Certification of Validation was issued on 19 October 2021 with first enrolment on 1 September 2022.

### **Validation of the Master of Education (MEd)**

The proposed Master of Education is a two-year, part-time, fully online programme. It is designed to meet the growing demand for flexible postgraduate training in education, with accreditation by Coventry University. It is envisaged that the programme will commence in September 2023. The internal approval panel took place in October 2022, and the external panel visit took place on 12 and 13 December 2022 (outside of this reporting period).

The development and growth of the College's programmes is indicative of the diversification and pursuance of new partnership opportunities, which form part of the strategic objectives of the College. Consequently, this was a very busy period within the College. The Quality Assurance Office monitored, facilitated and tracked these processes, supporting the Academic Dean and Programme Directors in mapping their programmes against QQI criteria and ensuring the HCQF was consulted throughout each process.

### **Digital Learning Architecture**

The following is an update (as noted in AQR 2022) on the Digital Learning Architecture developments within the College. Hibernia College is committed to ongoing technology research and innovation. To this end, we have appointed a full-time Research & Development Lead to examine future technologies and consider how they may be applied and implemented across academic programmes and supporting structures. New technological advances are actively considered to assist faculty with teaching and administrative tasks and to assist students in achieving their learning outcomes.

Some of the technologies under consideration in the past year include:

## **Artificial Intelligence**

Artificial intelligence (AI) has applications in teaching, learning and assessment. Its value to the College lies in its ability to leverage the power of cloud computing to help with administrative tasks and afford more time for faculty, learning designers and students to focus on active learning opportunities. A current example of the use of AI in the College is in the content creation process where the Describe product is used in audio and video editing. Using stored samples of author voice recordings and the AI capabilities of the platform, edits can be made to audio and video without having to bring authors back into the recording studio to re-record. It also allows for faster creation of transcripts for Universal Design for Learning (UDL) purposes.

## **Experience API (xAPI)**

xAPI is the modern standard for recording learning experiences and producing intentional measurements of how students engage with our learning content and activities. Implementation of xAPI would allow us to move beyond the limitations of the current SCORM standards and enable much greater insight into student engagement. The value to the College in adopting xAPI is in building a standardised language and process for the collection of appropriate learning analytics.

## **Adaptive Learning Technologies**

Students learn at different paces and in different ways. Adaptive learning aims to provide additional help to students based on their needs at particular points in a given module. There is a lot of work being done in this area, and we are researching emerging technologies. This benefits the College by serving the right supporting content to students at the right time to help them achieve their learning outcomes faster.

## **Additional Capabilities for Online Learning and Assessment**

There is ongoing work examining the provision of enhanced assessment capabilities for students and faculty. In particular, the College is considering future developments such as:

- Incorporating more cloud-based media production tools into our VLE to enable students to produce assignments using different media types (for example, audio and video)
- Delivering microlearning content and assessments to students through the College's Cohort app (a communication and collaboration tool)
- Incorporating social learning via the Cohort app directly into the learning management system
- Strengthening the use of formative assessment in online content

In addition to enhancing our digital architecture, the College has a number of external collaborative projects:

### **Remotivate**

This project looks at the issue of learner motivation. It explores the question of how to scaffold and sustain learner motivation while engaging with a blended learning programme. This is a multi-party project with industry and higher education organisations participating in it.

### **Assess 21C**

This project aims to design a framework for the assessment of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills in project-based learning. These skills include collaboration, creativity, communication, self-management and information management. The goal of the project is to establish a framework to capture the collaborative capabilities of participants in team project work. While formal studies tend to be a solo activity, workplace activities are invariably team based. This

project brings focus onto those aspects needed for the development of better team practices and an individual's capabilities within that.

### Return to Face-to-Face Classes

The previous reporting period saw COVID-19 contingency plans outlined, which set out how Hibernia College would deliver and assess live elements of the PME programmes to the extent that was possible to determine at that time. Contingency plans were continuously reviewed and developed in line with programme requirements and depending on the public health regulations at the time.

The plans demonstrated:

- How programme quality could and will be maintained and monitored, notwithstanding the prevailing extraordinary circumstances
- Migration to online assessments
- Alternative delivery methods
- Alternative placement arrangements
- Alternative induction/orientation plans
- Resource implications
- Mechanisms for staying engaged with stakeholders, including feedback from students and staff and involvement of external examiners

The COVID-19 contingency plans adopted by the College were hugely successful in ensuring a clear pathway for learners to continue their studies and achieve their awards. An analysis of feedback from students, staff and adjunct faculty (end-of-module surveys, adjunct faculty feedback forms, Assessment Working Group feedback, symposia feedback and student support surveys) during this time reveals that the enhancements were generally positively received; however, the following points were of note and informed our plans in relation to face-to-face delivery:

- Students felt the need for additional opportunities to engage with each other, outside of formalised webinars and online learning.
- Anxiety and feelings of isolation were more prominently reported during this period, with the lack of real-life engagements strongly felt by some students.
- Some school placement tutors found it more challenging to assess students in the adapted format while others reported that they obtained a more holistic view of the learner beyond the confines of a visit.

The College implemented a phased return using the COVID-19 Safety Guidelines and Requirements Process, which was regularly reviewed and updated and was shared with students and faculty before each real-life engagement.

### Specific Changes to Policies and Procedures

#### **Terms of Reference for Student Engagement Committee**

During this period, the Terms of Reference for the Student Engagement Committee were developed. The Terms of Reference outline the composition and membership of the Student Engagement Committee as well as functions and responsibilities. This committee:

- Provides a College-level forum for staff-student engagement in matters related to the quality assurance and enhancement of the College's learning environment
- Promotes and endeavours to strengthen the student voice in College governance
- Promotes innovation in student engagement and enhancement in all areas of College life and may focus on areas such as academic affairs, inclusivity and wellbeing
- Provides guidance and input to external quality assurance activities such as programme review and institutional review
- Advises the Quality Assurance Office on the enhancement of student engagement and partnership in the review, development and implementation of the HCQF
- Promotes and identifies areas to enhance student partnership between the institution and the student body

QA approval through reengagement (2018) recommends that provision is made for the inclusion of student membership and learning designers on the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee. This representation is reflected in the Terms of Reference for the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee. However, the formation of the Student Engagement Committee represents a further step towards rich engagement with students and provides opportunities for meaningful dialogues.

### **Advance Conferral of Awards Internal Process**

The Advance Conferral of Awards Internal Process was approved during this reporting period. This process was proposed to the Academic Board to cater for students who require their parchment early for employment or visa purposes.

### **Fitness to Practice Policy and Procedure**

This policy ensures that students are deemed to be fit to practise and, hence, to safeguard wellbeing of members of the public, service users and other students. Delivery of professional and accredited programmes involves student placement with the general public, patients, children and vulnerable adults.

### **Reasonable Accommodation Form**

On the recommendation of the Student Support Officer, this form was updated to make it as clear and easy to engage with as possible.

### **Conceptual Framework**

A reviewed Conceptual Framework was developed for the College during this period. While the Conceptual Framework is not in itself a policy or procedure, it integrates directly with and

provides a framework for the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. The previous Conceptual Framework was more narrowly focused on the needs of Initial Teacher Education. The newly developed Conceptual Framework provides a scaffold within which the College's ethos, principles and values about education are determined and realised (Lesham and Trafford, 2005) in light of an expanding suite of programmes. MIMLOs and MIPOs are constructed for all programmes to closely align with the Conceptual Framework.

### **Collaborative Agreement**

A Collaborative Agreement for the Master of Arts in Inclusive and Special Education was drafted to support the delivery of the programme.

### **Universal Design for Learning and Content Development (Case Study)**

In 2021 and 2022, 12 members of the Digital Learning Department received a digital badge for completing the Universal Design in Teaching & Learning CPD course, which is run by AHEAD and UCD Access & Lifelong Learning and hosted by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning. Undertaking this course increased our awareness of the importance of embedding UDL practices in our content development process. See Case Study 3 for further details.

### **Academic Integrity and Referencing (Case Study)**

A project was initiated by the Digital Learning Department to improve the College's online referencing supports in response to the high volume of referencing queries being received daily by the Digital Librarian. The project enhances the quality of online academic referencing support available for students — thus, supporting academic integrity and good practice. Periodic reviews of the referencing guides are now in place, representing an ongoing quality assurance process for ensuring the accuracy, currency and fitness for purpose of the guides. See Case Study 2 for further details.

### Student Engagement

Student engagement has been further enhanced via the development of Cohort Connections. The Cohort Connections pilot began in April 2022 with the PMEP Spring 22 cohort of approximately 165 students. The Cohort Connections were delivered via Zoom and aimed to support student engagement using small tutorial groups with academic staff. This structure changed to a more student-led initiative for the PMEP Autumn 22 cohort, with approximately 430 students. The initiative was piloted to support students' connection and sense of belonging to the College and to support their wellbeing. A 'well', confident and supported student is less likely to engage in or with academic impropriety.

### Review and Enhancement of the Hibernia College Quality Framework

The Hibernia College Quality Framework (HCQF) continues to be embedded into the day-to-day activities and processes of the College. As a living framework, it is reviewed and enhanced over time in line with the external regulatory environment, developing profile and needs of the College and best practice. The [Cyclical Review of Hibernia College – An Institutional Review Policy](#) sets out the principles and purposes surrounding the periodic review of Hibernia College and its activities — specifically, the effectiveness of its quality assurance policies and procedures. The [Monitoring and Review of the Hibernia Quality Framework Procedure](#) sets out the steps for monitoring and reviewing the documented elements of the HCQF. A comprehensive review of the HCQF will be undertaken in 2023. A recommendation of QQI re-engagement was that the College prepares flow diagrams to illustrate the inter-related processes of programme design, development, delivery, ongoing monitoring and periodic review. As part of the HCQF, the College has flowcharts to support the different processes of programme design, development, delivery, ongoing monitoring and periodic review. As part of future development, the College will continue to develop mapping documents, where appropriate, to facilitate ease of understanding and navigation of the HCQF.

### Development of an Internal Quality Assurance Support Site

A core responsibility of the Quality Assurance Office is facilitating the management and operation of internal and external quality assurance activities. Work on the College's internal Quality Assurance SharePoint website commenced in 2019 and it continues to be developed



and expanded on a cyclical basis. It provides direct access and signposting to all quality assurance activities. It also provides enhanced visibility of, and engagement with, internal and external QA activities. Furthermore, it enables easier access to all committee-related documentation and facilitates streamlined administrative processes and governance committee management.

### Committee Management

As part of this project, a dedicated SharePoint group and pages were set up for the governance committee. These pages facilitate administration and enhanced oversight of governance activities due to:

- Dedicated document libraries that store all committee-related files
- Use of consistent naming conventions that enable users to locate documents easily
- Support of the administrative management of committee membership
- Easy dissemination of committee communication using the dedicated group email address and sharing of files via direct links to the relevant document library – committee members can access files directly from the document library

Therefore, this development has had many positive impacts, including:

- It is no longer necessary to attach committee documents as copies
- All communication is centrally accessible – committee members can access all committee information centrally and collaborate online in this format

### Student Surveys

The Quality Assurance Office launched an anonymous survey on the quality assurance of student processes in July 2020 using Office 365 Forms to enable students to give feedback on quality assurance processes.

Following the pilot in 2020, students in 2021–2022 were asked to submit feedback where they had engaged with one or more of the following six College processes: change of personal details, reasonable accommodation, deferrals, extensions, extenuating

circumstances and review of provisional results. They were given a two-week window in which to upload their feedback. The purpose of the survey was to monitor student engagement and use of supports and to establish methods for supporting students while using the HCQF.

While this survey provided some useful data regarding the student experience of these processes, a review of the survey questions by the Quality Assurance Office, the Academic Dean and Programme Directors revealed that it could be made more user-friendly and less repetitive. In light of this, some adaptations were made. Additionally, a student Focus Group and review of forms and communications in these areas were launched and are currently underway. The outputs of the surveys have led to a number of key quality enhancement recommendations including a redevelopment of the Registrar's section of the College's VLE to increase the overall visibility of the HCQF and to highlight appropriate support staff and policy information for core processes.

### The HCQF Quality Digest

The Quality Assurance Office introduced 'The HCQF Quality Digest' in June 2021. This newsletter provides the College community with a high-level overview of academic matters as presented to, and discussed by, the Academic Board. It recognises the ongoing collective effort of all members of the Hibernia College community in upholding quality assurance and enhancement activities as underpinned by the [HCQF](#). At time of writing, this digest is being developed to become a publicly promoted document that celebrates the quality culture of Hibernia College with our peers across the sector. The Quality Assurance Office acknowledges the potential to make this digest more visually appealing and engaging. Therefore, as part of the scheduled staff consultation process, engagement with it will be reviewed.

### Data Champions Network

The first Data Champions meeting was held on 26 June 2021. The purpose of the network of programme and team leads is to ensure transparency, clarity and communication within the field of data protection. Nominated members are given an opportunity to discuss concerns,

ask for clarity and review procedures. It is a collaborative space that evidently supports the good practices of the College community. The meetings are chaired by the Data Protection Officer.

### Data Protection

There has been continued progress with the 'Record of Processing Activities' (ROPA) — a GDPR compliance requirement — and a retention schedule for processes identified in the ROPA has been developed. A plan has been put in place to ensure records are being maintained regarding the deletion of data.

### Development of a PowerBI Reconciliation Report

This allows the College to feed in data from five of our systems and check consistency of names and the registration status of students. This is assisting us in identifying anomalies sooner.

## 1.2 Update on Planned QA Objectives Identified in Previous AQR

No.	Planned objectives (Previous AQR)	Update on Status
	<i>Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable.</i>	<i>Provide brief update on status, whether completed or in progress.</i>

		<i>If an action was planned in the previous AQR, but not completed, provide reasons/short reflections for the delay/non-completion.</i>
1	Academic Integrity	Awareness-raising activities continued with a particular focus during AIP Awareness Week. An AIP short course for staff and students (including a quiz) was also released with some moderate/good engagement. National Academic Integrity Network engagement continued with attendance at events and distribution of information.
2	Digital Learning Architecture	Detailed update above, including the appointment of a full-time Research & Development Lead
3	College Strategy	This is overseen by the Executive Management Team (EMT) — a Strategic Plan for 2023–2028, which includes the development of synergies and growth opportunities going forward.
4	Performance Development Plan	This continued under the Human Resources Manager as part of the return to the office in the hybrid model.
5	QA Staff Survey	The implementation of the staff QA survey was paused due to recruitment requirements in the Quality Assurance Office. This is overseen by the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Manager and will be addressed in the coming reporting period.
6	HCQF Review and Development	Continue to implement scheduled review and development of the HCQF. Minimal review and development occurred during this reporting period due to the prioritisation of revalidation and the recruitment requirement noted above. This process is overseen by the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Manager.
7	Implementation of New Approach to Academic Board Work Plan	This is overseen by the Academic Dean as Chair of the Academic Board with support from the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Manager. Initial work has been completed; however, this will be an area of priority for the upcoming reporting period.

## 1.3 Governance and Management

### 1.3.1 QA Governance Meetings Schedule

Body	Meeting dates
Academic Board	14 September 2021 23 November 2021 3 February 2022 22 March 2022 14 June 2022
Board of Examiners	PMEPP – Dec Supp Bd – 9 Dec 2021 PMEP – Dec Supp Bd – 9 Dec 2021 PMEPP – SP20 BOE – 11 May 2022 PMEP – SP20 BOE – 25 May 2022 PMEP – AU20 BOE – 3 Aug 2022 PMEPP – AU20 BOE – 10 Aug 2022
Programme Boards	Programme Board meetings were held on 25 August and 15 November for PMEP and PMEPP programmes, respectively. These were held at a later date than usual to facilitate inclusion of an update on the revalidation process.
Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee	18 October 2021 15 December 2021 19 January 2022 9 February 2022 4 May 2022 22 June 2022
Ethics Committee	21 September 2021 16 December 2021 1 February 2022 22 March 2022 12 July 2022
Research Committee	19 January 2021 23 November 2021 15 January 2022 22 March 2022 26 April 2022 7 June 2022
Erasmus Committee	28 September 2021 18 November 2021 10 February 2022

Student Engagement Committee	23 February 2022
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### 1.3.2 QA Leadership and Management Structural Developments

A number of changes occurred in the academic and corporate governance structure prior to this reporting period (documented in the 2022 AQR). These changes aligned with the College's Governance and Management Policy. The Hibernia College governance structure (corporate and academic) is outlined in the Figure 2. A formal due diligence process (which commenced in October 2020) culminated in a partnership between Hibernia College and a leading educational provider and subsequent changes at Board level, with the appointment of a new Chair. A review of some senior roles and reporting structures will be necessitated in the next reporting period.

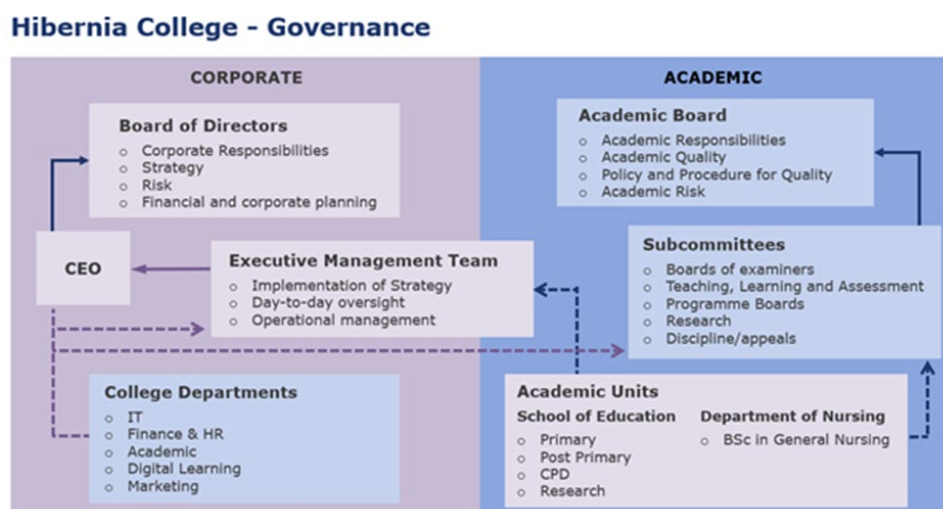


Figure 2: Governance structure (corporate and academic)

## 1.4 Internal Monitoring and Review

## 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
School of Education-Primary Programme Review (for revalidation)	As part of the revalidation process	Not published
School of Education-Post Primary Programme Review (for revalidation)	As part of the revalidation process	Not published

## 1.4.2 Expert Review Teams/Panels<sup>[1]</sup> involved in IQA

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

This has been completed in relation to the two PME programmes.

	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>	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
<i>of those:</i> the validation process was ongoing during this review period							
<b>On-site processes</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Desk reviews</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Virtual processes</b>	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
<b>Average panel size for each process type*</b>	6	0	0	0	0	6	0

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

	Total	Gender	Internal	National	International	Institution Type



Type of Expert/ Role on Panel		Male	Female	Other, or unspecified			UK, incl. NI	Other European	Outside of Europe	Similar	Different
Chair	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
Secretary	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
Academic/ Discipline Specific	4	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	4	0
Student Representative	2	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
JQA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Teaching & Learning	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
External Industry/ Third Mission	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

<sup>11</sup> QQI acknowledges that the terminology used to describe the groups of individuals that conduct peer review/evaluation varies from institution to institution.

## 2.0 IQA System – Enhancement and Impacts

### Information and Data Management: Analysis and Comparison of Data

The capturing, analysing and comparing of quality data is a key aspect of quality enhancement and assurance activities. To this end, the Quality Assurance Office was involved in the development of a learning analytics strategy. Research has increasingly indicated that higher education institutions should harness data extracted from educational technologies with analytics to better understand and optimise learning and learning environments across many dimensions (Macfadyen, 2022). The collection and use of data about students and their learning provide new opportunities for Hibernia College to support learners and enhance educational processes. Learning Analytics (LA) is the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about learners and their contexts for purposes of understanding and optimising learning and the environments in which it occurs (Jisc, 2016). Extrapolated data from international LA initiatives have identified a number of areas where LA can make a key contribution to higher education institutions as:

- A tool for quality assurance and improvement
- A tool for boosting retention rates
- A tool for assessing and acting upon differential outcomes among the student population
- An enabler for the development and introduction of adaptive learning

(Jisc, 2016)

Implementing learning analytics is a complex task that requires capacity building for the essential technologies and the subsequent knowledge building that must take place with institution stakeholders. A strategy document was developed that sets out Hibernia College’s foundations for developing and implementing a comprehensive LA programme. Our LA strategy will be fully aligned with Hibernia College’s ethos, mission, values and beliefs.

Over the last 15 years, researchers, analysts and application suppliers have argued strongly that higher education, in general, should make greater use of the rapidly expanding data sources to improve and optimise student learning across several dimensions (Macfadyen, 2022). As a blended learning institution, students at Hibernia College interact with the College via many online systems — each contact point leaving a trail of data that may or may not be important to better understanding individual learner and cohort choices, engagement and attainment.

The College’s strategic LA programme is designed to enhance student success by embedding evidence-based decision-making at all levels. The key strategic driver is enhancing the academic experience for its students — particularly, their engagement with their course so LA will be used as a tool for quality assurance and improvement.

The LA strategy operates at both macro and micro levels. At the macro level, aggregation of information about the student learning experience is intended to inform strategic priorities, to enhance the student experience, and to improve progression and retention. At the micro level, analytics are used to drive short-, medium- and long-term interventions at the module and programme levels.

The College is developing its institutional capabilities in three key areas to strengthen the foundations for the effective deployment of LA:

- **Pedagogical:** Enhancing the student experience and outcomes are at the core of all LA projects in the College. Everything we do will be transparent, reasonable and evidence based.
- **Technological:** The College takes its legal and ethical responsibilities around student data very seriously. The provision of a secure, accurate, timely and relevant data infrastructure is a high priority. This includes data identification and collection, technology architecture, data storage and reporting.
- **Processes:** Development of College-wide quality assurance processes that impact on supports for student success,, including direct intervention based on data insights, information advice, and guidance, continual quality enhancement, as well as optimal learning design and delivery methods.

## **Programmes of Education and Training**

This reporting period saw the College begin to expand its suite of programmes significantly. This expansion, as part of College-level strategic planning, necessitated a comprehensive and quality assurance facilitated approach to programme validation and revalidation. Quality data was required to inform critical reflection at programme and institutional level. A project commenced in the previous reporting period to establish an overarching central formal reporting structure to ensure the systematic capture of data. This project continued in this reporting period. A culture of scheduled and meaningful data reporting and analysis was maintained by the Quality Assurance Office, which subsequently facilitated stakeholder engagements across existing and new programmes. However, there is significant scope to develop this process to create a more comprehensive, systematic and College-wide approach to stakeholder engagement and the reporting and analysis of data.

## **Student Engagement**

End-of-module surveys have been reviewed and students have been consulted to ensure that they provide the College with enhanced and meaningful feedback and, thus, close the feedback loop with students. The survey structure and format has been adapted via a consultation process between the Quality Assurance Office and Programme Directors to ensure that responses and data are relevant at programme and institutional level. The establishment of the Student Engagement Committee represents a significant step towards regular, meaningful student consultation although there is scope

to improve the functioning and practices of this committee. The Terms of Reference for the committee set out its purpose to enhance learner partnership in the College. The HCQF student survey was also reviewed to improve participation and optimise engagement.

## **Sectoral Engagements Related to Quality Assurance**

Hibernia College remains committed to strong sectoral engagement with the wider higher education community. During this period, the College continued to commit to contributing to the dissemination of knowledge and sharing of good practice to enhance the teaching and learning environment. The following section provides a brief outline of the College's high-level sectoral engagements during this reporting period:

### **QQI and NAIN**

The College maintains nominated membership to the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN). The College continued to support the ongoing work of NAIN, including the distribution of data on good practice regarding academic impropriety and engagement with NAIN consultations. Hibernia College contributed to the QQI 10-year Anniversary Conference by submitting a poster presentation on Digital Transformations in the Blended Learning Environment. The College actively engaged with QQI on the validation and revalidation of programmes during this reporting period.

### **The HECA Academic Quality Enhancement Forum**

Hibernia College maintained membership of the HECA Academic Quality Enhancement Forum (HAQEF), the Quality Assurance representation of the Higher Education Colleges Association, and the College Registrar undertook the role of co-chair. During this reporting period, Hibernia College, through HAQEF engagement, contributed to a project aimed at producing useful insights and resources for the ongoing application of quality assurance of blended and online learning over the pandemic. The project was funded by the National Forum Network and Discipline Fund and the subsequent report (Quality Assurance in HECA Colleges During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Mixed Methods Analysis Through the Lens of QQI's Core Criteria) was launched in June 2022. The HAQEF seminar series on Academic Integrity was held during this period.

### **The Teaching Council**

Hibernia College maintains regular communication with the Teaching Council. The Academic Dean, Dr Mary Kelly, has served two terms of office on the Teaching Council's Executive Committee. As part of the revalidation process for the PME programmes, the College has engaged thoroughly with the

Teaching Council and submitted the pro forma for reconceptualisation of the PME programmes for review and professional accreditation.

## HECA

The College is a member of the Higher Education's College Association. HECA's mission is to increase awareness and understanding of the independent colleges higher education sector in order to influence policy on behalf of members. The College CEO, David Carpenter, is currently Chair of the HECA Board. HECA launched the very first HECA Student Research Awards, open to all undergraduate and postgraduate students in HECA member HEIs. HECA launched its 'Connected Conversations' report on 26 January 2022. HECA was an active partner in the National Forum Next Steps research project, which explored teaching, learning and assessment and next steps post COVID-19. Hibernia College's Quality Assurance Officer was part of the HECA Next Steps Steering Group directing and providing support to HECA on the National Forum Next Steps project.

## The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

Hibernia College staff received funding for four National Forum seminars as part of the annual seminar series programme. A fifth seminar was subsequently approved for funding on behalf of HECA. [The Seven Cs Toolkit for Embedding Student Success: A Toolkit for Higher Education Institutions](#) was launched on 6 October 2021 by the National Forum. It outlines a systematic process for embedding the continuous enhancement of student success. The college nominated two student success leads.

## NStEP

NStEP is the National Student Engagement Programme, which provides a framework for authentic student engagement in decision-making processes. The purpose of NStEP is to drive student engagement and a culture of student participation. Hibernia College participates in NStEP and all student representatives have undergone training with NStEP. NStEP's National Advisory Group was reformed during this period to inform new strategy development. Staff and student members of Hibernia College were appointed to this group.

## NMBI

Hibernia College maintains regular contact with the NMBI as it progresses through the rollout of the stages of the BSc (Hons) in General Nursing, which launched in March 2022 following extensive collaborative work and preparation between the nursing team and the NMBI. The first onsite visit of

the NMBI registry team occurred in the early weeks of the programme in preparation for clinical placements. This was a new initiative agreed between the College and the NMBI and was uniquely their first onsite visit to a participating HEI as part of their quality and engagement improvements. In addition to the broad engagement with the NMBI education and registry departments on various programme matters, the programme director, Dr Rita Collins, participates and contributes to various national panels and frameworks. The College makes considered contributions to calls for consultation on a wide variety of NMBI strategy and development issues — most recently, on future developments in nurse education.

### Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Teaching, learning and assessment across the College has been supported by the review of the Conceptual Framework, College Ethos and Mission Statement. The Conceptual Framework now clearly articulates a shared vision across all programmes for the learning path of all students. Furthermore, it acts as a scaffold within which the pillars of blended learning, student wellbeing, UDL and learner identity are enacted. The reengagement process recommended that the application of a UDL approach be more clearly reflected in the documentation and the revised Conceptual Framework does this very specifically by including UDL in the four pillars. Assessment practices, supports and training for assessors have undergone a comprehensive review process through the work of the Assessment Review Working Group. Quality assurance was a primary focus of this working group, with a specific emphasis on the development of replicable, comprehensive and systematic approaches to the development of rubrics while facilitating innovative modes of assessment.

### Supports and Resources for Learners

Hibernia College developed and launched the Cohort app, a new collaborative platform, which was rolled out to students in 2021. By the end of 2022, all students were added to the Cohort app from the beginning of their programme. This service enables students, staff and faculty to work together to complete individual and collaborative tasks on sustained projects or areas of focus. It also enables students to create support networks and engage in peer-to-peer learning.

Cohort Connections (see Case Study 1) was also developed during this reporting period as a form of academic and tutor-peer support for students. It enables students to engage regularly with academic staff and develop support systems with their peers. It includes an element of self-directed learning.

### Staff/Professional Development

Staff across different departments completed and obtained the Universal Design in Teaching and Learning (UDL) badge and Facilitator's badge. Others participated in the Steps to Partnership course. Training in management in a hybrid environment was also provided.

## Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

The pandemic has impacted on work environments across the education sector. Hibernia College launched a People Strategy during this reporting period as an essential component of the College Strategic Plan. The purpose of this was to drive staff engagement, align to overall business objectives and support staff retention and development. As a blended learning provider, Hibernia College was able to adapt efficiently to a hybrid working environment for all staff. Management Development Training sessions were provided by the College for managers and team leads (hosted by Monere Development) to support them in adapting to the hybrid working model. The College's company policies were updated to include the Hybrid Working Policy for all staff. A new staff induction process was developed in response to the needs identified to provide a structured, transparent and replicable process.

## 2.1 Initiatives Within the Institution Related to Academic Integrity

Within this reporting period, the College prioritised the promotion and embedding of an understanding of academic integrity within the College, with both staff and students. The College continued to build awareness, record and report academic misconduct, and plan for the development of academic integrity enhancement. However, a review and consultation with Programme Directors, and within the Office of the Registrar, have highlighted the preference for a more structured and targeted approach to this area for the next reporting period. While good work has been completed in the development of more robust assessment practices by the School of Education, further value can be obtained from bringing a quality assurance focus and structure to this work. Therefore, academic integrity has been identified as a key priority and a detailed work plan is currently in development.

### Staff Development

Opportunities were provided for staff in different departments to engage in developmental and cross-department conversations on the challenges and opportunities represented by academic integrity. These were primarily informal in nature and guided by information provided by the Office of the Registrar. Additionally, staff were presented with the opportunity to complete a module on Academic Integrity. NAIN Academic Integrity Guidelines were circulated to all staff, and opportunities for engagement with the Quality Assurance Office were presented. The Academic Integrity National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms were also circulated, and cognisance of these two important resources was taken in the practice of academic integrity within the College. The Hibernia

College Quality Digest was used to keep staff updated on all practices related to quality assurance, including academic integrity. Resources on good practice were shared using this digest. A reflective critique of current practices revealed that significant added value could emerge from a more structured dialogical approach with staff rather than a one-way information process. This will be facilitated by the staff survey and systematic approach to harvesting information that are planned as priorities for next year.

## Student Engagement

A student module on Academic Integrity was shared with all students. To encourage engagement with the module, an Academic Integrity quiz was also created. Resources to support students in their own practices were shared including the [MyOwnWork web page](#) and NAIN podcasts. The student noticeboard was used to share Academic Integrity Week lectures, webinars and events. The Student Charter, Academic Writing Toolkit and library referencing resources supported students in their own practice. However, having reflected on current practices, a more structured consultation process with students to understand the challenges and temptations they face would be an improvement to student engagement practices and could be facilitated by the Student Engagement Committee and the Quality Assurance Office. This forms part of the work plan for the coming reporting period.

## Recording and Reporting of Data

During this period, instances of academic impropriety were recorded and reported to the Board of Examiners and Academic Board.

## Ethics Committee

The Ethics Committee Terms of Reference set out that the role of the Ethics Committee is to guide the Academic Board and the College community on approaches to ethical teaching, research and scholarship. The Committee continued to explore and make recommendations to enhance academic integrity practices in the College, with a view to developing a strategy to enhance overall College approaches to embedding a culture of academic integrity and academic good practice. A committee work plan review is scheduled for next year to ensure more explicit outcomes are facilitated.

## Academic Good Practice

The Academic Good Practice Policy establishes standards for the ethical conduct of academic work and the establishment of parameters for the detection and investigation of instances of academic impropriety. It also sets out the penalties for those found to have engaged in academic impropriety. A preliminary review of the policy, informed by recent developments in this area and, specifically, the



work of NAIN (and NAIN working groups) has prompted the Quality Assurance Office to identify the development of this policy to include the clear division of degrees or level of academic impropriety and the specific inclusion of collusion as a key aspect of the forthcoming HCQF review process. The Academic Impropriety Investigation in a Formal Examination Procedure sets out the steps to be taken in the event of suspected academic impropriety in a formal examination. Hibernia College provides assessors with training on identifying suspected cases of academic impropriety. The working group on assessment has also considered how varied, creative and authentic assessments can act as a preventative measure.

### **Supporting Vulnerable Students**

Hibernia College acknowledges the temptations that students face and the increasing variety of those temptations. By supporting vulnerable students with strong mentoring practices and clear Reasonable Accommodation practices, the College aims to prevent students from engaging in such practices.



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

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

No.	Relevant objectives  Note: Include reference to the relevant section of the preceding AQR, where applicable	Planned actions and indicators
1	Academic Integrity	In the 2022 AQR, a continued emphasis on building awareness through engagement with NAIN and the development of a short Academic Integrity course for staff and students were prioritised. The development of the Academic Writing Toolkit for students was another priority that was identified and met during this period. Academic integrity has been identified as an area of continued key focus for the College. Stakeholder focus groups are being conducted in January–February, and cross-departmental working groups are being established following this to focus on areas identified as priorities. It is predicted that these will include a review of policies and procedures, communication structures and resources, sanctions and investigations. The emphasis for this reporting period is on understanding and meeting the new challenges presented by artificial intelligence. A review of the current Academic Integrity short module (to include new challenges) will also be conducted and collaboration/consultation with other institutions developing similar modules will be sought with the possible provision of a badge for course completion to be explored.
2	Quality Assurance Staff Engagement	Embedding a culture of quality assurance across the College is a key priority for the coming reporting period. This will include a series of workshops facilitated by the Quality Assurance Office, highlighting the role of quality assurance and how it can support and facilitate other College departments.
3	Quality Assurance Student Engagement	The Quality Assurance Office will identify key points on programmes to engage directly with students. A review of the Student Engagement Committee, with a specific focus on developing a more detailed work plan, will commence. Work has started (including student focus groups) on improving communication with students requiring supports such as extenuating circumstances applications, deferrals, reviews and extensions. This includes a UDL-informed approach to developing forms for these processes and providing better and more clearly defined communication paths.

4	HCQF Review and Development	A detailed review of the HCQF commenced in January 2023. This process involves consultation, development of a work plan, a precise and detailed tracking process, and transparent communication process with the Academic Board. This will be facilitated by the Quality Assurance Office through a Policy and Procedure Tracker, Academic Board policy and procedures memoranda, and the recording of Academic Board minutes and action points. In tandem with this review process, the reengagement recommendations will be reviewed to ensure that the College is addressing these appropriately through policies and procedures.
5	Committees — Terms of References and Work Plan Restructuring	A working group to review the functioning, structure, practices and recording methods of the Committees will be set up in February, facilitated by the Quality Assurance Office and comprising representatives from different College departments. The results of this working group will inform the work of the Committees.
6	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy	As per the reengagement recommendation, an update and review of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy will be conducted. This will be facilitated by the Quality Assurance Office and completed by the School of Education (with consultation with the Digital Learning Department) to culminate in a symposium presentation to staff, adjunct faculty and students.
7	Governance and Management Review/Academic Board	As per reengagement recommendations, the role of key senior management and reporting structures is being reviewed as part of a review of the Academic Board. The issue of externality in governance is subject to review.
8	Stakeholder Consultation Process	The College will develop a systematic and replicable approach to harvesting information from stakeholders across the College, conduct staff training on the consultation process, and track and record results.
9	Addressing Recommendations and Conditions	A working group comprising Programme Directors, the Quality Assurance Office and the Academic Dean will be convened to create a systematic process for ensuring that conditions and recommendations of validation/revalidation are addressed appropriately.

## 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
Student Support	March–May 2023	N/A
School Placement (SoE)	June–August 2023	N/A

### 3.2.2 Reviews Planned Beyond Next Reporting Period

Programme Level Reviews	Date of planned review	Date of last review
Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Business Data Analytics	2026	2022
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing in General Nursing revalidation	2025	2017
Annual Quality Review	2023	2022
Institutional Review	2024	N/A

## 4.0 Additional Themes and Case Studies

### Case Study 1

**Cohort Connections: A Student Wellbeing Initiative (QA and Academic Integrity — Prevention of Academic Misconduct)**

**Author:** Dr John Meegan, Lecturer in Education (Primary), School of Education

**Theme:** Wellbeing, Academic Integrity

**Keywords:** wellbeing, academic integrity, engagement, blended learning, community of inquiry

**Short abstract:** This case study presents the development of Cohort Connections — an online informal support system for students in blended learning environments. The primary purpose of Cohort Connections is to enable students to collaborate and develop professional communities of support.

## Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the mutual engagement of third-level academic staff, faculty members and student bodies shifted to an online environment. The shift to online interactions and teaching and learning led to the burgeoning development of virtual communities of practice (VCoP), defined by Rheingold (2000) as 'webs of personal relationships in cyberspace' (p.5). Throughout that pandemic, VCoPs acted as virtual spaces where students connected with their peers and faculty members, thus countering the social isolation and disconnectedness felt by those working and studying from home. VCoPs enabled student participation from a safe space where they felt less intimidated and, crucially, where student voice was amplified, listened to, and acted upon by higher-level institutions. Students' perceptions of social presence, influence and sense of community are vital for continued student engagement with VCoPs (Cheung et al., 2008).

Emerging from a review of the literature on VCoPs, Hibernia College developed a Virtual Communities of Inquiry (VCoI) (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000) initiative to strengthen and establish cognitive and emotional connections between physically separated learners. The Community of Inquiry framework adopted by the College highlights three core elements needed for a meaningful educational experience that are interdependent (depicted in Figure 1).

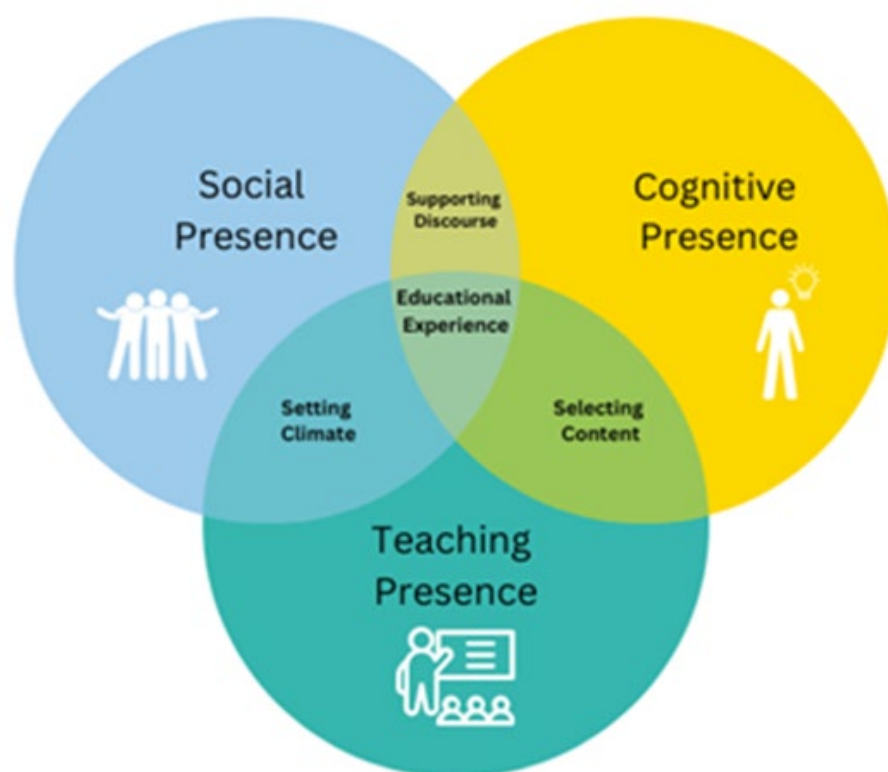


Figure 1: Community of Inquiry Framework, Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000)

Cognitive Presence refers to the ability to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection while Social Presence refers to the ability of people to present themselves as real people online (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000). Teaching Presence is the design, facilitation and direction of cognitive and social processes to support learning (Garrison and Arbaugh, 2007; Garrison et al., 2000).

The Cohort Connections (CC) initiative aimed to provide a supportive VCol through dialogic methods using informal drop-in sessions. Each session was facilitated by a Professional Master of Education (PME) faculty or adjunct faculty member. Each faculty member was assigned a specific cohort(s) of students. The overarching purpose was to support students' wellbeing, sense of belonging and connection with the programme faculty and peers. The aims were developed and achieved by enabling students to get to know each other and themselves as initial educators by establishing a collaborative professional community while learning online. Students also engaged in inquiry, explored ways of thinking and problem-solving at challenging moments during the programme, held reflective peer discussions,

constructed meaning, and developed critical skills in analysing, synthesising and making sense of teaching experiences.



Figure 2 : Cohort Application

The CC pilot began in April 2022 with the PMEP Spring 22 cohort of approximately 165 students. Initially, nine points of contact over the two-year PME course were planned, with one introduction session, six themed sessions and two discretionary theme sessions. Each session was to be approximately one hour long, and each cohort tutor would notify their perspective cohorts of each point of contact throughout the academic year.

The CC were delivered via Zoom. This structure changed to a more student-led initiative for the PMEP Autumn 22 cohort, with approximately 430 students. The new structure comprised three formal scheduled sessions, one introduction and two themed sessions. This change was due to the associated workload of facilitating meetings by each full-time faculty and adjunct faculty member with their associated CC groups and students' engagement in prescheduled CC meetings, which decreased from the first meeting.

The CC initiative was piloted with the Spring 2022 and Autumn 2022 cohorts on the Professional Master of Education primary programme. For this case study, the students from both cohorts were invited to complete a short online survey to gather information on their experiences of engaging with the CC initiative. The survey comprised two sections, 1) students' sense of belonging and connection with the College and 2) students' sense of wellbeing. The survey was piloted with 3 students before dissemination to the two cohorts. Of the 660 students surveyed, 78 responded, giving a survey response of 12%. The survey took an average time of 2 minutes and 29 seconds to complete.



In response to whether the CC initiative supported students' sense of belonging and wellbeing, 67% of students definitely or mostly agreed that CC provided opportunities to contact academic faculty when needed. 64% definitely or mostly agreed that CC provided opportunities to receive sufficient advice and guidance in relation to the course. 71% definitely or mostly agreed that CC provided opportunities to engage with peers, while 61% definitely or mostly agreed that CC supported their sense of belonging to the College. Some suggestions made by students to improve how the CC initiative can support students' sense of belonging and connection to the College were:

- To include lead tutor email addresses so they can be contacted directly
- For CC facilitators to post daily or weekly updates or check-ins to make the communications more regular

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the Cohort Connections (CC) initiative supporting your sense of belonging and connection to the College? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

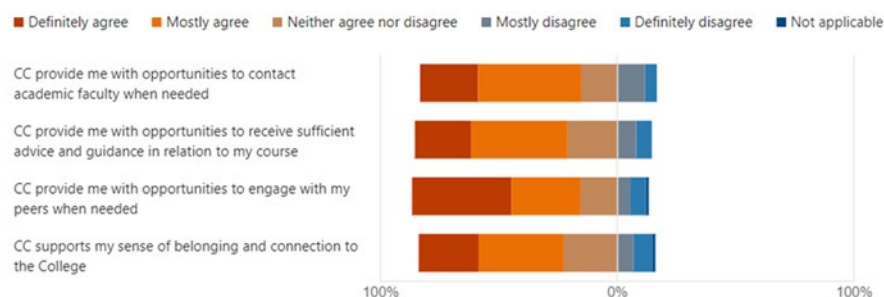


Figure 3: Section 1 Students' Sense of Belonging and Connection to the College

Some students indicated that cohort groups use alternative communication platforms to share and communicate with one another rather than the College's dedicated Cohort app. Students said they are more familiar with other communication platforms, such as WhatsApp, and feel they can be more open and honest because no faculty member is present.

In response to whether the C initiative supported students' wellbeing, 53% definitely or mostly agreed that CC provided opportunities to discuss difficulties and challenges faced on the course. 61% definitely or mostly agreed that C provided opportunities to receive sufficient advice and guidance in relation to difficulties or challenges faced on the course,

while 58% definitely or mostly agreed that CC made them feel part of a community with staff and peers. 42% definitely or mostly agreed that CC supported their wellbeing while on the course. Some suggestions made by students to improve how the CC initiative can support students' sense of wellbeing were as follows:

- Having the ability to chat with the Student Support Officer on CC to further support students
- Moving the assessment forum to CC
- Sending out a wellbeing message on the CC randomly

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the Cohort Connections (CC) initiative supporting your sense of Wellbeing? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

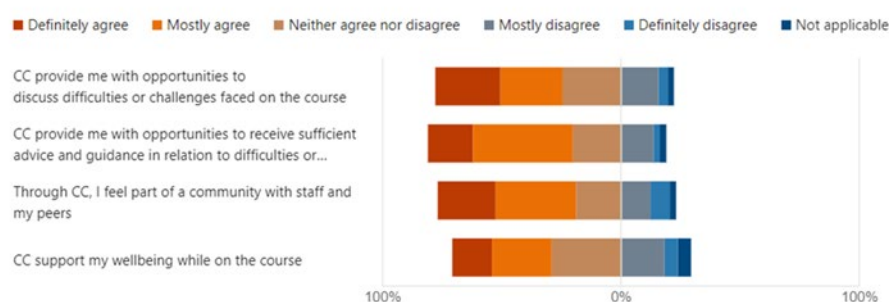


Figure 4: Section 2 Students' Sense of Wellbeing

## How Cohort Connections supports the development and evolution of the internal quality system

Higher education students experience high rates of negative emotions such as stress and anxiety (Tindall and Curtis, 2020) and the presence of negative emotions has been shown to predict attitudes towards plagiarism and academic integrity (ibid.) Student stress is due to not knowing what is expected of them, the fear of doing the wrong thing (Adam, 2016; McCabe, 2016) or stress resulting from poor time management and poor planning skills to complete their work on time (Selemani, Chawinga and Dube, 2018). While students face many challenges while on the PME primary programme, literature also indicates that academic misconduct is less likely to occur when they feel their teachers and tutors care about them (McCabe, 1992;1993). The CC initiative was piloted to support students'

connection and sense of belonging to the College and to support their wellbeing. This initiative has been positively received by the Spring and Autumn 2022 cohorts with the majority of students indicating that CC supported their sense of belonging to the College.

The next phase in the CC pilot is to carry out CC facilitator focus groups on their experiences to date and to explore options of how to leverage the initiative to further support student wellbeing. Suggestions from the student survey would be to engage more closely with the cohorts closer to assignment submission dates as students feel under pressure and stress at these times.

## Conclusion

While the CC initiative has had a positive impact on students' sense of belonging to the College, the initiative has had less of an impact on supporting students' sense of wellbeing. Survey results indicate that factors outside of the CC initiative such as academic scheduling of assignment submissions, face-to-face days, online forum responses, and contact with staff and faculty members are problematic. The learning outcomes for this study indicate that for future sustainability and success of the CC initiative, a more focused approach to supporting students' wellbeing is required.

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## Case Study 2

### Developing Academic Referencing Competencies Among Remote Learner PME Students

**Authors:** Anne Byrne, Digital Librarian; Irene O'Dowd, Digital Learning and Design Researcher

**Theme:** Academic Impropriety, Referencing

**Keywords:** digital library, referencing, academic writing

**Short abstract:** This case study outlines a project to support good referencing practices across Hibernia College. It includes the updating of Referencing Guides in tandem with a series of drop-in webinars and workshops on referencing.

## Introduction

This case study describes a project initiated by the Digital Learning Department (DLD) to improve the College's online referencing supports in response to the high volume of referencing queries being received daily by the Digital Librarian. The project, which began in 2020 and is ongoing, consisted of comprehensive updates of the College's core Referencing Guides and the delivery of a series of drop-in webinar workshops where referencing queries from students could be dealt with directly and specific problem areas addressed.

Academic writing and referencing skills are crucial for student success as they support students' ability to develop an argument, synthesise knowledge and evaluate evidence. According to Thesen (1994, quoted in Hendricks and Quinn, 2000, p.448), 'the convention of referencing is what characterises the academic essay more than any other feature'. The ability to draw from different sources, and acknowledge them by referencing them, has long been viewed by academia as essential to the construction of knowledge in academic writing and to maintaining academic integrity. However, many students struggle with academic referencing practices throughout their undergraduate years and often still need support at postgraduate level (Moore, 2014). The experience of students in Hibernia College reflects these findings in the literature.

## Overview of content

The project began with a thorough review of the full Referencing Guide, along with its condensed Quick Referencing Guide companion. This update was long overdue as technology-driven changes in the formats of information sources were not reflected in the referencing instructions while some categories of source included in the guidelines — such as CD-ROMs — had become obsolete. Library queries had also identified other gaps in coverage, and the design and user-friendliness of the Guides were also in need of improvement. The Guides were thoroughly updated over a period of months, with invaluable input from the DLD design team and content editors to ensure consistency and a user-centred design approach. Since the initial redesign, bi-annual reviews of the Guides have taken place to ensure continued currency and accuracy.

The drop-in workshop series was conceived as a means of giving students the opportunity to have their queries answered in person and in real time; as an opportunity to inform students regarding some key referencing-related topics; and as a way of promoting and modelling use of the Referencing Guides. The review of referencing queries that informed the updating of the Guides was also analysed for themes indicating the most common gaps in students' referencing knowledge. Each workshop devoted some time to instruction on one of these topics, before spending time addressing specific queries from participating students. Topics included academic integrity, critically evaluating sources, and constructing references from scratch. Focusing on such topics was seen as an opportunity to deepen students' understanding of the meaning, value and purpose of referencing and, thus, move beyond a focus purely on mechanics and concerns of plagiarism. The face-to-face aspect of the workshops, as well as the focus on student queries, is also supported by the literature, which highlights the importance of appropriate scaffolding and direct support for referencing (Gravett and Kinchin, 2020b). Providing the opportunity for students to ask questions in an appropriate space, where detailed guidance could be offered, was key to the purpose and value of the workshops. Webinars were delivered to students over a number of months and attendance was optional. The webinar recordings were subsequently converted into a resource and made available on the library website. Referencing workshops are now delivered periodically on an ongoing basis to offer students the opportunity to have their questions answered in real time as well as remind them of the referencing support resources available to them online.

### **How this supports the development and evolution of the Internal Quality System**

The project enhances the quality of online academic referencing support available for students. Periodic reviews of the Referencing Guides are now in place, representing an ongoing quality assurance process for ensuring the Guides' accuracy, currency and fitness for purpose. The project's findings indicate students' enthusiasm for enhancing their knowledge about referencing and academic integrity issues and satisfaction that additional supports are being provided to them in these areas. Support provided through the project aligns with the College's obligations on ensuring academic integrity as outlined in their Academic Good Practice Policy.

## Conclusion and learning outcomes

Patterns of students' online activity in viewing the redesigned Guide documents, measured via number of views/downloads, showed an overall increase in the period following the update and a noticeable increase in the number of views of the Quick Guide compared with pre-update usage patterns. While further research needs to be done on this data, evidence of increased use of the Guides is encouraging. Students' experience of the referencing workshop series thus far, according to survey data, has been very positive; a consistent finding from the feedback is that the workshops are a much-needed addition to the existing academic writing supports provided and that more webinars would be appreciated. Future plans for the project include the continuation of periodic reviews of the Guides; continued hosting of referencing workshops when possible; development of interactive digital learning objects to provide richer asynchronous referencing support; investigation of possibilities for producing a web-based, searchable Referencing Guide to improve ease of use; and more in-depth research into the impact of the supports on students' referencing and academic integrity practices.

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Figure 3: QR code linking to full paper on referencing support project

### Case Study 3

**Title:** UDL in New Online Digital Content

**Author:** Orla O’Loughlen, Digital Learning Manager, DLD

**Theme:** Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

**Keywords:** UDL, flexible, diversity, principles, engagement, representation, expression

**Short abstract:** This case study outlines how a UDL-informed approach to developing digital content for learners was engaged with at Hibernia College.

#### Introduction

‘Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn, including students with disabilities. UDL aims to improve the educational experience of all students by introducing more flexible methods of teaching, assessment and service provision to cater for the diversity of learners.’ (AHEAD, 2017)

In accordance with CAST guidelines (CAST, 2018), Hibernia College’s blended learning model adheres to the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), incorporating multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement into our teaching, learning and assessment.

In Hibernia College, the Digital Learning Department (DLD) are responsible for developing the digital content in the asynchronous online sessions that students engage with in their programmes. To enable access to the online content for all learners, as well as the growing number of our students with varying levels of physical and cognitive abilities, we need to be aware of UDL and accessibility principles and always keep these in mind when developing online content.

In 2021 and 2022, 12 members of the Digital Learning Department received a digital badge for completing the CPD course Universal Design in Teaching & Learning, run by AHEAD and UCD Access & Lifelong Learning and hosted by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning. Undertaking this course increased our awareness of the importance of embedding UDL practices in our content development process.

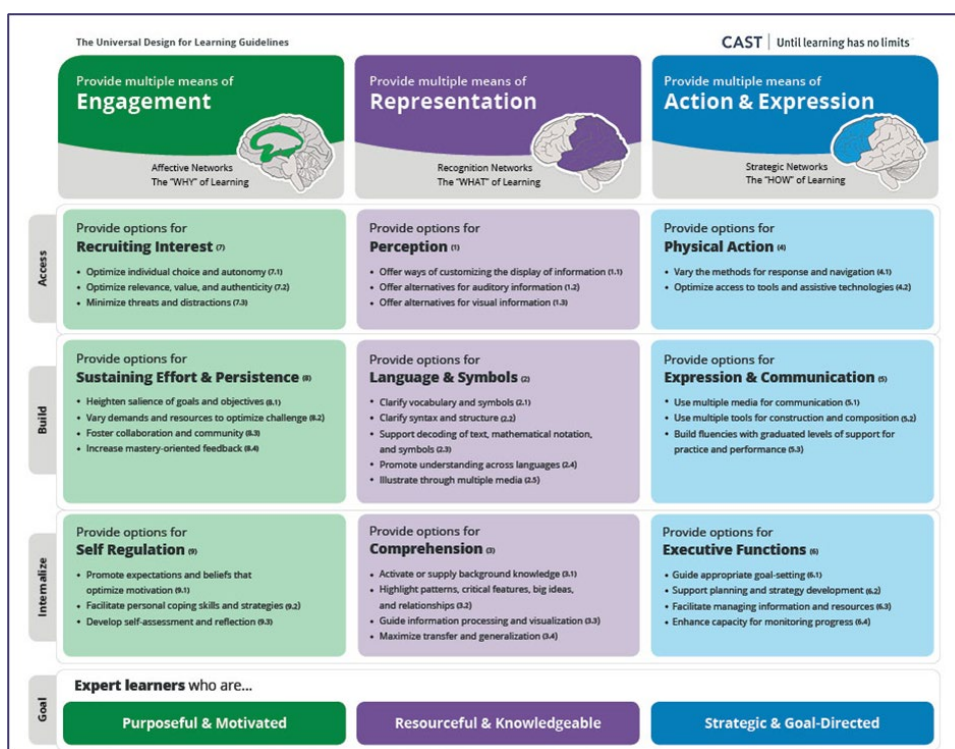
### **How we embed UDL principles in our online content**

The launch of two new programmes in the past two years — the BSc (Hons) in Nursing in General Nursing and the Postgraduate Diploma in Science in Business Data Analytics — has provided us with an exciting opportunity to examine how we develop content and look at new ways of developing creative and innovative content. Over the past four years, we have researched and expanded the range of digital tools and technology we use to develop our online content, such as Articulate Rise, Articulate Storyline, Vyond and H5P. While these digital tools allow us to develop more engaging, interactive and creative content, they can also support inclusive practices and provide flexibility in the way information is presented and how learners engage with the content — thus, ensuring that our content is accessible to all learners.

When developing content for asynchronous online sessions, our focus is mainly on the multiple means of representation principle of UDL; in other words, the WHAT of learning. We present information and content in a variety of ways to give learners different ways of

acquiring information, knowledge and skills and to support understanding by students with different learning styles and/or abilities. We do this by:

- Chunking information into smaller, more manageable, bite-sized elements
- Making connections between different elements
- Making content interactive by including a variety of learning activities
- Removing unnecessary distractions
- Offering alternatives for auditory and visual information, such as transcripts and closed captions



(CAST, 2018)

## Using alt text for images

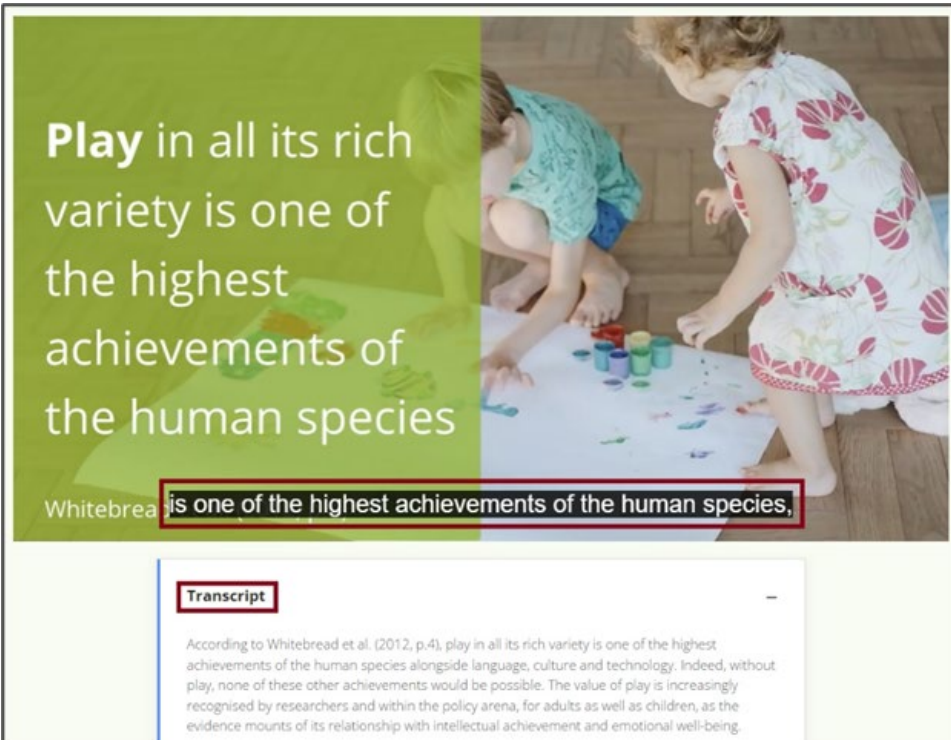
Alt (alternative) text is used to describe the appearance and function of all images in content. Our learners with visual impairments who use screen-reading tools rely on alt text to provide context for the images presented in our content.

## Providing transcripts and closed captions

We provide transcripts for videos, presentations and audio that we develop and include in our content — this allows all learners alternative ways of engaging with visual and auditory information. There are now multiple ways of engaging with a piece of content.

We now also provide closed captions in videos and presentations developed by our digital design team. Closed captioning is beneficial for all learners as it:

- Makes videos more accessible
- Allows deaf and hard of hearing people watch videos
- Helps learners to focus on and remember information more easily
- Allows learners to watch videos in sound-sensitive environments



**Play** in all its rich variety is one of the highest achievements of the human species

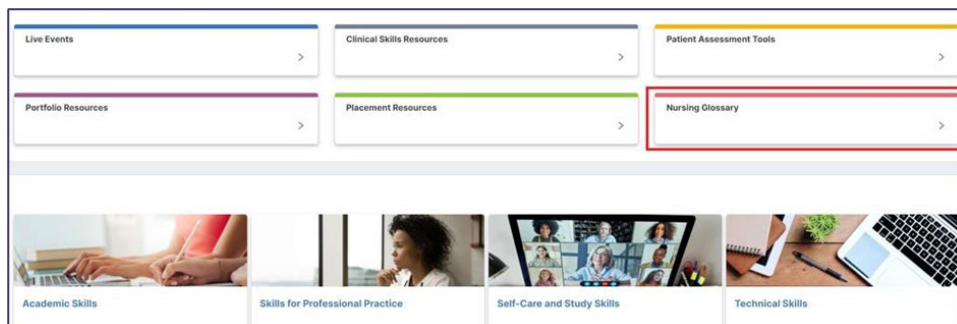
Whitebread is one of the highest achievements of the human species,

**Transcript**

According to Whitebread et al. (2012, p.4), play in all its rich variety is one of the highest achievements of the human species alongside language, culture and technology. Indeed, without play, none of these other achievements would be possible. The value of play is increasingly recognised by researchers and within the policy arena, for adults as well as children, as the evidence mounts of its relationship with intellectual achievement and emotional well-being.

### Clarifying vocabulary

To clarify unfamiliar vocabulary for all learners, we provide glossaries at the programme, module and session level in MyHELMs (Hibernia College's learning management system).



## Activating prior knowledge

We regularly activate relevant prior knowledge in our content by both linking to content previously covered and providing preparatory activities to allow learners to bring previously learned knowledge to their current studies. We do this by using visual imagery such as icons and headings, so learners are aware of the purpose of the learning activity.

### Linked learning

**A word of caution**

It is commonly assumed that arteries carry oxygenated blood and veins carry deoxygenated blood. This is not entirely true! The pulmonary artery carries deoxygenated blood away from the heart to the lungs and the four pulmonary veins return the oxygenated blood from the lungs to left atrium of the heart.

One easy way to remember the direction of blood to and from the heart is **Veins Enter, Arteries Leave**. If you'd like to revisit pulmonary circulation, follow this link: [The respiratory system](#)

## Guiding information processing and comprehension

When developing online content, we ensure that:

- Content is presented to learners in a logical and meaningful manner
- Patterns and ideas are highlighted
- Key points are emphasised
- Content is 'chunked' into smaller sections
- Headings, lists and instructional text are included to guide learners through the content

Here are some screenshots that show these elements in our online content:





## Environmental systems: Bronfenbrenner

After reading this, you may be asking yourself how or where we fit in as individuals in our society, culture and norms.


Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains four environmental systems in his Bioecological Model of Human Development:

- Microsystem
- Mesosystem
- Exosystem
- Macrosystem

Take some time to study this diagram. To learn more about each system, select each + icon:

### Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development






## Think about...

Can you think of anything historically that had to change within our healthcare system due to sociological issues?

### Linking the theory to associated sociologists

So, let's look at some of the sociologists who espouse the various theories.

To learn about the theories and sociologists, select each tab below.

FUNCTIONALISM: PARSONS	CONFLICT THEORY: MARX	SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM: MEAD
<p>The work of American sociologist Talcott Parsons (1952–1979) is relevant to the sociology of health and illness. Parsons advanced the notion of the 'sick role' to 'describe the patterns of behaviour which the sick person adopts in order to minimize the disruptive impact of illness' (Giddens, 2006, p.267). This functionalist thought, for instance, holds that society usually operates in a reasonable manner, illness is, therefore, a disruption to this operation.</p> 		

Asynchronous online content is released on MYHELMS, is available 24/7 and can be revisited at any stage throughout the programme. Learners can go through it at their own pace. They can pause/rewind audio, videos and presentations. Certain videos can also be speeded up/slowed down. There are no time limits on quizzing activities. When completing activities in digital tools such as Padlet or Mahara, students can record responses via audio or video. It doesn't always have to be written.

Our main goal when developing online content is to strive to provide equal access to all our learners, which will result in fairer and transparent learning. Applying UDL principles, where possible, in our content development process, will help us to achieve this goal.

## References

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