



Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures

of the

Irish Payroll Association

(IPASS)

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Part A - Introduction

1. Irish Payroll Association

1.1 The Irish Payroll Association is a sectoral representative body which provides and organises programmes of education and training leading to certificated awards. It was established in the year 2000 with the aim of training, supporting and developing the payroll profession. The Association's aim is to provide a platform for the promotion of excellence and professionalism within the payroll function through training, education, consultancy, and representation.

Throughout the remainder of this document, all references to the Irish Payroll Association will be denoted by the acronym: 'IPASS'.

1.2 Two courses are presently offered by IPASS which are assessed by examination/assignment:

1. Certificate in Payroll Techniques (CPT)
2. Professional Payroll Manager

1.3 IPASS is a multi-location provider, using a centrally co-ordinated approach to quality assurance and programme development.

1.4 The key stakeholders involved with IPASS are the learners, members, employees, lecturers, employers, the business sector, government departments and public bodies. Both lectures and training courses are delivered by full-time and part-time lecturers/trainers. A number of technical writers also deliver lectures and training sessions. The day-to-day business of IPASS is managed by a full-time management team supported by administration staff.

1.5 Overall management and control of education programmes has been delegated by the Board of Directors to the Academic Board. The Academic Board has overall responsibility for decision making when it comes to academic matters in relation to programs and the quality assurance of those programs. The Academic Board is supported by the Programme Board, Exam Board, External Examiner and Learner support.

2. Mission Statement

'The Irish Payroll Association (IPASS) aims to be the premier provider of training, support and development for the Payroll and VAT profession in Ireland. It is committed to achieving quality and excellence in the provision of practical, relevant and accessible information for a diverse range of learners, customers and clients'.

2.1 Aims and Core Values

IPASS undertakes to implement the following set of core values to ensure verifiably transparent, equal and fair treatment for all of its learners, staff and other stakeholders:

- Value all learners equally;
- Support all learners in maximising the personal and career-enhancing benefits to be derived from pursuing IPASS courses;
- Deliver learning opportunities that are accessible to a widely dispersed range of learners;
- Communicate and collaborate enthusiastically with learners, other interested stakeholders and business employers;
- Plan and implement all relevant syllabus reviews as soon as practicable following the annual budget and the passing into law of the annual Finance Act;
- Ensure the efficient use and management of resources in the pursuit of continuous improvement and enhancement of quality service to all learners, businesses and other stakeholders.
- All activities of IPASS are subject to periodic continuous review processes to ensure the highest standards are maintained.

2.2 Key Objectives

- Developing and delivering a relevant and responsive curriculum;
- Achieving a high-quality provision of service through a culture of continuous improvement;
- Promoting employability;
- Promoting a collaborative approach to meeting learner needs of individuals, business communities and employers;
- Ensuring diligent financial management and control to safeguard learners, employers and other stakeholders and to protect and ensure the future of IPASS.

2.3 IPASS Strategic Plan

Elements of the IPASS strategic plan that are relevant to this quality assurance document are outlined below.

- Provision of training and support initiatives
- Constant improvement and review process for programmes and courses to accommodate the increasingly diverse range of learners
- Developing programmes to meet industry expectations and enhance learners' career prospects

2.3.1 Provision of training and support initiatives

Aim

The main aim of IPASS is to work with all relevant stakeholders to provide a range of training and support initiatives that meet the needs of those working in the relevant environment. IPASS will provide up-to-date, accessible, appropriate and academically progressive training to all learners as part of its service to those stakeholders.

Methodology

- IPASS has formed strong working links with a range of other professional bodies, representative associations and other institutions that are critical to the payroll profession. i.e.

the Revenue Commissioners, Department of Social Protection, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Workplace Relations Commission, Payroll Software companies, Employers' representatives and key technical personnel with expertise relevant to the profession. Such links will aim to create a pro-active, influential role for IPASS within the profession.

- IPASS currently meets regularly with Revenue staff to discuss and address issues concerning the operation of the PAYE system and matters of importance to our students, members and customers.
- IPASS was instrumental in establishing the Payroll Software Developers Association in conjunction with many of the leading payroll software providers in the country. The aim of this group is to work together with various government departments to promote the effective implementation of regulatory changes in payroll software.
- IPASS has developed a close working relationship with many managers and directors of Ireland's largest companies/organisations and state bodies. In-house training is undertaken for many of these companies/organisations and our Annual Payroll Conference & Exhibition addresses many issues of concern to these companies. These managers liaise with IPASS on issues they see as important in the running of the payroll function in a large or small operation.

2.3.2 Constant improvement and review process for programmes and courses

Aim

The focus for IPASS is to produce course material that meets the direct needs of the relevant sector through the constant updating of this material to incorporate any relevant changes in the regulatory environment. This work requires input from technically competent personnel whose abilities and professional experience enable them to scan the external environment for changes that affect the course material and the working lives of learners.

Methodology

All lecturers who deliver our courses are working professionals in their relevant area and are therefore constantly aware of the operation and practice of their work. Feedback is received from lecturers on an ongoing basis.

Our Membership Body also provides us with views and feedback of issues happening in the external environment that need to be incorporated into our course and training materials. This direct link to the relevant environment ensures that any required changes to the academic material are identified by the Programme Board, designed and delivered in a manner that facilitates effective learning, with the overall quality assurance being under the remit of the Academic Board.

2.3.3 Developing programmes to meet industry expectations and enhance learners' career prospects

Aim

Our qualification courses and career development programmes will add value to learners' opportunities through enhanced career prospects, expanded professional associations, improved competencies and the development of self-confidence that accompanies in-depth training.

Methodology

- The growth in market awareness of IPASS programmes and the recognition and acceptance of IPASS qualifications by the wider business community is now accepted as a valuable contributor towards enhancing a learner's career prospects. This has been achieved through the quality of course content, material and delivery methodologies of IPASS programmes.

- The Programme Board and Academic Board ensure the continuing relevance and appropriate standard of the course content and provides support and training for lecturers and presenters to ensure focused delivery.
- Continuous student feedback informs the Programme and Academic Board in relation to the effectiveness of the course content from the learners' perspective. The growth in the external links that IPASS has developed with industry bodies demonstrates the recognition of IPASS qualifications and how they contribute to the career path of learners.
- The main focus of IPASS qualification courses and the development of continuous career-enhancing and professional development opportunities will be based on continuing relevance for both in the working environment. To this end, IPASS will continue to deliver 1 day information and update seminars with the aim of addressing changes in the relevant external environment, on a regular basis.

3. Quality Assurance System

- 3.1** IPASS has established policies and procedures for quality assurance for the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of education and training that it provides and organises.
- 3.2** IPASS is a multi-location provider whose quality assurance system is implemented at separate location level and also at organisational level.
- 3.3** While the Academic Board has overall responsibility for academic quality assurance, the implementation of our policies is the responsibility of all employees or agents of IPASS. The policies and procedures in this Quality Assurance document provide details as to how this quality assurance is achieved. *See Part B.*
- 3.4** This Quality Assurance (QA) document details systematic QA policies and procedures for a range of activities, including data collection and analysis. The document also identifies the appropriate forum for monitoring the data and requires the recording of such actions as deemed necessary, combined with a later evaluation of the effectiveness of these actions. Each policy is supported by the relevant procedures.
- 3.5** The establishment of QA policies and procedures by IPASS seeks to comply with and implement the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012 that requires all providers to establish Quality Assurance procedures and to agree these procedures with QQI in line with the 2016 QQI published "Core Strategy Quality Assurance Guidelines" and the Statutory Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes. These guidelines were used when designing, establishing, evaluating, maintaining, renewing and reviewing the QA policies and procedures of IPASS. As a result, the QA policies and procedures of IPASS garner public trust and confidence in the education and training provided by IPASS and the resulting qualifications obtained by our learners.
- 3.6** Our QA system is efficient, well communicated and integrated into the normal day-to-day activities of IPASS. A copy of our QA policies and procedures is published on our website www.ipass.ie and a copy will also be provided to QQI. This document will be monitored and reviewed periodically by IPASS to ensure they it remains fit for purpose and aligned with the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012.

4. Communication

IPASS achieves high quality in all ancillary activities concerned with the provision of education and training. This is achieved through the centrally co-ordinated and effective communication system that is applied to ensure clarity and transparency in all matters relating to the adherence to and implementation of, procedural guidelines and policies.

4.1 Due to the relatively small scale and controlled structure of IPASS, communication of directives and other information is efficiently achieved through the communication methodologies employed.

4.2 All policies and procedures are issued to all learners in a clear and accessible format. The methodologies employed to ensure the efficient communication of policies and procedures include the IPASS website www.ipass.ie, Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) <https://online.ipass.ie/> and the Student Handbook www.ipass.ie

4.3 The communication loop revolves around an evaluation and feedback system from learners, lecturers, Lecturer Review Groups and External Examiners that incorporate some or all of the following in given situations:

- evaluation undertaken to investigate any negative feedback issues
- review corrective action options
- select most appropriate option
- implement the required change
- communicate with those affected by the action taken
- review effectiveness of the change that is implemented
- invite further feedback to assess the effectiveness of the implemented change

This is the process by which IPASS communicates, measures, monitors and controls quality and is applied to all situations where IPASS engages with learners.

4.4 Feedback may also provide the guidance and directional focus to strengthen and consolidate quality in areas where positive feedback provides assistance in identifying opportunities to further improve and enhance the quality of programmes, support services, and learner experience.

4.5 The procedures adopted have been designed to implement the stated policies of IPASS and the effectiveness of those procedures is regularly evaluated by means of internal monitoring systems and is overseen by the QA Manager. The self-evaluation system as practised by IPASS examines feedback and reports on the quality of programme delivery and the manner in which those programmes are serviced by the support structures.

5. Human resource and financial implications of offering QQI accredited programmes

IPASS has considered the rationale of offering QQI validated programmes to include the human resource and financial implications of offering a QQI validated programme. Offering a QQI validated programme takes up a significant amount of time, for example re-engagement and validation process, etc. A significant cost is attached to offering a QQI validated programme in terms of Certification fees and the insurance cost of Protection of Enrolled Learners. Taking these implications into account, IPASS feels that QQI validation of a programme enhances the recognition of the programme.

Part B - Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures

The QA policies and procedures of IPASS provides the underlying framework for the implementation of all quality procedures and processes to ensure that the quality system is effective and provides assurance that the outcomes arising from such procedures are verifiable.

The training and support offered by IPASS to the payroll profession and business professionals ensures dissemination of proper procedures and practises, and develops employer and business compliance procedures with Irish and European regulatory and legislative systems.

6. IPASS Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures

Several key principles govern the aims of the QA policies and procedures for IPASS.

6.1 Standards

The commitment to achieve quality and excellence in the provision of practical, relevant and accessible information for the diversity of learners, as enunciated in the IPASS mission statement, is the dominant attribute which assures high quality delivery of services, including education, training, support and development for the payroll profession. In this context, IPASS has achieved its aim to become the premier provider of such services in Ireland.

6.2 Continuous Improvement

IPASS has garnered the reputation that it creates the justifiable expectation in the minds of those who engage with it that rely on receiving high quality levels of professional standards and service when dealing with the organisation. This reputation has been justifiably earned as a direct consequence of implementing high quality systems and procedures by ensuring that such quality is delivered to the satisfaction of all who have dealings with IPASS. IPASS commits itself to foster a culture of continuous improvement throughout all its departments and personnel.

6.3 Transparency

All IPASS activities are conducted in an open and accessible manner that provides transparency and accountability for those dealing with IPASS. All relevant information is made available in a format and style that is both easy to access and understandable by the user. A culture of openness and transparency will guide the interaction of IPASS personnel in their dealings with all stakeholders.

6.4 Effective Communication

All policies and procedures are issued to learners in a clear and accessible format and form part of the Student Handbook. The language used throughout IPASS material is accessible and easy to understand where at all possible. A thorough, effective and open feedback loop system is used in all relevant procedures, thus ensuring transparency, fairness and a quality of engagement with learners and external bodies. All members of staff are kept up to date with any changes in QA policies and procedures, and the student handbook.

6.5 Periodic Review of Procedures

IPASS commits itself to a periodic review of all its policies and procedures to ensure that the quality assurance of its activities is guaranteed and to keep in line with the highest standards of practice within the education and training environment. This system of periodic review is a core value of IPASS and is a guiding principle for all its activities.

The quality assurance policies within IPASS are designed to ensure that all aspects of syllabus material preparation, programme delivery, ongoing monitoring and learner assessment, are implemented by adhering to established procedures that are not only designed to work very effectively and efficiently, but that actually achieve results accordingly.

7. IPASS Quality Assurance Administration

Specific responsibility for the overall quality of programmes offered by IPASS rests with the Academic Board which includes our QA Manager. QA meetings are convened whenever the QA Manager deems it necessary to deal with an issue where collective input or feedback may be required.

The Academic Board is responsible for the systematic review, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of all academic procedures including, but not exclusively, the following processes:

- course design and maintenance of relevant and updated syllabus content and the production of high quality course materials
- ongoing monitoring and responsive evaluation of programmes
- assessment of learners including the appointment of examiners, assessors, invigilators and markers to ensure the integrity of examination standards and marking procedures
- selection, appointment, appraisal, training and development of lecturers
- evaluation and inspection of physical resources e.g. premises, equipment and facilities
- self-evaluation of the effectiveness of QA procedures
- measurable outcomes for relevant procedures are identified, assessed and reviewed periodically to ensure the highest quality possible

The QA Manager oversees all aspects of quality assurance and procedures in IPASS and will critique these and make recommendations and suggestions for changes where required. The QA Manager is constantly informed on all functional matters within IPASS and applies immediate corrective action to address any issue that may arise, or which requires attention. This role involves:

- regular overseeing of the policies and procedures in use,
- reviewing the findings of the feedback mechanisms,
- communicating any changes or development with all members of staff,
- ensuring all staff are aware of the procedures involved, and
- proactively assisting IPASS in maintaining the standards needed to meet its objectives.

The Academic Board meets twice per year, or as deemed necessary. This ensures that the required quality procedures are followed and implemented and that all staff are aware of their collective and respective responsibilities.

7.1 Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

This section sets out the methodologies employed to subject the QA procedures to review and recommendation.

Internal evaluation

Measurable outcomes to establish and inform the effectiveness of QA procedures are compiled by the cumulative feedback from all students (those are participating in face to face learning and those who are participating in blended or online learning) which provides feedback (as appropriate) on:

- the management of the particular venue
- the overall quality of delivery at that venue
- how the stated procedures are implemented at each venue
- the standard on teaching being delivered in a venue or online
- the quality of student resources made available on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
- how IPASS meets the learners' expectations based on the learner's view as to whether published procedures are implemented
- growth in learner numbers
- the average proportion of learners who successfully complete courses following enrolment

The analysis and measurement of these trends informs the approach to be taken to implement improvements in qualitative aspects of procedures in future.

External evaluation

There is growing evidence that the external payroll industry/market accepts and acknowledges the value of the IPASS qualifications. Employer approval and encouragement for their employees to pursue IPASS qualifications is further evidenced by the significant number of learners on whose behalf, the course fees are discharged by their employers.

Periodic QA Meetings

As a small organisation offering one QQI accredited programme, the QA Manager is in constant contact with all members of staff, thus facilitating the management of quality issues that may arise on an ongoing basis. Periodic meetings are convened on an ad-hoc basis throughout the year and annual meetings are convened to review and monitor the implementation and maintenance of quality issues for all procedures. Minutes of all meetings are recorded and communicated to all management and staff for implementation of any required corrective action.

Monitoring and implementation

Follow-up implementation of meeting decisions is monitored by the QA Manager. Should a specifically urgent issue arise which needs proactive attention, the QA Manager manages the addressing of such issues.

IPASS Quality Framework

8. Principal Quality Assurance Policies

- 8.1 Policy for Governance and Management of Quality
- 8.2 Policy for Programme Development
- 8.3 Policy for Access, Admission, Progression and Recognition
- 8.4 Policy for Recruitment, Management and Development
- 8.5 Policy for Teaching and Learning
- 8.6 Policy for Assessment, Grading and Certification
- 8.7 Policy for Learner Support
- 8.8 Policy for Learner Complaints
- 8.9 Policy for Appeals
- 8.10 Policy for Public Information and Communication
- 8.11 Policy for Information, Privacy and Data Management
- 8.12 Policy for Programme Monitoring and Review
- 8.13 Policy for Good Academic Practice
- 8.14 Policy for Risk Management
- 8.15 Policy for Blended and Online Learning

8.1 Policy for Governance and Management of Quality

8.1.1 Introduction

8.1.1.1 Purpose

This policy outlines the governance and quality management structure of IPASS and sets out the responsibilities of each board or committee, together with their regulatory context.

8.1.1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all boards, committees, and employees of IPASS as an education provider and private limited company. Good governance ensures that the academic decision making structures and the corporate governance structures are clearly separated.

Academic governance is paramount with the overall responsibility resting with the Academic Board. Academic governance refers to how academic matters are governed to include learner enrolments, programme design, curriculum, academic standards and academic quality. Good academic governance involves both internal and external oversight in relation to academic decision making. The academic governance of IPASS is vested in the Academic Board as delegated by the Board of Directors.

Responsibility for corporate governance rests with senior management who have responsibility for personnel, recruitment and HR matters, sales and marketing, customer service, strategy and planning, etc. Senior Management report directly to the Board of Directors.

All employees of IPASS have responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy.

8.1.2 Legal and Regulatory

IPASS is a private limited company with administrative offices at 9 Western Parkway Business Centre, Ballymount Drive, Dublin 12. The Companies Act 2014¹ together with regulations specifically pertaining to the provision of higher education programmes regulates how IPASS functions.

The strong organisational culture for management and governance is outlined in this quality framework which seeks to comply with and implement the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.² Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) have established such standards which have been adopted by IPASS in the provision of programmes leading to QQI awards.

IPASS provides one QQI validated programme which awards qualifications to successful learners. IPASS has established Quality Assurance policies and procedures in line with the 2016 QQI published “Core Strategy Quality Assurance Guidelines”³ and “Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers”. These guidelines were used when designing, establishing, evaluating, maintaining, renewing and reviewing the QA policies and procedures of IPASS. As a result, the QA policies and procedures of IPASS garner public trust and confidence in the education and training provided by IPASS and the resulting qualifications obtained by our learners.

¹ The Irish Statute Book <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/38/enacted/en/html>

² The Irish Statute Book <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/28/enacted/en/html>

³ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Core Strategy Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)
<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf#search=Core%20Strategy%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%2A>

IPASS also has regard for QQI's "Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers"⁴ and this policy reflects the implementation of these requirements.

8.1.3 Academic Governance and Management of Quality

IPASS aims to carry out its academic governance duties to the highest standards of compliance, ensuring that academic decision making is separated from commercial decision making in accordance with QQI's *Core Strategy Quality Assurance Guidelines*. IPASS has established an Academic Board to oversee the quality assurance of its academic governance.

8.1.4 Academic Board

The academic governance of IPASS is vested in the Academic Board as delegated by the Board of Directors. Overall responsibility for the quality assurance of our academic governance rests with the Academic Board. The Academic Board's work is supported by the Programme Board, Exam Board, External Examiner, Learner Support and Lecturers.

8.1.4.1 Membership of Academic Board

The Academic Board will always adhere to the relevant regulatory requirements and will consist of the following members:

- An Independent Chairperson – the chairperson of the Academic Board will be an individual who is external to IPASS with no involvement in the day to day affairs of the business during their tenure as a member of the board. The individual will be suitably qualified and competent and will be required to hold a level 8 qualification or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications and at least 10 years' experience in the field of adult education or relevant industry/sectoral experience. The term of office for the chairperson will be for an initial period of 3 years, with the option of a consecutive 3 year term.
- IPASS QA Manager
- IPASS Senior Manager
- Learner Representative – the term of office of the learner representative will be a maximum of 3 years. At the time of appointment, the learner will be either a current student or one who has graduated within the last 2 years from the programme at the date of appointment.
- Two lecturers
- An external member – who has graduated from the programme more than 8 years ago and working in the industry. The term of office for the external member will be for an initial period of 3 years, with the option of a consecutive 3 year term.

8.1.4.2 Terms of Reference of Academic Board

The Academic Board has overall responsibility for academic governance in IPASS. Good governance ensures that the necessary structures, policies, and processes are in place with regard to academic matters, reviewing QA policies and ensuring they are being adhered to. The purpose of the Academic Board is to carry out reviews of academic activities and to ensure that transparent, fair and consistent procedures are applied in all decisions relating to academic activities.

The terms of reference of the Academic Board include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Oversight of quality on all QQI programmes delivered by IPASS.

⁴ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers

<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Sector%20Specific%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%20V2.pdf#search=Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%20for%20Independent%2FPrivate%20Providers%2A>

- Contribute to the development and implementation of academic policies relating to programme development, teaching & learning, assessment of learners, recruitment, information & data management, self-evaluation, monitoring and review, blended or online learning.
- Review quality assurance policies and core report documents and make recommendations as necessary to support an ongoing cycle of self-improvement.
- Review and monitor all reports prepared by the Programme Board.
- Periodic monitoring of all QQI programmes to ensure that compliance is achieved.
- Provide advice, guidance and support to Senior Management, Boards, staff and lecturers on all aspects in relation to the quality assurance of QQI programmes.
- Ensure that IPASS is adhering to the QA procedures as outlined in the QQI Core Quality Assurance guidelines.
- Review and adjudicate on learner appeals.
- Liaise with senior management on necessary steps, including capital expenditure, in order to achieve academic goals.

8.1.4.3 Powers of the Academic Board

The Academic Board will operate under delegated authority from the Board of Directors. The Academic Board may review or investigate any matter falling within its terms of reference. The Academic Board is permitted to seek the information it requires from senior management or any other employee to enable it to carry out the necessary duties. It is the responsibility of senior management to ensure that all information needed is made available in a timely manner. The Academic Board has the power to make recommendations to senior management.

8.1.4.4 Meetings

Meetings of the Academic Board will take place in the IPASS office and will proceed as follows:

- Meetings will be scheduled bi-annually prior to the commencement of each academic term or as required for exceptional circumstances.
- An agenda will be prepared and distributed to members in advance of the meeting.
- Minutes of the meeting will be prepared, and once approved, will be distributed to all Board members.
- Reports and relevant documents will accompany the meeting minutes as applicable.
- The Academic Board has the power to request members of the Exam Board, Programme Board or Learner Support to attend to address specific items.
- Subgroups may be convened from time to time to assist with any ad-hoc projects or policy development. These subgroups may involve other individuals as deemed necessary.

8.1.4.5 Format of Meetings

The format of each meeting will be as follows:

- Review and approval of minutes from the previous meeting and matters arising.
- Agenda for the meeting is agreed.
- Strategic and or policy issues arising.
- Items brought forward for formal approval.
- Any other business.

8.1.4.6 Recommendations

The Academic Board will review each agenda item and all discussion points and recommendations will be recorded in the meeting minutes. Appropriate actions will be assigned and completed within an agreed timeframe.

In relation to appeals or complaints, the Board will notify the QA Manager of the recommended actions and subsequently, the appellant or complainant will be notified in writing (email). The

learner may refer their complaint to QQI if he or she is dissatisfied with the decision of the Academic Board.

8.1.5 Programme Board

The Programme Board, which consists of the QA Manager, academic staff and Internal Examiners, is responsible for preparing, reviewing and evaluating the programme material for learners.

8.1.5.1 Role of the Programme Board

The Programme Board is responsible for:

- Maintaining the academic standard of the award being delivered.
- Ensuring all programmes are updated, evaluated and reviewed at least twice yearly, to include all materials for all learners, as appropriate. This will be based on legislative changes; feedback from learners, lecturers, external examiner members and employers; number of enrolments; retention, completion and attrition rates, and analysis of grades.
- Ensuring the learner experience is in line with IPASS policies, whether the learner is participating in face to face or blended/online learning.
- Consider all aspects of feedback from learners, note trends and take any action deemed necessary.
- Ensuring all relevant staff and lecturers are informed of any changes affecting a programme, and that the minutes of any meeting relating to the conduct of a Programme are circulated to all relevant individuals.
- Seeking approval for any significant changes to the programme from the Academic Board. Minor changes such as those introduced by a Finance Act, social welfare legislation or employment legislation are updated by technical writers on an ongoing basis as and when required.
- Ensuring recommendations of the Academic Board are carried out.
- Considering reports from external examiners and take any actions as deemed necessary.
- Reviewing learner feedback and learner outcomes and report on same to the Academic Board to ensure the quality of the programme and recommend changes where necessary.
- Review and Evaluate reports from Learner Support on student enrolments, student gender, completion and attrition rates, results, and other reports as requested by the Programme Board and report on same to the Academic Board.
- Deal with learner complaints and refer appeals to the Academic Board for adjudication as necessary.
- Reporting to the Academic Board prior to Academic Board meetings.

8.1.6 Exam Board

The Exam Board is responsible for approving learner results before submission to QQI. The Exam Board will consist of at least 3 people to fill the following roles: a chairperson, a secretary, internal examiner and the external examiner. The internal examiner may hold the position of secretary or chairperson.

8.1.6.1 Role of the Exam Board

The Exam Board meets twice a year and is responsible for ensuring that learner results are quality assured and signed off by prior to submission to QQI. The role of the Exam Board includes (but not necessarily restricted to) the following:

- Ensure that all exam scripts submitted to IPASS have been corrected in accordance with issued guidelines.
- Ensure that marks awarded by correctors have been subject to internal verification and external review by the external examiner.

- Ensure that results bordering a pass mark are subject to a second review to determine if the learner merits a pass mark.
- Review and approve the results awarded by correctors to ensure consistency of marking between correctors. All learner results are provisional until approved by the Exam Board. Any change to the provisional results will be notified to the learner.
- Any anomalies or issues arising will be discussed, and where necessary, the appropriate feedback will be given by the QA Manager to the Programme Board, Learner Support or the Academic Board.
- Approve the final results and authorise them to be submitted to QQI as the final results.
- Ensure that the external examiner's report is submitted to QQI.
- Keep minutes of the Exam Board meeting.

8.1.7 External Examiner

The Programme Board seeks nominations for the position of External Examiner. The nominations are reviewed to ensure that the nominee is:

- Professionally qualified
- Sourced from within the Higher Education Sector and familiar with the assessment of learners
- Independent and has no other relationship with IPASS during their tenure

Successful nominations are selected, and the Programme Board approves the appointment based on the competencies required.

The successful nominee is notified in writing of the appointment to include remuneration. The Programme Board provides information and support to the successful nominee so that they can familiarise themselves with IPASS.

Notification of the appointment is communicated to QQI and a copy of the successful nominee's CV is submitted to QQI.

8.1.7.1 External Examiner

The role of the External Examiner is to:

- Ensure the appropriateness of the minimum intended programme learning outcomes and other programme objectives
- Ensure that the procedures for assessment of learners and the grading of examination scripts are carried out in a transparent, fair, consistent and traceable format
- Ensure that examination papers are relative to the programme.
- Review the examination papers prepared by the Programme Board to ensure the quality and standard of the examinations.
- Provide feedback and make recommendations with regard to the examination papers as appropriate.
- Carry out a review of a sample of corrected exam scripts to ensure scripts have been marked in accordance with the suggested marking scheme, provide feedback on the procedures followed, grading/marking, etc. and make any recommendations where appropriate.
- Review and decide upon any matters presented to the Exam Board for consideration.
- Approve final results prior to submission to QQI.
- Complete external examiners report for submission to QQI.

While External Examiners are not required to re-mark individual examination scripts, recommendations for grade changes may be included in their feedback, which will be considered, as appropriate, by the Exam Board.

The Exam Board which meets twice per year to approve exam results.

8.1.7.2 External Examiner's Tenure

External examiners shall not normally be appointed for a period exceeding 3 years on any programme. External examiners may be reappointed for a second term. External examiners who have served for two appointment periods or more should not normally be considered for re-nomination until a minimum of 3 years has elapsed.

8.1.8 Learner Support

Learner support primarily consists of administration staff who are involved in the day to day support of learners from the time they enrol on the course until they complete the course and graduate.

Learner Support is responsible for (but not restricted to) the following:

- Publishing an enrolment form
- Reviewing applications to ensure the entry criteria are met
- Processing applications, assigning student ID and enrolling learners.
- The distribution of all learning materials to students and lecturers and the ongoing provision of information to students and lecturers.
- Providing students with access to our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
- Ensuring IPASS policies are adhered too.
- Dealing with day to day queries from learners.
- Liaising with the Programme Board to ensure that all policies and procedure are being adhered too to provide the learner with the best possible learning experience.
- Sourcing suitable venues for the delivery of programmes which may include the inspection of physical resources (e.g. premises, equipment and facilities).
- Issuing a venue checklist for each venue in which face to face learning takes place, reviewing the feedback and taking any action as deemed necessary.
- Producing reports on student enrolments, student gender, completion and attrition rates, results, and other reports as requested by the Programme Board.

8.1.9 Quality Assurance Manager

The Quality Assurance Manager sits on the Programme Board and the Academic Board and is responsible for (but not limited to) the following:

- Overseeing that all learners are treated fairly, consistently and with courtesy and respect.
- Ensuring that learners are facilitated to provide feedback of their learning experience and that this feedback informs recommendations and decisions made by the Programme Board and Academic Board.
- Ensuring that learner supports are provided and that there is access to reasonable accommodations while acknowledging budget constraints.
- Learners have access to up to date, practical and relevant information in relation to access, transfer and progression on all courses.
- Monitoring of the provision of course materials, VLE, timetables and all relevant course procedures before or during course delivery as appropriate.
- Ensuring course outcomes and course expectations are explained to learners through public information systems, student handbook, and appropriate course materials.
- Ensuring that learners are made aware of their rights in relation to course completion, attendance, and fees.

- Ensuring that learners are made aware of the complaints and appeals process in the event that they are dissatisfied with any aspect of a programme.
- Learners have reasonable access to tutors both in person and via email during their course of study.
- Ensuring that all QA policies and procedures are kept up to date and approved by the Academic Board.
- Ensuring that IPASS and employees keep up to date with, and are in compliance with, all relevant legislation and regulations in relation to the provision of education and training.

8.1.10 Corporate Governance

IPASS is a private limited company incorporated in Ireland and it is managed by its Board of Directors.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors are governed by the Companies Act 2014 with the role of Chair and Company Secretary defined in law. The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for the corporate governance of IPASS. The responsibility of the Board of Directors is to ensure that IPASS functions effectively and legally, and aligns itself with the corporate goals of the organisation. The Board of Directors has delegated academic governance to the Academic Board.

The Board of Directors consists of both executive and non-executive directors. The non-executive directors have specialist knowledge that will help provide the board with valuable insights. The role of the non-executive directors is independent from the day to day management of the company and therefore can bring a degree of objectivity to board meetings.

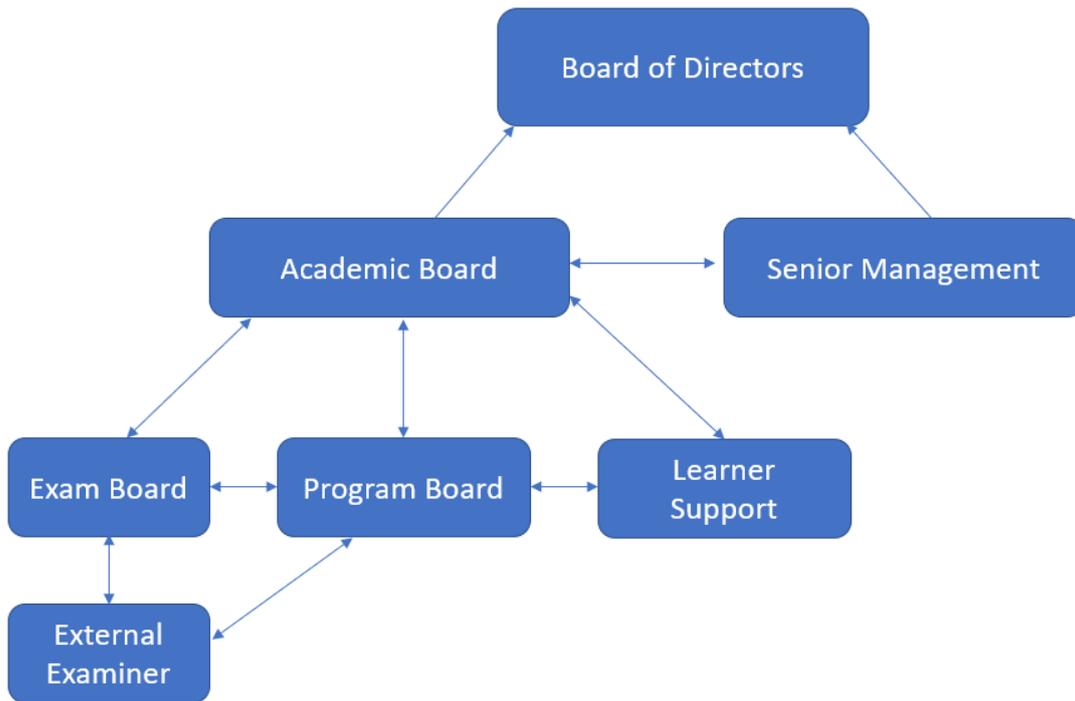
The Board of Directors meet at least 3 times per year.

Senior Management

Senior management are responsible for the day-to-day running of IPASS in line with the strategic goals set by the Board of Directors while ensuring that IPASS adheres to the relevant legislation and regulations. Senior management oversees the financial planning, financial transactions and financial reporting activities with specific responsibilities for statutory requirements such as the annual audit, accounting and tax records. Senior management is also responsible for the recruitment, selection, training and management of staff. Senior management has responsibility for implementing any recommendations of the Academic Board taking into account the financial viability of those recommendations, for example the minimum number of students required to run a programme in a particular location, investment in technology to support or enhance our VLE, etc.

Senior management report directly to the Board of Directors.

8.1.11 Organisation Structure



8.1.12 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Governance and Management of Quality
Author	QA Manager
Version	V.2
Last Reviewed	Oct 2021

8.2 Policy for Programme Development

8.2.1 Introduction

8.2.1.1 Purpose

This policy outlines the design and approval process undertaken by IPASS to ensure that the programmes meet the academic standard required of the programme in line with the appropriate level on the National Framework of Qualifications.

8.2.1.2 Scope

This policy applies to academic programmes leading to a QQI accredited award offered by IPASS.

The Academic Board is responsible for approving this policy and for its implementation. The QA Manager is responsible for ensuring IPASS adheres to this policy.

8.2.2 Legal and Regulatory

Quality Assurance Guidelines

This policy is designed with regard to QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines⁵ requirement that IPASS has and implements a policy for Programme Development and Approval.

8.2.3 Procedures for Programme Development and Approval

Outline Proposal

IPASS welcomes proposals for new programmes from various sources including members of the Programme Board, lecturers, students, external stakeholders and industry. All proposals will be considered on their own merit and how they align with other programmes currently offered by IPASS.

Internal proposers of the programmes will be required to submit a programme outline for consideration by the Programme Board to include the content, duration, mode of delivery, method of assessment and the proposed level of award.

Proposals from external stakeholders, employers and industry will be considered based on industry skills and knowledge requirements with the Programme Board assuming responsibility for a consultative approach to the preparation of a course outline.

Identifying a market need

Where the Programme Board considers the proposal to have academic merit, a meeting with senior management will be scheduled to discuss the proposal. Senior management has responsibility for ensuring that:

- research is carried out to determine the market need for the programme. This research will consider the potential demand from prospective learners, external stakeholders, employers, and industry, and
- an assessment of the human, IT and financial resources and number of learners required to provide the proposed programme is carried out to determine IPASS's capacity to deliver the programme.

⁵ Section 3 of the Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines

<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf#search=Core%20Strategy%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%2A>

Evaluation of the proposal

An evaluation of the proposal by the Programme Board and Senior Management will be carried out once the research and assessments have been completed. Where the outcome of the evaluation:

- Approves the proposal, the Programme Board will establish a programme design team tasked with designing the proposed programme.
- Varies the proposal, a report outlining the proposed amendments will be issued to the proposer who will be invited to submit a revised proposal.
- Rejects the proposal, a report outlining the reasons for the rejection will be prepared and issued to the proposer.

Programme Design

Where programme proposal is approved, the Programme Board establishes a programme design team tasked with designing the new programme in accordance with the QQI's Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training.⁶ The programme design team which will primarily consist of academic staff, will consult with relevant stakeholders such as lecturers, students and industry experts as appropriate in the design of the new programme.

The programme design team is responsible for:

- Preparing learning outcomes for the programme which identify the knowledge, skills and understanding to be achieved by learners.
- Programme schedule and structure to include all component modules, proposed NFQ level and the level of ECTS credits attributable to each module as appropriate.
- Complying with the relevant guidelines such as QQI's 'Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training'.⁷
- Criteria for access, transfer and progression.
- Strategy for teaching and learning; and assessment and certification, taking account of the mode of delivery and assessment including face to face learning, blended and/or online learning.
- Proposed staffing and resourcing requirements.
- Module descriptors to include the expected workload required of the student.
- Preparing a self-assessment programme evaluation report in compliance with QQI guidelines.

Review

The programme design team will be required to report to the Programme Board as specified by the Programme Board throughout the design phase. This allows the Programme Board to review the programme and revert to the programme design team with feedback and recommendations. The course design team will consider all feedback and recommendations and make any necessary adjustments at which point, it will be resubmitted to the Programme Board for a second review. This process will continue until the Programme Board approves the design and content of the programme at which point the programme is sent to the Academic Board for approval. The Programme Board will liaise with other parties as necessary, such as student support, senior management, lecturers, industry experts, etc.

Approval

On completion of the programme reviews by the Programme Board, the programme is submitted to the Academic Board for formal approval. The Academic Board will carry out a review of the

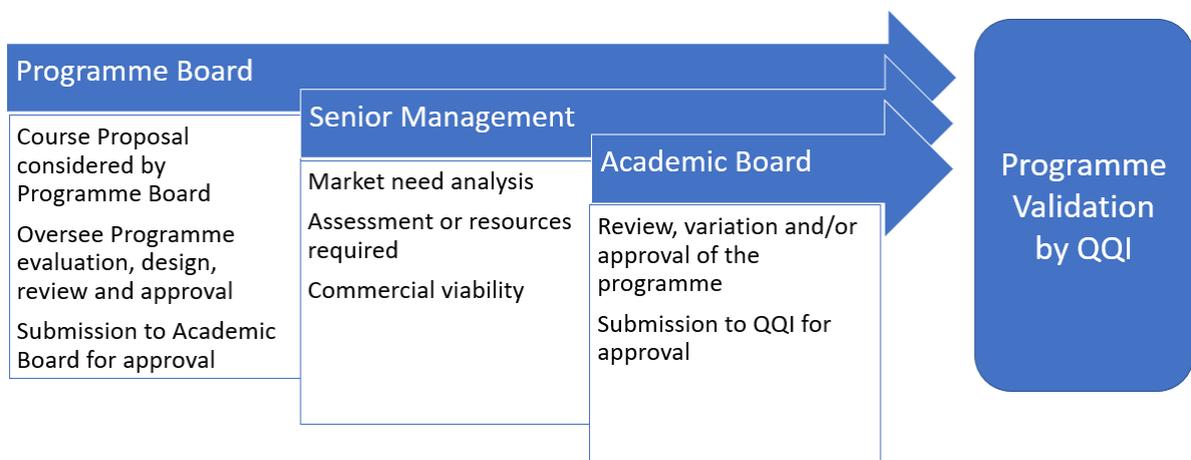
⁶ https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Initial_Validation_policy_7_10_13.pdf

⁷ https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Initial_Validation_policy_7_10_13.pdf

programme and it has the discretion as to whether the programme should be sent for external review. The Academic Board will review the programme content in line with its intended learning outcomes and to ensure it complies with QQI policies. With the support of the Quality Assurance Manager, the Academic Board will ensure that the programme adhere to IPASS’s quality assurances procedures. The proposed programme is also referred to senior management to consider the commercial viability of the programme. Any recommendations will be referred back to the Programme Board for review. Once all issues are resolved, the programme is resubmitted to the Academic Board who will approve the programme and authorise the submission of the programme to QQI for validation.

Validation by QQI

Once the programme has been approved by the Academic Board, it is submitted to QQI for validation. The programme will be assessed by an expert panel established by QQI who will carry out an assessment of the programme to include a site visit. When the programme is validated by QQI, it will be advertised to prospective students.



8.2.4 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Programme Development
Author	QA Manager
Version	V.2
Last Reviewed	Oct 2021

8.3 Policy for Admission, Access, Progression and Recognition

8.3.1 Introduction

8.3.1.1 Purpose

This policy outlines the approach of IPASS in the evaluation of applicants and the enrolment of prospective learners, to include the application and entry criteria for learners, together with the progression of learners and the inclusivity and equality of opportunity for prospective and current learners.

8.3.1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all applicants to all IPASS programmes.

The Academic Board is responsible for approving this policy and for its implementation. All employees of IPASS are jointly responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

8.3.1.3 Definitions

Prospective Learner

A prospective learner is any person who has interacted with IPASS with a view to becoming a registered learner. Prospective learners have no formal legal relationship with IPASS.

Applicant

An applicant is a person who has submitted an application to undertake a programme of study with IPASS.

Registered Learner

A registered learner is a person who has successfully completed the admission procedure, complies with all of the terms, conditions, and regulations for the relevant programme and has paid all fees due to IPASS (or has entered into a phased payment arrangement) at the time of commencement of the programme.

Access

The process by which learners may commence a programme of education and training having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence required.

Transfer

The process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme having received recognition for knowledge, skill and competence acquired.

Progression

The process by which learners may progress from one programme of education and training to another programme.

8.3.2 Legal and Regulatory

Quality Assurance Guidelines

This policy is designed with regard to QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines⁸ requirement that IPASS has and implements a policy for all stages of a learner's journey with IPASS.

⁸ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Section 3.2 of the "Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines"
<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf#search=Core%20Strategy%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%2A>

Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012

This policy acts as a guide to IPASS in implementing its legal requirements to have in place procedures for access, admission, transfer and progression as set out in Section 56 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.⁹

Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL)

This policy is designed with regard to QQI's protocols for compliance with legal requirements for PEL.¹⁰

Equal Status Act 2000

This policy is designed with regard to the Equal Status Act 2000.¹¹

8.3.3 Policy Statements

8.3.3.1 Principles for Learner Recruitment

Accurate Public Information

IPASS communicates using clear, up-to date and accurate information in line with our "Policy for Public Information and Communication" and resources published regarding:

- Programme details to include curriculum, mode(s) of delivery and assessment, and programme schedule
- Application procedures: deadlines, start dates, application form and supporting documentation
- Entry criteria and procedures
- Award details: the awarding body (QQI), NFQ level (if any) and award title
- Protection of Enrolled Learners arrangements
- Fees associated with the programme

Impartial Advice

All responses to enquiries from prospective learners and members of the public are provided in a timely manner and are honest, factual and up to date which aids the decision-making process.

8.3.3.2 Principles for Access, Admission Progression and Recognition

All applications and admissions to our programmes are based on:

Clear Entry Criteria and Procedures

All academic entry requirements are kept up to date. Our entry procedures are fair and are only based on the entry criteria for the programme.

Equality of Opportunity

All prospective learners have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their suitability to enrol on a programme with IPASS. All applications are assessed based on the entry criteria and IPASS does not discriminate on any other grounds. IPASS promotes access to prospective learners who may have disabilities and/or additional needs, where it is reasonably possible to do so.

⁹ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/28/enacted/en/html>

¹⁰ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Protection of Controlled Learners – Protocols for the Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act <https://www.qqi.ie//Policies/Pages/Protection-of-Enrolled-Learners---Protocols-for-the-Implementation-of-Part-6-of-the-2012-Act-.aspx>

¹¹ Equal Status Act 2000 <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/html>

Transfer

Unfortunately, due to specialist nature of payroll, it is not possible to transfer to/from another programme with IPASS or other providers. Where a student exits a programme prior to completion, no academic credit is available.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Due to the specialist nature and duration of CPT programme, there is no recognition of prior learning.

Reasonable Expectation of Success

IPASS enrolls learners where, based on the outcome of the application procedures, there is a reasonable expectation that the learner may successfully complete the programme.

Right to Refuse Applications

IPASS reserves the right to refuse an application for a programme where an applicant is unsuccessful in meeting the entry criteria.

8.3.3.3 Entry Criteria

The entry criteria is outlined in the relevant programme document. All applicants must provide verifiable evidence that they:

Meet All Entry Criteria

As outlined in the relevant programme documentation.

Meet Other Requirements

All applicants must demonstrate that they have familiarised themselves with the prospective field of study, subject matter, academic content and demands of the programme.

Good Standing

All applicants must commit to staying in good standing with IPASS, to include ongoing compliance with the policies and procedures that apply to all learners.

All learners who meet the entry criteria and requirements of a programme will be admitted to the programme regardless of the life stage, personal circumstances or geographic location.

8.3.3.4 Progression

Learners who are successful in achieving their Certificate in Payroll Techniques qualification are informed of their progression path to the IPASS Professional Diploma in Payroll Management.

IPASS has collaborated with the following associations/institutes to foster good relations to benefit our learners in their progression from IPASS programmes to other programmes of education, such as:

- Accounting Technicians Ireland www.accountingtechniciansireland.ie
- Irish Tax Institute www.taxinstitute.ie
- Association of Chartered Certified Accountants www.accaglobal.com/ie
- Certified Public Accountants www.cpaireland.ie
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development www.cipd.ie

8.3.4 Procedure for Application

This procedure outlines the steps taken by Learner Support to collect, verify and assess evidence provided by applicants against the entry criteria requirements. This will result in a decision as to whether an applicant meets the programme entry requirements.

8.3.4.1 Responsibilities

Applicant Responsibilities

Each applicant has the following responsibilities:

- Informing themselves about:
 - The programme
 - IPASS
 - Entry criteria
 - Workload and commitment to complete the programme
 - Fees and associated terms and conditions
- Providing verifiable evidence that they meet all the entry criteria
- Make themselves available to be contacted by IPASS in relation to their application

Learner Support Responsibilities

The responsibilities of Learner Support include:

- Provision of clear, up to date and accurate information about the application process and deadlines for admission to the programme
- Publication of an online application form
- Ensuring that the entry procedures are fair so that the quality of opportunity is extended to all applicants
- Maintaining a secure record of all applications
- Assessing applications in consultation with the Academic Board

8.3.4.2 Procedure

Application Forms

Learner Support publishes an application form online with information about the application process, deadlines for each intake of learners and guidance on completing the form.¹²

Application Process

The applicant:

- Completes the application form
- Provides any supporting documentation as evidence of attaining the entry criteria.
- Provides any information regarding learning needs
- Pays the programme fee

Records

IPASS keeps a secure record of all applications in accordance with the *Policy for Information, Privacy and Data Management*.

Assessment of the Application Form

Learner Support uses the following criteria in assessing an application form:

¹² <https://ipass.ie/qualifications/certificate-in-payroll-techniques/>

- Completeness – where an application form is deemed incomplete, the applicant is invited to supply additional evidence or information to complete their application
- Accuracy and authenticity
- Evidence that the entry criteria are met

Outcome of the Application Procedure

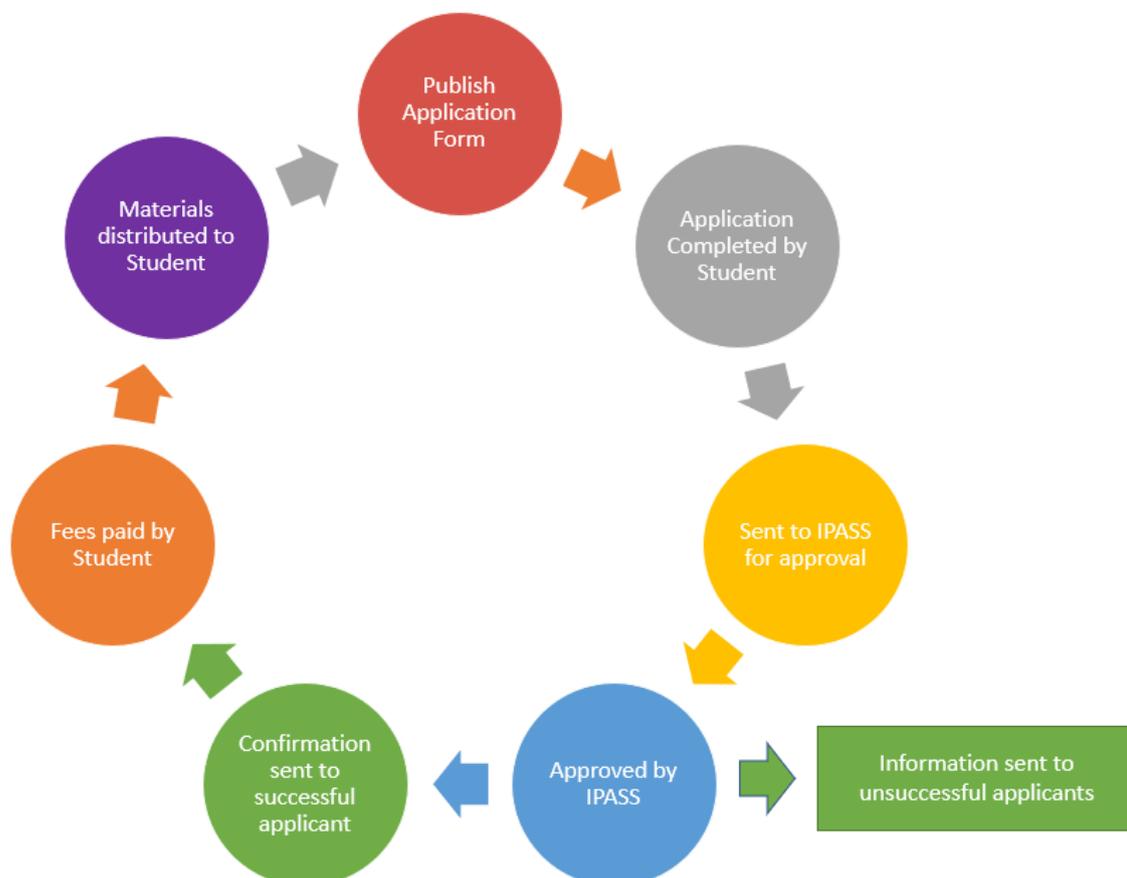
Where the application form is complete, accurate and authentic and evidence has been provided that the entry criteria is met, the applicant will be informed by Learner Support that their application has been processed, they have been admitted as a learner on the programme and an individual Student Number is issued. In addition, classroom learners are advised of the following:

- Address and room number of their chosen venue
- Date of classes – one evening per week for 9 weeks per semester
- Times of classes – 3 hours from 6.30pm to 9.30pm each evening
- Course material will be distributed at the first class
- Information to access the VLE

For those learners who opted for distance learning, the relevant course materials are posted to the applicant.

Where the application is deemed ineligible, the applicant will be informed by Learner Support in writing of the reasons why it is deemed ineligible.

IPASS Applications Flowchart



8.3.5 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Access, Admission, Progression and Recognition
Author	QA Manager
Version	V.2
Last reviewed	Oct 2021

8.4 Policy for Recruitment, Management and Development

8.4.1 Introduction

8.4.1.1 Purpose

This policy outlines how IPASS staff are recruited, managed and appraised of on-going development needs. It is the policy of IPASS to ensure that the best candidate for the job is selected. IPASS is an equal opportunities employer.

8.4.2 Legal and Regulatory

QA Guidelines

This policy is designed with regard to the “Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines”¹³ which specifies that “The provider’s quality assurance procedures for the recruitment, management and development of staff will be developed in the context of all the education and training activities and related services provided by the provider. This includes those education and training activities leading to awards of awarding bodies other than QQI, such as professional bodies and local provider provision, so that the overall commitments of staff are taken into account by the provider.”

IPASS does not engage with any other awarding body, other than QQI.

8.4.3 Policy Statements

Recruitment and Selection

IPASS is committed to ensuring that its staff recruitment and selection process leads to the employment of suitably qualified and skilled individuals.

Equality of Opportunity

It is the policy of IPASS that all applicants for employment are afforded equality of opportunity during the recruitment, selection and appointment process. Where a potential candidate highlights a disability, all reasonable arrangements to facilitate their inclusion in the recruitment process will be made.

Job Specification

All job advertisements will include a clear job specification to include any qualifications and/or experience deemed necessary for the role.

Development

As a training company, IPASS actively encourages all staff to upskill and develop to their true potential by undertaking training and professional development relevant to their role.

Support

IPASS provides ongoing support to all staff and welcomes feedback both informally and formally through its staff appraisal process.

Management

All staff are managed and guided in their specific role in order to achieve their potential and excel in their chosen career.

¹³ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Sector Specific Guidelines (2016)

<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Sector%20Specific%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%20V2.pdf#search=sector%20specific%20guidelines%20for%20independent%20private%20providers%2A>

Roles

IPASS ensures that all academic staff are qualified in their area of teaching and experienced in the delivery of programmes of education. Permanent staff are issued with a permanent contract of employment and all part-time lecturers are issued with a fixed-term contract of employment for the duration of the lecturing term. A Staff Handbook is also provided to all staff.

8.4.4 Procedure for Recruitment, Management and Development

Senior Management are responsible for the recruitment, management, and development of staff, and to ensure that there are adequate staff available to carry out the duties required.

8.4.4.1 Recruitment

All staff are recruited in accordance with normal criteria to employ staff that are appropriately qualified and/or competent to fill the role to which they are to be appointed. Staff are generally based in IPASS Head Office, except part-time lecturers, who generally carry out their lecturing duties in the venue to which they have been assigned. Where agreed with IPASS, the duties of those carrying out online teaching or assessment may be carried out remotely by the lecturer.

The recruitment of suitably qualified and competent lecturers is a key determinant in ensuring the maintenance of quality in the lecturing function. Accordingly, the procedures for employing and managing lecturers is the primary focus to ensure that learners' tutorial needs are met. Based on acquired experience to date, IPASS has unprecedented access to suitably qualified personnel in specific subject areas. Thorough selection procedures are in place for recruiting applicants who are sourced through a combination of recommendation by current lecturers, industry contacts and advertising. The majority of our lecturers work in payroll.

The recruitment and selection process is initiated once a vacancy arises. A vacancy may arise due the creation of a new position or by filling an existing position.

Job Specification

Once it is established what work the applicant will be required to do, a clearly defined job specification is created to include the role, responsibilities, tasks and expectations as outlined in the Job Specification. All candidates applying for a lecturing vacancy must be qualified in the relevant discipline in which they are lecturing and to a level that is at least the equivalent to the level that they are required to lecture.

Advertising

The vacancy will be advertised on the Jobs page on the IPASS website www.ipass.ie and externally using newspapers and/or recruitment agencies, as necessary. The advertisement will not discriminate on any of the 9 grounds for discrimination protected by the Employment Equality Acts i.e. gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the travelling community.

Selection

After the closing date for applications, senior management assess all applications against the job specifications and shortlist a number of potential candidates. Those candidates who most meet the criteria of the job specification will be shortlisted for interview. Selection is based on fair and transparent decisions. A record is maintained of all candidates shortlisted and those not shortlisted. A reason for not being shortlisted is recorded.

Candidates who are not shortlisted are notified in writing that they were unsuccessful in the selection process.

Candidates who are shortlisted are ranked in order of preference i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. and a record is maintained of this process.

Where none of the candidates meet the job specification criteria, the vacancy will be re-advertised.

All applications are treated confidentially.

Interview

An interview aids decision making by allowing the interview panel to assess the personal attributes, attitudes, values, skills, strengths and weaknesses of each candidate. The interview panel will also focus on the experience and knowledge of each candidate during an interview.

Successful candidates are invited for interview and advised of the date, time, location and any further requirements (i.e. potential lecturers are required to deliver a presentation and submit a summary of a Revenue eBrief). If a candidate is unable to attend for interview on the date specified, consideration will be given to an alternative date in order to facilitate the candidate.

The interview is conducted using a behavioural based interview system. The questions are objective and in keeping with equal opportunities and anti-discrimination legislation.

The interview panel will decide which questions each panel member will ask while the other panel member records the candidates' answers. This ensures that there is fair procedure for all candidates and there is not a reliance on memory after the interview.

At the start of the interview, the candidate is welcomed and introduced to the interview panel. The interview panel gives a brief history of IPASS and the reason for the vacancy arising. This ensures the candidate is put at ease from the outset. The interview system is explained. Candidates for lecturing positions are afforded adequate time to deliver a short presentation on a subject of their choice. This additional requirement assists the interview panel in choosing the best candidate for the vacancy.

During the interview adequate notes are recorded for discussion post interview and for feedback purposes, if requested. Candidates should be able to demonstrate the appropriate level of relevant and practical experience they have attained to date.

At the end of the interview, candidates are asked for their notice period if they are currently employed together with salary expectations. They are then advised of the next stage of the process.

Ranking

After each interview, the interview panel apply scores to each question based on the candidates' experience, qualifications, answers to questions, etc. The scores are totalled, and the candidate is ranked accordingly based on all aspects of the process i.e. written application, interview, presentation and summary of Revenue ebrief (for potential lecturers only). The interview panel sign the Interview Evaluation Form which is retained for feedback.

Offer and References

The candidate who achieves the highest ranking will be contacted and offered the job. It is a condition that all offers of employment are subject to the provision of evidence of qualifications attained and the attainment of 2 satisfactory employment references. Permission to seek a reference from a current employer will be sought.

On the attainment of 2 satisfactory references and the acceptance of the job by the candidate, a written letter of offer and a contract of employment will be prepared and sent to the successful candidate.

All employee contracts specify each individual's terms of employment, list of duties and how each position is integrated within the overall procedural structures in the day-to-day operation of IPASS.

8.4.4.3 Management

Office Based Employees

On commencement of employment with IPASS, the new employee is introduced to all staff and management. An induction meeting is held with the employee's manager to discuss the role, policies and procedures, IT system, VLE system, etc. All new employees are provided with a copy of our Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures and Student Handbook, in addition to a staff handbook. All employees' progress is monitored by their manager and feedback is provided on an ongoing basis.

All supports deemed necessary for the employee are provided. Office based employees are subject to a 6 month probation period.

Appraisal of Office Based Employees

An appraisal is an opportunity for employees to discuss their job performance and future. The main objectives of an appraisal system are to review an employee's performance and potential and to support career development by helping to identify training and career planning needs. IPASS is committed to a policy of equal opportunities and all staff appraisals are carried out in a non-discriminatory way.

Each employee is met individually at least twice per year. The appraisal is kept as simple and straight forward as possible and is a two-way process. A discussion takes place with each staff member regarding their past performance and future potential, ongoing or new responsibilities, suggestions for programme developments, training requirements, etc. Each staff member is given adequate time to discuss any issues raised, share their views and ideas. At the end of each staff appraisal, the appraiser and the employee will know exactly what has been discussed and what actions each party are committed to. After each staff appraisal, the appraiser will record the outcome of the meeting and this record will be retained on the employee's personnel record. Any issues that arise during the meeting must be recorded and followed up on.

Many of the present office-based employees have been employed by IPASS for 10 years or more. Staff retention is a very significant indicator of the success of the internal working environment.

Part-time Lecturers

On commencement of employment with IPASS, an induction meeting is held with the lecturer and a member of the Programme Board to discuss the role, policies and procedures, materials provided, lecturing techniques – face to face, blended or online, etc. Lecturers are provided with a copy of our Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures and Student Handbook, in addition to a staff handbook.

A new lecturer's progress is monitored closely by the Programme Board in the first weeks of delivery of a programme through telephone contact with the lecturer and feedback is also obtained from learners. All supports deemed necessary are provided. In the event that the performance of an appointed lecturer fails to meet IPASS expectations, all endeavours are made to assist the lecturer in meeting our expectations. On the rare occasion where no discernible improvement emanates from this assistance, the lecturer's agreement to withdraw from the programme is sought and a replacement lecturer is appointed from our established and experienced panel of

lecturers. Learners are never compromised in the event of a lecturer failing to meet expected teaching standards.

Appraisal of Part-Time Lecturers

The appraisal of part-time lecturers includes on-going telephone contact, virtual meetings and face to face meetings with individual lecturers. This is also measurably informed by feedback forms from learners. Lecturers are encouraged to make suggestions for programme developments, training requirements, etc. The lecturer appraisal is carried out by a member of the Programme Board. The Programme Board is responsible for reporting any matters arising from this appraisal process to the Academic Board. Any proposed changes regarding these procedures are approved by the QA Manager and the Academic Board.

Many of the present lecturers have been engaged by IPASS for 10 years or more. Staff retention is a very significant indicator of the success of the internal working environment and presently, approximately 70% of lecturers have been delivering the CPT programme for 5 years or more.

8.4.4.4 Development

Office Based Employees

IPASS facilitates the professional development of employees through internal training and support and by actively encouraging all employees to participate in professional training relevant to their needs, to include:

- Certificate in Payroll Techniques and Professional Payroll Manager
- Chartered Tax Adviser
- Diploma in Tax
- Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
- VLE Training
- Data Protection Training
- Management Training
- Customer Service Training
- MS Office (Excel, PowerPoint, Word, Outlook, Access) Training

Staff development is paramount and IPASS is committed to providing training/upskilling all staff on a continuous basis. Professional development of staff is supported, encouraged and resourced to add to enhance the management of our programmes and day-to-day operations.

Part-time Lecturers

IPASS facilitates the professional training of lecturers through internal training and support and by actively encouraging all lecturers to participate in professional training for adult lecturers i.e. Train the Trainer course.

Lecturers are encouraged to develop links with their peers for mutual support. Personal lecturer support is also provided if requested or deemed necessary. An annual meeting is held prior to the commencement of each academic year. Any lecturer feedback is discussed, changes to the course material explained, delivery methods, etc. are outlined and demonstrated at these meetings. Lecturers are also invited to attend the IPASS Annual Update Day Information Seminar which keeps lecturers informed of changes and developments affecting payroll.

New lecturers are offered support in their development by part-taking in our Mentor/Buddy system where an experienced lecturer is aligned with a new lecturer. This offers an opportunity to discuss and share lecturing experiences, examples to use in class, teaching methods, etc.

Lecturers are given a summary of the learner feedback obtained from the learners in their class which is collated and summarised by Learner Support. This provides the lecturer with feedback and is used as a development tool by highlighting a lecturer's strength and weaknesses. Support and guidance is provided to lecturer to assist them in overcoming any weaknesses identified. This feedback is used by the Programme Board as a tool to assist in the development of the lecturer.

Lecturers are provided with the exam results for both their own students and a summary analysis of the exam results for all learners for each exam sitting. This assists the lecturer in their self-development and can be used by the lecturer to review or enhance their teaching methods.

8.4.5 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Recruitment, Management and Development
Author	QA Manager
Version	V.2
Last Reviewed	Oct 2021

8.5 Policy for Teaching and Learning

8.5.1 Introduction

8.5.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out the *Policy for Teaching and Learning* of IPASS which is designed to support the mission of IPASS to achieve quality and excellence in the provision of practical, relevant and accessible information for a diverse range of learners, customers and clients.

8.5.1.2 Scope

The QA manager is responsible for approving this policy and for its implementation. All employees of IPASS are jointly responsible for the effective implementation of this policy. This policy is mandatory for all staff involved in teaching and learning for or on behalf of IPASS.

8.5.2 Legal and Regulatory

QA Guidelines

This policy is designed with regard to the 2016 QQI published “*Core Strategy Quality Assurance Guidelines*”¹⁴ which specifies requirements for IPASS to monitor the quality of the learning experience on an on-going basis and the commitment of IPASS to self-monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning on its education and training programmes and related services.

*National Strategy for Higher Education 2030*¹⁵

“This report presents a vision of an Irish higher education sector that can successfully meet the many social, economic and cultural challenges that face us over the coming decades, and meet its key roles of teaching and learning, research, scholarship, and engagement with wider society.”

8.5.3 Policy Statements

8.5.3.1 Principles of Teaching and Learning

Promotion

IPASS uses a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning and seeks to promote a quality learning experience for all learners by enabling learners to achieve the learning outcomes of their programme of learning. It also encourages learners to take an active role in their class by asking questions or sharing their work experiences, thus stimulating learners’ motivation and engagement, whether in a face to face, blended or online. IPASS continually monitors and improves our VLE to enhance the learners online learning experience.

Roles

IPASS ensures that all academic staff are qualified in their area of teaching and experienced in the delivery of programmes of education. Each lecturer is issued with a fixed-term contract of employment for the duration of the lecturing term.

Format

The aim of IPASS is to ensure that each learner achieves the learning outcomes of the programme they have undertaken. Learners have the option of availing of face-to-face or synchronous online learning, all supported by our VLE.

¹⁴ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Core Strategy Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)

<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf#search=Core%20Strategy%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%2A>

¹⁵ National Strategy for Higher Education 2030

<https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf>

Quality

IPASS prides itself in the quality of learning experienced by learners and delivered by lecturers. Quality is monitored and evaluated informally on an on-going basis and formally by requesting learners to complete a Course Assessment Form twice yearly. A review is carried out to evaluate:

- Teaching methodologies
- Learner achievement of learning outcomes
- Learner feedback

Learning Environment

IPASS ensures that each classroom venue:

- Is suitable for use as a lecturing facility.
- Accommodates any learner with a disability (i.e. wheelchair access including adequate toilet facilities).
- Is adequately equipped with an LCD projector and white board for use by the lecturer.
- Lecturers are advised in relation to health and safety procedures and other instructions relevant to the they venue they are assigned.

IPASS ensures that our online learning:

- Is carried out via user friendly robust technology making the online learning experience as straight forward as possible for the learner,
- Is conducted in an interactive manner utilising various resources such as screen shares, interactive screens, whiteboards, polls, etc.
- Is conducted in accordance with the online etiquette guidelines issued to online learners in advance.

IPASS has full public liability insurance for all venues, as the provision of confirmation of appropriate levels of insurance cover is a prerequisite requirement for any facility usage agreement with all Institutes of Technology. This insurance policy is reviewed on an annual basis.

8.5.4 Procedure for Teaching and Learning

This procedure implements the *“Policy for Teaching and Learning”* to ensure that the mission of IPASS to achieve quality and excellence in education is achieved.

8.5.4.1 Responsibilities

Learners

Each learner has the following responsibilities:

- Informing themselves about:
 - The programme,
 - IPASS,
 - Entry criteria
 - Workload and commitment to complete the programme
 - Fees and associated terms and conditions
- Attending class and actively participating in class
- Revising topics addressed in class
- Attempting End of Chapter questions
- Accessing the resources made available on our VLE such as quizzes, sample exam papers, past exam paper, summaries, etc.
- Reading the Student Handbook

Lecturers

It is the responsibility of each lecturer to adequately prepare for each class and to deliver the information to the learners using the learning methodologies of IPASS.

Senior Management

Senior Management has responsibility to ensure that there are adequate professionally trained staff and facilities to maintain quality standards in education.

Programme Board

The Programme Board has responsibility for the provision of:

- up to date and complete course manuals and ancillary programme materials
- academic calendar outlining dates of classes, revision day and exam dates
- Information and course materials on our VLE

Academic Board

The Academic Board is responsible for ensuring these procedures are implemented to ensure each learner has a positive learning experience.

8.5.4.2 Procedures

Format

Our programmes are primarily delivered one night per week for 9 weeks from September to November and one night per week for 9 weeks from February to May each year and therefore the programme can be completed within an academic year.

Each face to face or online class runs for 3 hours with a 15 minute break. All learners are provided with a study guide and timetable.

Lecturer

Each lecturer is provided with a detailed Session Plan which outlines the topics to be addressed in each class. The learning methodology is delivered as follows:

- Recap of topics addressed in the previous class
- Introduction of topics to be addressed in this class
- Teaching of the key issues in each chapter
- Review learning by attempting End of Chapter Questions or completing Polls, etc.
- Reinforce learning by asking learners to attempt on-line quiz questions and sample exam questions
- Being exam focused
- Accommodate all learners by using different teaching methods i.e. visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic.

Teaching Methods

IPASS incorporates the four main teaching methods in delivery of its programmes:

- Visual - printed course manual and Power Point presentations.
- Auditory – face-to-face classroom and on-line live or recorded presentations.
- Reading/writing – printed course material and practice writing answers to End of Chapter Questions and sample exam questions together with attempting online quiz questions.
- Kinesthetic – practice writing answers to End of Chapter questions and sample exam questions to include the completion of numerous calculations.

Lecturers are apprised of any special needs a learner may have and venue arrangements to accommodate such needs. Assistance is given to learners with special needs as required to include scribes, separate exam room, materials with increased font size, additional time to complete the exam, etc.

Blended and Online Learning

Learners choose to study the programme either as a classroom based learner or as an Online Learner. Prior to enrolment, learners are advised of the learning options available, the resources and supports available, and the commitment required to study the course.

Online Learners receive the same course materials as a classroom learner. Course manuals, study guides and instructions on how to access the VLE are issued to all learners. Ancillary course material such as Sample Exam Papers, Past Exam Paper, Summaries, etc. are made available on the VLE throughout the course.

A member of the Programme Board is assigned as a course tutor for online learners, whereby learners can telephone or email the tutor with any queries they have on the course.

Online learners have access to attend a live online lecture in a similar manner to a face to face learner (i.e. on a weekly basis for 3 hours each class). A recording of a live lecture is made available on the VLE which is accessible by all learners. An optional Revision Day / Exam Preparation day is made available in advance of the exam.

Assessment of all learners is carried out in the same manner which involves the completion of a time constrained hand-written exam.

Data

Learner data and records are retained for a period that is the length of time that they are useful or required to be kept by a third party or law. Learner data and records are only to be retained if they have a legal, fiscal, administrative or historical purpose. Each record retained is original and unique. IPASS maintains a retention schedule which specifies the duration and means of disposal for particular types of data. Where retention periods have expired, records are destroyed promptly and securely. The disposal or destruction of data or a record is recorded. Exam scripts are retained for 1 year after final appeal date.

Support

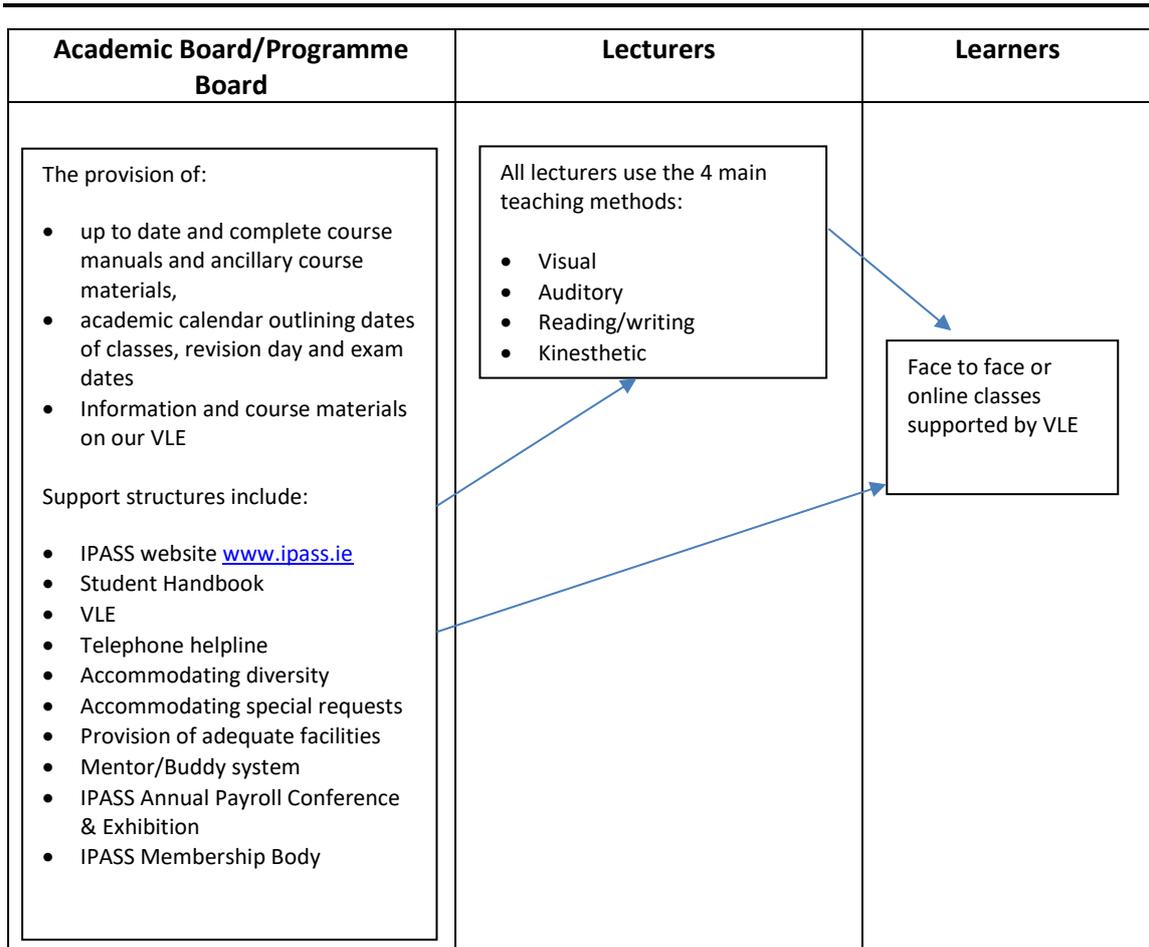
The support structures of IPASS contribute towards determining and ensuring the quality of the overall learner experience to include:

- Access to our VLE - learners have access to lectures, formative assessment quizzes, sample exam papers and a past exam paper, information regarding exam sittings, Revision Days, etc. This resource is available 24/7 on <https://online.ipass.ie/>
- Student Handbook - learners are provided with access to the Student Handbook which provides details of all supports available.
- Telephone Helpline - the telephone helpline is available to all learners Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. Any queries, technical and non-technical, learners have, are addressed immediately. Learners are encouraged to email their queries to ask@ipass.ie if they are not in a position to telephone during office hours Monday to Friday, which will be responded to as soon as possible.
- Accommodating Diversity - lecturers are apprised of any special needs a learner may have and venue arrangements to accommodate such needs. Assistance is given to learners with special needs as required to include scribes, separate exam room or additional time to complete the

exam. Where an issue becomes apparent in relation to an enrolled learner's proficiency in the English language to complete the programme, it is agreed that the learner will receive a refund of fees.

- Accommodating Special Requests - learners have the option to defer their exam sitting by notifying IPASS in writing in advance. Once the deferral is granted, the learner is transferred to the next exam sitting.
- Provision of Adequate Facilities - IPASS ensures that each venue:
 - Is suitable for use as a lecturing facility.
 - Accommodates and learner with a disability (i.e. wheelchair access including adequate toilet facilities).
 - Is adequately equipped with an LCD projector and white board for use by the lecturer.
- Health & Safety - all lecturers are advised in relation to health and safety procedures and other instructions relevant to the venue they are assigned. All classroom-based learners are required to sign an attendance sheet at each class. This attendance sheet is retained by the lecturer for the duration of the class for health & safety reasons so that a head count can be done in case of a health & safety issue arising (e.g. fire alarm or evacuation, etc.). All employees and lecturers are provided with a copy of our Health & Safety Statement.
- Mentor/Buddy system to support new lecturers.
- IPASS Annual Payroll Conference and Exhibition - learners are invited to attend this event, at a reduced rate, which brings together Ireland's payroll professionals where they will hear from a wide selection of speakers on relevant topics.
- IPASS Membership Body - as a post-qualification measure, graduates are invited to become members of the IPASS Membership Body thus demonstrating a commitment to professional and implied approval of IPASS programmes.
- IPASS website – all learners are encouraged to keep up to date post qualification. The IPASS website www.ipass.ie provides information on upcoming training courses for upskilling in an ever-changing environment.

IPASS Teaching and Learning



8.5.5 Document Control

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8.6 Policy for Assessment, Grading and Certification

8.6.1 Introduction

8.6.1.1 Purpose

This policy outlines IPASS's approach to assessing learners and the principles for assessing and grading learner effort. It also outlines the context for assessment in IPASS and for the maintenance of academic standards. In addition, it sets out the certification of learning in IPASS.

8.6.1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all learners on IPASS programmes leading to awards in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) validated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). This policy also applies to all employees of IPASS who have a role in the assessment of learners on programmes where effort is formally assessed.

The Academic Board is responsible for approving this policy and for its implementation. All employees of IPASS are jointly responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

8.6.1.3 Definitions

IPASS adopts the following interpretations as set out in the QQI Assessment and Standards – Revised 2013 document.¹⁶

Assessment

Learner assessment (specifically assessment of learning) means inference (e.g. judgement or estimation or evaluation) of a learner's knowledge, skill or competence by comparison with a standard based on appropriate evidence. Self-assessment is included in this.

Grade

This means the same as to mark – to award percentage marks to or to assign an alphabetic grade (to an assessment response or a learner).

Re-check

Re-check means the administrative operation of checking the recording and the combination of component scores for a module and/or stage.

Review

The re-consideration of the assessment decision, either by the original assessor or by other competent persons.

Results

A set of grades (or marks), normally for a stage of a programme. In the singular, the grade for a particular assessment task.

Award Standard

Award standards are the expected prior learning required to qualify for an award.

¹⁶ QQI Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013

https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Assessment_and_Standards%20Revised%202013.pdf#search=assessments%20and%20standards%2A

8.6.2 Legal and Regulatory

Assessments and Standards

IPASS, as a provider of a programme leading to a QQI award, adopts and is bound by the assessment, grading, certification and the maintenance of academic standards set out in the QQI Assessment and Standards – Revised 2013 document.¹⁷

QA Guidelines

This policy is designed with regard to QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines¹⁸ together with the Sector Specific Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers¹⁹ requirement that IPASS has and implements a policy and procedure for assessment, grading and certification.

Certification and Validation

This policy is also designed with regard to QQI's policy and criteria for making awards.²⁰

Student Handbook

This policy should be read in conjunction with the IPASS Student Handbook.²¹

8.6.3 Policy Statements

8.6.3.1 Principles for Assessment

The assessment of learners is supported by the following principles:

Transparency

All learners (face to face, blended or online) are assessed using procedures which are transparent using clear, up-to date and accurate information.

Fairness

IPASS is responsible for establishing assessment procedures which are fair in a just, unbiased, equitable, impartial and legitimate manner.

Consistency

It is the responsibility of IPASS to establish assessment and grading procedures which are consistent i.e. adhering to the same principles of thought or action.

Traceability

All learners are informed in advance of the learning outcomes, assessment method, marking criteria and appeals process which results in full traceability for the learner.

¹⁷ QQI Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013

https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Assessment_and_Standards%20Revised%202013.pdf#search=assessments%20and%20standards%2A

¹⁸ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Section 3.2 of the "Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines"
<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf#search=Core%20Strategy%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%2A>

¹⁹ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers <https://www.qqi.ie//Policies/Pages/Sector-specific-QA-guidelines-for-Private-and-Independent-Providers-.aspx>

²⁰ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Policy and Criteria for Making Awards
<https://www.qqi.ie//Publications/Pages/Validation%20Report%20-%20SOLAS,%20five%20apprenticeship%20programmes%20leading%20to%20Advanced%20Certificate%20Craft%20Awards.aspx>

²¹ IPASS Student Handbook <https://ipass.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/IPASS-Student-Handbook-2018-2019-Final.pdf>

Learners

All learners have responsibility to demonstrate their understanding of the learning outcomes, familiarise themselves with the policies and procedures that apply to a programme, comply with the rules and regulations, and undertake assessment in a fair and honest manner.

Feedback

Learners are entitled to receive feedback on their assessment upon request of a re-check/review of their examination script. The feedback is provided in the form of a report of findings and is provided in a timely manner.

8.6.3.2 Principles for Grading and Certification

IPASS applies the following principles to grading and certification of its learners:

Grading

- All programmes are graded using either “Pass/Fail” or a percentage grading system
- All grades are provisional until ratified at an Exam Board Meeting
- IPASS avoids issuing borderline marks where possible (e.g. 59% where the pass mark is 60%)
- Information relating to a learner and his/her assessment is treated confidentially

Grades

- Grades awarded reflect the extent the learner has met or exceeded the minimum intended learning outcomes for the relevant assessment
- A grade of 60% indicates that the learner meets the minimum intended learning outcomes
- A grade which exceeds 60% indicates the extent to which they have exceeded the minimum intended learning outcomes
- A grade of less than 60% indicates that the minimum intended learning outcomes were not achieved and results in a fail

Internal Review

In order to obtain reliable results, all examination scripts are internally reviewed as follows:

- Arithmetical calculations of awarded marks are checked by Learner Support
- Borderline grades (55% to 59%) are subject to an internal review by a second marker to ensure that marks have been awarded correctly
- Any variation in grades is awarded in the favour of the learner

External Examiner

The external examining process carried out by IPASS supports the maintenance of academic standards to include the fair and consistent assessment of learners. External Examiners:

- Act as independent and impartial advisors providing IPASS with feedback on the standards set and student outcomes
- Have a thorough understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the position
- Are drawn from the Higher Education community and are competent in the field of expertise
- Have a broad perspective of the training and education provision
- Are in a position to allocate the time necessary to complete the work in accordance to QQI standards
- Examine all exam papers prior to each exam date
- Review a sample of all examination scripts
- Review the results sheets prior to final results issuing

Certification

Learners:

- Receive certification for successfully completed programmes
- Do not receive certification for incomplete programmes
- Receive certification from QQI for QQI validated programmes
- Receive certification from IPASS for non-QQI validated programmes

8.6.4 Procedure for Assessment, Grading and Certification

This procedure outlines the steps that IPASS undertakes to ensure that the assessment of learners and the grading of examination scripts are carried out in a transparent, fair, consistent and traceable format.

8.6.4.1 Responsibilities

Learners

All learners are responsible for:

- Demonstrating their achievement of the learning outcomes
- Familiarising themselves with the Student Handbook together with the policies and procedures that apply to their programme
- Complying with the rules and regulations relating to assessment
- Undertaking assessments in a fair and honest manner

Academic Board

The Academic Board, in association with the Programme Board, Internal Reviewers and External Examiner, are responsible for implementing this procedure.

Programme Board

The Programme Board has responsibility for the creation, review and publication of exam papers, together with marking scheme and instructions for correctors in respect of each programme.

Learner Support

Learner Support is responsible for collecting, processing and storing learner's grades and reporting this information to the Programme Board.

8.6.4.2 Procedure for Formative Assessment

Lecturers

All lecturers carry out formative assessment of each learner in class by attempting exercises, examples, end of chapter questions, questions from sample exam papers, polls, etc.

8.6.4.3 Procedure for Summative Assessment

Assessors

A member of the Programme Board has responsibility for creating exam papers based on the examinable material in the learner's course manual, together with a marking scheme which allocates marks for method/learner effort. The assessment criteria used ensures that the knowledge, skills and understanding of learners is in accordance with QQI Assessment and Standards – Revised 2013 document. Learners will obtain the stated learning outcomes of the programme in a demonstrable manner. The Programme Board is cognisant of assessment outcomes from previous examinations when preparing an exam paper to ensure the integrity and quality of the exam.

Internal Review

An exam paper is prepared by one member of the Programme Board and reviewed by a second member of the Programme Board and attempted under exam conditions. Each exam paper is evaluated for reasonableness of exam standard and content. Feedback is provided to the creator of the exam paper regarding clarity of questions, ambiguous wording, technical amendments, marking, timing, etc. The creator of the exam paper revises/amends the exam paper, if necessary, and the exam paper is reissued and subsequently reviewed, as necessary.

Approval by External Examiner

Following the Internal Review process, each exam paper is submitted to the External Examiner for review and feedback. This ensures independent quality control, fairness, transparency and consistency of marking standards. Feedback is provided and the creator of the exam paper amends the exam paper, if necessary.

Final Approval

The creator of the exam paper completes a final review and approves the exam paper. Approved exam papers are password protected and printed internally for confidentiality reasons.

Exam Dates, Times & Venues

All exam dates, times and venues are communicated to all learners in a clear and timely manner. IPASS selects exam venues in suitable educational establishments (e.g. Institutes of Technology, Technological Universities, etc.), with experienced exam invigilators hired to supervise the exams. All exam venues have disability access including adequate toilet facilities.

Each exam sitting is held on predetermined dates at the same time which protects the integrity of the exam.

Sitting of Exam / Deferral of Exam

Learners are automatically entered for the examination which is to be held on the date immediately following their enrolment.

Learners who wish to defer their exam sitting must notify IPASS in writing in advance of the examination date, together with the appropriate deferral fee. Email requests for a deferral will be accepted and the deferral fee must be paid immediately.

Examination Procedure

The exam takes the format of a handwritten timed exam. Printed Exam Papers, Answer Booklets, Exam Information booklets and ancillary exam materials are sent by courier/registered post to the Exams Office in each exam venue for the attention of the invigilator at the beginning of the week prior to the exam, and are stored securely by the Exams Office prior to the exam.

All invigilators are provided with:

- A checklist of what is included in the exam pack.
- Invigilators Instructions to include an Examination Notice which must be read out at the beginning of the exam.
- Labels for desks,
- Attendance lists for students to sign in confirming their attendance at the exam.
- Examination report to be completed by Invigilator
- A contact number for IPASS, so that if any issues arise on the day of the exam, they can contact IPASS for guidance on how to proceed.

Students are not permitted to enter the exam hall prior to the exam when the desks are being numbered and materials being set out. Students are allocated to a specific desk number based on their Student ID. Students are permitted to enter the exam hall 10 minutes before the exam is due to commence to find their desk and hear the exam notice prior to commencement of the exam.

During the exam, an invigilator gets each student to sign an attendance sheet which is prepopulated with the student's name and desk number.

After the exam, an invigilator must ensure that each student has written their Student ID number and their desk number on their answer booklet and any additional paper submitted by the student. Students are only permitted to leave the hall when all scripts have been collected. Invigilators are required to crosscheck the scripts against the attendance list to ensure a script has been returned for each student who sat the exam.

Invigilators are also required to complete an examination report on completion of the exam. This report will indicate the number of exam scripts being returned and outline how the exam went on the day. It should also include any issues which may have arisen on the day.

All examination scripts, attendance list and examination report must be returned to IPASS by courier/registered post for processing.

Processing and Distribution of Exam Scripts for Correction

Once exam scripts are returned to IPASS, the number of scripts is crosschecked against the attendance sheet by Learner Support. The examination report is reviewed to ensure that the exam went well. Any issues identified will be brought to the attention of the Programme Board for subsequent consideration by the Exam Board as necessary.

A Marker Control Sheet containing Student IDs and Desk numbers is prepared by Learner Support in respect of each batch of scripts being distributed to correctors. The Marker Control Sheet indicates the exam venue where the student sat the exam. The Marker Control Sheet is cross checked against Exam Attendance lists to ensure all scripts are accounted for. Correctors are also provided with the exam paper, suggested solutions, marking scheme and guidance about the approach to correcting the scripts. All scripts are dispatched by courier/registered post.

Correction of Examination Scripts

Correctors are given adequate time to correct the examination scripts in a fair, consistent and transparent manner. All marks are awarded in accordance with the suggested marking scheme and recorded in the answer booklet. Where it transpires that a question in the exam may have been ambiguous, the benefit of the doubt is given to students. The marks for each question should be totalled and transcribed to the cover page of the answer booklet and totalled. The total marks obtained by the student should be recorded in the marker control sheet against the student ID number accompanied by any relevant comments. Corrected scripts should be returned to IPASS by courier/registered post before the return due date specified by IPASS.

Crosscheck of Corrected Scripts

Once corrected scripts are returned to IPASS, this is recorded on the Marker Control Sheet by Learner Support. Learner Support carry out a number of checks on corrected scripts as follows:

- Crosscheck of exam scripts against the Marker Control Sheet to ensure all scripts are returned.
- Crosscheck of marks awarded on each exam paper for each question to ensure the marks awarded were correctly transcribed to the cover sheet of the answer booklet.
- Crosscheck of the of the total marks awarded on the cover page of the answer booklet.

- Crosscheck of the marks on the cover page of the answer booklet against the mark awarded on the Marker Control Sheet.
- Once all crosschecks are carried out, marks are input for each learner onto the student database.
- Once the marks are updated on the student database, a crosscheck is carried out between marks entered on database against marks on Marker Control Sheet. The Marker Control Sheet is signed and dated to reflect this.

Review by Internal Examiner

As part of the crosschecks carried out by Learner Support, all borderline scripts (i.e. those within 5% of a pass mark) or any scripts which contain an anomaly in the marks awarded are referred to an internal examiner for review. The internal examiner is a member of the Programme Board. The internal examiner will carry out a review of the marks to ensure that the paper has been corrected in accordance with the marking scheme and/or to determine if any additional marks should be awarded. Where applicable, any variation in marks is awarded in favour of the learner and recorded accordingly. These scripts are referred back to Learner Support who update the marker control sheet with any change in the mark, and this mark is entered in the student database.

The Internal examiner also selects a random sample of marked scripts from correctors to review the consistency of marking across the various correctors. If an anomaly is detected with a particular corrector, all scripts received from that corrector will be reviewed by an Internal Examiner. Where applicable, any variation in marks is awarded in favour of the learner. These scripts are returned to Learner Support who update the marker control sheets and the student database as applicable.

Provisional Results Released to Students

Once all scripts have been corrected and returned to IPASS, crosschecked, and reviewed as necessary, and entered on the Student Database, provisional exam results are issued directly to students. The correspondence confirms the provisional mark obtained and outlines the learner's right to have their exam script rechecked.

Recheck of Provisional Examination Results

Where a learner is not satisfied with the provisional result awarded, they have the right to request a recheck of their exam script. A written request for a recheck of provisional results must be submitted to Learner Support in IPASS within 15 working days of the issue of provisional results together with the appropriate fee. Learner Support will refer the exam script to an Internal Examiner (who was not involved in any previous review of the paper) for recheck. The purpose of the recheck is to ensure that:

- Marks awarded by the corrector are in line with the suggested marking scheme
- Marks have been awarded for method/learner effort where applicable
- Examination script has been marked in a clear, consistent and fair manner

The Internal Examiner will prepare a Recheck Report for the student. The report will indicate the marks obtained in each question and outline where marks were lost. The exam script and Recheck Report are returned to Learner Support who issue a copy of the Recheck Report and Provisional Result (as amended) to the student. Any variation in provisional marks awarded by the Internal Examiner arising from a recheck is awarded in favour of the learner. A copy of the Recheck Report is attached to the exam script and is available for review by the External Examiner. Any change in the provisional mark is updated on the Marker Control Sheet and on the student database.

Review of Corrected Scripts by External Examiner

Once all scripts have been corrected for an exam sitting and all rechecks have been carried out, a date will be agreed with the External Examiner to review of the corrected scripts. All scripts will be

presented in batches accompanied by the Marker Control Sheet and Recheck Reports where applicable.

The External Examiner is instructed to carry out a review of a sample of the scripts from different correctors and different exam centres, covering a broad range of marks. An Internal Examiner is available on the day should the External Examiner have any queries in relation to the exam or the marking of the scripts. Where the External Examiner identifies any anomalies in marks awarded, this will be discussed with the Internal Examiner. Where applicable, any variation in provisional marks will be awarded in favour of the learner. Any such changes will be noted on the script and updated on the Marker Control Sheet which is relayed to Learner Support who update the Student Database and issue a revised transcript of results to the student. The External Examiner indicates the scripts reviewed on the marker control sheet which is signed and dated by the External Examiner. The External Examiner documents their feedback and comments on an External Examiner's Report to include feedback on the procedures followed, grading/marking, learner outcomes, etc., to the Programme Board.

Exam Board Meeting

Once the External Examiner has carried out their review of a sample of the papers, an Exam Board meeting will be held. Exam broadsheets with the provisional marks and grades are populated by Learner Support for review by the Exam Board.

An Exam Board Meeting is held twice per year. Any matters relating to the exam will be discussed and actioned accordingly. Once the Exam Board is satisfied that all marks are correct and all circumstances have been taken into account, the broadsheets are reviewed and signed. The decision of the Exam Board is final.

Minutes of the Meeting are prepared and approved by all attendees.

The External Examiner prepares an External Examiner Report for each programme which is submitted to QQI together with the Minutes of the Meeting.

Certification

A Graduation Ceremony is held on an annual basis which all graduates together with their families are invited to attend. During the ceremony, each graduate is presented with an IPASS Certificate for the programme they have studied together with a QQI Certificate which clearly states the programme of study and the level on the National Framework of Qualifications.

The date, time and venue for the Graduation Ceremony is communicated to all graduates in a clear and timely manner.

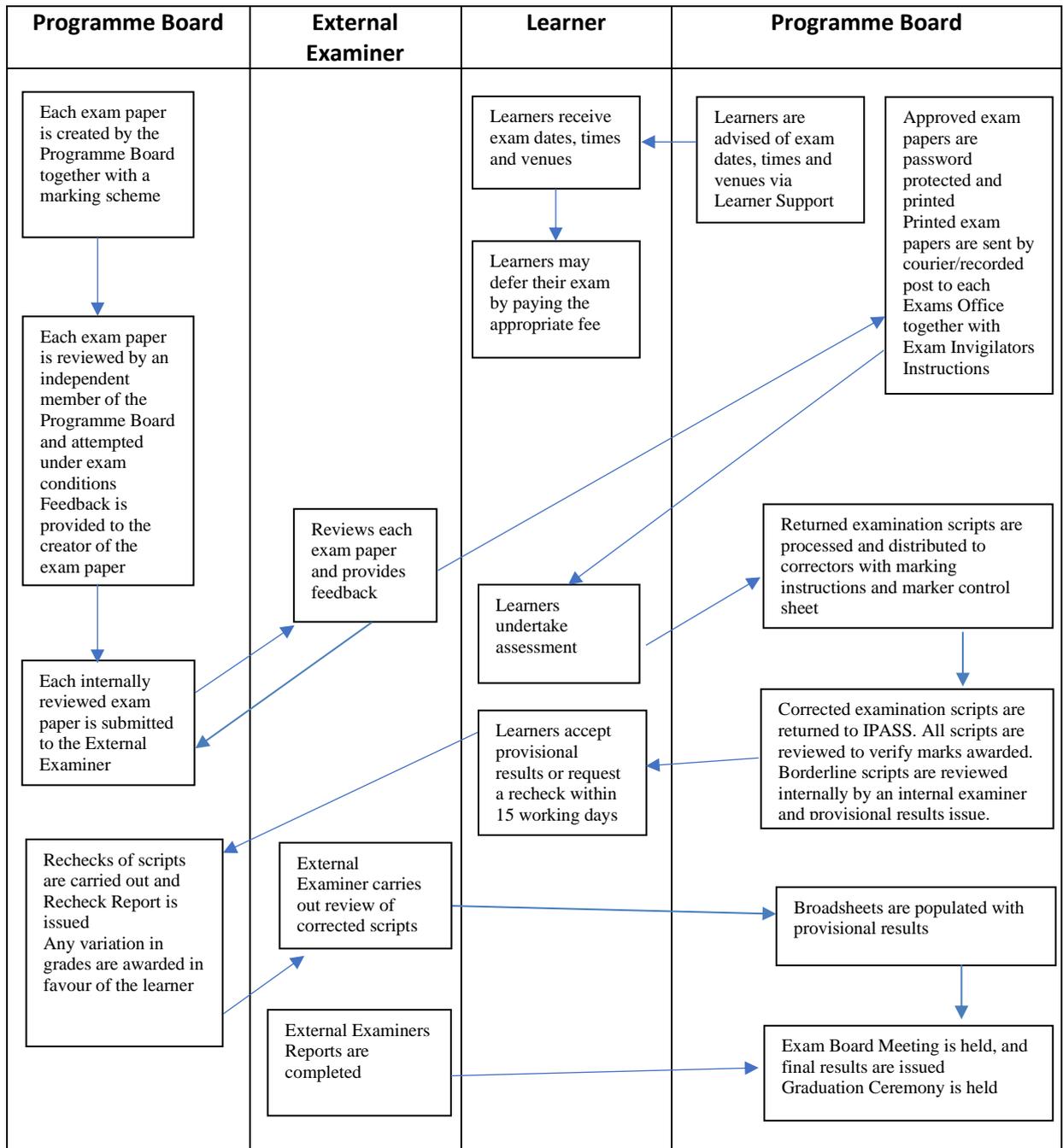
Analysis of Assessment Outcomes

An analysis of the Assessment outcomes is prepared following each exam sitting which is compared to previous exam sittings. This analysis highlights various factors such as the learner success rate, comparison of marks for particular topics between exam sittings, areas of the course where learners perform well and not so well, etc.

This analysis is shared with lecturers which they can take back to the classroom. This enhances the lecturer's teaching skills by identifying strengths and weaknesses in learner outcomes, leading to continued development of the lecturer and enhanced learner outcomes.

The analysis of the assessment outcomes is also taken into consideration by members of the Programme Board when preparing future exam papers to ensure that the level of the exam is set at the correct level while ensuring the quality of the programme and award.

IPASS Procedure for Assessment, Grading and Certification



8.6.5 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Assessment, Grading and Certification
Author	Academic Board
Version	V.2
Last Reviewed	Oct 2021

8.7 Policy for Learner Support

8.7.1 Introduction

8.7.1.1 Purpose

IPASS is committed to providing support to all learners to aid their academic journey and to afford them the best possible chance of completing their programme of study successfully. This policy outlines the principles for learner support within IPASS.

8.7.1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all learners on IPASS programmes and in particular to those programmes leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications.

The QA Manager and the Academic Board are responsible for approving this policy and for its implementation. All employees of IPASS are jointly responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

8.7.2 Legal and Regulatory

Quality Assurance Guidelines

This policy is designed with regard to QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines²² which specifies that IPASS must have appropriate support mechanisms and resources available to support learners during their studies.

Student Handbook

The Student Handbook sets out for learners the commitment of IPASS to them as learners and their obligations to IPASS for the duration of their studies.

8.7.3 Policy Statements

8.7.3.1 Principles for Learner Support

Accessibility and Openness

IPASS provides equivalent access to support facilities to all learners regardless of their programme choice, ability, location, mode of study or life circumstances. IPASS communicates using clear, up-to-date and accurate information and encourages learners to seek support and guidance. Where staff are made aware of a learner difficulty, support is offered in a confidential manner.

Impartiality and Equitable Treatment

Learner support is provided on the basis of need and no other criteria.

Caring

All IPASS staff are mindful of learner needs and provide guidance, support and information which contributes to a learner's successful completion of their study programme.

Confidentiality

All learner supports are provided and dealt in a confidential manner.

²² Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Section 3.2 of the "Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines" <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf#search=Core%20Strategy%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%2A>

Comprehensiveness

IPASS provides:

- Clear policies and procedures to assist learners in undertaking their course of study
- Academic support through its VLE and telephone helpline
- Support regarding conduct, level of engagement, etc.

8.7.4 Procedure for Governing the Adequacy of Resources available to Learners

This procedure outlines the steps that IPASS undertakes to ensure that adequate resources are available to all learners.

8.7.4.1 Responsibilities

IPASS Responsibilities

The Academic Board, Senior Management, Programme Board, Learner Support and Lecturers share responsibility for ensuring adequate resources are available to all learners.

8.7.4.2 Procedure

Provision of Information

Complete information regarding each programme is provided on the IPASS website www.ipass.ie. This information includes entry requirements, duration, venues, assessment, payment details, phased payment plans, etc.

Provision of Course Material

Comprehensive course material in printed format is provided with self-assessment questions and sample exam questions and answers. A monthly information IPASS Newsletter is emailed to all learners.

Access to Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

All learners have access to the VLE where they can view lectures, attempt quizzes, view information regarding exam sittings, Revision Days, etc. This support is available 24/7, on <https://online.ipass.ie/>

Student Handbook

All learners are provided with access to the Student Handbook which provides details of all supports available.

Telephone Helpline

The telephone helpline is available to all learners Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. Any queries, technical and non-technical, learners have, are addressed immediately. Where learners are not in a position to contact the office during working hours, they are encouraged to email their queries to ask@ipass.ie and their query will be dealt with as soon as possible.

Accommodating Diversity

Lecturers are apprised of any special needs a learner may have and venue arrangements to accommodate such needs. Assistance is given to learners with special needs as required to include scribes, separate exam room or additional time to complete the exam.

Accommodating Special Requests

Learners have the option to defer their exam sitting by notifying IPASS in writing in advance of the examination date. Once the deferral has been granted, the learner is transferred to the next exam sitting.

Provision of Adequate Facilities

IPASS ensures that each venue:

- Is suitable for use as a lecturing facility

- Accommodates learners with a disability i.e. wheelchair access
- Is adequately equipped with LCD projectors and white boards for use by the lecturer
- IT systems used for online learning are fit for purpose and easily accessible by learners.

Health & Safety

IPASS is aware of its obligations as an employer under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work 2005,²³ which include providing a safe working environment and ensuring the safety, health and welfare at work of all employees.

All lecturers are advised in relation to health and safety procedures and other instructions relevant to the venue they are assigned. All classroom-based learners are required to sign an attendance sheet at each class. This attendance sheet is retained by the lecturer for the duration of the class for health & safety reasons so that a head count can be done in case of a health & safety issue arising e.g. fire alarm, evacuation, etc. All employees are provided with a copy of our Health & Safety Statement.

Course Assessment Forms

Course Assessment Forms are circulated for completion twice per academic year. They are collected in each class by a volunteer learner and returned to IPASS in an addressed pre-paid envelope for collating and analysis. Course Assessment forms are made available during an online class for online learners to complete and return electronically. Where an issue regarding learner support arises, it is dealt with immediately.

Telephone Contact

Telephone contact is made with a random selection of learners throughout the programme. This support enables IPASS to elicit how learners are progressing with their chosen programme and if additional supports are required.

Feedback after Examinations

Following any exam sitting, all learners have the option of requesting for their exam script to be reviewed which must be accompanied by the appropriate fee. This process is carried out by a member of the Programme Board (i.e. a person other than the person who actually corrected the exam script) in order to ensure there is an independent review. The learner is provided with feedback of where marks were awarded and lost. Where the learner failed to achieve a pass mark, this feedback helps the learner to succeed when they attempt a re-sit exam at the next exam sitting.

IPASS Annual Payroll Conference and Exhibition

Learners are invited to attend this event, for a reduced fee, which brings together Ireland's payroll professionals where they will hear from a wide selection of speakers on relevant topics.

Progression

IPASS has collaborated with the following associations/institutes to foster good relations to benefit our learners in their progression from IPASS programmes to other programmes of education:

- Accounting Technicians Ireland www.accountingtechniciansireland.ie
- Irish Tax Institute www.taxinstitute.ie
- Association of Chartered Certified Accountants www.accaglobal.com/ie
- Certified Public Accountants www.cpaireland.ie
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development www.cipd.ie

IPASS also collaborates with the following international payroll associations:

²³ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/10/enacted/en/html>

- Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals in the UK (CIPP) <https://www.cipp.org.uk/>
- American Payroll Association (APA) <https://www.americanpayroll.org/>
- Canadian Payroll Association (CPA) <https://www.payroll.ca/>
- South African Payroll Association (SAPA) <http://www.sapayroll.co.za/>

Learners who are successful in achieving their Certificate in Payroll Techniques qualification are informed of their progression path to the IPASS Professional Diploma in Payroll Management qualification which is accredited by IPASS.

Job Opportunities

As the majority of employers seek “IPASS qualified” payroll professionals, IPASS invites employers to advertise payroll positions on a dedicated page on our website <https://www.ipass.ie/payroll-jobs.html>

Monitoring of Supports

All support services are monitored, and procedures are in place to ensure quality of service. Effectiveness is measured through quantifying telephone helpline enquiries and helpline use, website ‘hits’, log-ins on the VLE, membership association uptake, responses to surveys/course assessments and the rates of completion of certified courses. Such information is collated and presented at a QA meeting for analysis and discussion. Where appropriate, the Academic Board then make recommendations for any required improvements in quality.

Note:

Library facilities are not provided as all necessary materials are supplied to each learner.

IPASS Health & Safety Statement

Safety Statement:

This statement sets out the health & safety policy of IPASS and the means through which that policy is to be implemented. Our objective is to provide a safe and healthy place of work for all staff members and to meet all our duties and obligations to our clients. It is IPASS's intention to protect our employees from accident or ill health at work. IPASS will seek to ensure that all our equipment and systems do not constitute a risk to the Health & Safety of our employees, and we will consult with employees on risk improvements.

Our approach to Health & Safety as far as is reasonably practicable will be:

1. To Provide a Safe Place of Work.
2. To continue to identify and control hazards.
3. To prevent as far as is reasonably possible, any improper conduct or behaviour likely to put the Safety, Health & Welfare of employees at risk.
4. To consult with staff on all Health & Safety matters.
5. To provide protective clothing and equipment where necessary.
6. To provide a safe means of entering and leaving the building.
7. To provide a safe system of work practices.
8. To provide appropriate information and training to staff members on a continuous basis.
9. To make Health & Safety a key issue.

Employer Responsibilities:

The responsibility for the provision of a safe place of work rests with the Senior Management of IPASS. Specifically, these responsibilities are:

- To maintain a safe and healthy work environment for employees, in addition to conforming to all current statutory requirements.
- To provide the appropriate type and level of training to enable employees perform their work safely and efficiently.
- To make available to every employee appropriate equipment to ensure Health & Safety.
- To maintain a vigilant and continuing interest in all Health & Safety matters relevant to both IPASS and employees.

Employee Responsibilities:

As a valued employee of IPASS you have a responsibility to yourself and your fellow workers to carry out your work in a safe and considerate manner. Employees must:

1. Co-operate with the company in maintaining a safe workplace.
2. Report any potential hazards to management and not work in any hazardous conditions should they; in the employee's opinion exist.
3. Be aware of the nearest emergency exits and firefighting/first aid equipment.
4. Never interfere with or misuse anything provided by the company in the interests of Health & Safety.
5. Read the Employer Health & Safety statement and obey all mandatory signs.
6. Not partake in any form of horseplay or prank likely to lead to injury to you or others.

Smoking/Alcohol and Drugs:

It is not permissible to attend work under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs. The smoking of tobacco products is prohibited in the offices of IPASS. Smoking can take place outside the company building at least 3 metres distance away from door entrances and windows. This smoking policy forms part of the overall Health & Safety Policy and any breach will be dealt with under

IPASS's disciplinary procedure. Visitors, contractors and temporary members of staff are expected to abide by the terms of this policy.

Manual Handling:

Manual Handling is defined as the "transporting of a load by one or more employees and includes lifting, putting down, pushing, carrying or moving a load, which by reason of its characteristics or of unfavourable ergonomic conditions involves risks, particularly of back injury to employees". This is a priority issue because it is a major cause of accidents in the workplace. It is IPASS's policy to minimise the need for manual handling of loads and so therefore should be avoided as far as is reasonably practicable. Employees must check the weight of the load before attempting to lift it and if the load is too heavy get help.

When lifting, follow the following basic principles.

1. Relax the knees. Lowering movements should start at the knees not the head.
2. Get close to the object to be lifted. Get a good balance by keeping the feet apart, one foot will automatically be ahead of the other.
3. When in position, bend the knees and lift with the strong muscles in the legs.
4. Lift gradually, smoothly and without jerking, keeping the object close to the body and the back straight.

Training:

IPASS is committed to identifying the safety training needs on an ongoing basis. Staff will be involved in the identification of hazards in the office and advised of the particular hazards pertaining to their area. All staff will be trained in emergency procedures and where appropriate, staff will be trained in the use of special machinery and equipment. All staff will be trained in the correct techniques involved in safe manual handling.

Consultation:

IPASS is committed to consulting with its staff members regarding safety, health and welfare in the office. Staff who are involved in the identification of hazards and are trained in dealing with the hazards identified. The safety statement will be included in Induction Training and staff will be advised on how to deal with any problems that arise.

Reporting of Accidents:

Staff are required to report all accidents and near misses, whether resulting in injury or not, to management. Under the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work General Application Regulations 1993, employers must report certain occurrences to the Health & Safety Authority and ensure records are kept on site for a period of 10 years.

The following details are required:

- Date, Time and Place of the incident.
- Name, Address, Occupation and Age of the injured person.
- Circumstances, including cause and nature of the injury and the arrangements made for its treatment.

All reportable accidents will be investigated by a member of management and a written report prepared. Corrective action will be taken where necessary to avoid a reoccurrence. Accidents involving persons who are not members of staff but are visiting or working on the premises must also be reported.

Fire Procedures:

In the event of a fire and providing there is no danger to the persons concerned every effort should be made to extinguish or contain the fire pending the arrival of the fire brigade. The magnitude of

the outbreak must dictate whether attacking the fire should take priority over reporting and evacuation. All staff should be familiar with the exit routes and should also know the location and type of fire extinguishers in the office.

If you discover a fire you should:

- Activate the fire alarm.
- If there is a reasonable hope of extinguishing the blaze, attack the fire immediately.
- Do not under any circumstances, expose yourself to danger.
- Leave the building by the nearest fire exit and proceed to your designated assembly point.

If you hear the alarm you should:

- Switch off any equipment under your control and leave the building by the nearest fire exit.
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings.
- Once outside, do not enter the building until you are told it is safe to do so.

Guidelines for computer users.

As part of their duties some employees spend long periods of time using visual display screens. Any necessary adjustments will be made to avoid Repetitive Strain Injury, eyestrain and other ailments associated with work on screens and computers, which must be adjustable for height, tilt and brightness. No employee will be asked or expected to work any computer which is not in proper working condition, or, does not meet the highest specifications. Employees working continuously on-screen should alternate tasks so that at least 10 minutes during each 60 minutes of work is spent doing off-screen type of work. This work is to be undertaken away from the screen, but, does not constitute a break.

Employees who habitually use computers have the right to an eyesight test, the cost of which will be met or reimbursed by IPASS.

Hazard Analysis:

A hazard is anything at work that might cause harm e.g. Electricity, Hot Surfaces, Lifting Heavy Loads, Slippery Floors, and Poorly Lit Stairways etc. Staff should always turn on the light if they feel the stairway is unsafe. Staff must be aware of the potential hazards and risks involved and report specific hazards to management. A hazard analysis will be carried out once a year by Management. Particularly, attention will be paid to areas of high risk i.e. Floors, Stairs and Manual Handling. IPASS will remove hazards by engineering means where necessary.

First Aid:

A First Aid box is provided to ensure that first aid supplies are easily accessible when required in an emergency. The First Aid box is located on the ground floor in the kitchen area. It is to be checked weekly and shortages replaced. Employees have an obligation to ensure that First Aid Boxes, like any safety equipment, are not tampered with. Free access to First Aid Boxes, must be available at all times. Painkillers cannot be provided in the First Aid Boxes.

Hazard Identification/Risk Assessment/Control Measurement

Hazard	Risk	Risk Level	Affects	Control Measures	Responsibility
Electrical Wiring & Appliances	Electrocution; Fire; Trips; Falls;	Low-medium	Employees' & learners' trips and falls; wide range of possible injuries or even death	All leads to be properly secured and routed to prevent trips and falls; All leads and equipment maintained in good condition; Regular checks made on equipment and any defects reported to suitably qualified person for checking.	Health & Safety Officer in IPASS office and local lecturer in venues nationwide.
Manual handling	Injury to back, hand, foot; sprains and strains	Low	Staff in moving boxes of paper/course materials in and out of office	Encourage delivery by means of mechanical aids where possible; Reduce unit weights of consignments where manual handling is required.	Health & Safety Officer in IPASS office and lecturer in venues nationwide.
Fire	IPASS head office and venues nationwide	Low	Staff in IPASS office, lecturers and learners	IPASS head office protected by monitored fire alarm and fire extinguishers in office, maintained by qualified personnel on a regular basis. Fire drill held once per year. Appropriate fire protection measures required and confirmed in venues nationwide.	Health & Safety Officer in IPASS office and Venue Facilities Officer and lecturer in venues nationwide.

Housekeeping - keeping premises clean and tidy	Slips, trips and falls.	Low	Staff in IPASS office, lecturers and learners	Provide suitable storage for all equipment; Store cleaning substances correctly; Keep all stairs and walkways clear of obstructions. Regular disposal of all waste materials and cleaning service staff are employed on a weekly basis.	Health & Safety Officer in IPASS office and lecturer in venues nationwide.
Machinery use and cleaning	Damage to fingers or hands.	Medium	Staff in IPASS office	Printing machines are regularly maintained by service company. All staff are trained by service company engineers in the correct procedures for operating the equipment.	Health & Safety Officer in IPASS office
Machinery use and cleaning	Repetitive strain injury	Low	Staff in IPASS office	Use of well-designed equipment; protective screens and suitably modified accessories used where staff identify concerns.	Health & Safety Officer in IPASS office
Physical attack	In the case of robbery or break in	Low	Staff in IPASS office	Properly maintained lock system on external doors; staff instructed in correct safety procedures to prevent unauthorised access; Extreme care taken where one person is left alone in offices and this practise is discouraged except where absolutely necessary.	Health & Safety Officer in IPASS office

IPASS Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures

First aid and accidents	Minor cuts and accidents	Low	Staff in IPASS office	A fully stocked first aid kit is maintained in the IPASS office and the Health and Safety Officer has training in the correct use of simple procedures for dealing with minor accidents.	Health & Safety Officer in IPASS office
Reporting	All accidents or work-related ill health will be notified to senior management or the Health & Safety Officer and details will be recorded.		Staff in IPASS office		Health & Safety Officer in IPASS office

8.7.5 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Learner Support
Author	QA Manager
Version	V.2
Last Reviewed	Oct 2021

8.8 Policy for Learner Complaints

8.8.1 Introduction

8.8.1.1 Purpose

This policy recognises a person's right to raise a complaint where they feel they have been mistreated or disadvantaged as a result of IPASS's provision of programmes or services or the behaviour or actions of IPASS staff.

8.8.1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all learners undertaking of programmes with IPASS.

The Academic Board is responsible for approving this policy and for its implementation. All employees of IPASS are jointly responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

8.8.2 Legal and Regulatory

Quality Assurance Guidelines

This policy is designed with regard to QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines²⁴ requirement that IPASS has a policy and mechanism in place to facilitate complaints.

Office of the Ombudsman

IPASS is a private limited company and does not come under the auspices of the Ombudsman. However, IPASS has adopted the "Six Rules for Getting it Right – The Ombudsman's Guide to Good Public Administration"²⁵ as follows:

1. Get it right
2. Be learner oriented
3. Be open and accountable
4. Act fairly and proportionately
5. Deal with errors effectively
6. Seek continuous improvement

8.8.3 Policy Statements

8.8.3.1 Principles for Learner Complaints

Right to complain

Learners have a right to complain about services provided by IPASS where they do not meet a reasonable or published standard. All complaints must be in writing and will be treated in a fair manner. Complaints must not be of a vexatious nature or for the purpose of personal gain. The complaints procedure is based on the principle of natural justice. IPASS will deal with complaints promptly and in a comprehensive and professional manner.

Complainant

All learners are expected to comply with IPASS's rules and codes of conduct as outlined in the Student Handbook. A complainant should seek to resolve the matter of concern informally and directly with

²⁴ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Section 3.2 of the "Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines"
<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf#search=Core%20Strategy%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%2A>

²⁵ Office of the Ombudsman, The Ombudsman's Guide to Good Public Administration
<https://www.ombudsman.ie/guidance-for-service-providers/six-rules-for-getting-it/>

the person responsible for the service in question. Any allegations must be substantiated through evidence.

Subject of a complaint

The subject of a complaint i.e. person or lecturer, has the right to be notified of the nature of the allegations made and has the right to respond to assertions made.

Learner Support

Staff in Learner Support investigates and seeks to resolve any complaints relating to enrolments, venues, facilities, etc.

Programme Board

The Programme Board investigates and seeks to resolve any complaints relating to the course programme such as materials, lecturers, exams, etc.

Academic Board

The Academic Board adjudicates and seeks to resolve any complaints which have not been resolved by Learner Support or the Programme Board.

8.8.4 Procedure for Investigating Learner Complaints

This procedure outlines the steps required for a learner to raise a complaint with IPASS. IPASS encourages learners to raise issues of concern informally to enable resolution in an effective and timely manner.

8.8.4.1 Responsibilities

Learner Responsibilities

Each learner is responsible for the initiation of the process and to provide any evidence in support of their complaint.

Learner Support

Learner Support is responsible for investigating and resolving any complaints relating to enrolments, venues, facilities, etc.

Programme Board

The Programme Board is responsible for investigating and resolving any complaints relating to the course programme such as materials, lecturers, exams, etc.

Academic Board

The Academic Board has overall responsibility for the implementation of the complaints procedure and for adjudicating on any complaints which have not been resolved by Learner Support or the Programme Board.

8.8.4.2 Procedure

Informal complaints

A complainant should seek to resolve the matter of concern informally and directly with the person responsible for the service in question as follows:

- Initial informal complaints can be initiated orally or in writing.
- A member of Learner Support or the Programme Board, as applicable, attempts to mediate a satisfactory resolution through informal communication, orally or in writing, with the learner.
- Where applicable, this may involve communication with the subject of the complaint.

Outcome of making an informal complaint

Possible outcomes include:

- The complaint is resolved, the process concludes and there is no formal record retained.
- The complaint is not resolved, and the learner decides not to pursue the matter further or the learner makes a formal complaint.

Formal complaints

Having participated in the informal complaint process and finding a complaint remains unresolved, a learner is required to submit a formal complaint to IPASS. The complaint must be:

- In writing
- Factual, specific, comprehensively documented and any allegations must be substantiated through evidence.
- Include the learner's name, student number, information regarding dates, locations and details of any witnesses together with details of any previous efforts to resolve the matter.
- Made in a timely matter i.e. as soon as possible after the informal complaint process is deemed unsuccessful. Formal complaints will not be accepted if more than 6 weeks has elapsed since the matter of the complaint occurred.

Investigating a formal complaint

Formal complaints are referred to a Learner Support Manager or a Programme Board Manager. Where the formal complaint meets the relevant criteria as outlined above, the relevant manager:

- Acknowledges receipt of a formal complaint by email within 10 working days.
- Investigate the complaint in an independent and competent manner.
- Where applicable, advises the subject of the complaint and provides details regarding the nature of the allegations and invites a response.
- The investigator may invite the complainant and the subject of the complaint to discuss the complaint separately in order to establish the facts or to seek clarification.
- The investigator prepares a report of findings.
- Determine whether the complaint was valid or invalid.
- Where a complaint is deemed invalid, the process concludes and the learner is notified of the decision, the reason for the decision and the appeals mechanism available. Where a complaint is deemed valid the Manager determines a fair resolution.

Outcome of a valid formal complaint

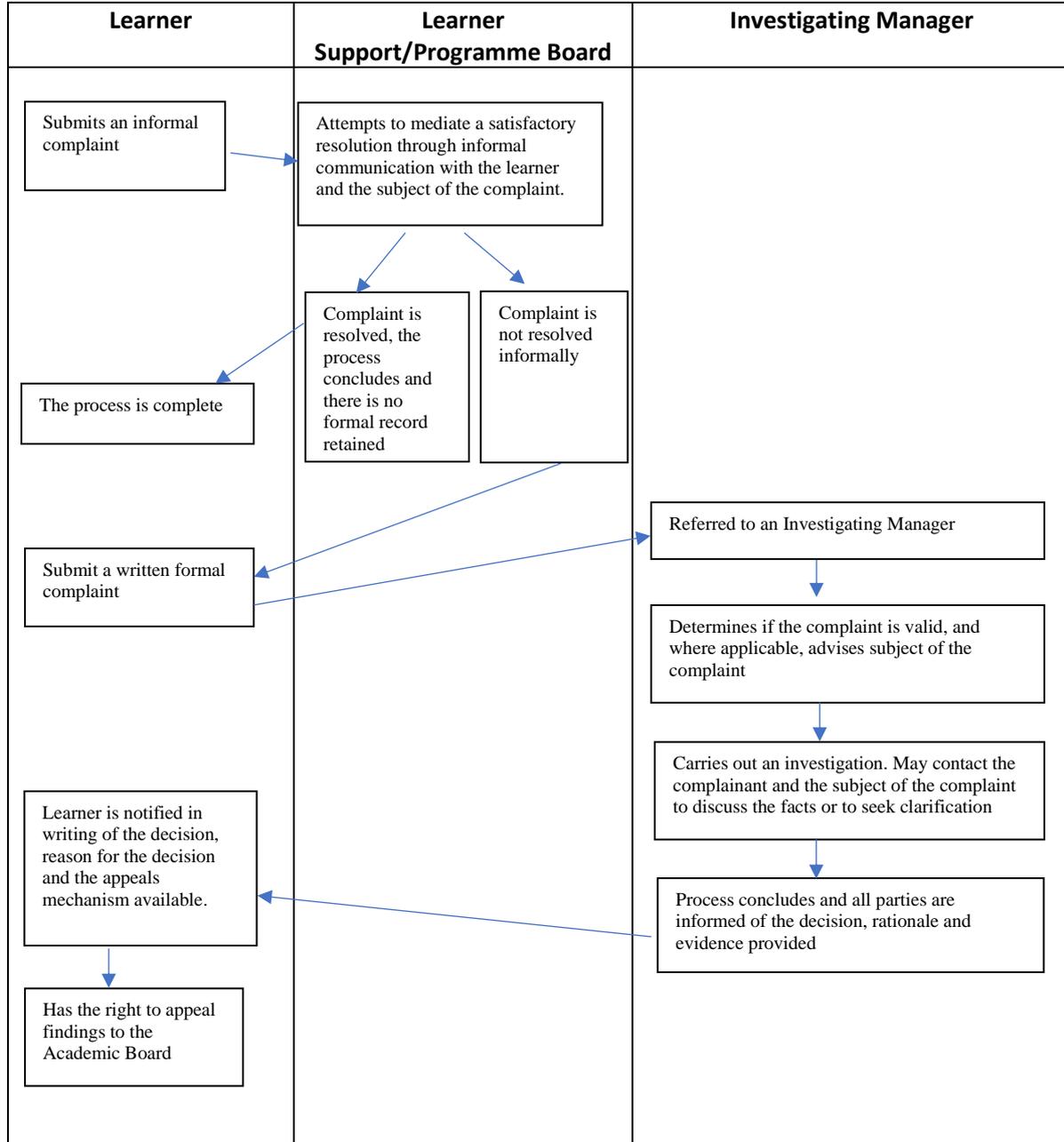
The investigating Manager will formally respond in writing to all relevant parties to advise them of:

- The findings of the investigation
- Decisions made
- Reasons for those decisions
- Any subsequent actions required by IPASS
- Appeal procedures

Right of appeal

Learners may appeal the outcome of the investigation within 10 working days of receipt of communication, using the relevant appeal procedure. Any appeal will be adjudicated on by the Academic Board as outlined in the Policy for Appeals.

IPASS Procedure for Investigating Learner Complaints



8.8.5 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Learner Complaints
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8.9 Policy for Appeals

8.9.1 Introduction

8.9.1.1 Purpose

This policy outlines the principles, circumstances, grounds and possible outcomes of an appeal by a learner against an academic decision made by IPASS.

8.9.1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all learners wishing to appeal decisions made by IPASS and to all IPASS staff in conducting the appeals process.

8.9.2 Legal and Regulatory

Quality Assurance Guidelines

This policy is designed with regard to QQI's Core Statutory QA Guidelines²⁶ requirement that IPASS has a policy and mechanism in place to facilitate learner appeals.

Assessment and Standards

IPASS is required by Section 4.10 of the "Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Assessment and Standards 2013" to have an appeals process relating to assessment decisions.²⁷

8.9.3 Policy Statements

8.9.3.1 Principles for Appeals

Transparency

The appeal process must be transparent, and the appellant must be aware of the appeal process.

Fairness

The appeal process ensures fairness to the appellant and all decisions made will be made in fair manner.

Care

All appeals are conducted with care.

Independence and Competence

While a review of a decision made can be considered by the original decision-maker, no person considering an appeal to the Academic Board can have had any previous involvement in the appeal being considered. Where a conflict of interest is apparent, it must be declared. The Academic Board will have the relevant competence and independence to contribute to a decision being made.

Grounds and Evidence

An appeal will only be considered if there are reasonable grounds for the appeal supported by evidence provided by the appellant.

²⁶ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Section 3.2 of the "Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines"
<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf#search=Core%20Strategy%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%2A>

²⁷ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013
https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Assessment_and_Standards%20Revised%202013.pdf#search=assessments%20and%20standards%2A

Conclusion

Once the appeals process is carried out in line with this policy and a decision has been made, there is no further right of appeal.

8.9.3.2 Policy for Appeals

Right of Appeal

All learners have the right to appeal a decision made by Learner Support, the Programme Board or the Exam Board regarding examination results or any other decision made by IPASS.

Grounds for Appeal

Reasonable grounds for an appeal are:

- Evidence that IPASS did not follow the Policy for Learner Complaints in the making of a decision.
- Information not previously made available to IPASS.

Exclusions

An appeal will be excluded from the appeal process where there are no reasonable grounds for an appeal such as:

- Appellant disagrees with a decision made by IPASS
- Appellant disagrees or is not satisfied with examination results and has not requested a re-check
- Complaints that should be dealt with under the “Policy for Learner Complaints”
- Appealing a decision that has been previously appealed.

Timeline

An appeal must be made within 10 working days of a decision issuing.

Appeal Process

A preliminary review of an appeal case will include:

- Reviewing the grounds for an appeal
- A re-check of the arithmetical calculation of grades awarded, where the appeal relates to an examination result
- A review of any evidence provided by the appellant
- A review of the factual accuracy of the appellant’s appeal

Academic Board

At least two members of the Academic Board will investigate an appeal. Each member will have the relevant competence and independence to contribute to a decision being made. A member who has previous involvement in the case or with the learner, cannot investigate an appeal.

Possible outcomes

The Academic Board may:

- Reject the appeal and the original decision stands, or
- Uphold the appeal based on reasonable grounds for an appeal.

Where the appeal is upheld, the decision of the Academic Board will be issued with a request to place the learner in a position where they would have been if the issue had not arisen. All relevant parties will be notified of the decision.

8.9.4 Procedure for Appealing a Decision

This procedure outlines the steps required for a learner to appeal a decision made by IPASS. All learners have the right to appeal a decision made by the Exam Board regarding examination results or any other decision made by IPASS.

8.9.4.1 Responsibilities

Learner Responsibilities

Each learner is responsible for the initiation of the appeal process within a specified timeframe and to provide any evidence and/or information of mitigating circumstances which were not previously known to IPASS in support of their appeal, together with an explanation why such mitigating circumstances could not have been made known prior to the Exam Board Meeting.

Academic Board

The Academic Board is required to investigate an appeal and make a decision to reject or uphold an appeal in a timely, transparent and fair manner. The decision will be communicated by the Academic Board to the appellant in a timely and clear manner.

8.9.4.2 Procedure

Submission of an Appeal

An appellant submits an appeal to the Academic Board using the appropriate “*Appeal Form*” together with any supporting evidence within the specified period of 10 working days of a decision issuing.

Review of an Appeal

The Academic Board will carry out a preliminary review of an appeal case to ensure that there are reasonable grounds for an appeal and that the “*Appeal Form*” is complete.

Appeal Process

At least two members of the Academic Board will investigate an appeal. Each member will have the relevant competence and independence to contribute to a decision being made. A member who has previous involvement in the case or with the learner, cannot investigate an appeal. The process will include:

- Reviewing the “*Appeal Form*” and the grounds for an appeal
- A re-check of the arithmetical calculation of grades awarded, where the appeal relates to an examination result
- A review of any evidence provided by the appellant
- A review of the factual accuracy of the appellant’s appeal

Possible Outcomes

The Academic Board may:

- Reject the appeal and the original decision stands, or
- Uphold the appeal based on reasonable grounds for an appeal.

Decision

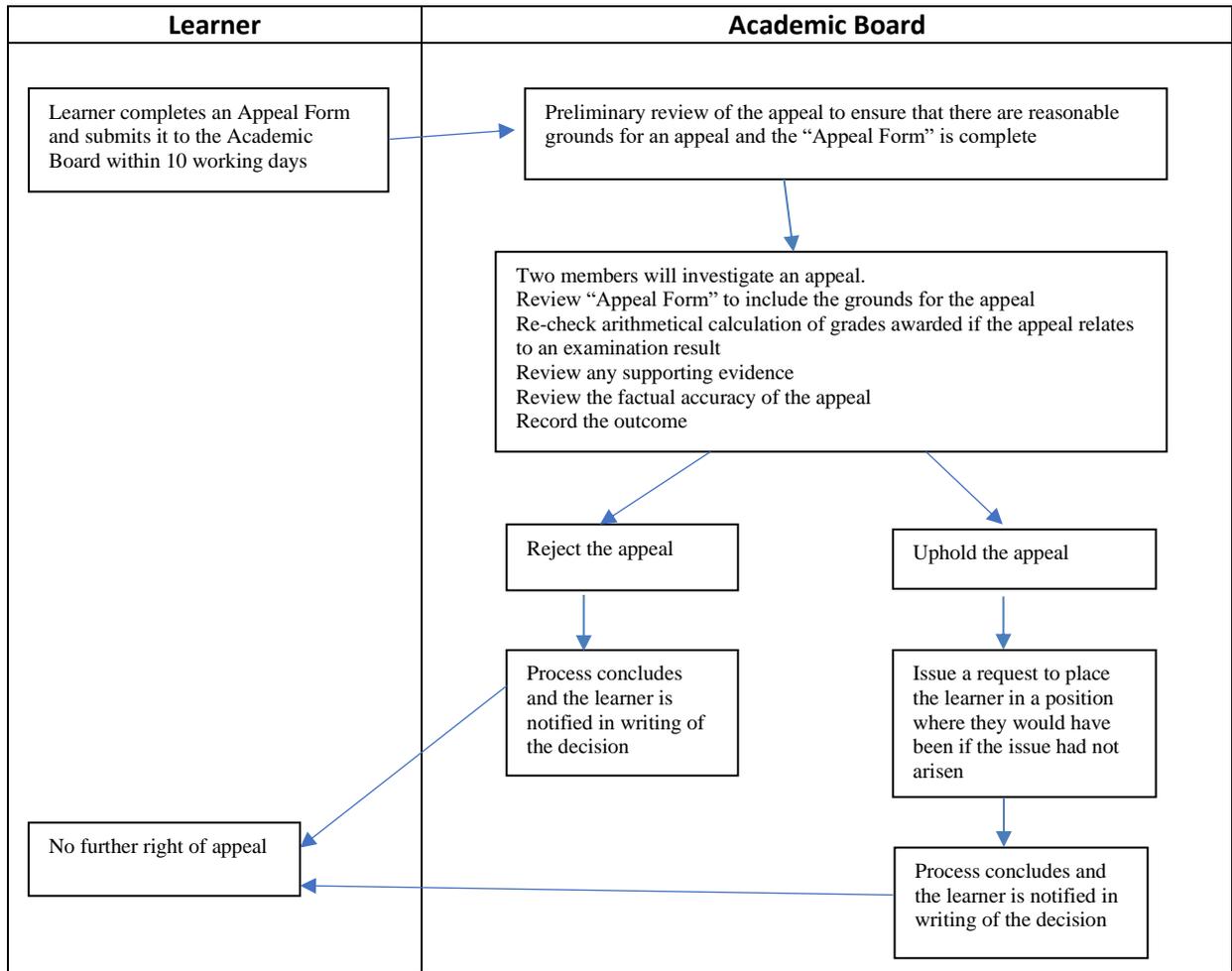
The decision of the Academic Board will be unanimous and a formal record of the decision to include the rationale and evidence used to support the decision will be maintained.

Where the appeal is rejected, the decision will be communicated in writing to the appellant in a clear and timely manner outlining the grounds for the decision. Where the appeal is upheld, the decision will be communicated in writing to the appellant in a clear and timely manner outlining the grounds for upholding the appeal and the Academic Board will issue a request to place the learner in a position where they would have been if the issue had not arisen.

Conclusion

Once the appeal process is carried out in line with the “*Policy for Appeals*” and a decision has been made, there is no further right of appeal and the process concludes.

IPASS Procedure for Appealing a Decision



Appeal Form

Please read this form carefully, then complete it and email it to ask@ipass.ie for the attention of the Academic Board.

1. Student Details

Name	
Student Number	
Course Programme	

2. Declaration

I have read and understood the Policy and associated Procedure for Appeals.	Tick Box <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I must have reasonable grounds for an appeal.	Tick Box <input type="checkbox"/>
I have included supporting evidence in support of my application.	Tick Box <input type="checkbox"/>
I have completed this form to the best of my knowledge and included all relevant information.	Tick Box <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that it is my responsibility to demonstrate that I have reasonable grounds for an appeal.	Tick Box <input type="checkbox"/>
I confirm that the information provided is accurate.	Tick Box <input type="checkbox"/>
Date	
Signature	

3. Decision to be appealed

Specify the decision you wish to appeal below.

4. Grounds for appeal

Evidence that IPASS did not follow an established procedure in the making of a decision.	Tick Box <input type="checkbox"/>
Information not previously made available to IPASS.	Tick Box <input type="checkbox"/>

Use this space to describe why your chosen grounds of this appeal are appropriate.

5. Evidence

Provide a summary of the evidence you have in support of your appeal and attach supporting documentation to this form.

8.9.5 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Appeals
Author	QA Manager
Version	V.1
Last Reviewed	June 2020

8.10 Policy for Public Information and Communication

8.10.1 Introduction

8.10.1.1 Purpose

This policy outlines the principles and responsibilities of IPASS in relation to the information published regarding the activities of IPASS, education and training programmes and related services, together with Quality Assurance policies and procedures.

8.10.1.2 Scope

The QA Manager is responsible for approving this policy and for its implementation. All employees of IPASS are jointly responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

8.10.1.3 Definitions

GDPR

IPASS adopts the definitions outlined in Article 4 of the GDPR as appropriate.

8.10.2 Legal and Regulatory

QA Guidelines

This policy is designed with regard to the 2016 QQI published “*Core Strategy Quality Assurance Guidelines*”²⁸ which specifies requirements for IPASS to regulate the information put into the public domain.

Data Protection

This policy is also intended to ensure IPASS’s compliance with Irish data protection legislation.

GDPR

This policy relates to the use of data that falls under the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.²⁹

8.10.3 Policy Statements

IPASS Information

IPASS has responsibility to make the following information publicly available:

- Legal name of IPASS and the company
- Legal and accreditation status with all professional, regulatory and statutory bodies
- Outcomes of external quality assurance and accreditation engagements
- Information about the use of personal data and a person’s right to privacy
- Contact details for IPASS

Complete information regarding IPASS is available on the IPASS website www.ipass.ie

Programme Information

Information regarding programmes offered by IPASS are available on www.ipass.ie to include:

²⁸ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Core Strategy Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)

<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf#search=Core%20Strategy%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%2A>

²⁹ EU General Data Protection Regulation, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal->

<content/EN/TXT/?qid=1528874672298&uri=CELEX%3A32016R0679> and Irish Statute Book

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/7/enacted/en/html?q=data+protection>

- What qualification will be obtained
- Who should enrol
- Award title
- Awarding body
- Level of NFQ award
- Any professional recognition or approval
- Details of the arrangements for the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL)
- Privacy Policy
- Student Handbook
- Benefits to Learners
- Benefits to Employers

Where a programme does not lead to an award, the same is available.

Comprehensive information regarding each programme is available on our website www.ipass.ie to include:

- Entry requirements
- Duration
- Study options – classroom or online
- Venues
- Syllabus
- Course material provided
- Method of assessment
- Fees and payment details to include an easy payment plan.
- Enrolment form
- Academic calendar
- Examination venues
- Certificate awarded on completion

All published information is:

- In plain English
- Consistent with the IPASS brand
- In line with the requirements of any accrediting bodies where it relates to an accredited programme
- Accurate and complete
- Up to date

IPASS produces publishable marketing material in a variety of media to address the needs of prospective learners. Photographs and other personal identifiable information are not used unless permission has been granted. All use of social media is accurate, respectful and aligned with the mission of IPASS.

Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures

A copy of the Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures is published on the IPASS website www.ipass.ie

Privacy Policy

Our Privacy Policy is available on our website www.ipass.ie

8.10.4 Procedures for Publishing Public Information

All text relating programme information is prepared by Learner Support and reviewed by the Programme Board prior to publication. Once approved, Learner Support is responsible for updating the IPASS website with the relevant information. The information on the website is then reviewed and corrected appropriate.

8.10.5 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Public Information and Communication
Author	QA Manager
Version	V.1
Last Reviewed	June 2020

8.11 Policy for Information, Privacy and Data Management

8.11.1 Introduction

8.11.1.1 Purpose

This policy outlines how information and data is used by IPASS. Reliable data is crucial for informed decision-making and can highlight areas that are functioning well and areas which require attention.

8.11.1.2 Scope

The QA Manager and Senior Management are responsible for approving this policy and for its implementation.

8.11.2 Legal and Regulatory

Quality Assurance Guidelines

This policy is designed with regard to QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines³⁰ requirement that IPASS has a policy for Information and Data Management.

This policy relates to the use of data that falls under the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.³¹

8.11.3 Policy Statements

Reliable data is crucial for informed decision-making by IPASS and can highlight areas that are functioning well and areas which require attention. Information on Learners gathered by IPASS includes personal details, contact information, examination results, course feedback, etc.

Our Student handbook informs students of the data collected by IPASS, the reasons why this data is collected, how their data is used, what data is shared and who that data is shared with.

8.11.3 Use of Information and Data

Management Information Systems

Cyclical data reports are prepared by Learner Support from information held on our student database and other sources for the Programme Board. Our student database, which is held on a secure server and backed up off site each night, is IPASS's primary method of documenting a student's progress through the programme from enrolment to completion. The student database provides a secure environment for current and historical student records. Reports can be generated from the database for enrolments per venue, assessment outcomes, completion and attrition rates, etc. These records comprise a valuable source of knowledge as to how and why decisions are taken by the Programme Board.

This is supported by information reported from our Management Information Systems and from other sources such as Learner feedback and Venue Checklists. This information enables effective decision making and contributes to future planning and the viability of each programme. Current and past information used by IPASS includes:

³⁰ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Section 3.2 of the "Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines" <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf#search=Core%20Strategy%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%2A>

³¹ EU General Data Protection Regulation, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1528874672298&uri=CELEX%3A32016R0679> and Irish Statute Book <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/7/enacted/en/html?q=data+protection>

- Enrolment numbers
- Completion rates
- Attrition rates
- Progression rates
- Grades
- Learner numbers per programme and venue
- Feedback from lecturers
- Feedback from learners
- Feedback from the External Examiner

This programme information is collected and used to enable the making of informed decision making regarding the continuance of the programme in a particular venue or changes that are warranted.

Learner Information Systems

Our VLE is used by IPASS to host course content and is used as a notice board where student information is posted for learners and staff to access easily. It is maintained by our IT Manager.

Data Protection

IPASS collects and processes personal information in order to carry out its statutory, academic, and administrative functions. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act (2018) apply to the processing of personal data and IPASS is committed to complying with its relevant legal obligations.

8.11.4 Data Processing Principles

IPASS adheres to the core principles relating to the processing of personal data under GDPR as follows.

Personal data shall be

- Processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner (lawfulness, fairness and transparency);
- Used for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes (purpose limitation);
- Adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed (data minimisation);
- Accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date. Every reasonable step must be taken to ensure that personal data that is inaccurate, having regard to the purposes for which it is processed, is erased or rectified without delay (accuracy);
- Kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed (storage limitation)
- Processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures (integrity and confidentiality).

There is an overall principle of accountability. Controllers are responsible for, and must be able to demonstrate, compliance with the principles as outlined above (accountability).

IPASS endeavours to ensure that data is kept accurate, relevant and not excessive. To ensure that your personal data is accurate, complete and up to date, please alert IPASS of any changes to your details. Alternatively, we may contact you from time to time. If you have any concerns about the accuracy of your data, please contact IPASS.

8.11.4.1 Definitions

Data Controller

A Data Controller is the person or organisation who decides the purposes for which, and the means by which, personal data is processed. The purpose of processing data involves 'why' the personal data is being processed and the 'means' of the processing involves 'how' the data is processed.

Data Processor

A person or organisation that processes personal data on the behalf of a data controller.

Data subject

A Data subject is the individual the personal data relates to.

Personal Data

Personal data relates to a specific individual who may be identifiable from that data.

Disclosure

Data will only be disclosed to the data subject or to persons authorised to process the data in accordance with the principles for collection and processing of data.

Storage

IPASS stores data and records in a format that is suitable for the processing of the data. IPASS ensures that data and records are stored in a safe and secure manner. Paper documents are stored in locked filing cabinets with IPASS operating a clean desk policy in respect of such documents. Learner data is entered on our student database which is held on a secure server. Credit or Debit card details are used by IPASS to process payments but are not held or stored by IPASS.

Retention

Data and records are retained by IPASS in accordance with our Data Retention Schedule, which specifies the duration and means of disposal for particular types of data.

Disposal

Where retention periods have expired, records are destroyed promptly and securely.

8.11.4.2 Lawfulness of Processing

The processing of personal data by IPASS will be based on one of the following legal grounds:

1. The consent of the individual concerned.
2. A contractual obligation between IPASS and the individual.
3. To satisfy a legal obligation.
4. To protect the vital interests of the individual.
5. To carry out a task that is in the public interest.
6. For IPASS's legitimate interests, but only after having checked that the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual whose data we are processing are not seriously impacted. If the person's rights override the company's interests, then IPASS cannot process the data.

8.11.4.3 Personal Data processed by IPASS

Personal data processed by IPASS includes:

- Names, addresses, email addresses and phone numbers for learners and those attending training courses, seminars and conferences
- Student ID numbers and Membership numbers

- Compliance data for QQI and Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL). This information is processed by IPASS to comply with our statutory obligations.
- Videos/photographs related to assessment and/or award ceremonies
- Credit Card/Debit Card information is used for processing payments only and is not stored by IPASS
- IP Addresses

8.11.4.4 How Personal Data is Collected by IPASS

IPASS collects personal data directly from you when you:

- Deal with IPASS by phone, letter, email or visit our website
- Supply a CV or other form of application
- Subscribe to email updates
- Submit any information regarding an application or enquiry
- Complete course assessment forms

On completion of the programme enrolment form, all learners are required to indicate that they agree to IPASS processing the personal data contained in the form or other data which IPASS may obtain from the individual or other people whilst the individual is a student.

Your personal data will only be collected by IPASS to provide you with current or future programmes, training or membership services and to comply with our statutory obligations.

Website Cookies

In order for IPASS to collect and retain data demographics which we use to inform us of user behaviour, some parts of our website use cookies to record single user sessions. However, you the user have some choice regarding cookies and their usage. By adjusting your browser settings, you can accept, reject a cookie or be notified when a cookie is present on a website.

Cookies are small files which are kept on a user's computer. They are created to contain a small volume of data specific to a website or a client, and they can be accessed either by the client's computer or by the web server. This allows the server to provide a page tailored to the user.

The information that we automatically log is as follows:

- your IP address, which is used to gather a wide range demographic data,
- your browsers user agent and referring address that we use to assist in identifying problems within our server, to identify users and finally to administer our site.

We will not observe, alter, or release any personal information about you or your Internet usage without your permission unless we have a belief that we have good reason to do so. When an action would be necessary:

- A. To follow legal requirements or to conform to legal process;
- B. Acting to protect the interests of our users.
- C. To apply the terms of use.
- D. When protecting the rights and property of our company.

In these instances, data could be forwarded to a suitable authority i.e. companies/organisations or individuals, if required. In the case of harassment or abuse, data may be used to locate the person responsible and data forwarded to suitable authorities.

Security

We at IPASS endeavour to protect our user's personal information as best as we possibly can. While data transmission over the internet is never 100% protected, security measures are in place to guard against the loss and abuse of any of the information our users submit to our website or any information that we store electronically and physically.

8.11.4.5 How IPASS uses your Personal Data

IPASS may use and disclose your personal data for the following reasons:

- To enrol you as a learner
- To process your assessments for certification by QQI
- To market our training services to you
- To improve our customer service
- To contact you on occasion with information on progression opportunities

8.11.4.6 Our Data Partners

We use the following data partners with regard to the processing of your personal data:

- Google Analytics – to analyse and report on how users navigate to our website
- Microsoft Office 365 – we use Office 365 for email and document storage
- Sendmode.com – to send text messages to you in relation to classes, examinations etc.
- Constantcontact.com – to send newsletters, information on training courses, examinations or other information related to your course. We also use Constantcontact.com on occasion as a booking system and for surveys.
- PayPal.com – is used to process payments due to IPASS
- Stripe.com – is used to process payments due to IPASS
- Elavon.com – is used to process payments due to IPASS
- Sentenial.com – is used to process direct debits made by students
- Moodle.com – is used as our preferred platform for online learning
- Ennovation.com – hosting provider for Moodle
- Arachas.ie – for the purposes of Protection of Enrolled Learners, IPASS shares your name, Student ID, email address and telephone number with O'Driscoll O'Neill Insurance in compliance with Section 65(4)(a) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- QQI.ie - For learners who complete a programme validated by QQI, QQI requires a name, Personal Public Service Number (PPSN), date of birth and relevant results of each learner. QQI receives the data and retains it in the pursuit of its statutory functions detailed in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. Once Certificates have been issued by QQI, the learner's date of birth and PPSN are deleted from our database.
- MJFlood.com – manages our IT infrastructure and includes backup of files and security
- Moderntribe.com – is used an add-on used on the IPASS website to process bookings in relation to revision days, examinations etc.
- Twohotshoes.com – is used to make modifications/updates on our website
- An Post – online registration for parcel post

8.11.4.6 Individual's Rights

A learner or any other individual has a right to obtain a copy of any personal data held by IPASS. This is known as a subject access request. IPASS will respond to a subject access request within 1 month of the request being received. This period may be extended by a further 2 months depending on the complexity and number of requests, however you will be informed of the extension within 1 month

and the reason for the delay. IPASS does not charge individuals for making a subject access request, except where the request is unfounded or excessive, especially if the requests are repetitive, in which case IPASS can charge a reasonable fee for administration costs in providing the information or carrying out the request or IPASS can refuse to act on the request.

In addition to a right of access to personal data held by IPASS, you also have the right to:

- Be made aware of the purpose of the processing
- Be made aware of the categories of personal data being processed
- Be made aware of the recipients to whom the personal data has been or will be disclosed
- Be made aware of the envisaged period for which the personal data will be stored -
- Rectification (i.e. to have any inaccurate data corrected)
- Erasure (i.e. to be forgotten) (e.g. where the data is no longer necessary in relation to the purpose for which it was collected, or the individual has withdrawn his consent where consent was used as the legal basis for the processing of the personal data, etc.)
- Restriction of processing where the data is inaccurate, or the processing is unlawful
- Be made aware of the source of the data where it was not collected from the individual
- Data portability (i.e. the right to receive personal data in a structured commonly used machine-readable format and the right to have it transmitted to another Controller) where the processing was based on the consent of the individual or the processing is carried out by automated means.

For further information on your data protection rights visit the website of the Irish Data Protection Commission: <http://www.dataprotection.ie>

To request removal of your data from our database:

Under data protection laws, you have the right to be forgotten. IPASS recognises and respects this right. You have the right to contact us at any time to request removal at any time. For any of the above matters or other queries related to your data, please contact IPASS.

8.11.5 Procedure for Managing Personal Data Breaches

Under Data Protection legislation, IPASS is obliged to keep personal data safe and secure and to respond promptly and appropriately in the event of a personal data breach. This procedure outlines the steps to be followed should there be a personal data security breach.

Initial Steps

Any learner who suspects a breach of their personal data has occurred should contact IPASS with details of the alleged breach.

All employees are responsible for reporting any suspected data breach senior management immediately.

Investigation

Senior Management will conduct an initial assessment to identify the:

- Nature of the personal data involved in the breach i.e. sensitive data
- Cause of the breach
- Extent of the breach i.e. numbers of staff/learners involved
- Potential damage to the data subjects
- Steps that may be taken to contain the breach

Where no breach is confirmed, the process concludes, and Senior Management notifies the reporter of the breach and the relevant staff members that no breach occurred.

Containment and Recovery

Where a breach is confirmed, Senior Management will:

- Establish a list of IPASS staff who need to be made aware of the breach and inform them of their expected role in containing the breach
- Establish and implement measures to repair the damage caused by the breach in conjunction with relevant staff members
- Inform any outside agencies, if applicable
- Undertake a risk assessment to consider the potential adverse consequences for individuals, to include how likely such adverse consequences are to materialise and how serious or substantial they are likely to be
- Assess the risks for IPASS to include strategic, operational, legal, financial and reputational risks, as appropriate.

Notification to the Data Subject

Senior Management will communicate the details of the data breach to the data subject to include the:

- Name and contact details of Senior Management where more information can be obtained
- Likely consequences of the personal data breach
- Measures taken or proposed to be taken by IPASS to address the personal data breach, including, where appropriate, measures to mitigate its possible adverse effects.

Notification to the Data Protection Commission

IPASS will notify the Data Protection Commission no later than 72 hours after the breach has become apparent. The notification shall include the:

- Nature of the personal data breach
- Categories and number of data subjects concerned
- Categories and number of personal data records concerned
- Name and contact details Senior Management where more information can be obtained
- Likely consequences of the personal data breach
- Measures taken or proposed to be taken by IPASS to address the personal data breach including measures to mitigate its possible adverse effects.

Evaluation and Response

IPASS:

- Retains all records of the data breach
- Conducts a review of the data breach to ensure the steps taken were appropriate and effective, and to identify any areas for improvement.

Data Retention Schedule

This schedule outlines in detail the retention schedule for data processed and held by IPASS and specifies their ultimate disposal.

Retention Schedule

Documents/Records	Retention Requirement	Final Disposal – Hard Copy	Final Disposal – Soft Copy
1. Board of Directors			
Minutes of Meetings	Permanent	Archive	Archive
Strategic Plans	Permanent	Archive	Archive
2. Learner Support			
QA Meetings	Permanent	Archive	Archive
New Programme Approvals	Duration of Programme plus 5 years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Programmatic Review/Validation Panel Reports	Permanent	Archive	Archive
Validation/Review Submission Documents	Permanent	Archive	Archive
QQI Validation Certificates	Permanent	Archive	Archive
Learner Attendance Records	5 academic years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Approved Minutes of Meetings	Permanent	Archive	Archive
Marketing Material	Permanent	Archive	Archive
Student Handbook	Permanent	Archive	Archive
Graduation Records	Permanent	Archive	Archive
Application/Enrolment Forms (successful applicants)	Duration of studies plus 6 months	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Application/Enrolment Forms (unsuccessful applicants)	Not Retained	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Learner record: name, address, and email address	Permanent	Archive	Archive
Learner PPSN, date of birth and Nationality	Duration of studies plus 6 months	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Forms of evidence of change of name i.e. marriage cert, etc.	Duration of studies plus 1 year	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Exam Lists	Permanent	Archive	Archive
Past Examination Papers	Permanent	Archive	Archive
Examination Scripts	1 year following the final appeal date	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Learner Examination Results	Permanent	Archive	Archive
Examination Broadsheets	Permanent	Archive	Archive

Examination Appeal Documentation	2 years after the learner ceases to be a learner of IPASS	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
External Examiner Reports	Permanent	Archive	Archive
Minutes of Exam Board Meetings	Permanent	Archive	Archive
General learner correspondence	2 years after the learner ceases to be a learner of IPASS	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
3. Senior Management			
Tender Documentation	7 years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Insurance Documentation	7 Years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Signed financial statements and audit reports	7 Years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Legal documents and correspondence	7 Years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Sales and Purchases invoices to include credit notes	7 Years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Expense Claim Forms	7 Years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Payroll Records Copy Payslips Schedule of Payments RPNs Payroll Submissions	7 Years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Bank Statements & Records	7 Years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Copies of VAT Returns	7 Years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Personnel Records IPASS Interview Forms Contract of Employment Staff Handbook Employment History Qualifications Training Salary increments Appointment and termination details Medical Certificates Leave of absence Staff Appraisal Forms	Duration of employment plus 7 years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Copy of Job Advertisements	1 year after completion of recruitment process	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
IPASS Interview Forms and CVs for unsuccessful applicants	1 year after completion of recruitment process	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete

Staff list, addresses, contact details and next-of-kin	Duration of employment plus 7 years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
General correspondence	3 Years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Parental leave records	8 years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Carer's leave records	8 years	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete
Pension records – Retirement or Resignation	6 years after pension commences, fund is transferred or contributions are refunded	Destroy by confidential shredding	Delete

8.11.6 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Information, Privacy and Data Management
Author	QA Manager
Version	V.2
Last Reviewed	Oct 2021

8.12 Policy for Programme Monitoring and Review

8.12.1 Introduction

8.12.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that IPASS manages and makes appropriate decisions/changes to ensure programmes are:

- Viable
- Fit for purpose
- Meet the conditions of validation
- Up to an acceptable academic standard
- Meet the QQI award standard
- Provide a high quality teaching and learning experience for learners in a blended learning environment

The purposes of this policy also extend to the provision of information to inform decision-making at Academic Board and Board of Director level.

8.12.1.2 Scope

The QA Manager is responsible for approving this policy and for its implementation. The Academic Board has responsibility for the monitoring of programmes. All employees of IPASS are jointly responsible for the effective implementation of this policy. The policy applies for the duration of the programme from development and approval and is subject to regular reviews.

8.12.2 Legal and Regulatory

Quality Assurance Guidelines

This policy is designed with regard QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines³² and the Topic Specific Guidelines for Blended Learning Programmes³³ which specifies that IPASS must implement policies and procedures for the monitoring of programmes. This ensures that a programme continues to meet all of the criteria for approval of the programme which is accredited by QQI.

8.12.3 Policy Statements

8.12.3.1 Principles for Monitoring Programmes

Ongoing Improvement

The Programme Board review the course materials regularly and updates the course material twice yearly to reflect legislative changes introduced by the Revenue Commissioners, Department of Social Protection, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Workplace Relations Commission. This ensures that learners have access to the most up to date information available. This process considers feedback from learners, stakeholders, staff, lecturers, External Examiner etc.

³² Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Section 3.2 of the "Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines"
<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf#search=Core%20Strategy%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%2A>

³³ Topic Specific Guidelines for Blended Learning Programmes
<https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Pages/Statutory%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20Blended%20Learning%20Programmes.aspx>

On-going Monitoring

The programme is monitored on a continuous basis to ensure that it meets the regulatory criteria for approval by QQI as a Higher Education Level 6 Special Purpose Award. This process considers feedback from learners, stakeholders, staff, lecturers, External Examiner, marketing and learner enrolment information, assessment outcomes, etc. to include information collated on appeals, complaints, External Examiner reports and the analysis of same. On-going monitoring assists the Programme Board in identifying change and improvements, where deemed necessary.

The Programme Board continually monitor the VLE and make changes and enhancements as identified internally or based on feedback from learners and lecturers.

A report is prepared by the Programme Board and presented to the Academic Board for consideration. The response from the Academic Board may affect the day-to-day operations of the programme which are monitored by the Senior Management.

The on-going improvement and monitoring process feeds into the QQI Programmatic Review every 5 years.

8.12.4 Procedure for Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

This procedure governs the ongoing self-evaluation, monitoring and review of our programmes in order to evaluate and enhance accordingly. This also includes the selection, contracting and monitoring of the various venues where classes are held. While reviewing programme delivery and how feedback is obtained from learners on their individual and collective experience of programmes is an on-going process.

8.12.4.1 Responsibilities

Learner Responsibilities

Each learner has the opportunity to provide feedback twice yearly by completing a "Course Assessment Form". A sample "Course Assessment Form" is included below.

Lecturer Responsibilities

Lecturers assess a learner's progress with a programme by carrying out an in-class appraisal of a learner's work in order to establish their understanding and progress. This may comprise of a short question and answer session at the start of each class based on topics addressed in the previous class, or based on work assigned by the lecturer for the learners to attempt between classes.

Lecturers are required to complete an attendance record for each class at each venue (attendance records are downloaded electronically in respect of online classes) and all lecturers are invited to provide feedback informally on an on-going basis and formally as part of the Review Group and when attending the Annual Lecturers Meeting. In addition, each lecturer must complete a Venue Check List at the start of each term. A sample Venue Check List is included below.

A Review Group, which comprises of a group of lecturers provide feedback to the Programme Board on the course material, clarity of examples and questions, sample papers, exam papers, topics that took longer than expected to cover, etc.

Programme Board

The Programme Board is responsible for implementing this policy. This is primarily carried out on a self-evaluation basis with the Programme Board reviewing all feedback relating to the programme. Any proposed changes to the programme are generally implemented for the next intake of students. The Programme Board prepares a report for review by the Academic Board.

Learner Support

Learner Support is responsible for monitoring services and supports provided to students to include the suitability of a venue, collating venue checklists, collating course assessment forms from learners, etc. The results of this feedback are analysed and reported to the Programme Board.

Academic Board

The Academic Board has responsibility for overseeing the quality assurance of the programme.

Senior Management

Senior Management is responsible for ensuring that there are adequate staff and facility resources to maintain quality standards.

External Examiner

The role of the independent External Examiner is to review the draft examinations created by the technical writers, provide feedback, attend Exam Board Meetings and complete the External Examiners Reports for submission to QQI.

IPASS Membership Body

The IPASS Membership Body consists of programme graduates who are working in the payroll environment. Included in the functions of the IPASS Membership Body is the maintenance of ongoing links with programme graduates. Feedback is invited from the IPASS Membership Body when new issues emerge and this forms part of the decision making process.

8.12.4.2 Procedures

Step 1

All Venue Check Lists are collated and analysed by Learner Support. If any issue arises that requires attention, appropriate action is taken. Feedback is necessary for management purposes and the completion of feedback forms is also used to assess venue suitability from the learners' perspective. Where an issue arises with a venue, it is initially handled by the lecturer on site and referred to Learner Support to register the matter and initiate the appropriate response. Documentation relating to the quality of the facilities and infrastructure is collated by Learner Support and reviewed by the QA Manager. Any issues raised and responses made are discussed. Any suggestions for corrective actions are brought to the attention of the Programme Board.

Learner Support collate the feedback from Course Assessment Forms which are completed by learners twice yearly. The Course Assessment Forms address the venue, facilities, course material, lecturer, VLE, etc. A report of the feedback is prepared for the Programme Board. Any actionable items relating to the suitability of a venue are actioned immediately by Learner Support. Any items relating to the programme material are referred to the Programme Board for review. Such feedback is reviewed by the Programme Board twice a year, and where a decision is made to make changes, such changes will be implemented in the programme for the next intake of students.

All lecturers are provided with a copy of the feedback received from learners for their venue to ensure transparency. It is the aim of IPASS to have completed Course Assessment Forms returned for 75% of classroom learners.

Attendance records are monitored on a weekly basis and where class attendance at any class drops below 75%, Learner Support investigates to see if there is any issue which may require attention.

Learner Support ensures that each venue:

- Is suitable for use as a lecturing facility
- Accommodates a learner with a disability i.e. wheelchair access including adequate toilet facilities
- All lecture rooms are adequately equipped with LCD projectors and white boards for use by a lecturer
- All lecturers are advised in relation to health and safety procedures and other instructions relevant to the venue they are assigned.

Contract rental agreements/Letters of Understanding for arrangements with venues including details of any special arrangements are maintained by IPASS. IPASS has full public liability insurance for all venues as the provision of confirmation of appropriate levels of insurance cover is a prerequisite requirement for any facility usage agreement with all venues. This insurance policy is reviewed on an annual basis.

Learner Support collates information on marketing, learner enrolment, pass rates, failure rates, etc. and produces a report of findings and recommendations for the Programme Board.

Step 2

The Programme Board reviews and evaluates the feedback from Learner Support. The Programme Board monitors the release of information on the VLE throughout the programme. Any minor items which warrant immediate attention are actioned immediately. Any feedback which requires a review of programme materials is reviewed twice a year by the Programme Board.

The Programme Board continuously monitors changes in legislation or practice (e.g. Finance Acts, Statutory Instruments, employment legislation, etc.) which results in an update to the course material.

Feedback from learners, lecturers, the Review Group, the External Examiner and stakeholders is also compiled. All feedback is considered and an action plan is created for the implementation of same. The Programme Board meet on a regular basis to co-ordinate the updating of existing programme materials in line with external changes that impact on the payroll environment.

Where a decision is made to make changes to the programme, such changes will be implemented for the next intake of students.

A report is prepared by the Programme Board and presented to the Academic Board.

Step 3

The Academic Board reviews the report from the Programme Board and oversees the quality assurance of the programme. The Academic Board monitors and reviews each programme to ensure it:

- Is up to date.
- Remains appropriate in order to create a supportive and effective learning environment.
- Achieves its objectives and responds to the needs of learners.
- Is delivered in an informative manner.

Maintaining programme relevance is a constant process to reflect ongoing developments in the external environments. This ensures that all programmes being delivered are current and valid to meet day-to-day best practice.

The Academic Board can recommend that the Programme Board action items which were not previously actioned. Where appropriate, such actions are relayed by the Programme Board to Learner Support as appropriate.

The Academic Board can also put forward recommendations to Senior Management in terms of resources, staffing requirements, etc. Such recommendations will be considered with due regard to the financial implications of these recommendations.

Step 4

The QA Manager reviews the processes and findings produced by the Programme Board and Academic Board to ensure that all Quality Assurance policies and procedures have been adhered to. Where necessary, policies and processes will be updated. The QA Manager is responsible for ensuring that all staff are informed of any changes to the programme, policies or procedures and how these impact on their role or responsibilities.

8.12.4.3 Self-Evaluation

The Programme Board carries out a self-evaluation of the programme to include the following:

- What is being done?
- Why is it being done?
- How is it being done?
- How do we know it is effective?
- What changes should be made?
- Is it viable to continue offering the programme?

The Programme Board also carries out a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the programme.

As part of an overall review process, the Academic Board reviews the programme approval criteria published by QQI to include:

- Learning hours
- Credits
- Learning outcomes
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategies
- Access, Admission, Progression and Recognition policies
- Resources
- Support staff
- Scheduling and Management of each programme
- Student Handbook

Feedback from learners, lecturers, IPASS Membership Body, employers, etc. is analysed for consideration. Such consideration may include the creation of a new topic for future inclusion in a programme syllabus, or the amendment of an existing topic that is already in the programme syllabus. Addressing such issues may also include revising the methodology for topic coverage of the specific area of new focus or interest.

As a post-qualification measure, IPASS identifies that a significant number of graduates become members of the IPASS Membership Body thus demonstrating a commitment to professional and implied approval of IPASS programmes.

Learner Support and the QA Manager monitor the learner support processes and procedures in place on an ongoing basis to ensure quality of service. Effectiveness is measured through quantifying telephone helpline enquiries and helpline use, website 'hits', log-ins on the VLE, membership association uptake, responses to surveys and the rates of completion of validated programmes. Such information is collated and presented to the QA Manager for analysis and discussion. The QA Manager then makes recommendations for quality improvements where appropriate.

External evaluation is further evidenced by the fact that all IPASS lecturers are employed in the payroll industry and are therefore well placed to provide practical assessment of the relevance and appropriateness of any quality improvements that are either introduced or proposed for introduction.

The growth in the number of course venues and learner numbers over the past 19 years provide clear and verifiable measures of the popularity and demand for IPASS programmes. Records are maintained to monitor and measure these growth metrics. The market demand reflects an acknowledgement of the focus and relevance of the programme materials for achieving the stated learning outcomes. Maintaining student levels over the past 5 years is the measurable verification that the outcomes are being achieved.

This process forms part of our QQI programmatic review every 5 years.

Sample Annual Programme Self Evaluation Form

This Evaluation is carried out so we can identify issues of concern that may arise throughout the year. Once identified we can make an informed decision on what steps to take to rectify any issues identified.

The report should be used to evaluate the programme and the quality of the information and learning methods used.

The report should be:

1. A critical evaluation
2. Include comments on feedback received from lecturers and students
3. Be based on facts in relation to enrolments and exam statistics
4. Identify any issues with venues and distribution of materials
5. Feedback from the external examiner
6. Steps taken to rectify any issues raised.

Programme Review Report

Programme Title	
Academic Year	
Name of person preparing the report	

Enrolments	Target	2019/2020	2018/2019

Student Feedback
<i>Insert a summary of the feedback received from the learner feedback forms</i>

Venue Feedback
<i>Insert a summary of the feedback received from the venue feedback forms</i>

Lecturer Feedback

Insert a summary of the feedback received from the Lecturer feedback forms

External Examiner Feedback

Insert a summary of the feedback received from the External Examiner

Overall Feedback

Insert a summary of the overall feedback of the course

Concerns/Issues

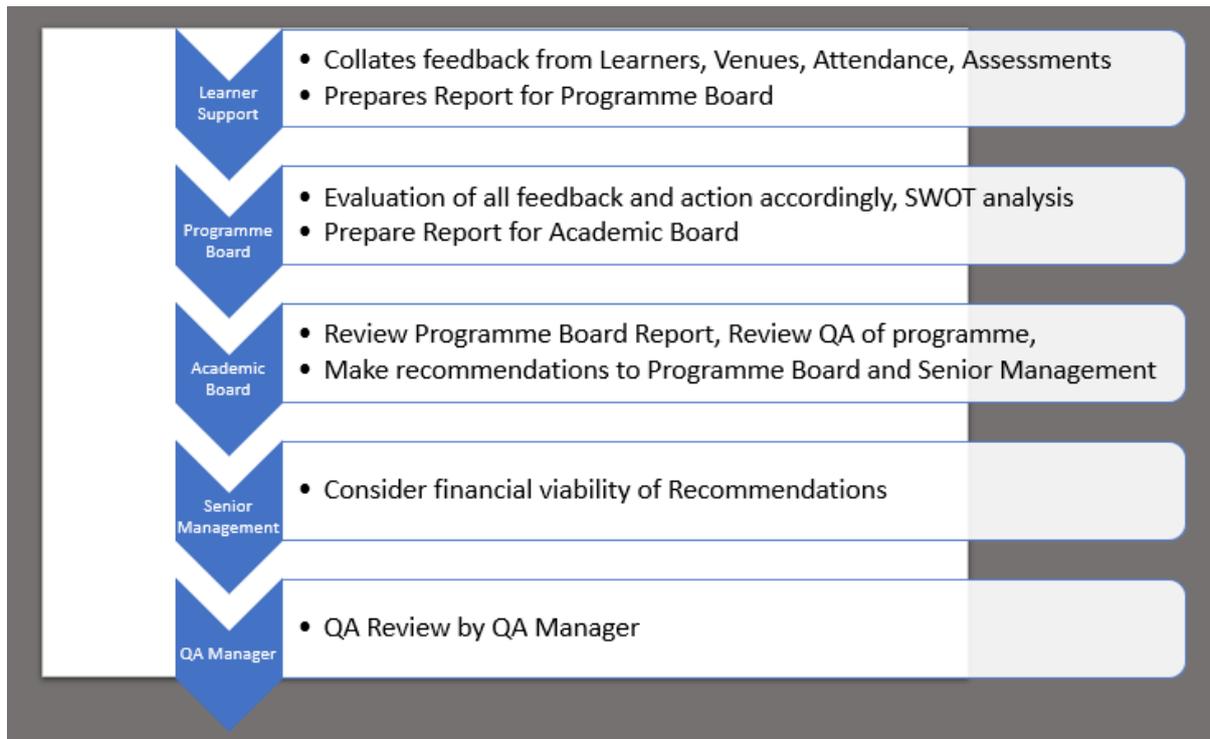
Insert any concerns or issues you may have with the current programme

Plan for following year

Insert any plans or changes required for the next intake

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

IPASS Self Evaluation, Monitoring and Review



Venue Check List

Venue location: _____

Lecturer: _____ Date: _____

Access:

Is the building accessible to less able individuals? _____

What floor is the room on? _____

Is there a lift available? _____

Room conditions:

Is the room suitable for the purposes intended? Yes No

How many students does the room comfortably accommodate? _____

Are all tables and chairs in safe working order? Yes No

What type of heating is in the room? _____

Is there adequate heating for the room? Yes No

Is the lighting working properly? Yes No

Are there any safety hazards in the room? Yes No

Facilities:

What facilities are in the room?

White/Black board Yes No

LCD projector Yes No

Computer Yes No

Multi-media projector Yes No

Lecturer's desk/podium Yes No

Are all these in proper working order? Yes No

If no, what work needs to be done to address / rectify matters?

Name and contact details of person responsible for the room:

8.12.5 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Programme Monitoring and Review
Author	QA Manager
Version	V.2
Last Reviewed	Oct 2021

8.13 Policy for Good Academic Practice

8.13.1 Introduction

8.13.1.1 Purpose

This policy outlines the standards for the ethical conduct of learners and methods used to detect and investigate instances of academic dishonesty and associated consequences. IPASS promotes a learning environment of honesty and integrity.

8.13.1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all learners enrolled on all IPASS programmes.

The Academic Board are responsible for approving this policy and for its implementation. All employees of IPASS are jointly responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

8.13.1.3 Definitions

Good Academic Practice

Good academic practice refers to the process of completing academic work (e.g. an examination paper) independently, honestly and in an appropriate academic style, using good referencing and acknowledging all sources, where appropriate (e.g. when completing an assignment).

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty erodes the integrity of all involved, devalues the learning experience and its legitimacy, not only for the perpetrators but for the entire IPASS community. Academic dishonesty applies equally to electronic media and print, and involves text, images, and ideas. It includes, but is not limited to, the following examples:

Cheating

- Copying from other learners during an examination
- Communicating exam answers to other learners during an examination
- Offering another person's work as one's own
- Taking an examination for another learner or having someone take an examination for oneself
- Sharing answers for a take-home examination or assignment unless specifically authorised by the lecturer
- Tampering with an assessment after it has been corrected, then returning it for more credit
- Using unauthorised materials, prepared answers, written notes or concealed information during an examination
- Allowing others to do the research and writing of an assigned paper (including use of the services of a commercial essay writing company)

Dishonest Conduct

- Stealing or attempting to steal an examination or answer guidelines from the lecturer/invigator
- Changing or attempting to change academic records without proper sanction
- Submitting substantial portions of the same work for credit in more than one programme without consulting all lecturers involved
- Intentionally disrupting the educational process in any manner
- Allowing another learner to copy from one's own work during an examination

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is intellectual theft. It means use of the intellectual creations of another without proper attribution. Plagiarism may take two main forms, which are clearly related:

- To steal or pass off as one's own the ideas or words, images, or other creative works of another.
- To use a creative production without crediting the source, even if only minimal information is available to identify it for citation. Credit must be given for every direct quotation, for paraphrasing or summarising a work (in whole, or in part, in one's own words), and for information which is not common knowledge.

8.13.2 Legal and Regulatory

Quality Assurance Guidelines

This policy is designed with regard to QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines³⁴ requirement that IPASS has and implements a policy for good academic practice which applies to all stages of a learner's journey with IPASS.

8.13.3 Policy Statements

8.13.3.1 Principles for Good Academic Practice

Skills and Techniques

The demonstration of skills and techniques includes:

- Good timekeeping
- Listening
- Note taking
- Evaluation
- Academic writing
- Referencing
- Citation
- Exam and assessment technique

IPASS Responsibilities

The provision of clear guidance on the demonstration of skills and techniques together with information on academic dishonesty in the Student Handbook. IPASS is cognisant of the need to uphold academic standards and good academic practice. A summary checklist for learners to avoid plagiarism includes:

- Always put direct quotes (sections of text that you are quoting word for word) in inverted commas, and always add an appropriate reference to the work cited at the end of the quote.
- If you are using someone else's idea in an assignment, and that idea is not in the common domain, always add a reference to the author of the idea. It is also often helpful to point out, in your text, that the idea is someone else's (e.g.: 'Marx believed that')

³⁴ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Section 3.2 of the "Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines"
<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf#search=Core%20Strategy%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%2A>

- Never copy a piece of text from a book (including your course material) or article or web-based source and hand it in as your own work. It is too easy to get caught. The writing style of the plagiarised text may give you away.
- Never allow another learner to take one of your assignments and hand it in, in part or in whole as his or her own work. If this is discovered both of you will face disciplinary action.
- Learners have been known to download whole sections of text from the internet, and to hand it in as their own work and where this happens it is usually quite obvious. Remember, lecturers also have internet access!
- At the end of the day, the work necessary to get away with plagiarism (setting aside the risks involved) adds up to the amount of work you would need to write your own non-plagiarised piece of work in the first place! In addition, you have taken on this programme in order to learn. Writing your own assignment solution is part of the learning process. Plagiarism disrupts that learning process.
- Finally, if you are in doubt about whether something is plagiarism or not you can always consult your lecturer.

Learner Responsibilities

Learners must:

- Ensure they engage in all course work and follow the guidance of the staff/lecturers
- Familiarise themselves with IPASS policies and procedures and guidance on good academic practice to include academic dishonesty
- Engage with the programme in an independent and autonomous way, learning how to express themselves clearly, without replicating another's thought while learning to cite and reference properly

8.13.3.2 Principles for Ensuring Good Academic Practice and Investigating Academic Dishonesty *Information*

IPASS provides clear guidance on and consequences of academic dishonesty to all learners in the Student Handbook and to all staff and lecturers in the Employee Handbook.

Investigation

All allegations of academic dishonesty will be investigated using natural justice, fairness, due process and in a timely manner.

IPASS may suspend a learner pending an investigation into academic dishonesty.

Learner

Each learner is responsible for their own conduct and are assumed capable of making informed decisions about their behaviour. Where a learner is accused of academic dishonesty, they are entitled to be informed of the basis for the allegation made against them and entitled to respond accordingly.

The learner may be invited to a meeting to discuss the allegation and may be accompanied by a friend or family member as support.

Outcome

IPASS will seek to resolve any breach of good academic practice in a non-adversarial manner. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Board.

8.13.3.3 Consequences of Academic Dishonesty

The consequences of academic dishonesty are proportionate to the infringement as follows:

- Learner is subject to discipline
- 0% grade is awarded to the learner in respect of a particular examination paper or assignment
- Learner may repeat the examination paper at the next sitting or may re-submit the assignment
- Learner may be suspended pending an investigation

IPASS will only consider expelling a student from a programme on health and safety grounds, repeated academic dishonesty or if IPASS is brought into disrepute.

8.13.4 Procedure for Investigating Academic Dishonesty

This procedure outlines the steps to be taken by IPASS where there is a suspicion of academic dishonesty in an exam or on submission of an assignment. Academic dishonesty is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at IPASS. Any claims of stress, financial pressure, ill health, lack of knowledge or other such instances will not be accepted as reasons for academic dishonesty.

8.13.4.1 Responsibilities

Learner Responsibilities

Learners have responsibility for:

- Refraining from cheating and plagiarism
- Refusing to aid or abet any form of academic dishonesty
- Notifying appropriate officials about observed incidents of academic misconduct

The anonymity of a student reporting an incident of academic dishonesty will be protected.

IPASS Responsibilities

All members of staff and lecturers share responsibility for maintaining this environment. It is essential that all members of the IPASS community accept individual responsibility for their work.

8.13.4.2 Procedure

Examination

Where an invigilator or IPASS staff member suspects academic dishonesty during an examination sitting, they must report their suspicions to the Chief Invigilator immediately. The Chief Invigilator is required to approach the learner and ask them to step outside the examination hall to:

- Confirm the identity of the learner
- Confirm the learner's Student Number
- Explain the suspicion or reason for suspicion
- Record the learner's response
- Remove any unauthorised notes/material
- Advise the learner that he/she can complete their examination
- Advise the learner to contact the Programme Board in IPASS immediately after the examination

On return to the examination hall, the Chief Invigilator will record all actions/reactions of both the Chief Invigilator and learner. The learner is permitted to complete the examination. On completion of the examination and following the collection of all examination scripts, the Chief Invigilator is required to submit a full written report to the Programme Board.

When the learner contacts Programme Board, he/she will be advised of the next steps in the process where a case of academic dishonesty is suspected. Their examination script will be corrected as

normal, but the grade awarded will not be released until the allegation has been fully investigated and the outcome determined.

Assignment

Where a corrector or IPASS staff member suspects academic dishonesty on submission of or while correcting an assignment, they must report their suspicions in writing to the Programme Board immediately. The report should include:

- A copy of the assignment submitted by the learner
- Assignment Cover Page to include marks awarded and feedback for the learner based on the assignment being marked as normal.
- Copies of documentation/evidence supporting the suspicion

The grade awarded to the learner will not be released until the allegation has been fully investigated and the outcome determined.

On receipt of the above information the Programme Board will commence an investigation.

Investigation

Upon detection of or information provided regarding suspected academic dishonesty, an investigation will be commenced by a member of the Programme Board (the investigator). This will be done as soon as possible to allow for further investigation, if necessary, in advance of an Exam Board Meeting.

Once investigated, a decision will be made if a particular case of suspected academic dishonesty requires further investigation.

Where no further investigation is required, a report will be prepared for the Academic Board and no further action will be required. The learner's grade awarded will be released.

Where further investigation is required, the learner will be:

- Informed of any suspected academic dishonesty in writing together with the investigation proceedings
- Advised of their rights as outlined in the Student Handbook
- Provided with a copy of the "*Policy for Good Academic Practice*"
- Invited to respond in writing within 10 working days
- Notified that failure to respond will result in the suspected case proceeding to the next stage
- Notified that failure to admit any wrongdoing during the investigation stage may result in more severe consequences should the allegation be proven
- Advised that the consequences for academic dishonesty may include suspension/deregistration from a programme with no refund of fees
- Invited to attend a meeting to discuss the allegations and may be accompanied by a friend or family member as support

Meeting

A meeting, attended by the learner and friend/family, the investigator and other members of the Programme Board will be held. At this meeting the learner will be afforded the opportunity to discuss the allegations. A written record of the meeting will be prepared and retained.

Outcome

Following the investigation process and meeting, the investigator is required to make a determination based on one of the following possible outcomes:

- The allegations were unfounded and therefore no wrongdoing has occurred
- The learner admits the wrongdoing
- The learner does not admit any wrongdoing while the evidence suggests otherwise

The learner will be notified of the outcome and any associated consequences within 10 working days.

Where the investigator determines that the allegations were unfounded and therefore no wrongdoing has occurred, the case will be concluded, and a report will be prepared for the Academic Board. The learner's grade awarded will be released.

Where the learner admits the wrongdoing, the investigator will apply the following:

- For a first offence, the learner is disciplined and a 0% mark for the examination or assignment will be awarded. The learner may repeat the examination paper at the next sitting or may re-submit the assignment. The maximum marks awarded will be capped at 60% for a repeat examination and 50% for the re-submission of an assignment in this instance.
- For a second or subsequent offence, the learner is disciplined and a 0% mark to the examination or assignment will be awarded. The learner may be expelled from the programme with no entitlement to a refund of fees.

A report will be prepared by the investigator for the Academic Board where a learner does not admit any wrongdoing while the evidence suggests otherwise. The report will be reviewed by the Academic Board who will make a determination i.e.

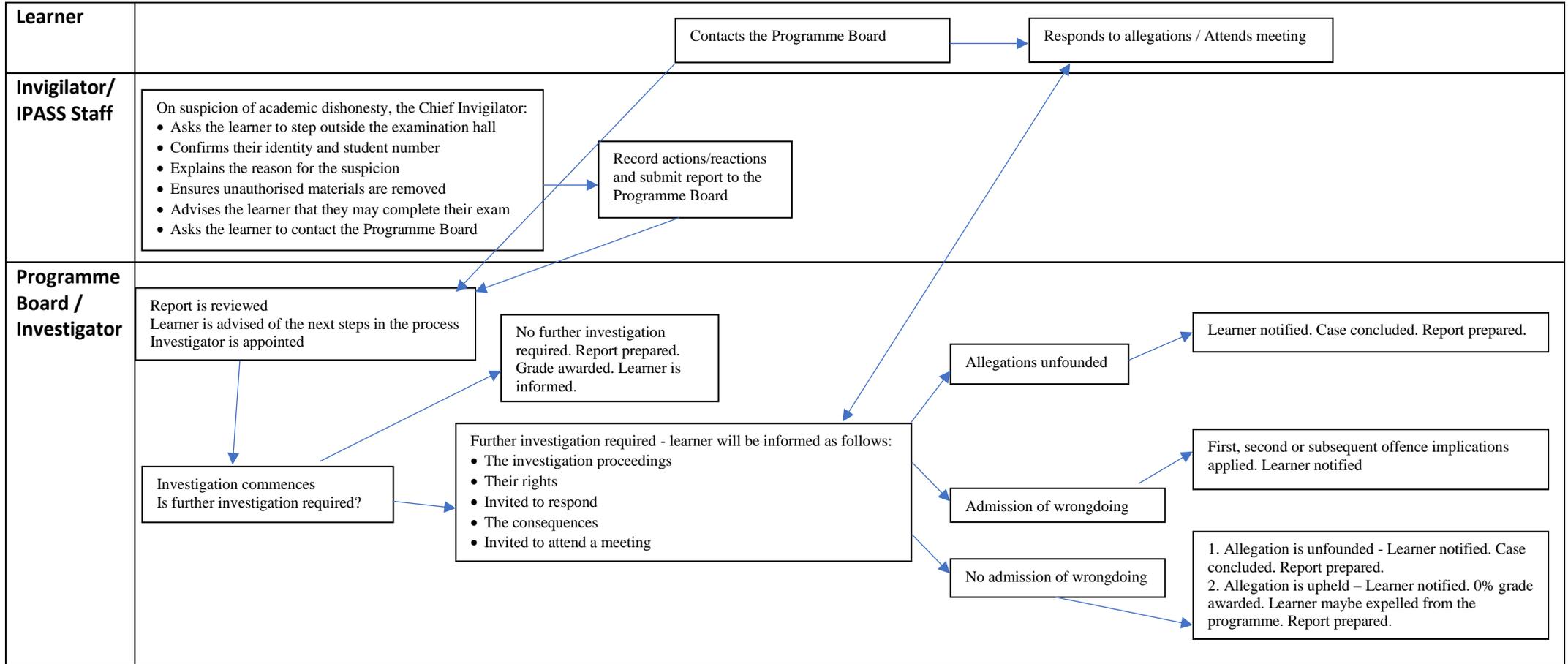
- The allegation is unfounded
- The allegation is upheld

Where the Academic Board determines that the allegation is unfounded, the case will be concluded, and a report will be prepared. The learner will be informed of the determination within 10 working days and the learner's grade awarded will be released.

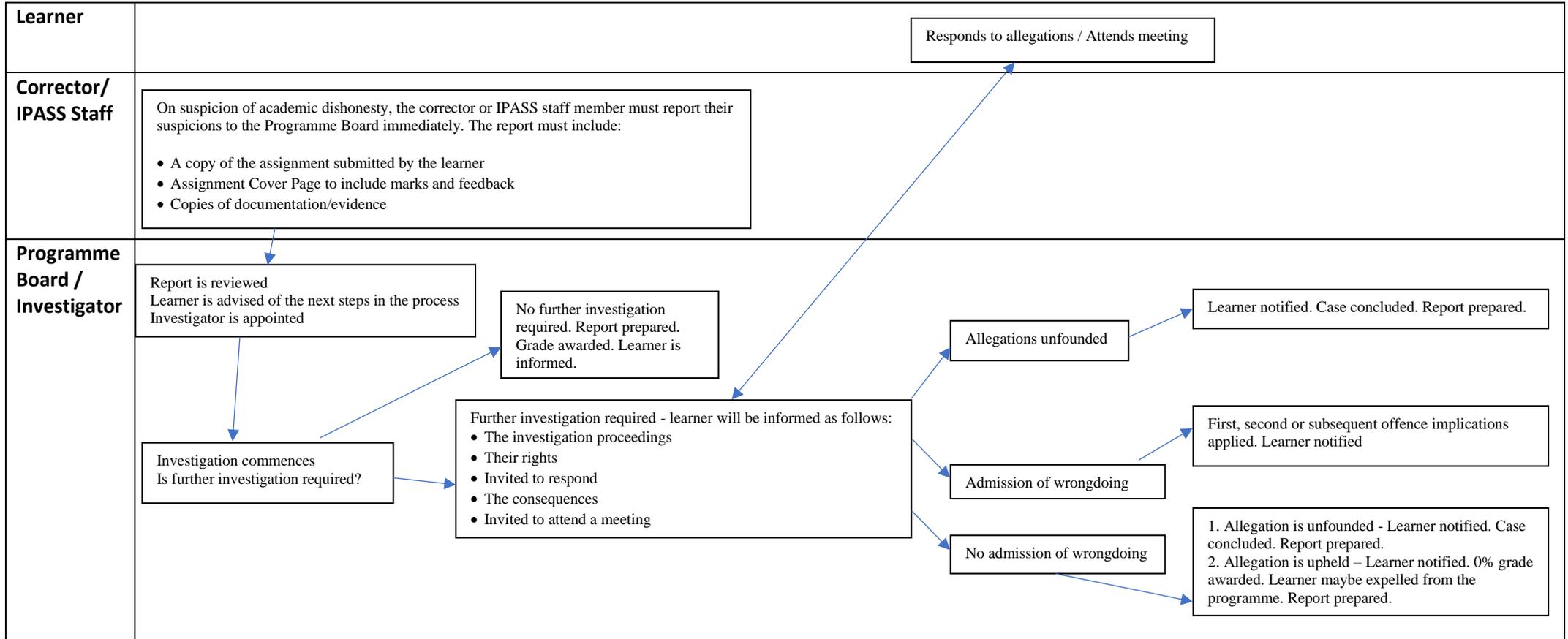
Where the Academic Board determines that the allegation is upheld, the learner will be disciplined and 0% mark to the examination or assignment will be awarded and a report will be prepared. The learner may be expelled from the programme with no entitlement to a refund of fees.

The learner will be informed of the Academic Board's determination within 10 working days.

IPASS Procedure for Investigating Academic Dishonesty during an Examination



IPASS Procedure for Investigating Academic Dishonesty on Submission of an Assignment



8.13.5 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Good Academic Practice
Author	QA Manager
Version	V.1
Last Reviewed	June 2020

8.14 Policy for Risk Management

8.14.1 Introduction

8.14.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out the *Policy for Risk Management* of IPASS. Risk management is a primary concern of IPASS, and this policy sets a framework and provides guidance to IPASS to support its management of risk. This policy recognises that the identification, assessment, evaluation and control of risks is an ongoing process. The management of risk associated with the administrative and technical output is vitally important for the continued success of IPASS.

8.14.1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all of the activities of IPASS and all of its employees. Senior Management and the Academic Board are the main decision makers and as such assume responsibility for all risk by providing oversight to risk management. All employees are responsible for identifying, communicating and managing risk. It is the aim of IPASS to reduce/eliminate all risk factors which could impact adversely on its activities.

There are various risks associated with the delivery of programmes of education to include:

Operational risks

Risks associated with the day-to-day operational and business systems or processes of IPASS.

Financial risks

The financial health/structure of IPASS may deteriorate i.e. due to reduced enrolments.

Strategic risks

Uncertainty regarding the successful implementation of business strategies and plans.

Reputational/Academic risks

Practices or procedures that are perceived to be dishonest, disrespectful or incompetent. Loss of confidence in IPASS due to negative publicity.

Managing these risks can improve the learner's experience while undertaking their educational journey with IPASS.

8.14.1.3 Definitions

Risk

Risk is an uncertain event or action that hinders the achievement of the goals or objectives of an organisation i.e. plans may not turn out as originally planned due to unforeseen events.

8.14.2 Legal and Regulatory

Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL)

This policy is designed with regard to QQI's protocols for compliance with legal requirements for PEL.³⁵

8.14.3 Policy Statements

8.14.3.1 Principles of Risk Management

Identify

All risks must be identified and categorised into "Internal Risks" and "External Risks". A Risk Register must be maintained. Internal Risk emerges from events that happen inside the organisation and can be controlled. External Risk emerges from events that happen outside the organisation i.e. economy, market, etc. and cannot be controlled.

Assess

Any risk must be assessed regarding its seriousness and impact on the business of IPASS.

Evaluate

Risk should be listed based on the severity of impact on IPASS i.e. financial and reputational risks are ranked first.

Control

Risk once identified should be controlled in order to minimise its impact. Identified risks should be recorded in the Risk Register. The Risk Register should be monitored and controlled on an on-going basis.

8.14.4 Procedure for Risk Management

This procedure outlines the procedures undertaken when identifying and managing risk associated with the business of IPASS and our enrolled learners.

8.14.4.1 Responsibilities

Senior Management

Senior Management has responsibility to mitigate risk and manage any identified risks. It is the responsibility of Senior Management to report to the Board of Directors on any identifiable risks from an operational and financial perspective.

Programme Board

The Programme Board has responsibility for monitoring any potential risk and/or minimising risk by ensuring that academic governance policies and procedures are adhered to.

All Staff

All staff are responsible for reporting any identifiable risks to senior management in a timely manner in order to mitigate or manage same.

³⁵ Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Protection of Controlled Learners – Protocols for the Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act <https://www.qqi.ie//Policies/Pages/Protection-of-Enrolled-Learners---Protocols-for-the-Implementation-of-Part-6-of-the-2012-Act-.aspx>

8.14.4.2 Procedures

Effective risk management is about managing the threats that may hinder delivery of the aims and objectives of IPASS. Risk management of IPASS should adhere the following procedures:

Step 1

Identify what could go wrong and include such events or circumstances on a Risk Register

Step 2

Assess how likely it will happen and its impact on the business of IPASS.

Step 3

Evaluate the seriousness of the risk i.e. high, medium or low.

Step 4

Control the risk by minimising its impact on IPASS. A decision must be made on the best course of action to address the identified risk and prevent the risk reoccurring.

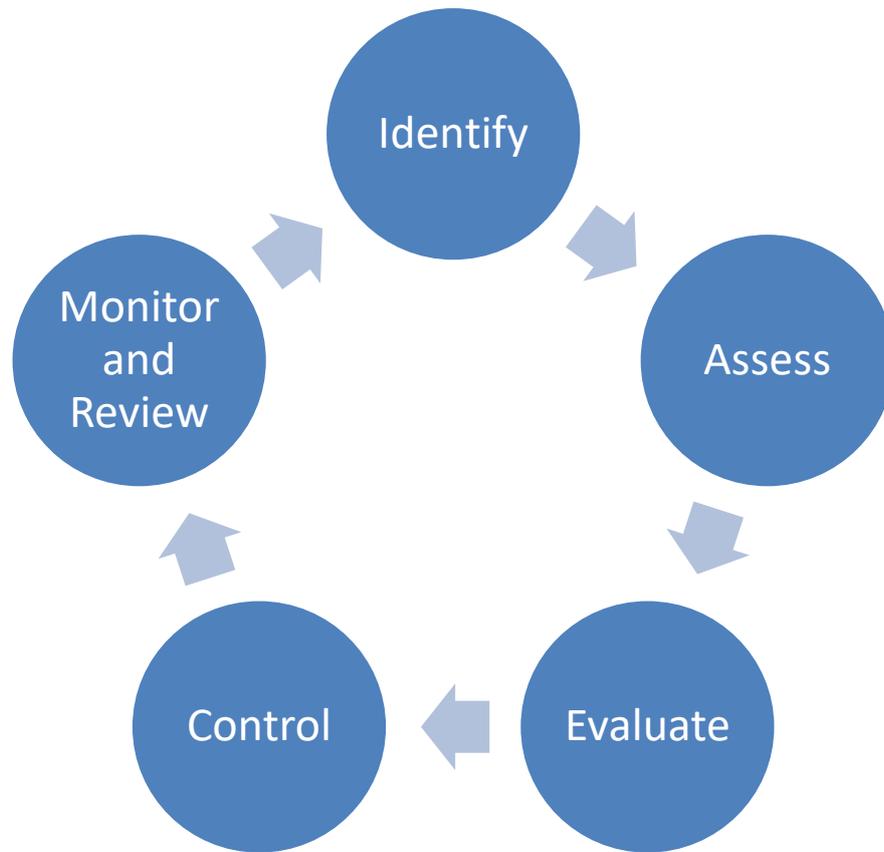
Step 5

Monitor and review on an ongoing basis.

Risk Register

Area of Risk	Risk	Controls/Action	Responsibility
Strategic			
IPASS does not achieve its goals and objectives	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial stability • Diversification to develop new income streams • Keeping up to date with the marketplace • Be well represented in the public domain • Relationships with governing authorities • Competitive pricing • Maintaining the profile of IPASS • QQI accreditation • Staff retention • Staff training 	Board of Directors / Senior Management
Failure to compete effectively in the marketplace for learners	High		
Failure to plan for growth and change	High		
Mismanagement of occupational health and safety	High		
Failure to protect intellectual property	High		
Failure to comply with legal obligations	High		
Loss or extensive damage to business premises	High		
Loss of key personnel	High		
Operational			
Failure of oversight of risk by the Board of Directors	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily backup of data on ICT system • Adherence to all employment and health and safety legislation • Fire drills • Knowledge of policies and procedures by all staff • Compliance with insurance requirements • Adequate resources – staff and venues • Staff training 	Board of Directors / Senior Management
Failure to implement decisions, policies and procedures	High		
Breach of employment legislation	High		
Breach of health and safety legislation	High		
Loss/hacking of ICT system	High		
Issues raised by learners that can be addressed internally	Low		
Human error/incompetence	Medium		
Inadequate personnel to support the service offering of IPASS	High		
Financial			
Insufficient financial resources to support the objectives of IPASS	High		Board of Directors /

Poor financial controls	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly management accounts • Management of budget and cashflow • Achieve value for money by negotiating contracts • Outsourced services to be reviewed annually i.e. auditor • Staff training 	Senior Management
Inadequate insurance cover	High		
Reputational			
Loss of learner interest in IPASS	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service offering • Pricing • Publicity • Adequate staff resources • Staff training 	Senior Management / Programme Board
Negative publicity	High		
Breach of confidentiality	High		
Poor leadership	Medium		
Lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities	Medium		
Academic			
Drop in standard of programme manual and materials	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining skilled technical staff • Continuous development of staff • Adequate pool of experienced lecturers • Adherence to the Examination process • Investment in the necessary resources 	Programme Board / Senior Management
Drop in quality of teaching	Medium		
Breach of integrity to the examination process	High		
Teaching resources are not sufficient for the programme	Medium		



8.14.5 Document Control

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8.15 Policy for Blended and/or Online Learning

8.15.1 Introduction

8.15.1.1 Purpose

This document outlines IPASS's policy for delivery of programmes leading to an academic award under the National Qualifications Framework (NFQ), which is delivered, supported or assessed in an online and/or blended modality. This policy supports the development of flexible learning opportunities to serve the needs of an increasingly diverse range of learners.

8.15.1.2 Scope

The QA Manager is responsible for approving this policy and for its implementation. All employees of IPASS are jointly responsible for the effective implementation of this policy. This policy is mandatory for all staff involved in online teaching, learning or assessment.

8.15.2 Legal and Regulatory

QA Guidelines

This policy is designed to comply with the 2018 QQI published "*Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*"³⁶ which specifies requirements for IPASS to have a policy in place for the teaching, learning and assessment of programmes with a blended or online component and is designed to safeguard the academic standards associated with IPASS courses, while also taking into account the views in the *National Strategy for Higher Education 2030*.³⁷

"People can learn in a variety of different ways, and the higher education system needs to be flexible in supporting and accrediting them all. While campus-based learning will continue to play a major role in higher education, the institutions will have to accommodate and serve the needs of an increasingly diverse student body, many of whom will need to engage flexibly with higher education.

In the years ahead, students will choose to learn in a variety of ways – full-time or part-time; on campus or off campus; classroom based, blended, online or accelerated learning. Some of this learning will take place through open and distance learning; some will take place in the workplace; and some will take place in outreach centres. Resources allocated to and within institutions should support all students equally, whether they are full-time or part-time, on-campus or off-campus."

8.15.3 Policy Statements

8.15.3.1 Definitions

IPASS adopts the following interpretations as set out in the "*Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes*"³⁸

³⁶ Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (2018) <https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Statutory%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20Blended%20Learning%20Programmes.pdf>

³⁷ National Strategy for Higher Education 2030 <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf>

³⁸ Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (2018) <https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Statutory%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20Blended%20Learning%20Programmes.pdf>

Blended Learning

“The integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences” (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

Online Learning

“A form of educational delivery in which learning takes place primarily via the Internet. Online learning can serve those who are geographically distant and without access to traditional classroom education, so it includes ‘distance learning’. However, distance learners are not alone in benefiting from online learning, which is also part of e-learning in mainly campus-based study programmes. In such cases, it may be referred to as blended learning” (Gaebel et. al. 2014).

Face to Face learning

This term refers to teaching and learning which takes place in a physical environment and is typically used to refer to a traditional classroom teaching environment.

8.15.3.2 Principles for Blended and Online Learning

This policy covers teaching, learning and assessment of programmes with a blended or online learning component and is designed to safeguard the academic standards associated with IPASS courses, and for staff and students engaged in blended and online learning programme provision. This policy is focused on student centred learning, teaching and assessment and engagement of students in the learning process.

The objectives of this policy are:

- To provide a framework for staff to engage with blended and online learning
- To ensure that the appropriate supports are allocated to blended and online learning
- To provide guidance on the design for blended and online learning

This policy supports the ongoing development of technology-enhanced learning across both online and face-to-face teaching environments that will assist in enhancing the learner experience and supporting innovative teaching strategies.

This policy supports IPASS’s Strategic Plan for constant improvement and review processes for programmes and courses to accommodate the increasingly diverse range of learners.

The following assumptions underpin the development and implementation of this policy:

1. In accordance with QQI Topic-Specific Guidelines for Blended Learning Programmes (March, 2018), section 3.1.3, IPASS will ensure that all strategies and processes for the appointment of, induction, training and professional development for teaching and professional staff are appropriate and specific for a blended or online learning environment;
2. IPASS recognises that teaching on a blended/online programme requires pedagogical and technical expertise. IPASS will ensure that academic staff are supported to function effectively in their delivery of blended/online content;
3. IPASS recognises that benchmarks and indicators (e.g. contact hours) designed for face-to-face provision are not always fit for purpose in a blended/online learning environment and can be revised, given the “flexibility afforded by digital technologies”, as noted by Murphy (2018);
4. IPASS will ensure that the appropriate technical infrastructure and technical support for programmes are in place, to support blended and online modes of delivery;

5. IPASS will ensure its teaching, learning and assessment practices are student centred, with a focus on engaging students in the learning process through face-to-face learning or online delivery of courses;
6. IPASS will ensure arrangements are in place for compliance with any legal, regulatory or statutory obligations required for a blended or online learning context. These include, but are not limited to:
 - a. General Data Protection Regulations 2016
 - b. Protection of Enrolled Learners
 - c. Equal Status Act 2000
 - d. Intellectual Property and Copyright Legislation
7. Reasonable efforts will be made by IPASS to ensure that blended learning is accessible to all learners, including learners with disabilities.

IPASS does not commit to the use of any specific technologies in relation to our blended or online learning due to ongoing technological advances. Instead IPASS will monitor evolving technologies and this policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary. In addition, innovative approaches to teaching and learning will be examined on an on-going basis, while ensuring the integrity and consistency of the learner experience. Blended or online learning will not be utilised in any way that would compromise the student experience or learner outcomes. IPASS will support lecturers in development of online teaching skills and practices.

8.15.3.3 Academic Standards

IPASS is responsible for the academic standards and quality assurance of programmes delivered through blended and/or online learning. All programmes offered under blended and/or online learning will be subject to the core quality processes as outlined in this QA document.

It is the responsibility of IPASS to manage the arrangements for the delivery of programmes and provision of support and assessment of students while ensuring that the academic standards of all awards.

IPASS will ensure that procedures and regulations as specified in academic policies are fit for purpose in a blended and online learning environment in place.

8.15.4 Additional Quality Assurance of Blended and/or Online Learning

8.15.4.1 Programme Development

In accordance with QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for providers of Blended Learning Programmes (March 2018), IPASS will ensure:

- Proposals for new programmes involving blended and/or online learning must include an analysis of rationale, resourcing, and capacity.
- Programmes incorporating blended and/or online learning are subject to our Policy for Programme Development.
- IPASS may develop elements of QQI validated programmes as blended and/or online learning where this does not directly contravene a condition of validation. Where applicable, IPASS will seek permission from QQI, and if necessary re-validation of a programme to incorporate blended and/or online learning.
- The use of blended and/or online learning will be designed in accordance with our Policy on Teaching and Learning and Policy on Assessment, grading and Certification.

- The delivery of blended and or online learning, particularly learner outcomes, will be closely monitored.
- Blended and/or online learning programmes will be developed and delivered in collaboration with the Programme Board and lecturers and subject to approval by the Academic Board and QQI.
- Blended and online learning developments are learner centred and subject-led rather than technology led.
- Teaching, learning, and assessment practices are accessible to all students with reasonable accommodations for learners with disabilities.
- All practicable steps are taken to ensure security and reliability of its VLE and support systems.
- All practicable steps are taken to ensure continuity of service delivery of its online learning and support systems.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Policy on Programme Development.

8.15.4.2 Learner Information and Support

IPASS commits to providing a safe online environment for learners, lecturers and all staff involved in the administration of the VLE. Access to the VLE will be controlled by IPASS and only those students who have registered to complete the programme will be given access. Access will be removed once a student has successfully completed the programme. All learners will be provided with detailed guidance and support to enable them to engage with blended and/or online learning aspects of the programme.

Prior to enrolment on a blended and/or online learning programme, students are informed about:

- The technology requirements to access the VLE.
- The learning options available for the programme to include face to face, blended and/or online learning as applicable.
- The blend of online and face to face learning involved in the programme.
- The nature and extent of autonomous learning involved and supports provided. Blended or Online Learning students can contact their lecturer via variety of channels including telephone, email or directly in an online class.
- The IT requirements for access to the VLE to include any specific hardware or software requirements.
- The level and nature of academic and technical support available. IPASS acknowledges the rights of both learners and lecturers not to be available online 24/7.

Learners, lecturers and all staff involved in the administration of the VLE will be provided with a code of etiquette to be followed in relation to online programmes. Manuals are distributed to Online Learners in the same manner as face to face learners. Online Learners commence the programme by accessing the VLE which provides materials which are regularly updated and categorised in accordance with the sequence of the teaching of the programme. Online learners are provided with a link to join the live streaming of a class. Online learners also have access to the recording of a class which will be available to them for the remainder of the semester.

Data and Information provided by a learner will be processed in accordance with our Policy on Information and Data Management.

This Policy should be read in association with our Policy on Learner Support.

8.15.4.3 Staff Professional Development and Support

IPASS will ensure that staff involved in teaching on a blended and/or online learning programme are appropriately qualified and supported. As part of its recruitment process, IPASS will recognise the need to prioritise the teaching and IT skill-set required by those involved in the delivery and administration of blended and/or online learning.

IPASS will ensure staff are provided with opportunities to develop their academic and technology-enhanced learning skills and digital competencies, with training provided as required to ensure the successful delivery of blended and/or online learning.

This Policy should be read in association with our Policy for Recruitment, Management and Development.

8.15.4.4 Assessment

Assessment for blended and online learning programmes will be the same as those used for face to face learners which typically takes the form of a hand-written timed exam in an exam venue.

With evolving technologies, IPASS will consider the feasibility of Technology-Enabled Assessment (TEA). Where implemented:

- TEA will only be carried out where it meets with IPASS's QA standards and Policy on Assessment, Grading and Certification
- TEA will only be carried out using secure platforms in line with our Policy on Information, Privacy, and Data Management
- Lecturers and all staff involved will be supported in the design of any TEA
- Learners must have the ability to access and complete any TEA
- Information on methods of assessment will be provided in our Student Handbook
- Learners will receive instruction and guidance in advance to ensure that they feel supported in engaging in this type of assessment.
- Security issues relating to the authentication of a student's work will be considered when designing assessment processes.
- Students will be made aware of IPASS's Policy for Good Academic Practice which is provided in our Student Handbook and QA Policy document.

This Policy should be read in association with our Policy on Assessment, Grading and Certification.

8.15.4.5 Technical Infrastructure and Support

IPASS commits to providing the IT Infrastructure necessary to develop, support and deliver blended and/or online learning. All technologies used to support and deliver blended and/or online learning will be licensed by IPASS. All online teaching and learning content and activities utilised for blended learning will be accessible for learners through the IPASS VLE.

IPASS retains the copyright of content created by IPASS for use on IPASS programmes, unless otherwise stated. IPASS will endeavour to ensure that all online content used to develop and deliver blended and/or online learning programmes complies with copyright laws.

Learners enrolled on programmes offered through blended and/or online learning will be entitled to the same level of administrative and IT support that is provided to all learners.

IPASS commits to monitoring and assessing its blended and/or online learning support and resourcing accordingly and to take proactive steps to address any issues that should arise.

8.15.5 Document Control

Document Title	Policy for Blended and Online Learning
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