

# National College of Ireland Quality Assurance Handbook



4. Assessment  
November 2018

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## 4.1. INTRODUCTION

Within the academic process it is necessary to have in place effective instruments designed **for verifying Learners' learning, knowledge and skills. These instruments need also to relate** to predetermined learning outcomes and to correspond to clearly defined stages of achievement in the accreditation and awards process. The concept of assessment is one which embraces the range of such instruments of evaluation and assessment currently utilised including written and practical examinations, practical and project examinations, oral and aural examinations, continuous assessments, examination of supervised professional practice and work placement, and examination of written reports and dissertations. These are the methods used to measure the performance of Learners in achieving the learning outcomes of a programme. Therefore, they constitute a core element in the academic quality assurance procedures of National College of Ireland (NCI).

All assessment is administered within a framework of formal written regulations as required **by NCI's awarding body, QQI. This framework is informed by best practices, NCI's teaching, learning and assessment strategy, and QQI's *Assessments and Standards (Revised, 2013)*.**

The policies and procedures detailed below shall apply to all assessments leading to an award. Where a particular awarding body requires a variation to the standard policy and/or procedure, this will be highlighted.

## 4.2. PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT

It is necessary to outline the conceptual parameters and provide a philosophical and theoretical context for assessment in NCI before explaining particular assessment policies and associated procedures. Accordingly, this section contains the fundamental concepts **informing NCI's assessment strategy, which are organised under** the six key themes laid out in *Assessments and Standards* (2013).

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### 4.2.1 Learners are responsible for demonstrating their learning achievement

A learner enrolled on a programme should submit themselves to assessment for the purpose of demonstrating attainment of the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs). Accordingly, the provider should ensure that there are learning opportunities for these MIPLOs, except those which are already satisfied by prior learning. In addition, with the support of the provider, a learner is expected to strive for academic integrity, and to undertake assessment tasks honestly and truthfully, shunning plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty or impropriety.

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### 4.2.2 Assessment supports standards based on learning outcomes

Awards are made and classified exclusively on the basis of criterion referenced assessment of learning outcomes, primarily knowledge, skill and competence. The learning outcomes required to qualify for QQI awards are specified by the standards issued by QQI in accordance with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

These award standards describe the standard to be acquired by learners:

- i. before a higher education and training award may be made by QQI or by a recognised institution to which authority to make awards has been delegated by QQI; or
- ii. who request from QQI recognition of an award made by a body other than QQI or a recognised institution to which authority to make awards has been delegated. Accordingly, the awards standards describe the learning required to pass.

The MIPLOs define the minimum learning outcomes for a particular programme at the programme level. These must always be specified through the programme validation process. If the programme allows substantial choice through electives, there may need to be variant forms of MIPLOs, i.e. a programme might allow a learner to choose from a number of specialisations.

A learner who completes a validated programme is eligible for the relevant award if they have demonstrated, through assessment (including by recognition of prior learning), attainment of the relevant MIPLOs. While not a proxy for attained learning outcomes, credit should normally be linked to achievement of MIPLOs.

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#### 4.2.3 Assessment promotes and supports effective learning and teaching

Teaching, learning and assessment are linked activities that affect one another. However, effective assessment is intrinsic to both effective teaching and learning. Effective assessment is consistent with, supportive of, and derived from the intended programme and module learning outcomes. Assessment should be planned and coordinated across modules and programmes. Both module assessment strategies and programme assessment strategies are necessary for effective assessment.

The effort required of a learner to complete an assessment task should be proportional to the associated educational benefit to them. Formative assessment is an essential part of any programme of education and training because it supports learning through formative feedback.

Teachers and learners share in the responsibilities for effective learning. Involvement of learners in the construction of assessment tasks and criteria can enhance learning, while authentic assessment further supports effective learning.

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#### 4.2.4 Assessment procedures are credible

Credible assessment is fair and consistent. More specifically it is valid and reliable (i.e. fit for purpose). Fair assessment is inclusive, recognising that different people can have different learning needs, styles and approaches.

Assessors and any committees with a role in assessment should have the necessary competence and this will likely require that they receive training from time to time. Any person who would have a conflict of interest (actual or potential, real or apparent) if they were to act as an assessor in a particular situation should neither act nor be required to act as an assessor in that situation. This requires that relevant interests should be declared.

There should be appropriate measures to ensure learners are confident about the fairness and objectivity of their assessment procedures. Anonymous grading of summative assessment, where feasible, is an example of an effective confidence building measure.

The intended programme and module learning outcomes and assessment strategies should be plainly written and communicated at the start of a programme to learners and all those involved with teaching and assessment.

The processes for assessment complaints and appeals should meet the same standards of fairness, consistency and fitness for purpose as assessment in general. In particular, they should be straightforward, efficient, timely, and transparent.

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#### 4.2.5 Assessment methods are reviewed and renewed as necessary to adapt to evolving requirements

Developing and testing new assessment methods, tactics and strategies is necessary for continual enhancement and to cope with emerging challenges.

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#### 4.2.6 Learners are well informed about how and why they are assessed

Learners need to be familiar with and understand the intended module and programme learning outcomes, and the relevant programme and module assessment strategies. Accordingly, they should be regularly reminded of these **along with the College's** assessment regulations. Learners should also be involved in the periodic review of assessment procedures.

Programme documentation, i.e. programme handbook/webpage, module guide, etc., should inform learners appropriately.

### 4.3. SECURITY OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Ensuring the security of the assessment process is of paramount importance to all stakeholders involved in the delivery of assessments at NCI. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how NCI ensures the security of (i) learner information and (ii) assessment materials. As such, it will outline the responsibilities of each stakeholder (i.e. individual, school, office, etc.) involved in the administration of assessments.

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#### 4.3.1 Security of Learner Information

It is the responsibility of each staff member working with, or with access to, **learners'** information to ensure it is both secure and accurate at all times. As a result, NCI has implemented the following rules:

- No member of staff should provide the personal details (i.e. address, phone no., etc.) of a learner to any another learner under any circumstances.
- Only the Programme Co-ordinator or Student Services Department are permitted to contact a learner on behalf of another learner if required for emergency or other appropriate reasons.
- Any change of name and home address should only be actioned when accompanied by a written application from the learner with accompanying identification.
- Assessment results are made available to individual learners via their personal online student record

- Assessment results may not be provided over the phone, even to the learner.
- Assessment results will be posted using the official transcript to the address provided by the learner.
- Assessment results should not be put on noticeboards or made available online to a group of students
- Information stored on QuercusPlus must be protected by individual usernames and passwords, and network security.
- The integrity of the learners records is maintained through the use of internet based systems that are securely accessible off-site, such as QuercusLive (MyDetails). However, in exceptional cases when these services are not available, individual learner information should only be removed from the College on external storage devices that are encrypted and password protected.
- Learner names should not be included in any off-line spread-sheets; only the Student ID number should be used.
- Non-electronic (physical) files should be stored securely at all times.
- Individual learner information other than that held in QuercusPlus, i.e. network files, office databases, etc., must be password protected and stored on the College's central servers.

The effectiveness of the above procedure will be quality assured as set out below:

Monitor	Frequency	Monitoring Method(s)
Director Quality Assurance	Annual (November)	Conduct a summary review to ensure all results are processed as required and that records are completed accordingly for the academic session
Director Quality Assurance	Spot Check	Conduct spot checks on assessment processes in accordance with the above rules.
IT Manager	Spot Check	Conduct spot checks on network file security as requested by Director QA

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#### 4.3.2 Security of Assessment Materials

Each stakeholder involved in the delivery of a programme at NCI has particular responsibilities when it comes to the administration of assessments for that programme.

Firstly, the Dean of School is responsible for maintaining the highest level of security at all times in relation to the production of examination papers. In this regard, the Dean must be satisfied that security is a priority amongst faculty and programme coordinators, and must ensure the following rules are strictly adhered to:

- Examination papers or individual questions should be provided to the Programme Coordinator or Examinations Officer in hard copy, on an external storage device or saved in the dedicated secure area of the network.
- Examination papers or individual questions must not be sent through the internal post
- Examination papers or individual questions being submitted by external post should be delivered using registered post

Examinations papers or individual questions can also be provided electronically to the Programme Coordinator or Examinations Officer. In such instances, the following responsibilities apply.

The School (Administrator) is responsible for:

- Creating a course level password to be used for all documentation relating to that course.
- Ensuring the password is suitably secure, i.e. consists of a combination of letters and numbers and does not contain the course code, title, or other easily identifiable characters.
- Issuing this password along with appropriate instructions to faculty.
- Notifying the Dean of the receipt of any examination papers or individual questions that were not submitted according to the above rules. The Dean must then contact the relevant member of faculty and request a new set of documentation.

The IT Department is responsible for:

- Creating 3 email addresses, one for each school/centre.
- Creating a directory on the relevant School/Centre drive per semester.
- Disabling these email addresses on request from the Director of Student Services.

The Director of Student Services is responsible for:

- Working in consultation with the Deans of School to set the deadline for the electronic submission of exam documentation.
- Informing the IT Department of the above deadline.

The Sender of the Email is responsible for:

- Submitting documents created in Microsoft Word format only.
- Sending the email from their staff email address. Please Note: Emails from other addresses will not be accepted. Any documentation from a non-staff email address will be required to be replaced by a new set of documentation.
- **Ensuring the submitted document contains the 'DRAFT' watermark.** Please Note: This DRAFT watermark will only be removed by the School Administrator when the paper is signed off by both internal and external examiners.
- Submitting only complete documentation. Please Note: If changes are made to any of the submitted documents, a whole new set of documents must be resubmitted.
- Ensuring the submitted document is password protected and providing the School Administrator with the password in a separate email.
- Placing a read receipt on the email.
- Keeping a back-up copy of the documentation in a secure place. Please Note: the sender must ensure that this place is appropriate to the requirements of storing sensitive information. It is advised that all electronic copies of examination documentation are password protected and destroyed once they have accepted by the Examinations Office.

The Recipient of the Email is responsible for:

- Ensuring the email is sent to ONE email address in each school.
- Saving the documentation to the appropriate location in each school.
- Recording receipt of the documentation and noting its status/state of readiness.
- Deleting all traces of the email and its attachments from the college systems.



In addition to the particular responsibilities of each stakeholder involved in the administration of assessments, there are also General Rules for ensuring the security of assessment materials:

- The number of academic and non-academic staff handling examination papers or individual questions in draft or final form should be kept to the necessary minimum.
- Office doors, filing cabinets and desk drawers must be kept locked if the staff **members' office is unattended**.
- For final printed papers, responsibility rests with the Examinations Office.
- Whether at School level or within the Examinations Office, examination papers are held in one secure location.
- In the case of the External Awarding Bodies where the College does not participate in the production of examination papers, responsibility for the security of papers received rests with the Examinations Office.
- Where a member of NCI staff is participating on a programme, they should not be involved in the examination paper process. It is the Deans of Schools and the Director **of Student Services'** responsibility to ensure that appropriate processes are put in place to monitor and manage this.

The effectiveness of the above procedure will be quality assured as set out below:

Monitor	Frequency	Monitoring Method(s)
Registrar	Annual	Conduct spot checks of the security of examination papers, premises and files during the assessment preparation period. Conduct a review of any recorded breaches of security

#### 4.4. INTEGRITY OF ASSESSMENT

External Examination/Authentication is a quality assurance mechanism employed by National College of Ireland to ensure the integrity of assessments and to maintain public confidence in its academic qualifications. Ultimately, public confidence rests on its belief that graduates have been objectively judged to have reached the standard that is certified by their qualification in the context of the National Framework of Qualifications.

External Examination/Authentication is particularly concerned with actual programme learning outcomes, their compliance with national standards and, by extension, anything that affects those outcomes. The external examination/authentication allows for the introduction of an independent element into the procedures for the assessment of learners.

For QQI accredited programmes of Higher Education (HE), External Examination is a core condition of their initial validation. Similarly, for QQI accredited programmes of Further Education and Training (FET), External Authentication is a core condition of the initial validation.

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#### 4.4.1 External Examiners

The External Examiner is an independent expert who is a member of the broader community **of practice within the programme's field of learning and whose accomplishments attest to** their likelihood of having the authority necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of the role. External examiners are often drawn from the higher education community. They can be drawn from other communities of practice provided they have the necessary competences or acquire them prior to engagement.

##### *4.4.1.1 The Role of the External Examiner*

The functions of this role can be discharged by an individual or by a team of External Examiners. A team approach might be useful, for example, where the needs of the programme demand a range of specialisations that are difficult to find in a single individual. The constitution of an external examining team is determined by the needs of the programme.

It is particularly important to recognise that the role of External Assessor (where employed) is fundamentally different from that of the External Examiner (individual or team). In research degree programmes, **the term 'external examiner' is used to refer to an 'external assessor'**. An External Assessor may also be appointed to assist in the moderation of assessments in modules where the number of specialists at NCI is limited.

The primary responsibilities of the External Examiner are as follows:

- To review the appropriateness of the MIPLOs and other learning-related objectives of the programme.
- To investigate the actual attainment of learners using information agreed and supplied with by the College;
- To compare and contrast the MIPLOs **and Learners' actual attainment** with the relevant awards standards outlined in the National Framework of Qualifications and with corresponding data from other programmes in the same discipline in other higher education institutions, both nationally and internationally;
- To determine whether or not the applied procedures for assessment are valid, reliable, fair and consistent;
- To review the appropriateness of the programme assessment strategy, assessment procedures and, developing from this, all subsidiary module assessment strategies;
- To review key assessment tasks prior to their assignment whilst taking account of prior learnings; and
- To report all findings to the College and make evidence-based recommendations if necessary. to the College.

The following Code of Practice also applies to the role of External Examiner, as they must undertake to:

- exercise their role with utmost integrity and professionalism when undertaking external authentication for a provider
- comply with policies and procedures specifically in relation to awards and assessment
- **fully comply with NCI's** policies and procedures
- inform NCI of any potential conflict of interest which may compromise their role

- inform NCI of availability
- communicate appropriately with NCI and inform them of planned visits and information required
- provide constructive feedback to the management and staff
- compile an External Examiner Report on time and based on an independent evaluation of the process and procedures

#### *4.4.1.2 Selection of External Examiners*

The Deans of School are responsible for nominating potential External Examiners to the Academic Council for approval. When compiling a list of nominees, the Deans must ensure that:

- Nominees are suitably qualified academic experts in the relevant disciplines with current or recent experience in third level teaching, research, or in relevant commercial, industrial or professional fields;
- Nominees hold an academic qualification, in the appropriate discipline, of a level higher than that of the programme(s) to which they have been nominated, with a minimum of an honours degree or equivalent;
- Only persons involved in the delivery of degree and postgraduate programmes in their own institutions should be considered to evaluate degree programmes in NCI;
- Nominees are capable of dealing with the full range of module areas covered on the programme;
- Nominees are drawn from the Irish or overseas higher education sector, with consideration given to significance of the European dimension of Higher Education in the appointment of teams of External Examiners.
- All appointments of External Examiners in the context of the ongoing development of academic disciplines within the college and of the college's strategic development; and
- Due cognisance of the desirability of gender balance is given when nominating teams of external examiners.

Please Note: Individuals employed by the College within the previous five years are not eligible for nomination as an External Examiner regardless of their academic qualifications and/or professional experience.

Nominations for External Examiners are forwarded to the Registrar by the Dean of School by the agreed date. The Dean will normally be required to make a number of nominations greater than the number of vacancies arising to ensure that all External Examiner positions within the college are appointed. The Academic Standards & Policy Committee will also recommend a list of External Examiners to Academic Council for approval if required.

Prior to recommending external examiners to Academic Council, the Academic Standards & Policy Committee will ensure that an appropriate mix of institutions is represented across the Irish and international education sector. Normally, the incoming External Examiner will not be from the same institution as the outgoing External Examiner and no more than one External Examiner is appointed from a single institution in the same subject area.

It is wholly inappropriate for individuals to canvass NCI on their own behalf for the purpose of seeking a nomination as an External Examiner.

#### *4.4.1.3 Appointment of External Examiners*

On appointment, the External Examiner will be provided with the following documentation

- The original Programme Validation documentation
- The Programme Handbook
- Module Descriptors and Guides
- The current Programme and Module Assessment Strategy
- Assessment Policies of the College

The External Examiner will be invited to a meeting with the relevant Dean of School, the Programme Director and other members of the Programme Team as necessary. This may take place as a formal induction process in the case where a number of External Examiners are being appointed at one time or on an individual basis where individual appointments are being made.

The normal period of appointment of External Examiners for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes is three years. This may be extended to four years with the express permission of the relevant Dean in exceptional circumstances. An External Examiner will not normally be re-appointed within the three years following completion of their most recent appointment.

#### *4.4.1.4 Discontinuation of Appointment*

Under certain circumstances, the appointment of an External Examiner may be discontinued by the College or the individual examiner before the completion of their period of appointment.

Where an External Examiner resigns prior to the completion of their appointment, the relevant School is responsible for obtaining written confirmation of the resignation and advising the **Registrar's Office before** nominating a replacement.

In the event of unsatisfactory performance, the College reserves the right to terminate N appointment at any time. The decision to discontinue shall be based on a statement detailing the proposed grounds for discontinuation and must be submitted to the Vice/President for **final decision**. **The Registrar's Office** will inform the External Examiner in writing of the decision, which must also be reported to the relevant School Committee and Academic Council.

#### *4.4.1.5 Approval and Review of Assessments*

It is the duty of External Examiners to agree the drafts of all examination papers, individual assessments that contribute to 40% or more of summative assessment for a module, marking schemes and model answers where applicable, before the examination papers/assessments are finalised.

The External Examiner shall ensure that the assessment properly reflects the syllabi and approved programme schedules. External Examiner comments on all assessment and examination papers are recorded the annual Module Evaluation Forms.

External Examiners shall decide, in consultation with the Internal Examiner:

- The particular draft assessment briefs, examination papers, model answers and marking schemes to be assessed, prior to the examination.
- The particular marked examination scripts they wish to assess
- The nature and content of other assessment material they wish to assess, including programme coursework.

The Dean of School shall ensure that such material is provided to the External Examiner in good time and that the timely submission of examination papers, assessments and sample scripts are made available when requested. Where the External Examiner wishes to suggest amendments to draft examination papers they may do so.

For full details about the role of the External Examiner in the moderation of assessments, please refer to Section 4.10.5 below.

#### *4.4.1.6 Reporting by External Examiners*

External Examiners are required to submit a full report on each examination with which they are involved not later than September 30th for QQI HE awards. The report should cover both summer and autumn examinations and should be made in sufficient detail to enable the Programme Committee to derive substantial benefit from its contents. On receipt of this report by the Registrar, the Examinations Office **will arrange payment of External Examiner's Fee**.

The Registrar will make a copy of each report available to the Dean of School. The Dean of School will ensure that the contents of the report are communicated appropriately to staff and to the relevant programme committees.

The Dean of School shall respond to these reports by the 30th October via the Annual Monitoring Report and shall advise the Academic Policy and Standards Committee by report of any actions taken to address matters arising from the External Examiner's reports or any other comments or reactions from the School to the content of the reports. This shall serve as feedback to Academic Council.

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#### 4.4.2 External Authenticators

Similar to the function of external examination in QQI HE programmes, external authentication provides independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with national standards in QQI FET programmes.

#### 4.4.2.1 The Role of External Authenticators

The External Authenticator is responsible for ensuring the fairness, consistency and validity of assessment and of the outcome of assessment within programmes leading to QQI FET Awards. External authentication establishes **the credibility of the provider's assessment** processes and ensures that assessment results have been marked in a valid and reliable way and are compliant with the requirements for the award.

The External Authenticator will:

- confirm the fair and consistent **assessment of learners consistent with the provider's** procedures and with QQI policy on quality assuring assessment
- review internal verification report(s) and authenticate the findings/outcomes
- apply a sampling strategy to moderate assessment results consistent with QQI requirements
- moderate assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the Award Specification
- visit the centre and meet with appropriate staff and learners
- **participate in the results approval process as per the provider's agreed** procedures
- identify any issues/irregularities in relation to the Assessment Process
- recommend results for approval
- produce an external authentication report

#### 4.4.2.2 Selection of External Authenticators

When recommending an External Authenticator, the relevant Dean of School should ensure that the candidate:

- has technical/subject matter expertise within the appropriate award area/field of learning
- has experience of delivering programme assessment or work in the industry/field agree to undertake appropriate training and attend appropriate briefings
- has the qualities necessary to interact with learners, assessors and senior staff members i.e. communication skills
- has administrative and IT skills e.g. report writing, time-management skills
- undertakes to operate within the code of practice and guidelines issued by
- is available to the provider at appropriate times
- is independent of the centre to which they are assigned

#### 4.4.2.3 Appointment of External Authenticators

Upon appointment, the External Authenticator will be provided with the following documentation:

- The original Programme Validation documentation
- The Programme Handbook
- Module Descriptors and Guides
- The current Programme and Module Assessment Strategy
- Assessment Policies of the College

The External Authenticator must confirm their availability with NCI to undertake the role for the specific certification period and formally agree dates to conduct the authentication visit. If a programme is delivered across multiple sites, it will be necessary to plan a schedule of visits. The external authentication process should be completed in sufficient time such that **the programme satisfies QQI's published dates for the end of each certification period.**

In advance of the authentication visit, the External Authenticator should be provided with the following:

- the appropriate award specification(s) for the major, special purpose or supplemental awards for which results are to be authenticated
- the sampling strategy used by NCI to ensure a representative sample is available
- all relevant documentation related to the different assessment instruments being used on the programme
- marking schemes for specific assessment activities and outline solutions where appropriate
- details regarding how learner evidence can be accessed

During the authentication process, the External Authenticator will:

- review internal verification report(s) and authenticate the findings/outcomes
- **sample a range of learner evidence using NCI's sampling strategy**
- moderate assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the Award Specification

#### *4.4.2.4 Sampling Learner Evidence*

**The External Authenticator will apply NCI's sampling strategy when selecting an appropriate amount of learner evidence to moderate, which is to sample 10-20% of a group depending on the size of the cohort. In the case of a cohort < 20, all learner evidence is sampled.**

The External Authenticator will inform the College in advance of the specific sample of learner evidence to be selected, which needs to be made available during the authentication visit. The following should also be noted in relation to sampling:

- it is the External Authenticator, not NCI, who selects the evidence to be sampled
- the sample must be sufficient to enable the Authenticator to make an informed judgement on the consistency of the assessment decisions in the context of the award standards
- the sample should reflect the spread of grades and borderline grades i.e. Pass, Merit, Distinction, to ensure grading criteria are being applied consistently
- if the Authenticator is moderating results from a number of assessors and programmes then the sample of evidence should reflect each assessor and each programme sufficiently
- if the Authenticator is moderating results from a number of centres for NCI, the sample should reflect all centres sufficiently
- new assessor judgements/decisions should be sampled at least once during the assessment cycle
- if significant issues are identified within a sample; the evidence for the whole cohort of learners from which the sample was taken should be reviewed by the authenticator

For full details about the role of the External Authenticator in the moderation of assessments, please refer to Section 4.10.6 below.

#### 4.4.2.5 Reporting by External Authenticators

In the case of QQI FET awards, the **External Authenticator's** report will be submitted to the Programme Director following the external authentication visit. The report should cover both summer and autumn examinations and should be made in sufficient detail to enable the Programme Committee to derive substantial benefit from its contents. On receipt of this report by the Registrar, the Examinations Office **will arrange payment of External Examiner's Fee**.

The Programme Director will forward this report to the Registrar. The Registrar will make a copy of each report available to the Dean of School. The Dean of School will ensure that the contents of the report are communicated appropriately to staff and to the relevant programme committees.

The Dean of School shall advise the Academic Policy and Standards Committee of any actions taken to address matters arising from the **External Authenticators'** reports or any other comments or reactions from the School to the content of the reports. This shall serve as feedback to Academic Council.

## 4.5. CONDUCT OF ASSESSMENT

The following section outlines NCI's policies and the associated procedures for ensuring that all assessments are conducted according to the guidelines provided in QQI's *Assessment and Standards* (2013), in particular that assessment procedures are fair and consistent.

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### 4.5.1 Assessment Schedule

The assessment schedule for all assessments other than terminal examinations is set annually by the Programme Committee. This is published prior to the commencement of teaching in the programme handbook and on the student portal/Moodle.

When setting the schedule, the Programme Committee should ensure an appropriate balance of assessment throughout the semester/term. It is strongly encouraged that Programme Committees plan programme and module assessment strategies at the end of the previous academic year in order to assist in the planning of the following academic year.

The assessment schedule should be made available to the Examinations Office in order to ensure that the integrity of mid-term/semester assessments held under examination conditions is maintained. This includes provision of appropriate scripts, security of papers, external examiner arrangements and invigilation. Schools should endeavour to arrange their assessments within the same week to allow for the efficient operation of the assessments.



Terminal examinations are timetabled by the Examinations Office and are published at the end of Week 8 for semesterised programmes. Timetables for non-semesterised programmes will be made available 4 weeks before the commencement of the examination period.

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#### 4.5.2 Scheduling Assessments for Learners with Extenuating Circumstances

In the case where learners may have missed a mid-term examination, laboratory or other summative assessment and an extension to the submission deadline is not possible, the Programme Committee should provide for a day/series of days in the semester where suitable assessments can be scheduled. Learners may have to take the assessment in the repeat session due to time constraints or schedule conflicts. In such cases, this assessment will be treated as a first attempt.

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#### 4.5.3 Scheduling Repeat Assessments

Repeat assessments may include examinations, submission dates for continuous assessment, laboratory practicals, etc., and should be scheduled as early as possible. The repeat examination timetable for the Autumn sitting will be made available 4 weeks in advance of the commencement of examinations.

Regardless of when the assessment is repeated, it will be considered by the Autumn Examination board. In the cases of learners sitting an assessment in the repeat session as a first attempt, this assessment will be considered by the Summer Examination board.

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#### 4.5.4 Preparing Assessment Material

The Internal Examiner, or module owner, is responsible for ensuring the preparation of all assessment materials. Where a module is being delivered in the same semester by more than one lecturer, all lecturers must be consulted by the Internal Examiner in the preparation of assessment materials.

For a diagrammatic representation of this process, please see Figure 4.1 below.



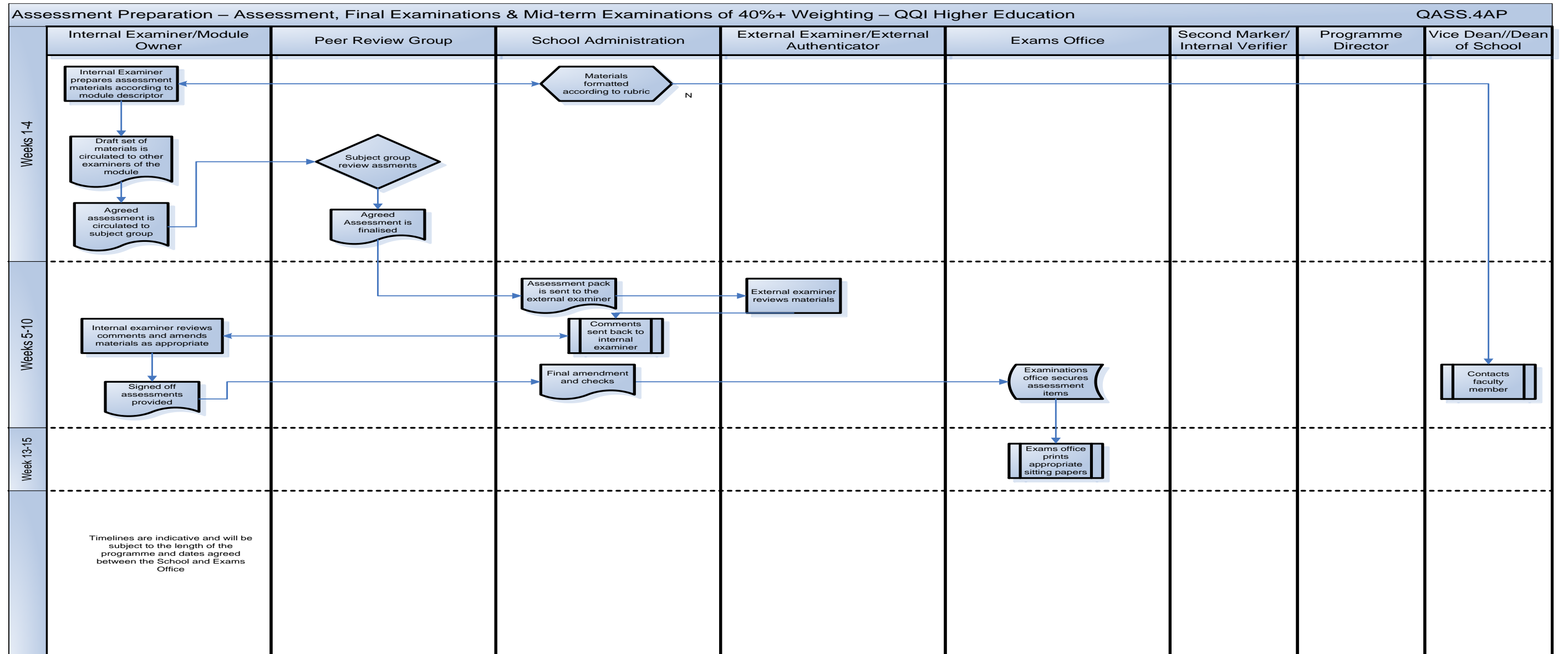


Figure 4-1: Assessment Preparation Process

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#### 4.5.5 Format of Examination Papers

The cover page of each examination paper should include the following:

- The College title and logo
- Date and time of examination
- Programme title
- Programme Stage\*
- Level of the programme award
- Title of subject in accordance with approved programme schedules
- Time allowed
- Instructions to candidates
- Additional materials required
- List of attachments
- Number of pages listed
- Names of Internal examiners
- Names of External examiners

\*It is important to note that the stage of the programme may not be the year of delivery. Due to the nature of part-time programmes stage 2 may be delivered in year 3 of the delivery cycle.

Once reviewed and agreed by the External Examiner, the Internal Examiner must submit all examination papers or part examination papers that they are responsible for to the Examinations Office in accordance with the dates and conditions specified by the College. Each paper will be accompanied by a marking scheme, outline answers and/or model solutions as appropriate.

In order to assure the quality of assessment, all summative assessment should be internally reviewed by the subject group or appropriate review group appointed by the School prior to being submitted to the External Examiner. This process should assist in ensuring that the assessment tests the appropriate programme learning outcomes as approved and that any anomalies or inaccuracies can be detected.

In preparing such material, the Internal Examiner(s) shall also have regard to the following:

- a) Examination papers must provide unambiguous instructions to candidates specifying the number of questions to be attempted and the marks allocated for each question or part thereof.
- b) Where special materials, tables, stationery, dictionary, calculator or equipment are permitted in an invigilated assessment, these are to be clearly specified and notified to the candidates in advance.
- c) Such materials must maintain the established standards for the programme.
- d) There must be conformity with assessment specifications as defined in these regulations.
- e) There must be consistency of terminology and clarity of expression in examination papers.
- f) The relevant standards and conventions of the discipline must be used.
- g) Clearly outlined marking schemes are provided for an examination/assignment so as to ensure that any examiner can correct the assessment in a case where the Internal Examiner is unavailable to correct.

- h) Sufficient differentiation in examination papers/tests is provided from one year to another. Whilst previous examination papers should provide guidance to learners on how the paper may be presented, questions should not be repeated using the same exemplars or numbers.

The Internal Examiner(s) shall ensure that the context and overall balance of the examination paper is satisfactory, having regard to the syllabus and the standard of the programme and the examination. Where there is more than one Internal Examiner involved in the preparation of an examination paper, then appropriate consultations shall take place between them concerning the formulation of the proper balance on the examination paper.

Draft examination papers for first sitting and second sitting should be issued to the External Examiners by the School not later than four weeks prior to the examination date(s). External Examiners will be required to return comments no later than two weeks following receipt of draft examination papers.

The Internal Examiner(s) shall give due consideration to suggestions, criticisms and amendments proposed by the External Examiner(s) either provided verbally or in the External Examiners Annual Report. Once reviewed and agreed by the External Examiner, the Internal Examiner must submit all examination papers or part examination papers that they are responsible for to the Examinations Office in accordance with the dates and conditions specified by the College. Each paper will be accompanied by a marking scheme, outline answers and/or model solutions as appropriate. The Internal Examiner shall ensure that proof copies of the examination paper, including any special requirements and special attachments, are checked for accuracy prior to the commencement of the examination.

It is the responsibility of the Dean of School to ensure that the final examination paper is deposited with the Examinations Office 10 working days before the examination is due to take place. The draft must include all special diagrams and tables and be in a sealed envelope. Failure to deposit the final paper with the Examinations Office by this time will normally result in the examination being postponed. In the event of the Dean of School being unavailable through unforeseen circumstances, the Programme Director will assist in ensuring that the examination paper is deposited with the Examinations Office.

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#### 4.5.6 Preparation of Coursework

All summative coursework items, i.e. items that form part of the **learner's end** of year mark/grade, are subject to the following approval process.

The Internal Examiner shall ensure that the context and overall balance of the coursework item is satisfactory, having regard to the syllabus and the standard of the programme. Where there is more than one Internal Examiner involved in the preparation of a coursework item, then appropriate consultations shall take place between them concerning the formulation of the proper balance on the coursework item.

The internal examiner will discuss the continuous assessment approach with the External Examiner at the end of the appropriate semester. Where a single piece of coursework has a weighting of 40% or more, The title(s) of project/assignment and resit project/assignments should be agreed with the External Examine at least 2 weeks prior to the announcement of the coursework item to students

A representative sample of these coursework items should be sent to the external examiner after correction by the Internal Examiner. Consideration of suggestions, amendments and/or criticisms either provided verbally or **outlined in the External Examiner's Annual Report should be applied** in the setting of future assessments for the module.

In preparing coursework material, the Internal Examiner(s) shall also have regard to the following:

- a) Coursework items must provide unambiguous instructions to candidates specifying the number of questions to be attempted where appropriate and the marks allocated for each question or part thereof.
- b) Coursework must maintain the established standards for the programme.
- c) There must be conformity with assessment specifications as defined in these regulations.
- d) There must be consistency of terminology and clarity of expression in assignment briefs.
- e) The relevant standards and conventions of the discipline must be used.

## 4.6. PROGRAMME AND MODULE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY & STRUCTURE

Each programme and its constituent modules will have an assessment strategy that is approved during the programme validation process and reviewed by the Programme Committee at the end of each academic year. The following regulations set out the principles by which assessment strategies should be formulated.

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### 4.6.1 Assessment Attempts

It is NCI policy that the learner should attempt all assessment approved for the module. Failure to attempt an assessment without approved extenuating circumstances will result in an overall fail of the module.

A derogation from this regulation may be obtained by a programme team through the validation or annual programme change process. Where a derogation is obtained, the module descriptor must clearly indicate the assessment regulations for the module.

#### 4.6.1.1 Number of Attempts

Learners will normally be allowed 4 attempts at an assessment where extenuating circumstance does not apply. This is reduced to 2 attempts for Dissertation or Major Projects at level 9.

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### 4.6.2 Typical Models of Assessment

The assessment strategies for programmes delivered by NCI normally adhere to one of the following models. These are indicative and by no means meant to be limiting.

Model 1: Module grade is based on 1 piece of work, i.e. a project, essay or dissertation worth 100%

Model 2: Module grade is based on 2 pieces of work with equal or different weighting, i.e. a Project and Terminal Examination both worth 50% or an Essay worth 40% and a Terminal examination worth 60%.

Model 3: Module grade is based on multiple continuous assessment activities, i.e. a series

of 5 small assignments spread across the semester, each worth 20%.

Model 4: Module grade is based on a considerable piece of work and multiple continuous assessment activities, i.e. a Project or Terminal Examination worth 60% and a series of 4 small assignments spread across the semester, each worth 10%.

The programme and module assessment strategy should link the programme assessment instruments, including continuous assessment and repeat assessment, to the MIPLOs as well as the MIMLOs and the learning outcomes for each stage.

Module assessment strategies must clearly outline

- If all summative assessments should be attempted and if not, why not.
- The designation of some elements of work which specifically assess a learning **outcome as 'must pass'**
- If the learner must pass the exam, the continuous assessment or the module as a whole
- Whether or not the module can be compensated with any other module or with a defined set of modules
- In order to ensure that minimum programme learning outcomes are met, can this module
- How the overall mark for a module will be calculated
- How each MIPLO has been assessed

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#### 4.6.3 Assessment of Joint/Group Projects

Joint Assessment is the marking of examinable material submitted by more than one candidate. Such material may include a project, research, analysis, work placement or any combination of these.

Where two or more candidates present a project, the individual contribution and performance of each candidate should be assessed and individual marks awarded accordingly.

By its nature, joint assessment can be prone to (i) unequal effort by the group members, (ii) plagiarism and (iii) subjective marking, which makes it difficult to ensure fairness and consistency. To address this problem, the following procedures should be strictly adhered to:

- Participants should be placed in groups by the lecturer that are suitably balanced and do not dis/advantage any of the individual members
- Assessment should be continuous throughout the time period permitted for the project
- A viva voce examination is permissible as part of the assessment process

To discourage unequal effort by individual group members, the format of the assignment should allow for easy distribution of component tasks. One of the following models for allocating marks to individual members should also be chosen.

- Each learner is assigned a task within the project that is assessed individually
- An overall mark is awarded for the project and individual marks adding up to the overall mark are allocated based on contribution, i.e. the project is awarded 65% for a group of 3 students, Student A = 20%, Student B = 30% and Student C = 15%.
- Each learner is awarded the same mark for the project and an additional 10 marks are allocated amongst the members based on individual effort, i.e. the project is awarded 66% for a group of 3 students, Student A = 24% (23+1), Student B = 26% (23+3) and Student C = 29% (23+5)
- All learners get the same mark for the project and then get additional individual marks for another task.
- All learners get the same mark for the project and then get additional individual marks for their performance in a group viva.
- All learners get the same mark for the project and then get additional individual marks based on an exam that will assess their knowledge of and involvement in the project.

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#### 4.6.4 Repeat Assessment

Having agreed the structure and calculation rules of assessment, a decision is then required on how to manage repeat assessment for the models as presented above. Any repeat assessment must be set in order to test the learning outcomes that the learner has not passed. Accordingly, the module assessment strategy must clearly outline how a learner who fails a particular assessment and its associated learning outcomes can be reassessed. The available options are:

- The learner repeats the specific assessment that they have failed, i.e. a project is repeated by completing another project, an assignment is repeated by submitting another assignment, etc.
- The internal examiner sets a new assessment that tests the same learning outcomes that the original assessment was set to test, i.e. a project or assignment is replaced by an examination.

The learner will retain any marks gained in any previous sittings of the module for other elements of assessment that have been passed. In the case where a module is no longer offered or the assessment structure of a module has changed, the learner must undertake to be assessed under the new assessment structure.

#### 4.7. POLICY ON ASSESSMENT SUBMISSION

All assessments at Level 6 and above are to be submitted both:

- Electronically via Moodle/Turnitin

AND

- In hard-copy to the relevant school co-ordinator in accordance with the project submission schedule as outlined in the programme handbook.\*



\* Where a lecturer advises learners that a hard-copy is not required, the lecturer must make arrangements to ensure that copies of the corrected assessment are available for the external examining, feedback and appeals processes.

A common submission sheet is to be submitted with all assessments. This sheet will outline the College plagiarism policy (see Section 4.22.2 below) and will include a declaration that all work submitted is that of the learner and that they have read and understood the plagiarism regulations.

Please Note: Learners should be advised to avoid submitting assessments at the last minute before the deadline as it can may take some time for Turnitin to process submission reports. Training for learners on the use of Turnitin will be provided as part of the information services orientation and training service.

The following deadlines apply for coursework submissions:

- Full-time Learners: 4.00pm at the School Office on the due date of the assessment.
- Part-time Learners: 9.00pm at the School Office on the due date of the assessment or 5.00pm in the case of Saturday deadlines\*

\*The School office should have a post box available for this purpose. These can be delivered in person or posted in the case of off-campus students.

On submission of coursework via Moodle/Turnitin, the learner will receive an email receipt. This is the official receipt of submission. Receipts for hard copy submissions will not be issued.

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#### 4.7.1 Late Submissions and Penalties

Projects that are received after the deadline, if approved in advance by the Programme Director, should be forwarded to the relevant Programme Co-ordinator. Medical certification or a Personal Circumstances Form must also be submitted with the coursework.

In the case of an extension not being requested, not being granted or being exceeded, the following penalties apply to each piece of coursework:

- Up to one week late from the time and date of submission 10% of the mark awarded for the essay/project will be deducted.
- For every week after the first week and up to the sixth a further 5% will be deducted from the mark awarded.

Any coursework received after a six-week period will attain a zero mark.

#### 4.8. MANAGEMENT OF ASSESSMENT TAKEN UNDER EXAMINATION CONDITIONS

In order to ensure clear lines of responsibility for the maintaining the integrity of assessments taken under examination conditions, terms of reference and associated duties are outlined below for the two primary stakeholders involved in facilitating this process. This section will also provide details of the examination regulations that learners are expected to adhere to.

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#### 4.8.1 Examinations Officer

The role of the Examinations Officer is to ensure that the academic credibility of exams is maintained at all times. Accordingly, they must be available for the full duration of the examination session.

In broad terms, the duties of the Examinations Officer are as follows:

- Ensuring the venue used for the assessment is fit for purpose, i.e. there is sufficient **space between desks to prevent candidates easily copying each other's work, that it is** suitable for candidates who have been granted particular accommodations, etc.
- Ensuring the assessment schedule is adhered to through a punctual start and finish **for the each of the day's sessions.**
- Make themselves known to the Senior Invigilator for that session and checking for any issues or concerns.
- Confirming that the answer books and seating arrangements have been adhered to.
- Checking that Learners have not brought books and/or coats into exam centre.
- Immediately prior to the commencement of the session, surveying the aisles and desks for illegal notes and discretely checking table tops, calculators and other places that illegal notes may be concealed or written.
- Patrolling the exam centre on at least one further occasion during the session to ensure no issues or concerns have arisen.

In the event of there being a mistake on an examination paper that cannot be answered in the normal way, the Examinations Officer may be required to make a decision, i.e. in terms of how a question should be interpreted. In such cases, the Examinations Officer should record the instruction to the Learner(s) and inform the Registrar accordingly.

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#### 4.8.2 Exam Invigilators

The role of the Exam Invigilator is concerned with ensuring that the rules and regulations guiding the examination process are applied consistently and that all associated procedures are strictly adhered to.

To ensure the security of the assessment, Exam Invigilators must:

- Collect the Examination Papers, Examination Scripts, Invigilator's Report Form (Appendix 6) and the Sign-in-Sheet from the Examinations Office at least 15 minutes prior to the commencement of the examination. (It is crucial that everything is cleared and brought back from the examination room to the examinations office once the examination has ended.)
- Place an answer booklet on each of the numbered desks before the Learners enter the examination centre. Any unused answer books should be collected 30 minutes into the examination session.
- Ensure that all candidates are seated in their correct place 10 minutes before the commencement of the examination. Learners are assigned a numbered desk that is published outside the examination room. Please Note: No bags or coats are permitted in the examination centre. Food or drink is not permitted in the examination centre without prior approval of the Registrar.

- Ensure that Learners' desks contain nothing other than writing material and Student ID card, unless otherwise specified for the examination.
- When distributing the examination papers, instruct each candidate not to turn over the paper until the general instruction to do so is given.

Immediately prior to the commencement of the examination, the invigilator should:

- Announce that no candidate is permitted to leave the examination centre during the first 30 minutes or last 30 minutes of the scheduled assessment period.
- Advise all candidates how to complete the cover sheet of the answer booklet and instruct them that their Student ID number and desk number must be written clearly on the booklet.
- Advise all candidates to carefully read the instruction at the head of the examination paper before beginning.

During the examination, the invigilator should:

- Complete the attendance register by having each candidate sign beside their name and checking this against the details on their Student ID card.
- Ensure that no candidate is admitted to the examination centre more than 30 minutes after the commencement of the exam. Please Note: In exceptional circumstances, and provided that no other candidate has withdrawn and left the examination centre, a candidate may be admitted past 30 minutes at the discretion of the Examinations Officer.
- Accompany any candidate that requests to use the toilet or access first-aid facilities and record this information opposite their name on the attendance register. Please Note: invigilators **will be appropriately briefed regarding individual candidates'** medical conditions if necessary.
- Ensuring that if a candidate leaves the examination centre without reason or accompaniment, they are deemed to have finished their examination and are not permitted to re-enter the examination centre.
- Maintain a record of the number of candidates in the examination centre and indicate on the attendance register the candidates who received additional answer booklets.

At the conclusion of the examination, invigilators should:

- Inform candidates when there are 15 minutes and 5 minutes remaining in the assessment period.
- Advise candidates when the assessment has concluded and ensure they remain seated while answer booklets are collected.
- When collecting answer booklets, ensuring that candidates have completed the front cover correctly, checking them against the attendance register to account for all additional booklets.
- Ensure that candidates refrain from speaking to each other until they exit the examination centre.
- Arranging answer booklets in the order of the attendance register.
- Delivering answer booklets to the Senior Invigilator, who includes those from other locations where students with reasonable accommodations were being assessed, and then provides them to the Student Services Officer for official sign-off against the attendance register.

#### *4.8.2.1 Invigilator's Report Form*

At the end of each assessment period, the invigilator must complete the Invigilator's Report Form. This document contains the following information:

- Details of Assessment Period, i.e. location date, time, etc.
- Number of Candidates Present
- Number of scripts distributed
- Number of scripts collected.
- Details of Learner behaviour, i.e. instances of illness, suspected cheating, candidate(s) leaving the centre of medical reasons, etc.
- Queries that arose regarding the examination paper, what candidate raised the query and how it was addressed.
- Any comments regarding examination registration.

#### *4.8.2.2 Suspected Breaches of Exam Regulations*

In the case of observing suspect behaviour and/or breaches of exam regulations, the invigilator must follow the following procedure:

- i. Collect suspect evidence in breach of examination regulations or in the case of oral communication, inform the Learner that the activity is in breach of examination regulations and that the incident is going to be reported and brought to the attention of the Examinations Office.
- ii. Contact the Examinations Office and inform them of what has occurred.
- iii. Record the details of the event **in the Invigilator's Report, attaching all relevant evidence** and getting signed by the Senior Invigilator.

It is the responsibility of the Senior Invigilator and the Examinations Officer to discreetly interview the candidate concerned before they exit the examination centre. They must ensure the details recorded in the Invigilator Report Form are accurate and record any explanations provided by the candidate in question. They must also inform the candidate that issue may be dealt with as a suspected breach of examination regulations and that a report will be passed to the Registrar.

#### *4.8.2.3 Emergency Evacuation*

In the event of an evacuation order, the Invigilator shall observe normal safety precautions and shall bring the examination group to a safe place having first instructed candidates that they must not discuss the examination.

Careful note should be taken of the time when the examination is interrupted. When the 'all clear' is given, the Invigilator shall bring the group back to the examination centre to recommence the examination and shall allow an appropriate amount of time to the candidates to complete it. Details of any such interruptions must be included in the Invigilators Report Form.

Please Note: The Registrar has the right to recommend that the whole examination is cancelled and alternative arrangements made to reschedule the assessment.

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#### 4.8.3 Examination Regulations

The following regulations apply to all assessments held under examination conditions and it is the responsibility of the candidate to familiarise themselves with these regulations prior to such assessments.

- Candidates should assemble 10 minutes before the advertised time of an examination but should not enter the examination room until requested to do so. Please Note: If a candidate is absent from the examination for medical or other unavoidable reasons, a Medical Certification Personal Circumstances Form must be submitted to the relevant Programme Coordinator, together with a medical certificate if the absence was due to illness.
- No candidate shall bring into the examination centre or have in their possession while in the examination centre, any materials other than those expressly permitted for that examination.
- Candidates should seat themselves at the desk indicated by their designated desk number as displayed on the notice board at the entrance to the examination centre. They should not move any of the papers on the desk or commence writing until requested to do so.
- Candidates must leave their Student ID card visible on their desks for the purpose of checking.
- Candidates must comply with an Invigilator's directions at all times.
- Candidates may use slide rules, drawing instruments, dictionaries and other reference books/documents if expressly permitted. Mathematical tables, if required, will be supplied. Candidates may not bring their own mathematical tables or statistical tables into the examination room. If a candidate wishes to use anything other than what is expressly permitted for that examination, this must have been previously agreed with the Academic Affairs Office.
- Silent, non-programmable calculators may be used provided that the rules of any relevant external examining body do not specifically exclude them. It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that their calculator is in working order as they will not be permitted to borrow materials from another candidate.
- Candidates shall not bring into the examination centre, nor have in their possession while in the examination centre, any computing equipment (including electronic organisers and programmable calculators), mobile phones, recording equipment, radios, books, notes, paper or any source of information pertinent to the examination or which might influence examination performance. Retention of any unauthorised material shall be construed as a serious breach of Exam Regulations.
- No candidate will be admitted to the examination room more than 30 minutes after the start of the examination; in exceptional circumstances, and provided that no other candidate has left the examination room, a candidate may be admitted beyond this time by the Examinations Officer. Extra time will not be allowed in such instances.
- If, after reading the examination paper, a candidate wishes to leave the examination room, they will not be allowed to do so until after 30 minutes from the beginning of the examination.
- Candidates wishing to temporarily leave the examination centre may not do so unless accompanied by a nominated attendant. In any event, no person may leave the **examination room without the Invigilator's permission and no candidate** may leave

within the last 30 minutes of the examination period.

- Rough work should be included in the answer book and identified as such. Anything written on material other than the answer book or exam script will be considered unauthorised material and removed by the Invigilator.
- At the end of the examination, candidates must remain in their place until an Invigilator has collected **their script(s)**. **It is a candidate's responsibility to ensure that** their script(s), answer sheet(s) and any unused answer books are handed to the Invigilator before leaving the examination hall.
- The candidate may NOT remove from the examination hall any items provided by the College other than the examination paper.

A serious breach of examination regulations will be deemed to have occurred when any actual instances, or attempted forms, of the below are perpetrated by a candidate, whether acting alone or with another person(s):

- Cheating
- Plagiarism (as defined in Sec.)
- Misrepresentation
- Falsification
- Impersonating or other such form of deception
- Possession of copies of examination question or examination paper, in advance of the examination being held

Accordingly, a candidate will be in serious breach of examination regulations if they:

- Communicate or attempt to communicate with another candidate whilst in the examination centre. Please Note: Any additional assessment materials must be requested from the Invigilator.
- Are found to have unauthorised materials in their possession whilst in the examination centre. Please Note: An invigilator shall be empowered to inspect any material in the possession of a candidate during an examination.
- **Are considered to have copied or to attempted to copy another candidate's answer(s).**
- Are thought to be impersonating another candidate. Please Note: In such instances, both the impersonator and the impersonated will be deemed to be in breach of examination regulations.

Please refer to Section 4.22 below **for NCI's procedure for dealing with serious breaches of examination regulation.**

#### 4.9. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES RELATING TO EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

NCI is committed to ensuring that no learner is unfairly disadvantaged due to their individual and/or personal circumstances. Please refer to Chapter 7 (7.3.10 & 7.3.11) **for NCI's Assessment Policy for Learners with a Disability or Learning/Health Difficulty.**

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##### 4.9.1 Extenuating Circumstances

A learner can make an application for ***Extenuating Circumstances*** if they are of the opinion that their performance in an examination or their ability to attend an examination and/or to comply with regulations governing the examination have been adversely affected by their

personal circumstances. Application is made to the relevant Dean of School with a request that these circumstances are brought to the attention of the appropriate Examination Board.

**It is the Learner's responsibility to bring extenuating circumstances to the attention of the relevant Dean of School at the earliest possible opportunity.** Applications must be made in writing, must explain fully and clearly the circumstances affecting the learner, must indicate the exact dates during which the learner was affected, and must be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation.

Applications must be made within five working days after the date of the last examination. Requests to consider extenuating circumstances will not be considered after the meeting of the Board of Examiners except in exceptional circumstances information of this nature shall not be considered if presented after the meeting of the Board of Examiners.

The Dean may seek such supplementary information as deemed necessary to assist the Board of Examiners in its consideration of the extenuating circumstances identified by the Candidate. They may also request to interview the Learner to further clarify their request.

The Board of Examiners will consider all extenuating circumstances referred to it by the Dean of School when making a decision regarding the final result of an assessment(s) affecting a **Learner's progress.**

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#### 4.9.2 EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Learners

While evidence of English language competence is required during the admission process for EFL applicants, NCI acknowledges that the use of ambiguous phrases and complex terminology can unfairly disadvantage EFL Learners, especially in exam situations. Furthermore, as all examinations are conducted through English without reference to the **Learner's** native language, it is necessary to permit certain arrangements for EFL Learners.

##### 4.9.2.1 Eligibility

It is recommended that examination concessions only be extended to students who:

- i. Are citizens of a country where English is not the native language
- ii. Meet one of the following criteria:
  - Have come to NCI directly
  - Have come to NCI through an English Language School or Foundation/Bridging Course.
  - Have not lived in an English-speaking country for more than 5 years.
  - Have not completed their last 3 years of post-primary education in an English-speaking country.
- iii. Demonstrate that they are taking measures to improve their English by attending recognised English language courses. Please Note: supporting documentation confirming that the Learner is registered to an approved course must be provided upon request.

#### 4.9.2.2 Arrangements

Authorised EFL Learners can avail of the following arrangements during assessments taken under examination conditions.

##### Use of Dictionaries

It is acknowledged that, in some circumstances, including examination conditions, the use of ambiguous or less familiar terminology, words or phrases may cause EFL learners particular difficulties. To remove any consequent disadvantages, it is appropriate to permit such Learners to use an English dictionary provided by the College. This dictionary will not contain expanded definitions of words but simple word-for-word definitions. The use of electronic dictionaries in examinations is not permitted.

##### Time Concessions

Approved EFL Learners should be permitted additional time to complete written examinations. An additional 10 minutes should be allowed for every 1 examination hour. This allowance is in accordance with concessions made for candidates with learning difficulties, thus making it easier for Invigilators to manage all candidates in the examination centre.

##### Marking

While NCI accepts that lecturers are ultimately responsible for maintaining standards and ensuring equity for all students completing examination assessments, approved EFL Learners will be identifiable to markers. Accordingly, markers will be advised not to penalise such candidates for poor language skills as long as the concepts are coherent and correct. However, if precise language use is part of the assessment criteria for the module, this accommodation will not be applicable to EFL Learners.

### 4.10. CORRECTION OF ASSESSMENT

If assessments are to be fair and consistent, it is necessary to have robust procedures in place that guarantee common standards are being applied across all Schools, levels and subject areas but also within programmes themselves. As a result, NCI has developed the following **guidelines for Examiners concerning the correcting of Learners' exams and the following procedure for the moderation of each Examiner's marking.**

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#### 4.10.1 Guidelines for Examiners

Examiners should evaluate the academic content of each candidate's **examination material** in an objective, transparent fashion, based on the solutions and/or marking scheme approved by the External Examiner. They should also ensure that such material is assessed using the appropriate guidelines of their respective School and be vigilant when recording and returning marks.

The following guidelines are proposed to ensure that examination assessments are evaluated in a fair and consistent manner across the entire college:

- Marks awarded must be in accordance with the marking scheme agreed with the External Examiner. No additional considerations should influence an Examiner in the



awarding of marks. Please Note: The Examination Board will consider documented extrinsic considerations raised by programme directors.

- Care should be taken to scrutinise every page of each answer book as Learners sometimes leave blank pages between portions of their work, or do not begin their work on the first page of the answer book.
- Examiners should ensure that when they read a page in the answer book that they mark each page with a tick or an initial to demonstrate that the page has been read.
- Examiners should write the marks awarded for each portion of the Learner's work in a colour other than that used by the Learner. The total mark awarded for the answer to a whole question should be given in bold clear figures beside the question number and ringed, i.e. on the page where the question starts.
- All comments must relate strictly and concisely to the criteria for the assessment in the marking scheme. Comments that could be construed as being in any way personal or offensive must be avoided.
- Where the Learner has answered one or more questions in excess of the number required, they should indicate which question is cancelled. Examiners should only mark the required number of answers. If the excess answer(s) is not cancelled, the Examiner should mark the answers in the order presented until the required number has been reached.
- Where a Learner answers only the required number of questions but has cancelled an answer or part thereof. The Examiner should ignore the cancellation and mark all answers provided.
- To ensure that the total mark awarded to a candidate is correct, all marks should be double-checked. A suggested approach is to start at the front of the script and total up the marks. Record this total on the inside cover of the exam paper. Now repeat the process, this time starting at the last page of the answer book and working backwards. Record this mark on the inside of the answer book cover. Now check to make sure that the two totals agree. If they do not agree, all discrepancies must be rectified.
- The total mark awarded for each question should be entered in the grid on the cover of the answer book. The total for the entire examination should be entered into a box **underneath the answers for each numbered question, with the word 'Total' to the left** of the mark.
- Total marks must be entered onto the marksheet by the lecturer. This is electronically through QuercusPlus, which can be accessed via the staff portal. Examiners are reminded to be vigilant when entering total marks and cross-checking all entries before submitting.
- All scripts should be checked against the attendance register. If a script is missing, the Examiner must check this against the absences recorded on the attendance register.

Where a Learner is absent with permission from a continuous assessment, the total for the examination should also be given for the continuous assessment.

Please Note: If a Learner achieves an overall result of 39% in a module, the lecturer should decide whether that Learner will be awarded 40% or not and make the change on the exam script or continuous assessment accordingly.

Faculty are requested to collect the completed examination scripts for their class within twenty-four hours of completion of the examination. The faculty member will be requested to sign for the examination scripts at which point a check of the scripts will be completed by the examinations administrator and the faculty member.

Faculty are encouraged to have the relevant scripts corrected and second marked within eight working days. In circumstances where a faculty member is unable to comply with this request, a derogation may be applied by prior agreement with the Dean of School. The Dean of School will notify the Examinations Officer of such arrangements prior to the commencement of examinations.

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#### 4.10.3 Guidelines for Correcting Assessments

NCI recognises that modules can have different styles of assessment that consequently lend themselves to different styles of correcting. For this reason, all faculty involved in the correcting of assessments are advised to consult with a colleague on any queries they might have or issues they encounter when deciding what grade(s) to award. Faculty are also required to adhere to the Guidelines for Correction of Assessment provided in Section 4.16 below.

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#### 4.10.4 Internal Moderation of Marking

Confirming fair assessment of learners in accordance with national standards is undertaken through moderation of assessment results. Moderation is the process whereby the evidence **of a candidate's learning that has already been assessed by the Internal Examiner is reviewed** according to the standards outlined in the Award Specification.

NCI adheres to a strict moderation policy to ensure consistency of standards between Examiners. This policy is informed by Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance **in the European Higher Education Area (2015) and QQI's *Assessment and Standards* (2013).**

Assessments on all Programmes from Level 4 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications are subject to the provisions of this policy. All assessments that count towards the final grade will be subject to internal moderation, i.e. continuous assessment and examinations. In NCI there are four possible models for ensuring consistency of marking standards between Examiners.

Please Note: MCO assessments and tests corrected by online systems are excluded from the internal moderation policy.

##### 4.10.4.1 *Model 1*

Blind Double Marking: Dissertations and Single assessments worth 10 credits or more

Blind double marking means that separate copies of the assignment are marked independently and anonymously, or that the 1st marker makes no annotations on the work being marked so that the second marker examines all pieces of work. Both markers record their marks and comments separately and a final mark is determined. It is unlikely that a single examination script will be subject to blind double marking.

#### 4.10.4.2 *Model 2*

Seen Double Marking Retrospective Sampling: All other assessments work  $\geq 15\%$  of the total mark.

Double marking by sampling means that all assessments are marked by an internal examiner. A second marker then double marks a sample of the work already first marked, the sample being randomly selected from across the range of marks as follows:

- A minimum of 3 assessments from each classification band and all fails OR
- **FETAC sampling rules:  $\sqrt{n+1}$  where n is the number of students. Minimum sample 12** OR
- The sample to be second marked must include written assessments and examinations scripts from the top, middle and bottom of the range of work.

#### 4.10.4.3 *Model 3*

Moderation: This should be used in the case of large common modules as an additional quality assurance mechanism, i.e. modules delivered off campus or common 1st year modules.

Moderation means that all assessment scripts whose primary purpose is summative are marked by an internal examiner who will have access to the grades and comments of the initial examiner. The following sampling options are applicable for moderated assessments: 1st marker will moderate a sample of assessment to assure the quality of marking standards.

- A minimum of 5 assessments from each classification band and all fails OR
- **FETAC sampling rules:  $\sqrt{n+1}$  where n is the number of students. Minimum sample 12** OR
- The sample to be second marked must include written assessments and examinations scripts from the top, middle and bottom of the range of work.

#### 4.10.4.4 *Model 4*

Single Marking: Formative assessment and small individual assessments worth  $< 15\%$ .

In cases where the assessment for the module is made up of several small assessments, at least 50% of assessments should be adhere to Model 2.

In the cases of Models 1-3, once internal moderation has been completed, a discussion on the standards and grades will take place between the two examiners. This may result in adjustments to overall marks if, for example, the boundary between pass and fail is not suitable or marks at the top of grade scales are disproportionate. In all instances, this discussion must take place in the context of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the module and the extent to which learners have achieved and adhered to these, respectively.

Internal moderation will not normally result in changes to individual scripts but may instead result in changes to marks within bands. For example, a decision that marks within the 50% - 59% band had been under/over-marked by 5% would result in all scripts within this band having to be remarked. In cases where an irresolvable dispute arises between the two examiners, an additional examiner will be asked to mediate. This third examiner may be the Programme Director, the Subject Head or the Dean of School.

Internal moderation must be completed before work is sent to External Examiners/Authenticators. All work that has been internally moderated will be sent to the external examiners. The Internal Examiner shall make available to the External Examiner/Authenticator all scripts and continuous assessment material in accordance with dates determined by the Dean of School, together with the mark sheets that shall clearly show the marks allocated to each examination question, and the total mark for this subject computed and expressed as a percentage.

In conjunction with colleagues in Schools and administrative services, the Registrar is responsible for ensuring that the following procedure is adhered to during the internal moderation process.

- First and second markers should ideally be paired at the commencement of the semester but no later than week 3. This pairing takes place at School level.
- In cases of Model 1 being used, 2 copies of the assessment should be submitted by the learner for that purpose.
- In cases of Model 2 being used, the second marker should use a different colour pen to the learner and 1st marker is used.
- The first marker must provide their sample available to the second marker as soon as it becomes available.
- The Double Marking Audit Sheet must be used to ensure the accurate recording of awarded marks. Both markers must record their respective marks on this document.
- A discussion must take place between the two markers regarding grade bands and not individual marks. If there is no material difference between the marks awarded, the mark of the first marker will remain as the agreed mark.
- Following an agreement being reached, marks must be noted on the sample scripts.
- Both markers are required to sign the Double Marking Audit Sheet and the marksheet attachment before submitting the scripts to the Examinations Office for External Examination/Authentication.

#### **4.10.4.5 Internal Verification Process (QQI FET and CIPD Awards)**

For Further Education and Training programmes and programmes accredited by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), a process of internal verification must be completed before assessments can be externally moderated.

The Internal Verifier should be a **full-time member of the relevant School's academic faculty** but must not be an Internal Examiner on the programme being assessed. It is their **responsibility to assess the programme's adherence to the College's quality assured assessment procedures.**

In order to do so, the Internal Verifier must determine whether or not:

- learner evidence matches the assessment requirements of the award standard by confirming that the assessment techniques being used are appropriate
- information on assessment was provided to learners i.e. submission dates, guidelines/briefs, assessment criteria
- appropriate documentation was issued to learners
- appropriate documentation was used to record learner results

Using a sample of learner evidence, the Internal Verifier will also further moderate the marking of assessments by:

- checking marks are totalled and percentage marks calculated correctly
- checking marks are transferred correctly from learner evidence to learner marking sheet/record
- checking percentage marks and grades allocated are consistent with QQI FET grading bands
- noting any errors and recording the corrections made
- identifying any irregularities, notifying the appropriate staff and taking corrective action if required as per agreed procedures

The International Verifier will complete the Internal Verification Report, which will include all relevant observations and recommendations concerning the above tasks.

During the internal verification process, the Examinations Office is responsible for:

- Obtaining a report of a provisional results the learner group(s)
- Confirming results are recorded for all learners being entered on the report
- Confirming evidence is available for all learner results recorded
- Taking corrective action if learner results and/or evidence is missing, i.e. contacting the Internal Examiner, rechecking all assessments and/or evidence for mislaid items, reviewing attendance registers and submission logs to ensure evidence was received, etc.

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#### 4.10.5 External Moderation of Assessments for HE Programmes

**Following the completion of a module's assessments, the** External Examiner is required to see representative samples of assessment material presented by candidates. This also forms a **crucial component of the College's** External Examination procedure (see Section 4.4.1.1 above). The sample should normally include the best script, a number of borderline scripts at each grade in the case of award years and a random sample of the remainder, with sufficient material, including where feasible, relevant statistical data to enable the External Examiner(s) to form a judgment as to the appropriateness of the marking at all levels of classification. All assessments will have been internally moderated in accordance with College policy and only the agreed marks will be sent to the External Examiner.

The External Examiner should receive the following:

- A sample of scripts as specified above
- Coursework for this sample where practicable/applicable
- Copies of the assessment brief, examination paper, marking schemes, and model solutions

- Original of the college's mark sheet showing the aggregation and final mark for each candidate in a module
- Statistical data regarding award classifications, Pass rates, Percentage Point Averages (PPA) and standard deviation for specific modules

In the case of oral examinations, External Examiners with specific responsibility for modern languages shall normally be expected to attend for all or part of the Oral competence assessment sessions held at the college in respect of programmes for which such assessments are specified in the approved programme schedule as an examination requirement. Where such assessments are carried out in the absence of the External Examiner, an audio recording of the assessment(s) will be produced and a representative sample of this recorded material shall be monitored by the External Examiner as part of their duties.

#### **4.10.5.1 Duties**

External Examiners shall normally attend the college at the time of determination of co-ordinating results and at such other times as may be determined by the college for the purpose of assessing the standard of the programme and/or the standard of learner performance.

Please Note: If the External Examiner feels that circumstances exist that might constitute a conflict of interest, they shall bring this to the attention of the Dean of School/Registrar who will make such arrangements as are necessary to negate the conflict of interest.

The appropriateness of examination materials to the level of award concerned shall be a primary consideration of the External Examiner. They will also pay particular attention to:

- the spread of marks and the grades awarded during the Award Stage of a programme
- whether or not the standard of learner performance is adequate for the relevant stage of the programme
- whether or not assessment processes and the determination of awards have been conducted fairly

The External Examiner may comment on such matters relating to individual and/or cohort learner performance, module performance and/or programme performance as they deem necessary.

The External Examiner shall indicate on the Module/Subject marking sheet any proposed amendments for the Internal Examiner. The Internal Examiner shall take such proposed amendments into account, and shall make the necessary adjustments. Efforts should be made to achieve consensus in relation to such proposed amendments.

All programme External Examiners will be expected to visit the college at least once in each academic year. This visit will normally take place at the time of determination of final results in summer, i.e. the Examination Board. Examiners may also be required to visit the College on other occasions in order to examine scripts or other assessment material. In the case of programmes or examination modules where repeat examinations are held in the Autumn, or at such other times as may be approved by Academic Council, the attendance of one External Examiner will be arranged as appropriate.

At the Examination Board, all comments and recommendation of the External Examiner(s) will be given due consideration. The External Examiner may also request to have their dissenting opinion on any matter recorded on the Broadsheet of results (see Section 4.11.3 below).

#### 4.10.5.2 *Assessment Appeals*

External Examiners will be asked to review examination scripts, continuous assessments and projects where the final marks decided by the Examination Board are appealed. The appeals process is explained in full detail in Section 4.13.4 below.

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#### 4.10.6 External Moderation of Assessments for FET Programmes

Moderation in this case is the process whereby the marked learner evidence presented is judged by the External Authenticator according to the standards outlined in the Award Specification. As already explained in relation to external moderation of assessments within QQI HE programmes, external moderation of assessments within QQI FET programmes involves reviewing results and checking the standard of evidence in each grade band. The critical points at which judgment is applied are the boundaries between grade bands, particularly for assessments contributing to the award classification. This also forms a crucial **component of the College's External Authentication procedure** (see Section 4.4.2 above).

##### 4.10.6.1 *Duties*

External Authenticators shall normally attend the college at the time of determination of co-ordinating results and at such other times as may be determined by the college for the purpose of assessing the standard of the programme and/or the standard of learner performance.

To moderate the assessment results, the External Authenticator must:

- Review the grading criteria and standards in the appropriate award specification
- Confirm that the assessment techniques and instruments are suitable, and ensure consistency with award requirements
- Confirm that the assessment criteria and marking sheets are appropriate
- Review the results presented by the School on the provisional results reports, paying particular attention to the spread of grades
- Select the sample **of learner evidence according to NCI's sampling strategy and ensure** a spread across the different grade bands and at the borderline between grades. The following method should be strictly adhered to:
  - Levels 1 – 3
    - Successful: a sample of portfolios
  - Levels 4 – 6
    - Referred ( $\leq 49\%$ ): highest mark(s)  $\leq 49\%$
    - Pass (50% – 64%): lowest mark(s)  $\geq 50\%$  and highest mark(s)  $\leq 64\%$

- Merit (65% - 79%) lowest mark(s)  $\geq$  65% and highest mark(s)  $\leq$  79%
  - Distinction ( $\geq$  80%) lowest mark  $\geq$  80%
- Examine the evidence within the sample with reference to the learning outcomes in **the award specification and the programme's assessment criteria and marking sheets.**
  - Make a judgment as to whether the evidence meets the national standard required at this grade with reference to the grading criteria.

If the External Authenticator agrees with the result given by the assessor, this is confirmed on the marking sheet and results report in the external authenticator column.

If they disagree with the result given by the assessor, all of the grades for that assessor should be identified and all marks adjusted accordingly.

#### 4.10.6.2 *Assessment Appeals*

External Authenticators will be asked to review learner evidence where the final marks decided by the Examination Board are appealed. The appeals process is explained in full detail in Section 4.13.4 below.

### 4.11. RESULTS APPROVAL PROCESS

It is the responsibility of the Internal Examiner **to record the final marks on the College's MIS** system (QuercusPlus) within 2 weeks of correction and internal moderation being completed. In the case of terminal examinations, marks must be submitted at least two weeks in advance of the Examination Board's **scheduled meeting**. A "Mark Sheet" should be completed for each Examination Subject and must be signed by the Internal Examiner, the examiner involved in internal moderation, and the External Examiner(s). The External Examiner(s) certifies the agreed final marks for each candidate. The completed "Mark Sheet" should include the following for each candidate:

- The allocation of marks for Written, Oral, Practical, Projects, Continuous Assessment etc., in accordance with the terms of the Approved Programme Schedule currently in operation

AND

- The overall total of marks awarded as agreed upon by the Internal and External Examiners/Authenticators for that Examination Subject.

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#### 4.11.1 Examination Boards

In preparation for the Examination Board, the Examinations Officer will run the overall programme calculator 3 days in advance of the scheduled meeting and produce the programme broadsheet

The Programme Director will review the broadsheet, manually calculating an overall result for a sample group and reviewing the following:



- Absences (cross-referencing these with the attendance register)
- Borderline cases
- Deferred students

Once signed-off, the broadsheet must be returned to the Examinations Office by noon of the working day preceding the examinations board. Any anomalies should be highlighted to the Examinations Officer. If a Programme Director is not available to sign off a broadsheet, the Dean of School takes on this responsibility

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#### 4.11.2 Composition of Examination Board

The Internal and External Examiners shall meet together as an Examination Board under the chairmanship of the Vice/President. Only those Internal Examiners who have participated in the examinations for a given award or an examination stage leading to an award, together with the Dean of School concerned, shall attend the examinations board at which recommendations in relation to that award or examination stage are decided.

A set of assessment results for a programme may not be considered unless a quorum of internal examiners for that programme exists. This is determined as:

Total number of credits for the programme

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20 + 1

Accordingly, the following quorums will apply:

- Programmes of 90 credit – 5 internal Examiners
- Programmes of 120 credits – 7 Internal Examiners
- Programmes of > 120 credits – 13 Internal Examiners

Where an award is being made, the External Examiner for the programme must attend or, having already visited the College and provided comments/ made recommendations in their report, be represented by an individual independent to the College

The Director of Student Services and their staff as appropriate may attend the Examination board but shall not participate in the decision-making.

All decisions of the examination boards shall be made by majority decision of the Examiners present. In the event of an equality of votes, the Chairperson of the Examination board shall exercise a casting vote.

The proceedings and deliberations of the examinations board are strictly confidential. Under no circumstances should any person attending an examination board disclose to any other person a decision of the Board or any document, information or opinion considered, conveyed or expressed at the meeting.

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#### 4.11.3 Broadsheets of Results

At the Examination Board, broadsheets of results shall be endorsed, which record the total marks awarded to each candidate in each module and will provide each candidate's overall result according to the grading criteria of the award.

In the event of a disagreement between Examiners with regard to the mark being awarded to a candidate in any assessed module and that has not been resolved during the Examination board, an Examiner may choose to have a dissenting opinion recorded on the Broadsheet of Results. Any dissenting opinions recorded on the Broadsheet of Results will be brought to the attention of the Registrar, Academic Council and the relevant Awarding Body. The decision of the Awarding Body in relation to such marks will be final.

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#### 4.11.4 Pass by Compensation

Grades greater than or equal to 35% but less than 40% are awarded when a learner has nearly (but not quite) demonstrated attainment of the relevant minimum intended learning outcomes for a particular assessment task.

Performance at the first attempt in modules in a given stage of at least 30 credits may be used to compensate in the same stage provided no module in the stage has been failed outright. A pass earned in this way is referred to as a pass by compensation and is credit bearing.

Where a candidate is just below pass in each of a string of independent modules in the same stage, the results are reinforced. Consequently, it is justifiable to limit the number of independent modules that may be passed by compensation in a stage. As modules can have different numbers of credits attached to them, it is reasonable to express such a limit as a proportion of the total available credit rather than the number of modules. This latter point assumes that the confidence in the grade is increased in larger volume modules owing to compensation processes operating within the module.

Pass by compensation can only be applied if:

- i. The Learner has been assessed for all stage modules and no module in the stage has been failed outright, i.e. < 35%;
- ii. the results of all modules in the stage are from first attempts (in the case of full time learners, the results are from the same examination session);
- iii. the potentially compensable results account for no more than one third of the credit for the stage i.e. 20 credits in a 60 credit stage or 10 credits in a 30 credit stage; and
- iv. the stage aggregate of credit-weighted percentage marks over 40% is greater than or equal to twice the stage aggregate of credit-weighted percentage marks under 40%.

Please Note: Compensation may be applied to enable a Learner to pass a stage. Accordingly, a Learner who passes by compensation remains eligible for honours at the award stage. However, compensation does not change the result of the modules passed in that way. When reporting module passes by compensation on the Diploma Supplement, the actual result is returned, e.g. 37%, along with an indication that the module pass has been granted by compensation.

Compensation is applied automatically unless specifically passing a module in this manner is precluded in the programme assessment strategy and approved programme schedule. The programme and module assessment strategies should accommodate for this by ensuring that pass by compensation is consistent with the requirement that MIPLOs are achieved before an

award is recommended. Certain modules may be designated as not passable by compensation in the programme assessment strategy and approved programme schedule.

A transcript of results (marks) combining both semesters will be made available to the Learner in June following the Examination board. If the Learner is in this category, their overall grade at the bottom of this transcript will indicate that they have passed by compensation.

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#### 4.11.5 Exemptions

Subject to normal programme update and modification via periodic programme evaluations or otherwise, modules passed shall accrue for the purposes of award and need not be retaken.

Students re-taking a module in a new academic year are normally required to repeat all assessment in that module.

The passing of a module at any examination is governed by the right of the College to admit or re-admit Learners to its examinations or to present/re-present such Learners for the purpose of awards.

##### 4.11.5.1 *Additional Exemptions*

Additional exemptions may be granted to a candidate in respect of additional Examination Subjects passed by virtue of further attempts at the examination. In order to complete the examination stage concerned, the candidate must obtain a clear pass in all required Examination Subjects.

In respect of attempts subsequent to a candidate's first attempt at an examination, only the additional exemptions gained should be recorded in the overall result column on the Broadsheet of results. Exemptions awarded by virtue of previous attempts should not be repeated in the overall result column on a current Broadsheet but instead be recorded **as "X"** in the module mark column(s).

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#### 4.11.6 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

**For the purpose of this section, "exemption" means** exemption from parts of a programme. Accordingly, exemption procedures must be consistent with the necessity for learners to demonstrate the learning outcomes required to qualify for an award. Exemption allows those learning outcomes to be achieved and/or demonstrated in alternative ways and recognises that they may have been achieved prior to enrolment in the programme.

In principle, exemptions are permitted at any stage of a programme subject to the relevant programme and constituent module assessment strategies. Where the result of the module is required for calculation of an award classification, the Programme Committee should establish **a fair, consistent and transparent process for grading the learner's achievements in respect of the exempted module's learning outcomes. Where this is not possible, the award can only be recommended without classification.**

#### 4.11.6.1 *Uncertified Learning*

A learner may be exempted from having to participate in a module if they have already attained the minimum intended module learning outcomes (MIMLOs). The demonstrable prior learning should be a sufficiently good match to the MIMLOs to justify exemption from the module in the context of the overall programme.

In the particular case where the relevant prior learning is uncertified (e.g. prior experiential learning) the Programme Committee should assess the Learner by the regular module assessment instruments and/or by an alternative assessment arrangement. This process will be clearly documented in the programme and module assessment strategy.

Learners who are assessed to have demonstrated the required learning are granted the available credit for the module and are exempt from the module. Furthermore, a grade (percentage mark or alphabetic grade) should be available in principle. However, a grade may not be provided if the assessment arrangement does not allow for consistency with the regular assessment instruments.

If the module is one that contributes to the award classification, it must be graded in order for the award to be classified, otherwise, an unclassified award should be made. Modules that do not contribute to the award classification do not need to be graded.

When a grade is not assigned, the result for learners who demonstrate the required learning **should be returned as 'Exemption Granted'**. Where a grade is awarded it can be used in compensation as with any regularly passed module.

Where grading is infeasible there are foreseeable circumstances where a learner might be advantaged by waiving a right to exemption to enable award classification. Such situations should be prepared for to ensure learners are aware of the possible consequences.

#### 4.11.6.2 *Certified Learning*

There are two instances when RPL can be granted for Certified Learning.

1. Learning certified by an Awarding Body in a Major Award

Subject to the Sectoral Convention 5 on Post-award Achievement Required for an Additional Major Award at the Same Level, an exemption may be granted for a module if the MIMLOs can be demonstrated by the Learner. The result for learners who demonstrate the required learning should be returned as **'Exemption Granted'**. **The learner should not be granted any ECTS credit** because credit has already been granted in the prior qualification.

If the module is one that would normally contribute to the award classification, such exemption should only entitle a learner to an unclassified award unless it is feasible to recognise or award a grade. Any grade awarded/recognised should be consistent with the prior award classification and the module grades in the associated Europass Diploma Supplement.

2. Learning certified by an Awarding Body in a Minor, Special Purpose or Supplemental Award OR certified in respect of a period of study and the relevant credit has not already been used to meet the credit requirements for a major award.

RPL is processed in the same manner as uncertified learning outlined above with the exception that the Learner is not required to undergo assessment provided the attainment of the MIMLOs can be demonstrated.

If the module is one that would normally contribute to the award classification, then assessment may be necessary. While the Learner may transfer their credit, thus making a grade available in principle, the College may decide not to recognise this grade if there is consistency with the regular assessment instruments cannot be guaranteed. The result for learners who demonstrate the required learning but are not graded should be returned as **'Exemption Granted'**.

#### 4.12. COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS

All results received by learners prior to ratification by the Examination Board will be considered provisional results. Upon ratification, these results will be regarded as the final results. Only final results can be rechecked and/or reviewed as outlined in Section 4.13.4 below.

**If recommendations are made about a learner's results during the Examination Board, those results will remain provisional until such time that the learner has acted upon or complied with the recommendation, as advised by the Examinations Office.**

Results for learners who have not complied with all appropriate College procedures and requirements will also be regarded as provisional. Examples of such non-compliance can include non-payment of fees, disciplinary issues, outstanding library fines and/or loans, etc.

Please Note: NCI will not allow an award to be granted to a learner whose results are provisional.

#### 4.13. ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK

The purpose of feedback is to provide academic information and direction to Learners after an assessment has been completed and to assist in the development of learning. Feedback should explain to Learners what they are doing correctly and incorrectly. For this reason, it should provide advice on what a Learner should do to improve their assignments in the future and should make explicit reference to particular tasks they were requested to perform in the assessment. In no cases will the feedback process alter the mark awarded.

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##### 4.13.1 Feedback on Coursework

Information regarding the type of feedback and the relevant timeframe (normally 2-3 weeks after the assessment deadline) will be provided to Learners in the programme and module assessment strategy, which is made available to them at the commencement of the programme.

In each module, the lecturer will conduct a class feedback session reviewing how the assessment task was managed in general terms, highlighting common errors and discussing

key areas for improvement. Lecturers are encouraged to demonstrate model answers of all CA work and to distribute a handout. Attendance at this session will be recorded.

The lecturer may also decide to provide individual feedback sheets to Learners but this is entirely at their own discretion. They are also responsible for retaining a copy of the assessment for each learner for a year and a day from the original submission deadline.

Only those learners who attended the class feedback session may request additional individual feedback. In exceptional cases, i.e. illness or family bereavement, a Learner who did not attend the session may also apply. Individual feedback must be applied for in writing using the Feedback Request service on NCI360 highlighting the specific reason(s) for the request. This form must be submitted to the relevant Programme Coordinator within five working days of the class feedback session.

The Programme Coordinator will forward the request to the relevant lecturer and to the Examinations Office for scheduling purposes. This meeting must take place prior to the terminal examination. A summary of the overall CA result should be communicated to Learners in advance of the terminal semester examination.

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#### 4.13.2 Feedback on Terminal Examinations

After the publication of end of semester and resit results, all lecturers will make themselves available for one day for individual feedback. This day will be published as part of the academic calendar.

Learners seeking an individual feedback meeting must apply in writing to the relevant Programme Co-ordinator within five working days of the publication of results.

Individual lecturers will liaise with relevant Programme Co-ordinators to arrange appointments. A Learner may also make an appointment to discuss their overall performance with the Programme Director during the feedback day.

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#### 4.13.3 Retention of Examination Answerbooks/scripts

Learners are required to retain a copy of all coursework submitted for assessment.

**Learners may request a copy of their terminal examination or 'in class test' answerbooks or scripts.** NCI will not consider any mark or grade arising from any external assessment of this material. NCI will only consider marks or grades that have been arrived at using its quality assurance processes.

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#### 4.13.4 Rechecks and Reviews

After fully engaging with the feedback process outlined above, a learner may choose to avail of the recheck and/or review mechanism at NCI. A recheck/review can be applied to any examined assessment.

A recheck refers to the administrative operation of checking the recording and the addition of marks, while a review means the reconsideration in detail of all or part of the existing examination material where feasible by the internal and external examiner(s).

A Learner can apply for a recheck and/or review of an assessment once they have received their transcript for combined Semester 1 and Semester 2 results. Where the recheck/review necessitates a change of a provisional result following Semester 1, the learner should be made aware that this result remains provisional and is subject to alteration at the final examination board

The learner must apply by the date published annually by the examinations office. Learners should be made aware that the a recheck/review can result in a grade being either increased or decreased. They should also be kept informed that a recheck does not entail a remarking or re-evaluation of an examined assessment but instead verifies that all marks were correctly totalled.

#### **4.13.4.1**      *Recheck Process*

To apply for a Recheck, the learner must complete Sections A and B of the Recheck Application Form and submit the entire form to the Office of the Registrar within five working days of receipt of results. The form is available from the Learner Life Office and can be downloaded **from the College website. An administrative fee of €32 per module must be included with the application, which will be refunded if the recheck is successful.**

It is the responsibility of the Learner to ensure that they comply with the correct procedures or the request will not be processed. Not being aware of the publication date of results and/or inability to consult the notice board will not be deemed sufficient reason to grant an extension to the above deadline.

The Registrar will request that all relevant examination scripts, projects and assessment material, where feasible, is be made available by the Examinations Office. There will be external verification that the percentage mark on the learner transcript for a module has been awarded in respect of all answers, part answers and any assessment material submitted by the learner. The learner will be informed of the outcome of the recheck.

#### **4.13.4.2**      *Review Process*

To apply for a Review, the learner must complete Sections A-E of the Review Application Form and submit the entire form to the Office of the Registrar within five working days of receipt of results. This form available from the Academic Affairs Office and can also be downloaded **from the College website. An administrative fee of €80 per module must be included with the application, which will be refunded if the Review is successful.**

A Learner may NOT appeal against the academic judgement of the examiners. Reviews will only be considered under the following circumstances:

- The examination regulations of the College have not been properly implemented and there is a prima facie case that **this has had an adverse effect on a candidate's** performance.

Or

- **Compassionate circumstances related to the candidate's examination situation** were not made known to the college, for a justifiable reason, by the candidate prior to or during the programme and of which the Examinations Board was unaware.

Or

- There has been an error in the recording and addition of marks on a particular paper

If the learner wishes to query a particular mark but does not have specific grounds for review, they can request a Recheck. A Review automatically involves a Recheck.

It is the responsibility of the Learner to ensure that they comply with the correct procedures or the request will not be processed. The submission must identify the element(s) of the examination for which a review is being sought and must specify the grounds on which a review is being sought. All necessary information that should be taken into account during the review must be included in the application.

### Review Committee

The Review Committee will consider the documentation and supporting evidence submitted by the Learner. The committee will consist of the following individuals:

- Vice President or nominee (i.e. Registrar)
- 3 members of Academic Council
- One learner representative who sits on Academic council
- Programme Director(s)

Four members shall constitute a quorum. The Learner also has the right, accompanied if desired by another person, to appear personally before the Committee.

The Review Committee shall endeavour to reach its decision by majority vote. In the event of a tied vote, the President or nominee shall exercise a casting vote. The Review Committee shall inform the Learner of its recommendations in writing and will update Academic Council regarding these. The Chair of Academic Council is responsible for ensuring the appropriate action. In the case of a review being upheld, the candidate will normally be given the opportunity to re-sit the examination at the next available session and to have the result for the session appealed to be recorded as deferred.

## 4.14. STAGE PROGRESSION

**A learner's ability to progress between stages of a programme and the award they receive** following completion of a programme is determined by the assessments conducted in each module. These assessments are informed by the overall assessment strategy for the programme and can include both continuous assessment activities and terminal examinations.

## 4.15. PROGRESSION ELIGIBILITY

Where programmes are organised in stages, a learner, to be eligible to progress to a particular stage, is normally required to demonstrate achievement of the minimum intended learning outcomes of all the preceding stages. This should be explained in the programme assessment strategy.



In order to progress to the next stage of a programme, learners are required to pass all modules identified as essential prerequisites in the current stage. These modules are specified in the approved programme schedule. This is based on the presumption that the stages **consist of  $\geq 30$  Credits and that the programme leads to a Major Award.**

Learners may be permitted, under exceptional circumstances, to progress to the next stage while carrying a failed module from the current stage, provided the module is not a **prerequisite for any module in the next stage. Eligibility will be decided on a 'case-by-case'** basis and decisions must be in accordance with the requirements of the relevant programme assessment strategy. Learners are required to pass this failed module during the stage into which it is carried.

The decision to allow a learner to progress whilst carrying a failed module will be made by the Examination board on recommendation of the Programme Director. This decision must be considerate of the following conditions:

- A learner may only carry only 1 Module (5 or 10 Credits)
- The recommendation to carry a module may only be made at the Examination Board
- The threshold to consider carrying a module is an overall module mark of 35%
- The module may not be carried if it is a prerequisite module
- The Examination board reserves the right to review the learners overall academic performance prior to accepting the recommendation of the Programme Director
- The repeat assessment must have been attempted unless the learner was unable to do so due to evidenced extenuating circumstances that were approved by the Programme Committee
- Carrying modules into an award stage will not normally be allowed.

A learner who is permitted to carry a failed module while progressing to the subsequent stage of their programme must meet with the Programme Director during the first week of term to discuss how the failed module will be remediated. Normally, the learner will take the relevant assessment(s) when the module is next scheduled.

The Office of the Registrar is required to agree a process for monitoring these students so that examination clashes do not occur between the failed module from the previous stage and modules from the current stage.

## 4.16. MARKING GUIDELINES

### 4.16.1 Higher Education Awards: Guidelines for Correcting Assessments

	Range and Accuracy of Knowledge	Structure and Focus	Quality of Argument and Expression
Distinction/1 <sup>st</sup> Hons (70%+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response demonstrates informed and secure understanding of the issue.</li> <li>• Response acknowledges complexity of the argument and reveals a very high standard of comprehension.</li> <li>• A range of reading and sources is evident.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response is exceptionally well formulated.</li> <li>• Structure is clear, coherent and <b>develops the writer's argument.</b></li> <li>• Answer relates directly to the task and shows an appreciation of the wider implications/context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is clear, fluent and accurate with an appropriate use of vocabulary and linguistic idiom.</li> <li>• Writing displays evidence of original thinking rather than merely replicating <b>tutor's notes or paraphrasing other author's ideas.</b></li> <li>• Argument demonstrates conceptual command of the issue and displays a level of critical reflection</li> </ul>
Merit 1 or 2.1 Hons (60–69.9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sound understanding of main issues demonstrated.</li> <li>• Knowledge is significant.</li> <li>• Answer is competent in the reproduction of received ideas.</li> <li>• There is evidence of good reading.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While work displays an understanding of the question it may lack a sustained focus.</li> <li>• Structure is clear but may wane from question.</li> <li>• Answer relates directly to the task and shows and appreciation of the wider implications/context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is clear enough to convey the <b>writer's meaning.</b></li> <li>• Writing displays evidence of original thinking rather than merely replicating <b>tutor's notes.</b></li> <li>• Argument demonstrates conceptual command of the issue.</li> </ul>
Merit 2 or 2.2 Hons (50–59.9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sound understanding of main issues demonstrated, but work is limited in terms of depth of analysis and findings.</li> <li>• Knowledge is significant.</li> <li>• Answer is competent in the reproduction of received ideas and in the demonstration of a critical viewpoint.</li> <li>• There is evidence of reading beyond class notes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While work displays an understanding of the question it may lack a sustained focus.</li> <li>• Answer may get a little side tracked and veer away from the central issue or task set.</li> <li>• Response deals effectively with the task set but may omit to place this in the wider context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is clear enough to convey the <b>writer's meaning.</b></li> <li>• Writing displays evidence of original thinking rather than merely replicating <b>tutor's notes.</b></li> <li>• Argument demonstrates conceptual command of the issue.</li> </ul>
Pass (40–49.9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows sufficient knowledge to frame a basis answer to the question.</li> <li>• Shows a basic understanding and awareness of the relevant concepts and practice.</li> <li>• Misses some points of information and may not answer the question directly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is indiscriminately around the subject without showing real understanding of the question.</li> <li>• Structure of answer is underdeveloped.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Argument is incomplete and poorly organised.</li> <li>• Writing is generally grammatically correct but does not use extensive or sophisticated vocabulary.</li> <li>• Little originality is shown. Work is limited in terms of depth of analysis.</li> </ul>

	Range and Accuracy of Knowledge	Structure and Focus	Quality of Argument and Expression
FAIL (0-39%)	Essentially, the work is severely lacking in a number of ways, as there is an inadequate coverage of objectives. The work is likely to have errors or go off in a tangent at times and overall the material presented tends to be overly descriptive rather than evaluative. The material presented shows little relevance and may fail to deal with the theoretical elements of the programme. It may be suggestive that the Learner concerned needs to understand more clearly how to write and to develop more appropriate techniques for project preparation.		

4.16.2 Further Education and Training Awards: Guidelines for Correcting Assessments

Successful			
Grading Criteria	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Pass	The learner has achieved the learning outcomes for the award in a structured and supported learning setting. The outcomes have been achieved with significant support and direction from the assessor, but the learner has demonstrated substantive achievement on their own.	The learner has achieved the learning outcomes for the award in a structured and supported setting with clear direction from the assessor. The learner has demonstrated some autonomy of action and has taken limited responsibility for the activities and for generating evidence.	The learner has achieved the learning outcomes for the award with some supervision and direction. The learner has demonstrated autonomy of action and has taken responsibility for generating appropriate evidence.
		Merit	Distinction

	<p>A Pass indicates that the learner has:  achieved the learning outcomes as outlined in the minor award - a pass is the minimum acceptable standard  used the language of the vocational/specialised area competently attempted to apply the theory and concepts appropriately  provided sufficient evidence which has relevance and clarity.</p>	<p>A Merit indicates that the learner has:  achieved the learning outcomes as outlined in the minor award - a merit implies a good standard has been achieved  used the language of the vocational/specialised area with a degree of fluency expressed and developed ideas clearly  demonstrated initiative, evaluation and analytical skills  presented coherent and comprehensive evidence.</p>	<p>A Distinction indicates that the learner has:  achieved the learning outcomes as outlined in the minor award - a distinction implies that an excellent standard has been achieved  used the language of the vocational/specialised area fluently and confidently  demonstration-depth understanding of the subject matter  demonstrated a high level of initiative, evaluation skills  demonstrated analytical and reflective thinking  expressed and developed ideas clearly, systematically and comprehensively  presented coherent, detailed and focused evidence.</p>
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4.16.3 Masters Degrees: Guidelines for Correcting Dissertations

	<b>FAIL</b> 0 – 39%	<b>PASS</b> 40 – 59%	<b>Second Class Honours</b> 60 – 69%	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Class Honours</b> 70% +
<b>Dissertation Objectives: definition and attainment</b>	Objectives are inadequately specified	Objectives may be specified but not achieved.	Objectives have been clearly specified and achieved to some extent.	Objectives have been clearly specified and are creative and appropriate. Objectives have been fully achieved or surpassed
<b>Use of and critical understanding of relevant theory</b>	Very limited use of theory and concepts	Limited use of theory and concepts	Reasonable use of theory and concepts but lack of breadth in literature reviewed.	Critical application and critique of relevant theory and concepts. Evidence of breadth and depth of literature reviewed.
<b>Relevance and justification of methodology utilised and the ability to carry out the specified methodology</b>	Alternative methodologies not considered and method selected not justified. Significant errors in the application of methodology.	Alternative methodologies have not been considered and only limited justification for selected methods. Some errors in application.	Alternative methodologies have not been fully considered, though a reasonable attempt made at justifying the selected methodology. The methodology has been completely carried out.	Alternative methodologies have been fully considered and the chosen methodology fully justified. The application has been rigorously carried out.

		<b>FAIL</b> 0 – 39%	<b>PASS</b> 40 – 59%	<b>Second Class Honours</b> 60 – 69%	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Class Honours</b> 70% +	
<b>Analysis of the research findings and ability to understand the study's implications and limitations</b>		Pedestrian or poor attempt to analyse the findings. Implications and limitations not understood.	Some attempt at analysis although with some problems. Implications and limitations not well understood.	A reasonable attempt has been made to analyse the findings. However, the synthesis of data collected and relevant theory is not fully achieved. Implications and limitations not fully appreciated.	Rigorous analysis of findings. Demonstrates the ability to synthesise data collected and relevant theory. Shows an understanding of the limitations and implications of the study.	Rigorous and creative analysis of findings. Demonstrated the ability to synthesise data collected and relevant theory. Insightful conclusions which appreciate limitations and implications of the study.
	<b>Quality of Presentation – including referencing and structure</b>	Poor presentation with inconsistent referencing	Reasonable presentation but inconsistent in referencing	Satisfactory presentation with consistent referencing and clear structure	Good presentation and structure with rigorous referencing	Excellent presentation and structure with rigorous referencing.

#### 4.17. AWARDS

All programmes at NCI are developed, validated and reviewed in accordance with QQI's *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016). Accordingly, the awards offered by NCI are in line with the National Framework of Qualifications, such that all programmes and their constituent modules are assessed according to the schedules and marking schemes that **Furthermore, NCI's compliance with QQI's [Awards and Standards \(2013\)](#)** means it is also compliant with the Sectoral Conventions for Assessment, contained in Section 3.

#### 4.18. CRITERIA FOR QQI HIGHER EDUCATION AWARDS

In accordance with Sectoral Convention 1 on Award Classification and Sectoral Convention 4 on the Percentage and Alphabetic grading systems, the below criteria must be satisfied in order for the following awards on the National Framework of Qualifications to be issued to learners.

Normally, awards will be made based on final year results only. However, certain programmes will calculate the total average sum from the final 2 years of the programme. Contributions from other sources will also be accepted in cases where only spectrum of skills that can only **be acquired over time can indicate a learner's eligibility for an award. worthiness of the candidate for the award and where these skills can only be acquired over time.** Any deviation from awards made on final year results will be indicated in the approved Programme Schedule.

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##### 4.18.1 Higher Certificates (Level 6) & Ordinary Degrees (Level 7)

Awards at Higher Certificate and Ordinary Degree may be made at Pass, Merit or Distinction classification.

To be eligible for consideration for an award at Pass classification, a learner must:

- Satisfy all assessment and other related requirements included in the programme

AND

- Pass the final examination as a whole in accordance with the approved Programme Schedule

A learner will be considered for a Pass Award if their Percentage Point Average (PPA) is between 40% - 49%.

To be eligible for consideration for an award at Merit or Distinction classification, a learner must:

- Satisfy all assessment and other related requirements included in the programme

AND

- Achieve at least a Pass grade in all the required Examination Subjects at the final examination. A pass by compensation will suffice for this purpose.

AND

- Pass the final examination at the first attempt in the case of full time students OR by virtue of passing each required examination module at the first attempt for part-time students

A learner will be considered for a:

- Merit 2 Award if their PPA is between 50% - 59%.
- Merit 1 Award if their PPA is between 60% - 69%.
- Distinction Award if their PPA is at least 70%

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#### 4.18.2 Bachelor Degrees (Level 8) & Higher Diplomas (Level 8)

Awards at Bachelor Degree and Higher Diploma levels may be made at Pass or Honours classification.

To be eligible for consideration for an award at Pass classification, a learner must:

- Satisfy all assessment and other related requirements included in the programme

AND

- Pass the final examination as a whole in accordance with the approved Programme Schedule

A learner will be considered for a Pass Award if their Percentage Point Average (PPA) is between 40% - 49%.

To be eligible for consideration for an award at Honours classification, a learner must:

- Satisfy all assessment and other related requirements included in the programme

AND

- Achieve at least a Pass grade in all the required Examination Subjects at the final examination. A pass by compensation will suffice for this purpose

AND

- Pass the final examination at the first attempt in the case of full time students OR by virtue of passing each required examination module at the first attempt for part-time students

A learner will be considered for a:

- Second Class Honours, Grade 2 if their PPA is between 50% - 59%.



- Second Class Honours, Grade 1 if their PPA is between 60% - 69%.
- First Class Honours if their PPA is at least 70%

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#### 4.18.3 Masters Degrees (Level 9)

Awards at Masters Degree level may be made at Pass or Honours classification.

To be eligible for consideration for an award at Pass classification, a learner must:

- Satisfy all assessment and other related requirements included in the programme
- AND
- Pass the final examination as a whole in accordance with the approved Programme Schedule

A learner will be considered for a Pass Award if their Percentage Point Average (PPA) is between 40% - 59%.

To be eligible for consideration for an award at Honours classification, a learner must:

- Satisfy all assessment and other related requirements included in the programme
- AND
- Achieve at least a Pass grade in all the required Examination Subjects at the final examination. A pass by compensation will suffice for this purpose
- AND
- Pass the final examination at the first attempt in the case of full time students OR by virtue of passing each required examination module at the first attempt for part-time students

A learner will be considered for a:

- Second Class Honours if their PPA is between 60% - 69%.
- First Class Honours if their PPA is at least 70%

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#### 4.18.4 Postgraduate Diplomas (Level 9)

Awards at for Postgraduate Diploma may be made at Pass, Merit or Distinction classification.

To be eligible for consideration for an award at Pass classification, a learner must:

- Satisfy all assessment and other related requirements included in the programme
- AND

- Pass the final examination as a whole in accordance with the approved Programme Schedule

A learner will be considered for a Pass Award if their Percentage Point Average (PPA) is between 40% - 59%.

To be eligible for consideration for an award at Merit or Distinction classification, a learner must:

- Satisfy all assessment and other related requirements included in the programme
- AND
- Achieve at least a Pass grade in all the required Examination Subjects at the final examination. A pass by compensation will suffice for this purpose.
- AND
- Pass the final examination at the first attempt in the case of full time students OR by virtue of passing each required examination module at the first attempt for part-time students

A learner will be considered for a:

- Merit Award if their PPA is between 60% - 69%.
- Distinction Award if their PPA is at least 70%

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#### 4.18.5 Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards

Minor and Supplemental Awards will remain unclassified. Special Purpose Awards will also **remain unclassified unless they consist of  $\geq 60$  Credits and are comparable to a Major Award** at the same NQF level. In such cases, they will be classified in accordance with the convention for the relevant Major Award.

### 4.19. GRADE BANDS FOR OTHER AWARDING BODIES

In addition to QQI HE Awards, NCI also offers a number of other programmes.

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#### 4.19.1 QQI Further Education and Training Awards

QQI FET Awards Levels 1 - 3 are awarded as Successful.

QQI FET Awards Levels 4-6 are awarded as:

- REFERRED  $\leq 49\%$
- PASS 50-64%
- MERIT 65-79%

- DISTINCTION  $\geq 80\%$

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#### 4.19.2 ICM awards

The Institute of Commercial Management (ICM) makes awards at the same grade bands as QQI HE:

- Grade A – Distinction **is awarded at  $\geq 70\%$**
- Grade B – Credit is awarded at 60% - 69%
- Grade C – Pass is awarded at 50% - 59%
- Grade D – Marginal Pass is awarded at 40% - 49%
- Grade F – Fail **is awarded at  $\leq 39\%$**

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#### 4.19.3 CIPD awards

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) makes awards at:

- Pass  $\geq 40\%$
- Fail  $\leq 39\%$

### 4.20. REPEAT FOR HONOURS

In accordance with Sectoral Convention 3 on Determination of Award Classification, NCI **applies the ‘repeat for honours’ rule to the final 60 credits of a learner’s programme, referred to as the Award Stage.** As a result, a learner who repeats a module during the Award Stage will not be eligible for consideration for an award higher than Pass classification.

**In cases where a learner’s average mark for the programme is determined by a percentage of marks for modules completed before the final 60 credits of the programme, the learner is permitted to repeat modules during the first to penultimate stages of the programme without the ‘repeat for honours’ rule being applied.**

Learners who gain full stage exemption from stages that are used to calculate the award classification will have it calculated on the basis of the stages completed at NCI.

### 4.21. BORDERLINE CASES

Examination Board meetings should allow for discretion in full and frank discussion of all borderline cases before a final decision is made. That final decision should be based on the cumulative evidence presented rather than on the view of one Internal or External Examiner.

**Where a learner’s overall average mark for the purpose of calculation of an award lies at a borderline, the rule of preponderance should be used.** Learners achieving within 0.5% of the minimum of the overall grade band will normally be rounded-up subject to the approval of the Examination Board.

The preponderance rule should be used for learners achieving 0.5% and 1.5% of the minimum of the overall grade band. For example, a learner who achieves an average mark of 68.7% will not be uplifted to 70% unless at least 50% of the modules giving credit for the award stage have 1st Class Honours marks ( $\geq 70\%$ ).

The Broadsheet(s) of Results shall be signed by the Chairperson of the Examination Board (President), the Secretary (Registrar) and all the Examiners (External and Internal) present at the meeting. The Broadsheet(s) of Results must be lodged immediately in the Office of the Registrar. The Registrar will then forward all Broadsheet(s) of Results to the Academic Council and/or the relevant Validating Authority for final ratification.

#### 4.22. ACADEMIC IMPROPRIETY

As members of the College community, Learners have an obligation to know and abide by, in addition to the laws of the state, all College policies and procedures, including the College's Code of Discipline. In this regard, the College has developed the following policy and associated procedure regarding academic impropriety. In general, the College expects that the common sense of a mature and responsible individual will determine if the behaviour is one that should be avoided and may be adjudicated.

The provisions of the Code of Discipline continue to apply when a Learner is outside the campus on an academic exercise or representing the College in any way. Learners should be also aware that they are viewed by the public as representatives of the College and they are expected to behave in a manner that reflects positively on themselves and the College.

Any breach(s) of this policy by a student of NCI will be reported to the relevant Dean of School, whether it:

- occurs during an examination, where it is also documented by the Invigilator and reported to the Examinations Office.

OR

- is discovered during the marking of the examination, where it will be recorded by the Internal Examiner(s).

Without prejudice to the Registrar's **authority** to decide whether an alleged offence is major or minor, the following examples would normally be regarded as serious breaches of the **College's policy** regarding academic honesty. In other words, each example constitutes a major offence in terms of academic impropriety, i.e. cheating, fraud, etc:

- Plagiarism or the use of **someone else's work without proper acknowledgment in an assessment**
- The use of unauthorised material during an examination or other breaches of the examination regulations as outlined in Section 4.22.2 below
- Failure to adhere to Invigilators instructions during an examination
- Receiving, possessing, distributing or using any unauthorized material or assistance in the submission of any assessment (formative or summative) or academic requirements of a programme

- The unauthorized collaboration on individual assignments or representing work from collaboration as individual work
- Having others complete assignments for oneself
- Impersonating or having someone else attend where credit is given and/or mandatory attendance is required
- Fabrication of or falsifying the results of research
- Knowingly permitting others to copy your work and declaring it as their own original work

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#### 4.22.1 Code of Practice for Academic Honesty & Integrity

**Academic honesty and integrity is central to NCI's learning community and all students and staff are expected to uphold this principle.** The purpose of this code is to ensure that the assessment process is valid, reliable, have integrity and are fair to all. This policy is to ensure that student engagement in assessment is honest and reflects the work and abilities of the student and that it provides a response, feedback and consequence to issues concerning possible breaches in a timely and transparent manner. The code also lays out the process for managing alleged breaches and stipulates penalties.

**Academic dishonesty arises when someone misrepresents someone else's work as their own.** This can take many forms, the most common of which are outlined below. The College commits to dealing with and resolving any alleged breaches of this code in a timely manner **and in a way which will not disadvantage a learners' progression.**

The College commits to holding up to 3 Disciplinary Committees per semester, one of which will be after any terminal examination period.

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#### 4.22.2 Breaches of Code

##### 4.22.2.1 *Plagiarism*

**Plagiarism arises when all or part of someone else's work is used without acknowledgement.** In the case of written work this means where direct quotation is not set in quotation marks, or is not referenced, or where paraphrased, work is not referenced. This is not limited to text but can also include graphics, tables, photographs, video, music and computer code. Plagiarism is also submitting the same piece of work for assessment under multiple modules;

Regulations, guidelines and procedures regarding plagiarism are made widely available to learners and included in programme handbooks, websites, school noticeboards or appropriate handouts to learners.

##### 4.22.2.2 *Cheating in assessments or examinations*

Receiving, possessing, distributing or using any unauthorized material or assistance in the submission of any assessment (formative or summative) or academic requirements of a programme

#### **4.22.2.3**      *Collaboration/Collusion*

The unauthorized collaboration with any person on individual assignments or representing work from collaboration as individual work.

#### **4.22.2.4**      *Outsourcing assessment*

Having others complete assessments for oneself whether personally or via any free or commercial service.

#### **4.22.2.5**      *Impersonation*

Impersonating or having someone else attend where credit is given and/or mandatory attendance is required.

#### **4.22.2.6**      *Fabrication.*

Fabrication or falsifying results of research.

#### **4.22.2.7**      *Knowingly aiding and abetting academic misconduct*

Cases in which students knowingly permit others to copy all or part of their work shall also be subject to the procedures outlined here and considered an offence.

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### **4.22.3** Process for Coursework

If a lecturer has concerns that a student may have breached the code, they communicate to the student stating concerns and that a second opinion is being sought.

A second opinion is sought from a suitably qualified and experienced person, i.e. the Programme Director, the Dean or Vice Dean, a subject specialist, the Director Centre for Research and Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CRILT), etc.

Following review, both assessors may agree an outcome or may call the student for a verbal examination to support and validate the outcomes as indicated in the written assignment. The outcome may be no breach, an instruction to submit or amend an assignment or referral to the Disciplinary Committee. In the case of a re-submission or amendment the assignment mark will be capped at the pass mark of the module.

The review will take place no later than 5 days after s/he is first alerted to the possible breach and if found in breach will be referred to the next available Disciplinary Committee to be held within the semester.

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### **4.22.4** Process for Assessment under Examination Conditions

In the event of a suspected case of breach of examination regulations, the invigilator and a witness where possible will ensure the following procedure is followed:

- Collect suspect evidence in breach of examination regulations or in the case of oral communication, inform the Learner that the activity is in breach of examination regulations and that the incident is going to be reported and brought to the attention of the Examinations Office.
- Contact the Examinations Office and inform the examinations administrator of what has occurred. The examinations administrator will then inform the Director of Student Services immediately
- Ensure the details are recorded fully and accurately on the form provided (To be signed by Invigilator concerned, and Senior Invigilator for the session).
- Ensure the evidence is attached to the form in the case of notes etc.

The Senior Invigilator and Examinations Officer should discreetly interview the Learner concerned (before he/she leaves the exam room) and check that the recorded details are correct. Record whatever explanation he/she may give on the Invigilator Report Form. The Learner must be informed that this may be dealt with as a suspected breach of examination regulations and that a report will be passed to the Registrar.

The Learner may be instructed to continue with the remainder of his/her examinations. The incident must be handled in a confidential and discrete manner.

The student will be made aware of the process to be followed within 5 working days of the reported incident.

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#### 4.22.5 Outcomes and Consequence

All breaches of the Code will be dealt with by a Disciplinary Committee. The Disciplinary Committee is appointed by the Academic Council and shall be constituted as follows:

1. Registrar or Nominee of the President
2. Four (4) members of Academic Staff
3. One Learner representative who sits on the Academic Council
4. Recording Secretary

Four members shall constitute a quorum.

The Registrar may nominate an alternative in the event of her/his unavailability. The Student Body may nominate one alternative member and the Academic Council may nominate two alternative members.

The Committee will decide what penalty, if any, should be imposed in each case. This decision should be communicated to the Student and to the appropriate Programme Director and Vice Dean no later than 3 working days of the Disciplinary meeting.

The student may appeal this decision within 10 working days of the receipt of the decision of the disciplinary committee.

The School may appeal this decision within 5 working days of the receipt of the decision.

This recommendation from the Disciplinary Committee will then be presented by the Registrar at the Examinations Board for notification.

Where the Disciplinary Committee has made a finding that there has been a breach of the Code, it shall make such recommendations to the Examination Board as it considers appropriate to include but are not limited to:

Programmes up to and including Level 8

Academic Misconduct	1st Offence	Subsequent Offence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plagiarism</li> </ul> <p>Level one - characterised by poor scholarship and a careless approach to referencing the work of others.</p> <p>Level two - deemed to be a case of plagiarism where the student presents the work of others as if it were their own work.</p> <p>Level three - deemed to be a case of plagiarism where the student has plagiarised to a serious and major extent in the work submitted.</p>	<p>Warning &amp; academic essay and resubmit (1st sitting)</p> <p>Assessment to be resubmitted 2nd sitting</p> <p>Suspension 1 year</p>	<p>Failure of assignment</p> <p>Suspension</p> <p>Expulsion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Level</li> <li>Stage</li> <li>Other personal circumstances which <b>may affect the student's progression</b></li> </ul>

Academic Misconduct	1st Offence	Subsequent Offence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Outsourcing'</li> </ul>	Suspension 1 year	Expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Level</li> <li>Stage</li> <li>Other personal circumstances which may affect the <b>student's progression</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unauthorised Collaboration</li> </ul>	Failure of assessment	Suspension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Level</li> <li>Stage</li> </ul>



	and resubmit, 2nd sitting		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other personal circumstances which may affect the <b>student's progression</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cheating in Examinations - Distributing unauthorised material</li> </ul>	Suspension 1 year	Expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Level</li> <li>Stage</li> <li>Other personal circumstances which may affect the <b>student's progression</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cheating in Examinations - Being in possession of unauthorised material in an examination.</li> </ul>	Suspension 1 year	Expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Level</li> <li>Stage</li> <li>Other personal circumstances which may affect the <b>student's progression</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fabrication</li> </ul>	Expulsion		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Level</li> <li>Stage</li> <li>Other personal circumstances which may affect the <b>student's progression</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impersonation</li> </ul>	Expulsion		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Level</li> <li>Stage</li> <li>Other personal circumstances which may affect the <b>student's progression</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aiding &amp; Abetting</li> </ul>	Suspension 1 year	Expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Level</li> <li>Stage</li> <li>Other personal circumstances which may affect the <b>student's progression</b></li> </ul>

#### Programmes at Level 9 and 10

Academic Misconduct		
Academic Misconduct	1st Offence	
<p>Plagiarism</p> <p>Level one - characterised by poor scholarship and a careless approach to referencing the work of others.</p> <p>Level two - deemed to be a case of plagiarism where the student presents the work of others as if it were their own work.</p>	<p>Failure of assignment</p> <p>Suspension</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Level</li> <li>Stage</li> <li>Other personal circumstances which may affect the <b>student's progression</b></li> </ul>

Level three - deemed to be a case of plagiarism where the student has plagiarised to a serious and major extent in the work submitted.	Expulsion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Outsourcing'</li> </ul>	Expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Level</li> <li>• Stage</li> <li>• Other personal circumstances which <b>may affect the student's progression</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unauthorised Collaboration</li> </ul>	Suspension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Level</li> <li>• Stage</li> <li>• Other personal circumstances which may affect the <b>student's progression</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheating in Examinations - Distributing unauthorised material</li> </ul>	Expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Level</li> <li>• Stage</li> <li>• Other personal circumstances which <b>may affect the student's progression</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheating in Examinations - Being in possession of unauthorised material in an examination.</li> </ul>	Expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Level</li> <li>• Stage</li> <li>• Other personal circumstances which <b>may affect the student's progression</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fabrication</li> </ul>	Expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Level</li> <li>• Stage</li> <li>• Other personal circumstances which <b>may affect the student's progression</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impersonation</li> </ul>	Expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Level</li> <li>• Stage</li> <li>• Other personal circumstances which <b>may affect the student's progression</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aiding &amp; Abetting</li> </ul>	Expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Level</li> <li>• Stage</li> <li>• Other personal circumstances which <b>may affect the student's progression</b></li> </ul>

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#### 4.22.6 Appeals Committee

The decision of the Examinations Board can be referred to the Appeals Committee by the student for further consideration. Appointed by the Academic Council, the Appeals Committee shall be constituted as follows:

- President
- Three members of the Academic Council who do not sit on the Disciplinary Committee
- One Learner representative who sits on the Academic Council but does not sit on the Disciplinary Committee
- Recording Secretary

Four members shall constitute a quorum.

The President may nominate an alternative when s/he is unavailable. In the event of a tied vote, the President or nominee shall exercise the casting vote.

Notice of intention to appeal the decision of the Disciplinary Committee must be submitted to the Appeals Committee within 10 working days of receiving the formal notification of the decision. The written notice of appeal must concisely explain the grounds on which the appeal is being made.

The Appeals Committee shall endeavour to reach its decision by majority and shall in its discretion decide the appropriate penalty, if any, that should be imposed in each case. Decisions of the Appeals Committee shall be final.

A member of the Disciplinary Committee may not be a member of any Appeals Committee considering the same case. Similarly, no member of the Disciplinary Committee or Appeals Committee shall adjudicate in a case in which they are to prosecute or be a witness.

The accused Learner has the right to speak in their own defence and call witnesses accordingly, including character witnesses, at hearings of the Disciplinary Committee and the Appeals Committee. Persons reporting instances may also call witnesses.

The accused Learner may also be represented at any hearing. The Disciplinary Committee and the Appeals Committee may seek advice from any expert or person they think fit and shall have the right to invite such persons to attend any hearing of the Disciplinary Committee or Appeals Committee.

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#### 4.22.7 Records

In all instances where the accusation of plagiarism against a learner has been proven and upheld by the committee, appropriate records should be kept. These can be consulted by the Plagiarism Committee to determine whether a new case of potential plagiarism is actually a second or subsequent offense.

Statistical information covering the number of cases referred to the Committee, the number of written warnings issued and the number of penalties enforced and their distribution across Schools will be collated by the Quality Assurance & Statistical Services Office. This information will be used to inform subsequent modifications to the above policy and associated procedures, and to determine the requirement for wider training and information sessions on the topic of academic impropriety.

### 4.23. ASSESSMENT OF APPRENTICESHIPS AND WORK-BASED LEARNING

Assessment of work placements and work-based learning is conducted in accordance with the policies and procedures outlined so far. However, work-related assessments require specialised policies and procedures because of their exceptional arrangements. For example:

- Pass by compensation is not permitted for modules designated as work based learning
- The number of repeat attempts that a learner may make for any module is subject to agreement by the Consortium Steering Group

In addition to the assessment policies and procedures outlined in this chapter, the following procedures should be followed for the assessment of work placements and work-based learning to ensure fairness and consistency within and between programmes, and accordance with the sectoral standards outlined in *QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines: Apprenticeship Programmes* (2016).

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#### 4.23.1 'Off-the-Job' Assessment

To ensure all 'off-the-job' assessments are compliant with the principles of assessment outlined in Section 4.2 above, the same policies and procedures concerning the Assessment Schedule (Section 4.5.1 above), Preparing Assessment Materials (Section 4.5.4 above), Structure of Assessment (Section Error! Reference source not found.) and Management of Assessment (Section 4.8 above) apply here.

In addition, 'off-the-job' assessments require the following procedures to ensure fairness and consistency:

- all summative assessments should be internally reviewed by the subject group or appropriate review group appointed by the School prior to being submitted to the External Examiner. This process should assist in ensuring that the assessment tests the appropriate programme learning outcomes as approved and that any anomalies or inaccuracies can be detected.
- when a module is being delivered to multiple cohorts during the same timeframe, the same assessment is completed by all learners. If it is not possible to assess all learners simultaneously, an identical assessment regime must be adhered to that assesses the **learners' in accordance with the MIMLOs.**

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#### 4.23.2 Work-Based ('On-the-Job') Learning

In addition to adhering to the principles of assessment outlined in Section 4.2 above, assessment of on-the-job training and education at NCI is also informed by the following **guidelines to ensure further compliance with QQI's Assessments and Standards** (2013):

- Assessment methods should be explicitly related to MIPOs and set at the appropriate level of the National Framework of Qualifications.
- The assessment strategy should be appropriate to measure the achievement of students in terms of the MIPOs, with arrangements in place to keep it under review.
- The assessment regime should be well-documented and transparent.
- Any assessment of students in a work environment should involve employers, with appropriate support and guidance provided.
- Evidence of thorough marking and moderation should be maintained to effectively ensure consistency of practice within and across delivery sites.
- Learners should be encouraged to develop their own assessment tasks, which are then approved by tutors.

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#### 4.23.3 Management of Assessment

As assessments delivered as part of work-based do not follow the same procedures as either continuous assessments or terminal examinations, they must be managed in a different way. The following stakeholders are responsible for management of work-based assessments and

for ensuring that fairness and consistency are maintained both within and between programmes.

#### **4.23.3.1**      *Academic Supervisor*

The Academic Supervisor is based at NCI and is responsible for the following:

- Supervision of the completion of the learners Work Based Learning modules.
- Conducting weekly group meeting throughout the year with allocated apprentices and delivering support-based seminars on portfolio building, project management, etc.
- **Actively monitoring apprentices' submission of evidence and** alerting apprentices as to when this is falling behind. Monitoring will look at both the quality of what is submitted and the frequency with which the apprentice engages with their portfolio.
- Visiting an apprentice in their place of work at least twice in each academic year. At each visit the Academic Supervisor will meet with the learner, and also the Workplace Mentor.
- Reviewing the delivery of the programme, together with the development of the apprentice with workplace mentor and apprentice at these visits.
- Reviewing and discussing assessment issues, progression of the e-Portfolio, and assessing evidence demonstrated at these visits
- **Acting as first or second marker of apprentices' work**-based assessments
- Participating in standardization meetings which consider the assessment of work-based learning
- Advising the Workplace Mentor on assessment and evaluation of evidence

#### **4.23.3.2**      *Workplace Mentor*

Each apprentice will be assigned a suitably experienced member of staff to function as a mentor for the duration of their employment at the organisation. The Workplace Mentor will use their specific organisational and industry knowledge to guide learners through their apprenticeship, helping them to navigate corporate culture and gain confidence in the application of their learning from all modules on the programme.

##### Role of the Workplace Mentor

The interests, wellbeing and professional development of the learner are of paramount importance in the mentoring relationship. For this reason, the role of the Workplace Mentor is to:

- Act as an advocate of the programme within the organisation and to understand the background and context of it from a strategic point of view and how that translates to the workplace.
- Attend and participate in the Mentor Development Programme provided by NCI and leverages opportunities to share learnings and gain insights from other mentors.
- Build an open and honest relationship, and create an atmosphere where the apprentice feels safe to try out different ways of doing things.

- Support and encourage the **learner's** personal development and learning by giving confidential feedback to reinforce what they do well and advise in areas where they want to develop.
- Help the learner to take increasing initiative for their own learning and development and to take increasing responsibility for managing the mentoring relationship.
- Support the development of the learner through leveraging internal learning and development opportunities that are relevant to the learning outcomes and goals.
- Fully understand what subjects the learner is covering whilst at college and reinforcing this within the workplace.
- Challenge the learner to tell or demonstrate what they have learnt and correct any misunderstandings and reinforce the knowledge gained.
- Facilitate the learner in working on tasks that relate to the subject recently taught at the college.
- Discuss with the learner what assignments they need to complete and ask them to tell you how they will go about it.
- Discuss what evidence is required **with the learner's Academic Supervisor** and try to help them to gain it through task allocation.
- Share your experiences of interesting and challenging jobs with the learner to create enthusiasm in these areas.

#### Workplace Mentor's Expectations of the Learner

The learner should seek development opportunities, undertake self-learning and get support and encouragement at a pace which suits them. Initially, the learner may not feel very clear about what they want from mentoring, and so the role as mentor is to help define these, although they may change as the mentoring process develops.

#### Workplace Mentor's Interaction with the Academic Supervisor

As the Workplace Mentor is integrated into the overall work-based learning programme, the Academic Supervisor will act as a point of contact for queries and will support the them and their learner. The Academic Supervisor maintains overall responsibility for each **learner's** progression during their time on the programme. The Academic Supervisor can help support mentoring arrangements, provide support, training for the Workplace Mentor and action plans for the learner.

#### Support and Training to Be Provided to the Workplace Mentor

Workplace Mentors will be given appropriate support and guidance to make work-based assessment decisions. Workplace Mentors will attend three training days at NCI per academic year. The first will be prior to the commencement of the programme at the beginning of September, and further development will be provided at workshop meetings held mid-academic year in January and at the end of academic year in May. As part of the workshops, the assessment rubric will be explained which will act as guidance when making assessment decisions (see Error! Reference source not found.).

In addition, Workplace Mentors will be supported and partnered by an Academic Supervisor who will act as Second Marker. The Academic Supervisor will make a minimum of two scheduled visits **to each learner's employer** per academic year, ideally one per semester. Not only will the Academic Supervisor meet with the learner at the workplace, they will also meet with the Workplace Mentor. Furthermore, the Workplace Mentor will be able to contact the Academic Supervisor by email, phone, electronic conferencing, should they wish to avail of support. The Programme Director will also be available as an escalation point for Workplace Mentor to contact.

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#### 4.23.4 Recording Learning Activities

**Any assessment of learners' achievement of MIPOs in 'on-the-job' training will typically involve the monitoring and evaluation of an 'e-portfolio'. This will allow each learner to maintain a continuous record of work experience and assessment, and will also enable them to complete critical reflections.**

This record must be substantiated with evidence provided by the learner, which is confirmed by the Workplace Mentor and is accessible by the Examiner(s). Such evidence must be:

- Valid: directly related to the MIPOs the placement is designed to satisfy;
- Sufficient: satisfy the MIPOs the placement is designed to address;
- Authentic: all evidence is provided by the Learner;
- Consistent: achieved on more than one occasion, where required; and
- Current: not more than two years old.

The Academic Supervisor will monitor the apprentice's engagement with their learning and their provision of evidence on a consistent basis, and will provide timely feedback on this assessment

Provision should be made for the external observation of the apprentice by the academic supervisor, programme director or other examiner. This may necessitate recording of the apprentice if the assessment carries a considerable weighting for the module grade. Face to face observation of the apprentice will be achieved during the progress visit undertaken by the Academic Supervisor.

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#### 4.23.5 Assessment and Marking

The primary source of evidence of attainment of MIPOs during on-the job learning will be the 'e-portfolio', **which will be assessed using one of the following methods:**

- The Workplace Mentor is the 1<sup>st</sup> Marker and the Academic Supervisor is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marker

OR

- The Academic Supervisor is the 1<sup>st</sup> Marker and the Workplace Mentor provides feedback to contribute to the mark. This contribution is intended to verify that the evidence provided by the learner is valid.

The method of assessment is decided by the Programme Team during the initial validation process. This choice may be influenced by the level of the programme and/or the maturity of the sector in terms of assessing work-based learning. In all cases, those involved in assessing work-based learning must have completed appropriate training in assessment and grading.

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#### 4.23.6 Standardisation of Assessment

As assessments of work-based learning are individualised, it is necessary to follow additional protocols to ensure fairness and consistency for all learners. For this reason, standardisation meetings are scheduled for the end of each semester. These are attended by the Programme Director, Academic Supervisors and Workplace Mentors, and allow for the internal moderation of marks as outlined in Section 4.10.4 above.

In addition, each of the three standardisation meetings have a further particular purpose:

- Meeting 1: a review of assessment practice and instruments before they are implemented
- Meeting 2: address any concerns with managing assessments and identify training needs of assessors
- Meeting 3: follow-up on above and identify best-practices for subsequent iterations.

During the standardisation process, the review will consider the grade banding decisions of assessors rather than conduct a granular review of **individual learners' marks**. **It will determine** whether or not learners met the criteria for a particular grade rather than determining if a **learner's mark should be 64% or 66%**. **This is to ensure the consistent application of standards** for all learners. If the sample for a particular assessor is deemed to high/low, a recalibration of the assessments from the assessor will be made to the appropriate grade band. Any disputed marks between 1st and 2nd Markers will also be reviewed at the Standardisation Meeting and brought to the explicit attention of the External Examiner.



#### 4.23.7 Rubrics for Work-Based Learning

	FAIL	PASS	MERIT 2	MERIT 1	DISTINCTION
Satisfaction of Learning Outcomes	The evidence presented for the module fails to meet <u>all</u> of the Learning Outcomes for the module.	<p>The evidence presented is sufficient to satisfy the Learning Outcomes. However, the evidence presented only demonstrates a basic level of knowledge, skill and competence.</p> <p>A basic understanding and awareness of the relevant concepts and practice is shown. Some points of evidence, information and artefacts will benefit from being more direct and focused toward the satisfaction of Learning Outcomes.</p>	<p>The evidence presented clearly satisfies the Learning Outcomes. The evidence presented demonstrates a sound level of knowledge, skill and competence.</p> <p>A suitable understanding and awareness of the main issues is demonstrated, and relevant concepts and practice are shown. However, there are clear opportunities to develop evidence for the module further. Evidence may be limited in terms of its analysis, complexity, and range. The majority of evidence is direct and focused toward the satisfaction of Learning Outcomes.</p>	<p>The evidence presented clearly satisfies the Learning Outcomes. The evidence presented demonstrates a high level of knowledge, skill and competence.</p> <p>A depth of understanding and awareness of the main issues is demonstrated, and relevant concepts and practice are shown. There are some opportunities to develop evidence for the module further. Evidence shows greater analysis, complexity, and range. All of evidence is directed and focused toward the satisfaction of Learning Outcomes.</p>	<p>The evidence presented clearly satisfies the Learning Outcomes. The evidence presented demonstrates an exceptional level of knowledge, skill and competence.</p> <p>A secure understanding of the subject matter, concepts and practices is demonstrated. Evidence shows analysis, acknowledges complexity, and scope. A very high standard of comprehension is evident. All of evidence is directed and focused toward the satisfaction of Learning Outcomes.</p>
Knowledge & Understanding	The evidence presented may not be appropriate to satisfy the Learning Outcomes. The evidence presented shows little relevance to the Learning Outcomes	Evidence is overall suitable, however exhibits some indiscriminate content around the subject without showing	Evidence displays an understanding of the main concerns, but may lack a sustained focus, get side tracked and veer away from the central issue or task	Evidence displays an understanding of the main concerns, and an appreciation of the wider implications/context.	Evidence displays an understanding of the main concerns, and is cognisant of the wider implications/context.

	FAIL	PASS	MERIT 2	MERIT 1	DISTINCTION
	and assessment measures assigned.	complete understanding.	set. Concern for the wider context may be missing.		
Consistency	Evidence may be incomplete, and there may be omissions, resulting in Learning Outcomes not being satisfied.	Whilst Learning Outcomes are satisfied, the Learner has not fully pursued the Consistency concept, i.e. the learner has not provided more than one piece of evidence for most of the Learning Outcomes.	The Learner has clearly attempted pursue the Consistency concept, i.e. the learner has provided more than one piece of evidence for some of the Learning Outcomes. However, further opportunities remain to show a varied range of evidence.	The Learner has clearly pursued the Consistency concept, i.e. the learner has provided more than one piece of evidence for many of the Learning Outcomes, where appropriate and opportunity allows.	The Learner has clearly pursued the Consistency concept, and provided multiple forms of varied evidence, for each Learning Outcome, where appropriate and opportunity has allowed.
Originality & Creativity	Little or no originality or creativity is demonstrated in the presentation or collection of evidence for the e-portfolio.	Little originality or creativity is demonstrated in the presentation or collection of evidence for the e-portfolio.	Some originality and creativity is demonstrated in the presentation or collection of evidence for the e-portfolio.	Originality and creativity is clearly demonstrated in the presentation or collection of evidence for the e-portfolio.	The evidence presented for the module / e-portfolio is highly creative, original and innovative.
Organisation	There is a lack of clarity in the evidence presented and the match to Learning Outcomes.  The organisation of evidence for the portfolio could be significantly improved. Examples of poor	Not all of the evidence is accompanied by a caption that clearly explains the importance of the item.  The organisation of evidence for the portfolio is could be improved further. Examples of poor	Most of the evidence is accompanied by a caption that clearly explains the importance of the item to the Learning Outcomes.  The organisation of evidence for the portfolio is satisfactory,	All of the evidence is accompanied by a caption that clearly explains the importance of the item to the Learning Outcomes.  The portfolio is organised well, with limited opportunities to	All of the evidence is directly focused on achieving the Learning Outcomes and its relevance and relationship to the Learning Outcome is explained with detail.  The portfolio is highly organised, with minimal

	FAIL	PASS	MERIT 2	MERIT 1	DISTINCTION
	organisation are: confusing navigation links that make it difficult to locate artefacts; external links do not connect to the appropriate website or file.	organisation are: confusing navigation links that make it difficult to locate artefacts; external links do not connect to the appropriate website or file.	with some opportunities to further develop. Examples of poor organisation are: confusing navigation links that make it difficult to locate artefacts; external links do not connect to the appropriate website or file.	further develop. Examples of poor organisation are: confusing navigation links that make it difficult to locate artefacts; external links do not connect to the appropriate website or file.	or no issues. Examples of poor organisation are: confusing navigation links that make it difficult to locate artefacts; external links do not connect to the appropriate website or file.
Presentation	The evidence is very poorly presented which significantly distracts or inhibits its impact and ability to be considered as a portfolio entry. Examples could include: written submissions to the e-portfolio that are difficult to read due to inappropriate use of fonts, type size for headings, sub-headings and text and font styles; Audio and/or video artefacts are not edited or exhibit inconsistent clarity or sound (too loud/too soft/garbled).	The evidence has numerous errors that should be have corrected prior to submission and these distract from the impact of the evidence. Examples could include: written submissions to the e-portfolio that use inappropriate fonts, type size for headings, sub-headings and text and font styles; A audio and/or video artefacts are edited with inconsistent clarity or sound (too loud/too soft/garbled).  Writing is generally grammatically correct but does not use extensive or	The evidence has some errors that should be have corrected prior to submission and but these do not distract from the impact of the evidence. Examples could include: written submissions to the e-portfolio that use inappropriate fonts, type size for headings, sub-headings and text and font styles; audio and/or video artefacts are edited to focus on the Learning Outcome, and there are few issues with inconsistent clarity or sound (too loud/too soft/garbled).  Written evidence is generally grammatically	Consideration to the design and display of evidence is demonstrated. The evidence has few obvious errors and these do not distract from the impact of the evidence. Examples could include: written submissions to the e-portfolio that use inappropriate fonts, type size for headings, sub-headings and text and font styles; audio and/or video artefacts are edited to focus on the Learning Outcome, and there no issues with clarity or sound.	A high level of attention is given to the design and display of the Evidence. The evidence has no, or very minor, errors and these do not distract from the impact of the evidence at all. The evidence (written, audio, and video, etc.) is of a high standard, and is targeted on the Learning Outcomes.

	FAIL	PASS	MERIT 2	MERIT 1	DISTINCTION
		sophisticated vocabulary, or language common in their role / industry.	correct and has some use of sophisticated vocabulary and language common in their role / industry.		
Academic Supervisor / Work Based Mentor Support	Overly dependent on Mentor / Academic Supervisor support, guidance, or direction in the completion of evidence for the module. Support, guidance, or direction may not have been taken, acted on and ignored.	Highly dependent on Mentor / Academic Supervisor support, guidance, or direction in the completion of evidence for the module.	Some direct Mentor / Academic Supervisor support, guidance, or direction has been in the completion of evidence for the module.	The learner has received limited Mentor / Academic Supervisor support, guidance, or direction in the completion of evidence for the module. The learner has acted independently for the most part.	The learner has received minimal Mentor / Academic Supervisor support, guidance, or direction in the completion of evidence for the module. The learner has demonstrated high levels of independence.

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#### 4.23.8 Feedback on Assessments

**For ‘off-the-job’ assessments, feedback will be provided to learners in accordance with** the procedures outlined in Section 4.13 above.

**For assessments of ‘on-the-job’ learning, Workplace Mentors will provide ongoing feedback** through the normal employer performance management process. This can include regular one-to-one progress meetings and/or formal appraisals, and can result in pass/fail outcomes for a particular task and the requirement to repeat a task until completed to a satisfactory standard. The Academic Supervisor will provide feedback through scheduled weekly seminar meetings and via feedback on the evidence submitted through the e-portfolio system.

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#### 4.23.9 Impact of Disruption(s) on Assessment

**If a learner is unable to complete an ‘off-the-job’ assessment due** to illness or personal circumstances, the policies on late submission of coursework (Section 4.7.1 above) and extenuating circumstances (Section 4.9.1 above) **apply. For assessment of ‘on-the-job’** learning, individual arrangements must be made between the learner and their Workplace mentor.

However, as failure to complete a work placement can have an impact on the relationship between the College and the employer, final approval of the deferral of the placement is at the discretion of the latter.

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#### 4.23.10 External Review of Assessments

The External Review of Assessments completed as part of apprenticeship and other work-based learning programmes adheres to the same policy outlined in relation to the external authentication of QQI FET programmes (see Section 4.4.2 above). However, slight variations to the associated procedure are necessary to ensure the integrity of such assessments.

##### **4.23.10.1 External Authentication**

A team of External Authenticators will be appointed by NCI for each programme. Each team will be chaired by a Senior Authenticator and its size will depend on the number of learners enrolled on and the number of education providers involved in the programme.

The External Authenticators will operate independent of NCI and will be appointed according to the policy outlined in Section 4.4.1.2 above. However, at least 50% of the team must comprise individuals with experience in the assessment of work-based learning.

Upon appointment, each External Authenticator will receive the following documentation from the Office of the Registrar:

- a role description outlining the various responsibilities to be discharged
- the relevant policy and procedure documents relating to assessment
- all programme documents and assessment strategies
- necessary report forms

Once the Authenticators have agreed to conduct the external authentication on behalf of the NCI, the next step is to arrange a visit to the centre(s). It is good practice to prepare an agenda or visit plan in advance and to confirm information required on the day with the NCI. This should include:

- identification of the awards for which results are to be externally authenticated
- **plans for sampling learners' evidence** according to **NCI's sampling strategy**
- the learner evidence that is required on the day
- list of staff that are required to be available
- arrangements for a brief session to provide verbal feedback at the end of the visit

In preparation for the visit, Authenticators should be provided with the following:

- list of apprentice cohort(s) from which the sample is to be selected
- report(s) of the standardisation meeting
- assessment instruments i.e. briefs, examination papers
- marking schemes for specific assessment activities and outline solutions where appropriate
- broadsheet of results for all apprentices being considered at that session

When conducting the authentication process, the Authenticators will:

- consider the report of the standardisation meeting and authenticate the findings/outcomes
- **sample a range of learner evidence using NCI's sampling strategy**
- moderate assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the Award Specification

The External Authenticators **will apply NCI's sampling strategy when selecting an appropriate** sample of evidence to moderate, which stipulates sampling 10-20% of a cohort. i.e. 10-20% of a group depending on size. In the case of small class sizes (less than 20), all learner assessment is sampled.

The following should be noted in relation to sampling;

- it is the External Authenticator not NCI who selects the evidence to be sampled, applying the sampling strategy.
- the sample must be sufficient to enable the Authenticator to make an informed judgement on the consistency of the assessment decisions in the context of the award standards
- the sample should reflect the spread of grades and borderline grades to ensure grading criteria are being applied consistently
- if the Authenticator is moderating results from a number of assessors and programmes then the sample of evidence should reflect each assessor and each programme sufficiently
- if the Authenticator is moderating results from a number of centres for NCI, the sample should reflect all centres sufficiently
- New assessor judgements/decisions should be sampled at least once during the assessment cycle
- If significant issues are identified within a sample; the evidence for the whole cohort of learners from which the sample was taken should be reviewed by the Authenticator

External Authenticators are required to submit a full report on each examination with which they are involved not later than September 30th. The report should cover both summer and

autumn examinations and should be made in sufficient detail to enable the Programme Committee to derive substantial benefit from its contents. This report should be sent to the Registrar, who will make a copy of each report available to the National Programme Director. They will ensure that the contents of the report are communicated appropriately staff and to the relevant local programme committees. The National Programme Director shall respond to these reports by the 30th October and shall advise the Academic Operations Committee by report of any actions taken to address matters arising from or any other comments or reactions from the School to the content of the reports. This shall serve as feedback to Academic Council.

## 4.24. BLENDED LEARNING

Online and Blended Learning Programmes at NCI are subject to the same assessment policies and procedures as programmes delivered in a face-to-face manner. Furthermore, the assessment strategies and instruments designed for both onsite and online cohorts will be informed by the same principles of fairness and consistency, and the aim of assessing **learners' achievement of the MIPLOs for their respective programmes.**

However, due to the unique characteristics of blended learning programmes, particular arrangements are necessary. For example, in order to provide a fully online programme, it is necessary to provide students with the option of taking their assessment in an online environment that is accessible and secure. This online environment must ensure the integrity of the assessment process while also not dis/advantaging the student in any way.

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### 4.24.1 Online Assessments

The following procedures have been developed for ensuring the integrity of assessments conducted online and equity with the invigilation process and examination regulations outlined in Section 4.8.2 above and Section 4.8.3 above, respectively.

Online assessments are invigilated, or proctored, in a different manner to traditional onsite examinations. Proctoring involves either:

- using a system that allows for the live monitoring of candidates during the assessment
- OR
- recording the session and reviewing it once the assessment has been completed.

To **ensure the integrity of the students' exam environments**, a screen, audio and webcam recording must be available. There can be no breaks in coverage in these recordings for the duration of the examination session.

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### 4.24.2 Remote Proctoring

Proctored examinations are only offered if:

- The module is delivered online
- OR

- The learner is unable to attend an assessment for a validated reason and has been given permission by the Registrar to undertake the assessment in this manner. This **includes ‘in-class’ tests, time-limited assessments and terminal examinations.**

When delivering proctored examinations, the Programme Team have the following responsibilities toward all learners:

- To provide the opportunity to test that environment will facilitate access to the remote proctoring service
- To provide the opportunity to trial the assessment at least 3 weeks before the official assessment date in order to understand how the process works

By reciprocation, the following conditions must be agreed with in order to take a proctored assessment:

- **The learner’s technical environment must** meet the required specification as laid out in the programme information
- Learners must permit the installation of the software used for this process on their device
- Learners are required to establish identity following the procedures outlined by the software provider instructions
- Learners are responsible for testing the functionality of the system suitably in advance of all proctored exams in their courses so that any required troubleshooting can be completed and any issues remedied.
- Learners must agree to their name, email address and a recording of the assessment being stored **on the software providers’ server**. This will be deleted at the end of the assessment period and after all appeals are completed.

#### **4.24.2.1**      *Test Environment*

In order to replicate a traditional examination centre governed by examination regulations, the following rules apply to proctored assessments:

- The test environment for the duration of the assessment must be a quiet, secure and fully-lit room
- The exam should be taken **in the same room that the “Exam Environment View” is completed in**
- There should be no other computers in the room
- No other people are permitted into the room for the duration of the assessment
- The candidate is not permitted to leave the room for the duration of the assessment
- The candidate is not permitted to speak with others by any means with the exception of the relevant faculty member in the case of an emergency
- The candidate must be seated at a desk/table rather than sitting on a bed/sofa
- There should be nothing except a computer and an external camera/microphone on the desktop, table top or floor surrounding the candidate
- Bottles of water are permitted once the labelling has been removed
- All books, papers, notebooks, or other materials should be removed from the environment, unless specifically permitted in written guidelines for a particular examination



- There should be no visible writing on the desk and/or walls
- Music is not permitted and the candidate is not to be using headphones of any sort
- The candidate should not be wearing hats, scarves or other headgear except with prior permission

During proctored assessments, candidates are not permitted to use the following:

- Microsoft Excel or equivalent software products
- Microsoft Word or equivalent software products
- Microsoft Powerpoint or equivalent software products
- Calculators (online/computer or handheld devices)
- Textbooks (online/computer or hardcopies)
- Notes (online/computer or hardcopies)
- Pen and Paper
- Other websites

Please Note: If a learner is unable to take the assessment in an environment as described above or is unwilling to agree to any of the conditions outlined above, they must attend the assessment at NCI or another agreed location.

The camera used to record the examination session must be an external device and should be placed just above the screen of the laptop/computer where it will have uninterrupted view of the candidate. The camera must be focused on the candidate for the duration of the examination session and there should be no instances when its view is blocked and/or obstructed.

#### **4.24.2.2**      *Breach of Protocol*

In the event that a potential breach of protocol is observed either during the live invigilation or the subsequent review of the examination session, the candidate will be notified within 5 working days of the assessment date.

If a breach of protocol is confirmed, the candidate will be subject to the disciplinary procedure outlined in Section 4.22.5 above.

#### **4.24.2.3**      *Data Capture*

Reliance on data capture by an external organisation should be minimised where possible. **Where possible, examinations should be delivered through NCI's own Learning Management System** and scripts should be captured through this system. However, if the service of an external provider is required, the organisation must be compliant with the relevant inter/national data protection laws and, if outside the E.U., must be compliant with the Safe Harbour Agreement. As with traditional terminal examinations, student scripts must be stored for a year and a day.

#### **4.24.2.4**      *Criteria for Selecting Provider and Software*

Any provider or software selected for the provision of remote proctoring services must fulfil the following criteria:

1. The software must allow for complete lockdown of the learner's device to services other than those permitted by the faculty member and/or programme team
2. The software must allow for the unambiguous identification of the student
3. The software must require a 360 degree overview of the testing environment
4. The process must make a copy of all recordings available at the end of the assessment
5. Reports from the process must be available within 3 days of the assessment date
6. Proctors employed by the provider must be trained and evidence of that training provided
7. The provider must have the capability to store recordings for at least 4 months
8. The provider must hold its data in a secure location within Europe or within a **'safe-harbour' environment**