

National College of Ireland
Quality Assurance Handbook



5 Learning & Teaching Environment
November 2018

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5.1 Learning and Teaching Strategy

This section outlines the principles and practices underpinning the learning and teaching strategy at NCI that allows for the delivery of dynamic, learner-centred academic programmes **in line with the College's values** of inclusivity, community and integrity. NCI's learning and teaching strategy is informed by three mutually dependent principles:

1. Providing students with learning experiences that are effective, inclusive and empowering;
2. Providing students with learning that is useful and relevant, that facilitates employment and participation, and that develops values that contribute to justice and prosperity in the society in which we live; and
3. Enriching our learning community by extending the flexibility and reach of our programmes and by nurturing the professional development of our staff.

None of these principles can be considered in isolation when it comes to achieving excellence in teaching practices and learning experiences, since, for example, providing students with learning experiences that are effective and with learning that facilitates employment and participation requires programmes that are developed and reviewed in accordance with the most current requirements of industry and are delivered by teaching staff that are informed by the most up-to-date scholarship in pedagogic practices

NCI's **Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy** (2018-2022) is not simply a technical strategy that outlines how the College will achieve pre-determined outcomes and thus demonstrate compliance to regulatory bodies and engagement with the short-term skill requirements of particular industries. Rather, this strategy speaks to the very purpose of NCI and what the College represents as an institute of teaching **and learning**. NCI's strategy aims to develop the learner experience, the learning curriculum and the learning community because we believe that effective teaching requires an institution, and its staff, to always be learning, from its own and sectoral best practices, from the views of its primary stakeholders, and the philosophico-pedagogical discussions surrounding student partnerships, technology-enhanced analysis of student progression/attainment, and assessment of, as and for learning.

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (2018-2022) also identifies the core activities in each of the three areas outlined above. These activities are informed by the research presented in *Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision-Making: Report of the Working Group in Student Engagement in Irish Higher Education* (2016)

5.1.1 Developing the Learner Experience

The 'learner experience' refers to every aspect of students' engagement with the college. In practical terms, it is most apparent in the activities engaged in and services availed of by learners from the time of initial registration to the occasion of their conferral, but this can be expanded to include activities undertaken during the application process and their identification with the college following graduation. **The 'learner experience' refers not only to students' engagement with the academic components of their programme but also to student involvement in the decision-making processes in the institution in relation to governance and management, quality assurance and teaching and learning.**

The primary activities to be undertaken in this area are concentrated around six distinct objectives.

1. Enhanced Teaching

In order to foster teaching practices that are responsive to the diverse requirements of our learners and adaptive to current pedagogical research and effective uses of appropriate technologies and innovation, NCI has endeavoured to (i) establish guidelines for determining evidence-based best practices for teaching in specific subject areas, (ii) improve the existing peer-review of teaching policy to encourage greater staff engagement, and (iii) develop a teaching innovation resource to support sharing and implementation of best practices amongst teaching staff at both the local school and larger institutional levels.

2. Enhanced Student Participation

Providing all students with an opportunity to meet with relevant teaching staff at least once a semester and improving the student feedback mechanism so that it is integrated into the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) will ensure learners are more engaged with the delivery of their programmes and more willing to participate in the reviews that inform any quality enhancement initiatives.

3. Enhanced Assessment Practices

As the entire Higher Education sector is engaged in a debate about assessment for, as and of learning, NCI believes it is equally important to also address the more practical components of assessments that concern learners. For this reason, the college is committed to (i) further extending the processes in support of greater student feedback, (ii) providing learners with fully transparent marking schemes in advance of all assessments, and (iii) continuously evaluating the peer review of marking schemes to ensure greater challenge and openness to learners, and improved collaboration on marking.

4. Enhanced Modes of Delivery

NCI's mission of improving access to education and widening participation amongst under-represented demographics in Higher Education and Further Education and Training has meant that more flexible modes of learning content delivery have always **been sought as they have proven more suitable and responsive to our learners'** requirements. The college will continue its commitment in this area by (i) increasing blended learning options across all programmes, (ii) extending fully on-line programmes and block-delivery, short duration and professional development programmes, and (iii) developing best practice guidelines for work-based learning.

5. Enhanced Library, Technology & Learning Spaces

As programmes respond to the opportunities afforded by technology-enhanced **learning and accommodate the changing requirements of the college's** learners, it is vital that the learning environment develops in conjunction. For this reason, NCI aims to (i) provide spaces to facilitate collaborative learning, (ii) establish pedagogical

design guidelines for all NCI teaching spaces, outlining how technology enhanced **teaching practices can be implemented, and (iii) extending ‘bring your own device’** policies for all programmes.

6. Enhanced Student Support & Wellbeing

Further supporting students’ learning and wellbeing should be at the centre of all initiatives designed to enhance the learner experience. For that reason, NCI is determined to (i) develop and implement support strategies specifically designed for international students, (ii) to formulate guidelines to assist students to ideally reduce, or at least manage, stress more effectively, and (iii) to introduce improved policies for supporting students with learning difficulties.

5.1.2 Developing the Learning Curriculum

Preparing students for employment and offering students opportunities to acquire new skills to improve their employability are the key objectives of the programmes delivered by NCI. However, it is no longer acceptable to simply prepare students for the employment market as it exists or is emerging during their time of study. Graduates must be able to respond to the challenges posed by the dynamics of an ever-changing jobs market and to identify opportunities for employment in transdisciplinary areas that do not yet have clearly mapped out entry routes or progression options. For this reason, NCI believes that encouraging independent learning and critical research skills in students is a crucial component in all learning, teaching and assessment activities, in addition to installing the values necessary for graduates to be fully engaged and informed citizens committed to lifelong learning and the ideals of participatory democracy.

1. Programme Development

Developing new and enhancing existing programmes is a core function of NCI’s teaching staff and is comprehensively monitored by the college’s quality assurance system. The college actively seeks out opportunities to improve and increase its provisions in the areas of business, computing, education and psychology, while always attempting to identify potential new subject areas and opportunities for transdisciplinary learning. NCI is also committed to ensuring that all proposals for new and reviews of existing programmes are informed by the most current research in curriculum design, best practices in technology enhanced learning, and national guidelines for enhancing student engagement.

2. Graduate Skills Development

In addition to the Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs), all programmes delivered by NCI will endeavour to develop and implement teaching, learning and assessment strategies that facilitate the development of problem-solving, collaboration and critical thinking skills, and capacity for creativity and entrepreneurialism in our learners by the time of graduation.

3. Graduate Values Development

In addition to the Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs), all programmes delivered by NCI will endeavour to develop and implement teaching, learning and assessment strategies that ensure values such as social justice, ethics, sustainability, community and client-focused thinking are instilled in our learners by the time of graduation.

5.1.3 Developing the Learning Community

NCI values itself as both an institute of learning and a learning institute; the college not only provides excellent learning opportunities to its students but also learns from its primary stakeholders, in particular from their changing requirements and their feedback regarding the quality of services provided to them. In essence, NCI is a learning community in which the primary stakeholders, i.e. the learners, members of the immediate and more distant communities, and its staff, are engaged as partners in the delivery of programmes and **provision of services to each other. While NCI's immediate community largely comprises its** students and staff, the local and regional business districts, and the national education environment, recent developments in the Higher Education sector means the college is now also part of more global communities. As the college population has expanded, inclusivity and improved access opportunities now means our learning community now includes a considerable international student population and learners who were previously considered outside the standard reach of education and training. As our community of learning becomes more diverse, it is of vital importance that all students and staff are capable of responding to the challenges and utilising the opportunities that arise.

1. Serving our Learners' Needs

NCI's commitment to providing inclusive learning environments and widening participation in higher and further education means that the college must respond to and accommodate a diverse range **of learners' needs. For this reason, we endeavour to identify and support the** individual requirements of (i) learners attending college for the first time immediately after post-primary school, (ii) adult learners or all ages and abilities, (iii) international students, and (iv) professional workers. Whether attending NCI full-time or part-time, or enrolled in a **four-year bachelor's degree programme or a special purpose award, all learners' needs and** feedback will be valued equally, and used to inform the quality enhancement initiatives undertaken in the college at local programme and larger institutional levels.

2. Serving our Communities

Changing lives and improving society through education is at the core NCI's philosophy. As such, it is embedded within the communities it serves and committed to ensuring that its learners come to embody and act on the same principles in their professional activities. While the college must remain attentive to the demands of larger, global communities due to the **increase in international students and the changes in Ireland's business model,** it continues to prioritise its responsibilities as an educational institute within the North Inner-City and within the Irish Business community. **Serving the needs and responding to the changing requirements of both these communities is testament to NCI's genuine engagement with its** stakeholders, a quality that the college aims to instil in its community of learners by example.

3. Serving our Staff's Needs

NCI acknowledges that any strategy intended to create a supportive learning community that values diversity and inclusivity, and is informed by best practices in learning, teaching and assessment must facilitate the professional development of its teaching staff so that best practices are recognised and shared, the implementation of innovative learning and teaching practises is encouraged, and an environment of critical inquiry self-reflective research is fostered. Accordingly, NCI is committed to (i) developing the education and professional capacity of all staff, (ii) facilitating teaching staff in the completion of activities aimed at improving professional competence, and (iii) embedding research and scholarship in teaching and learning as a core output of the college.

The Centre for Research and Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CRILT) fulfils a crucial function in this area as it provides staff with the opportunity and the necessary resources to develop self-reflective teaching practices informed by the most current scholarship and that place learner-centredness at the forefront of any quality enhancement initiatives in the areas of learning, teaching and assessment. Please refer to Section 5.4 below for further information on the professional development activities coordinated by CRILT.

5.2 Blended Learning

As part of NCI's commitment to widening participation in higher and further education, blended learning performs a crucial role in certain programmes due to the flexibility, independence and diversity of resources it provides to learners. NCI defines **'blended learning'** as *"the integrated combination of a number of pedagogic approaches – usually traditional learning with e-learning approaches"*.

In this definition, the important term is **"integrated combination"**, which means blended learning is not simply a collection or mixture of pedagogic approaches but rather is the planned and appropriate use of different media, learning environments and teaching scenarios to deliver more engaging and effective learning experiences.

The rationale for incorporating blended learning into the teaching and learning strategy of a programme is that it provides, encourages and/or allows for:

- **Flexible and adaptive learning to suit students' needs**
- Expanded collaboration and goal-oriented activities
- Self-directed and autonomous learners
- Improved learner engagement through multiple modes of learning, i.e. visualization, animation, simulation, narrative, interactivity, etc.
- More effective and varied teaching strategies, i.e. problem-based learning, learner collaboration, meaningful contexts and case studies, continuous assessments, simulations, practice-based learning, etc.

Programmes delivered through or that include elements of blended learning utilise the **College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)**, currently Moodle, and virtual classroom technology platform, currently Adobe Acrobat, to present, organise and manage student learning activities.

Faculty involved in the delivery of a blended learning programme or blended learning content must endeavour to make the learning experience as similar to the conventional face-to-face

classroom setting as possible. This may involve adapting their presentation style, modifying the content to be delivered and/or incorporating additional formative assessment activities to encourage engagement in the online classroom. Mapping the Minimum Intended Learning Programme Outcomes (MIPOs) to the teaching and learning strategy for a blended learning programme is completed as part of the initial validation conducted by QQI. This process allows the Programme Director and Module Owners to discuss the design of the teaching and learning content with the instructional designer, thus ensuring that the presentation style and formative assessment activities are directly related to the MIPOs.

The instructional settings to be used in the delivery of a blended learning programme include:

- Traditional Classes
- On-line Classes - fixed schedule with opportunities for learner interaction using virtual classroom technology
- Flexible Activities
 - Digital Actions - online activities that are time flexible
 - Independent Learning - self-directed learning using on-line, print and other sources
 - Collaboration - learners collaborating with other learners

See Chapter 13 for further information on Programmes Using Technology Mediated Learning.

5.3 Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning is defined as credit bearing learning that takes place in a workplace setting and is a mandatory element of a programme of study. As such, work-based learning can be of any duration. At present, NCI delivers work-based learning in the following formats, **either as the primary mode or a component part of a programme's learning and teaching strategy**:

- Collaborative arrangements to provide in-company training
- Accredited placements offered as part of undergraduate degrees
- Industry based projects/dissertations offered on postgraduate degrees
- Apprenticeship programmes

NCI's **policy on work-based learning** has been developed to ensure that the learning environment is managed using the same principles as the traditional learning environment. Accordingly, this policy is informed by the following principles:

- All activities **must be consistent with the College's strategic plans, (ideally) arise from School plans and be congruent with the School's existing academic provision, bringing clear benefits to all those involved;**
- All activities should only be delivered with other organisations that have
 - the academic OR professional standing to successfully contribute to or deliver programmes of study to appropriate academic and professional standards;
 - the financial standing to sustain them;
 - adequate infrastructure facilities and resources to support them, including appropriate staffing; and
 - the legal standing to contract to their delivery;
- All activities should be equivalent in quality and standards to comparable programmes

delivered solely by the College, and be comparable in student learning, support and experiences to those programmes based solely at NCI; and

- All activities should give adequate opportunity for student representation and feedback;

Programmes delivered solely through, or that consist of components of, work-based learning **are subject to the College's existing processes for programme monitoring. The Vice Dean of the School** is responsible for ensuring that the annual School Report and contains the observations and recommendations of the relevant Programme Reviews, which contain the outcomes of the Programme Committee Meeting, the Class Representative Meeting, External Examiner reports and learner feedback surveys. Such programmes are also subject to revalidation every 5 years using the programme revalidation process.

5.3.1 Learning Environment

The work-based learning environment should be safe and appropriate to the learning taking place. All environments should be appropriately vetted and due diligence carried out on prospective employers. A tri-party agreement between the learner, the employer and NCI must be completed in all cases. In the unlikely event of a minor or vulnerable adult going on placement, the appropriate child protection arrangements should be put in place.

Please refer to Chapter 3 (Section 3.6.13) on the due diligence process conducted when developing programmes delivered through collaborative provision for further information on how the learning environment is assessed prior to the delivery of programmes involving work-based learning. Chapter 3 (3.6.9) also provides details on the quality assurance system that ensures the standards of this learning-environment are maintained as the programme is delivered.

5.3.2 Consistency of Learning

Each learner must be visited in accordance with the programme validation requirements by the academic supervisor/placement supervisor to ensure that the learning outcomes associated with work-based learning can be achieved.

The ratio of learners to academic supervisor/placement supervisor will normally be no more than 8:1 or the equivalent of a module workload in the case of supervisors who are undertaking only this role. All supervisors, placement tutors and workplace mentors must be appropriately briefed on the nature of the programme, the nature of the learning and how this is being managed at NCI. Those involved in assessing learners must have undertaken training at NCI.

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5.3.3 Assessment of Work-Based Learning

All assessment of work-based learning is subject to NCI's quality assurance procedures for assessment. Work-based learning must be designed so that judgement is not dependent on a single marker and that it can be externally examined.

Work-based learning may or may not be graded. When considering the grading of work-based learning, consideration should be given to impact on the award classification of the learner, the experience and expertise in assessment of those grading the work and the level of the programme.

5.3.4 Information Provisions

Each learner shall receive a placement handbook or in the case of apprentices, a programme handbook, outlining the processes, expectations of them as a learner and the responsibilities of NCI and the employer. Each workplace mentor shall receive a handbook outlining the processes, expectations of them as an employer and the responsibilities of NCI and the learner.

5.3.5 Data Protection and Intellectual Property

When designing work-based learning, the nature and types of data that must be shared for the placement to be effective should be made clear to both the learner and the employer. The data that may need to be shared between the employer and NCI may include but is not limited to:

- Attendance data
- Results data
- Commercially sensitive information for the purposes of validating assessment outcomes
- Submissions of **student's work**-based assessment

5.3.6 Roles and Responsibilities

The following individuals have particular responsibilities concerning the monitoring and maintenance of academic standards in work-based learning activities.

5.3.6.1 Academic Supervisor

The Academic Supervisor is based at NCI and is responsible for supervising the learner's successful completion of the work-based learning modules as set out in the programme schedule. In particular, they will liaise with the workplace mentor to review the delivery of the programme and the development of the learner, paying close attention to the Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes and the Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes, as appropriate, and assessing the learner's achievement of these as evidenced through the learner's submitted evidence.

5.3.6.2 *Workplace Mentor*

The Workplace Mentor is an experienced officer within the organisation where the learner is completing their work-based learning. **They are responsible for supporting the learner's** personal development and encouraging their independent learning by providing confidential feedback to reinforce what the learner does well and to identify the areas where they need to improve. Ultimately, the Workplace Mentor assist the learner in taking increased initiative for their own learning and development, and greater responsibility for managing the mentoring relationship.

The Workplace Mentor also supports the development of the learner by leveraging internal learning and development opportunities that are relevant to the learning outcomes of the programme/module(s); challenging the learner to demonstrate what they have learned and correct any misunderstandings; and facilitating the learner in reinforcing knowledge by working on tasks where they can directly apply their learning.

5.3.6.3 *The Placement Tutor*

The Placement Tutor supports and evaluates student teachers during the placement by means of meetings, site visits and portfolio assessments. The Placement Tutors work with the Module Leader and the Programme Director and are members of the Programme Team.

5.3.6.4 *Placement Co-Ordinator*

The placement co-ordinator has overall administrative responsibility for the placements. They assign Placement Tutors to each student. They monitor progress and make sure that students and Placement Tutors keep up-to-date submissions. The placement co-ordinator will also act as liaison with the placement setting.

5.3.6.5 *Mentor Teacher*

An experienced professional who works in the co-operating institution and who agrees to act as a mentor for the student teacher while he or she is fulfilling the placement.

5.3.7 *Learning and Teaching Standards*

The following standards must be met when delivering blended learning programmes and/or content.

1. MIPLOs and Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs) should be the same regardless of the mode of delivery unless approved during the programme validation and explicitly specified programme schedule.
2. Lecturers should apply good pedagogic design to their production and planning of student learning activities. This is achieved by mapping such activities against the MIPLOS and/or MIMLOs

3. Where possible, the amount of student contact hours should be the same. In a blended learning context, “contact hours” are designated as:
 - a. Learning events where learners have opportunities to ask questions contiguously, i.e. conventional classroom or online class environment
 - b. Guided learning activities, i.e. interactive exercises that are pedagogically designed to enable the student to achieve a specific learning outcome)
4. Learners should be provided with opportunities to review archived instructional materials for revision and assignment purposes.

5.3.8 Staff Training and Support

To ensure the above standards are consistently met, staff are provided with ongoing support and continuing professional development opportunities in the area of technology mediated and technology enhanced learning, in particular in the design, production and implementation of learning and teaching strategies suited to NCI’s VLE.

Any staff member asked to participate in online delivery is required to undertake training sessions aimed at improving online pedagogy and ensuring consistent and appropriate teaching methodologies, regardless of prior online delivery experience outside of NCI.

Please refer to Section 5.4 below for further information regarding the professional development opportunities for faculty in the areas of learning and teaching.

5.3.8.1 Synchronous Online Delivery

Training on the use of the virtual classroom platform is currently modelled on University of Maryland Sloan online training. It addresses 5 key competencies

- System training
- Avoiding standard practice
- Discussing motivation
- Course design
- Institutional support

Modules set for synchronous online delivery must be discussed with an instructional designer. This provides the lecturer with an opportunity to become cognisant of how module delivery may have to vary in an online mode, while also allowing for discussion with, and feedback from an expert regarding the planned learning and teaching strategy, and the resources available.

Each module will have a Learning Experience Monitor (LEM) assigned for the first 2-3 weeks of delivery. The LEM will be an individual trained in pedagogical approaches for online delivery who will assist lecturers in refining their technique and navigating the online system. They will also advise the IT department if there are any technical issues that require monitoring.

5.3.8.2 Asynchronous Online Delivery

Content developed for asynchronous delivery is subject to the following process:

1. Development of Traditional Content
 - a. The module developer develops content in accordance with the approved module descriptor in traditional text and/or slide style. This includes instructions with respect to assessments and how formative assessment should be accommodated.
 - b. Slides and accompanying text are proof read by a second reader who is a subject expert in the area
2. Treatment by the instructional designer.
 - a. The content is then reviewed by the instructional designer and converted into appropriate content using the VLE or other SCORM based tools.
3. The voice recording is prepared to be overlaid on the content.

The choice of content to be delivered in this manner should be chosen carefully as the resources required to maintain and update this type of delivery are significant. This mode is suitable for historical and/or theoretical concepts that are not likely to change frequently.

5.4 Continuing Professional Development

NCI recognises the importance of teaching *and* learning for both its students *and* its staff. Furthermore, the College also appreciates that in order to be a teaching *and* learning institution, its staff must be provided with opportunities to learn and to use this learning to inform their teaching practices. For these reasons, NCI places great emphasis on building its capacity to increase existing, and develop new knowledge, through engagement in advanced research and professional activities, and the provision of professional development opportunities. The learning thus achieved can then be utilised by staff in their teaching activities, such as, programme design, development and delivery; curriculum and module content; and facilitating student engagement.

Having a faculty that is fully engaged with developing best practices, facilitating independent learning and knowledge dissemination, and involved in collaborative enhancement sets an excellent example for the College and encourages a similar attitude in the student community. In addition, providing teaching staff with continuing professional development opportunities **in the area of learning and teaching further strengthens the College's commitment to realising 'students as partners' in the development, delivery and enhancement of its academic programmes.**

5.4.1 Centre for Research and Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CRILT)

CRILT coordinates the teaching enhancement services provided to all teaching staff at NCI. At **the core of this service is the Teaching Enhancement course available on the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).** This course is available to all new and existing faculty and associate faculty, and addresses the six competence areas identified for accomplished teaching by the CRILT. These are:

- Teaching Effectiveness
- Reflection on Practice
- Student-Centeredness
- Digital Capacity
- Assessment
- How College Works

CRILT provides professional development workshops and specialist seminars in each of the **above areas to improve the College's capacity to provide an excellent student learning experience** informed by the principles of reflective practice and continuous enhancement. Proficiency in the above competence areas is demonstrated by staff accessing the online resources and completing the associated activities.

CRILT also coordinates the induction of new teaching staff through its **“New to Teaching”** seminar series, which addresses assessment and feedback, teaching strategies, and developing teaching skills. New teaching staff can also request to meet with a specialist teaching practice mentor to address a particular area of concern.

As the Postgraduate Diploma in Learning and Teaching is delivered through CRILT, the centre has access to a wide range of scholarship on best practices. These are often made available to teaching staff in the form of online resources accessed through the Teaching Enhancement **course on NCI's VLE. Furthermore, its ‘Accomplished Teacher’ workshop is specifically designed for NCI teaching staff and those involved in supporting student learning.** This workshop provides staff with the opportunity to share best practices in the area of learning and teaching, and facilitates collaborative learning in the six core competency areas **mentioned above. CRILT are also responsible for implementing the ‘Accomplished Teacher’ framework.** Please refer to Chapter 8 (Section 8.3.2.2) for further information about this framework and to Chapter 8 (Section 8.3.2.3) to understand how the above professional development opportunity is mapped against the appointment criteria for faculty at different grades.

5.5 Guidelines for Programme Delivery

Identifying and responding to the needs of all our learners equally and conscientiously; providing a learning environment that facilitates increased student engagement in learning, teaching and assessment activities; and developing a culture where students are partners in the quality assurance system and quality enhancement initiatives are some of the core **activities outlined in the college's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.** Accordingly, NCI has developed the following policies, guidelines and associated procedures to address some of the practical considerations that must be maintained when delivering programmes **that respond to learners' requirements in an environment conducive to effective learning,** teaching and assessment practices.

5.5.1 Publication of Programme Information

The publication of programme information should be carried out with reference to the ***Policy on Public Information***

5.5.1.1 Full-Time Programmes

Full-time programme information is made available for the production of marketing material 18 months prior to the intake date. Any programmes that are not yet approved by QQI should not be advertised in the prospectus unless the validation has been applied for using the processes described in the Policy on the Development & Validation of Programmes Leading to HE awards. If this is the case, all materials for this programme should prominently and clearly specify that programme validation is pending using the phrase **'Subject to QQI validation'**. If the programme is not yet approved only a broad indicative outline of the curriculum should be included in any pre-publicity materials. Detailed curricula should not be published until validated.

5.5.1.2 Part-time Programmes

Part-time programme information is made available for the production of marketing material 9 months prior to the expected intake date. Any programmes that are not yet approved should not be advertised in the prospectus unless the programme submission document has been submitted to the awarding body using the processes described above. If this is the case, all materials for this programme should prominently and clearly specify that programme validation is pending **using the phrase 'Subject to QQI validation'**. If the programme is not yet approved only a broad indicative outline of the curriculum should be included in any pre-publicity materials. Detailed curricula should not be published until validated.

5.5.2 Admission & Registration

Learners may not be admitted or registered on a programme that has not been through the validation process as outlined above. The Certificate of Validation or equivalent documentation must be received prior to admission and registration unless permission is received from the awarding body.

Offers may be made to applicants pending validation of the programme. Offers should not be made unless the programme has been submitted to the awarding body for validation.

5.5.3 Annual Planning and Agreement of Schedule of Programme Delivery

As part of the annual budgeting cycle, the schedule of expected overall programme delivery is agreed by Executive Group. This will be based on the strategic plan of the College and operational considerations such as availability of location, expected market demand etc.

Figure 1 outlines the process and interplay between the relevant functions within the College throughout this process.

Full-time Programmes

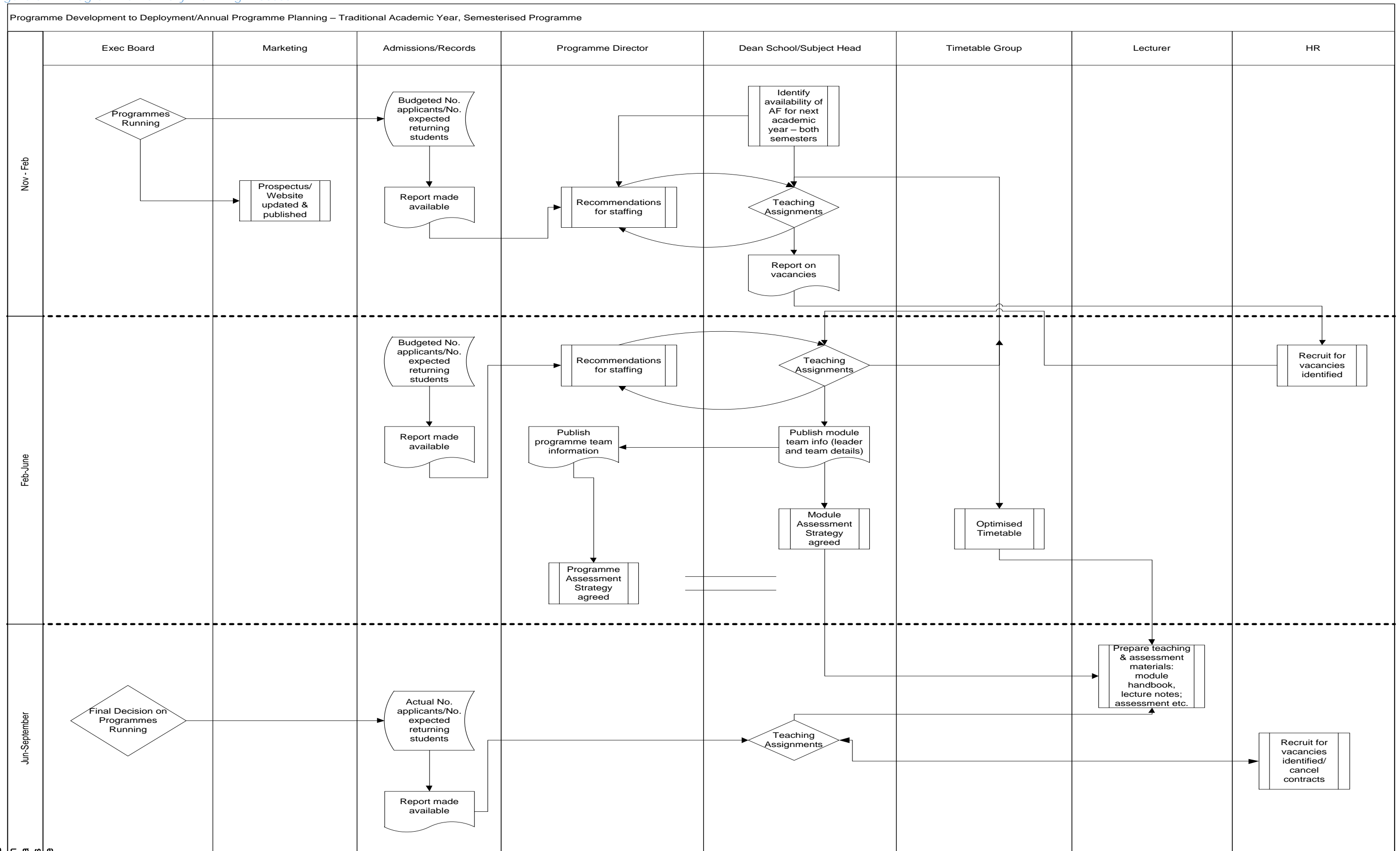
The schedule for full-time programme delivery is set 18 months ahead of the expected intake date. It should be available by mid-March. Executive Group may opt to remove a programme from the advertised set of programmes based on application information made available in March preceding the intake date. Due to the impact on the CAO process, this decision must

be taken in time for the change of mind process in July. All applicants to this programme should be contacted.

Part-time Programmes

The schedule for part-time programme delivery is set 9 months ahead of the expected intake date. This schedule will include indicative days, timeframes, locations and expected intake per cohort

Figure 5-1: Programme Delivery Planning Process



5.5.4 Decisions to Cease Delivery of a Programme

5.5.4.1 Cessation of an Approved Programme

Where an Approved Programme does not operate for two years or more due to lack of learner demand, the Programme Committee may decide not to include the Programme in the next Programmatic Review for revalidation.

The decision to withdraw a programme from CAO or not to offer a programme in a particular year due to lack of demand is taken by Executive Group, having consulted with the Dean of School concerned.

It is National College of Ireland's policy that should a programme commence, it will be offered to completion for the specific intake of students.

5.5.4.2 Non-Commencement of an Offered Programme

In cases where an offered programme may not run for reasons such as non-viable numbers, unsuitability of location or unavailability of appropriate teaching staff, learners are offered the following.

- Transfer to the same programme at another NCI location if appropriate

Or

- Full refund on fees paid for that academic year and appropriate guidance as to other education options.

In such cases, the decision to not run a programme in such cases as above is made at least 5 working days prior to the proposed start date for programmes at levels 5-6 of the National Qualifications Framework. For all other programmes, the decision is made at least 10 working days prior to the proposed start date. Refunds are made to those persons or organisations that originally paid the programme fee.

Prospective Learners are notified in all correspondence and publications that programmes may not commence for reasons such as those outlined above.

5.5.4.3 Cessation of a Programme that has Commenced

In exceptional cases where a programme is terminated after it has commenced and prior to the normal completion of the programme for reasons such as non-viable numbers, unsuitability of location or unavailability of appropriate teaching staff, learners will be offered the following options

- Transfer to the same course at another NCI location if appropriate

Or

- Endeavour to facilitate transfer to a similar programme with another provider using procedures agreed under the HECA PEL Scheme Action plan

Or

- Full refund on fees paid for that academic year and appropriate guidance as to other education options

Where appropriate, a statement of credit will be provided for successful completion of modules. Refunds are made to those persons or organisations that originally paid the fee.

5.5.5 Notification of Resources Required to Support Teaching & Learning

A report on additional software, hardware and information resources shall be made available to the IT department and Library & Information Service as part of the annual budgeting process.

5.5.6 Teaching Assignments & Timetables

Teaching assignments for the following year (all semesters) should be made by 28th February (for September – May delivery) or 30th September (February–December delivery). This is completed by the Dean or Vice Dean of School as appropriate.

These assignments will be made based on decisions made regarding programme delivery for the following year and expected intakes. Expected intake should be calculated based on **previous years' trends of intake/retention and/or completion.**

The Dean of School will provide detail of any resourcing requirements to the HR Department by 28th February (for September – May delivery) or 30th September (February–December delivery).

Teaching assignment, capacity requirements and arrangements for tutorials should be provided to the Central Timetabling Office by 28th February (for September – May delivery) or 30th September (February–December delivery).

5.5.6.1 *Subject Teams and Module Owners*

For modules that are shared across multiple programmes, module owners must be identified by each School.

5.5.6.2 *Notification of Module Teams*

Arising from the assignment of teaching loads, module teams will be identified for modules that are shared by several programmes. Details of the module teams will be provided to all faculty via the staff portal

5.5.6.3 *Notification of Programme Teams*

Arising from the assignment of teaching loads, programme teams will be identified and details provided to all faculty via the staff portal

5.5.7 Scheduling of Teaching Activities

To ensure that all learners at NCI are provided with the same high standard of learning opportunities and within learning environments that are suited to their requirements, the

following policy and associated procedures have been developed for the scheduling of teaching activities.

NCI also recognises the importance that effective scheduling of teaching activities plays in enhancing the student experience. Therefore, the following conditions apply when compiling the academic timetable.

5.5.7.1 General Principles

When compiling the timetable of learning activities for the College, the Central Timetable Office (CTO) employs the following general principles:

- Public Holidays, Good Friday and the Christmas Closedown period are not considered teaching days. Please refer to Academic Calendar for exact dates.
- Teaching activity starts sharply on the hour. All rooms should be vacated five minutes to the hour to allow time for students to vacate the room and enable the following session to start on time.
- Teaching activities take precedence over non-teaching activities. Bookings for Open Days may be requested as part of the timetable construction process however, due to the demand on teaching space there is no guarantee that rooms required will be available.
- All teaching activity must be recorded in Syllabus+ and attached to relevant student sets. No teaching activity must be recorded as an ad hoc booking.
- All campus space designated as teaching space is considered owned by CTO in Syllabus+ and the CTO has responsibility and authority to allocate this teaching space in accordance with this policy.
- Teaching activities will not be arbitrarily scheduled at the same time every year via rolling over of activity bookings in Syllabus+.

5.5.7.2 Priority Scheduling

Teaching activities are scheduled within priority blocks to ensure that teaching activities with specific requirements or constraints are given the resources that they need. Priority is as follows:

1. Teaching activities with set timetables as their times and dates are inflexible.
2. Any activity that requires to be scheduled at a specific time of the day.
3. All other teaching activities.

5.5.7.3 Daytime Programmes (Full-time and Part-time)

The teaching hours for daytime programmes at NCI are 9am – 6pm Monday – Friday, with the following conditions:

- Classes on a Wednesday must finish at 1pm to facilitate student recreation;
- Students and teaching staff will have at least one hour free from 12pm – 2pm each day; and
- Classes will only be scheduled during the 5pm-6pm timeslot on a needs must basis.

To enhance the student experience, NCI also endeavours to ensure that:

- No more than 4 consecutive hours of teaching activity will be scheduled for all students
- No more than 3 consecutive hours of teaching will be scheduled for School of Business where possible
- No more than 2 hours of consecutive teaching in the same module will be scheduled. Daytime block delivery is an exception to this.
- The time between students start and end times on a particular teaching day will not exceed 9 hours.
- Compulsory learning activities do not clash with optional academic activities
- A learner will not be scheduled for just 1 hour of teaching on a single day, where possible and permitted by resources
- A learner will not have more than 2 hours between scheduled teaching on any given day, where possible and permitted by resources
- Teaching activities for Higher Certificates in the School of Business are not scheduled before 10am, where possible and permitted by resources
- Tutorials, Labs and Practicals are scheduled after the relevant lecture(s) but ideally not on the same day

5.5.7.4 Evening Programmes (Part-time)

The teaching hours for part-time evening programmes are 6pm – 10pm Monday – Friday and 9am – 6pm Saturday with the following conditions:

- At least a 1 hour break will be scheduled between 12pm – 2pm on Saturdays for both students and teaching staff
- Evening classes will not commence before 6pm on any given weekday, except in exceptional circumstances. In these cases, the relevant school must submit a request to the CTO by the published deadline
- No teaching activities will take place after 10pm Monday – Friday or anytime on Sundays.

5.5.7.5 Daytime Block Delivery

The teaching hours for programmes that include the block delivery of learning content are 9am – 6pm Monday – Saturday with the following conditions:

- students are generally scheduled for a maximum of 3 days in a single week
- students are scheduled for either one or two 3-4 hour blocks a day with a maximum of an hour break between blocks for lunch

5.5.8 Teaching Load and Availability

While NCI recognises that poorly scheduled teaching activities can have adverse effects on student experience, the college also acknowledges that the requirements of teaching staff must also be considered to ensure a high standard of teaching activities for all learners. For this reason, the CTO adheres to the following conditions when compiling the schedule of teaching activities.

- No regular, ongoing teaching activities are scheduled between 1pm - 6pm on Wednesdays to facilitate meetings and other activities.
- If a staff member is scheduled to teach until 10pm on a given evening, then generally they will not be scheduled until the end of the morning the next day, except by agreement between the staff member and the Dean of School.
- Teaching staff can be assigned a maximum of four hours continuous teaching activity before a break is scheduled.
- The time between teaching staff starting and ending teaching on a particular teaching day will not exceed 9 hours, except by agreement between the staff member and the Dean of School.
- No teaching day can exceed 12 hours from start to finish.

5.5.8.1 Faculty

The CTO adheres to the following conditions relating to teaching load and availability when scheduling teaching activities that are delivered by Faculty.

- Whether a faculty member is assigned to teach a daytime, evening or block module, or a combination of delivery modes, is decided by the Deans of School. Once a faculty member has been allocated a daytime, evening or block module to teach, it will be assumed by the CTO that they are fully schedulable during the teaching times for these delivery modes indicated above.
- On the assumption above, Faculty assigned to only teach on full time daytime modules can be scheduled up to 5 of the 5 teaching days. Faculty assigned to evening modules or a combination of evening and daytime modules can be scheduled for 5 of the 6 teaching days, except by agreement between the staff member and the Dean of School.
- Any Faculty member that would like to request a reduction in their availability for the standard teaching times listed above, due to such things as research activity, must request this in writing to their Dean of School and then this must be communicated to the CTO by the agreed deadline.
- The standard teaching load per week for Faculty Staff is 12 hours, and Faculty can expect to be scheduled up to those 12 hours. For Faculty members with agreed higher teachings loads, they will be scheduled up to the maximum agreed.
- Any reductions in teaching loads, due to such things as research activity, must be formally agreed with the Dean of School and communicated to the CTO within the agreed deadline.

5.5.8.2 Associate Faculty

The CTO adheres to the following conditions relating to teaching load and availability when scheduling teaching activities that are delivered by Associate Faculty.

- Associate Faculty availability will be taken into account when scheduling, but there can be no guarantee that all teaching activity assigned to associate faculty can be timetabled within their notified availability.
- 2 hours is the minimum of hours that can be scheduled in one day.
- **Within an Associate Faculty's availability, and within the guidelines of this policy,** Associate Faculty can expect to be scheduled within the full range of teaching hours

listed above, although they will only be scheduled for a maximum of 5 of the 6 teaching days, except by agreement between the staff member and the Dean of School.

- There is no stated minimum or maximum teaching hours that Associate Faculty can be scheduled for during the week, although normally Associate Faculty will not be scheduled for less than two hours per week of teaching activity and no more than 18 hours per week of teaching activity, unless approved by the Dean of School.

5.5.9 Postponement of Lecture/Late Start

Classes should be postponed only in the case of emergency and missed lectures must be made up. In the case of known non-attendance, faculty should arrange to swop with colleagues and/or arrange alternative sessions with students.

5.5.10 Assessment

NCI policy and process for assessment is detailed in Chapter 4 of the QA Handbook. Assessment should be carried out in accordance with this policy and process.

5.5.10.1 Annual Agreement of Module & Programme Assessment Strategy

The Programme Team, both the current iteration and those who are due to deliver the programme the following year, will meet before the commencement of term to review the current programme and module assessment strategy. The assessment strategy for the following year should be agreed no later than the 30th of June (for September – May delivery) or 31st October for (February – December delivery). This will allow time for faculty to prepare and for the support services (e.g. disability support, IT) to ensure that the assessment strategy can be supported.

This annual review refers only to the nature of the assessment instrument or the number of coursework elements. Proposals to change the overall assessment structure and/or the weighting of assessment must be processed through the module modification process as outlined in Chapter 3 (3.8.3).

Consideration will be required for the co-ordination of the inputs of module teams in agreeing assessment strategies for shared modules.

5.5.10.2 Variation in Assessment

It is College policy that the assessment strategy for shared modules will be the same for the purposes of consistency and quality assurance. However, it is recognised under the principles of assessment that in some circumstances a variation in assessment may be required e.g to allow for blended delivery, international delivery, learners with specific learning needs or other pedagogical reasons. Such variation shall be approved at the original validation or through differential validation as appropriate. If a validation process is not being undertaken, proposals for variation in assessment should be submitted to the module owner. This will then be reviewed at subject team level from which a recommendation will be made to the School Committee.

This recommendation will be approved at the Academic Standards & Policy Committee.

5.5.11 Programme Information

5.5.11.1 *The Programme Handbook*

Purpose

The programme handbook provides information to the student on his/her programme. The programme handbook will refer to common information for the programme, i.e. programme learning outcomes, award information, contact details for key services policy for late submission, policy for extensions, deferrals etc. In order to ensure that learners are fully aware of requirements, it is good practice to cross reference the module guide to the programme guide and/or to the student portal.

Approval of the Programme Handbook

The programme handbook is approved annually by the Programme Director and forms part of the initial validation documentation set. . In the case of programmes that may have more than 1 person dealing with different cohorts of learner on the same programme, the School will appoint the director who should take responsibility for the completion on the handbook.

Publication of the Programme Handbook

The programme handbook should be published electronically on the student portal. It should be available prior to the commencement of teaching and at orientation/induction. A template for completion of the Programme Handbook is available in Appendix 1.

5.5.11.2 *The Module Handbook*

In accordance with best practice, European Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance and Assessment & Standards (2015), the module handbook has been created to supplement the approved module descriptor. The guide gives more specific guidance to learners about what they can expect from class, the basis of their assessment and what is expected of them in terms of class participation and wider reading etc. as appropriate to their module. In many cases this information already exists and individual lecturers have been provided it in a number of ways. This handbook brings these practices together into one common template for use by all. The module handbook is closely linked to the programme handbook.

Whilst all sections of the outline will be appropriate to all modules, there will be variance in the detail required to ensure full information is provided to learners. Technical and numerate modules may not require much guidance as to readings. However, learners should be referred to appropriate examples of computing codes, mathematical models etc.

Variations in Assessment of Common/Shared Modules

Where a module is delivered over multiple programmes or delivery modes, it is recognised that there will be variances in the specific weeks that a subject is dealt with, submission dates of assignments or under approved circumstances the assessment structure or assignment brief may vary. Where a module falls into this category, lecturers are encouraged to collaborate on the module guide and agree variations to ensure that learners are provided with the correct information.

Approval of the Module Handbook

The module handbook is approved by the module owner. The module owner is appointed by the School to ensure the academic integrity of the module as it is taught across the College.

Publication of the Module Handbook

The module handbook may be made available in hard copy, on Moodle or on the student portal. Whilst it is preferable that a common place is used e.g. Moodle, it is recognised that this may not be feasible for this initial implementation. The information on the handbook may be placed on Moodle as a document download or the Moodle week by week schedule can be used to provide the same information.

A template for completion of the Module Handbook is available in Appendix 2.

5.5.12 Use of Moodle

It is expected that all faculty will make use of Moodle as a single point of contact for module information. Faculty may opt to use Moodle in different ways but at a minimum, the following information should be made available:

- Link to programme handbook
- Link to programme and module details on Coursebuilder
- Link to the module handbook

5.5.13 Feedback to learners

Faculty should identify the date that feedback will be provided on all formative and summative assessment. This will normally be within 3 weeks of the assessment in the case of coursework. If for unforeseen circumstances the published date cannot be met, faculty should inform learners in good time.

The feedback provided to learners should be detailed and constructive.

Formal feedback days are available for end of semester examinations. These dates should be agreed as part of the academic calendar and published. A student may request formal feedback of examination scripts at the end of each semester (or assessment period in the case of non semesterised programmes). This should not be confused with requests for review or recheck which take place at the end of the second semester.

5.5.14 Communication with learners

5.5.14.1 Use of email/SMS texting

Learners should be emailed using the contact functionality within QuercusPlus. This ensures a record of the correspondence with the learner/class group is maintained.

1. Broadcast SMS texting or emailing of current students is to be used in the following circumstances only:

- a. Notification of a cancelled class
 - b. Notification of a change in class time
 - c. Reminder of critical deadline eg closing date for Careers events, graduation deadlines
 - d. Reminder of student services/learning development seminars
 - e. Notification that examination results are published
 - f. Notification that the publication of examinations results has been delayed
 - g. Notification of registration dates
 - h. Notification of change in library opening hours
2. Broadcast SMS texting or emailing of applicants is to be used in the following circumstance only
 - a. Notification of interview
 - b. Notification of interview change
 - c. Reminder of deadline for acceptance of offers
 - d. Notification of registration dates
 3. Broadcast SMS texting or emailing of prospective students is to be used in the following circumstance only
 - a. Invitation to open days
 - b. Invitation to recruitment events
 - c. Invitation to revision events
 4. Broadcast SMS texting or emailing of graduates/alumni is to be used in the following circumstance only
 - a. Invitation to alumni/graduate seminars
 - b. Invitation to alumni/graduate reunions
 5. The use of Broadcast SMS or email facility should not be used for any other reason. The Registrar must approve use of this facility and the student/prospective student/ phone number/email address for any other reason

5.5.14.2 Source of Telephone Number and email address

Current Students/Applicants

1. The telephone number used will be that as stated in the student record held on QuercusPlus
2. The email address used will be the student's current NCI email address or in the case of applicants, the email address provided by the applicant
3. The student will be automatically enrolled on the above services at registration or application. (this will be actioned using the Application/Registration Checks option on QuercusPlus – true = opt in; false = opt out. Acceptance of the service is to be incorporated into the Registration /Application form
4. During the year or the recruitment process, the student/applicant may opt out of these services and must do so at the Academic Affairs office by filling in the withdrawal of SMS service form

5. It is the duty of the Director of Student Services to ensure that this is actioned on NCI systems

Prospective Students

1. The contact number or email address used will be that as provided by the prospective student for the particular service that the contact number was sent for
2. The prospective students may opt out of the service at any point using an unsubscribe text or form (to be clarified)
3. It is the duty of the Director of Marketing to ensure that processes are in place to ensure that this opt out is actioned on NCI systems
4. The record of numbers is to be stripped at the end of each recruitment season

Graduates/Alumni

1. The telephone number/email address used will be that as stated in the alumni record held on QuercusPlus /Alumni office system
2. The graduate will be enrolled on these services if they opt to do so
3. The graduate must opt out of these services and must do so at the Alumni office by filling in the withdrawal of SMS service form
4. It is the duty of the Alumni Officer to ensure that this is actioned on NCI systems

Content

The content of any text or email will comply with normal business practices and data protection/freedom of information legislation.

5.5.14.3 Methodology

Email

Faculty should use the messaging functionality for classes in QuercusPlus. Administrative staff should use the distribution lists provided by the IT department

SMS

All staff should use the information supplied by reports from the MIS system and the XIAM texting service. Note, that SMS messages should only be sent to those students who have agreed to be contacted in this manner.

This policy applies to the use of Email and SMS in the context of general information being provided to a group of students. When corresponding with an individual student, normal business rules apply

5.5.15 Recording Learning Events

The use by learners of devices to record learning events is strictly prohibited. However, it is permitted in exceptional circumstances and to enhance access and engagement for learners with a disability or learning/health difficulty. The following policy and procedure applies to audio recording only; visual recording is permitted in no circumstances outside of the blended learning context and for formal assessment purposes.

Academic staff can provide personal permission to a learner to record their lecture and/or tutorial if they wish to do so. There is no obligation for academic staff to provide such permission. However, academic staff are obliged to allow audio recordings of their learning events for learners authorised by the Disability Office and in accordance with their educational needs assessment.

Learners who are not authorised by the Disability Office to record lectures and/or tutorials must request permission from the relevant academic member of staff prior to the learning event taking place. Where a learner records a lecture without seeking and obtaining prior approval it will be treated as misconduct, which will result in the College taking disciplinary action against the student(s) responsible.

Teaching staff who wish to record their own lectures for professional development purposes may do so only after advising the learners present. A learner may request that a lecturer stop recording in order to protect confidentiality and personal data.

5.5.15.1 Reasonable Accommodation

NCI is committed to the principles established by the Equal Status Act 2000 and Disability Act 2005 to make **reasonable** accommodation to learners with a disability. The use of recording devices, i.e. dictaphones or computer-based recording devices, in lectures and/or tutorials should normally be allowed by academic staff once the learner has been deemed eligible by the Disability Office (DO) through an Educational Needs Assessment (ENA). The ENA must indicate which accommodation is the most suitable to that **learner's requirements and** recording will only be permitted under those circumstances. Academic staff will be informed of this authorisation and the rationale for this via the ENA report, which will be supplied electronically to Programme Coordinators.

Learners authorised by the Disability Office to use a recording device in lectures and/or tutorials must agree to the following conditions in writing. The original student agreements by the DO and a copy will be attached to the student record. If a learner has not signed the agreement, they will not be authorised to use a recording device.

- a) recordings are for personal use only and for the purpose of private study. No further use is permitted. Students must not transfer, disseminate, publish in another media, or otherwise disclose the recording to any third party including the National College of Ireland;
- b) the processing of any personal data is in accordance with GDPR (2016);
- c) the lecturer concerned retains the rights to any recording made of a lecture and/or tutorial and also owns the rights to the electronic distribution of a lecture and/or tutorial. Any unauthorised commercial exploitation of recorded material by the NCI or student is prohibited;
- d) any recorded material used in a written assessment must be acknowledged and correctly referenced within their text. If the learner does not understand how to do this correctly, they should seek advice from appropriate academic or library staff;
- e) misuse of recorded material, including but not limited to unauthorised re-distribution, disclosure, dissemination, publication on any media including but not limited to social network sites, will be deemed a form of misconduct, which will result in the College taking disciplinary action against the student(s) responsible; and

- f) all recordings must be stored securely in read-only format and with password protection. They must be destroyed after the successful completion of the course.

When recording a learning event, the learner must be aware that:

- other students in the lecture and/or tutorial are to be informed by the lecturer that **recording is taking place and that such recording is solely for a student's private study** and that it will be destroyed on completion of the module;
- on occasions, where sensitive issues or personal experiences are being discussed, lecturers or other students can insist that recording stops in order to protect confidentiality and personal data. In this event, all recording devices will be switched off immediately;
- where a lecturer feels that a recording is negatively affecting the quality of the **students' discussion then he/she may direct that recording cease; and**
- recorded lectures and/or tutorial or seminar discussions may not be used in any way that brings into disrepute or intends to bring into disrepute the Faculty member, other Lecturers, or students whose comments are recorded as a part of the teaching activity and where it is used in this way, it shall be treated as a form of misconduct which will result in the College taking disciplinary action against the student(s) concerned.

5.5.15.2 Blended Learning Programmes

By their nature, blended learning programmes are designed to be recorded and archived for further and future use. Learners enrolled on such programmes will, at registration, consent to this recording and archiving. The conditions outlined above do not apply to these programmes. However, learners enrolled on a blended learning programme may insist that recording be ceased where sensitive issues or personal experiences are being discussed.

5.6 Policy on Student Attendance and Engagement

NCI expects its learners to engage with and attend all learning activities and events associated with their course of study at the National College of Ireland. Student Engagement and Attendance data is captured and monitored for the following purposes

- The early identification of at risk or habitual non-attenders. The College recognises the value of engagement monitoring to help identify students who may be in danger of leaving their course of study. Through early identification of such students, the College has the opportunity to proactively offer assistance and guidance to encourage progression and to avoid potential discontinuation
- Meeting statutory requirements for receipt of funding under certain initiatives
- Meeting its legal obligations for reporting to the Garda National Immigration Bureau for international students
- Meeting the arrangements agreed with employers or other organisations for specific programme delivery
- **Meeting the college's duty of care obligations** under health and safety legislation
- Informing physical resource planning

See Chapter 6 (Section 6.11) for the full Policy on Attendance and Student Engagement.

5.7 Student Engagement and Quality Enhancement

While students are ultimately responsible for their level of engagement with the academic components of their programmes, i.e. the teaching, learning and assessment activities, such a limited understanding of student engagement can have a negative impact on **learners'** experience of the institution as a whole during their period of study. However, even within this very limited understanding, student engagement is dependent on certain institutional conditions, cultures and policies that either allow or preclude more active involvement of **learners' in their studies. For this reason, it is important to adopt the definition of student engagement proposed by *Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision-Making* (2016), which refers to student involvement in decision-making processes in higher education institutions in relation to governance and management, quality assurance, and teaching and learning. This report builds on V. Trowler and P. Trowler's definition of student engagement as:**

The investment of time, effort and other relevant resources by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students, and the performance and reputation of the institution.¹

Student engagement, therefore, refers to one of the core components of quality assurance and enhancement: the involvement of students as partners within a learning community during the development, delivery and review of programmes and their associated teaching, learning and assessment activities. Accordingly, NCI subscribes to the findings of the above report, in particular that student engagement can be greater facilitated within institutions that position themselves as a site of democratic citizenship, a learning community and a critical institution.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the *Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision-Making* (2016) report was the establishment of the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP), which aims to assist higher education institutes in building capacity to embed the principles needed to develop a culture of student engagement, primarily in the areas of quality assurance, teaching and learning, and governance and management.

5.7.1 National Student Engagement Programme

The National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) is intended to develop student capabilities and assist higher education institutions build capacity to allow for enhanced engagement. NStEP operates according to the principles proposed by the Working Group on Student Engagement in Irish Higher Education. These guiding principles are:

1. Democracy: The institution will adhere to democratic principles, and will encourage these principles in staff, students, and in wider society.
2. Student as partner: The implications of perceiving students as partners, rather than as consumers are substantial and deep. The student as partner is an active member of an institution with which s/he shares a strong sense of allegiance and commitment.
3. Inclusivity and diversity: Institutions will actively seek to gain insights and contributions from all sectors of the academic community in their governance and

decision-making processes. This will go beyond the formal legislative requirements, to provide myriad formal and informal engagement opportunities. As institutions become more socially and culturally diverse, student unions will work to ensure that the diverse nature of the student body is represented on the executive team.

4. Transparency: Institutions will be transparent in the life-cycle of their decision-making processes, while student unions will be transparent in their internal lines of governance, and in the relationship between elected officers and permanent staff. They will ensure that suitable measures are in place to facilitate knowledge transfer from year to year.
5. Students as co-creators: Students will be expected to take responsibility for their own learning. Irish HEIs will embrace innovative teaching and learning techniques which value active involvement from the students.
6. Collegiality and parity of esteem: Irish HEIs and student unions will promote collegiality between staff and students across the institution. Central to collegiality is the development of an open and trustful relationship between individual staff and students within the institution.
7. Professionalism and support: Students and their representatives will contribute fully and act in a professional manner when they are involved in the structures and processes of the HEI. This professionalism is the joint responsibility of the institution and student union. The institution will recognise that staff and student members on committees may have different life experiences and areas of expertise but all are equally valued in the ongoing evolution of the institution. It will be the responsibility of the institution to provide the necessary supports to the student representatives as to enable them to fulfil their role.
8. Feedback and feedback loop: Institutions will welcome and encourage open and prompt feedback from students. Suitable measures will be put in place across the institution to ensure that students are facilitated in providing feedback in a safe and valued manner. Feedback practices will be transparent and the feedback loop will be closed in a timely fashion.
9. Self-criticism and enhancement: Student unions and institutions will continue to be self-critical of their student engagement practices. They will use evidence-based techniques to assess and critique the effectiveness of their strategies for building a culture of engagement.
10. Consistency: Institutions and student unions will ensure that values and practices with regard to student engagement are applied consistently through particular institutions and across institutions, and may put procedures in place to allow departments to share good practice measures.

Not only does NCI recognise these principles in terms of its own short-term goals and long-term objectives regarding student engagement, the college was one of five HEIs involved in the pilot phase of assessing our own institutional capacity for student engagement and identifying areas for enhancement towards improved practice.

The institutional analysis outputs from the pilot phase were compared and five common themes were identified. These themes were developed into projects each lead by one of the institutions which completed the pilot. The working titles of the projects are:

1. The Role and Recruitment of Class Representatives
2. The Design, Review and Delivery of Programmes
3. Student Feedback Opportunities, Data and Follow Up
4. Students in formal System Level Procedures, Strategy and Decision-Making
5. Staff Roles and Capacity Building

NCI is the lead institution for Project 1, which aims to develop:

- A set of national guidelines on how the role of class representative should be defined in accordance with the requirements and characteristics of the institution;
- Best practice case studies for the recruitment of class representatives;
- Analyses of existing systems to mentor and monitor the retention of class representatives;
- Examples of how class representatives can be recognised and rewarded by their institutions; and
- Strategies for utilising the class representative mechanism to realise the long-term objective of installing students as partners in quality assurance and enhancement.

NCI's involvement in NStEP since the very beginning testifies to the college's active role in developing student capabilities to engage in quality enhancement, quality assurance and other related activities at all levels of the higher education system, and in developing processes and resources to strengthen the value placed on student engagement and support the sharing of best practices.

5.7.2 Learner Feedback

Effective and prompt learner feedback plays a crucial role in NCI's Quality Assurance system and, in particular, the quality enhancement initiatives therein. Following a review, conducted in 2015, of the learner feedback mechanisms operating in NCI, the College focused its **attention on improving learner feedback processes in accordance with the 'virtuous circle'** principle. This effective practice involves four stages: (i) promotion of feedback mechanism, (ii) completion of feedback activity, (iii) evaluation of data and (iv) actions supported by ongoing communication with feedback participants.

5.7.2.1 Module Evaluations

Module evaluations are the primary internal source of learner feedback regarding the delivery **of academic programmes in NCI. This mechanism is designed to obtain learners' views on the** academic content of a module and the teaching activities through which it was delivered. Students are invited to complete their module evaluations during Week 8 (or equivalent for block teaching) of each semester. The quantitative responses and qualitative feedback provided by students is anonymised and aggregated. This information is then compiled in a report that is sent directly to individual lecturers. These reports are then reviewed by the lecturer and their respective Dean of School.

The Quality Assurance and Statistical Services (QASS) Office coordinates the module evaluation **mechanism. Gathering students' views on the delivery of their programmes during Week 8 of** each semester is intended to facilitate module conveners reviewing the feedback and responding effectively to the concerns of learners. Receiving learner in such a prompt manner is crucial to NCI being seen to be responding to the opinions of its students through the responses of its teaching staff to their module evaluations and any quality enhancements initiatives they may implement as a result. The QASS Office also compiles the module evaluation reports at programme and school level, which are then presented to the Programme Committee and School Committee, respectively. This serves to close the feedback loop by providing those responsible for the delivery, review and enhancement of academic programmes with examples of best practice and areas for immediate improvement. Please

refer to Chapter 7 (7.18) for further information on how the learner feedback gathered through module evaluations is used in the context of NCI's Quality Assurance system.

5.7.2.2 Irish Survey of Student Engagement

NCI has participated in the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) since the 2013/14 academic year. In contrast to the feedback obtained via module evaluations, the data obtained via ISSE allows NCI to compare its institutional feedback to national standards. ISSE now plays an increasingly prominent role in the academic calendar of the 27 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that participate as it provides them with effective and prompt feedback from learners at the beginning and the end of their studies. ISSE surveys learners in the first and final years of their studies, therefore useful information regarding trends and trajectories across the entire student lifecycle can be obtained. By assisting HEIs to understand their own **performance regarding student engagement in the context of other providers' in the sector**, ISSE provides potential opportunities for the identification and sharing of best practices for enhancing student engagement between HEIs.

Each participating institution receives quantitative data and qualitative responses regarding student engagement from its own students. Since 2016, the Quality Assurance and Statistical Services (QASS) Office has analysed this information against both national standards and HEIs of a comparable size. The QASS Office presents its analyses of the local institutional report to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC), focusing on the following areas:

1. Response rates
2. Levels of student participation in/outside the classroom
3. Learner interaction with and support from staff
4. Feedback to/from staff regarding teaching and assessment activities

As the LTAC is attended by the Director of the Centre for Research and Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CRILT), the Deans and Vice Deans of each School, and two student representatives, this occasion is an important example of closing the feedback loop as the various stakeholders involved in enhancing student engagement are informed of and can **discuss NCI's performance in comparison to previous years and other providers in the sector** to identify good practices and potential improvements that can then be communicated to the entire college community.

By collecting data on students' engagement with the learning and teaching environments, ISSE provides institutions with the data required to make evidence-based decisions in this area. It also functions to improve learner feedback by:

- increasing transparency in relation to the student experience in higher education institutions
- enabling direct student input on levels of engagement and satisfaction with their higher education institution
- identifying good practice that enhances the student experience
- assisting institutions to identify issues and challenges affecting the student experience
- serving **as a guide for continual enhancement of institutions' teaching and learning** and student engagement
- documenting the experiences of the student population, thus enabling year on year comparisons of key performance indicators
- providing insight into student opinion on important issues of higher education policy and practice
- facilitating comparison with other higher education systems internationally

The data gathered by ISSE and disseminated amongst higher education institutions, in conjunction with the research presented in *Enhancing Student Engagement in Decision-Making* (2016), has been crucial to developing and foregrounding the objectives the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP). Like ISSE, NStEP is a collaborative partnership involving the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), with working groups consisting of institutions' **and students'** representatives managing the national projects. Please refer to Section 5.7.1 above for further information on NStEP.

5.8 Prevention and Resolution of Bullying and Harassment (Students)

NCI is committed to providing all its learners with a learning environment that is free from bullying and any form of harassment. The College aims to provide a campus culture marked **by mutual regard, personal dignity and support for everyone's** skills and abilities, and strives for a campus environment where employees and students may reasonably expect to pursue their work/studies in a safe and civil space, free from discrimination, harassment, threatening or violent conduct or offences against individuals or their property.

Bullying and harassment by fellow students, employees and non-employees of the College will not be tolerated. Employees include full-time faculty, part-time faculty, Associate Faculty, administrative support staff and security staff of the College. Non-employees include service providers; users of College facilities; other business or community organisations, including any person with whom the College might reasonably expect students to come into contact with, i.e. those who supply or deliver goods/services to the College; maintenance staff and other types of professional contractors; and volunteers.

Students also have a responsibility to create and contribute to the maintenance of an environment free from bullying and harassment or from conduct likely to contribute to bullying and harassment. Management and employees of the College will take appropriate measures to ensure that bullying/harassment do not occur, such as:

- Providing a good example by treating all in the College with courtesy and respect;
- Promoting awareness of the policy and the complaints procedures;
- Being vigilant for signs of harassment and bullying and take action before a problem escalates;
- Dealing sensitively with a student who makes a complaint of bullying or harassment;
- Explaining the procedures to be followed if a complaint is made to them;
- Ensuring that an alleged perpetrator is treated fairly;
- Ensuring that students making a complaint are not victimised for doing so; and
- Monitoring and following-up after a complaint is made to ensure that harassment or bullying is not recurring.

Appropriate disciplinary action, including expulsion for serious offences, will be taken against **any student who breaches this policy**. **In the case of employees, the College's** Disciplinary Procedures will be invoked. In the case of non-employees, sanctions could include the suspension of contracts or services; exclusions from the College campus or other work environs; or the imposition of other sanctions as appropriate. A complaint of bullying or harassment from a student which is found to be vexatious following investigation will be dealt with through the Student Disciplinary Procedures.

The scope of this policy extends beyond the College, for example, to sporting and other events organised by the College which take place outside the IFSC campus or other off-

campus locations. It may also extend to student social events organised by the NCI Students Union.

The number of instances of reported bullying and harassment will be monitored, as well as how complaints are resolved. Such information will be used to evaluate this policy and the associated procedures in order to implement changes as appropriate. The policy will also be updated in line with changes in the law, relevant case law or other developments.

Learners are informed of and must agree to the terms and conditions of this policy during the annual registration process. The policy is available online, with links provided to each learner in their respective programme handbook.

5.8.1.1 Definition of Bullying

Bullying has been defined as repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, which could reasonably be regarded as **undermining the individual's right to dignity and respect**. A single isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an **affront to an individual's dignity and respect but it would not be considered an instance of bullying**.

A pattern of the following behaviours are examples of types of bullying. This list is not exhaustive and includes behaviour towards other students, employees and non-employees of the College.

- Exclusion with negative consequences
- Verbal abuse/insults
- Physical abuse
- Being treated less favourably than others
- Intrusion – pestering, spying or stalking
- Menacing behaviour
- Intimidation
- Aggression
- Undermining behaviour
- Humiliation
- Persistent unjustified criticism or sarcasm
- **Blame for things beyond the person's control**

Bullying does not include reasonable and essential discipline arising from the good management of the performance or conduct of a student or actions taken which can be justified as regards the safety, health and welfare of students. For example, a student whose performance is continuously signalled at a level below that which is required may feel threatened and upset but this in itself does not indicate bullying.

Cyberbullying refers to bullying which is carried out using the internet, mobile phone or other technological devices. Cyberbullying generally takes a psychological rather than a physical form but is often part of a wider pattern of bullying behaviour.

5.8.1.2 Definition of Harassment

Under the Equal Status Acts 2000-2004, harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine specific discriminatory grounds defined below, which has the purpose or

effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading humiliating or offensive environment for the person. The unwanted conduct may include acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

Many forms of behaviour may constitute harassment, including:

- Verbal – jokes, comments, ridicule, songs, recordings
- Written – including text messages, e-mails, notices, or misuse of social media.
- Physical – jostling, shoving, or any form of assault
- Visual – such as posters, emblems, badges, recordings or misuse of social media

Intimidating behaviour in the forms of bodily gestures, postures or poses; isolating or excluding an individual from social activities; and pressurising an individual to behave in a way they might find offensive or degrading, are all further examples of harassment.

The nine specific discriminatory grounds are defined as follows:

Gender – male, female, transgender

Civil Status – single, married, separated, divorced, widowed, or in a civil partnership within the meaning of the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Acts 2010 or being a former civil partner in a civil partnership that has ended by death or been dissolved.

Family Status – responsibility as a parent or as a person in loco parentis in relation to a person under 18, or as a parent or the resident primary carer of a person over 18 with a disability which is of such nature as to give rise to the need for care or support on a continuing, regular or frequent basis.

Sexual Orientation – heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual or asexual.

Disability, defined as

The total or partial absence or a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body;

The presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness;

The malfunction, malformation **or disfigurement of a part of a person's body;**

A condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction; or

A condition, disease or illness which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour, and includes a disability which exists at present, or which previously existed but no longer exists, or which may exist in the future which is imputed to a person.

Age – applies only to employees over the maximum age at which a person is statutorily obliged to attend school. The minimum school leaving age is currently 16 years, or the completion of three years of post-primary education, whichever is the later.

Race – race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins.

Religious Belief – includes different religious background or outlook, including the absence of religious belief.

Membership of the Traveller Community – **“Traveller Community” means the community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.**

5.8.1.3 Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment is defined in the Equal Status Act as any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a **person’s dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating** or offensive environment for that person. A single incident of such behaviour may constitute sexual harassment.

Many forms of behaviour can constitute sexual harassment, including:

Physical conduct of a sexual nature – this may include unwanted physical contact such as **unnecessary touching, patting or pinching or brushing against another employee’s body**, assault and coercive sexual intercourse.

Verbal conduct of a sexual nature – includes unwelcome sexual advances, propositions, requests or pressure for sexual activity, continued suggestions for social activity outside the workplace after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome, unwanted or offensive flirtations, suggestive remarks, innuendos or lewd comments.

Non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature – this may include the display or sending of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures, calendars, objects, written materials, e-mails, text messages or faxes. It may also include leering, whistling or making sexually suggestive gestures.

Gender-based conduct – this includes conduct that denigrates or ridicules, or is intimidating or physically abusive for, an employee because of their gender, such as derogatory insults.

5.8.1.4 Permitted Behaviour and Consent

To constitute harassment, sexual or otherwise, the behaviour complained of must firstly be unwelcome. It is up to each individual to decide (a) what behaviour is unwelcome, irrespective of the attitude of others to the matter; and (b) from whom, if anybody, such behaviour is welcome or unwelcome, irrespective of the attitudes of others to the matter. The fact that an individual has previously agreed to the behaviour does not stop him/her from deciding that it has become unwelcome. It is the unwanted nature of the conduct which distinguishes sexual harassment and harassment from behaviour that is welcome and mutual.

Furthermore, to constitute harassment, the behaviour must have the purpose or effect of **violating a person’s dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating** or offensive environment for that person. The intention of the perpetrator of the harassment is irrelevant; the effect of the behaviour is what is relevant. The fact that the perpetrator has no intention of the student is no defence.

If the student is below 18 years of age or is a vulnerable adult and conduct of a sexual nature **occurs, the College’s Child Protection Guidelines and Principles for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults** should be referred to for further guidance.

5.8.2 Reporting Instances of Bullying and/or Harassment

Instances of bullying and/or harassment reported by students will be treated with fairness and sensitivity and in as confidential a manner as possible. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the course of any investigation consistent with the requirements of a fair investigation. Depending on the nature of a complaint, it may be possible to resolve the matter through an informal intervention or through mediation.

A student who makes a complaint in good faith, who supports a complainant, who gives evidence in proceedings or who gives notice that they intend to do any of the foregoing will not be victimised. The College will ensure that both parties to the complaint receive appropriate support e.g. counselling or other intervention as appropriate. No assumption will be made about the culpability of an alleged perpetrator in the course of investigating a complaint.

As well as the roles set out below, the Learning Support & Development Officer in Student Services or the Director of Student Services can provide information and advice to students who believe they are experiencing harassment or bullying and to students against whom allegations of harassment or bullying have been made.

5.8.3 Informal Procedure

This procedure involves the student who believes that they are the subject of bullying and/or harassment making the individual responsible for such behaviour aware of the issue and asking them to stop the offending behaviour.

Where a student finds it difficult to approach the other party directly, they should seek help and advice on a confidential basis from a contact person. A contact person acts as an initial point of contact for someone who believes that they are being treated in a way that constitutes bullying or harassment. The role of the contact person is to listen and be a point of contact for the complainant. They can also explain the procedures in place to resolve complaints. This could involve providing the complainant with a copy of the NCI Student Policy on Prevention and Resolution of Bullying & Harassment, outlining the options available and explaining roles within the College. The contact person does not get involved in any other way in the complaints procedure and does not act as an advocate for either party.

Where the informal procedures can be used to achieve a resolution, a separate person will be designated to deal with the complaint on behalf of the College. The complaint made to this designated person could be verbal or written. If verbal, a written note of what is complained of should be taken by the designated person and a copy given to the complainant. The designated person should then establish the facts, the context and determine if the complaint falls under the definition of bullying or harassment.

If the behaviour complained of does not constitute bullying and/or harassment as defined, an alternative approach should be put in place and a rationale recorded. If the complaint is not supported by concrete examples, it must be deemed that there is no complaint to be answered by the person complained of as they have no recourse to repudiating an accusation that is not supported by concrete examples. If the behaviour complained of falls under the definition of bullying or harassment and includes concrete examples of inappropriate behaviour, the person complained of should be presented with the complaint and their response established.

Following this, an approach should be agreed to resolve the issue so that both parties can return to a harmonious learning environment where bullying/harassment will not be a factor going forward. Informal resolutions could include, for example, clarification of what bullying

or harassment is, agreement to alter style, agreement by the person complained of, if they accept that their behaviour was inappropriate, that the conduct will not be repeated, or an explanation to the complainant about what occurred from the point of view of the person complained of which dispels the complaint.

The Lecturer, Programme Director, relevant Vice-Dean or other member of the College Staff should be kept informed as appropriate.

5.8.3.1 Mediation

Mediation is an assisted process for resolving differences which aims to help the parties come to an understanding and reach agreement. The objective is to assist the parties themselves to resolve their complaint in a mutually agreeable way with the help of a neutral third party, a Mediator. This process is only pursued in instances when the informal procedure explained above fails to resolve the issue to a satisfactory level for either or both parties involved.

Participation in the mediation process is voluntary. The agreement of both parties to participate in mediation is required. Information disclosed and exchanged during mediation is confidential and remains within the mediation process. It must not be given by the mediator to an investigator if there is a subsequent investigation under formal procedures.

The role of the Mediator is:

- To manage the mediation process
- Explain the role of the Mediator
- Explain the process to the parties and ensure that there is common understanding of the mediation process.
- Establish the ground rules
- Gather information and identify the issues where there is disagreement
- Facilitate the process of reaching understanding and agreement.

5.8.3.2 Records

In both scenarios, the designated person or the mediator should keep a record of the complaint, any meetings held and actions agreed, and signed records of the final agreement. The purpose of the records, which do not include details of discussions, is to provide evidence that the complaint was responded to and whether or not a resolution was achieved. Following a resolution under informal procedures, consideration will be given to putting in place supportive interventions for the parties involved.

5.8.4 Formal Procedure

The College recognises that it may not always be appropriate to use the informal procedure to resolve instances of bullying and/or harassment, especially when the behaviour is deemed to be of a grossly inappropriate nature. Furthermore, if a resolution cannot be achieved through the informal procedures or through mediation, the matter will be dealt with under the formal procedures. Formal procedures will be used where bullying or harassment continues after an informal procedure has been followed or where the student making the complaint wishes it to be treated formally. Formal procedures involve submitting a formal complaint and a formal investigation. Choosing not to use the informal procedure or declining to participate in a mediated process will not reflect negatively on a complainant in the formal

procedure. If mediation was attempted and was unsuccessful, the Mediator will not have a role in the formal procedures.

When a formal complaint is being made, then the student should contact the Registrar as soon as possible. If the complaint is against the Registrar, the Vice President Academic Affairs & Research should be contacted. The complainant will make a formal complaint in writing which is signed and dated. The complaint document should be confined to the precise details of the alleged incidents, including dates and the names of witnesses, if any. The complainant will be informed of the steps involved, timeframes and possible outcomes. They will also be **given a copy of the College's Student Policy on Prevention and Resolution of Bullying & Harassment**.

A meeting will be organised with the person against whom the complaint has been made. **They will be given a copy of the complaint document and the College's Student Policy on Prevention and Resolution of Bullying & Harassment.** They will be informed of the steps involved, timeframes and possible outcomes. If a complaint of harassment or bullying is made against a person who is not a student or employee of the College and it transpires that it is not possible to secure their participation in either a formal or informal process, such individuals will be kept informed of any developments and given an opportunity to respond to them. The outcome of an investigation and any potential sanctions will be explained to such individuals and/or any person or company for whom they work.

5.8.4.1 Investigation

The investigation of any complaint will be handled with fairness, sensitivity and with due respect for the rights of both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator. The principles of natural justice will be adhered to when an investigation is being conducted.

An appropriate Investigator who is not connected with the allegation in any way and who can be considered impartial may conduct the investigation or, if the circumstances require it, an investigator external to the College may be appointed. More than one person may be appointed to conduct the investigation. Where more than one person is appointed to carry out an investigation, consideration will be given to the gender or diversity balance of those conducting the investigation.

Terms of Reference using the following structure will be established for the investigation:

- The investigation will be conducted by <name>.
- The scope of the investigation will cover the specific complaints made by <the Complainant> in his/her complaint document dated <date>.
- In adhering to the principles of natural justice <the Respondent> will be furnished with documentation detailing the allegation and with all other information upon which the Investigator may rely on in arriving at a decision.
- The <Respondent> will be given reasonable time to consider the documentation and an opportunity to respond in writing.
- In the course of the investigation, the Investigator will meet with <The Complainant>, and with any of his/her witnesses or relevant person(s). The Investigator will also meet with the <Respondent> and with any of his/her witnesses or relevant person(s). These meetings will take place on a one-to-one confidential basis.

The Investigator may also identify appropriate witnesses.

Copies of witness' statements will be furnished to both the Complainant and the Respondent.

Both the Complainant and the Respondent may be accompanied at the investigative interview **by another student, or a friend or a family member or a representative of the Students' Union.**

In the interests of the parties involved and in the interests of integrity of the investigation process, all parties to the investigation are expected to adhere to the highest standards of confidentiality in regard to the content and process of the investigation. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigation to the greatest extent consistent with the requirements of a fair investigation. For clarity, this means that the Complainant and the Respondent should not discuss any matter in relation to the investigation with any person other than their respective representatives or with the Registrar in the context of procedural matters. On no account should either party discuss subject matter, the investigation or the investigation process with a witness or potential witness. Similarly, witnesses should not discuss the subject matter, the investigation or the investigation process with any person other than the Investigator or the Registrar in the context of procedural matters.

Both the Complainant and the Respondent will be provided with a written record of all meetings, and any documentation or material in relation to the allegation and with all other information upon which the Investigator may rely on in arriving at a decision. Both parties will be given an opportunity to respond in writing, or if necessary in person, to this material before the Investigator considers the evidence.

On completion of the investigation, the Investigator will furnish a written report containing the findings and the reasons for the final decision. In arriving at a conclusion, the Investigator will consider whether or not, on the balance of probabilities, the behaviours complained of occurred. Where a complaint is not upheld, the Investigator will consider, whether or not, on the balance of probabilities, the complaint was false, malicious or vexatious. A complaint not being upheld does not necessarily mean that the complaint was vexatious.

Where a complaint is upheld, the report will recommend whether or not the College's Student Disciplinary Procedures should be invoked.

The Investigator will furnish the Report to the Registrar within three weeks of the sign-off of final interviews. The timeframe for the investigation will be impacted by the availability of parties for interview and by the number of witnesses or parties for interview. The objective of the Investigator will be to complete the investigation and report as quickly as is practicable but depending on the circumstances it could take up to three months to complete from the date of the initial interview with the Complainant.

5.8.4.2 Representation

The complainant, the respondent and any witnesses have the right to be accompanied by another student, a friend or family member, or a representative from NCI **Students' Union.**

5.8.4.3 Outcomes from the Investigation

Where a complaint is upheld against a student, the matter may be dealt with under the **College's Student Disciplinary Procedures. This could lead to disciplinary sanctions up to and including expulsion being imposed.** In the case on non-employees, sanctions could include the suspension of contracts or services, exclusions from the College campus or other work environs, or the imposition of other sanctions as appropriate.

Complaints that are found to be false, malicious or vexatious may also be dealt with under the **College's Student Disciplinary Procedures.** A record of the investigation will be maintained by the Registrar in accordance with the Data Protection requirements.

5.8.4.4 Appeals

When the Investigator's Report is issued to the Complainant and the Respondent, they will be given the opportunity to comment on the findings within a set timeframe. No action will be taken by the College before this process is completed. The College will respond to any comments submitted and will advise the parties of the appeals process.

The appeal will be heard by a party not hitherto involved in the investigation or not connected with any of the issues considered under the investigation. This could be a member of management in the College or an external third party. The appeal will focus only on the aspect(s) of the case cited by the appellant as being the subject of the appeal. Appeals arising from any Student Disciplinary Procedures initiated will be dealt with under that process.

5.8.4.5 Action Following Investigation

Regular reviews will be conducted by an appropriate party to ensure that the bullying/harassment has stopped and that there has been no victimisation for referring a complaint in good faith. Appropriate supports will be considered for both parties. Retaliation of any kind against a student for complaining or taking part in an investigation concerning bullying/harassment will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

5.8.4.6 Statutory Rights

Using this complaints procedure will not affect a complainant's right to make a complaint under the Equal Status Act. A complaint of harassment, including complaints relating to expulsion in circumstances amounting to discrimination or victimisation, may be made to the Director of the Equality Tribunal, who may refer the complaint to an Equality Officer or, with the **parties' agreement, for mediation**. A complaint must be made within 6 months of the alleged occurrence of the harassment or of the most recent occurrence of such harassment. The time limit of 6 months may be extended up to a maximum period of 12 months where reasonable cause is shown.

5.9 Student Complaints Procedure

While NCI will always try to resolve any issues that learners have with their programme of study through its quality assurance system and continuous enhancement of the student experience, the College recognises that sometimes more serious problems can arise. NCI takes student complaints seriously and endeavours to improve its processes and services by supporting students in expressing their dissatisfaction and seeking resolution to problems encountered. To ensure that learners have an appropriate means of lodging in/formal complaints that cannot be remedied via any other local mechanisms, NCI has developed the following student complaints procedure.

NCI's student complaints procedure seeks to provide an accessible, fair and straightforward system to resolve legitimate complaints in a timely fashion. Such complaints can relate to the delivery of academic programmes and the provision/availability of services. Most concerns can be successfully addressed and remedied through informal means, i.e. before a formal complaint is made. However, if informal resolution is unsuccessful or not to the satisfaction of the learner, the formal procedure can be pursued.

Complaints should only be made by the individual who has had a negative experience or is personally dissatisfied, not by someone else on their behalf, even with their prior consent. Confidentiality will be maintained where appropriate and retaliation or victimisation as a result of a complaint will not be tolerated. Complaints found to be malicious or vexatious will be **dealt with under the College's disciplinary procedures.**

5.9.1 Scope

The student complaints procedure can be used to submit a complaint about any aspect of the academic provisions in NCI or any other service provided directly by the College. The procedure does not, however, cover the following categories of complaint, for which separate procedures exist:

- Grievances relating to personal harassment or discrimination on gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or membership of the traveling community;
- Requests for reviews of academic decisions;
- Complaints relating to the Students' Union; and
- Appeals against decisions taken under disciplinary proceedings.

The procedure is available for learners currently enrolled on a NCI programme of study. Additionally, any individual who was a registered student but who has graduated or otherwise left the College may also avail of the procedure providing that any such complaint is made within three months of the individual leaving the College and that the acts or omissions being complained of occurred whilst they were a registered student.

The following process is designed to resolve issues and dissatisfactions as speedily and effectively as possible. Most can be successfully addressed and remedied through informal means but a formal process is available if this proves unsuccessful or unsatisfactory. All complaints, whether formal or informal, will be dealt with respectfully in the context of the **College's policies and according to the resources available.**

5.9.2 Informal Complaint

To make an informal complaint, the learner should:

- Approach the **person responsible for the Learner's complaint**

The Learner should first address concerns directly to the person responsible to attempt to resolve the matter informally.

If this recourse proves unsuccessful or unsatisfactory, the learner should then:

- Approach the person responsible for the area about which the learner has the complaint.

This may be the learner's Programme Director or Dean of School, or the relevant Head of Service Unit. Many concerns can be dealt with informally by explanation and discussion. If the Learner needs help in expressing their concern or are reluctant to approach the person(s) responsible, the Learner can seek advice from their Programme Director, Student Support Officer, the Students' Union Executive or the Registrar.

5.9.3 Formal Complaint

If it is not possible to resolve the **learner's** issue or dissatisfaction informally by discussion and explanation, the learner can lodge a formal complaint with the Office of the Registrar. This formal complaint must be submitted in writing and contain the following:

- **The Learner's name and** contact details
- The nature of the complaint, providing clear and concise information
- What action, if any, has already been taken by the learner to attempt to resolve the concern
- What prior action(s), if any, have been taken by the College in regard to this matter
- **Statement of the learner's expectations regarding how this** complaint can be satisfactorily resolved

In the case of complaints regarding academic provisions, a copy of the complaint should also be submitted to the relevant Dean of School.

5.9.3.1 Acknowledgement of Complaint

The learner can expect to receive a written acknowledgement of their complaint within 20 working days of its receipt. They can also expect to be kept informed if there is undue delay in coming to an appropriate resolution. The learner will also be kept informed of any decisions to refer the complaint to a suitable staff member or to another office for redress, or to pursue and remedy the complaint according to another College procedure.

5.9.3.2 Investigation and Response

The **learner's complaint will be investigated as quickly as possible**. The investigation may include individual face-to-face discussions with the complainant and the relevant staff member or head of service. Once the investigation has been completed, the complainant will receive a written response detailing what actions, if any, are to be taken.

5.9.3.3 Appeals

If the learner remains dissatisfied after the conclusion of the investigation described above, they can write directly to the President who will either personally investigate the complaint or will identify a suitable person/office who has not been involved in dealing with the complaint to investigate further.

Please Note: The President cannot be involved in complaints at an earlier stage. They are the final point of appeal within the College and complaints addressed to them that have not gone through the appropriate channels outlined above will be referred to Dean of School or Registrar as appropriate.

5.9.3.4 Monitoring and Feedback

All formal complaints will be monitored by the Registrar, with annual reports provided to the President and presented to Academic Council for consideration. This monitoring process is part of the College's efforts to continually improve its academic provisions, administrative processes and delivery of services to all cohorts of learners.

5.9.3.5 Referral to Office of the Ombudsman

If a student has exhausted NCI's internal complaint procedure and remains dissatisfied with the proposed recommendations, remedies offered or how the complaint itself was handled, they are entitled to refer their complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman (OO).

OO will seek to determine if there was any maladministration in the handling of the complaint and, if so, what were the effects. While the OO handles complaints and determines appropriate redress first and foremost, its secondary role is to drive improvements in public administration and ensure institutional learning to prevent recurrence.

If OO decides to carry out an investigation, they must inform both the complainant and NCI of the results. NCI must also be afforded an opportunity to consider the matter and make representations before any adverse finding or criticism is made.

The Ombudsman may investigate any action taken by or on behalf of NCI in the performance of administrative functions if that action has resulted in an adverse effect, intended or otherwise. This actions must have been either:

- taken without proper authority
- taken on irrelevant grounds
- the result of negligence or carelessness
- based on erroneous or incomplete information
- improperly discriminatory
- based on an undesirable administrative practice
- a failure to comply with section 4A of the legislation or
- otherwise contrary to fair or sound administration

A complaint is excluded from OO's jurisdiction if a person has already initiated court proceedings or has a right of appeal to another body; the complaint was not made within 12 months of the action occurring; or the complaint relates to the terms and conditions of employment.

5.10 Disciplinary Policy & Procedures

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 Disciplinary Policy. Through its policies and regulations statements, the College has made an effort to outline the behavioural expectations it holds. 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, but may be adjudicated upon by the College. The provisions of the Disciplinary Policy continue to apply when a learner is outside the campus on an academic

exercise, attending College events or representing the College in any way. Learners should be 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.

5.10.1 Authority and Timelines

The Registrar shall, as soon as is reasonably practicable (and generally this will be within 5 working days of receipt of notice in writing to her/him), deal summarily with what s/he considers to be a minor offence or refer to the Disciplinary Committee that which s/he considers to be a major offence. Where a learner admits to having committed a minor offence to the Registrar, if s/he deems it appropriate, may, with the consent of the learner, deal with the case in a summary manner.

5.10.2 Minor Offences

Minor offences regarding damage or related matters shall be dealt with by the Registrar who shall in her/his own discretion decide the appropriate penalty, if any, that should be imposed in each case. Similarly, minor academic offences such as, learner(s) during lectures, classes, research work, field exercises, seminars or any other academic work, be responsible for any breach of good conduct or discipline, or fail to obey instructions from any member of staff, or breach of any regulations, such as a member of staff may require a learner(s) to withdraw from a particular lecture or class or other academic activity, the staff member if he/she thinks fit, may bring the matter to the notice of the Registrar for appropriate action to be taken.

The Registrar will then decide the nature of the breach and may request the staff member to provide a written report on the matter.

Minor offences dealt by the Registrar will be concluded as follows:

- First Offence – Written warning put on learners file
- Second Offence – Second written warning put on learners file
- Third Offence – Registrar will refer learner(s) to Disciplinary Committee

Any decision or any penalty or sanction imposed in this manner may be appealed by the learner concerned in writing to the Disciplinary Committee within 10 working days of receiving notification of the decision or penalty. The written notice of appeal must state briefly the grounds on which the appeal is made.

The learner(s) will be notified in writing that they are requested to attend a Disciplinary Committee. The learner(s) will be given no less than 72 hours notice to attend the committee.

Decisions of the Disciplinary Committee, on appeal from the Registrar, shall be final in relation to minor offences. The Registrar may from time to time establish regulations relating to the handling of minor offences. The Disciplinary Committee shall be advised of these regulations.

In the event and need for an investigation, the Registrar will appoint a member of the Academic Council to investigate the matter and provide the Registrar with a complete and

comprehensive report into the incident, and generally this will be within 5 working days of receipt of notice. This role will also include the interviewing of individuals concerned, research material that may be required to conduct the investigation and assist the Disciplinary Committee in its reaching conclusions.

The Registrar will then distribute this report for the attention of the Disciplinary Committee and the learner(s) concerned. The learner(s) will be notified in writing that they are requested to attend a Disciplinary Committee. The learner(s) will be given no less than 72 hours notice to attend the committee. In circumstances where cases extend beyond the normal expected timeframes, the Registrar will appoint an independent member from Academic Council to ensure that the learner (s) concerned is provided with appropriate updates and at appropriate intervals up to the conclusion of the relevant committee business.

In such circumstances as determined by the President of the college “and without prejudice”, the college has the right to immediately suspend any learner(s) whom the college believe to be a threat or danger to the college, to staff members or fellow learners, until the disciplinary process is complete.

5.10.3 Major Offences

Without prejudice to the general power of the Registrar to decide whether an alleged offence is major or minor, the following examples (and this is not an exhaustive list) would normally be regarded as major offences:

- a) Plagiarism or the use of unauthorised material during an examination/assessment
- b) or other breaches of the examination regulations
- c) Failure to adhere to invigilators instructions
- d) Misuse of college IT systems in breach of college policies and procedures
- e) Furnishing false information to the College with intent to deceive
- f) Forgery, alteration or misuse of College resources, documents, records or identity cards
- g) Verbal or Physical abuse of another person
- h) Malicious destruction, damage or misuse of College property or of private property on the campus
- i) Unauthorised retention of library materials
- j) Forcible occupation of College buildings and grounds
- k) Unwarranted interference with the College safety equipment, fire fighting equipment and alarm systems
- l) Referral of learner (s) by Registrar who have committed three minor offences

5.10.4 Disciplinary Committee

The Disciplinary Committee is appointed by the Academic Council and shall be constituted as follows:

- (a) A Nominee of the President of the College
- (b) Three members of the Academic Council
- (c) One Nominee of the Learner Body

The Learner Body may nominate one alternative member and the Academic Council on an annual basis will appoint a panel of eight members of the Academic Council to represent the council on Disciplinary matters for one year. The eight members of the panel will be appointed on conclusion of the first Academic Council in each academic year.

Four members shall constitute a quorum. The Disciplinary Committee shall endeavour to reach its decision by consensus but in the event of a disagreement its determinations shall be decided by majority. The disciplinary Committee shall in its discretion decide the appropriate penalty, if any, that should be imposed in each case. In the event that there is a tied vote of the Disciplinary Committee, the nominee of the President shall exercise a casting vote.

5.10.5 Appeals

- (a) The decision of the Disciplinary Committee on major offences may be appealed by the learner concerned or by the Registrar (on behalf of the College) to the Appeals Committee appointed by the Academic Council. The Appeals Committee shall be constituted as follows:
 - a. President
 - b. Three members of the Academic Council
 - c. One Nominee of the Learner Body

Four members of the Appeals Committee 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 his/her nominee shall exercise the casting vote.

- (b) Notice of Appeal from decisions of the Disciplinary Committee shall be lodged in writing within 10 working days by the learner(s) on receiving notification of the decision or penalty of the Disciplinary Committee. The written notice of appeal must state briefly the grounds on which the appeal is 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. The learner(s) will be notified in writing that they are requested to attend the Appeals Committee. The learner(s) will be given no less than 72 hours notice to attend the committee.
- (c) Decisions of the Appeals Committee shall be final.
- (d) For Disciplinary procedures relating to breach of examinations regulations please refer to Chapter 4 (Section 4.22.5)

5.10.6 Rules Regarding Both Major and Minor Offences

- (a) The provisions of this paragraph shall apply to major offences and minor offences equally.
- (b) A member of the Disciplinary Committee may not be a member of any Appeals Committee considering the same case.
- (c) No member of the Disciplinary Committee or of the Appeals Committee shall adjudicate in any case in which she/he is to prosecute or be a witness. An accused person has the right to speak in her/his own defence and call witnesses, including

character witnesses, at hearings of the Disciplinary Committee and of the Appeals Committee. Persons reporting instances may also call witnesses. An accused person 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 at any hearing of the Disciplinary Committee or the Appeals Committee.

- (d) The College may make regulations governing the conduct of disciplinary and/or appeal hearings and the procedures applicable to disciplinary issues.
- (e) The learner under normal circumstances will attend a Disciplinary/Appeal Committee hearing when established. In unforeseen circumstances where the learner cannot attend, the committee will be rescheduled. The college maintains the right to insist that a learner requested to attend a Disciplinary/Appeal Committee, must attend the committee sessions. If the learner refuses to attend for his/her own personal reasons, the learner will be advised that failure to attend may result in further action being taken against the learner and/or the committee will continue their investigation in the **learner's absence based on the report presented to them. The Disciplinary Committee** may make a decision and or recommendations on the learner concerned in their absence. The Appeals Committee decision is final.

5.10.7 Penalties

Without prejudice to its right to impose such penalties or make such recommendations as are considered appropriate in any case the Registrar, or Disciplinary Committee, or Appeals Committee as the case may be, shall be empowered to:

- (a) Suspend a learner from College for any specified period of time
- (b) Expel a learner from College
- (c) Prohibit a learner from sitting any examination or assessment
- (d) Impose such fines (not exceeding €1,000) as are considered appropriate
- (e) Require a learner to attend additional or other lectures or courses or undertake additional academic work
- (f) Refer a learner for medical/psychological assistance to the College doctor
- (g) **Place a written warning on a learner's personal file. This may be first, second or third written warning.**

5.10.8 General Violations of College Code of Discipline

- Failure to comply with the reasonable directions of a College official acting in the performance of his/her duties.
- Failure to comply with the reasonable directions of law enforcement officers or fire department personnel acting in the performance of their duties.

- Failure to provide complete and truthful information to a College official.
- Failure to carry or surrender **one's learner ID to a College official upon his/her request.**
- Forgery, alteration, or misuse of any college document of identification
- Criminal convictions or actions that bring the College into disrepute.

5.10.9 Academic Violations

- Misrepresenting **academic work as one's own, when it is not** – e.g. plagiarism, cheating on projects or exams of any type, etc.

5.10.10 Library and Information Technology Violations

- Violations of the NCI Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy
- Violation of pertinent state laws:
Data Protection Act Intellectual Property Act, 1998 Copyright Act, 1963 (as amended) Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act, 1989 Criminal Damage Act, 1991 Child Trafficking and Pornography Act, 1998, Criminal Justice Act 1999
- Damaging or unauthorised taking of any library or information technology resources.

5.10.11 Residential Violations

(These are outlined in the Residence Handbook)

5.10.12 Alcohol Violations

- Under-age possession of alcohol.
- Under-age consumption of alcohol.
- Consumption of alcohol in public areas, the restaurant or other areas of the Campus.
- Purchasing or providing alcohol to a minor.
- Hosting an unauthorised on-campus function where alcohol is served.
- Attending an unauthorised on-campus function where alcohol is served.
- Illegal distribution of alcohol.
- Possession of an unauthorised quantity of alcohol.
- Public intoxication.
- Abuse of alcohol.

- Possessions and/or use of paraphernalia intended for the abuse of alcohol.

5.10.13 Illegal Drugs Violations

- Use of illegal drugs.
- Possession of illegal drugs.
- Distribution of illegal drugs.
- Possession and/or use of illegal drugs paraphernalia.

5.10.14 Gambling Violations

- Engaging in illegal gambling.

5.10.15 Key, Combination and Card Access Violations

- Unauthorised or inappropriate use or loan of keys, combinations, or access cards to any College or operated facility.
- Neglectful or intentional misuse or improper storage of any keys, combinations, or access cards to any College owned or operated facility.
- Tampering with or damaging any door or lock of a College owned or operated facility.
- Entry into any College property that is not normally accessible to an individual, including misuse of College issued keys, combinations, or access cards, or actual forcible entry.
- Propping or any internal or external door of a College owned or operated facility.
- **Three or more “lock outs” which require Residential Life staff assistance.**

5.10.16 Fire Safety Violations

- Violation of fire safety policies.
- Illegal or unauthorised possession of firearms, explosives (including fireworks), other weapons (i.e. hunting knives, bows and arrows, martial arts weapons, etc.), or dangerous chemicals on College premises or at College-sponsored events.
- Use and/or possession of burned or burning candles or incense.
- Use and/or possession of prohibited electrical appliances.
- Tampering with fire prevention, fire safety, or fire fighting equipment.
- Causing an unnecessary emergency evacuation on College premises or at a College sponsored or supervised event.
- Failure to follow fire drill and/ or other emergency procedures including evacuation.

5.10.17 Personal Injury Violations

- Harassment and Bullying
- Conduct that is disruptive, lewd, indecent, or infringes upon the rights of others (i.e. use of profanity, obscenity, public nudity, sexual activity in public places, water fights, etc.)
- Physical Assault - physically beating another and/or inflicting any menacing touch to his/her person or clothes.
- Verbal Assault - **a verbal attack that is a threat to someone's physical safety.**
- Specific conduct that threatens or endangers the health/safety of a particular person.
- Threats - statements or action that causes an individual(s) to fear for his/her safety.
- Coercion - statements or action that is intended to compel or force an individual to act in a manner that is contrary to their chosen style.
- Harassment - behaviour(s) or statements(s) that have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual(s) academic, social, or work-related functions.
- Unwanted sexual contact.

5.10.18 Theft and Damage Violations

- Attempted or actual theft of College, individual, or group property.
- Unauthorised possession of College, individual, or group property.
- Tampering with or damaging any door or lock of a College owned or operated facility
- Entry into any College property that is not normally accessible to an individual, including misuse of College issued keys, combinations, or access cards, or actual forcible entry
- Propping or any internal or external door of a College owned or operated facility
- **Three or more "lock outs" which require Residential Life staff assistance**

5.10.19 Fire Safety Violations

- Violation of fire safety policies
- Illegal or unauthorised possession of firearms, explosives (including fireworks), other weapons (i.e. hunting knives, bows and arrows, martial arts weapons, etc.), or dangerous chemicals on College premises or at College-sponsored events
- Use and/or possession of burned or burning candles or incense
- Use and/or possession of prohibited electrical appliances

- Tampering with fire prevention, fire safety, or fire fighting equipment
- Causing an unnecessary emergency evacuation on College premises or at a College sponsored or supervised event
- Failure to follow fire drill and/or other emergency procedures including evacuation

5.10.20 Personal Injury Violations

- Harassment and bullying
- Conduct that is disruptive, lewd, indecent, or infringes upon the rights of others (i.e. use of profanity, obscenity, public nudity, sexual activity in public places, water fights, etc.)
- Physical Assault – physically beating another and/or inflicting any menacing touch to his/her person or clothes
- Verbal Assault – **a verbal attack that is a threat to someone’s physical safety**
- Specific conduct that threatens or endangers the health/safety of a particular person
- Threats – statements or action that causes an individual(s) to fear for his/her safety
- Coercion – statements or action that is intended to compel or force an individual to act in a manner that is contrary to their chosen style
- Harassment – behaviour(s) or statements(s) that have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual(s) academic, social, or work-related functions
- Unwanted sexual contact

5.10.21 Theft and Damage Violations

- Attempted or actual theft of College, individual, or group property
- Unauthorised possession of College, individual, or group property

5.11 Drugs and Alcohol Policy

A ‘Framework for Developing a College Alcohol Policy’ was produced by the National Working Group on Alcohol Consumption in Higher Education. The National College of Ireland’s alcohol policy is based on a continuing concern about the high rates of consumption of alcohol by third level students and the health risks associated with it. NCI’s Alcohol and Drugs Policy is underpinned by the following principles from that Framework.

5.11.1 Aims of the NCI College Alcohol Policy are to:

Ensure that the social and academic life on campus is conducive to the health and well being of students and staff.

- Ensure that the College environment is safe for students and staff and complies with

health and safety regulations.

- Promote the College as a supportive environment which enables students and staff to make healthy choices that promote health and well being.
- Provide support services for those who may require assistance during their time at the College.

5.11.2 Objectives:

- Promoting the health and well being of students and staff
- Promoting personal responsibility and social obligation to the College community
- Enhancing a campus environment where low-risk drinking is the 'social norm'
- Promoting low-risk drinking and discouraging high-risk drinking
- Providing an atmosphere free from pressure to drink for those who choose not to drink
- Providing alcohol-related information and education for all students and staff
- Supporting and promoting alternative to drinking thus creating choice and a balanced social programme
- Promoting opportunities for brief interventions to reduce high-risk drinking
- Providing confidential and effective supports for those who seek assistance as a result of problem drinking
- Reducing the incidence of alcohol-related problems among College students and staff
- Promoting a caring environment for those who experience difficulties related to alcohol

NCI, recognising the place of moderate alcohol consumption in many areas of society, considers it important to create an environment within the College which promotes a sensible attitude to drinking, while accepting the potential of alcohol abuse to adversely affect the well-being of individuals. It is assumed that all students are responsible adults and will only consume alcohol in moderation. The College has the following policies to provide guidelines and promote a healthy and responsible environment.

These policies are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that we continue to address these important issues successfully.

5.11.3 Policies and Procedures - Drugs and Alcohol

All national laws and college policies pertaining to alcohol and other drugs apply to all members of the National College of Ireland community including students, faculty and staff as well as campus organisations. These policies include but are not limited to:

- Any faculty, staff, Learner or campus organisation wishing to conduct an event on campus where alcohol will be served must complete the appropriate Alcohol Function Agreement Form with the Director of Student Services. Alcoholic beverages may only be consumed in areas designated on the Alcohol Function Agreement Form
- As one would expect, the sale of alcohol must adhere to all pertinent national laws (i.e. no public intoxication, no one shall sell or give away any alcoholic beverages to an underage person or an intoxicated person, etc.)
- The use of alcohol must not adversely affect other people or their property
- Excessive drinking is not an excuse for behaviour that violates the College Code of Discipline
- The use and distribution of illegal drugs or the misuse of legal drugs is dangerous to the individual as well as the greater College community

5.11.4 Smoking

Smoking is a serious danger to the health of the smoker and those who are in the presence of the smoke. NCI has a strict no smoking policy and smoking is not permitted within an NCI premise. Disciplinary action under Section A of the Disciplinary Code will be taken against anyone found in breach of the College no smoking policy.

National College of Ireland

New Programme Validation



Template: Programme Handbook

August 2018

Certificate in Social Protection Studies Learner Handbook

1.1 Introduction

This Programme Guide has been compiled to provide you with a readily accessible source of vital information relevant to all aspects of your experience at NCI. Consequently, it is an extremely important document, should be kept in a safe place and referred to throughout the year. Please also consult <https://www.ncirl.ie/Students> for additional and supplementary information.

1.2 Key Contacts

1.2.1 Who's Who

Title	Role	Contact Details
Programme Director	The Programme Director is responsible for academic issues and decisions relating to the course. She will liaise with the student group as needed and will deal with individual queries by appointment only.	
Programme Co-ordinator	The Programme Coordinator is responsible for administrative issues and decisions relating to the course.	
Vice-Dean for Undergraduate Studies	The Vice-Dean has oversight of the day to day management of all undergraduate programmes.	
Fees Office	The Fees Office deals with all fees issues.	Elaine Coburn / Sandra Lally 4498566 / 4498569 fees@ncirl.ie
Student Services	This office covers the administrative function of the College: registration, student cards	studentservices@ncirl.ie
Exams Office	The Exams Office coordinate examination timetables and process and publish final exam results	Sinead Kavanagh / Isabelle Caulfield 4498524 / 4498553 exams@ncirl.ie
Learning* Support	Mathematics Support	Jonathan Lambert (Maths Support) 4498245 Jonathan.lambert@ncirl.ie

	Academic Support	Dr Mike Goldrick (Learning Support & Development) 4498650
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Title	Role	Contact Details
	Learning Support Tutor	studentsupport@ncirl.ie Catherine Elliott 6599208 catherine.elliott@ncirl.ie
	Disability Officer	Karen Mooney 6599269 karen.mooney@ncirl.ie
Careers and Opportunities Officer		Caroline Kennedy 4498526 careers@ncirl.ie
Library		Mary Buckley: Librarian 4498509 Tim Lawless: Deputy Librarian 4498590 library@ncirl.ie
Registrar	The Registrar deals with requests for exam deferrals, academic plagiarism issues, and individual student cases. He is responsible for the services within the College.	John McGarrigle 4498514 jmcgarrigle@ncirl.ie

1.2.2 Programme Codes

The programme code for the <Programme Title> is xxxxx

1.2.3 Programme Co Coordinator's Office Hours

The programme coordinators office is open from 9am to 12pm, 2pm to 4pm and 5pm to 6.30pm from Monday to Thursday, from 9am to 12pm and 2pm to 4pm on Fridays and from 9.30am to 2.30pm on Saturdays. The office is located on the third floor of the research side of the college.

1.2.4 Programme Director's Appointment System

Meetings with the Programme Director are strictly by appointment only. If you wish to arrange an appointment, please contact the course director by phone or email, leaving your contact details and suggested times when you are free to meet.

1.2.5 College Communication

The College will send official notices to your NCI student e-mail address. Please note that communication will not be sent to students' personal email addresses. It is therefore extremely important that you check into your NCI account regularly.

Your Moodle site will include a programme information page which will contain important details regarding your course such as CA deadlines and contact details. The School of Business Moodle site will provide information on general matters for the attention of all School of Business students. It is very important that you these pages are consulted frequently throughout your programme.

The student portal provides you with information on your course, college resources such as the library, IT facilities, the Careers Office, Exams and Student Support. You will also find information on the College's academic regulations and you can access your personal details through MyDetails

1.3 Teaching and Learning in the <School of Business/School of Computing>

Teaching and Learning is a collaborative process involving learners, lecturers and academic support staff. YOU are at the centre of this process, and your success depends on your active engagement with it. Below we list some of the things you can expect from us, and some of the things that we expect from YOU.

You can expect the School to:

1. Treat all learners with dignity and respect
2. Provide academic support and guidance
3. Provide appropriate teaching and learning materials
4. Provide a Module Handbook for each Module studies
5. Assess your learning in ways that are fair, consistent and valid
6. Assure fair and consistent enforcement of all College rules and procedures

In turn, we expect YOU to:

1. Treat all College staff and students with dignity and respect
2. Take responsibility for your own learning
3. Attend all classes, tutorials and other learning sessions
4. Make proper use of all learning resources provided
5. Attempt honestly all assessment set on your programme
6. Abide by all College rules and procedures

2.<Programme Title>

Provide a brief summary of the programme objectives and outcomes.

2.1 What the Programme Does The objectives of the programme are:

2.2 Programme Structure

2.3 Modules and Objectives

Provide brief outline of each of the modules. Use Section 5 of the validated programme document to support this sections as applicable

2.3.1 Stage level outline

Stage label	Stage synopsis

2.3.2 Rules for electives

2.3.3 Module-level outline

Stage label	Module title	Module synopsis

2.3.4 Assessment

Module		
	No of Credits	Assessment

Please Note

- i. If there are changes to the above, you will be notified. In addition, the changes will be notified on Moodle and class representatives will be informed.
- ii. Students must submit their projects by the date due unless an extension has been granted in writing from the Programme Co-ordinator. Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, i.e. a bereavement or a medically certified illness, and the Programme Co-ordinator must be made aware of the above. All projects must be submitted to the College on or before the due date. All projects and assignments must be submitted on Moodle using the Turnitin function. The Turnitin receipt is your proof of submission.

2.4 How You Will be Taught

The School uses a variety of teaching methods, in accordance with the rules, policies and procedures of the College. All students should read these notes which explain what is required in lectures, tutorials and other teaching sessions.

Students should be aware that there is a clear link between attendance at and engagement in learning session, and performance in modules.

2.4.1 Lectures:

You should attend lectures as these provide the framework for your studies. All lecturers will provide learning materials on Moodle but these are intended to supplement, not supplant, the lecture itself, which will be wider-ranging and provide support for your own study. You should not expect to be able to note down everything that is said in lectures, and copying things down verbatim will distract you from the more important task of listening. The lectures are there to stimulate interest and further study. They are not primarily sessions in which lecturers dictate information.

2.4.2 Blended Learning

Components of this programme may be delivered in Blended Learning modes. NCI's E-Learning Strategy defines "Blended Learning" as: *the integrated combination of a number of pedagogic approaches – usually traditional learning with e-learning approaches*. In this definition the important words are integrated combination – this means that blended learning is not a collection or mixture of pedagogic approaches – it is the planned and appropriate use of different media, learning environments and teaching scenarios to deliver more engaging and useful learning experiences.

The rationale for incorporating blended learning includes:

- Flexible and adaptive learning to suit students' needs
- Expanded collaboration and goal-oriented activities
- Promoting self-directed and autonomous learning
- Catering for individual learners through engagement and multiple modes of learning (e.g. visualisation, animation, simulation, narrative and interactivity)
- Supporting effective teaching strategies such as problem based learning, meaningful contexts and case studies, learner collaboration, open and continuous assessments, simulations, learning by doing and many others.

Programmes that are delivered in Blended Learning Mode (also called Flexible Learning) utilise the College's Learning Management System (Moodle) and virtual classroom technology (Adobe Connect) platform to present, organise and manage student learning activities.

Instructional settings to be used in the delivery of this Programme

- **Traditional class**
 - **Digital or Virtual Class** – fixed time schedule with opportunities for student interaction
 - **Digital Actions** – online activities that are time flexible
 - **Independent Learning** – students' self-directed learning using online, print and other sources.
 - **Collaborations** – student collaborating with others

NCI's Standards for Blended Learning

- Students are advised in advance of commencement of the course of the technical requirements and pre-requisite skills for effective participation on the course.
- Students are provided with support during course induction on how to use the learning technologies associated with the course
- NCI provides technical support for College systems (e.g. LMS, virtual class room, Student Portal, etc.). Students are provided with technical support during College opening hours including a telephone helpline for off-campus users.
- It is the responsibility of students to ensure that they have the required local access and technical facilities when they are participating off-campus.
- Programme and module learning outcomes and associate assessments are the same for all modes of delivery except where specifically specified and approved.
- Lecturers are encouraged to apply good pedagogic design to their production and planning student learning activities – this is achieved by mapping such activities against learning outcomes.
- Further training and ongoing professional development is provided to college staff in the use of new technologies in teaching and learning.
- Where possible, the amount of student contact hours should be the same – in a Blended Learning context “contact hours” are designated as times where students have opportunities to ask questions contiguously (immediately following on).
- Students should be provided with opportunities to review archived instructional sequences for revision purposes.
- Student assignments are to be submitted electronically through the LMS and Turnitin software unless otherwise specified.

2.5 Attendance

In line with the National College of Ireland’s policy on monitoring & engagement of students, the College expects all its student population to attend their respective timetabled classes. For the purposes of this policy, classes include lectures, tutorials, seminars, workshops and critiques

If a student identifies particular challenges during their studies which may impact upon the successful completion of the Programme, the Department will seek to put appropriate supports in place for them.

2.6 Overall Award

The following QQI grading scheme is used for the programme. “Overall award” refers to the classification of the programme, which is an average of the Final/Award year marks obtained.

Mark %	Grade	Overall Award

Please ensure that any special regulations for a programme are clearly identified.

2.7 How Assessments are Managed

Assessment provides you with your record of achievement. Assessment must be seen as objective, meaningful and fair by all stakeholders, including students and staff, Regulatory and Professional bodies, potential employers and many others. It follows that the management of assessments and their strict regulation, is of great importance.

Assessments are set by the tutor(s) delivering individual modules. Questions and model solutions are reviewed by other academic staff and by the External Examiner for the Programme. This is to ensure that assessments are fair, consistent, and appropriate to the level of study, and broadly comparable to similar assessments at other third level institutions.

Assessments are marked by the tutor(s) delivering individual modules. A sample of all assessments is second marked by other academic staff and by the External Examiner for the Programme. This is to ensure that marking is fair, consistent, and appropriate to the level of study, and broadly comparable to similar assessments at other third level institutions.

All assessments in the College are marked anonymously.

Other forms of assessment

Specific regulations will apply to different forms of assessment, and these will be given to the student along with the assessment of the task itself. These generally will specify submission dates and such matters as length and presentation. There are, however, some common regulations.

- Where a word count is specified assignments will be accepted 10% under or over.
- Unless otherwise specified, all assignments must be submitted via “Turnitin”, the College’s online system for checking the originality of student work.

- Where a group assignment is set provision must be made for the identification and marking of individual student input.

2.7.1 How Your Work is Assessed and Managed

Assessments

Assessment is how your achievements are evaluated, and they determine the marks you are given, and, ultimately, the award you receive. The pass mark for all modules is 40%. Students must pass all modules in each stage before they can progress to the next. Where modules are failed, opportunities will be given for assessments to be repeated.

Assessments may be **summative** (a mark will be awarded that will contribute to the module mark), or **formative** (feedback is provided but no mark given that contributes to the module mark). Whether Summative or Formative every assessment **MUST** be attempted or the student will **FAIL** the module outright – unless there is good cause; see the section on regulations below.

Each module is assessed differently and the appropriate details will be available under the relevant Module in Moodle.

Assessments are generally made up of essay or projects, continuous assessment and presentations. Students will find some modules require a mandatory pass mark in each component of assessment. Module lecturers will identify if this is the case at the start of the programme. Students must attempt all elements of the module assessment given by the lecturer.

Marking Criteria

In the interest of fairness and consistency the College has developed general criteria for summative assessments of all kinds. The mark you receive will reflect these criteria.

Distinction - Pass	(70- 100%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an outstanding range and depth of knowledge. • Demonstrates a high degree of original and independent thinking based on wide range of sources • Demonstrates an outstanding ability to integrate theoretical and practical material • Answers are extremely well formulated and directly related to the problem presented 	
Merit grade 1 – Pass	(60-69%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a very good range and depth of knowledge. • Demonstrates a substantial degree of original and independent thinking based on a good range of sources • Demonstrates a very good ability to integrate theoretical and practical material • Answers are well formulated and relate to the problem presented 	
Merit Grade 2 – Pass	(50-59%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a good range and depth of knowledge. • Demonstrates a degree of original and independent thinking based on a range of sources • Demonstrates a good ability to integrate theoretical and practical material • Answers are reasonably well formulated and relate to the problem presented 	
Pass - Pass	(40-49%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a barely adequate range and depth of knowledge. • Demonstrates a very limited capacity for independent thinking based on very narrow range of sources • Some attempt to integrate theoretical and practical material • Answers use material indiscriminately and sometimes inaccurately with minimal relationship to the problem presented • The minimal standard for an award at this level 	
Compensation Band – may be accepted as a pass mark subject to certain terms and conditions	
	(35-39%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows some evidence of grasp of material and/or skills, but is not applied appropriately or where relevant; there may be misconceptions but nevertheless shows some evidence of an elementary grasp of issues 	
Fail	(0-34%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not meet any of the thresholds of the learning outcomes • Insufficient range and depth of knowledge or comprehension • Little or no engagement with sources of learning 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No capacity to use knowledge to address issues or problems

2.7.2 Project Extensions

Project extensions are only granted in exceptional circumstances, namely personal illness and bereavement of a close family member. The personal illness must be medically certified. The extension must be requested in writing, at least one week before the project deadline, and submitted to the Programme Co-Ordinator.

2.7.3 Project Penalties

- In the case of an extension not being requested, not being granted or being exceeded, the following penalties apply to each essay / project:
- Up to one day late from the date and time of submission, 3% of the mark will be deducted.
- 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 third a further 10% will be deducted from the mark awarded.
- Any essay / project received after a three-week period will attain a zero mark.

2.7.4 Referencing and Plagiarism

Failure to reference materials used in projects can lead to charges of plagiarism and subsequent disciplinary action. There is a *Harvard Reference Guide* provided by the library and this should be used at all times.

Avoiding problems with Plagiarism, Poor Scholarship and Collusion

Plagiarism is copying another's published or unpublished work, including material found on the Internet and representing it as your own, and is a disciplinary offence under College Regulations. Students found guilty of this offence will be penalised and may be reported to the Plagiarism Committee. It is very important that all quotations are acknowledged and referenced to avoid charges of plagiarism.

Collusion, where two or more students work together, without the prior authorisation of the course tutor or supervisor, to produce the same piece of work, and then attempt to present this work as entirely their own work, is also a disciplinary offence.

The School takes both offences extremely seriously, and you should expect to be caught and punished if you plagiarise or collude.

Poor scholarship may consist of poor referencing, but where there is clearly no intention to deceive. This may be penalised in the mark you receive. Poor scholarship may also consist of very close paraphrasing of published work, or the over-use of long quotations (such that your own contribution is unclear) and will receive a low mark.

2.7.5 Feedback

Feedback on projects is provided at the lecturer's discretion and may take the form of a general session during lecture time.

Difficulties with Assessments (timeframes and content)

If a student is having difficulties with assessments, they must notify the SDU liaison person as early as possible. DSP will work closely with NCI (lecturers and support team) to ensure that the student is fully supported in achieving a successful outcome.

3. Facilities and Services available to you

Being at College should be an enjoyable time, but there may be occasions when support and guidance are required. Your programme team will be able to help you with problems you may experience at College and in particular any difficulties you may be having with your coursework. The Learning Support team can provide non-academic pastoral advice and guidance.

As a registered student of NCI, you can avail of all services and support facilities available to students.

Information on these services is available on the College website and include the following:

3.1 Library

The Norma Smurfit Library in National College of Ireland will provide you with the key academic material needed in order to make your college career a success. The Library section of the NCI website (www.ncirl.ie/library) provides students with the comprehensive information on research tools, using the library and e-information so please ensure you review all information on the Student Portal at the start of the academic year. Your student card will become your library card so it is important you pick up your student card at registration. A comprehensive student support service is available postal library service is available to Off-Campus students. In addition, a huge number of academic journals are available through the library in on-line format. Details are given in induction or enquire at the library desk.

3.2 IT Facilities and Services

The NCI IT Department is responsible for providing IT services and support to all students. For more information about the IT facilities, user guides and updates refer to the IT Facilities and Services section of the website; www.ncirl.ie/campus/student-services/IT-Services. If you encounter any difficulties or have any queries in relation to your IT Services, you are requested to contact the IT Support desk: 01 4498671/ 01 4498667 or itsupport@ncirl.ie.

3.3 Mathematics Support Service

The Mathematics Support Service provide an informal environment for students who are experiencing difficulties where they can improve their understanding of and confidence in mathematical concepts. The service provides workshops and one-to-one sessions throughout the year. The service is free to all students in NCI and you can attend as often as you wish.

3.4 Learning Support

The Learning Support Service is centred on some core areas such as academic writing, reading, researching, studying, note-taking, exam revision and aiding students in all areas of academic advancement.

3.5 Disability Support

National College of Ireland believes that one of the most important first steps for students with disabilities is to be sure that you can access supports in an open, relaxed, friendly and confidential manner. In order for the College to help you achieve these first steps please contact our Disability Support Officer in order to arrange a first meeting by calling 01 4599269. If you need to talk to someone about a matter regarding day-to-day life beyond the lecture theatre, or if you have any medical, social or well-being concerns, the Disability Support Officer will be more than happy to meet with you and provide personal support and guidance.

3.6 Medical and Counselling Service

College and work life can sometimes produce a great deal of stress. The reasons for this can range from a heavy workload and imminent deadlines, to difficulties of a personal nature. The Counselling Service provides an opportunity to discuss any difficulties you may be experiencing with a qualified

person. The counsellor will help by listening without judgement, offering new perspectives and working with you on strategies that are right for you.

3.7 Careers and Opportunities

National College of Ireland provides students with a comprehensive Careers Advice Service and provides classes and individual support on job-hunting strategies, creating CV's, cover letters, preparing for interviews and holds a number of careers fairs, and events throughout the year.

3.8 Moodle

Moodle is the virtual learning environment used at NCI and the location where you will find information on your programme, notes for lectures or other announcements

3.9 NCI360

NCI360 is where you can submit helpdesk calls to IT or submit requests for extensions to deadlines or to complete personal circumstances forms if you have difficulty meeting deadlines or attending assessments.

4. Issues and Complaints

4.1 How You Should Manage Difficult Personal Circumstances

You will see from the regulations surrounding assessment that personal circumstances affecting attendance, your capacity to study, or any form of assessment need to be clearly communicated to the College. This should be done by submitting a Personal Circumstances Form using NCI360

The Personal Circumstances form should be used if you wish to submit medical documentation or highlight any personal circumstances (such as bereavement or other difficulties) to be considered by the relevant staff of the college in terms of your assessments, which may then be brought to the attention of the Examinations Board.

Please note that your submission will only be taken into account in terms of the assessments you specify on this form, and cannot then be used for a review of results or appeal purposes. Details of modules affected must be clearly noted on the form.

Please ensure that you have also informed your employer of any personal circumstances you may be experiencing if it has an impact on your role in the organisation.

4.1.1 Submitting a Personal Circumstances Form for Continuous Assessments

This includes all assessments throughout each Semester e.g., project work, presentations and class tests.

This form should be used if you wish to submit medical documentation or bring attention to any personal circumstances because you were/will be absent for your continuous assessment or you believe your performance was affected in your continuous assessment or you wish to have an extension to your continuous assessment.

In the case of a projects/assignments, the deadline for submission of this form is two days prior to the assessment hand-in-date. In the case of class tests /presentations, the deadline for submission of this form is not later than two days after the assessment date.

Please note that it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they comply with the correct procedures or your form **will not** be processed.

This form must be completed and submitted to the Programme Coordinators Office within the relevant timeline stated. Where a project is affected an extension will be given with a new submission date confirmed by either the lecturer or the Programme Coordinator, where an in class assessment is affected your lecturer/Programme Coordinator will confirm whether you will be required to take another assessment in place of the assessment missed or if there are any other requirements of the student to make up for this missed assessment. This communication will normally be sent about one week after the assessment has taken place.

In the case of an acute illness or an accident this process is very straightforward for students. Where circumstances are more complex, or indeed personal, students often delay submitting the form. This is a mistake. It is always in your interests to keep the College informed of any difficulties you may face, and that will help the college to make sure you get the appropriate support.

4.2 Expressing a concern regarding your Programme of Study

The following process is designed to resolve concerns as speedily and effectively as possible. Most concerns can be addressed successfully in informal means (before writing a formal complaint); however, if informal resolution is unsuccessful, the formal process is available.

If you have a concern, we expect you to express it, and not someone else. If you name another person in expressing a concern, they have a right to know what is said about them as soon as possible, and who is raising the issue. Any fear of retaliation as a result of raising a concern will not be tolerated. Confidentiality will be maintained when appropriate. All concerns are taken seriously. It is assumed they are legitimate. If an expressed concern is found to be malicious the College may have to consider disciplinary proceedings.

We will respectfully deal with each concern and deal with it in the context of our policies and resources.

There are five steps in expressing a concern:

Step 1: approach the person responsible for the concern.

You should first address concerns directly to the person responsible to attempt to resolve the matter informally

Step 2: approach the person responsible for the area about which you have the concern.

This may be the Course Director, Head of Department/School or Head of relevant Service. Many concerns can be dealt with informally by explanation and discussion. If you need help in expressing the concern, or are reluctant to approach the person(s) responsible, you can seek advice from the Course Director, Student Services Officer, the Students' Union Executive or the Registrar.

Step 3: make a formal complaint in writing.

If you are unable to resolve the concern informally by discussion and explanation you can lodge a formal complaint with the Registrar. A formal complaint must be in writing. Please give the relevant Service the following details in a letter:

- Your name and contact details
- The nature of the concern
- What action, if any, has already been taken by you to attempt to resolve the concern

- Any prior action by the College in regard to this concern
- say what would be expected to be done to resolve the complaint

The written formal complaint will be sent to:

- The appropriate Head of School if the complaint is about academic matters
- All other formal complaints should be sent to the Registrar

Step 4: acknowledgement of the complaint.

You can expect to receive a written acknowledgement of the complaint within 20 (Twenty) working days of its receipt. You will be kept informed if there is undue delay in coming to a conclusion on the complaint. If the person dealing with the complaint thinks it would be better dealt with by someone else, or that it should be dealt with under some other procedure, you will be informed what is happening.

Step 5: investigation of the complaint and response

The complaint will be investigated as quickly as possible and you will receive a written response upon completion of that investigation that details what action, if any, is to be taken.

4.3 Appeals

If you remain dissatisfied after the conclusion of the investigation described above, you can write to the President who will investigate him/herself or will identify a suitable person (or body), who has not been involved in dealing with the complaint, to investigate further. Please note that the President cannot be involved in complaints at an earlier stage. The President is the final point of appeal within the College and complaints addressed to him/her which have not previously been investigated by the Registrar normally will be referred to the appropriate person.

4.4 Monitoring and feedback

All formal complaints will be monitored. Annual reports on complaints will be made to the President and presented to Academic Council for consideration.

You have the right to feel safe where you learn and where you work. If you think you are being mistreated by another employee or your employer you should contact a member of your HR Department. If you think you have been hurt or ill-treated by another student or a member of the College Staff you should follow the steps above.

Similarly, if you have a complaint to make in relation to your workplace, you should contact the relevant member of staff (HR or Line Manager) and follow their procedures as advised.

The Module Guide

Purpose:

In accordance with best practice, European Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance and Assessment & Standards (2015), the module guide has been created to supplement the approved module descriptor. The guide gives more specific guidance to learners about what they can expect from class, the basis of their assessment and what is expected of them in terms of class participation and wider reading etc. as appropriate to their module. In many cases this information already exists and individual lecturers have been provided it in a number of ways. This guide brings these practices together into one common template for use by all.

The module guide is closely linked to the programme guide. Generally speaking the programme guide will refer to common information across all modules, e.g. policy for late submission, policy for extensions, deferrals etc. In order to ensure that learners are fully aware of requirements, it is good practice to cross reference the module guide to the programme guide and/or to the student portal.

Whilst all sections of the outline will be appropriate to all modules, there will be variance in the detail required to ensure full information is provided to learners. Technical and numerate modules may not require much guidance as to readings. However, learners should be referred to appropriate examples of computing codes, mathematical models etc.

Variations with common modules

Where a module is delivered over multiple programmes or delivery modes, it is recognised that there will be variances in the specific weeks that a subject is dealt with, submission dates of assignments or under approved circumstances the assessment structure or assignment brief may vary. Where a module falls into

this category, lecturers are encouraged to collaborate on the module guide and agree variations to ensure that learners are provided with the correct information.

Approval of the Module Guide

The module guide is approved by the module owner. The module owner is appointed by the School to ensure the academic integrity of the module as it is taught across the College.

Publication of the Module Guide

The module guide may be made available in hard copy, on Moodle or on the student portal. Whilst it is preferable that a common place is used e.g. Moodle, it is recognised that this may not be feasible for this initial implementation. The information on the guide may be placed on Moodle as a document download or the Moodle week by week schedule can be used to provide the same information.

<Module

Title> Module

Guide

This pack contains the following important information. Keep it in a safe place, and refer to it in order to plan your work.

Lecturer: <Lecturer

Name> Email

xxxxxxx@ncirl.ie

[Telephone <phone number>](tel:xxxxxxx)

1. Aims, Learning Outcomes and Key Skills

1.1 Aims:

Guidance Note: This will come from the approved module descriptor

1.2 Student learning outcomes

Guidance Note: this will come from the approved module descriptor. Note that these link into the overall programme learning outcomes.

1.3 Key Skills:

Guidance Note: Although not formally listed in the module descriptor, refer to the transferable skills matrix prepared for the Programme that this module is contributing to. Reflect on what skills the learner will gain from participating in the module. An example from the Industrial Relations subject area is outlined below

Key skills developed in the study of this module include

For example:

- Understanding a range of different ideas: developed through independent reading
- Argument and analysis: developed through the essay assignment and tutorial exercises
- Presentational skills: developed through oral, structured presentations in tutorials
- Team working skills: developed through preparation for presentations in tutorials

2. Module Introduction

Guidance Note: Insert a paragraph here introducing the module/subject. Outline its context within the programme and as a whole.

2.1 Delivery Outline

Guidance Note: Outline the week by week or other structured timescale as appropriate outline of the module

E.g.: From the Industrial Relations subject area

- Lectures one to five introduce the module and Collective Bargaining, and outline the place of Industrial Relations in the social sciences, and analyses the employment relationship.
- Lecture six is a stand alone lecture on planning and writing assignments.

- Lectures seven to thirteen introduce the role of the state in the regulation of Industrial Relations, the development of collective labour law, and the institutional structures to resolve conflict introduced consequent on the 1990 Industrial Relations Act
- Lectures fourteen to nineteen introduce Trade Unions, their structure, governance, membership changes, and their role in Industrial Relations at the workplace
- Lecture twenty deals with Employer Associations
- Lectures twenty one and twenty two analyse the origins and types of industrial conflict
- The remaining lectures are devoted to a reprise of the main themes and exam preparation

Lectures are supplemented by tutorials which all students are expected to attend. Tutorials require students to do preparatory work and are aimed to reinforce lectures and readings by

- The completion of set exercises
- Collaborative work in groups in order to
 - Develop and embed useful definitions
 - Explore current examples of Industrial Relations issues
 - Aid students in developing analytical and presentation skills

2.2 Teaching and Assessment

Guidance Note: This section should clearly outline the teaching and assessment strategy of the module and how this relates to the programme strategy. Refer to the original validation document if necessary. If assessment is integrated it should refer to its associated module(s). Clear guidance should be given to marking schemes that will be used. This will be outlined Chapter 4 of the QA handbook.

The assessment strategy should outline to students elements of coursework that must be passed either as individual assessments or aggregate coursework. This will depend on the learning outcomes of the module and how those learning outcomes are being assessed.

It should outline how the assessment will be repeated if the module is failed as a whole. e.g. will an examination assess learning outcomes that were originally assessed via project.

This section must now also refer to the assessment of any learner requesting exemption of this module by virtue of prior accredited or experiential learning.

Example from the Industrial Relations subject area

The course will be taught through a combination of lectures and tutorials, and will be assessed by means of an essay 1,500 words in length (30% of marks) and a 2 hour examination (70% of marks).

To pass the module, students must achieve at least 40% of the total marks available over both assessment. Students must attempt both the essay and the examination.

Students who do not pass the module in the 1st attempt will be required to sit an examination. Any marks achieved in the essay in the 1st attempt will be carried forward.

The tutorials for this module are structured around student discussions on the topic designated for the session in question. All students will be expected to take part in class activities during this course and, while activities are not formally assessed, comments and constructive criticism of a formative nature will be given in order to help you improve your presentation and communication skills.

Students will be expected to read in advance of the tutorial, and to complete tutorial exercises. If you attend a tutorial not having read the required material, you will not gain any benefit from the session.

Attendance at tutorials is extremely important. You will find that lecture and reading material is supplemented by discussion in tutorials, and this will also be directed at module assessment. Attendance at, and active participation in tutorials will help you achieve the module learning outcomes. An attendance register will be taken.

2.3 Learning Resources

Guidance Note: This is not simply a reading list. Describe for example, the context of a particular resource and how resources should be used. Refer to all resources available, not just text books.. Note that the approved module descriptor may now contain obsolete or out of date references, so ensure that you are referring to the latest edition or that weblinks are not broken prior to providing to learners.

3. Lectures

Guidance Note: The following section outlines what each lecture will cover. It also should refer to the reading required that will support that lecture etc.

An example from the Industrial Relations subject area

3.1 Lecture 1:

Introduction. Module structure & assessment. Set library & news exercises.

3.2 Lecture 2:

What do we mean by the 'Employment Relationship'? The nature of the employment contract: unequal power, conflict & job regulation.

Reading

Chapter 1 in Wallace et. al. (the core text book). This chapter forms the background to lectures 1-5. Start it NOW!

Edwards P 'The Employment Relationship' section in Edwards P (ed.)

Industrial Relations: Theory & Practice In Britain (Chapter 1). Library location 331.0941

Flanders A. Management & Unions pages 132-139. Library location

331.0941 Rose Employment Relations pages 2-20 Library location 331

etc

3.3 Indicative Timetable

Week	Indicative Content as per schedule above	Time	Time	Tutorials	Group 1 Group 2
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					

4. Module Assignment (30%)

Guidance Note: Provide details of any coursework required, including instructions on submission i.e. to whom, date and time. Note current processes are being reviewed to include electronic submission via Moodle

4.1 Feedback:

Guidance Note: Outline when the learner can reasonably expect feedback on their work and how that feedback will be provided. Note: If there is a change to this as a result of circumstances, ensure learners are fully briefed.

4.2 Plagiarism

Guidance Note: The text below is an extract from the assessment regulations and should be included in all module handbooks and referred to at every appropriate opportunity.

Plagiarism arises when extracts from someone else's work are used without acknowledgement, i.e. in the case of written work, not italicised, not set in quotation marks and 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;

Plagiarism is not an acceptable practice and will cause a piece of work to be penalised or regarded as null.

The submission of plagiarised materials for assessment purposes is fraudulent and all suspected cases will be investigated and dealt with appropriately by the College following the procedures outlined in the Assessment Regulations and with reference to the Code of Discipline

If perpetrated on a substantial scale, especially with intention, disqualification from an assessment, examination or award may occur.

All work submitted by students for assessment purposes is accepted on the

understanding that it is their own work and written in their own words except where explicitly referenced using the accepted norms and formats of the **appropriate academic discipline. NCI's house style of referencing is the Harvard Style.** Guidance on the use of the Harvard Style can be found in the library and on the student portal.

4.3 Guidelines on Essay Writing

Guidance Note: You may refer the learner to other resources available on the student portal, in the library or include your own section here.

An example from the Business area is shown below

The following guidelines are intended to help you prepare and write your essays, and should be used in addition to guidance given in your module outline. Essays are intended to develop students' analytical powers, their ability to construct a coherent and logical argument, and their understanding of the varied literature on a particular subject. The feedback we can give you on essays should enable you to constantly develop and refine your critical faculties throughout the degree course.

These guidelines address the two main technical components of a good essay: structure and style.

4.4 Essay Structure

We recommend that all students follow these guidelines (which are precisely that) on essay structure, before they start writing the essay itself. The structure should have three main components: an Introduction, a Main Part, and a Conclusion. Note that it is not necessary to use sub-headings, although you may find these helpful in structuring your essay. The **question is 'addressed' rather than 'answered', in an organised analytical argument.** Observe the word limit (plus or minus 10%).

1. Introduction

This should cover the following:

Discussion of title - your understanding of what the question is asking, and the definition of any relevant terms.

Summary of your argument.

Indication of your conclusion.

Be careful not to allow the introduction to become over-long. This wastes space in an essay of 1000 to 2000 words.

2. Main Part

The Main Part should concentrate on a number of major themes - for example, three or four. Once you go over this sort of number, it becomes more difficult for the reader to assimilate, and the essay starts to take on the shape of a shopping list.

Do not merely summarize the readings and/or your notes from lectures. Use the readings to support and develop an argument of your own, not as a substitute for analysis. Assess alternative theories and evidence if the essay title requires this.

If you draw on your own experience, it must be to illustrate an argument in your essay, not as a substitute for argument.

2. Conclusion

This pulls together and summarizes the major findings of the Main Part. It may also indicate any implications of your argument. Do not introduce new material.

When you are clear about the conclusion that you have reached, it you may integrate this into the Introduction, so that the main thrust of your argument is spelled out at the beginning of your essay. This will clarify the discussion in the Main Part.

It is helpful to construct an Essay Plan before writing the essay. This should indicate the main points of the Introduction, the key points from each theme in the Main Part, and your conclusions and any consequences flowing from them. This will ensure that you have a clear overview of your essay before writing it. You are encouraged to discuss essay plans with the module lecturer or tutor.

4.5 Style

The following guidelines are not exhaustive, but should help you with general and stylistic points. All essays must be referenced, with a bibliography at the end.

All concepts, figures and other evidence, using the 'Harvard' system as

explained here. In the text of your essay you should refer to the surname only of the author(s), and then the date of publication, and the page number: e.g. (Nolan 1983:303), especially for quotes.

Bibliography - at the end of the essay, you should have a section marked Bibliography where all your references should be listed in full and alphabetically by surname, e.g:

- Nolan **P. (1983), 'The Firm and Labour Market Behaviour', in Bain G. (ed), Industrial Relations in Britain (Blackwell, Oxford).**
- McIlroy J. (1988), Trade Unions in Britain Today (Manchester University Press).

Statistics - when referring to data and statistics, use rounded numbers in the text. For example, if the cited figure is 13,201, either put 13,000 or "just over 13,000". Unless there is a good reason, you should avoid decimal places - so put 49% rather than 48.8%.

Do not copy other student's essays. This is a disciplinary offence.

Quotes - do not over-quote. Stringing quotes together, however good they are, is no substitute for developing your argument in your own words, with your own emphasis. A judicious use of quotes, where it enhances the point you wish to make, is all that is needed. Where you do quote, do not quote paragraphs; often single sentences, or even phrases, contain the essential point you want. You should never insert bits of the literature into your essay without using this proper system of quotation or acknowledgement as this may be interpreted as plagiarism by the marker. Where you refer to an **author's** work, you should still give the full reference: author, date, page.

An essay should not consist of a series of paragraphs beginning, '**Jones/Smith argues....**'. **Focus upon concepts, issues, cases, with reference to authors.**

Avoid assertions, vagueness, and value-judgements.

For example:

- **'it is well know that'** (assertion - statement without evidence)
- **'some union leaders have said'** (vague - imprecise statement)
- **'unfortunately, Fianna Fail is still in government'** (value-judgement)

Historical material - too much of this is often reproduced in essays. As with other evidence, it should be used selectively to illustrate arguments, not to avoid making them. In social science essays, historical exposition does not usually constitute an argument in its own right, so it should not be used as one of the major themes, but

in support of each of the themes. Finally, historical material can easily impose its own structure on the writer - i.e. chronological - and, when reproduced, makes the essay far too descriptive, rather than analytical.

Check your grammar and spelling. Do not use paragraphs either too short or too long; each should be a coherent unit.

Typing and Word-processing - Quite apart from the fact that a typed essay looks better and is easier to read, using word-processing facilities enables you to correct and alter your work without having to rewrite the entire essay. Any skills that you pick up in typing and/or word-processing are almost certain to be useful to you in your future career and a useful addition to your c.v.