Quality Assurance Manual

QQI AWARD

For QQI Validated Programmes

Offered by

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About Professional Development

Professional Development (PD) is a leading private provider of short, intensive training courses. PD is a private limited company incorporated in 1989.

PD has been a quality assured course provider with QQI (formerly FETAC) since March 2006. PD offers minor awards (components) leading to QQI Certification in the areas of Training & Development, Management, Project Management, and Lean.

All QQI validated courses run by Professional Development are eligible for certification for a QQI award recognised under the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) at Levels 5 and 6. Professional Development's QQI Centre Number is **38038N**.

We currently offer the following validated programmes:

Lean Manufacturing Tools	5N5407
Project Management	6N4090
Managing People	6N3945
Training Delivery & Evaluation	6N3326
Training Needs Identification & Design	6N3325
Coaching Models of Practice	6N3087

These programmes are offered on a public and / or in-company basis in line with the needs of our clients.

Should a need to expand the range of courses arise, our systematic procedure for Programme Development and Approval (outlined in Section 3.0) is followed.

PD is also an approved training provider with a number of international accreditation bodies. These include: PeopleCert®, the International Association for Six Sigma Certification ("IASSC"), and VMEdu Inc. (including SCRUMstudy).

PD offers publicly advertised courses ("public courses") as well as delivering within a company to its employees ("in-company courses"). Participants are generally all within employment with the training funded by the Learners' employer.

Organisational Structure

You can view an organisational structure of Professional Development in Figure 1 - Professional Development Organisational Structure.

Scope of this Quality Management System

The policies and procedures described in this Quality Assurance Manual are developed specifically to conform to the requirements of our QQI (formerly FETAC) certified programmes.

The policies and procedures are aligned with the provisions set out in the *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers – April 2016/QC1-V2 ©QQI.*

This Quality Management System (QMS) replaces provisions B1 – B9 with the following 11 core areas, CG 1-11.

11 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Core Guidelines

1. Governance and Management of Quality
2. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance
3. Programmes of Education and Training
4. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development
5. Teaching and Learning
6. Assessment of Learners
7. Support for Learners
8. Information and Data Management
9. Public Information and Communication
10. Other Parties Involved in Education and Training
11. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Review Frequency

This Quality Assurance Manual and its policy and procedures are reviewed every 3 years (or as need arises) to ensure they remain fit for purpose and effective.

1.0   Governance and Management of Quality

Policy

Professional Development is committed to providing an overarching governance and quality management system that controls and assures the academic integrity of our training programmes and delivers the highest level of service to our clients. See Figure 3 - Quality Assurance System Structure for an outline of our QA System structure.

Through our Quality Assurance Manual policies, procedures, and related documents are detailed, reviewed, and monitored. This is to ensure that they are in line with best practice, reflect what we are actually doing, and provide transparency for improvements, corrective actions, and preventative methods.

Purpose:

To describe the methods used to assure the overall integrity of our quality management system and to clearly outline the appropriate separation of commercial and academic decision-making within the organisation.

Responsibility:

Managing Director, Director of Training, QA Officer.

Procedures:

1.1   Governance

1.1.1   Structure and Terms of Reference

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1.2   Management of Quality Assurance

1.2.1   Description of Quality Assurance Processes

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1.2.5   Continuity Planning Procedures

1.3   Embedding a Quality Culture

1.3.1   Elements within the Professional Development QA System

1.3.2   QA Continuous Improvement Strategy

Reference Documents:

- Quality Review Board Action Template
- Risk Management Register
- RAP Report
- Self-evaluation checklists & audit report

- IV reports
- EA reports
- TMS Learner analysis and grade reports

1.1 Governance

1.1.1 Structure and Terms of Reference

A governance structure is in place in order to oversee all activities in Professional Development that relate to the provision of training programmes to our clients.

This governance structure ensures that an appropriate separation of academic and commercial decision-making is enforced.

A graphic summary outlining the interrelations between the governance and operational structures covering the life cycle of the training processes is outlined in
Figure 2 - Professional Development Governance Structure.

There are three supervisory boards / panels that oversee the governance of QA:

1   Board of Directors (BoD): Commercial Overview & Financial Governance
2   Quality Review Board (QRB): Academic Integrity & QA Governance
3   Results Approval Panel (RAP): Learner Results Review & Approval (sub-committee of the QRB)

Terms of reference for each of these supervisory boards are outlined in the following sections 1.1.1.1, 1.1.1.2, and 1.1.1.5.

1.1.1.1 Board of Directors

Board of Directors (BoD)	
Purpose:	The BoD is responsible for all aspects of governance outside of QA and academic policy and procedures. This includes legal, financial, commercial, risk, and regulatory.
Membership:	1. Managing Director 2. Director of Training Where there are relevant BoD agenda items, the Financial Controller may attend, but without voting rights.
Quorum:	Both members must be present.
Duties & Responsibilities:	1. The BoD is responsible for all aspects of governance outside of academic and QA policy and procedures. This includes legal, financial, commercial, risk management, and regulatory. 2. In addition to its statutory duties under company law, the BoD is responsible for ongoing review of programme commercial viability and ensuring that all existing and planned programmes have sufficient resources. 3. The Board of Directors (BoD) is responsible for ensuring there are stable resources and infrastructure to sustain the implementation of the Quality Management System. 4. The BoD is also responsible for final commercial sign-off of all new draft programmes approved by the Quality Review Board (QRB) before they are submitted for QQI Validation.
Meeting Details: (timings & frequency)	Quarterly and as required for programme development approval, programme commercial approval, etc.
Standing Agenda:	1. Review any actions or relevant items from previous meeting. 2. Review financial performance of the business. 3. Review risk register including any updated risks that have been identified. 4. Address any new business.
Reporting Requirements & Approval Sign-off:	**Who reports to committee?** The sales and marketing teams report to the Board of Directors. **Who provides approval sign-off?** The board has final approval sign-off. Approval must be unanimous.

1.1.1.2 Quality Review Board (QRB)

	Quality Review Board (QRB)
Purpose:	The Quality Review Board (QRB) has overall responsibility for ensuring the quality of programmes and related service improvement. This includes all self-evaluation findings. QRB also has final sign-off on all new programmes from an academic and QA standpoint.
Membership:	1. External Expert (Chairperson) 2. Director of Training 3. QA Officer 4. Tutor Representatives (2) 5. Assessor Representatives (2)
Quorum:	Must consist of a minimum of 4 members, 2 of which must be external (for example: external expert, tutor representatives).
Duties & Responsibilities:	1. To assure that quality management and quality assurance are independent of commercial decisions. 2. To assure that training programmes are developed in line with best practice by qualified training professionals who are subject matter experts in the field. (See Section 3.0 for more detail on programme development) 3. To assure that training materials are aligned with documented learning outcomes and objectives. 4. To assure that training assessment briefs are aligned with training content and assessment methodologies. 5. To review and approve draft training programmes prior to submission to QQI for validation. 6. To assure that trainers are recruited and selected in accordance with documented processes based on objective criteria as set out in Section 4.1.2 of this QAM. 7. To assure that training programmes are delivered in line with provisions set out in Section 3.1.6 of this QAM. 8. To assure that Learner work is assessed fairly, consistently, and in line with the provisions set out in Section 6.0 of this QAM. 9. To assure that Learner work is verified as set out in the provisions of IV, EA, and RAP in Section 6.1.7 of this QAM. 10. To assure that the processes in place for Learners to appeal their results are upheld and in line with the provisions set out in Section 5.2.4.3 of this QAM. 11. To assure that quality trends are reviewed as part of IV for each of the six (6) certification periods during the year.

Quality Review Board (QRB) continued	
	12. To assure that an overall quality review is carried out at least once per year. Decisions and actions arising will be documented on our Quality Review Board Action Plan Template. 13. To assure that continuous improvement and self-evaluation are embedded across all of our activities including customer service, quality of training materials and training delivery, feedback from Learners and trainer, IV, EA, RAP, and self-evaluation process. 14. To assure that actions arising from 13 above are documented, implemented, and tracked using the comprehensive Cases system in Salesforce, our Training Management System (TMS). 15. To assure that the Risk Management Register is maintained and reviewed on an ongoing basis as well as during the Quality Review Board Meeting.
Meeting Details: (timings & frequency)	The QRB meets at least twice a year to discuss self-evaluation and QA review. The QRB also meets as needed to approve new draft programmes submitted by the Programme Development Committee (PDC).
Standing Agenda:	**1. Governance and Management of Quality** • Risk Register • Review internal evaluation RAP reports and actions arising • Self-evaluation checklist and schedule • Self-evaluation audit results **2. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance** • Any updates required **3. Programmes of Education and Training** • Any new programmes under consideration for validation (see exception in section 1.1.1.3 below) **4. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development** • Staff resources and training needs • Tutor resources and training needs **5. Teaching and Learning** • Feedback to tutors • Tutor performance management • Evaluation of training and Learner feedback • Customer complaints log (extracted report from Cases in TMS) • Learning environment – review of venues

Quality Review Board (QRB) continued

	6. Assessment of Learners • Assessment brief review • IV reports • EA reports • RAP reports • Appeals **7. Support for Learners** • Adequacy of resources **8. Information and Data Management** • TMS Learner analysis reports • Completion rates by course type (public vs IC), by trainer, by course, grade distributions by course, by trainer, by QQI certification period • Benchmarking against national standards • Security of materials and GDPR **9. Public Information and Communication** • Marketing and sales materials • Website • Document control **10. Other Parties Involved in Education and Training** • Any collaborations for review **11. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review** • Monitoring reports including Learner metrics and complaints • Self-evaluation audit reports • Review of open cases in TMS **12. Action Plan and Decisions**

Quality Review Board (QRB) continued	
Reporting Requirements & Approval Sign-off:	**Who reports to committee?** The QA Officer, RAP, and all sub-groups and sub-committees of the QRB (for example: Programme Development Committee) report to the QRB. **Who provides approval sign-off?** The QRB has collaborative sign off on all matters. In event of a tie, the Chairperson has the deciding vote. See section 1.1.1.3 below for note on voting rights for draft programmes.

1.1.1.3 Voting Rights of PDC Members

Any members of the QRB, who are also active members of the Programme Development Committee (PDC) do not have voting rights in approval of draft programmes for QQI validation.

This exception is always noted in the minutes of the QRB meeting.

1.1.1.4 Sub-Committees of the Quality Review Board

Where required, sub-committees of the QRB are established to focus on particular initiatives and progress tasks between QRB meetings. Examples of this include, but are not limited to:

- Results Approval Panel (RAP) (see next section)
- Programme Development Committee (PDC) (see 3.1.2.5)
- Learner Feedback Committee (see Section 11.2.1.2)

Sub-committees are formed by the QRB with final approval for each sub-committee given by the QRB chairperson.

1.1.1.5 Results Approval Panel (RAP)

Please refer to 1.1.1.8 below for further details regarding Learner Results Approval.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">Results Approval Panel (RAP)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Purpose:</td><td>The Results Approval Panel (RAP) has overall responsibility for approving all results before they are submitted to QQI for certification.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Membership:</td><td>1. QA Officer
2. Assessments Coordinator
3. Assessors</td></tr>
<tr><td>Quorum:</td><td>Must consist of a minimum of 3 members, including at least 1 assessor (external member).</td></tr>
<tr><td>Duties & Responsibilities:</td><td>The Results Approval Panel's primary terms of reference is approval of all results before:
1. Learners are formally notified of their Provisional Grades
2. Learners are submitted to QQI for certification (subject to no appeals)
3. When applicable, the RAP reviews any Learner appeals.
4. Where an EA visit has taken place in the current certification period, the RAP will review and discuss the EA report.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Meeting Details: (timings & frequency)</td><td>At a minimum, the RAP meets every certification period (every two months, approx. 14 days before the QBS closes for certification). Additional RAP meetings are scheduled if a need arises.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Standing Agenda:</td><td>1. Review any actions or relevant items from previous meeting.
2. Review and approve certification results for current certification period.
3. Review IV Report and discuss matters arising from same.</td></tr>
</table>

Results Approval Panel (RAP) continued	
Standing Agenda: (continued)	4. Review Learner appeals (where relevant) and discuss matters arising from same. 5. Review EA Report (where relevant) and discuss matters arising from same. 6. Agree final results and approve for submission to QQI for certification. 7. Any other business.
Reporting Requirements & Approval Sign-off:	**Who reports to committee?** The QA Officer, Assessments Coordinator, Assessors, and Tutors report to the Results Approval Panel. **Who provides approval sign-off?** The primary objective for the RAP is to have unanimous sign-off on all grades for each certification period. The RAP has collaborative sign off on all matters.

This governance structure is designed to address the following areas:

1. Internal Programme Development Approval
2. Education, Training, and Related Activities
3. Learner Results Approval
4. Self-Evaluation Findings and Programme and Related Service Improvement

1.1.1.6   Internal Programme Development Approval

Responsibility for internal programme development is divided across three bodies:

1. Board of Directors (BoD)
2. Quality Review Board (QRB)
3. Programme Development Committee (PDC)

The QRB will appoint a Programme Development Committee (PDC) to develop new programmes. Before submission to QQI, all new programmes must be submitted for approval by:

1. The Quality Review Board (QRB): QA and academic approval
2. Board of Directors (BoD): Commercial and resource approval

Please see Section 3.0 for a detailed outline on the programme development process.

1.1.1.7 Education, Training, and Related Activities

All day-to-day education, training, and related activities are the ultimate responsibility of the Director Training (DT). Refer to Section 1.1.2.2 below for more details on the role and responsibilities of the DT.

The QRB has overall responsibility for the quality of training programmes to include the full life cycle of services. Refer to Section 1.1.1.2 for more detail on the responsibilities of the QRB.

1.1.1.8 Learner Results Approval

The Results Approval Panel (RAP) has overall responsibility for approving all results before they are submitted to QQI for certification.

The role of the RAP is to review all Learners before submission, review IV and EA reports, and action any follow-up items if necessary.

The RAP meets every certification period (6 times per annum). The RAP will also meet on an ad-hoc basis to approve any appeals processes.

Provisional Grades cannot be issued to Learners until results are signed off by the RAP.

1.1.1.9 Self-Evaluation Findings and Programme and Related Service Improvement

The Quality Review Board (QRB) has overall responsibility for ensuring the quality of programmes and related service improvement. This includes all self-evaluation findings.

A review of self-evaluation findings takes place during every QRB meeting.

The QA Officer will minute the QRB meeting. The QA Officer is responsible for circulating minutes to the board members and follow up agenda items.

Agreed actions and opportunities for improvement (OFI) are logged by the QA Officer to the Cases system in the TMS. Here, they can be managed and tracked to completion.

1.1.2 Roles and Responsibilities

1.1.2.1 Managing Director (MD)

The MD has overall responsibility for all day-to-day commercial aspects of the business outside of quality assurance, which is the remit of QRB.

The MD's responsibilities include, but are not limited to; day-to-day financial, legal, HR, stakeholder, and risk management.

The MD is a member of the Board of Directors.
The MD reports to the BoD.

1.1.2.2 Director of Training (DT)

The DT has overall responsibility for the day-to-day provision of training and related activities to include the full life cycle of the services including the following:

1. Identification of suitable training programmes for our clients based on their needs.
2. Design of programmes with input from subject matter experts and trainers (Programme Development Committee Section 3.0).
3. Referral of programmes to the Quality Review Board for approval prior to submission to QQI for validation.
4. Recruitment and selection of suitably qualified and experienced trainers to deliver the training programmes.
5. Preparation of course schedules in line with client needs and selection of trainers from our approved panel to deliver the training.
6. Recruitment and selection of suitably qualified and experienced assessors to mark and grade the work submitted by Learners for certification and to ensure that work is marked in line with national standards.

The DT is a member of the following boards / committees:

1. Board of Directors (BoD)
2. Quality Review Board (QRB)
3. Programme Development Committee (PDC)

The DT reports to the BoD and QRB.

1.1.2.3 Assessments Coordinator (AC)

The Assessments Coordinator (AC) is the main point of contact for Learners in all matters relating to the certification process.

The Assessments Coordinator has responsibility for the following:

1. Responding to assessment-related queries from Learners.
2. Collation of all submitted, marked, and resulting graded Learner materials and safe storage with a secure Dropbox folder, in line with data protection policy.
3. Updating of training management system (TMS) in Salesforce for all matters relating to submission and grading of Learner work.
4. Responding to requests for extensions and escalating to the Director of Training as required.

5. Preparation and sending of provisional grade notifications (PGN) to Learners.
6. Input of all Learners and their respective grades to QBS and submission to QQI once signed off by the RAP.

The AC is a member of the Results Approval Panel (RAP).
The AC reports to the RAP and QRB.

For graphical representation of the Assessments Coordinator's role, see Figure 4 - Assessments Coordinator: Responsibilities and Reporting Structure.

1.1.2.4 Course Coordinator (CC)

The Course Coordinator is the main point of contact for Learners in all matters relating to the booking and course attendance process.

The Course Coordinator has responsibility for:

1. Maintaining courses in the Training Management System (TMS) showing course dates, trainers, and all logistical course information.
2. Organising venues for training programmes and liaising with the events manager in relation to same.
3. Assuring that training venues deliver on service level agreements in relation to facilities, equipment, catering, and refreshments.
4. Liaising with trainers and provision of training materials and course collateral for all training programmes.

5. Dissemination of training materials and course collateral to Learners via a secure Dropbox folder.
6. Provision of deadlines to Learners for submission of work for assessment.

The CC reports to the Director of Training and Managing Director.

For graphical representation of the Course Coordinator's role, see Figure 5 - Course Coordinator: Responsibilities and Reporting Structure.

1.1.2.5   QA Officer (QAO)

The QA Officer (QAO) has overall responsibility for reporting to the QRB on the ongoing Monitoring of Programme Delivery and Assessment.

They are also responsible for ensuring all relevant QAM policies and procedures are updated in a timely manner (with input from the QRB, MD, DT, and Documents Manager).

The QAO has responsibility for the following:

1. Checking uploaded authentication QBS in preparation for IV, EA, and RAP.
2. Organising of Internal Verification processes and completion of IV report for each QQI certification period (6 times per annum).
3. Preparation of quality analysis and distribution of grades report by course type on both a period and cumulative year to date basis.
4. Organising site visits by approved External Authenticators (EA).
5. Coordination of facilities and access to reports, marked Learner materials, and grading sheets for the EA for the duration of their visit.
6. Organising Result Approval Panel (RAP) meeting for each of 6 certification periods and preparation of RAP report.
7. Documentation of any actions for improvement arising from the RAP in both the RAP Report and using the Cases system in TMS.
8. Sending summary grade sheets to each trainer for each certification period and collation of any actions arising from the findings within these summary grade sheets in the Cases system.
9. Coordination of request for appeals and organising same.

The QAO is a member of and reports to the Quality Review Board (QRB).

For graphical representation of the QA Officer's role, see Figure 6 - QA Officer: Responsibilities and Reporting Structure.

1.1.2.6 Assessors

The Assessors have overall responsibility for marking and grading the work submitted by Learners for certification.

They perform the following duties:

1. Assess and grade Learner skills demonstrations and written assessment work in line with the current assessment brief, the national standards rubric, and Bloom's Taxonomy.
2. Complete a grading sheet for each Learner providing detailed feedback and justification for awarding or deducting of marks.
3. Notify the Assessments Coordinator of any anomalies which may arise.
4. Provide input into the development and review of assessment briefs and tutor briefs.
5. Attend the Results Approval Panel meeting where required.
6. Attend the Quality Review Board meeting where required.

Assessors are members of the Results Approval Panel (RAP) and when invited, of the Quality Review Board (QRB). Assessors report to the RAP and QRB.

For graphical representation of the Assessor's role, see Figure 7 - Assessors: Responsibilities and Reporting Structure.

1.1.2.7 Documents Manager (DM)

The Documents Manager (DM) has overall responsibility to ensure that all documents relating to training courses are maintained and version controlled. The DM ensures that only current documents are available for use and that obsolete documents are archived.
Working closely with the Director of Training, the following responsibilities fall under the control of the DM:

- Company website (with input from Programme Development Committee)
- Course brochures and guides (with input from Programme Development Committee)
- QQI Assessment Briefs (with input from Programme Development Committee)
- Training Materials (with input from Programme Development Committee)
- Quality Assurance Manual and related QA documents (with input from the QA Officer and QRB)
- Learner Handbook (input from QA Officer, QRB, and BoD)
- Tutor Handbook (input from QA Officer, QRB, and BoD)
- QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines
- GDPR Legislation

The DM maintains and updates a library of all relevant and current legislation as it applies to Professional Development, including Training, Employment and Health & Safety.

1. Law Reform Commission Act 1975
2. Further Education and Training Act 2013 (updated amendment 05/2016)
3. Health and Safety at Work Act 2005
4. Employment Equality Act 2004
5. Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Act 1973
6. Terms of Employment (Information Act) 1994
7. Unfair Dismissals Acts, 1977 to 2005
8. Organisation of Working Time Act 1997

The DM is mentored by and reports to the Director of Training and, in matters of QA documentation, to the QRB.

The DM Is a member of Programme Development Committee (PDC).

1.1.2.8 External Authenticator (EA)

The company engages the services of experienced External Authenticators for two of the six QQI bi-monthly assessment periods.

The EA undertakes the following duties:

1. Attends site visits following internal verification (IV) to review the results of IV.
2. Selects a proportion of assessments for review against the assessment brief and marked works.
3. Provides external independent opinion regarding the quality of both the work submitted and the quality of the marking and grading process versus national standards.
4. Advises the company of any potential risks.
5. Recommends any changes to grades and provides rationale for same.
6. Advises the company on the suitability of the assessment briefs and makes recommendations in light of any findings.
7. Issues a report to the company following the EA visit.
8. On request, conducts Learner appeals when not having been involved in the EA process for the period in question, and submits a detailed report of finding and recommendations.
9. On request, conducts self-review audits.

1.1.2.9 Chairperson of the QRB

The Chairperson of the QRB is an independent expert, external to the Company.

The Chairperson's responsibilities include:

1. To direct the theme and timing for the annual Quality Review Board meeting and to liaise with the QA Officer in relation to subject matter and external invitations as required.
2. Organising annual Quality Review Board (QRB) meeting to include the agenda (with input from other members of the QRB).
3. To assure that the provisions for verification of work and appeals process is performed in line with the provisions set out in Section 6.0 of this manual.

Trudi Barnett is an External Expert Panellist, who performs the role of Chairperson of the Quality Review Board (QRB).

1.1.2.10 Tutors

Tutors deliver the approved training programmes. In this role, they impart relevant knowledge, skills, and behaviours to our Learners in order to prepare them for certification on the national framework.

Having a lot of contact time with the Learners, our trainers are an integral part of our quality management and assurance processes.

Key responsibilities include:
1. Contributing to the development of learning objectives, course content, and assessment briefs as requested.
2. Delivery of training in line with approved content.
3. Providing feedback to the Director of Training (DT) and QA Officer (QAO) regarding any issues which may require improvement.
4. Providing input and comment to the Assessments Coordinator (AC) and DT regarding summary grades for their classes.
5. Attending Quality Review Board (QRB) meetings as required.
6. Providing subject matter expertise into continuous improvement and self-evaluation initiatives.

Tutors report to the DT. When required / invited, they are members of the QRB and / or Programme Development Committee (PDC).

1.1.2.11 Training Consultants

Training Consultants (TC) are members of the business development and customer care team. They are also called "Account Managers".

TC have overall responsibility for assuring that Learners receive full and comprehensive information as part of the booking process. They are the key contact for Learners throughout the booking process.

Their main responsibilities include:

1. Providing Learners with course brochures, guides, and information relating to the course and certification requirements.
2. Ascertaining the suitability of courses to each Learner's needs.
3. Responding to any Learner queries regarding booking and attending training.
4. Completing the booking process and sending a booking confirmation email.
5. Referring Learners to the Assessments Coordinator (AC) for any matters relating to the certification process.

Training Consultants report to the DT.

1.1.2.12 Programme Development Committee (PDC)

The Programme Development Committee (PDC) has responsibility for developing all new training programmes. The PDC is appointed by the QRB.

Its membership includes the Director of Training (DT) and the Documents Manager (DM), along with internal and external subject matter experts as required.

Any new programmes must be first submitted to the Quality Review Board (QRB) for academic approval before being submitted to the Board of Directors for commercial sign-off.

See Section 3.1 for a full outline of the Programme Development process.

The PDC reports to the QRB.

1.1.3 Mission Statement and Strategic Business Objectives

1.1.3.1 Mission Statement

We believe the key to a thriving, rewarding career is continuous professional development.

Our programmes are designed to enhance each Learner's potential. We focus on providing Learners with practical, transferable skills and understanding they can apply immediately.

We are committed to creating supportive, dynamic, and equitable experiences for all of our Learners.

We strive to ensure that our methods and practices of teaching are flexible, varied, and incorporate both advances in relevant disciplines and national and international effective practice.

1.1.3.2 Strategic Business Objectives

We have developed the following strategic business objectives to support our mission:

1. Create a rich learning environment where ideas can be exchanged and formative feedback provided.
2. Facilitate a supportive, Learner-centric approach to training and assessment through clear and detailed information and open communication channels.
3. Embed a strong, structured quality culture within the organisation.
4. Provide a varied offering of training programmes and respected certification options.
5. Promote continuous professional development from within the organisation.

1.1.3.3 Application of Strategic Business Objectives

1. Create a rich learning environment where ideas can be exchanged, and formative feedback provided.
   - Tutors provide formative feedback to Learners during training and where required, via email on draft work for assessment as required. (See Section 6.1.8 for more detail on formative feedback)
   - Our programmes incorporate group discussions and exercises to promote the sharing of ideas and different perspectives.

2. Facilitate a supportive, Learner-centric approach to training and assessment through clear and detailed information and open communication channels.
   - Provision of comprehensive course materials to all Learners. This includes:
     - Brochures and detailed course information on all webpages.

- Booking confirmation email (see Section 3.1.5.4)
- Welcome Letter
- Assessment brief and assessment submission date.
- QQI Learner Handbook
- Data Protection FAQ document
- Course slides, templates, and supporting documents as relevant
- Bibliography and referencing guide

o Provision of guidelines and comprehensive support for tutors, including:
- All information provided to Learners (listed above)
- Tutor Resources Folder (see Section 2.1.1.4 for more details)
- Tutor Handbook
- Class summary feedback following training
- Class summary grade reports following assessment

3. Embed a strong, structured quality culture within the organisation.
   o Maintain our Quality Assurance Manual (QAM) as an active, live document that embeds a culture of quality across our business. Our client and Learner centric culture is founded on the principles of the quality assured processes and continuous improvement documented within this QAM.
   o Active participation of staff, trainers, and assessors in QA processes and supervisory boards.
   o Our QAM is fully reviewed on a 3-year, cyclical basis and as required in the interim.

4. Provide a varied offering of training programmes and respected certification options.
   o Maintain partnerships with established international accreditation and certification bodies including PeopleCert®, the International Association for Six Sigma Certification (IASSC), SCRUMstudy, and VMEdu.
   o Secure re-engagement with QQI in order to:
   - Deliver certified programmes up to level 6 to our clients based on their needs.
   - Develop new programmes at level 6, in particular a lean six sigma green belt.
   - Expand the scope beyond level 6 by applying for approved status at level 7-9.
   o Expand our panel of experienced, qualified training specialists to support increased activity.
   o Ongoing review of our programme effectiveness, drawing from Learner feedback, tutor and assessor input, and study of advances in relevant disciplines.

5. Promote continuous professional development from within the organisation.
   o Develop and train our staff and tutors on an ongoing basis.
   o Encourage peer learning through tutors sitting in on each other's courses.
   o Implement continuous communication between the Director of Training and Tutors on CPD via a formal, annual submission of CPD hours completed and an open channel for discussing opportunities for development of new skills.
   o Staff attend Professional Development training courses as relevant to their role and further development.
   o Read more about how we support this objective in Section 4.0.

1.1.4 Participation and Involvement of Staff in QA

We strive to promote and support a culture of quality across all activities in Professional Development.

Staff, trainers, and assessors play an integral part in the provisions of quality assurance set out in this QAM. Roles and responsibilities are set out in detail in Section 1.1.2 above and throughout this manual.

1.1.5 Protection of academic processes and standards

The QRB is responsible for ensuring that the interest of Learners and the provisions for quality assurance are upheld and are independent of commercial decisions.

In order to ensure the integrity of academic processes and standards, the following checks and balances have been developed:

1. In order to protect the integrity of academic decision making from undue commercial influence, we have implemented a separation of governance between those who approve material from an academic and QA perspective (QRB) and those who approve it from a commercial perspective (BoD).
2. Development of detailed assessment briefs and marking schemes where a detailed rationale for all marks deducted as well as awarded must be recorded by the Assessor.
3. All programme development is signed off by the QRB and BoD prior to submission for validation by QQI. To ensure the protection of academic processes and standards, QRB has ultimate academic approval, whilst BoD has ultimate commercial approval.
4. The use of an External Authenticator (EA) at twice a year to ensure there is external oversight of the assessment process.

5. Review of academic performance (grade distribution, completion rates, pass rates) as part of the annual review by the Quality Review Board (QRB).
6. Ongoing feedback of tutor performance through continuous sharing of Learner feedback and of Learner results and grade distribution after each certification period.

1.1.6 Risk Management

Risk is defined as uncertain events which may or may not impact on the business and the ability of the business to deliver training programmes to our clients.

A risk register has been developed to record all matters relating to the management of risk. The QA Officer, in association with the Director of Training and the Managing Director is responsible for maintaining the risk register.

The following risk management processes are in place to manage and mitigate risk in the business:

1. Risk Identification
2. Risk Categories
3. Risk Analysis
4. Risk Responses and Risk Owners
5. Risk Monitoring and Controlling

1.1.6.1 Risk Identification

Team members and trainers are encouraged to raise potential risks and issues. Risk may be identified from a range of sources including:

- Management Team
- Members of the Quality Review Board
- Feedback from Learners
- Insights from Training Consultants
- Insights from Marketing Team
- Feedback from Trainers
- Financial Controller

- Selection and Performance of Trainers
- Documents Manager
- IV and RAP process
- Evaluation of quality trends and results
- External Authenticators
- Quality Review meetings
- Team conversations

1.1.6.2 Risk Categories

The following risk categories are used:

1. Governance and Management of Quality
2. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance
3. Programmes of Education and Training
4. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development
5. Teaching and Learning
6. Assessment of Learners
7. Support for Learners
8. Information and Data Management
9. Public Information and Communication
10. Other Parties Involved in Education and Training
11. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review
12. Commercial and Financial

1.1.6.3 Risk Analysis

Once identified and documented on the risk register, the probability and impact of the risk is assessed using the following methodology.

Risk Probabilities	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Score	5	4	3	2	1

Impact of Risk

The same scale is used as above:

Impact of Risk	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Score	5	4	3	2	1

Risk Score Calculation

The probability risk score is multiplied by the impact risk score giving a maximum risk score of 25 (5 x 5) and a minimum risk score of 1 (1 x 1).

Example 1: Risk Factor A

Very high probability: 5

Low impact: 2

Risk score: = 10 (5 x 2)

Example 2: Risk Factor B

High probability: 5

Very high impact: 4

Risk score: = 20 (5 x 4)

1.1.6.4 Risk Responses and Owners

Once the risk score is calculated, the risk responses are identified and assigned to the risk owner.

Depending on the risk score, steps are taken to mitigate the probability, impact, or both. The response is documented on the risk register and kept under review.

1.1.6.5 Risk Monitoring and Control

The risk register is reviewed at all RAP and QRB meetings. Any actions arising from discussions during this meeting will be monitored by the QA Officer.

1.1.6.6 Risk Reporting and Management

Risk management is an integral part of the governance of the organisation. Ultimate responsibility, reporting, and managing risk lies with the Board of Directors.

The following risks with a risk score of greater than 9 have been identified and are monitored on an ongoing basis:

1. Financial
2. Availability of tutors
3. Availability of course venues and facilities
4. Protection of Learner Data
5. Integrity of internal verification and external verification processes
6. Objective assessment of Learner work

1.1.7 Integration of Internal and External Evaluation in QMS

Our quality assurance procedures are constantly evolving to ensure they are relevant and fit for purpose. Feedback from internal and external evaluations is continually fed into our QA procedures to ensure they meet the requirements of our internal and external stakeholders.

Feedback is captured both internally and externally and is shared throughout the organisation in Learner feedback forms (refer 1.1.7.1 below) or client feedback via testimonials.

It is company policy that all feedback is brought to the attention of senior management (both DT and MD). If necessary, they instruct the QA Officer to ensure that QA procedures are developed or amended if required to address any issues or risks identified.

1.1.7.1 Learner Feedback Forms (External Evaluation)

A central element of our quality assurance process is the collection and review of Learner feedback. Learner feedback forms are circulated for completion after every course.

Following training, each Learner receives an automatic email asking them to fill in our short, online training evaluation form. This information is automatically gathered into the Learner's delegate record in Salesforce.

Class feedback is circulated to all internal team members, plus the class Tutor every Friday. The QA Officer circulates this feedback.

Any action items are identified and followed up by the DT or the QAO. They are escalated to the Managing Director if necessary.

The Cases system in the TMS is utilised here to ensure corrective action is taken if the feedback is negative or identifies an opportunity for improvement (OFI).

The QAO is responsible for managing input of corrective action or OFI Cases to the TMS and ensuring the cases are addressed in a timely manner, with any relevant action taken.

1.1.7.2 Client Feedback (External Evaluation)

As part of our customer service ethos, all Training Consultants follow up with clients after each in-company course to ascertain their feedback.

This is in addition to the direct feedback from Learners, which is captured through the Feedback Forms (refer 1.1.7.1 above).

Any action items are identified and handled as outlined in 1.1.7.1 above.

1.1.7.3 Third-Party Professional Accreditation (External Evaluation)

Professional Development is accredited by a number of third-party professional training organisations.

As part of this accreditation, these bodies carry out periodic audits / reviews of our quality assurance procedures including desktop review of all course collateral (course workbooks, slides, website material, and brochures) to ensure compliance with their academic standards.

They also ensure that all Tutors hold the required professional qualifications and / or have completed the necessary training to deliver their accredited courses.

1.1.7.4   Results Approval Panel (RAP) (Internal Evaluation)

For each of the 6 certification periods, the results of the internal verification and (when applicable) external authentication are reviewed at the Results Approval Panel Meeting, which is held in advance of sending provisional grade notifications (PGN) to each Learner.

Any actions arising are documented in the RAP report which is prepared by the QA Officer and responsibilities for follow-up action are assigned. These processes are documented in Section 6.0 of this QAM.

1.1.7.5   Quality Review Board (QRB) (Internal Evaluation)

The Chairperson is responsible for organising a minimum of two annual meetings of the Quality Review Board.

See Section 1.1.1.2 for an example of a typical QRB agenda.

1.2   Managing Quality Assurance

Policy

Professional Development has put in place a coherent, sustainable system to manage Quality Assurance consistently.

Procedures

1.2.1.   Description of quality assurance processes
1.2.2.   Identification of roles and responsibilities
1.2.3.   Self-monitoring system
1.2.4.   Self-evaluation system
1.2.5   Continuity planning procedures

Responsibility

Quality Review Board (QRB), Board of Directors (BoD), Result Approval Panel (RAP)

1.2.1 Description of quality assurance processes

This Quality Assurance Manual (QAM) is the centrepiece document within Professional Development's Quality Assurance system. Herein, all processes are outlined in detail.

Supporting documents include, but are not limited to:

- QQI Learner Handbook
- Tutor Handbook
- Staff Handbook
- Data Protection FAQ
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy
- QQI Assessment Briefs & Marking Schemes
- Welcome Letters
- *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers – April*
- *2016/QC1-V2 © QQI*

This Quality Assurance Manual is updated on a 3-year, cyclical basis or as the need arises in the interim. See Section 2.1.3 for more detail on review and updating of the QA Manual.

1.2.2 Identification of Roles and Responsibilities

In order to implement our quality assurance system successfully, clearly outlined roles and responsibilities have been designated throughout the organisation.

See Section 1.1.2 for further detail on the roles and responsibilities relating to the implementation of quality assurance procedures within Professional Development.

For graphical representation of these responsibilities, see:

-
- Figure 2 - Professional Development Governance Structure
- Figures 3 – 6: Responsibilities & Reporting Structure

1.2.3 Self-Monitoring System

Professional Development has created a self-monitoring system that is both thorough and consistent.

Utilising self-monitoring reports (e.g., Learner evaluation forms, grade distribution reports, etc.), data is collected on both an ongoing and annual basis.

See section 11.0 for more detail on self-evaluation, monitoring, and review.

1.2.4 Self-evaluation System

The Quality Review Board (QRB), Board of Directors (BoD), and Results Approval Panel (RAP) are responsible for ongoing evaluation of self-monitoring findings.

These governance structures are also responsible for acting upon these findings to improve processes where possible and minimise any potential risks identified.

See sections 11.3.1.3 and 11.3.1.4 for more information on the analysis of self-monitoring findings.

1.2.5 Continuity Planning Procedures

The Board of Directors (BoD) is responsible for ensuring there are stable resources and infrastructure to sustain the implementation of the Quality Management System.

1.3 Embedding a Quality Culture

In order to create the highest possible standards of Quality Assurance (QA), Professional Development is focused in embedding and nurturing a positive quality culture throughout the organisation.

Creating this quality culture leads to all staff members, tutors, and assessors working as a community to promote quality assurance in all activities relating to teaching and learning.

To facilitate the development of our QA system, we have created a continuous improvement strategy that impacts all areas of our business.

This strategy revolves around 3 principles:
1. A holistic approach to quality assurance
2. Ongoing self-monitoring and evaluation of the QA systems and processes.
3. Nurturing a "community-based" approach to QA.

Read more about how we uphold these principles in Section 1.3.2.

1.3.1 Elements within the Professional Development QA System

1.3.1.1 Quality Assurance Manual

Our QA System centrepiece is the Quality Assurance Manual (QAM), which outlines and details all processes relating to QA.

1.3.1.2 Supporting QA Documentation

Whilst the QA Manual is the centre point for procedures and policies within our QA system, there are several supporting and guiding documents used in our ongoing QA application and improvement.

These include Professional Development and QQI documentation such as:

- QQI Learner Handbook
- Tutor Handbook
- Staff Handbook
- Data Protection FAQ
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy
- QQI Assessment Briefs & Marking Schemes
- Welcome Letters
- *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers – April 2016/QC1-V2 © QQI*
- *Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training – November 2017/QP.17-V1.03 © QQI*

Internal reports and resources also form an important part of our QA system and continuous self-evaluation process. These resources include:

- Self-evaluation audit checklists
- Learner feedback forms
- Grade trend analysis reports
- IV Reports
- EA Reports
- RAP Reports
- QRB Action Planner
- Risk Register

1.3.1.3 QA Roles and Responsibilities

Each member of the team within Professional Development holds a clearly defined role within the QA ecosystem. All team members understand their role and its responsibilities well.

1.3.1.4 QA Governing Bodies

Within Professional Development, there are three governing bodies concerned with overseeing the application and continuous improvement of the QA system. These bodies are:

1. **Quality Review Board (QRB)** – Tasked with upholding the academic and QA integrity of all activities within Professional Development. QRB also undertake the regular review and updates of the QAM and any associated QA documentation.
2. **Results Approval Panel (RAP)** – Primarily focused on approving Learner grades and ensuring QA throughout the assessment process.
3. **Board of Directors (BoD)** – Responsible for ensuring that a stable, well-resourced environment remains in place to implement correct QA measures in all activities.

1.3.2 QA Continuous Improvement Strategy

1.3.2.1 A holistic approach to quality assurance

This principle draws from QQI's document, *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers – April 2016/QC1-V2 © QQI*, which states that QA strategies should have:

"A holistic approach towards quality assurance where continuous improvement is key. Procedures are integrated into the normal activities of the provider, with minimum unnecessary administrative requirements."

Our strategies for applying this principle are:

a) A 360° Approach to QA:

In compiling our Quality Assurance Manual, we have followed the 11 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Core Guidelines set out by QQI.

We have carefully reviewed each guideline with relation to all of our activities in teaching and learning and created QA procedures that inform all of our actions and processes. The result is a QA manual that covers all activities within the organisation.

b) Clear Understanding

Our quality assurance processes are documented in detail and made widely available to our staff, tutors, and assessors through Dropbox folders, internal file servers, and our website.

Experienced QA personnel mentor other team members. Questions, feedback, and suggestions are always encouraged.

c) Open Communication Channels

At Professional Development, we have a culture of open communication. This is a key ingredient for nurturing continuous improvement.

All staff are encouraged to provide feedback, questions, and suggestions via email, informal conversations, and during team meetings.

1.3.2.2 Ongoing self-monitoring and evaluation of the QA systems and processes

Our self-monitoring and self-evaluation procedures ensure that adequate and appropriate processes are in place to assure that our quality management system is robust, effective, and reflects best practice.

Our strategies for implementing regular and consistent, self-monitoring and self-evaluation procedures are:

a) Self-Audit Checklists:

Our self-audit checklists are aligned with the QA Manual and QQI's Core Guideline Areas 1 – 11. The objectives are:

- To assess each core guideline area and the processes within to assure that we are doing what we say we do.
- To identify any areas of non-compliance, any potential risks, and any opportunities for improvement.
- To document findings so that they may be evaluated and actioned by the Quality Review Board (QRB).

The annual review of self-audit checklists is led by the QA Officer, with participation from all other team members.

Once the self-audit has been completed, the QA Officer completes a report on the findings and circulates this report along with the completed audit checklists to all team members.

This process gives all involved visibility on the current state of our QA System and helps to keep QA knowledge fresh.

b) Self-Evaluation System:

The Quality Review Board (QRB), Board of Directors (BoD), and Results Approval Panel (RAP) are responsible for ongoing evaluation of self-monitoring findings.

These governance structures are also responsible for acting upon the findings to improve processes where possible and minimise any potential risks identified.

1.3.2.3   Nurturing a "community-based" approach to QA

In order to establish a sustainable culture of quality, it is important to be both inclusive and balanced in approach.

Here are the strategies we use to support this principle:

a) Balanced Assignment Responsibility:

We make certain that QA responsibilities are distributed throughout the team in a fair and balanced way to avoid overloading any one team member.

This promotes a higher universal standard in the team understanding of QA procedures and avoids burdening anyone within the team.

b) Total Team Involvement:

Every member of the team within Professional Development plays a role in the QA system.

Through participating actively in the application of QA procedures, each team member becomes fluent in Quality Assurance, with greater confidence and capability to identify risks and / or opportunities for improvement.

2.0   Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

Policy

Professional Development is committed to ensuring that a robust system is in place to document policies and procedures in relation to its Quality Management System.

Our Quality Management System procedures, processes, and related documents are in place to support this policy.

Purpose:

To describe the methods used to assure that there is a documented set of quality assurance policies and procedures that reflect current practice and are in line with the *Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines April 2016/QG1-V2*.

Responsibility:

QRB, Director of Training, Managing Director, QA Officer, Documents Manager

Procedures:

2.1   Documented Policies and Procedures

2.1.1   Quality Assurance Guidelines

2.1.2   Publication of Quality Assurance Manual (and other related documents)

2.1.3   Review and Update of QA Manual

2.2   A Comprehensive Quality Management System

2.2.1   Integration with other Quality / Legislation / Regulatory Requirements

2.2.2   Regulatory Compliance

Reference Documents:

- Quality Assurance Manual (QAM)
- QQI Learner Handbook
- Tutor Handbook
- Employee Handbook

2.1 Documented Policies and Procedures

Professional Development has committed to a fully documented quality assurance system.

As a private provider on a voluntary basis, a robust quality management system helps to ensure that we can offer courses to our clients that are relevant and based on international best practice, training that is consistently delivered in a supportive learning environment, and is assessed in accordance with a transparent assessment brief.

2.1.1 Quality Assurance Guidelines

As part of this commitment, we have developed within this document (Quality Assurance Manual or QAM), a comprehensive set of procedures dealing with the following main quality assurance guidelines as per the *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers – April 2016/QC1-V2*:

1. Governance and Management of Quality
2. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance
3. Programmes of Education and Training
4. Staff Recruitment, Management, and Development
5. Teaching and Learning
6. Assessment of Learners
7. Support for Learners
8. Information and Data Management
9. Public Information and Communication
10. Other Parties Involved in Education and Training
11. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring, and Review

2.1.1.1 Documentation and Version Control

The Documents Manager (DM) has ultimate responsibility for maintaining all documentation relating to training programmes, certification, and QA procedures. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Quality Assurance Manual (QAM)
- Learner Handbook
- Tutor Handbook
- QQI assessment briefs and marking sheets
- Data Protection FAQ document
- Bibliography and Referencing Guide
- Welcome Letters
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Course webpages
- Course brochures and guides

To support best practice in document tracking, version control of QA and certification documents (QAM, handbooks, briefs, marking sheets etc.) includes:

- Revision Number
- Approving Body (QRB, BoD, RAP etc.)
- Date Approved

It is also the responsibility of the DM to disseminate documentation to all relevant stakeholders and to ensure that publicly available information on the Professional Development website is current and accurate.

2.1.1.2   Learner and Tutor Handbooks

Based on these guidelines, Professional Development has developed the following two handbooks that are in continuous use by the stakeholders of the Company.

2.1.1.3   Learner Handbook

The Learner Handbook is a document that is provided in electronic format to each Learner in advance of their attendance on a QQI validated course. It deals with all the relevant policies and guidelines such as:

1. Privacy Policy
2. Learner Supports
3. Course Attendance
4. Written Assessments (including submission and Skills Demos)
5. Grading Process
6. QQI Grade Bands
7. Fail Grades
8. Notification of Results
9. Appeals
10. Receipt of QQI Certificate (including certification periods)

Learners receive a PDF copy of this handbook as part of their course materials in advance of training. These materials are provided via a secure Dropbox folder.

A copy of this document is also freely available on the Company internal file server and publicly available on the Professional Development website:

https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/qqi-learner-handbook-online

The Assessments Coordinator frequently refers to this handbook when communicating with Learners regarding submission of assessments, extension requests, appeals etc.

This document is maintained and reviewed on an ongoing basis, as well as on a 3-year cyclical basis by the QRB.

The Documents Manager (DM) is responsible for version control and maintenance of the Learner Handbook in all locations.

2.1.1.4 Tutor Handbook

The Tutor Handbook is a document that, in addition to covering the same material as the Learner Handbook, includes detailed procedures to give guidance regarding the role and responsibilities of the Tutor.

This includes course delivery and interaction and communications with Learners, including Learner feedback.

Tutors are provided with this handbook as part of their induction process. It is also made available to all tutors in a secure "Tutor Resources" Dropbox folder maintained by the DM. Resources available within this folder include:

• Tutor Handbook	• Data Protection FAQ
• Quality Assurance Manual	• QQI Assessment Briefs
• Learner Handbook	• QQI Welcome Letters
• References and Bibliography	• Tutor Feedback and CPD Form

This document is maintained and reviewed on an ongoing basis, as well as on a 3-year cyclical basis by the QRB.

The DM is responsible for version control and maintenance of the Tutor Handbook in all locations.

2.1.2 Publication of Quality Assurance Manual (and other related documents)

The Quality Assurance Manual (QAM) and relevant QA documents freely available on the Company internal file server and publicly available on the Professional Development website.

You can access all key Professional Development QA documents on our website via this link: https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/quality-assurance

Links to the following documents are available here:

- QA Manual
- QQI Learner Handbook
- Mission Statement

- Privacy Policy
- Data Protection FAQ
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy

Any available QA Evaluation Reports are also published here as they are provided by the panel, or completed internally (for example, self-audit report).

It is company policy to issue all staff with a copy of the Learner Handbook, Tutor Handbook, and the QAM.

The Documents Manager is responsible for updating all of these documents as required. Publishing of minutes from the QRB and RAP on the Professional Development website is planned from Q3 in 2021.

2.1.3 Review and Update of QA Manual

The QAM is kept in constant review and updated as necessary to reflect best practice and changing circumstances.

Prompts for review include (but are not limited to) feedback from all external stakeholders such as Learners, clients, and professional accreditation bodies, such as QQI.

In addition, as part of our continuous improvement ethos, all internal stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback to help enhance and improve our quality management systems.

The QAM is also reviewed on a 3-year cyclical basis by the QRB.

The QA officer is responsible for updating the manual in light of new insights and improvements once approved by the QRB.

The QA Officer will update the QAM for any changes in procedures recommended by the Results Approval Panel (RAP – refer 1.1.1.5) or the Quality Review Board (QRB – refer 1.1.1.2) as required.

2.2   A Comprehensive Quality Management System

Professional Development is committed to developing and maintaining a comprehensive quality management system.

Such a system facilitates us in developing and delivering courses to our clients on a consistent basis.

It ensures our training is relevant and represents best national and international practice in the skills that we impart to our clients.

In order to achieve this consistency of delivery and outcomes we have developed a comprehensive quality management system that actively encourages feedback from all stakeholders in the business.

The open-plan office environment encourages active communication between staff and senior management. Ideas and feedback can be easily exchanged.

The flat organisational structure and relatively small size of the organisation means change can be implemented quickly if / when required.

2.2.1 Integration with other Quality / Legislation / Regulatory Requirements

Any updates to the QAM are conducted bearing in mind specific provisions laid down by any other regulatory responsibilities.

The Director of Training updates the BoD, QRB, and the QA Officer in respect of any changes arising. All changes are subject to approval by the QRB.

2.2.2 Regulatory Compliance

The Board of Directors (BoD) is responsible for all aspects of governance outside of academic governance, which is the responsibility of the QRB.

A library of all relevant legislative requirements is on file and is updated by the QA Officer (see 1.1.2.7 for full listing).

Any changes to legislation and impact to the business, including QA are discussed by the BoD and at financial review meetings with the Financial Controller.

3.0   Programmes of Education and Training

Policy

Professional Development is committed to providing high quality training programmes that are developed, approved, monitored, and reviewed in line with best practice.

The scope of this policy incorporates the full training cycle including training needs analysis, programme design, programme validation and approval, delivery, and review.

We are also committed to ensuring that Learners are enabled to:

1. Make informed choices in relation to the range of programmes offered.
2. Undertake programmes based on recognition of prior learning as appropriate to the course.
3. Successfully participate in the programme chosen.
4. Transfer or progress to other programmes offered.

Professional Development is committed to the provision of training programmes designed to meet the training needs of our Learners as outlined in points 1 – 4 above.

Procedures

Purpose:

To define the processes in place to ensure that our programmes meet the needs of our Learners and those provisions set down under the QQI National Framework of Awards.

Responsibility:

- QRB
- Managing Director
- Director of Training
- QA Officer
- Course Coordinator

- Assessments Coordinator
- Documentation Manager
- Training Consultants
- Tutors
- Assessors

Procedures:

3.1   Programme Development and Approval Process

3.1.1   Identification of Training Needs

3.1.2   Programme Design

3.1.3   Programme Approval prior to submission to QQI for Validation

3.1.5   Programme Planning

3.1.6   Programme Delivery

3.0   Learner Admission, Progression, and Recognition

3.2.1   Provision of Course Information (pre-booking)

3.2.2   Progression

3.2.3   Learner Entry Requirements

3.2.4   Recognition of Prior Learning

3.2.5   Facilitation of Diversity and Disability

3.2.6   Protection of Enrolled Learners

3.3   Programme Monitoring and Review

3.3.1   Maintenance of Learning Facilities and Resources

3.3.2   Programme Review

3.3.3   Benchmarking Against Comparable Providers

Reference Documents and Resources:

- Website
- Course Brochures
- Training Needs Analysis and Pre-course Questionnaires
- QQI Component Specifications
- QQI Document: Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training
- QQI New Programme Initiation Document (Charter)

- FET Validation Self Evaluation Report
- Training Schedule
- Booking Schedule and notifications to training facilities providers
- Welcome Letter
- Training Materials and Learning Aids
- Assessment Briefs and associated Marking Sheets
- Sign in Sheets
- Evaluation Sheets

3.1   Programme Development and Approval Process

In this section, we have outlined our 10-step process for programme development and approval. In sections 3.1.1, 3.1.2, and 3.1.3 we detail specific stages in more detail.

For a graphical overview of the bodies involved in Programme Development, see Figure 8 - Bodies Involved in New Programme Development and Approval.

For a graphical overview of Professional Development's process for Programme Development and Approval, see Figure 10 - New Programme Development and Approval Process.

Stage 1: Identification of Training Needs

1. An idea for a new programme is raised and discussed with Director of Training (DT). Idea sources may include, but are not limited to, sales team, direct client enquiry, marketing team, trainers, etc.

2. The DT liaises with the Marketing Manager (MM) to review market demand for the proposed programme including search volume, competitor offerings, etc.

3. A QQI New Programme Initiation Document (Charter) is then completed by the DT who will act as the sponsor for referral of the programme to the BoD. Charter is presented to the BoD for consideration for further planning.

4. The BoD will review the application's commercial viability and approve a development budget. If approved for commercial viability, the Charter is signed by BoD to authorise QRB to develop the programme.

Stage 2: Programme Design

5. QRB sets up a Programme Development Committee (PDC). This is a sub-committee of the QRB to include the DT and Documents Manager (DM), along with internal and external subject matter experts as required.

6. The Programme Development Committee (PDC) creates indicative learning outcomes, course content, and assessment criteria. See section 3.1.2 for further detail on programme design.

7. Prior to draft submission to QRB, the DT compiles a provider's evaluation report (FET Validation Self Evaluation Report) to outline the programme's adherence to QQI validation requirements as outlined in the document *"Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training" - November 2017/QP.17-V1.03 © QQI.*

Stage 3: Programme Approval pre submission for Validation

8. The PDC presents a draft programme to QRB for academic and QA review and sign off.

9. If approved by QRB, the programme is presented to BoD for ultimate commercial sign off.

10. QRB then submits the programme to QQI for validation following the specifications for application outlined in *"Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training"* (Section 5.5. Assembling and Making the Application)

Note: If the draft programme is not approved by the QRB or BoD, steps 8 & 9 must be repeated. No draft programme is submitted to QQI for validation without QRB (academic) and BoD (commercial) approval.

3.1.1 Identification of Training Needs

The programmes we offer are developed in line with *"Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training" - November 2017/QP.17-V1.03 © QQI.* They are designed to meet the needs of Irish business of all sizes and individual clients across a wide range of sectors.

Proposals for new programmes can come from any of the following sources:
- Information gathered from programme evaluation records
- Corporate client requests for tailored programmes addressing specific learning needs
- Communicating with our existing clients on their changing needs
- Analysing market trends
- Search term volume research
- Courses offered by our competitors

To be eligible for consideration at this initial stage, a proposed programme must fall within Professional Development's scope of provision. If the proposed programme meets this requirement, the DT works with the MM to ascertain market demands.

The DT then compiles the QQI New Programme Initiation Document (Charter) to present to the BoD.

The Charter includes:
- Business case: a description of why this programme is proposed and potential benefits.
- Alignment with existing programme suites and scope of provision.
- Description of programme (e.g., QQI Level 6 Agile Project Management, QQI Level 6 Lean Six Sigma Green Belt, or an existing QQI programme)
- Indicative course duration (if available at this early stage)
- Market demand: monthly search volumes and survey of existing comparable programmes in Ireland and other countries.
- Indicative course price
- Potential audience
- Project Sponsor

The BoD meets to assess the viability of a programme, completing an analysis of:

1. Projected demand for the proposed programme.
2. Resources available, both of qualified, capable staff and any physical resources required.
3. Price and costs including developmental, marketing, sales, course delivery, and certification.

Once the BoD has ascertained the commercial viability of a programme, they will grant approval to develop and pass the programme to the QRB to begin development.

3.1.2 Programme Design

Once approval to develop has been granted, the QRB will form a Programme Development Committee (PDC).

Membership of the PDC will always include the DT and Documents Manager - DM (who also performs the role of QA Officer).

Where relevant, course tutors with experience and qualified subject matter expertise in their designated field are also included in the PDC.

For QQI programmes (up to Level 6), the prescribed component specification and the *"Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training" - November 2017/QP.17- V1.03 © QQI* documents are used as a basis to design the training programme.

All programmes are developed to interface with Professional Development's approved quality assurance procedures. Therefore, the PDC will also utilise this Quality Assurance Manual while designing and developing a programme for QQI validation.

The DM is responsible for ensuring that the most current version of these documents is available on the company's internal secure server, and for dissemination of these documents to PDC members.

Programme design is progressed via a combination of email discussions and meetings of the PDC. Meetings are chaired by the DT, with minutes taken by the DM.

Programme design and development incorporates the following focus areas:

3.1.2.1   Learning Outcomes and Programme Objectives

Learning outcomes are the starting point for programme development.

- For QQI Level 5 and 6 programmes, the learning outcomes are as prescribed by QQI and laid down in the component specification. For other programmes, the learning outcomes are designed as appropriate to the course.
- Working from the QQI-specified learning outcomes, the PDC will transcribe these outcomes into programme objectives.
- These programme objectives serve as anchors for the programme's module content and assessment techniques. They ensure that each element of the programme remains clear and consistently in line with the learning outcomes for this QQI award.

3.1.2.2 Appropriate Assessment Strategies

The PDC gives dedicated focus to creating fair and prescriptive assessment strategies.

- The PDC maps each learning outcome to an appropriate assessment technique. For quality assurance and consistency, each criterion in the programme's marking scheme will display the relevant learning outcome number.
- A detailed assessment brief together with the associated marking scheme is produced. These documents are created by the Director of Training and the Documents Manager.
- Where relevant, selected tutors (subject matter experts) are invited to review the assessment briefs and to provide comments based on their subject matter expertise.

3.1.2.3 Teaching and Learning Strategies

Teaching and learning strategies provide support for both Learners and tutors.

- Programmes are designed to facilitate Learners to move from understanding of concepts and theories to their practical application.
- Learning outcomes are translated into module content.
- Care is taken to ensure that programmes are designed such that course tutors have sufficient materials, methods, and flexibility to use different delivery styles appropriate to their Learners.
- The programme outline includes a focus on the ideal learning environment to meet the needs of Learners for this programme.
- As part of this focus area, the PDC will assess which tutors are most suited and qualified to deliver this programme.

3.1.2.4 Review, Evaluation, and Quality Assurance

Before a draft of the programme can be submitted to the QRB, a number of procedures must be completed as follows:

- The DT and DM will review the programme and supporting documentation to ensure alignment with:
  - *"Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training" - November 2017/QP.17-V1.03 © QQI*
  - Relevant QQI component specification document
  - Professional Development quality assurance procedures

- The DT will create a provider's evaluation report that examines the programmes alignment with these documents.

Programme Documentation

The following documentation is prepared for submission to the QRB:

- **Programme Outline:** An overview of the programme and the relevant QQI award.
- **Documented Programme:** This incorporates:
    - Assessment strategies and procedures
    - Teaching and learning strategies
    - Detailed outline of staff and physical resources required.
    - Documented procedures for programme operation.
    - 5-year plan for the programme
- **Sample Materials:**
    - Learner Materials: The DT will work with the DM to create brochures, web pages, welcome letters, and assessment briefs that can be used as sample materials for information to be provided to Learners.
    - Tutor Materials: The DT will work with subject matter expert(s) on the PDC to create materials (slides, marking schemes etc.) that will be provided to tutors.
- **Provider's Evaluation Report** (FET Validation Self Evaluation Report):
    - This report evaluates the proposed programme against the applicable validation policies and criteria, as directed in QQI validation guidelines.

3.1.2.5 Roles and Responsibilities within the PDC

- **Development Management:** The DT holds overall responsibility for overseeing the design of the programme, and final has approval before submitting the draft programme to the QRB for review.
- **Content Creation:** This includes module content creation (slides, handouts etc.), programme brochures and web page, assessment brief, marking scheme, and welcome letter. The entire PDC are involved in content creation.
- **Design Leader:** Depending on the subject matter, either the DT or selected subject matter expert (tutor) will lead the programme design. DT is a subject matter expert within many subjects that fall within Professional Development's scope of provision (management, project management, Lean Six Sigma). If outside the DT's area of expertise, subject matter expert will perform this role.
- **Content Review:** When the DT leads the programme design, the selected subject matter expert reviews the programme content to ensure it achieves the objectives set out at the beginning of the design process and is correctly mapped to each learning outcome (LO) outlined in the QQI Component Specification. When the subject matter expert leads the programme design, the DT carries out this role.

- **Documentation Review:** The DM carries out a thorough documentation review, cross-checking that learning outcomes have been mapped correctly, proposed marking scheme is weighted and calculated correctly, and that course materials (slides, assessment brief, marking scheme) read well and are clear of spelling or grammatical errors.
- **QA Preliminary Review:** The DT reviews the programme documentation to ensure that it aligns with documents outlined in Section 3.1.2.4 above. The DT will create a provider's evaluation report that examines the programme's alignment with these documents.

For a graphical representation, see Figure 9 - Roles & Responsibilities Within the PDC.

3.1.3 Programme Approval prior to submission to QQI for Validation

QRB holds academic governance on new programme development.

When the draft programme is finalised and approved at initial design stage by the DT, a meeting of the QRB is convened. The draft programme is sent via email to each member in advance.

The programme is reviewed by the QRB and any recommendations for improvement are discussed. Any actions arising are documented by the QA Officer.

Any members of the QRB, who are also active members of the Programme Development Committee (PDC) do not have voting rights in approval of draft programmes for QQI validation. This exception is always noted in the minutes of the QRB meeting.

If the programme is not approved by the QRB, it returns to the design stage. The PDC will then review and incorporate the recommendations for improvement made by the QRB. The programme is then re-submitted to QRB for further review.

Once approved by the QRB, the BoD has final commercial sign-off prior to submission to QQI for validation. The DT is responsible for submitting the final approved version to QQI for validation.

3.1.4 Tutors Delivering QQI Validated Courses

Tutors must be familiar with the approved QQI programme materials. Any additional slides, handouts, or exercises for use during a course must be in-line with these materials and approved by the Director of Training.

Once approved, all materials being used for the relevant course should be forwarded to the Course Coordinator no later than one week before the first date of training. This is outlined clearly in Section 6.2 of the Tutor Handbook.

3.1.5 Programme Planning

3.1.5.1   Marketing and Sales Collateral

Once a course has been validated by QQI, the associated collateral is finalised and published. Examples of such collateral include:

- Website material
- Programme brochure

- Frequently asked questions
- Promotional materials

The Documents Manager (DM) is responsible for drafting the above collateral for approval by the Board of Directors (BoD). All sales and marketing materials are drawn from and aligned with the validated materials.

The DM in her role as QA Officer also ensures that all sales and marketing collateral adheres to QA policies outlined in the Quality Assurance Manual (QAM).

The DM is responsible for version control of live sales and marketing documentation.

3.1.5.2   Staff, Tutor, and Assessor Training

- The course collateral described in 3.1.5.1 above is circulated by the DM to Staff, Tutors, and Assessors who are involved in customer service, course coordination, delivery of training, and assessment of course work for QQI certification.
- The Director of Training (DT) organises training and communication sessions with staff to explain the content and to answer any queries.
- Any further training requirements are identified as needed. These may take the form of one-to-one sessions, team meetings and briefing sessions, email and telephone communication. Peer learning, where Tutors sit in on each other's training sessions, is encouraged where new programmes are concerned.

3.1.5.3   Training Schedules

Public Courses

A public course training schedule is generated by the DT. This is generated as an excel file for internal use. Courses are scheduled 4-6 months in advance on the basis of forecasted demand. The training schedule details the name of course, location, QQI reference (as applicable), and scheduled Tutor.

The DT in association with the Managing Director is responsible for allocation of programmes to course Tutors.

Once approved, the DT contacts the Tutor, typically 2 months in advance of the commencement date and confirms availability in writing by way of email. In the event that the Tutor is not available, the DT will deploy an alternative Tutor from the approved panel.

Once the public course schedule is completed, the Course Coordinator is responsible for updating the online Training Management System (TMS). The Training Consultants can then access the TMS and book Learners onto upcoming courses as required.

The Marketing Manager is responsible for maintaining the online public course schedule. The online schedule displays upcoming public course dates clearly within each relevant course webpage on the Professional Development website.

Corporate Courses (In-Company)

The Director of Training is responsible for the approval of all corporate, in-company QQI courses. The TMS is used to schedule and maintain all upcoming in-company courses. This schedule details the name of the course, QQI code, scheduled dates, and scheduled Tutor.

The Director of Training liaises constantly with each of the Training Consultants to discuss in-company programmes.

3.1.5.4 Booking Confirmation

The Training Consultants (also referred to as Account Managers) are responsible for ensuring that Learners have received a course brochure in advance of booking the programme. All course brochures can also be downloaded directly from the Professional Development website.

Clients are encouraged to contact us directly so that we may answer any questions they have. This is one of Professional Development's unique selling points. A Learner cannot book a course place without first having a conversation with a Training Consultant.

This is to provide a better quality of service but also to ensure the course best suits the needs of the client. This also ensures that the client is fully briefed on the requirements of the QQI course including assessment requirements, the need for self-directed learning, etc.

Once a client has booked a course, the Training Consultant will invoice the Learner (or their organisation) and email them the Terms and Conditions of business (cancellation policy etc.).

The Training Consultant is responsible for sending the booking confirmation email (BCE) which includes a Welcome Letter to Learners (for QQI programmes) in advance of the start date.

This email is sent from the TMS. When sent, a copy of the BCE is automatically added to the Learner's delegate record in the TMS.

The BCE includes:

- Delegate number: a unique number assigned to the Learner, used throughout all communication. A description of the purpose of the delegate number is also included.
- Course name and QQI code.
- Course dates
- Tutor name
- Venue information and course logistics
- Information about dissemination of course materials
- Introductory information about timeline for assessment work, QQI Learner Handbook, and disclosure of personal details for certification. *
- Information about reasonable accommodation and a link to our reasonable accommodation policy, published on the Professional Development website: https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/reasonable-accommodation-policy
- Welcome letter containing detail on the assessment process and what to expect from the course. *

* Note: Further information on all of these areas will be provided in advance of course start date (see section 3.1.6.3 below).

3.1.5.5 Confirmation of Venue and Facilities

The Course Coordinator schedules the course venue and facilities in advance (refer 3.1.5.3 above).

Service Level Agreements and contract of services are in place with our third-party facilities providers (hotels).

Course name, tutor, and delegate numbers are provided to the Conferencing Manager in advance.

This person is responsible for assuring that the training facilities meet our requirements including:

1. Projector is in working order with HDMI leads and extension leads
2. Training room is fit for purpose and properly configured
3. Access for those with disability is provided (as necessary)
4. Flip charts and pens are provided
5. Refreshments are provided as per contract of services
6. Room has adequate lighting, heating, and ventilation (as necessary)

Quality of services is assured by site audits / meetings from time to time by the Managing Director, Director of Training, and Course Coordinator as required.

In Section 6.5 of the Tutor Handbook, Tutors are also encouraged to highlight any issues promptly with Conference Manager to get them resolved.

If necessary, the issue is escalated to the Course Coordinator who will contact the Venue to resolve. If required, they will involve the Director of Training and / or the Managing Director. The QA Officer is notified of any escalated venue issues in order to document and monitor from a QA perspective.

3.1.6 Programme Delivery

3.1.6.1 Training Materials

The training materials for each course are developed and agreed upon by the course tutors in consultation with the Director of Training.

Training materials include:

- Lesson Plans
- PowerPoint slides
- Workbooks
- Exercises

- Case Studies
- Assessment Brief
- Supporting Templates
- Other training aids

The detailed assessment briefs and associated marking schemes are those finalised by the Programme Development Committee, approved by QRB, and validated by QQI.

The Documents Manager is responsible for maintaining document version control of the assessment briefs.

3.1.6.2 Provision of Materials to Tutors

The Course Coordinator (CC) is responsible for ensuring all training materials are provided for each course.

The CC sets up a unique course folder in Dropbox for each scheduled programme. This folder is made available to the Tutor via email approximately one week prior to commencement of the course.

The Dropbox folder contains the materials listed on the following page:

1. All approved course materials submitted by the tutor for Learners in PDF format (slides, templates, supporting documents, etc.)
2. Assessment brief in PDF format
3. Assessment date deadline in PDF format
4. Learner Handbook in PDF format
5. Data Protection FAQ document in PDF format
6. Welcome Letter
7. Guidelines for Referencing and Bibliography in PDF format

The CC also provides the Tutor with a Delegate List the day before a course commences. This list is automatically generated from the Scheduled Course within the TMS and includes:

- Delegate Names & associated Delegate Numbers
- Company Name (where relevant)
- Account Manager
- Special Requirements (where relevant)

3.1.6.3 Provision of Materials to Learners

The CC makes the Dropbox folder mentioned in 3.1.6.2 available to Learners a minimum of 48 hours before training commences.

Each Learner receives an access link via an automatic email (Dropbox Link Email) sent to them by the CC through the TMS.

This email includes information about how to access the materials and the date of link expiry. Each Dropbox link is live for 90 days from the course finish date. Learners can download all material shared in this Dropbox folder. This is advised in the Dropbox Link Email.

3.1.6.4 Delegate Attendance Sheet

- The Tutor reports to the venue facilities team on arrival at the course venue.
- They contact the Course Coordinator as necessary.
- The Tutor welcomes the course delegates, registers them for the course, and confirms that they have signed the attendance sheet.
- The completed delegate attendance sheet is returned promptly to the CC at the end of every course.
- The CC then updates the attendance status accordingly for each delegate record ("attended in full", "did not attend", "partial attendance").

3.1.6.5   Delivery of Training Modules

All Tutors are furnished with a Tutor Handbook which forms part of their contract of services. They are bound by the provisions and code of conduct contained therein. (more information in section 4.0)

Where relevant, the assigned Tutor for each course collects the Tutor pack from the Professional Development offices in advance of commencement of the training.

The programme is delivered by the Tutor in accordance with the materials provided to the Learner and the methodologies contained in the assessment brief.

3.1.6.6   Delivery of Training Modules – Trainer Availability

In the event that the Tutor is unable to deliver the programme as planned due to unforeseen circumstances, Professional Development take all reasonable steps to deploy a replacement Tutor from a panel of pre-approved Tutors who have previously delivered the course.

If a replacement Tutor is not available, the Learners will be offered the choice of a place on the next available course or a full refund of course fees.

3.1.6.7   Feedback to Tutors

Following training, each Learner receives a follow up email requesting their feedback via our online evaluation form. Feedback is then recorded in the delegate record within the TMS.

Class feedback is collated in the TMS for distribution to the relevant Tutor, MD, DT, Training Consultants, and QA Officer. The QAO is responsible for dissemination of class feedback
 (see Section 5.1.1.3).

3.1.6.8   Learner Records

The Course Coordinator (CC), Assessments Coordinator (AC), and QA Officer (QA) are responsible for the maintenance of the following Learner Records at different stages of the Learner Life Cycle.

Refer to Figure 11 - QQI Learner Lifecycle for a graphical representation of ownership of contact at each stage.

Learner Records include:

1. Training Management System (Delegate Records) – CC & AC
2. Pre-course questionnaires (where applicable for in-company clients) - CC
3. Attendance sign-in sheets (generated from TMS) – CC & Tutor
4. Submitted work for assessment (forwarding to Assessors and recording on TMS) – AC
5. Graded work for assessment (notifying Learners of grades) - AC
6. Class Results Summary Sheet (forwarding to Tutors) - QA
7. IV Report - QA
8. EA reports (follow up with EA and circulating of draft report for consideration by RAP) - QA
9. RAP reports - QA
10. Email communications to Learners regarding assessment submissions, extension requests, collating personal details - AC
11. Notification of results to Learners - AC

The collection of personal Learner details (Learner Personal Data) is subject to the requirements laid out in the Data Protection Act and our GDPR Policy (refer section 8.4.6).

The provisions for assuring the timely collection, retrieval, storage, and ultimate disposal of this information are set out in the QQI Learner Handbook and a PDF document entitled "Data Protection FAQs".

The Documents Manager is responsible for version control of the QQI Learner Handbook and the Data Protection FAQ document.

3.1.6.9   Collation of Learner Details

The Course Coordinator is responsible for setting up and maintaining Learner Details on the Training Management System (TMS).

Learner details are captured in the TMS via a Delegate Record. A unique delegate record is created for each Learner every time they attend a course.

This Delegate Number is communicated to them via a booking confirmation email when their Account Manager books them onto the course (see 3.1.5.4 above).

The following details are stored in the Delegate Record for each Learner who is booked onto a course:

1. Learner Name (First and Last Name)
2. Course Name
3. Course Code
4. Course Start Date
5. Course Finish Date
6. Tutor name
7. Course Type (Public / In-Company)
8. Venue Details
9. Course Attendance Status
10. Learner email address(es)
11. Learner telephone number (mobile and / or landline)
12. Assessment deadline (normally 8 weeks after the course completion date)
13. Special details (dietary requirements, special needs etc.)
14. PPS Number **
15. Date of Birth **
16. Gender **
17. Other First and Last Names (Maiden Name etc.) **
18. Postal Address (for posting QQI certificate) **

** Personal Details

Access to Personal Details is restricted to the Assessments Coordinator (who is responsible for collecting and recording this information), the Assessor, Director of Training, and the Managing Director.

3.2 Learner Admission, Progression, and Recognition

3.2.1 Provision of Course Information (pre-booking)

Information on all courses is published on the website. Course brochures and guides may also be downloaded from our website.

Each course is described as follows:

- Course Title
- Duration and Cost
- Facilities, i.e., parking, breaks, communications, dining arrangements
- Who should attend
- Course Content
- Training Methods to be used:

  - Workshop approach
  - Group discussions
  - Interactive group exercises
  - Individual Exercises

  - Problem analysis
  - Case studies
  - Role play
  - Video training films
  - Delegate workbook

3.2.1.1 Transfers and Refunds

From time to time a course may be undersubscribed and consequently it is uneconomical to run.
In these circumstances, the Learner is offered the option of transferring onto a future date or receiving a full refund.

3.2.2 Progression

At present, Professional Development does not offer programmes leading to a full award under the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). We do, however offer the Special Purpose Award in Training and Development (award code: 63372).

At present, none of our QQI validated courses are recognised by other professional accreditation bodies for progression on their courses. As most of these courses are discrete exam preparation courses, this is not practical nor relevant.

The credit value of our QQI courses in outlined clearly in our course brochures and on our website. The Documents Manager is responsible for ensuring this information is clearly visible and correct.

3.2.3 Learner Entry Requirements

We assess suitability through consultation with our Learners. This is ascertained through a phone or email consultation.

We recommend that our Learners have achieved a minimum standard of education of the Leaving Certificate or equivalent.

We provide information to our clients outlining who the programmes are suited to, experience level required, and any specific competencies, knowledge, or skills they will require.

If, during a telephone consultation, it is determined that the course requested by the potential Learner is not suitable for their needs, we recommend an alternative programme (if one exists in our suite) which may better suit their needs, and which may offer a potential route to progression to the desired programme at some point in the future.

Given that most of our Learners are in full-time employment (and the majority are being funded by their employer) we generally don't have an issue with this pre-requisite.

At times however, there are other circumstances (learning impairments or disabilities) that are considered as part of determining the suitability of a course. (refer Section 6.1.4, Reasonable Accommodation)

3.2.4 Recognition of Prior Learning

As our QQI programmes are currently component awards, we take account of prior learning during consultation with our clients as outlined in 3.2.3 above.

3.2.4.1   Course Pre-Requisites

As part of our admission process, all prospective clients have a minimum of one consultation with a Training Consultant. If the client's needs are more complex this may also involve the Director of Training.

As part of this consultation, the client's prior professional and learning experience / achievements are considered before recommending a course. The desired learning outcomes are also considered as part of this recommendation.

In general, we do not have any formal prior learning pre-requisites for Learners before they can enrol on a QQI certified course with us. The only exception to this is our Special Purpose (SP) Award in Training and Development (award code: 6S3372) where eligibility is based on successful completion of

both components; QQI Training Needs Identification and Design (award code: 6N3325), and QQI Training Delivery and Evaluation (award code: 6N3326).

We do not offer this award as a discrete programme, but instead offer Learners the opportunity to earn the SP award once both components (6N3325 & 6N3326) are completed.

In most instances, Learners will complete both components with us. On occasion, if a Learner has completed one of the components with another provider, we will request proof of successful completion.

This usually takes the form of a copy of their QQI certificate or an official transcript of results.

3.2.5 Facilitation of Diversity and Disability

3.2.5.1 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

Professional Development is committed to establishing and nurturing a learning environment and workplace that supports equality and inclusivity for all.

This policy is in place is to ensure that all learners, staff members, tutors, and other stakeholders feel safe, supported, and always respected.

Our aim is to always treat everyone fairly. In compliance with The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018, we never discriminate based on gender, marital status, family status, age disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, or membership of the Traveller community.

Methods used to achieve our goal of equality and inclusion:

- Publishing this Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy in the following locations:
    - in this Quality Assurance Manual
    - [publicly on the Professional Development website](#)
    - in our QQI Learner Handbook
    - in our Tutor Handbook
- Making all relevant Quality Assurance Documentation publicly available and easily accessible on the Professional Development website.
- Providing all learners with a copy of the QQI Learner Handbook in advance of their training.
- Ensuring that all staff, including tutors and assessors are familiar with this policy.
- Monitoring student feedback from all training courses on a weekly basis.
- Ongoing monitoring of training and assessment.
- Providing clear communication channels and procedures for questions, requests, complaints, and appeals (outlined in our Quality Assurance Manual, Learner Handbook, and Tutor Handbook).

- Reviewing and updating this policy in tandem with regular reviews of our Quality Management System and in response to any issues that may arise from student feedback, requests.
- Clearly communicating our Reasonable Accommodation Policy and supports for learners via our marketing material, booking confirmation communication, and Quality Assurance Documentation.

Breaches of This Policy

Professional Development takes the correct application of this policy very seriously.

Learners, staff, tutors, and assessors are encouraged to communicate any breaches or suspected breaches of this policy so that relevant management and quality review boards can investigate and take measures respond appropriately.

3.2.5.2 Facilitation of Disability

See Section 7.2 for more detail on Support for Learners with Disability and Section 6.1.4 for more on our Reasonable Accommodation Policy.

Professional Development's Reasonable Accommodation Policy is publicly available on our website. The online policy can be viewed here:
https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/reasonable-accommodation-policy

While taking account of the learning outcomes and course objectives, Learners who may have certain special requirements are invited to bring these to the attention of the Training Consultant at the time of booking the course. This request for information is incorporated within our booking confirmation email (BCE), which is sent to every Learner upon confirmation of their booking (3.1.5.4 – Booking Confirmation).

Any adaptations or supports that are within the Company's capacity to deliver, will be reasonably accommodated.

Any special requirements are brought to the attention of the course Tutor within the delegate list notes (see Section 3.1.6.2).

Wheelchair access and any dietary requirements are accommodated in all the training venues we use.

The following are examples of diversity we have accommodated in recent years:

- Mobility issues (involving the use of a wheelchair)
- Dietary requirements including gluten and lactose intolerance
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Vocalisation issues
- Shyness and anxiety in group situations
- Difficulty hearing
- Visual impairment

Group size is generally capped at max 14 persons to ensure optimum level of interaction for each Learner with Tutors and fellows Learners.

3.2.6 Protection of Enrolled Learners

In accordance with Part 6 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Professional Development has established the following policy for the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL).

Purpose of this Policy

This policy ensures that, in the unlikely event of a programme ending or being unavailable before an enrolled learner can complete it, learners are refunded the moneys most recently paid.

Who does this policy apply to?

This applies to learners who have paid fees for programmes of longer than 3 months' duration.

Policy

In the event that a programme in which a learner has been enrolled can no longer be offered, for any reason, Professional Development has financial bonding in place to provide a refund of all fees paid by the learner.

3.3   Programme Monitoring and Review

3.3.1 Maintenance of Learning Facilities and Resources

The requirement for learning facilities and resources varies depending on the course type (Public or In-Company).

3.3.1.1   Public Course Facilities

The Course Coordinator has responsibility for scheduling the course venue and facilities in advance and for adding the course to the TMS.

There are three types of Course Status:

1. Active – Provisional
2. Active – Confirmed
3. Cancelled

When a course is first added to the TMS, the default status is "Active – Provisional" until the venue and trainer availability are confirmed.

Public courses are usually scheduled 6 months in advance. At the time of scheduling the course name and duration is communicated to the venue.

The TMS is updated with the venue status once confirmed. Default venue status is "Unconfirmed". Once the venue has confirmed our booking, they will communicate the exact room name. This information is recorded on the TMS.

We have Service Level Agreements and a contract of services in place with our third-party facilities providers. These providers are exclusively hotel venues.

Approximately 3 days prior to the course commencement, the Course Coordinator will notify the Venue Liaison (usually the Banqueting Manager) of course start date, tutor, and delegate numbers.

The TMS is configured to notify the Course Coordinator in advance (approximately 7 days) if confirmations are still outstanding.

The Venue is responsible for assuring that the training facilities meet requirements including:

1. Projector is in working order
2. Training Room is fit for purpose
3. Access for those with disability is provided
4. Dietary requirements are catered for
5. Flip charts and pens are provided
6. Refreshments are provided as per contract of services

Quality of services is assured by site audits / meetings from time to time by the Managing Director, Director of Training, and Course Coordinator as required.

3.3.1.2   In-Company Course Facilities

The Account Manager is responsible for liaising with the designated contact person in the organisation that has booked the course (Client Contact).

The Account Manager will request confirmation from this person that the training facility is suitable and set up in advance to a specified layout and that all required training aids are provided to include overhead projector and flip charts.

On occasion, the Client will use third-party hospitality (hotels) as a training venue. Here, the requirements are similar to those where the training is to be carried out on the Client's premises.

A pre-course booking confirmation is emailed via the TMS to the Client Contact outlining the following key areas:

1. Course organiser contact details.
2. Training facility requirements.
3. Refreshments and lunch arrangements.
4. Confirmation that all training material and collateral is circulated to Learners as requested.
5. Any particular special Learner requirements.
6. Emergency procedures.
7. Communication requirements in relation to Learners who have not submitted work for assessment.
8. Communication requirements in relation to Learners who fail to meet the minimum requirements to pass the programme.
9. Communication requirements in relation to notification of provisional results following RAP.
10. Communication requirements in relation to sending the QQI requirements.

The Account Manager is responsible for ensuring that all requirements are completed.

3.3.1.3   Safety during Courses

All provisions in relation to Safety are laid down in the Professional Development Safety Statement. This is shared with Tutors within the Tutor Resources Folder.

The Tutor is responsible for communicating the fire exits and emergency procedure to Learners on the first morning of the course. This is communicated to Tutors in the Tutor Handbook (Section 6.6).

3.3.2 Programme Review

The Director of Training is responsible for reviewing the programmes provided to ensure that they continue to meet the training and development needs of Learners.

The following quality assurance processes are in place to review programmes:

- Timely review of the Learner course evaluation records.
- Feedback from Tutors following delivery of programmes – this can be in the form or phone calls or emails form Tutors to the Course Coordinator, Account Managers, or the Director of Training
- Feedback to Tutors.
  - Communication of course results summary for each certification period once passed through the EA and RAP processes.
  - Feedback to Tutors regarding any recommendations or comments following EA.
  - Review and update of assessment brief in collaboration with Tutors and Documents Manager as required.
  - Learner feedback via telephone or email.
  - Results trends analysis during IV.
  - Debriefing with EA during external authentication.
- Results Approval Panel (RAP) meeting
- Continuous improvement actions plan following RAP report.
- Review of Appeals

3.3.3 Benchmarking Against Comparable Providers

The Director of Training and the marketing team conduct periodic reviews of our competitors.

This may include review of information on competitor websites along with any other information available in the public domain including programme content and delivery, frequency of delivery, price level, course duration, and venues / locations.

Our training consultants also seek feedback from clients or prospective clients where appropriate.

The QA Officer is responsible for collating the grade statistics provided by QQI for the same courses. This process began in November 2018. We compare our performance against the national average for each of the six QQI certification periods.

These comparisons are reviewed at the annual Quality Review Board meeting.

4.0   Staff Recruitment, Management, & Development

Policy

Professional Development is committed to ensuring that all staff and tutors involved in the provision of training and related services hold the necessary qualifications and experience to carry out their duties.

As part of our Teaching and Learning policy, we are further committed to ensuring that staff and tutors have access to any training and developmental opportunities as identified as part of this policy.

This is aligned with our mission statement and strategic business objectives (Section 1.1.3.1)

Procedures

Purpose:

To describe how we recruit, train, assess, and develop our staff.

Responsibility:

Managing Director, Director of Training

Procedures

4.1   Staff and Tutor Recruitment

4.1.1   Staff Recruitment

4.1.2   Tutor Recruitment and Selection Process

4.2   Staff and Tutor Communications

4.2.1   Handbooks

4.2.2   Management Information Systems

4.2.3   IT Operating System and Email

4.2.4   Tutor Feedback and Email

4.2.5   Dropbox

4.2.6   Open Plan Office Configuration

4.2.7   Sales Reporting

4.2.8   Sales and Marketing Meetings

4.2.9   Legislation Library

4.3   Staff and Tutor Development

4.3.1   Staff Development

4.3.2   Tutor Development

4.3.3   Tutor Engagement with Communities of Practice

Reference Documents:

- Equality Act 2004
- Company Equality Policy (Employee Handbook)
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2005
- Professional Development Safety Statement
- Job Descriptions (as advertised)
- Evidence of Qualifications
- Contracts of Employment

- Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Act 1973
- Staff Appraisals
- Training Log and Training Plan
- Terms of Employment (Information) Act 1994
- Organisation of Working Time Act 1997
- Tutor Contracts

4.1 Staff and Tutor Recruitment

4.1.1 Staff Recruitment

Staff are hired on the basis of education, skills, experience, and competencies to carry out their duties.

All staff involved in direct interaction with Learners, (Account Managers, Course Coordinator, Assessments Coordinator) are required to hold a minimum of one Post-Leaving Certificate qualification.

The performance level of all new staff is determined during a 6-month probation period. As part of the induction process, attention is drawn to the following:

- Health & Safety Policy
- Quality Policy & Equality Policy

- Disciplinary Policies and Procedures
- Pay and holidays entitlements

All of this information is outlined in the Employee Handbook, a hard copy of which is provided to each staff member along with their contract of employment.

As part of their induction process, staff are required to sign their contract of employment and confirm they have received, read, and understood the contents of the Employee Handbook.

4.1.2 Tutor Recruitment and Selection Process

External tutors are engaged on a training associate basis to deliver many of our training programmes. The following criteria are used to during the selection process:

- Qualifications as appropriate to the training programme(s) being delivered
- Training and education qualifications
- Practical experience gained over a number of years in industry
- Communication and facilitation skills
- Ability to impart their knowledge in a supportive and inclusive manner

Process

A four-stage process is in place in order to assure the suitability of tutors to deliver our programmes.

- **Stage 1:** All potential tutors are required to send a letter of application and CV via email to the Director of Training who will review it against the selection criteria.
- **Stage 2:** Applicants who are successful at stage 1 are contacted by the Director of Training to organise an initial telephone consultation.
- **Stage 3:** Applicants who are successful at stage 2 are invited to attend for interview. Applicants are interviewed by the Managing Director and the Director of Training in order to determine their suitability and competence to undertake the training programmes proposed.
- **Stage 4:** Applicants who are successful during stage 3 are invited to make a presentation to the Director of Training to showcase their delivery style.

During the induction process, the Director of Training and the Managing Director explain the provisions set out in the Tutor Handbook and the QQI Learner Handbook to the tutor. They also answer any queries the tutor may have.

All tutors are furnished with a contract for the provision of services, a copy of the Tutor Handbook, and access to the Tutor Resources Folder in Dropbox.

4.1.2.1   Minimum Academic Qualifications

All tutors must hold at least a Post-Leaving Certificate academic qualification (ideally at degree level) in addition to minimum qualification in QQI Training Delivery and Evaluation (6N3326).

They are also required to hold to a minimum Level 7 qualification in their subject matter area of expertise or equivalent professional qualification.

4.2   Staff and Tutor Communications

4.2.1 Handbooks

All employees are furnished with a contract of employment, a copy of the Employee Handbook, and a copy of this Quality Assurance Manual (QAM).

All tutors are furnished with a contract for provision of services, a copy of the Tutor Handbook, a copy of the QAM, and access to the Dropbox Tutor Resources Folder.

PDF copies of all 3 handbooks are readily available to staff on the company's secure internal server.

The QAM is also published and publicly available on the Professional Development website: https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/quality-assurance

The Documents Manager (DM) maintains an up-to-date PDF version of the Tutor Handbook on a secure Dropbox folder, shared with tutors (Tutor Resources Folder). The DM is responsible for version control of this document and for communicating any amendments or updates to staff and tutors.

The Director of Training is the designated contact for communications with our certification bodies: QQI, PeopleCert®, VMedu, and IASSC.

All developments are communicated with staff and tutors through training sessions, emails, calls, and updates to communication documentation.

4.2.2 Management Information Systems

The following management information systems are in place for the timely storage and retrieval of information:

- Salesforce CRM system
- Customised Training Management System (TMS) integrated with Salesforce
- Secure Internal Server Folders
- Dropbox

The Company invested in upgrading the management information system in November 2015. The system provides full traceability of Learners' history including course interest, course(s) attended, assessment results, and communication with respect to results and certification. This information is available to staff.

4.2.3 IT Operating System and Email

The Company invested in the upgrade off all computers and operating systems to iMac in Q3 2014 to assure consistency of access to and retrieval of information.

All staff are furnished with a Professional Development email address in the format of: name@professionaldevelopment.ie.

4.2.4 Tutor Feedback and Email

The company invested in the provision of Professional Development email addresses for a number of its tutors. All communications are documented using email. Email is used to confirm training dates, course and Learner specific requirements, and certification requirements.

As per Section 4.1 of the Tutor Handbook, tutors are encouraged to provide feedback to the Director of Training (DT) on an ongoing basis via email, phone, and office visits. They are invited to raise any issues or areas for improvement regarding:

- course materials
- assessment briefs and marking schemes
- course brochures
- communication with Learners that arise during or after each programme

Tutors are encouraged to provide any feedback regarding the venue facilities to the Course Coordinator, who will escalate to the Director of Training if required.

Beginning in 2021, Tutors will submit an annual Tutor Feedback and CPD form. This is part of our Tutor development initiative, created to support:

- the ongoing professional development of our Tutors.
- documentation of Tutor CPD activity.
- a formal platform for Tutors to provide feedback and suggestions to the DT.

4.2.5 Dropbox

The company provides Dropbox links to all Tutors (see Section 3.1.6.2). All course materials for each course, along with the assessment brief, welcome letter, Learner Handbook, Data Protection FAQ document, and guidelines for referencing and bibliography are posted here.

4.2.6 Open Plan Office Configuration

During late 2014, the Company invested in the refurbishment of the offices to facilitate open communication between the team.

This has resulted in a more open environment where ideas, opportunities, challenges, and issues can be easily discussed in an open collegiate environment.

There is a private board room where meetings of a private and / or confidential nature can be held if necessary.

4.2.7 Sales Reporting

Our CRM software programme has been customised to provide the team with reports and dashboards.

These reports provide a detailed breakdown of all sales by course type on a daily and cumulative month-to-date figure in terms of course numbers and revenue, and number of Learners booked onto each scheduled course. Comparative information to previous periods is also provided.

These reports are visible to all staff members. They enable the team to ensure that courses are not overbooked.

4.2.8 Sales and Marketing Meetings

Regular sales meetings are held with the Training Consultants, Director of Training, and the Managing Director. Trends in sales and bookings by course type are tracked and discussed and any actions arising are taken.

Regular marketing meetings are held with the Managing Director, Director of Training, and the Marketing team.

The open plan environment supports open communication between all Staff. This facilitates the rapid response to enquiries and any issues which may arise from time to time.

4.2.9 Legislation Library

The company maintains a library of all relevant and current Legislation as it applies to Professional Development, including Employment, Health and Safety, and Training Legislation. (see Section 1.1.2.7)

4.3 Staff and Tutor Development

4.3.1 Staff Development

Staff development needs are discussed during performance reviews and on an ongoing basis in light of needs that arise.

Staff are provided with constructive feedback in relation to their performance by management. Areas for improvement are identified. Support and developmental needs are put in place. A bi-annual review of personnel competency and performance is carried out by management covering:

- Objectives agreed at the last review
- Performance against KPIs.
- Training and development undertaken during the year
- Personal development programme for the coming 6-month period

Ongoing training and levels of competency, along with relevant qualification and experience are recorded in individual employee personnel files.

Examples of staff development channels:
- The Director of Training organises training modules specific to course materials for the Sales Team (Account Managers / Training Consultants).
- The Sales Team also have access to our training programmes in line with the needs identified during performance reviews.
- The Director of Training and Marketing Manager attend conferences on a regular basis.
- The Marketing Team attend current online webinars.

4.3.2 Tutor Development

Tutors are encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions, and to contact us with questions on an ongoing basis.

We keep an ongoing record of our Tutors' Continued Professional Development (CPD). Our Tutors communicate their CPD on an annual basis via our Tutor Feedback and CPD Form.

This form outlines any training, conferences, seminars, or webinars they have completed and is submitted at year end to the DT. The DT keeps a record of this form with each tutor's personnel file.

This form also provides a formal platform for Tutors to raise any queries, make suggestions, and provide overall feedback on the programmes they deliver, areas for improvement, and their experience with Professional Development over the past year.

The DT will arrange a one-to-one meeting or call with each Tutor following their submission of the Tutor Feedback and CPD Form. This meeting functions as an annual review and opportunity to discuss each Tutor's continued professional development in the coming months.

We encourage peer learning, whereby trainers have the opportunity to sit in on each other's training sessions to support sharing of ideas, development of skills, and ensure consistency of training delivery.

Where a training programme within our suite of courses is applicable to a Tutor's further CPD, we encourage them to discuss taking part in this course with us.

These policies are outlined Section 4.1 of the Tutor Handbook.

4.3.3 Tutor Engagement with Communities of Practice

A number of our Tutors are members of communities of practice in their respective fields (for example, PMI® membership).

Those with certain international qualifications are required to undertake professional development programmes in order to maintain their credentials.

These include attending further accredited training programmes, attending conferences, seminars and webinars.

When submitting their Tutor Feedback and CPD Form, Tutors provide the DT with a copy of their current certification, which is maintained as part of their personnel file.

5.0   Teaching and Learning

Policy

Professional Development is committed to providing a rich, supportive, and equitable learning environment for our Learners and tutors, nurturing continued professional development for staff and tutors, and for assuring the quality of training and of the facilities used which are reviewed and monitored on an ongoing basis.

Our overarching approach to teaching and learning is to support Learners at every stage of their learning experience, to provide programmes that equip our Learners with practical, real-world abilities, and to deliver the highest possible standards of quality at all stages of the learning and assessment process in line with national and international effective practices.

It is also to continuously monitor and review our teaching and learning activities to support a culture of quality within the organisation.

We support this teaching and learning policy through the application of the following strategic business objectives. See Section Strategic Business Objectives for more information.

Procedures

To facilitate the implementation of our teaching and learning policy, we have devised the procedures outlined in this section.

Purpose:
To describe the methods used to assure that the quality of teaching and learning is in line with best practice and our overarching approach to teaching and learning outlined above.

Responsibility:
QRB, BoD, RAP, Director of Training, Assessors, Training Consultants, Course Tutors, QA Officer, Office Manager, Documents Manager

Procedures:
5.1   Training and Learning
5.1.1   Monitoring the Quality of the Learning Experience

5.2   Ethos that Supports Learning
5.2.1   Training Format - Classroom Based
5.2.2   Trainer Performance
5.2.3   Diversity and Progression
5.2.4   Customer Service: Learner Complaints and Appeals
5.2.5   Promotion of Effective Practice

5.3   Learning Environment

5.3.1   Learning Facilities and Resources

Reference Documents:

- Course evaluation forms
- Tutor Handbook

5.1   Training and Learning

5.1.1 Monitoring the Quality of the Learning Experience

5.1.1.1   Tutor Performance Management

The Director of Training (DT) monitors the classroom performance of new tutors initially by attending a number of modules.

The tutors are given constructive feedback including areas of strength and those which may present an opportunity for improvement.

Classroom monitoring of all existing tutors is carried out as required. The DT will carry out a classroom visit when poor feedback or lower grade trends merit this action.

The Training Consultants attend certain Professional Development programmes as part of their personal development plans. This also provides an opportunity to monitor the classroom performance of tutors and to provide feedback to the Director of Training who can discuss any items and provide constructive feedback.

5.1.1.2   Tutor Continuous Professional Development

To support our teaching and learning policy, we promote continued professional development of all tutors and staff alike.

Tutors are required to submit details of their annual CPD activities to the Director of Training (DT) at the end of each year. They are also encouraged to discuss further skill enhancement opportunities with the DT. (as outlined in Section 4.3.2)

The Director of Training may suggest further training and development arising from any of the following prompts:

- Feedback from Learners, IV, EA, RAP, and grade trend analysis.
- As part of our ongoing commitment to evaluation of our pedagogical methods.
- As research or preparation for a new programme.
- As part of agreed goals during annual tutor reviews.

5.1.1.3   Feedback to Tutors: Class Feedback

Following training, each Learner receives a follow up email and evaluation form from their Training Consultant.

This form is designed to gain feedback from Learners and to identify strengths and potential areas for improvement. A scale of 1-5 is used and Learners are asked to score according to the following criteria:

1. Clarity and comprehensibility of course content
2. Preparation and organisation
3. Instructor helpfulness, effectiveness, teaching ability, and experience
4. Effectiveness of exercises and discussions to learn and practice new skills
5. How the course compared with other courses attended by the Learner

6. Overall impression of the course Tutor
7. Overall impression of the course
8. Service provided by Training Consultant
9. Recommend to others?
10. Training Room
11. Lunch
12. Tea / coffee service
13. Overall impression of venue
14. Customer Service

Additional Questions in open field format:
1. Request for feedback if score of 3 of below is awarded
2. Suggestions for improvements
3. Strengths of the course

Feedback is recorded in the delegate record within the TMS. Class feedback is collated in the TMS for distribution by the Course Coordinator to the relevant tutor, MD, DT, Training Consultants, and QA Officer.

Any issues arising from this feedback will be handled by the DT as required. A conversation with the tutor or monitoring visit to the tutor's classroom may be sufficient to address and resolve the issue.

If further action is required, the DT will discuss with the QRB and, if appropriate, will also communicate to the BoD.

5.1.1.4   Feedback to Tutors: IV and RAP results and monitoring period class results

All class results and trends are monitored during Internal Verification (IV). Once IV and (where applicable) External Authentication (EA) are completed, the Results Approval Panel (RAP) review and approve the grades.

The class results for the certification period are emailed to each of the Tutors for their classes only.

Any trends identified by the QA Officer during the IV and RAP process are communicated to the Director of Training (DT). The DT will discuss with any tutors involved and an improvement plan will be put in place if required.

5.1.1.5 Continuous Improvement – Evaluation of Training and Learner Feedback

All feedback is welcome and is viewed as an opportunity to improve. Learners, tutors, and staff are encouraged to provide feedback. Learner feedback is gained from a range of formats including:

- Learner course evaluations following each course
- Ad-hoc follow up with Learners
- Email communications from Learners
- Tutor feedback

Any opportunities for improvement are identified and put in place including:
- Discussion with tutors via phone, email, or meeting
- Additional training for Training Consultants, staff, and tutors
- Review of course brochure content
- Review of assessment brief content
- Review of marking scheme content

Any issues related to the venue and training facilities are actioned directly by the Course Coordinator, who is responsible to managing the relationship with these third parties. A call is made and followed up by written communication via email.

In some cases, a meeting will be convened to discuss any outstanding issues. The Managing Director and / or Director of Training attend as needed.

Any issues or areas identified for improvement are discussed and an improvement plan is implemented if required.

5.2 Ethos that Promotes Learning

The ethos of the business is to enhance the potential of our Learners through the provision of relevant, practical courses that enhance their potential while developing transferable skills.

5.2.1 Training Format – Classroom Based

All of our courses are classroom based where Learners have direct face-to-face time with experienced, credentialed tutors who have real world experience.

The classroom forum also provides a rich opportunity for Learners to engage with each other and to share experiences and practices in a safe, tutor-facilitated environment based on mutual respect between the Learners and tutor.

The classroom environment offers the Learner a chance to practice skills while developing autonomy under the guidance and formative feedback of the tutor. A variety of methodologies are used to ensure this happens.

The focus of all of our QQI programmes is the practical application of the new knowledge, skills, behaviours, and competencies to the Learners' environment using individual and group exercises, discussions, role-plays, skills demonstrations, projects, assessments, and Learner records.

5.2.2 Trainer Performance

Trainer performance is monitored to ensure that a supportive, inclusive learning environment is provided (section 5.1.1.1).

All of our trainers are committed to ensuring that learning outcomes and objectives are achieved. Our trainers are involved in the enhancement of our assessment briefs which are very transparent and aimed at ensuring the learning, new knowledge, skills, and competencies are demonstrably achieved using a range of training methodologies including exercises, discussions, skills demonstrations, projects, assessments, and Learner records.

The course evaluation sheet completed by the Learner is used to monitor the effectiveness of the learning (reference Section 5.1.1.3 above).

5.2.3 Diversity and Progression

Professional Development offers component modules at level 5 and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. We do not offer full awards at this time.

The vast majority of our clients come from the corporate business sector with a requirement to learn specific skills. Examples of this include project management or the ability to manage people.

A high number of our Learners hold levels 7, 8, and 9 full awards on the National Framework of Qualifications and as a consequence have less of an interest in obtaining full awards at levels 5 and 6. The credit value of each component module is outlined in the course brochures.

5.2.4 Customer Service: Learner Complaints and Appeals

5.2.4.1 Learner Complaints

As part of our customer service focus, we are committed to ensuring that all Learners have a good experience with Professional Development. If a Learner has any questions or concerns, they are encouraged to contact their Training Consultant initially to have the matter resolved.

We welcome all feedback both positive and negative as it facilitates us in continuous improvement of our offering to our customers. Our complaints process is outlined in the Learner Handbook, Section 4.

If a Learner wishes to make a complaint about any aspect of our service, they are asked to submit the details of the complaint in writing, via email directly to their customer service representative.

Upon receipt of a complaint, the complaint is entered into the Cases system in the TMS. This system tracks the issue through to its resolution.

The DT will coordinate a team to address the complaint. This usually consists of the DT, relevant Training Consultant, and any other party involved (examples: tutors, assessors, venue).

Where appropriate (e.g., in any case that affects academic governance or QA), the DT will escalate the matter to the QRB.

5.2.4.2 Assessment and Grade-Related Complaints

Learner complaints regarding the assessment and appeals process are governed by the Learner Handbook are handled by the Assessments Coordinator (AC). At all stages the AC communicates with the Learner via email (assessments@professionaldevelopment.ie) to ensure there is a clear communication trail (refer 5.2.4.3 below for further details).

The central repository for assessment and grade related complaints is the Cases system within the TMS. When a Learner emails assessments@professionaldevelopment.ie, a case is automatically

created. This system ensures a complete written record of all correspondence regarding the issue. It also eliminates any risk of complaints remaining unresolved.

It is policy that Training Consultants do not have access or input into the area of the TMS that handles Learner grades, personal details, or appeals.

5.2.4.3   Learner Grades and Appeals

Learners have a right to appeal their grade. Provisions for making an appeal are set out in the Learner Handbook, Section 11 – Appeals. The following is extracted from Section 11.1 – 11.7 of the Learner Handbook.

"**Appeals**
Once you receive your Provisional Notification of Results by email you may if you wish, have an opportunity to formally appeal your result. Any formal appeal must be made in writing and sent to assessments@professionaldevelopment.ie.

You cannot appeal your grade directly to QQI. They will redirect you back to Professional Development (your Provider) who is responsible for carrying out all appeals in accordance with its QQI approved quality assurance process.

Deadline for receipt of an Appeal
Any request for an appeal must be made in writing, by email, within the deadline set out in the Provisional Notification of Results, or Initial and Resubmit Fail Grade Notification.

Appeal requests must be sent to assessments@professionaldevelopment.ie.

Cost of an Appeal
The cost of a formal appeal is €125 (Appeal Fee) and must be paid at the time of submitting a formal written appeal request. The Appeal Fee may be paid by cheque, postal order, or credit / debit card over the phone.

Request for marked assessments prior to an Appeal
You cannot request a copy of your marked assessment(s). This applies equally before, during, or after your decision to appeal either your Fail Grade Notification or your Provisional Grade Notification.
If you receive a Fail Grade Notification (refer 9.0 above) you will receive feedback as to where you lost marks and where to focus your effort in order to improve your grade.

Conduct of Appeal
We will arrange for a QQI approved External Authenticator (EA) to carry out the appeal. This individual

will be appointed by us (at our absolute discretion) from a panel of QQI approved EAs. The EA will be independent of the original grading process.

The EA will conduct a full review of all documentation in relation to your grade (including relevant IV, EA, and RAP reports). They will then determine whether a re-grade is warranted. The re-grade on appeal will be final and cannot be further appealed.

Withdrawing a Request for Appeal

Once you have submitted your request for an appeal you may, up until the appeal has been carried out, withdraw your request for an appeal.

If you choose to withdraw your request for an appeal however, your Appeal Fee will not be refunded to you.

Risk of Grade being Reduced on Appeal

There is a risk that on appeal your grade will be reduced. It may also remain unchanged.

Feedback after Appeal

The EA who conducts your appeal will provide you with a copy of their report outlining the results of the appeal and their rationale. You will not be provided with a copy of your corrected scripts.
You cannot appeal the decision of the EA on appeal. You may, however, request that QQI conduct a review of our Appeals procedures. This will not result in any change to your grade."

5.2.5 Promotion of Effective Practice

Professional Development strives to offer a variety of relevant programmes to Learners as follows:

1. Enterprise Ireland: Approved Training and Service Provider
2. PeopleCert: Accredited Training Organisation (ATO)
3. International Association of Six Sigma (IASSC): Accredited Training Organisation ATO.
4. VMEdu: Approved Training Partner.
5. SCRUMStudy: Approved Training Partner to deliver certified Scrum and Agile project management courses.

Trainers who deliver these programmes are certified in the programmes and undergo training in order to be eligible to deliver the courses.

5.3 Learning Environment

5.3.1 Learning Facilities and Resources

5.3.1.1 Physical Environment

Live Virtual Environment

The majority of courses take place in a live virtual classroom environment.

We advise learners to find a suitable, quiet location for their training. If this is not possible, we recommend using earphones to enable focus.

We also offer guidance on physical environment elements that will promote comfort and focus throughout training.

This is reinforced on the first morning by tutors. In their initial housekeeping, they:
- advise learners of the running order of the day ahead, including scheduled breaks
- remind learners to take breaks as needed for stretching, movement, or comfort
- acquaint learners with the functionality of their live virtual environment (chat box, screen sharing, breakout rooms, etc.)

In-Person Classroom

For all in-person, classroom-based courses, we require:

- U-shape room setup
- Overhead projector screen
- Projector (if not available, we can provide this facility)
- Flip chart and markers (if not available, we can provide this facility)

The tutor will bring the following items to all in-person programmes:
- Name cards
- Pen and A5 notebook for each learner
- Sign-in sheet
- Aside from the provisions mentioned above, the physical environment will operate in the same manner as the virtual environment, incorporating the use of Dropbox to securely share course materials.

In-person classroom options for this programme will most frequently be delivered for in-company bookings, where training takes place at a client's location or a venue of their choice. In these instances, the client is responsible for ensuring the suitability of the venue from a health and safety perspective.

For these in-person, in-company bookings, we will consult with the client in advance to ensure appropriate setup for the physical environment is in place.

Public courses

The Course Coordinator schedules the course venue and facilities in advance. We use hotels that offer business and conference facilities.

Service Level Agreements and a contract of services are in place with our third-party facilities providers. Course names, tutor name, and delegate numbers are provided to the facilities manager in advance.

The Venue Banqueting Manager is responsible for assuring that the training facility meets requirements including:

1. Training room is set up for the required number of delegates in U-shape configuration
2. The designated room is reserved for the duration of the course
3. Projector is in working order
4. Climate control is operational
5. Training room is fit for purpose
6. Access for those with disability is provided
7. Dietary requirements are catered for
8. Flip charts and pens are provided
9. Refreshments are provided as per contract of services

Trainers are asked to report any issues directly to the Course Coordinator (CC) immediately. The CC then contacts the Venue Facilities Manager and ensures that any issues are resolved without delay. Where required, issues may be escalated to the DT or MD.

Quality of services is assured by site audits / meetings from time to time by the Managing Director, Director of Training, and Course Coordinator as required.

5.3.1.2 Social & Cultural Environment

As outlined in our [Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy](#), Professional Development is committed to establishing and nurturing a learning environment that supports equality and inclusivity for all.

Our tutors create a learning environment that is socially and culturally inclusive by establishing our code of conduct on the first morning of training.

This code of conduct is [published on the Professional Development website](#), and included as part of the following QA documentation:

- This Quality Assurance Manual
- QQI Learner Handbook (provided to learners in advance of training)
- Tutor Handbook (provided to all tutors as part of their induction)

5.3.1.3 Technological Environment

Many public and in-company courses will take place in a live virtual classroom environment. Public courses are carried out via Zoom. Live virtual in-company courses delivered, either over Zoom or, upon request by the client, over Microsoft Teams or WebX.

Learners are provided with the link below to information on joining the live virtual training classroom environment within their booking confirmation email:
https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/joining-our-live-virtual-classroom-training

As part of their general housekeeping at the beginning of each course, tutors will offer guidance on the various functionalities of the virtual platform in use.

5.3.1.4 Intellectual Environment

As stated in our Code of Conduct, tutors provide all learners with their contact email address on the first morning of training.

They encourage learners to contact them via email with any questions they may wish to ask or information they would like to communicate in confidence.

They also also offer the opportunity to speak outside of class time – for example, at lunch time or at the end of the day – for anyone who wishes to speak privately.

These opportunities for communication are key in accommodating different learning styles, as often learners will use these channels for advising their tutor of difficulties or requesting reasonable accommodation.

Learners with intellectual challenges or specific requirements for consideration are encouraged to advise their training consultant or tutor as outlined in our Reasonable Accommodation Policy.
Learner Supports for the Learning Environment

As referred to in the Professional Development Code of Conduct, learners will have the facility to contact their tutor or training consultant regarding any questions or matters that may impact their experience within any aspect of the learning environment.

Additional resources:
https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/code-of-conduct
https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/joining-our-live-virtual-classroom-training
https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/equality-diversity-inclusion-policy

6.0   Assessment of Learners

Policy

Professional Development is committed to ensuring that adequate and appropriate processes are in place to ensure fair and consistent assessment, authentication, and approval of Learner assessment results.

We ensure that our Learners are kept informed of what is expected from them and of their progress in achieving this in line with National Standards.

Through our Quality Management System, procedures, processes, and related documents we are focused on ensuring that assessment of Learners' work is:

- Valid for the purpose of QQI awards
- Understood by Staff, Tutors, and Learners
- Fair to Learners in terms of access and process
- Verified internally as fair and consistent
- Authenticated externally as fair and consistent with national standards
- Consistent with QQI assessment guidelines

Procedures

Purpose:
To describe the methods used to assess Learners.

Responsibility:
QRB, RAP, Director of Training, Account Managers, Assessors, Course Tutors, QA Officer, Assessments Coordinator, Course Coordinator, Documents Manager

Procedures:
6.1   Assessment of Learning Achievement

6.1.1   Coordinated Planning of Assessment

6.1.2   Information to Learners

6.1.3   Security of Assessment Related Processes and Material

6.1.4   Reasonable Accommodation

6.1.5   Consistency of Marking Between Assessors

6.1.6   Assessment Performed by Third Parties

6.1.7   Authentication Process

6.1.8   Feedback to Learners

6.1.9   Corrective Action

Reference Documents:

- Welcome Letter
- Tutor Pack
- GDPR Policy on company website
- Data Protection FAQ
- Tutor Handbook
- Assessment Brief
- Assessment Marking Scheme
- QQI Database
- Submitted Assessment
- Marked submitted assessment with Assessor comments
- Master file containing marked assessments filed by course type and class date.
- Master file containing:
  - Completed Marking Sheets
  - Video Evidence
  - QQI marking guidelines
  - Bloom's Taxonomy
  - Summary Results Sheet

Authentication:

- Internal Verification Report (IVR)
- IV Trend Analysis
- External Authentication Report (EAR)
- Results Approval Panel Report (RAPR)
- Appeals Process
- Notification of Results to Learners Report
- Appeals Process
- Appeals Report
- Certification

6.1 Assessment of Learning Achievement

6.1.1 Coordinated Planning of Assessment

The planning, organising, monitoring, and conducting of assessments is the responsibility of Professional Development.

In advance of each programme the following processes are finalised:

1. Welcome letter is sent to each Learner by the Training Consultant via email.
2. The Tutor Pack is compiled by the Course Coordinator for collection by the Tutor.
3. Learners are given access to a Dropbox folder by the Course Coordinator.

The Tutor Pack includes the following information:

1. Welcome letter (copy for Tutor)
2. Attendance Sheet
3. Delegate List (including Learner Special Requirements if applicable)
4. Assessment Brief
5. Notification of deadline for submission of assessments
6. Learner Handbook
7. Training materials
8. Course notebooks, pens, delegate name cards

6.1.2 Information to Learners

Information in relation to the assessment is conveyed to Learners using the following media:

- Course Brochure (downloaded from website)
- Welcome Letter (emailed to Learner by Training Consultant)
- Learner Handbook (shared via Dropbox)
- Assessment Brief (shared via Dropbox and by Tutor)
- Notification of Deadline for Submission of Assessment (shared via Dropbox and by Tutor)
- PDF document "Guidelines for Referencing and Bibliography" (shared via Dropbox)
- Data Protection FAQ PDF document (shared via Dropbox)
- Notification of provisional grade following RAP meeting (via email)

assessments@professionaldevelopment.ie is a dedicated email address for all correspondence with Learners.

Through several channels of information (assessment brief, assessment deadline notification, and QQI Learner Handbook) Learners are advised to address all communications regarding their assessments or grades to this email address.

Learners are also provided with a dedicated Tutor email address to facilitate communication with Tutors, who may assist with any questions they may have while preparing their assessments for submission.

The Learner Handbook sets out detailed information relating to Assessment Procedures, Appeals Procedures, and Certification Guidelines and schedules.

6.1.3 Security of Assessment Related Processes and Material

6.1.3.1 Storage of Learner Personal Details

All Personal Details are subject to the provisions set out in our Data Protection FAQ document. This document is circulated to Learners via a secure Dropbox folder before training commences. Learners have access to this folder for 90 days following the completion of training and have the ability to download all information stored here.

Our privacy policy complies with GDPR provisions. It is available to view on our website: www.professionaldevelopment.ie/ /privacy-policy.

Personal Details include PPS Numbers, Date of Birth, Gender, and Postal Address. They are collected solely for the purposes of facilitating certification. In this regard, we are acting in our capacity as data collector rather than data processor.

The rationale for this, including the requirement for a Learner to hold a valid PPS Number is clearly communicated to Learners during the booking process (both verbally and via email). It is also included in the course brochures, as well being mentioned in the welcome letter, assessment briefs, and QQI Learner Handbook.

The Assessments Coordinator is responsible for collection and input of this information to the TMS. Personal Details are received by email to the dedicated assessments@professionaldevelopment.ie address only.

Access to this data on the TMS is strictly restricted to the Assessments Coordinator, Assessor, the Director of Training, and the Managing Director. Once a Learner is certified by QQI, the personal details are securely deleted from the TMS by the Assessments Coordinator under direct supervision of the Managing Director.

6.1.3.2 Storage of Graded Assessments and Learner Course Details

All assessment details are treated as confidential and will not be shown to or discussed with anyone outside of those directly involved in the training, assessment, verification, authentication, results approval, and appeals processes.

Assessment work and skills demonstration videos for certification are stored in a secure Dropbox folder until the appeals process is complete. Access to this folder is restricted to the Assessments Coordinator, Assessor, QA Officer, Director of Training, and the Managing Director.

Once the certification is completed, the skills demonstration videos are securely deleted, primarily for space-saving purposes.

Graded written assessments and course-related Learner details (course attendance, grade etc.) is stored and for a minimum period of 5 years. After this time, they are permanently deleted from the server.

6.1.3.3   Storage of other QMS Documentation

Other quality documents directly related to Learner certification and approval are maintained on the secure server for a minimum period of 5 years. These include assessment marking records (marking sheets), IV reports, EA report, and RAP reports.

These, in addition to class summary performance records and trend analysis reports are also stored on this secure file server.

6.1.4 Reasonable Accommodation

See Section 7.2 for more detail about our Reasonable Accommodation Policy and Procedures.

To provide a supportive learning and assessment structure for all Learners, we have a comprehensive Reasonable Accommodation Policy in place.

A full outline of this policy is publicly available on the Professional Development website. It is also referenced with an accompanying weblink in the QQI Learner Handbook and the Tutor Handbook.

Website Link: https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/reasonable-accommodation-policy

6.1.5 Consistency of Marking Between Assessors

Tutors assess the practical skills demonstrations while the Assessor marks all other assessments.
In some cases, the Tutor delivering training may also be the Assessor.

6.1.5.1   Assessment of Practical Skills Demonstrations

- The Course Coordinator issues the course tutor with the detailed assessment brief via Dropbox in advance of each training course.

- The marking scheme is provided for the assessor, within the relevant Dropbox folder. This includes guidelines for awarding marks at Pass, Merit, and Distinction level.

- The Documents Manager is responsible for communicating any updates to the assessment briefs and marking schemes to all relevant stakeholders (Tutors, Assessors, Staff, and both RAP and

- QRB members) and for ensuring only the current, live version of this document is available for use.

- Tutors are required to complete the assessment and provide detailed rationale as to why marks are awarded or lost.

- The completed marking sheets are returned to the Assessments Coordinator (AC) along with the video evidence. A sample of the completed marking sheets are checked by the AC in order to ensure that adequate rationale is provided by the Tutor. In circumstances where the AC is not satisfied, the Director of Training and QA Officer will be notified. The AC will contact the Tutor and ask for the additional detail. Any such trends will be monitored during IV and any further corrective or preventative measures will be put in place by the Director of Training and the QA Officer.

- The returned assessment marking schemes and video evidence are filed by the AC in a dedicated, secure Dropbox folder, which is available for IV and EA purposes. The resulting marks are recorded on the QQI database by the AC. Trends in marks and grades between Tutors are monitored by the QA Officer during the Internal Verification process. If they exist, variances between the skills demonstration marks and the written marks are also noted and followed up as required. They may also be flagged by the QA Officer to the Director of Training and External Authenticator for review. Trend Reports form part of the Internal Verification process and the reports are furnished to the External Authenticator during the EA process.

6.1.5.2 Marking of Written Assessments

Our Assessors are subject matter experts. They are also members of the panel of Tutors that deliver our QQI Training Courses.

Here is an overview of our standard grading process. Exceptions to the standard flow are detailed in 6.1.5.3, 6.1.5.4, and 6.1.5.5.

See Figure 12 - Standard Grading Process for a graphical representation of this process.

1. All written assessments are sent by email to the Assessments Coordinator (AC) at assessments@professionaldevelopment.ie.

2. The AC checks that all assessment techniques have been submitted in the correct format. They then check the delegate record within the TMS to ensure that the work is received within the

deadline, to mark receipt date of the assessments, and to check for any special requirements of which the Assessor needs to be notified.

3. Once the delegate record has been updated, the AC uploads the assessment work to a secure Dropbox folder, to which the Assessor has access.

4. In cases where special requirements are present, the AC will send an email to the Assessor outlining the special requirements. They will also "star" the delegate's assessment folder within Dropbox to notify the Assessor that there are special requirements to consider. This directs them to refer to the email received from the AC on this subject.

5. The Assessor marks the written work against the marking scheme while providing written comments as to why marks are awarded or deducted.

6. The Assessor will also use the guidelines for awarding marks at Pass, Merit, and Distinction level provided in the marking sheets as well as Bloom's Taxonomy during the marking process.

7. If the Assessor has any particular concerns relating to a Learner's work, the following steps are taken:

    a. The Assessor will use Bloom's Taxonomy where Learners are on a grade cusp.
    b. The Assessor may contact the course Tutor as necessary to gain insights from them.
    c. In certain circumstances the Director of Training may review the work.

6.1.5.3   Fail Grades

In cases where a Learner has failed to reach the minimum marks to pass the course, the Assessor will notify the Director of Training (DT) and Assessments Coordinator (AC) outlining the main areas with justification where the Learner has lost significant marks.

The AC will notify the Learner by email and allow one opportunity to resubmit. Learners are reminded (as stated in the Assessment Brief) that the maximum grade attainable on resubmission is a Pass. The RAP in association with the DT reserves the right to apply a discretionary provision in such case to take account of any extenuating circumstances.

6.1.5.4   Late Submissions

There is a provision in place for Learners to apply for an extension to the submission date. This provision is clearly outlined in the Assessment Brief and the Learner Handbook. The Learner must make the request in writing to assessments@professionaldeveloment.ie outlining the extenuating circumstances.

This email must be received before the assessment submission deadline has passed.

If work is submitted later than the deadline and no request for an extension has been made and / or approved, the Learner's grade will be entered as Fail-Non-Submission.

The AC in association with the DT reserves the right to apply a discretionary provision in such case to take account of any extenuating circumstances. In such cases, the Learner will be notified that the maximum grade they may achieve is a Pass.

6.1.5.5   Non-Submissions

If work is not submitted, the Learner's grade will be entered as Fail-Non-Submission in the QQI database.

Professional Development does not issue reminders to Learners. It is the Learner's responsibility to submit the work.

This is clearly communicated to all Learners by their Tutor, in the Welcome Letter, the Assessment Brief, the Assessment date deadline PDF, and the QQI Learner Handbook.

6.1.6 Assessment performed by third parties

All of the provisions set out in 6.1.5 above are applicable to all assessments carried out, including third parties (if used). Currently, assessments are not performed by third parties.

6.1.7 Authentication Process

In order to assure that the assessment process is fair, consistent, and valid, and that the outcomes of assessment in the form of the Learner's results are consistent with national standards, the authentication process includes procedures for Internal Verification and External Authentication.

The provisions for authentication as communicated to Learners are set out in the Learner Handbook.

The standard authentication process is detailed below and shown visually in Figure 13 - Standard Authentication Process. Exceptions to the standard flow are detailed below within 6.1.7.1 through 6.1.9.

6.1.7.1   Internal Verification (IV)

Internal Verification Report

The TMS can generate real-time reports containing detailed information regarding Learner submission, status, grades, and certification status.

The following information is available for each Learner, for each certification period, and for each programme being processed for certification (this list is not exhaustive):

1. Course Name
2. Course Code
3. Certification Code
4. Learner's Name
5. Learner Status
6. Course Commencement and Completion Dates
7. Attendance Status
8. Assessment Due Date
9. Extension date if requested and if authorised
10. Assessment Submission date
11. No. of days submitted late (if relevant)
12. Initial Marks per assessment technique
13. Initial Marks (Pass/Fail)
14. Date of Initial Fail Grade Notification Letter (IFGN Letter)
15. Deadline to appeal initial fail grade
16. Deadline to resubmit
17. Date of resubmission (if relevant)
18. Days resubmission overdue (if relevant)
19. Provisional Marks, % Mark, and Grade
20. Date of Provisional Grade Notification Letter
21. Deadline to appeal Provisional Grade
22. Date of receipt of formal appeal (if relevant)
23. Appeal marks, % marks, and Appeal Grade (if relevant)
24. Date Grade deemed final (after expiry of appeals deadline if not appealed)
25. Certification Period
26. Date results input onto QBS
27. QBS Learner Status (Valid / Invalid)
28. Learner Code Group
29. QQI Learner Status

The QA Officer uses the following sample size and sampling criteria during IV:

Sample Size

A minimum sample size of mean value between √n+1 and 20% of n each case, where n is taken from across different classes and Tutors as applicable. Specific attention is paid to those at the cusp of the grade brackets and where different Tutors are used for assessment.

Internal Verification Activity

IV commences on the last week of the month prior to QQI certification. There are clear cut-offs for all assessments submitted if the Learner wants to be included in a certification period. These cut-off

periods are outlined in the Learner Handbook, which is publicly available on the Professional Development website.

Using the TMS, the QA Officer can generate a real-time report of all Learners submitted before the cut-off date to determine their QQI Learner Status.

Once the final list of Learners is complete, the QA Officer can export the report to Excel and filter by course. This report is used by the QA Officer to record their IV activity.

The checks detailed below are carried out. A key is used for each check type for ease of recording on the report. Once verified, the key is marked on the report, indicating that the check is completed.

Checks for all Learners
1. Check that evidence is available for all Learners for all assessments (on Dropbox).
2. Confirm results are recorded for all Learners and entered to QBS system.
3. Cross check to ensure that information on QBS agrees with completed marking schemes and information extracted from the TMS.

Checks for the selected sample in the Learner group
1. Check marks are transferred correctly from Learner marking scheme to the TMS.

The QA Officer prepares the Internal Verification Report (IVR). Any exceptions or points of note are brought to the attention of the RAP for further discussion.

Trend Analysis Report
Trends in marks and grades between Tutors are monitored by both the QA Officer and the Director of Training during the Internal Verification process.

The purpose of this is to ensure consistency and fairness of assessment as well as identifying areas for improvement. Any impact of updates to assessment briefs is also reviewed as required during this IV process.

From time to time, Learners fail to earn sufficient marks to pass the programme. Reasons for such failures are reviewed during IV.

The QA Officer includes a trend analysis report within the IVR. Any issues identified are recorded and communicated with the RAP and DT.

Issues or areas for improvement as they arise during this analysis are flagged to the EA and RAP for review or comment.

6.1.7.2 External Authentication (EA)

An External Authenticator (EA) is appointed for some but not all certification periods (twice a year) in order to assure that there is independent, authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of Learners in accordance with national standards.

The EA is appointed in line with the provisions set out in the *QQI guidelines– Guidelines for Providers May 2007*, Section 4.3 in Quality Assuring Assessment.

The QA Officer is responsible for organising and liaising with the EA. The following process is in place for External Authentication:

- The External Authenticator will come on-site at the agreed date and time.
- The QA Officer organises the following files and documents:
  - Hard copy prints outs of Course Summary Grade Sheets for all courses that include Learners (including those not yet graded as well as those previously certified) who are to be submitted to QQI for certification in the next period.
  - Marking Sheets for each Learner (Hard Copy)
  - Soft copy of Graded Assessments (including Assessor Notes)
  - Skills Demonstration Videos (where applicable)
  - Copy of Assessment Brief (including marking scheme)
  - Internal Verification spreadsheet extracted from TMS
  - Internal Verification Report (IVR) – signed
  - IV Trend Analysis reports – signed
  - External Authentication Report (EAR) from previous certification period
  - Results Approval Panel Report (RAPR) from previous certification period
- The EA completes their audit, which is followed by initial feedback to and discussion with the DT and QA Officer on findings.
- The EA sends their official EA Report in the week following EA visit.

6.1.8 Feedback to Learners (Formative & Summative)

In order to ensure that Learners receive timely and constructive formative and summative feedback during the programme, the following provisions are in place during tutor-directed and self-directed learning:

- Formative feedback from Tutor following in-class completion of exercises and activities as appropriate to the programme. This may be in the form of written or practical exercises to demonstrate understanding of learning.

- Formative Tutor feedback on draft work for assessment as required. However, there are clear guidelines provided to Tutors in Section 3.14 of the Tutor Handbook that discourage them from giving opinions on the standard of the work being submitted for review. Feedback is encouraged but limited to areas of improvement. This is also explained within the assessment brief provided to Learners and in Section 6.3 of the Learner Handbook.

- Notification of Provisional Grade
  - Once the results of the Learners' assessments have passed through IV, EA, and RA, the Assessments Coordinator will send a provisional grade notification by email.
  - This notification is referred internally as a Provisional Grade Notification Letter (PGN Letter) and it is automatically generated as a PDF documented by the TMS (once instigated by the Assessments Coordinator).
  - The PGN Letter extracts the relevant Learner details directly from the TMS and is sent automatically by email to the Learner's primary and secondary (if relevant) email address.
  - The PGN Letter provides a breakdown of the marks for each of the assessment techniques (max. 3 min. 2) as well as their overall total marks, % marks, and overall grade. It also includes summative feedback from the assessor. To further improve our supportive, summative feedback, from June 2021 period onwards, the PGN Letter will also include an attachment of the Learner's completed marking sheet.
  - They are advised that they may appeal the result, the process to follow, timeframe to lodge the appeal, and the associated cost. They are also informed that the outcome of the appeal may result in a grade uplift, no grade change, or a downgrade.
  - The process regarding the issuing of the PGN Letters is set out in the QQI Learner Handbook (section 10 – Notification of Results) which forms part of our quality procedures.

- Notification of Fail Grades
  - If a Learner is graded and they are unsuccessful, the Assessor notifies the Assessments Coordinator (AC), Director of Training, and the Managing Director
  - The AC enters the Learner's marks onto the TMS and includes high level feedback to the Learner including the areas where they lost marks and accompanying rationale.
  - Once signed off by the Director of Training, the Assessments Coordinator issues the Initial Grade Notification Letter (IGN Letter) to the Learner by email.
  - The IGN Letter includes the same information as the PGN letter regarding marks, % marks, and grade.
  - The IGN letter also includes a deadline for appealing their fail grade as well as the deadline for re-submitting their assessment.
  - The maximum grade a Learner can achieve on resubmission is a Pass grade.
  - If a Learner chooses not to resubmit or to appeal, their Fail grade is deemed final once the deadline passes.

o   If a Learner resubmits and is again unsuccessful, they are notified of this by a similar Resubmission Grade Notification Letter (RGN Letter). This letter is also autogenerated by the TMS at the instigation of the Assessments Coordinator, once the Director of Training and the Managing Director have been informed and signed off on the feedback from the Assessor.

6.1.8.1   Learner Appeals

If a Learner feels that the results achieved are not consistent with the work submitted, they may appeal the outcome.

The full provisions for appeals are set out in the QQI Learner Handbook (Section 11) which forms part of our quality procedures.

As part of the appeal, a report prepared by the External Authenticator provides feedback for the rationale used to determine the outcome of the appeal. The Learner is provided with a copy of the appeals report and reviewed marking sheet once completed.

6.1.8.2   Results Approval

The Results Approval Panel (RAP) is comprised of the QA Officer, Assessments Coordinator, and Assessors.

- Once the EA has issued their report, the RAP will meet to consider the findings of the IV and EA processes. Any grade change recommendations are discussed and approved. The RAP will consider any other finding and recommendations.
- The RAP approved grades are considered final, subject to any appeal as provided for under 6.1.8.1 and as detailed in the Learner Handbook (section 11).
- Once results are approved by the RAP, the Assessments Coordinator will notify Learners of the outcome.
- The Results Approval Panel will issue a report which is filed with the IV and EA reports for the certification period. All such reports are maintained for inspection by QQI if requested. The QA Officer is responsible for maintenance of these reports.
- In the event that a Learner confirms an intention to appeal their result, their provisional grade is not processed for certification until the appeals process in complete. Once complete, the outcome is approved by the RAP and the Learner is notified.
- All grades (once final) are submitted to QQI. All grades are entered onto the QQI certification system (QBS – Quality Based System). Every two months, QQI will lock the QBS and all grades on the system at this date will be sent forward for printing.

- QQI will arrange for the printing of certificates beginning the week after the close of the QBS system for grades (i.e., the week beginning after 15th of month). It can take up to two weeks for all certificates to be printed.
- Certificates are then couriered to our head office in Dublin on the first week of the following month.
- Detailed provisions for the safe delivery / collection / replacement of certificates are set out in the Learner Handbook which forms part of this quality procedure.
- For In-Company programmes, the Assessments Coordinator will organise delivery of the certificates to the Client course organiser or individual Learner as per the Client's documented requirements.

6.1.9 Corrective Action

Continuous improvement is integral to our Quality Management System.

Once the IV, EA, and RAP are concluded any corrective actions or opportunities for improvement (OFI) arising are coordinated by the QA Officer. Such actions may include but are not limited to; feedback to Tutors, feedback to Assessors, updating of documentation, streamlining of processes.

The QA Officer will add any agreed upon actions and OFI to the Cases system in the TMS. This system enables the QA Officer to project manage each agreed initiative through to completion.

Progress on each case will be reviewed at the next RAP meeting. Where relevant, cases will be communicated or escalated to the QRB.

7.0   Support for Learners

Policy

Professional Development is committed to ensuring that adequate supports and resources are in place for Learners and that the adequacy of these is reviewed and monitored in line with any ongoing requirements.

Procedures

Purpose:

To describe the methods used to ensure that adequate resources and support are in place for Learners.

Responsibility:

QRB, RAP, Director of Training, Managing Director, Training Consultants, Course Coordinator, Assessments Coordinator, QA Officer, Assessors, Tutors

Procedures:

7.1   Learner resources and support

7.2   Support for Learners with disabilities

7.2.1   Gathering special requirement information

7.2.2   Application of reasonable accommodation

Reference Communication Media:

- Website
- Brochures, Guides, and FAQ
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy
- Dropbox access to course materials including Welcome Letter, Assessment Brief, course slides, workbooks, exercises, QQI Learner Handbook, Data Protection FAQ document
- Dedicated email for correspondence with Tutors

7.1 Learner Resources and Support

The QA Officer has overall responsibility for coordinating various Learner supports and monitoring their effectiveness.

The QA Officer will defer to the Managing Director (MD) and / or Director of Training (DT) as required in order to secure approval in relation to certain additional supports which may be required on a case-by-case basis.

Once a course has been validated by QQI, the associated collateral is finalised and published. This is the responsibility of the DT with input from the Documents Manager (DM). This collateral is drawn from and aligned with the validated materials.

Examples of such collateral include:

- Course Brochure (available as a downloadable PDF from website)
- Frequently Asked Questions (available on website course pages)
- Welcome Letter (shared via Dropbox and emailed to Learner with booking confirmation email)
- Learner Handbook sets out detailed information relating to assessment procedures, appeals procedures, and certification guidelines and schedules (shared via Dropbox and available on the Professional Development website).
- Comprehensive course materials (shared via Dropbox - including tutor slides, course workbooks, exercises, course specific templates)
- Assessment Brief (shared via Dropbox and by Tutor)
- Notification of deadline for submission of assessment (shared via Dropbox and by Tutor)
- PDF "Guidelines for Referencing and Bibliography" (shared via Dropbox and by Tutor)
- Data Protection FAQ PDF (shared via Dropbox)
- Dedicated email address for all correspondence with Learners (assessments@professionaldevelopment.ie)

Learners are advised to use the assessments email address to communicate any queries they may have following the course specifically in relation to their work for assessment. If input from a Tutor is required, the Assessments Coordinator (AC) will forward the query to the tutor for follow up. The AC will consult with the DT in order to determine if additional support is needed.

As required, the Tutor may be asked to clarify any points of concern or in some cases with provide high level feedback regarding a draft work prior to submission.

7.2   Support for Learners with Disabilities

Any adaptations or supports for Learners with diversity and disabilities that are within the Company's capacity to deliver, will be reasonably accommodated.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Mobility issues (involving the use of a wheelchair)
- Dietary requirements including gluten and lactose intolerance
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia

- Vocalisation issues
- Shyness and anxiety in group situations
- Difficulty hearing
- Visual impairment

To facilitate universal understanding, our Reasonable Accommodation Policy is published on the Professional Development website: https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/reasonable-accommodation-policy

This link is shared in the following places:

- Booking confirmation email sent to Learners upon confirming their course place.
- Learner Handbook provided as part of pre-course materials via secure Dropbox link.
- Tutor Handbook.

The following processes are in place in order to ensure that reasonable provision is in place to accommodate Learner special requirements or those covered by equality legislation.

7.2.1 Gathering Special Requirement Information

For a graphical representation of the process for gathering and communicating Learner special requirements, see Figure 14 - Gathering and Communicating Special Requirements.

- Once a Learner has confirmed their course booking, the Training Consultant (TC) sends them a booking confirmation email (BCE). The BCE includes detailed information about the course and assessments (see Section 3.1.4.4). This information includes an introduction to our reasonable accommodation policy, a link to a Professional Development webpage outlining our reasonable accommodation policy, and a request for the Learner to send any special requirements to the TC via return email.
- If applicable, the Learner will return their special requirements to the TC by email. The TC then updates the Learner's unique Delegate Record (DR) in Salesforce with the special requirements.

- This information in the DR feeds into information provided to the venue, tutor, and assessor at appropriate times.
- In cases where the requirements provided by the Learner are new to our team or require immediate attention, the TC consults with the Director of Training (DT) on the best way to proceed as soon as the requirements are received from the Learner.

7.2.2 Application of Reasonable Accommodation

In order to provide a supportive learning and assessment environment for all Learners, any special requirements given will be actioned as follows:

- In cases where the requirements provided by the Learner are new to our team or require immediate attention, the TC will consult with the Director of Training (DT) on the best way to proceed as soon as the requirements are received from the Learner. The DT will assess the requirements – consulting with assessors, tutors, and / or venue staff as needed – and advise on the most supportive course of action for the Learner.
- Training consultants, tutors, assessors, and all staff members are familiar with procedure for previous and recurring special requirements e.g., dietary, accessibility, dyslexia etc. and will follow actions taken in past instances when these requirements arise.
- Dietary and accessibility requirements are reported to the venue in advance of course start date to ensure accommodations are in place. This also enables us to relay any additional relevant information about dining and accessibility from the venue back to the Learner where relevant.
- All special requirements are communicated to the tutor when they are provided with the delegate listing in advance of the course date.
- Any learning difficulties will be communicated to the assessor once the Learner has submitted their assessment work. The assessor will then make appropriate allowances when grading the assessment work. As mentioned above, any requirements that are new our team, are discussed with relevant parties at the time of the Learner's submission of special requirements.
- The Learner's Training Consultant and the Assessments Coordinator are always available to address any queries or concerns relating to a Learner's course attendance and assessment work respectively. This is outlined in our Reasonable Accommodation Policy (see Section 7.2 for places this is communicated).

8.0   Information and Data Management

Policy

Professional Development is committed to ensuring that reliable information and data is available in order to assure effective communication with a range of stakeholders including Staff, Learners, and the public.

The information and data management policy has been updated to include the provisions set out in the GDPR regulations, May 2018.

Procedures

Purpose:

To describe the methods used manage information and data.

Responsibility:

Managing Director, Director of Training, Marketing Manager, IT Manager, Account Managers, QQI Assessors, Course Tutors, QA Officer, Course Coordinator, Assessments Coordinator, Documents Manager

Procedures:

8.1   Information Systems (IS) and Learner Information Systems (LIS)

8.2   Management Information Systems and Information for Further Planning

8.2.1   Use of MIS to for Quality Assurance and Monitoring

8.2.2   Completion Rules

8.3 Records Maintenance and Retention

8.3.1   Quality Records Maintenance and Retention

8.3.2   Security of Learner Assessments and Related Documents

8.4 Data Protection and Freedom of Information

8.4.1   Retention of Email Addresses and Phone Numbers

8.4.2   Retention of PPS Numbers and other QQI Required Details

8.4.3   Retention of Credit Card Details

8.4.4   Access to QQI Personal Data

8.4.5   Communication of QQI Data Retention Policy with Learners

8.4.6   Communication of GDPR Policy and Procedures

Reference Documents and Reports:

- Course Brochure (downloaded from website)
- Welcome Letter (emailed to Learner by Account Manager)
- Learner Handbook (shared via Dropbox and available on website)
- Assessment Brief (shared via Dropbox and by Tutor)
- Notification of Deadline for Submission of assessment (shared via Dropbox and by Tutor)
- PDF "Guidelines for Referencing and Bibliography" (shared via Dropbox and by Tutor)
- Data Protection FAQ PDF (shared via Dropbox)
- Notification of provisional grade following RAP meeting (via email)
- Learner Assessments
- Marked Learner Assessments
- Marked Learner Assessment with related Summary Sheets
- IV, RAP, EA, Trend Analysis and Appeals Reports

8.1 Information Systems (IS) and Learner Information Systems (LIS)

The primary IS used is Salesforce Enterprise Edition, a cloud-based CRM system. This system is fully customisable. A fully bespoke Training Management System (TMS) has been developed on the Salesforce platform.

The TMS is the primary Learner Information System and tracks all Learner interaction from the initial course booking, to course attendance and completion, assessment submission and grading (including appeals), through to submission on QBS and final certification (including postage of the cert). In addition, Salesforce is used to manage all invoicing, receipts and inventory.

The following information is managed by Salesforce.

1. Scheduled course dates, venue, and trainer
2. Delegate details against each scheduled course with due date for assessment work
3. Number of Learners that attended each course
4. Learners who submitted work for certification
5. Details of assessment results
6. Marked Learner Assessment with related Summary Sheets
7. IV, RAP, EA, Trend Analysis, and Appeals Reports (Learner Data only)
8. Storage of Assessor summative feedback
9. Grade and mark achieved by each Learner
10. Summary results and grade analysis per class and per Tutor
11. Notification date of provisional results following IV and RAP
12. Appeal requests
13. Results of appeals
14. Date certificate received from QQI
15. Date certificate dispatched to Learner

Access to information required by External Authenticator (EA) and for external monitoring by QQI is provided.

The EA is provided with access to all Learner materials submitted for certification, together with Assessors' comments and marks allocated with justification for award. Summary class results, IV report, Quality Trend Reports, and RAP report for previous certification periods all provided. The QA Officer and Director of Training are on-hand to answer any queries during the visit.

8.2 Management Information Systems and Information for Further Planning

The following management information systems are in place for the timely storage and retrieval of information

1. Salesforce CRM and TMS system (refer 8.1 above)
2. Mac Server Network Shared Folders
3. SAGE Accounting Software
4. Dropbox

The Company invested in upgrading the IS in November 2015. The system provides full traceability of Learner history including course attended, assessment results, and communication with respect to results and certification.

The Company invested in the upgrade of all computers and operating systems to iMac in late 2014 to assure consistency of access to and retrieval of information. All iMacs have subscriptions to the latest versions of MS Office (cloud-based software).

All staff are furnished with a Professional Development email address in the format name@professionaldevelopment.ie. This is a cloud-based email offering to ensure offline availability.

8.2.1 Use of MIS to for Quality Assurance and Monitoring

The procedures for assessing Learners and assuring quality are outlined in detail in Section 6.0. The reports generated from the TMS are used to support quality assurance as follows:

- Internal verification process 6.1.7.1
- External authentication process 6.1.7.2
- Results approval process 6.1.8.2
- Quality trends are reviewed at the RAP meeting. Any actions required are identified, documented by the QA Officer, and actioned using the Cases system in the TMS.

The TMS has been customised to provide the team with reports and dashboards in real-time. These reports provide a detailed breakdown of all sales by course type on a daily and cumulative month-to date figures in terms of course numbers and revenue in addition to number of Learners booked onto each scheduled course.

Comparative information for previous periods is also provided. This report is visible to all Staff members and enables the team to ensure that the courses are not over-booked.

This system also enables the team to review demand cycles and to adjust the course schedule as required. In some cases, the course frequency is increased to accommodate additional demand. The course schedule is reviewed on a three-month rolling cycle.

The open plan office environment supports open communication between all staff. This facilitates a rapid response to enquiries and any issues which may arise from time to time.

8.2.2 Completion Rules

The TMS allows for the tracking of attendance on each course in real-time. All Learners must be entered onto the TMS before they can attend a course. This is a fundamental part of the booking procedure followed by the Account Manager.

8.2.2.1   Sign-In Sheets

A system generated sign-in sheet is included with the Tutor Pack and all Learners are required to sign in each day. This sign-in sheet is returned to the office following training.

8.2.2.2   Updating Learner Profiles

The Course Coordinator (CC) is responsible for updating the TMS with Learner attendance after the course completes. Once a Learner submits their assessment work, this is entered into the Delegate Record by the Assessments Coordinator (AC). If a delegate fails to submit or is late in submitting, the TMS notifies the AC.

Once grading is completed the AC enters the Learner's results for each assessment in the TMS. The TMS automatically calculates the total marks, % marks, and overall grade. The TMS also handles all communications to Learners regarding their grades (successful or unsuccessful) including notifying them of their Provisional Grade once approved by the RAP.

It also allows for recording submission of work for certification and results achieved.

8.2.2.3   Learner Trend Analysis and Completion Rates

The TMS allows real-time reporting of the following:

1. Completion rates by course (by trainer)
2. Completion rates by course type (public v in-company)
3. Completion rates by trainer (by course and by course type)
4. Completion rates by QQI certification period (by course, by trainer and by course type)
5. Grade distribution by course (by trainer and by course type)
6. Grade distribution by trainer (by course and by course type)
7. Grade distribution by QQI Cert period (by course, by trainer, and by course type)

This allows benchmarking against prior period performance, by trainer and by course in addition to comparison of overall Learner performance against national statistics provided by QQI.

8.3   Records Maintenance and Retention

8.3.1 Quality Records Maintenance and Retention

All course related materials including course brochures, assessment briefs, and course materials are maintained on a secure server.

The Documents Manager is responsible for archiving obsolete documents which are also maintained on the secure server.

assessments@professionaldevelopment.ie is a dedicated email address for all correspondence with Learners.

Learners are also provided with a dedicated Tutor email address to facilitate communication with Tutors and to assist with any questions they may have while preparing their assessments for submission.

The Learner Handbook sets out detailed information relating to Assessment Procedures, Appeals Procedures, and Certification Guidelines and schedules.

8.3.2 Security of Learner Assessments and Related Documents

8.3.2.1   Cloud Based File Storage

Electronic copies of assessments are the only accepted format.

All assessments are held in secure, designated Dropbox folders. These folders are only shared with relevant assessors. A robust password security system in place.

All Personal Data is subject to the provisions set out in our Data Protection FAQ PDF, which forms part of our Learner Handbook and our Quality Procedures. No Personal Data is stored on the File Server.

A server back-up process is in place to ensure the sustainability of the information systems as follows:

      I.   Automatic back up every two hours to an on-site portable hard drive (securely stored in server cabinet)

     II.   Portable hard-drive is swapped out weekly and backed-up offsite to a second secure server

8.3.2.2 Access to Assessment Files

All assessment details are treated as confidential and will not be shown or discussed with anyone outside of those directly involved in the training, assessment, verification, authentication, results approval, and appeals processes.

Access to the section of the cloud file storage where Learner assessments are stored is restricted to the Assessments Coordinator, Director of Training, QA Officer, and the Managing Director.

8.3.2.3 File Retention

Submitted written assessments and skills demonstration videos for certification are maintained on the secure server until the appeals process is complete and for a maximum period of 5 years thereafter. It is policy for these to be securely deleted as soon as the certification process is completed so as to minimise data storage requirements.

After this time, they are permanently deleted from the server. Other quality documents directly related to Learner performance are maintained on the secure server for a period of 5 years. These include assessment marking records, IV, EA, and RAP reports in addition to class summary performance records and trend analysis reports.

8.4 Data Protection and Freedom of Information

Professional Development is committed to ensuring compliance with all Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

The types of Personal Data collected and retained are as follows:

1. Email address
2. Phone and / or mobile
3. Postal Address
4. PPS Number
5. Gender
6. Date of Birth

8.4.1 Retention of Email Addresses and Phone Numbers

Email and phone details are either collected online (web forms), verbally, or are collated from email signatures. Consent is either explicitly granted (in the case of a web form) or implied (verbal). This information is retained on the CRM system indefinitely.

8.4.2 Retention of PPS Numbers and other QQI Required Details

Postal address, PPS numbers, gender, and date of birth (QQI Personal Data) is collected as this information is required by QQI when submitting a Learner to QBS. This information is retained until the Learner has been certified and is then deleted from the TMS. The Assessments Coordinator under supervision of the Managing Director is responsible for deleting this data.

Learners are advised of the reasoning for collecting this information in the Learner Handbook. Further supporting detail is given in the PDF Data Protection FAQ document (also published on website).

8.4.3 Retention of Credit Card Details

We no longer collect and retain credit card details from clients as part of the booking confirmation process.

All credit card payments are handled securely online by a secure, third-party payment processor.

8.4.4 Access to QQI Personal Data

Access to Learner Personal Data (as defined under the relevant data protection legislation) is strictly controlled.

Learner QQI Personal Data is only stored on the TMS and access to these relevant data fields is restricted to the Assessments Coordinator, Assessor, Director of Training, and the Managing Director.

8.4.5 Communication of QQI Data Retention Policy with Learners

Our policy and procedures regarding QQI Personal Data is subject to the provisions set out in our "Data Protection FAQ PDF, which forms part of our Learner Handbook and our Quality Procedures.

Each Learner is provided with an PDF copy of this FAQ and the Learner Handbook via Dropbox before they attend training.

Both documents are publicly available on the Professional Development website.

8.4.6 Communication of GDPR Policy and Procedures

Our Privacy Policy, which complies with GDPR provisions is available to view on our website:
https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/privacy-policy

9.0   Public Information and Communication

Policy

Professional Development is committed to ensuring that communication in all aspects is effective and transparent.

As we are committed to continuous improvement, our communication procedures and processes are designed to facilitate the circulation of relevant, accurate, and timely information and feedback. Our feedback mechanisms are inclusive and allow Learners of diverse backgrounds to give feedback on issues of particular interest or concern to them.

Once a course has been validated by QQI, the associated collateral is finalised and published. The Marketing Manager is responsible for drafting website material and course brochures for approval by the Director of Training. Such materials are drawn from and aligned with the validated materials.

Procedures

Purpose:

To describe how we communicate internally and externally with our Clients, Learners, and other stakeholders regarding validated programmes.

Responsibility:

Managing Director, Director of Training, Account Managers, Documents Manager, Marketing Manager, Course Coordinator, Assessments Coordinator, QA Officer, Tutors

Communications Procedures:

9.1   Public Information
9.1.1   Website
9.1.2   Relations with Industry Groups and Prospective Future Learners

9.2   Learner Information
9.2.1   Website
9.2.2   Course Brochures
9.2.3   Client (Learner) Account Manager
9.2.4   Course Materials

9.3 Publication of Quality Assurance Evaluation Reports

Communication Documents and Formats:

- Website
- Promotional emails
- Course Brochures
- Course Schedule
- Customer Database
- Pre-course Questionnaire
- Welcome Letters
- Learner Handbook

- Booking Terms & Conditions
- Email Confirmation
- Location Map
- Attendance Sheet
- Course Assessment Brief
- Data Protection FAQ

- QQI Database
- Course Materials
- Employee Handbook
- Tutor Handbook
- Course Evaluation
- Feedback

Collateral Approval and Document Control

Once a course has been validated by QQI, the associated collateral is finalised and published. The Marketing Manager is responsible for drafting website material and course brochures for approval by the Director of Training. Such materials are drawn from and aligned with the validated materials.

Examples of such documentation include:
- o Website material
- o Programme brochure
- o Frequently asked questions
- o Promotional Materials for digital marketing campaigns

- A document control system is in place to assure that only current approved documents are circulated to Learners, Staff and other stakeholders.
- All obsolete documents are archived, and only active documents are available to send to Learners and Tutors.
- Documentation version control notes the document, revision number, approving body, and date approved.
- The Documents Manager is responsible for version control, filing, and archiving of all such documents.

9.1 Public Information

9.1.1 Website

Professional Development completed a rebranding and website upgrade project during Q1, 2015.

The website upgrade was designed to improve the user experience. Further development of the website was completed during Q2, 2018 and in Q2 of 2020 to further enhance user experience.

The Marketing Manager is responsible for all updates to the website and to ensure that all information is current, accurate, and that it reflects any provisions required by our accrediting bodies including QQI, IASSC, PeopleCert, SCRUMStudy, and VMEdu Inc.

All relevant QA documentation is publicly available on the Professional Development (see Section 9.3 below)

9.1.2 Relations with Industry Groups and Prospective Future Learners

Professional Development actively engages with other bodies and interest groups, which are deemed important for the Company, its Employees, Tutors, and Learners.

To this end the Director of Training accepts invitations to deliver presentations to industry groups such as IHEEM, PMI®, and Engineers Ireland. The Company also sponsors events and provides showcases of relevant programmes to prospective Learners. These events also provide developmental opportunities for Staff.

The Director of Training volunteers her services to relevant industry and interest groups including the Lean Construction Institute.

9.2 Learner Information

9.2.1 Website

See Section 9.1.1 above.

9.2.2 Course Brochures

All prospective Learners are provided with a detailed course brochure which may be downloaded directly from our website or requested via email or telephone.

9.2.3 Client (Learner) Account Manager

Each prospective Learner is allocated to an Account Manager (also called "Training Consultant"), who will contact them by email or telephone to determine the suitability of the course to their needs.

Once the Learner has received the course brochure and reviewed the programme with the Account Manager, they may take the decision to book the course.

If they decide to proceed, they are sent a booking confirmation email from their Account Manager, outlining the booking terms and conditions. Once payment is received, the Learner is advised by email that their booking is confirmed.

9.2.4 Course Materials

Prior to commencement of the course, the Account Manager will send a detailed booking confirmation email, Welcome Letter (for QQI courses), and a Location Map to each Learner.

The Course Coordinator is responsible for organising the course materials including slides, workbooks, handouts, assessment briefs, and all other documentation relating to the Learner.

Each Learner is sent these materials via a Dropbox link which remains open for 90 days after the course completion date. (see Section 3.1.6.2 and 3.1.6.3 for more detail)

9.2.4.1 Pre-course Questionnaire

For corporate In-Company training, a pre-course questionnaire is used from time to time as determined by the Account Manager and / or the Director of Training. The pre-course questionnaire is sent to the client by email.

The purpose of this is to ensure consistency of information, to identify the main areas of interest, roles and current competencies and challenges. The pre-course questionnaires are analysed by the Director of Training, Account Managers, and Tutors as applicable in order to tailor the courses to specific training needs.

9.2.4.2 Course Material and Learner Handbook

A secure folder in Dropbox is set up for each course by the Course Coordinator. Course materials are made available to Learners via this medium. Any training materials required by the Tutor for the purposes of delivering the course are organised by the Course Coordinator and are ready for collection by the Tutor in advance of the course. (see Section 3.1.6.2 and 3.1.6.3 for more detail)

The Learner Handbook is a detailed document outlining the provisions for managing personal details, customer service, written assessments, grading process, QQI Grade Bands, Fail Grades, Notification of Results, Appeals, and obtaining QQI Certificates.

9.2.4.3 Assessment Brief

A comprehensive assessment brief is developed for each QQI programme. This brief is prepared by the Director of Training in consultation with the course Tutors and the Documentation Manager. It is approved by the QRB.

The Documentation Manager is responsible for version control of the assessment brief and associated marking schemes.

The Course Coordinator is responsible for organising copies of the assessment brief for collection by the Tutor in advance of the training and inclusion of the assessment brief in the Dropbox folder created for each course.

9.2.4.4   Evaluation of Training and Learner Feedback

A central tenet of our quality assurance process is the collection and review of Learner Feedback. Learner feedback forms are circulated for completion after every course. See Section 1.1.7.1 for more detail.

9.3   Publication of Quality Assurance Evaluation Reports

Quality Assurance reports are made available as required to members of the QRB.

The following Quality Assurance Documents are published on the Professional Development Website:

- Quality Assurance Manual (QAM)
- Learner Handbook
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Data Protection FAQ
- Mission Statement

All of these documents can be accessed via the following link:

https://www.professionaldevelopment.ie/quality-assurance

Publishing of minutes from the QRB and RAP on the Professional Development website is planned from Q2 in 2021.

10.0 Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

Policy

Professional Development has a policy of forming strategic partnerships with highly reputable education providers and certification bodies.

In order to support this policy, we have devised the procedures outlined in this section.

Procedures

Purpose:

To describe how we manage relationships with other parties involved in education and training.

Responsibility:

Managing Director, Director of Training, QA Officer, Marketing Manager.

Other parties involved in education and training procedures:

10.1   Peer relationships with the broader education and training community

10.1.1   PeopleCert and AXELOS

10.1.2   Enterprise Ireland

10.1.3   International Association for Six Sigma Certification (IASSC)

10.1.4   SCRUMstudy

10.2   External partnerships

10.3   External Expert Panellists, Authenticators, and Examiners

10.3.1   Expert Panellists

10.3.2   Authenticators

10.3.3   Examiners

Related Documents and Communication Formats:

- Website organised by course type
- AXELOS PRINCE2® project management course guides and brochures
- International Association of Six Sigma Certification (IASSC) course guides and brochures
- SCRUMstudy course guides and brochures

10.1 Peer relationships with the broader education and training community

Professional Development forms strategic partnerships with a number of highly reputable international education providers and certification bodies listed in 10.1.1 to 10.1.4.

In order to achieve each status, we are required to submit and maintain our quality management systems and training materials as subject to the criteria of each body.

10.1.1   PeopleCert and AXELOS

We are an official PeopleCert Accredited Training Organisation (ATO).

PeopleCert are an AXELOS Examination Institute (EI). AXELOS are the owners and creators of PRINCE2®, who operate through Examination Institutes.

Our PeopleCert Registry ID is 5707.

10.1.2   Enterprise Ireland

Professional Development is an approved, registered Lean Training and Lean Services to Business provider with Enterprise Ireland.

10.1.3   International Association for Six Sigma Certification (IASSC)

Professional Development is an Authorised Training Organisation (A.T.O.) with the IASSC for the provision of certified Lean Six Sigma business excellence Yellow, Green, and Black Belt courses.

10.1.4   SCRUMstudy

Professional Development is an Approved Training Partner (A.T.P.) for the provision of certified Agile and Scrum project management courses leading to SCRUMStudy certifications.

We currently offer the following classroom-based and online exam-preparation courses offered by SCRUMStudy:

1. Scrum Master Certified (SMC^{TM})
2. SCRUMStudy Agile Master Certified (SAMC^{TM})
3. Scrum Product Owner Certified (SPOC^{TM})
4. Scrum Developer Certified (SDC^{TM})

10.2 External partnerships and second providers

We do not use external partners or second providers to deliver our QQI programmes.

10.3 External Expert Panellists, Examiners, and Authenticators

10.3.1 Expert Panellists

Trudi Barnett is an External Expert Panellist, who performs the role of Chairperson of the Quality Review Board (QRB).

As required, we invite expert panellists to join the Programme Development Committee, QRB, and any sub-groups or sub-committees where their contribution will be beneficial. These expert panellists may be Tutors who have subject matter expertise.

10.3.2 Authenticators

For our QQI programmes, we use External Authenticators (EA) who are approved by QQI.

10.3.3 Examiners

We do not use external examiners as we do not run exams for QQI approved programmes.

11.0   Self-Evaluation, Monitoring, and Review

Policy

Professional Development is committed to ensuring that adequate and appropriate processes are in place to assure that our quality management system is robust, effective, and reflects best practice.

In order to promote a culture of continuous improvement, we have devised a number of procedures as set out in this section.

Procedures

Purpose:

To describe the processes in place to self-evaluate the policies and procedures set out in this Quality Assurance Manual.

To provide evidence to management that the system is working as documented, is understood, and continues to meet the requirements of Professional Development and QQI.

Responsibility:

Managing Director, Director of Training, Documents Manager, QA Officer

Procedures

11.1   Internal Self-Monitoring and Self-Evaluation

11.1.1 Responsibility

11.1.2 Focus

11.1.3 Purpose

11.2   Internal Self-Monitoring

11.2.1 Self-Monitoring Process

11.3   Internal Self-Evaluation

11.3.1 Internal Self-Evaluation Process

Reference Documents:
- Self-monitoring reports
    - Learner evaluation forms
    - Submission rates
    - Pass rates
    - Fail rates
    - Appeals rates
    - Grade distribution by course type and trainer
    - IV error rates
    - Customer complaint form
    - Self-monitoring action plans
- Self-evaluation
    - Self-evaluation audit schedule
    - Self-evaluation audit checklists
    - Self-evaluation report
    - Self-evaluation corrective and preventative action report

11.1 Internal Self-Monitoring and Self-Evaluation

Internal self-monitoring and self-evaluation are integral parts of our quality management system.

11.1.1   Responsibility

The QA Officer in association with the Director of Training is responsible for managing the internal self-monitoring and self-evaluation processes, results of monitoring and evaluation reports, and action plans.

11.1.2   Focus

The focus of our self-monitoring activities is largely metrics driven as set out in section 11.2 below.

The focus of self-evaluation activities is largely process driven as set out in section 11.3 below.

The processes for carrying out our self-monitoring and self-evaluation activities are documented in sections 11.2 and 11.3 respectively.

11.1.3   Purpose

The purpose of self-monitoring is to:
1. Review the adequacy of quality performance metrics.
2. Review performance against the quality performance metrics.
3. To identify non-conformances.
4. To identify and put in place corrective and preventative actions in respect of 2 and 3.
5. To review trends in quality performance metrics and act on any actions arising.
6. To identify new metrics in lights of any findings and new learnings from a variety of internal and external sources.

The purpose of self-evaluation is to:

1. Review the efficacy of our QMS and how well we perform against the provisions for quality assurance set out therein.
2. To identify any non-conformances.
3. To identify any preventative and corrective actions.
4. To identify areas for improvement as part of a continuous improvement initiative.
5. To identify key quality measures to support 1 – 4 above.

11.2 Internal Self-Monitoring

The focus, responsibility, and purpose of self-monitoring are described in section 11.1.1 through 11.1.3 above.

11.2.1 Self-Monitoring Process

The following 4- step process is in place to manage activities relating to internal self-monitoring.

1. Identification of self-monitoring quality metrics
2. Setting and agreeing performance indicators for self-monitoring quality metrics
3. Reporting and review of results versus agreed performance indicators
4. Action planning and review of actions

11.2.1.1 Identification of self-monitoring quality metrics

The following self-monitoring quality metrics have been identified:

- Learner satisfaction rates
- Submission rates
- Error rates in grading found during IV
- Pass rate - overall and by course type
- Fail rate - overall and by course type
- Appeal rate - overall and by course type
- Grade distributions by course type and trainer
- Customer complaints

11.2.1.2 Setting and agreeing performance indicators for self-monitoring quality metrics

A number of self-monitoring projects were initiated in 2020 as follows:

Project 1: Collation and Review of Course Evaluation Forms – underway

We have developed a centralised system to review the results of completed evaluation forms after each course is completed.

This project was focused on the following:

1. Adequacy of the existing evaluation form, rating system 1 - 5 and open text questions.
2. Collation of overall customer satisfaction level by course and cumulative on an annual basis.

3. Breakdown of satisfaction level by course materials, suitability of exercises, trainer, venue, and customer service while booking.

4. Ratings and interest in other programmes offered will also be collated

Project 2: Generation of reports from TMS in Salesforce – complete

This project was led by the Reporting Committee. This is comprised of the MD, the Assessments Coordinator (AC), and the QA Officer.

As was the objective of this project, the following metrics are generated automatically from the TMS and form part of Professional Development's self-monitoring programme:

- Submission rates
- Error rates in grading found during IV
- Pass rate, overall and by course type
- Failure rate, overall and by course type
- Appeal rate, overall and by course type
- Grade distributions by course type and trainer

Project 3: Customer Complaints - complete

A centralised "Cases" system in the TMS used to log all complaints.

This project was led by a sub-group of the Evaluation Committee that was comprised of the QA Officer and the MD.

The scope of the project was as follows:
- Create a complaints sequential numerical system e.g., CC 01/2019
- Create a complaint tracking system in our TMS in Sales Force.

This will track the following:
1. Date of complaint
2. Name and email address
3. Details of complaint
4. Complaint source
    - Quality of training course
    - Trainer
    - Venue and facilities
    - Customer service on booking
    - Certification process
    - Results and grade awarded
5. Complaint Owner
6. Complaint resolution – details of actions, corrective and preventative
7. Complaint close date

11.2.1.3 Reporting and review against agreed performance indicators

As projects are completed, the QA Officer will be responsible for preparing a summary report for inclusion in the IV process.

The results are reviewed at each at the Results Approval Panel meeting. The results and trends will also feed into the annual Quality Review Board Meeting, under agenda item "self-monitoring and evaluation".

11.2.1.4 Action planning and review of actions

The Cases system in the TMS will be used to track all actions arising from processes 11.2.1 – 3.

The QA Officer meets with the DT and MD in order to agree action plans, assign owners and dates for completion.

These action plans, in addition to a review of level of completion are included in the RAP meeting for each of the six QQI certification periods.

These action plans will also be reviewed at the annual Quality Review Board Meeting, agenda item "self-monitoring and evaluation – action plans".

11.3 Internal Self-Evaluation

The focus, responsibility, and purpose of self-evaluation are described in section 11.1.1- 11.1.3.

11.3.1 Internal Self-Evaluation Process

The following 4-step process is in place to manage activities relating to internal self-evaluation:

1. Preparation of self-evaluation audit checklists
2. Planning of self-evaluation audit schedule
3. Execution, reporting, and action planning
4. Review of audit performance at annual Quality Review Board Meeting

11.3.1.1 Preparation of self-evaluation audit checklists

The QA Officer in association with the Director of Training and Documents Manager will prepare self-evaluation audit checklists for each of the areas QA1 -11.

The Documents Manager is responsible for ensuring that checklists are version controlled and that only the current active version is available for use which older versions are rendered obsolete.

11.3.1.2 Planning of self-evaluation audit schedule

A self-evaluation schedule is prepared annually by the QA Officer. The schedule will define the various processes within the QMS to be audited and evaluated.

This schedule may be revised in light of audit findings, particularly if evidence of system deficiency indicates a need for additional monitoring, which may not have been planned at the start of the cycle.

2022 self-evaluation was carried out in July.

11.3.1.3 Execution, reporting, and action planning

The audits are conducted in line with the audit schedule. The QA Officer is responsible for ensuring that the audit is carried out in a timely manner. A key focus of the self-audit is the collection of evidence to show that the provisions for quality assurance and quality control are effective.

A self-audit report is prepared by the QA Officer and used by the audit team showing:
   a) A statement of the monitoring investigation performed, incorporating the activities, procedures and processes checked
   b) The evidence gathered
   c) Evidence of good practice
   d) Non-conformances, deficiencies, or opportunities for improvement identified

The report is sent to the Director of Training who will work with the QA Officer to coordinate the preventative and corrective actions, together with timescale for implementation.

11.3.1.4 Review of audit performance at Quality Review Board Meeting

This item will be added to the agenda for each autumnal QRB meeting (following July audits). The audit reports along with associated corrective and preventative action plans will be reviewed for completeness. The effectiveness of the audit system along with the action plans will be reviewed.

Any improvements or recommendations will be documented in the minutes of the QRB by the QA Officer for circulation and action.

Professional Development Organisational Structure
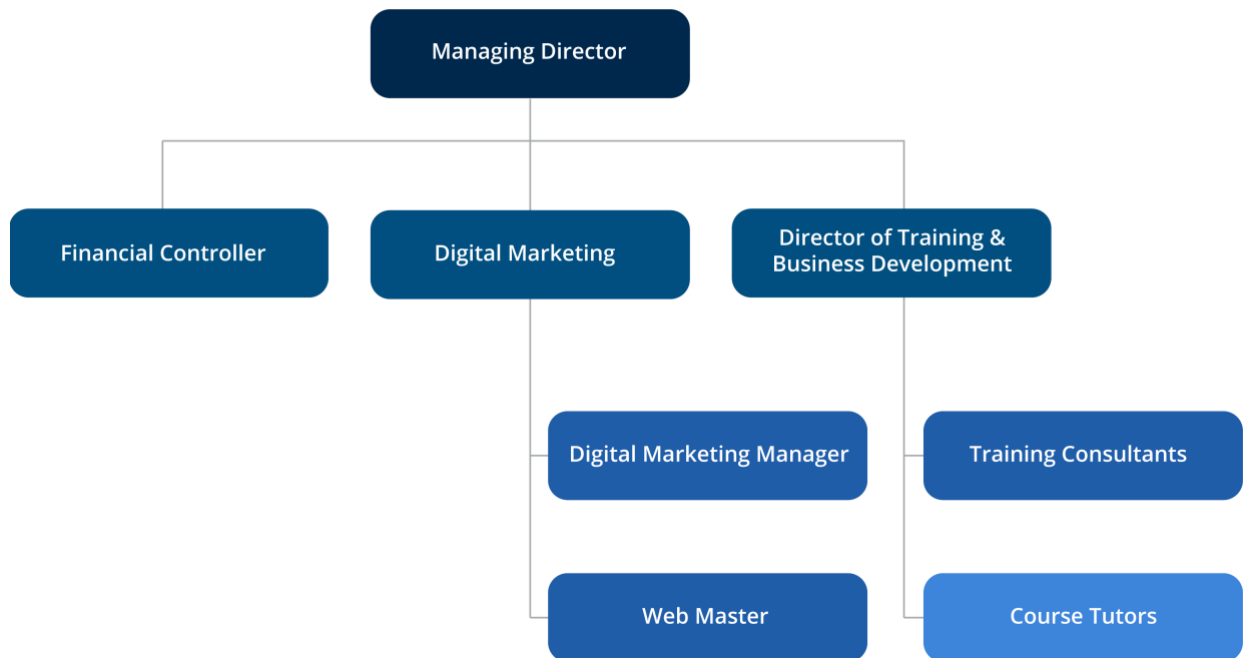
Figure 1 - Professional Development Organisational Structure

Professional Development Governance Structure

Financial & Commercial Governance

QA & Academic Governance

Board of Directors BoD

Managing Director

Director of Training (DT)

Quality Review Board QRB

External Expert (chair)

Director of Training (DT)

QA Officer (QAO)

Tutor & Assessor Representatives
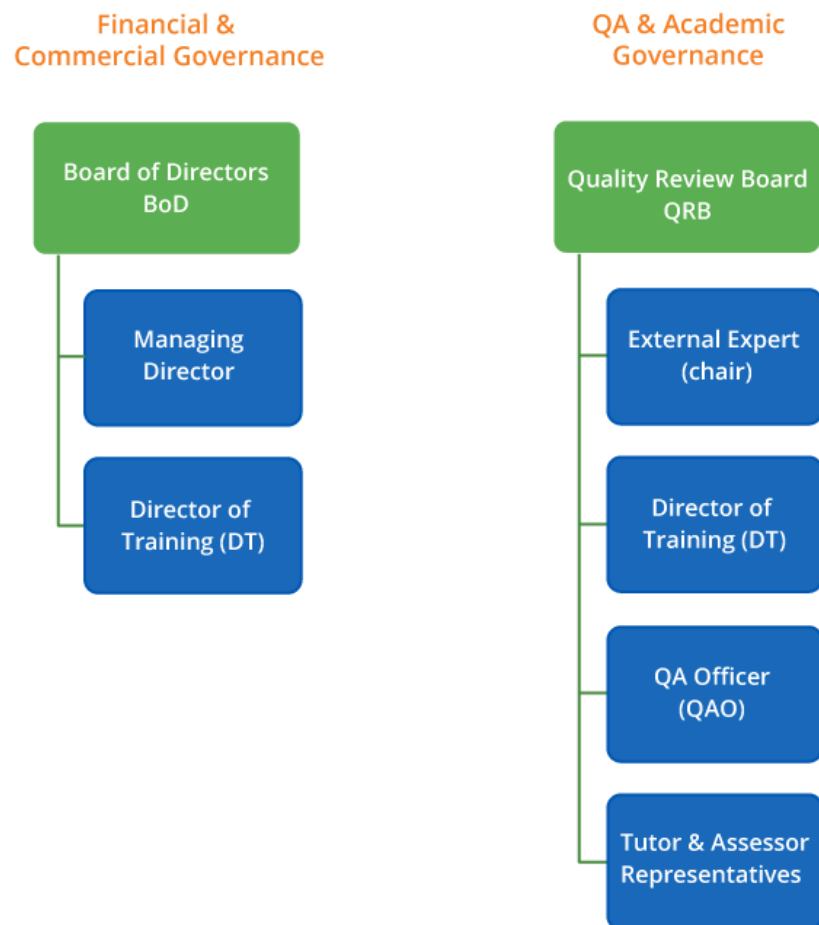
Figure 2 - Professional Development Governance Structure

Quality Assurance System Overview
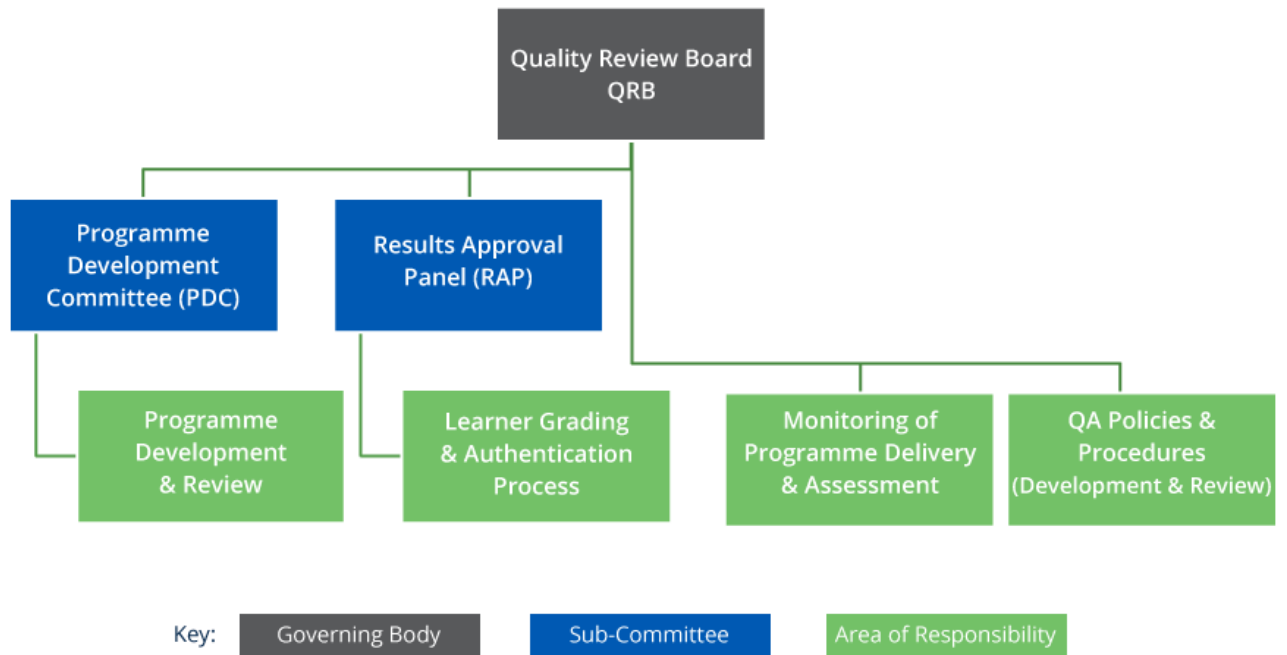
Figure 3 - Quality Assurance System Structure

Assessments Coordinator: Responsibilities & Reporting Structure
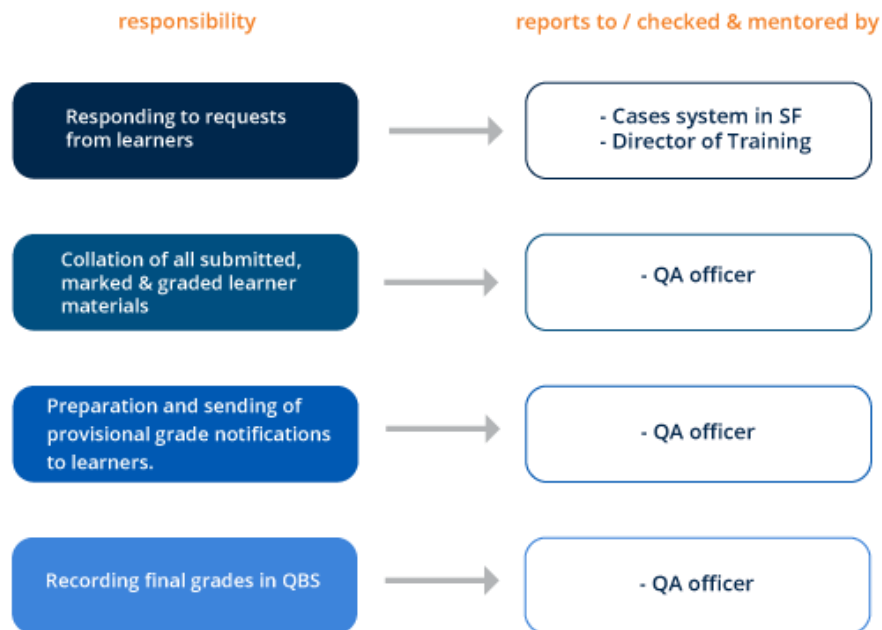
Figure 4 - Assessments Coordinator: Responsibilities and Reporting Structure

Course Coordinator: Responsibilities & Reporting Structure

responsibility	reports to / checked & mentored by
maintaining course schedule in TMS	- Director of Training
training venue management	- Director of Training - Managing Director
trainer liaison for course collateral	- Director of Training - Documents Manager
communication with Learners in all matters relating to booking, attendance, & course materials	- Director of Training - Documents Manager

Figure 5 - Course Coordinator: Responsibilities and Reporting Structure

QA Officer: Responsibilities & Reporting Structure

responsibility	reports to / checked & mentored by
QBS authentication and IV	- Results Approval Panel (RAP) - External Authenticator (EA)
EA visit coordination	- Results Approval Panel (RAP) - External Authenticator (EA)
RAP meeting coordination	- Results Approval Panel (RAP)
Sending grade summary sheets to trainers	- Results Approval Panel (RAP)
Coordination of Appeals	- Results Approval Panel (RAP)

Figure 6 - QA Officer: Responsibilities and Reporting Structure

Assessors: Responsibilities & Reporting Structure

responsibility	reports to / checked & mentored by
Assess and grade learner skills demonstrations and written assessment work.	- Assessments Coordinator - QA Officer — EA - RAP
Complete a grading sheet for each learner providing detailed feedback & justification.	- Assessments Coordinator - QA Officer — EA - RAP
Highlight any anomalies that are noted during grading.	- Assessments Coordinator
Provide input into development & review of assessment briefs & tutor briefs.	- Programme Development Committee
Attend RAP and QRB meetings as required.	- RAP - QRB

Figure 7 - Assessors: Responsibilities and Reporting Structure

New Programme Development & Approval Bodies

Figure 8 - Bodies Involved in New Programme Development and Approval

Roles and Responsibilities within the PDC

Role	Responsibilities	Owner(s)
Development Management	oversees programme development at a high level / final approval before QRB submission	Director of Training
Content Creation	development of all programme materials	All members of PDC
Design Leader	leads programme design / provides subject matter expertise / primary creator of module content & assessment brief	Director of Training or alternative subject matter expert
Content Review	review of all programme content created by Design Leader for quality and achievement of objectives	Director of Training or alternative subject matter expert
Documentation Review	review of all programme content for format, spelling, grammar & readability, score tallies.	Documents Manager
QA Preliminary Review	review of all programme content for alignment with relevant policies and guidelines / compiles provider's evaluation report	Director of Training

Figure 9 - Roles & Responsibilities Within the PDC

New Programme Development & Approval Process

Process Steps	Owner	Event
1. Idea for new programme	can be initiated by any team member	meeting or email discussion with the DT
2. Market research	Director of Training Marketing Manager	market research meeting
3. Programme Charter Creation	Director of Training	programme charter creation
4. Approval to Develop	Board of Directors	BoD meeting
5. Programme Development Committee Establishment	Quality Review Board (QRB)	QRB meeting
6 & 7. Programme Design	Programme Development Committee	meetings & email discussions
8. Academic & QA Approval	Quality Review Board (QRB)	QRB meeting
9. Commercial Sign-Off	Board of Directors	BoD meeting
10. Submission to QQI for validation	Quality Review Board (QRB)	QQI submission process

steps 6, 7, & 8 must be repeated if programme not approved by QRB

steps 7, 8, & 9 must be repeated if programme not signed-off by BoD

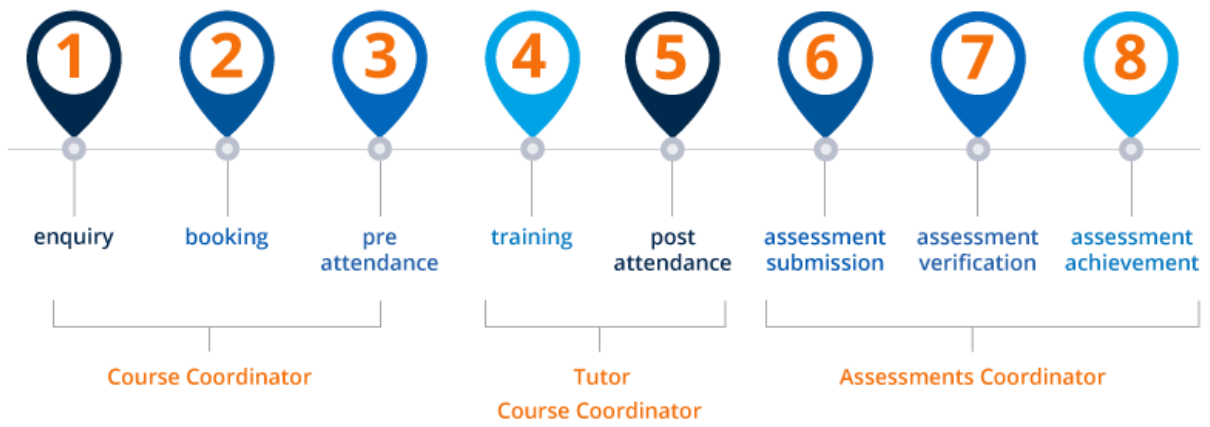*Figure 10 - New Programme Development and Approval Process*

The QQI Learner Lifecycle

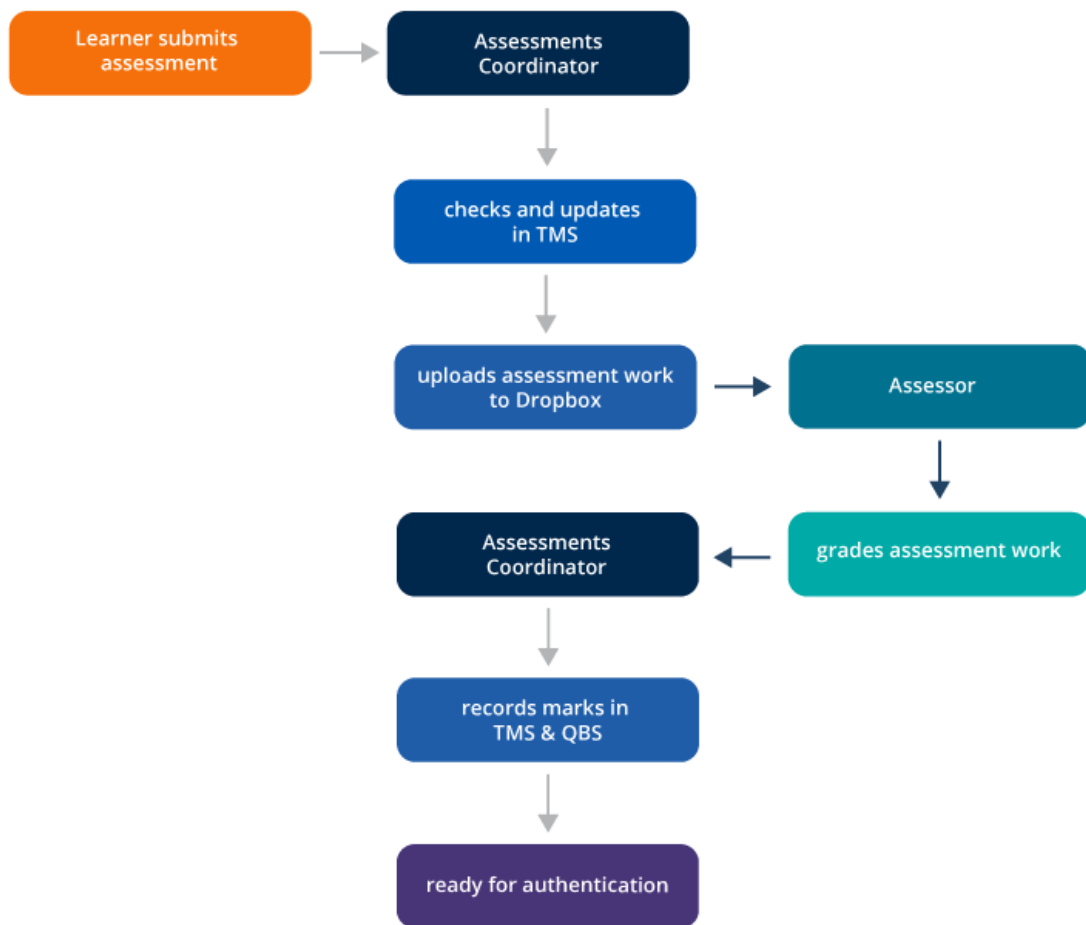*Figure 11 - QQI Learner Lifecycle*

Standard Grading Process

Figure 12 - Standard Grading Process

Standard Authentication Process

Phase 1: Internal Verification
(occurs every certification period)

- QA Officer
- exports certification period data from TMS
- performs checks for all learners
- performs checks for sample selection
- completes IV Report

Phase 2: External Authentication
(occurs at least 3 times per year)

- QA Officer
- coordinates EA visit
- External Authenticator
- completes EA report

Phase 3: Results Approval
(occurs every certification period)

- QA Officer
- coordinates RAP meeting
- QA, AC & Assessors attend RAP meeting
- once results are approved, AC sends PGN
- final grades entered to QBS
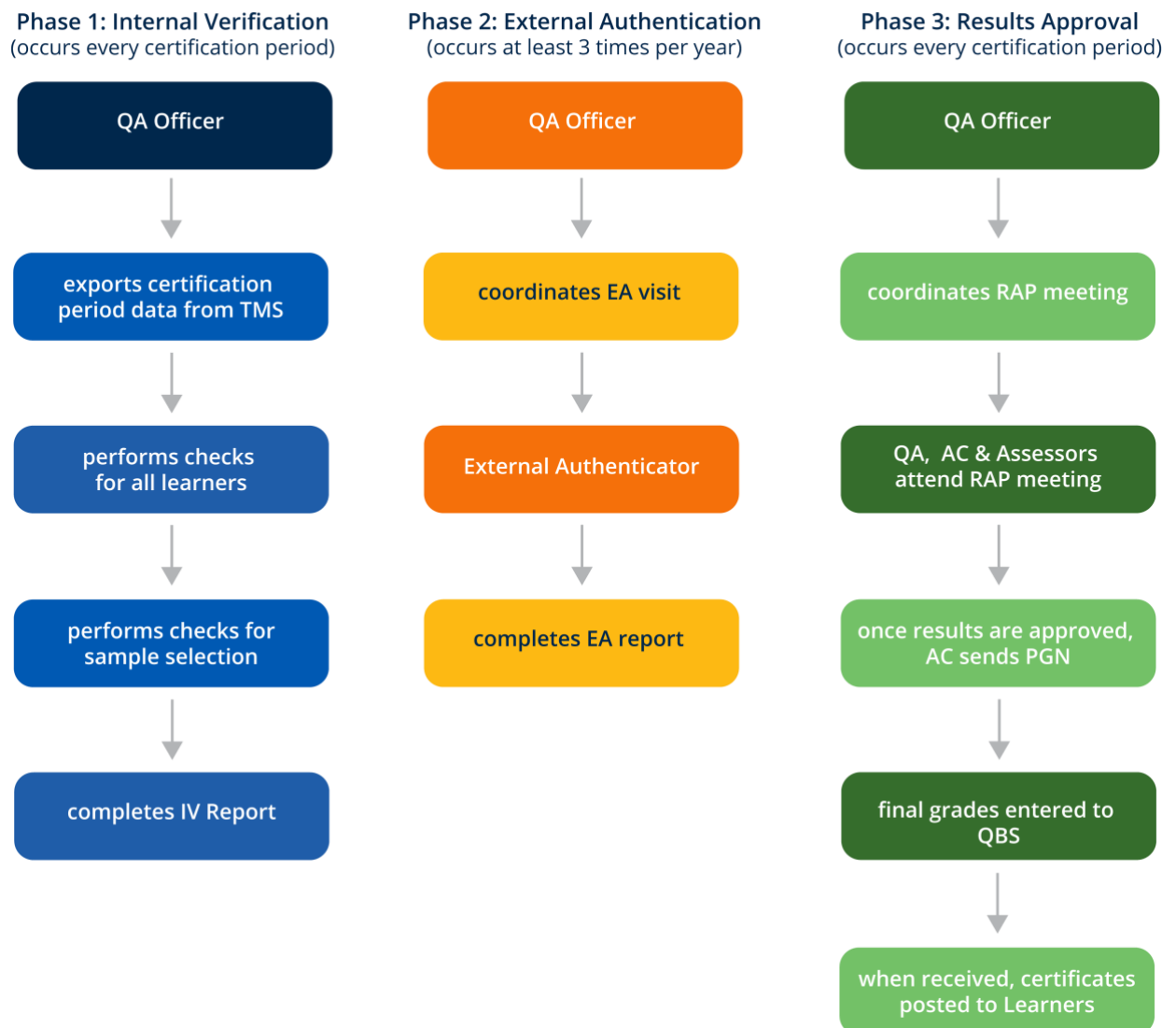- when received, certificates posted to Learners

Figure 13 - Standard Authentication Process
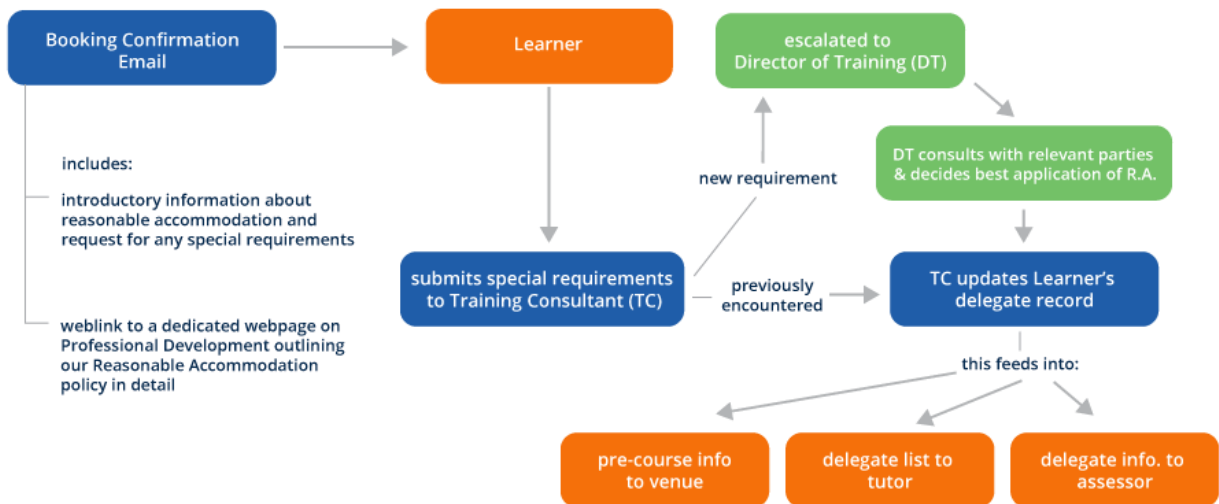
Gathering & Communicating Special Requirements

Figure 14 - Gathering and Communicating Special Requirements

Approved by: Dr. Paula Higgins   Date Approved: 22.11.2022