UPOL005 Programme Review and Development Policy

1. Policy Overview

This policy is designed to guide College staff as to the process for reviewing the College programme and developing new programmes. This policy sets out what needs to happen and why as regards reviewing and developing any programme in the College that lead to a QQI award.

2. Policy Statement

The College sets out to comply with QQI core programme validation criteria[1], namely

- The provider is eligible to apply for validation of the programme.
- The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought.
- The programme concept, implementation strategy, and interpretation of QQI award standards are well informed and soundly based (considering social, cultural, educational, professional and employment objectives).
- The programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory.
- The programme's written curriculum is well structured and fits its purpose.
- There are sufficient qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned.
- There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned.
- The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners.
- There are sound teaching and learning strategies.
- There are sound assessment strategies.
- Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided and cared for.
- The programme is well managed.

This policy is also written following QQI's core validation policy and criteria[2].

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[1] Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training (2017), section 17
[2] QQI HET Core Validation Policy and Criteria Revised (2013)

- The programme's content and learning environment must be appropriate to the programme's intended learning outcomes.

- The programme should involve authentic learning opportunities to enable the achievement of the intended programme learning outcomes.

- The programme should compare well against benchmarks (where appropriate).

- The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression should be consistent with the procedures described in national Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners[3].

- The programme should meet genuine education and training needs.

- The programme should be viable.

- All programmes should have procedures for assessment of learners which should be consistent with Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013[4].

- The provider should have, where required, suitable arrangements for protection for enrolled learners if it ceases to provide the programme.

- The provider should have appropriate quality assurance arrangements for the proposed programme. Any new quality assurance arrangements required should be agreed upon with QQI. Where QQI is the awarding body such new arrangements should be detailed with the application for validation.

A programme is the learning package designed, developed, and delivered by the College and it describes how the award standard will be reached. It provides an insight into the learning experiences on offer that will enable the student profiled to reach the standards of knowledge, skill and competence required to achieve the award that the programme is designed to deliver. A module can be defined as a sub-component of a programme with a defined title, learning outcomes, syllabus, and credits. For this policy, it is inferred that module reviews form a part of the programme review and development process.

Ideas and suggestions for new and improved programmes must be processed in a controlled and methodological way to ensure that programmes

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[3] QQI Policy Restatement Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training
[4] Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013

- Are only developed if an identified need and an identified demand are in evidence.

- Are consistent with the College strategic and resource planning and contributes to achieving its aims and objectives.

- Offer a valuable educational experience to our students.

- Are developed to meet the requirements of QQI and other external requirements where required.

- Are formally approved and validated before delivery and are subject to periodic revalidation as per QQI guidelines.

- Have access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI criteria for approval.

- Have considered and outlined any blended learning aspects.

- Are subject to continuous monitoring and formal annual review.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Programme Manager to implement this policy in all its aspects. Staff, students, and stakeholders may suggest ideas for programme enhancements or new programmes but irrespective of source, this policy guides all programme review and development at the College.

The Academic Director is responsible for ensuring that policies are developed and maintained, that they remain fit for purpose, that they remain in compliance with QQI guidelines, that they are updated as per agreed schedules, and that they are being implemented as intended. In the latter context, the Academic Director will inspect a sample of policies each year to check for the correct implementation and bring the findings to AC as part of the annual QA/QQI review and reporting process.

The Programme Manager is responsible for ensuring that programmes have a formalised academic calendar, programme outlines, learning outcomes, assessment strategies, learning materials, sufficient teaching staff and for liaising with the external examiner to confirm academic standards in assessed work. A full role description is outlined in the QAM, section 2.4.3. The Student Support Officer supports the Programme Manager with programme monitoring by gathering, analysing, and feeding in salient academic into the relevant boards and committees that meet to discuss programmes

and student performance. This process allows all staff to make informed decisions as to what improvements are needed.

Programme Board

Programme development post the development of the first programme and programme reviews are discussed and processed via Programme Board. Its terms of reference concerning programme review and development and membership are as follows…see QAM, section 2.3.2.1. for its full terms of reference.

Purpose

Programme Board is responsible for the effective development, management, operation, and review of the programme as well as the monitoring, review and development of new modules, programmes, and assessments.

Key Responsibilities

Its main responsibilities include – see chapters 4, 6 and 7 for full details on the programme including admissions, recruitment, teaching, learning and assessment.

- Programme Development
  - Ensure that the programme is developed to ensure that it meets the required standards for the Level 5 Specific Purpose Certificate in International Foundation Studies award. Each of the 12 QQI validation criteria will be addressed in the submission[5] to ensure that the programme:
    - Is designed with overall programme objectives and programme strategies that are in line with the provider strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes.
    - Is developed in line with the requirements of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and associated policies and procedures on Access, Transfer and Progression.
    - Is designed with the involvement of learners and other stakeholders. For the College programme, learner input from previous roles held by existing staff has been included.

[5] Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers (2016), section 3.1.

- Benefits from external expertise and reference point to ensure it fulfils vocational needs where appropriate.
- Is designed to enable smooth progression for learners within and between programmes. For the College programme, progression between pathways is more relevant.
- Defines the expected learner workload.
- Is compliant with internal and other regulatory or professional policies and requirements.
- Has procedures for coordinating provision at faculty (or equivalent) level and college or centre (or equivalent) level for multiple programmes.
- Include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate (including traineeships, internships, and other time outside the provider designed to offer experience in an area related to the programme of study).
- Is subject to formal internal provider approval processes against defined criteria.
- Is subject to ongoing monitoring and periodic review.
- Is designed with the intended mode of delivery and learning environment in mind.
  - o Formally proposing new programmes and or programme suggestions and improvements to EMT initially for resource and demand evaluations/decisions and later AC for final programme proposal to EMT.
- Programme Monitoring and Review
  - o Ensuring all QA College policies and procedures are adhered to.
  - o Ensuring arrangements are in place that addresses all aspects highlighted by the QQI validation criteria.
  - o Developing and ensuring implementation of programme-specific quality assurance arrangements.
  - o Undertaking and evaluating student and staff feedback. After the first student intake has completed the programme, feedback from College graduates and receiving HEIs will be sought and evaluated.
  - o Agreeing on the schedule of assessments and feedback to students to manage student assessment workload.
  - o Ensuring that programmes are adequately staffed.

- o Ensuring that programmes and modules are reviewed.
- o Ensuring that premises, facilities, and technologies remain fit for purpose for the programme(s) run at the College.
- o Checking that library – physical and online - resources remain up to date and relevant to the modules and content being taught.
- o Reviewing programme action plans to ensure proposed actions are followed up and implemented.
- o Identifying risks, perform a quantitative and qualitative risk analysis, implement preventative and mitigation actions and review as per UPOL003 UniHaven Risk Management Policy.

- Public Information
  - o Ensuring that programme information is made publicly available to applicants, students and agents in a way that is easily accessible, accurate and transparent.

Membership

- Programme Manager (Chair).
- All Teachers.
- Student representatives (at least two nominated from the student pathway stream/class representative cohort).
- Student Support Officer.
- External Adviser for external input as relevant…examples includes experts in Teaching and Learning, Blended Learning, Business, Industry, International Education, Student Communications and so on.

Frequency of Meetings

At least twice per semester.

Receives reports/information from

- Academic Director for institutional performance data.

- Programme Manager for programme and student data.

- External Examiners as reports for examination-related input.

- Student Representative Meetings for student feedback and input.

- Staff regarding feedback about the programmes, teaching, student performance, etc.

<u>Reports to</u>

An Annual Programme Report is prepared and agreed upon by Programme Board and sent to AC for approval.

4. Policy

There are 2 key aspects to the College's approach to programme review and development, namely:

- Programme Development.

- Programme Monitoring and Review.

Programme Development

The development of new and updated programmes is conducted in a defined way with sufficient time allowed for the necessary internal and external assessments and consultations. New and updated programmes proceed through an internal approval process and must also be approved externally by QQI. Several principles underpin and provide the rationale for these developmental steps:

- There should be a systematic approach to programme design and development to provide clarity around responsibilities, purpose, resource implications (including premises and facilities) and sufficient time to introduce any new or changed programmes.

- There should be sufficient clarity around the objectives, learning outcomes and size of a programme from early on, and relevant staff should be aware of the implications of its introduction.

- The design phase of the programme should involve sufficient reflection on how the programme structure, content, blended learning, and assessment methodologies match the learning outcomes.

- A business case should be proposed to justify the demand for the programme, its financial sustainability, its market need and relevance, the need for additional physical infrastructure all to enable the College to fulfil its obligations and reach expected academic standards.
- There should be an external validation of the programme by QQI.

The developmental steps that a new programme idea must go through before approval are outlined in detail in the programme development process in section 5. A summary of this process is shown in Figure 1.1.
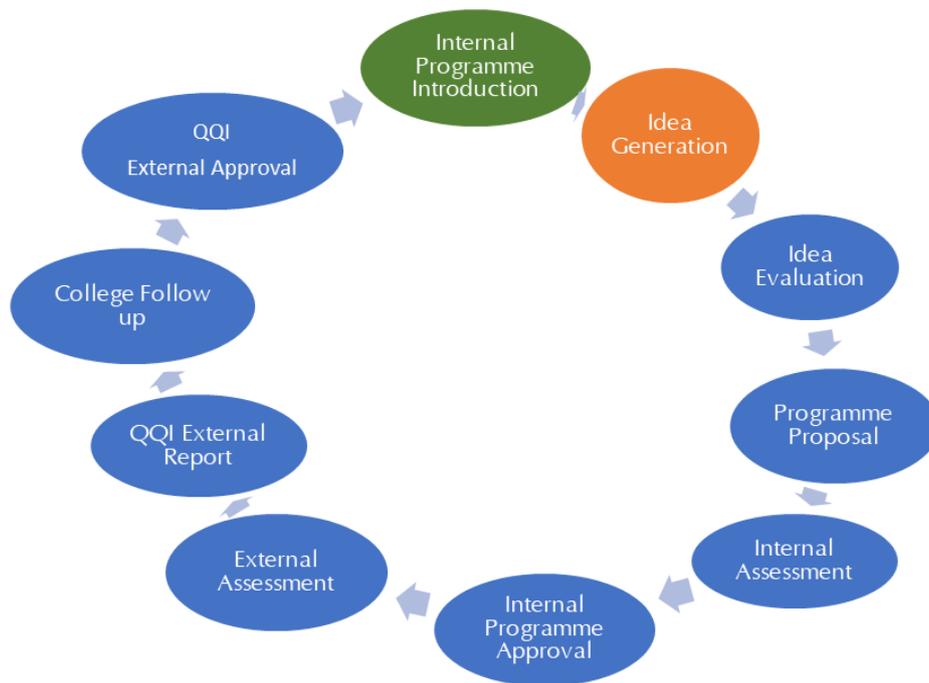
Fig 1.1 Programme Development Process

Programme Monitoring and Review

Programme monitoring and review is taken as an opportunity to:

- Ensure that the programme remains appropriate and create a supportive and effective learning environment.
- Ensure that the programme achieves the objectives set for it and responds to the needs of the College students and the changing needs of the College's HEI partners and ultimately employers and society.
- Review the student workload.
- Review student progression and completion rates benchmarked against competitors.
- Review the effectiveness of assessment policy and procedures, adding new assessment types, as necessary.
- Review the physical premises and facilities that are necessary for programme delivery including but not limited to classroom sizes, library and IT, science/media laboratory facilities etc.
- Update programme content, delivery modes, teaching and learning methods, learning supports and resources, and information provided to students.
- Update third party, industry, or other stakeholders as relevant to the programme.
- Review quality assurance arrangements that are specific to that programme.
- Review blended learning and assessment aspects.

Programme delivery is monitored in a way that allows for the identification of needs and the modification and adjustment of the programme and its delivery method as appropriate.

Ongoing Monitoring and Review

Ongoing monitoring and review of a programme are used as an opportunity to evaluate that programme with the benefit of the experience of programme delivery incorporating feedback from staff, students, and stakeholders. Such evidence is reflected in student academic data, programme completion rate data and Higher Education Institution (HEI) progression data/feedback as well as student, teacher, and/or stakeholder feedback and programme evaluations. UPOL030 UniHaven Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review Policy and UPOL025 UniHaven Learning Analytics Policy address

how the College collects data on students' engagement, the effectiveness of student supports, learning effectiveness, programme effectiveness, students' academic progression through the programme and the academic performance of the College generally.

The monitoring and review process is iterative, and much of this activity takes place at different times and through a variety of mechanisms during the year such as Programme Manager-staff interactions, assessment results reviews, and staff and student feedback via formal and informal channels. See UPRO003 UniHaven Performance Management Procedure for how staff feedback is gathered and UPOL017 UniHaven Student Support Policy for how student feedback is collected. Notwithstanding the more immediate interventions that continuous monitoring allows, the principal monitoring mechanism is the more formal module and programme reviews that take place annually.

Annual Programme and Module Reviews

It is good practice for the College[6] to periodically evaluate modules and programmes to consider advances in knowledge or technology, changing social, societal, or international contexts, changing student profiles, change in learning delivery expectations, and change in HEI requirements concerning the type of programmes needed to satisfy their entry criteria or the change in student profile they need to satisfy their academic requirements. An Annual Programme Report is prepared and agreed upon by Programme Board that details the findings and recommendation from the annual programme and module review process and is sent to AC for approval. Its key findings will be incorporated into the College Annual Quality Report endorsed by AC and sent to QQI each year.

The module reviews are coordinated by the Programme Manager in conjunction with the Teachers. The review assesses student academic performance, module assessment successes/issues, and general teaching effectiveness using feedback from student achievement and progression data (formative and summative), teacher/external examiner feedback and student feedback. Review outputs are fed into and discussed at Programme Board. Programme reviews are conducted by the Programme Board and staff, student and external feedback as described in the terms of reference in

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[6] Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers (2016), section 3

section 3. Improvement measures are implemented in consultation with internal assessors and External Examiners in respect of each module.

On foot of the above reviews as well as from student feedback or informal monitoring during the year, it is common that there will be minor alterations to modules to maintain relevance and freshness. These can include changes to title, aims, objectives, outcomes, syllabi, programme content and delivery methods. Where minor changes are proposed after a review, the Programme Manager will approve the proposed changes and implementation strategy. If the revisions are substantial or a new module is required, which necessitate approval from QQI, the Programme Manager begin the programme development process as outlined in section 5 of this policy. See also UPOL030 UniHaven Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review Policy where the degree to which a programme change constitutes a significant change is described and how such changes are dealt with.

5. Procedures and Forms

Programme Development

The Programme Development Process is outlined here for all programmes to be developed at the College after the first programme has been approved.
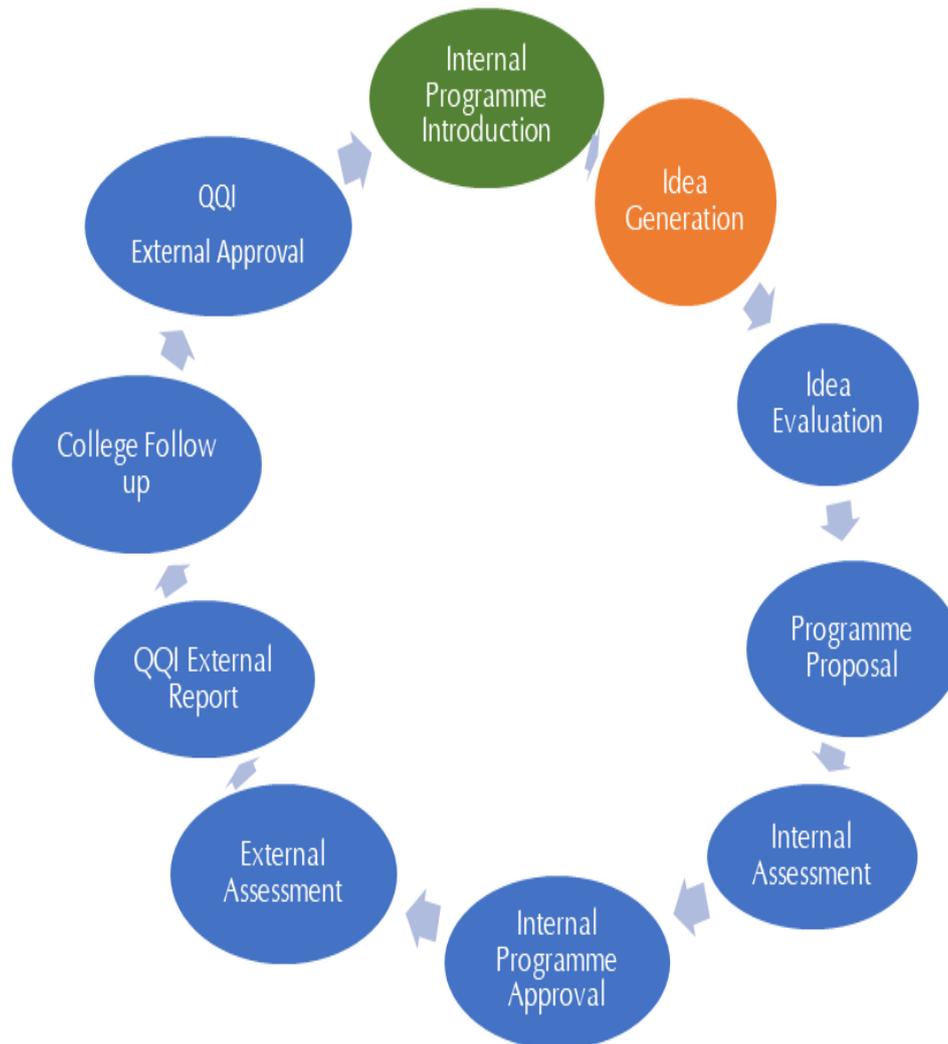
Figure 1.1 (Repeat) Programme Development Process

Idea Generation

The first step is the initial idea generation. Ideas for new and updated programmes arise in several ways including from College staff, from student feedback, from engagement with HEI partners, from engagement with external experts, from engagement with government bodies in Ireland and overseas, or a formal programme review at Programme Board. Managers and College Officers also review international education trends and gaps in the market to develop new programme ideas.

Idea Evaluation

The proposed programme or update is discussed initially at the programme level with the Programme Manager taking the lead. The Programme Manager requests approval from Executive Management Team (EMT) regarding the following aspects in particular

- Does it fit with the College's core mission and strategic priorities?
- Is there sufficient demand and need for the programme externally?
- Are there sound financial reasons for its introduction...has a cost/benefit analysis been completed and does it project profitability?
- Are there sufficient resources to develop and implement the programme to include premises and facilities to accommodate the programme or is an extension of premises and facilities up to and including the addition of a new teaching centre/college in a separate location to our current college location needed?

If EMT does not give its approval for the suggested programme/update, the process stops at this stage. If it does verify that the programme/update is worth pursuing, then the programme development process continues to the next stage.

Programme Proposal

The Programme Manager must consider further aspects of the programme/update to decide whether to formally propose new or updated programme suggestions to Programme Board, including:

- Are there sound academic reasons for its introduction to include areas such as the progression of students to HEI partners, the assessment strategies for the modules suggested?

- Will it meet the required academic standards as specified by QQI?
- Is the programme workable internally regarding staff competence and capability, external examiner resources etc.?

If the outcome of the above deliberations endorses the suggested programme/update, the Programme Manager then outlines the following information in detail as part of his/her official programme proposal for consideration at the Programme Board.

- Programme Business Case - including the rationale for programme or update introduction, the target group, the resources required, the staff required (including External Examiners) and evidence of likely demand.
- Premises and Facilities – are current premises, facilities, and support infrastructure such as IT, learning technologies, availability of student nearby accommodation, transport linkages, HEI linkages, science/media laboratory access etc. able to absorb another programme being run in situ or do we need to run our programme in a different location, building, site, etc. altogether.
- Programme Title - including the qualification and the relevant NFQ level.
- Programme Profile - including the duration, the award type, and the credit size.
- Student Profile and Entry Criteria – ensuring entry criteria are in line with the entry criteria of the HEI partners this programme will feed into.
- Programme Objectives - including student outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, and competence.
- Access Transfer and Progression - ensuring the proposed programme comes under the College's existing ATP policy.
- Delivery Mode and Methodologies – differentiating between in class delivery and online learning support.
- Delivery Programme Structure - including the modules and general academic content.
- Assessment Strategies[7] – for both the overall programme and for each module.
- Student Supports - including how students are supported in the context of the College's overall student support services.
- Staffing – to include internal and external staff resources needed to deliver the programme.

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[7] Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013

- Specific Validation Requirements - including any requirements that are outside of the normal QQI validation requirements due to the nature of the programme or any unique features of the target student profile.
- Protection for Enrolled Learners - ensuring students on the proposed programme are included in the College's existing learner protection arrangements.

Internal Assessment

The Programme Manager brings the proposed programme to Programme Board. Programme Board perform an initial evaluation of the proposal. If further information is required, the Programme Manager adds such information to the proposal before bringing it back to Programme Board. If Programme Board is satisfied that the proposal is worth taking forward, an internal review panel is assembled under the oversight of the Programme Manager. This panel will consist of

- Programme Manager (Chair).
- Teachers with sufficient experience and expertise in the programme/update.
- Student representatives (two with sufficient knowledge of the programme/update).
- External Advisers for external input as relevant...examples include experts in Teaching and Learning, Blended Learning, Business, Industry, International Education, Student Communications, Higher Education, HEI Partner Representatives, Multicultural Teaching Experts, other Foundation Programme Providers and so on. These experts may assess potential transfer and progression option concerning other providers or HEI partners.

If the outcome of the above deliberations endorses the proposed programme, the Programme Manager takes the endorsed programme back to Programme Board for proposing to AC for formal approval. If it does not, the proposed programme goes back to the Idea Evaluation stage in conjunction with EMT.

Internal Programme Approval

Programme Board will meet to discuss the programme after its internal assessment has been completed and will formally decide to approve it for proposal to AC. AC will then formally endorse the programme for validation through QQI and proposes this step to EMT. EMT signs off on the business and academic case for the introduction of the programme.

The Programme Manager assembles a programme team to prepare the submission material and documents to facilitate the QQI validation processes[8]. The Programme Manager leads on the internal compiling of documentation while the Academic Director leads on the coordination of communications, panel reviews and site visits with QQI. Ultimately, the Academic Director is responsible for oversight of the submission working closely with the Programme Manager and s/he approves all documented submissions to QQI before they are sent until QQI programme accreditation is secured. The programme is then formally submitted to QQI comprised of the

- Completed submission.
- Supporting documentation.
- Self-evaluation of the programme against QQI programme validation requirements.
- Applicable fee.

External Assessment

QQI form a panel to externally assess the programme submission against the QQI programme validation requirements. This may include site visits.

College Follow Up

In line with QQI requirements[9], the Academic Director in conjunction with the Programme Manager will review QQI's report received as part of the programme validation process to implement any actions recommended by QQI and respond accordingly. The Academic Director will liaise with QQI as s/he coordinates the follow-up process.

QQI External Approval

QQI receives the College response to its initial assessment and proceeds with its final assessment. It then produces the QQI Report that also contains its determination. Assuming the programme validation process has not led to a refusal, the programme will be approved by QQI for the College to promote and teach it. QQI will notify the College in writing of its programme validation approval and

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[8] QQI Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training (2017)
[9] QQI Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training (2017)

issue a certificate of validation. QQI will also follow up to make sure its recommendations have been implemented by the College.

If refusal has been the determination, the College may follow up as follows:

- Make representations up to and including an appeal.
- Act to fully address QQI's recommendations to satisfy all QQI's programme validation requirements.
- Reapply for programme validation.

Internal Programme Introduction

Once QQI programme accreditation is secured for the new or significantly updated programme, the Academic Director will oversee the preparation of the College and its staff for the introduction of the new/significantly changed programme. For a new programme, the programme team will set about developing the course materials and online material where necessary. Meanwhile, the Programme Manager and the Student Support Officer are tasked with setting up the staffing, administrative and student supports for the programme. EMT will have pre-approved budgets for any additional physical or technical infrastructure needed and the Academic Director will oversee the renting/purchasing of all additional resources required.

Module Development

Changes to modules and in ways that affect overall programme delivery, and the suggestions for the introduction of new modules, will require approval from QQI via the Programme Review and Development process outlined above. Teachers, therefore, should be aware that final confirmation might not be forthcoming for a period spanning one or more meetings with QQI. However, it is common that there will be minor alterations to modules to maintain relevance and freshness. These can include changes to title, aims, objectives, outcomes, syllabi, programme content and delivery methods. They may result from annual reviews or student feedback or informal monitoring during the year.

Where issues arise during the delivery cycle of a module, and immediate minor changes are deemed necessary, the Programme Manager should ensure that a record of the change appears in the next Programme Review cycle and the Academic Director should notify QQI of such minor changes to ensure continued compliance with programme validation criteria. While the effectiveness of any minor changes completed will be evaluated during the progress of the next delivery cycle of the module (and adjustments made accordingly), the success or otherwise of such changes must feed into the Programme Review process and be recorded as part of Programme Board's Annual Programme Report sent to AC for approval.

Quality Assurance Manual (QAM) Chapter 4	
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