Quality Assurance Manual

Teaching & Learning

5. Teaching & Learning

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5. TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Foreword

The 2019 revision of the Dorset College Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) is in line with the Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers[1] and the Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Independent/Private Providers coming to QQI on a Voluntary basis[2], as well as the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, May 2015[3]. This revision also takes into consideration the evolving scope of Dorset College encompassing policies and procedures applicable to higher, further and English language education. The revision is within the context of overall governance and management structures in place to support the delivery of such programmes and specifically encompassing policies and procedures applicable to our current suite of programmes (Level 5 to Level 8) and in the future up to level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

This edition of the QAH was informed by consultation with key stakeholders of the College including but not limited to learners, staff and faculty and wider engagement with the further and higher educational community as well as external stakeholders for approval by Dorset College Academic Quality Committee upon review by an independent QQI panel.

[1] QQI’s Core Statutory QA Guidelines
https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf
[2] QQI’s Sector Specific QA Guidelines
https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ Sector%20Specific%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines%20V2.pdf
[3] European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)
https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

Policy Title	**Teaching & Learning**
Date Approved	17/12/2018
Effective From	02/01/2019
Monitor	Registrar / QA Department
Summary	This policy provides an overview of the policies directly related to the teaching and learning activities of the College. This encapsulates both the learning experience and the learning environment offered by the College.
Related Policies	
Revision History & Commencement Date & Date of Next Review	Version 1 – 2019 Commencement Date (Version 1): 02/01/2019 Date of Next Review: Following Independent Assessment from Re-engagement process

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide an overarching framework to ensure the quality of the learning experience offered by the College. The learning experience is inclusive of the learning facilitated in the classroom (and supplemented through the College's Virtual Learning Environment), how programmes are taught and delivered by the College, as well as the learning environment offered by the College. This policy will also provide clarity of the College's provision to its learners.

Scope

This policy applies to all assessments as part of the Further Education and Higher Education programmes as well as English Language education at Dorset College.

Policy Statement

Dorset College recognises that the teaching & learning of its programmes is integral to its educational provision. Therefore, the College is cognisant of the need to ensure that it maintains a high standard of teaching and learning. It is also cognisant of the importance of its learning experience and environment, which support the teaching and learning efforts of the College.

5.1

Monitoring the Learning Experience

The maintenance of the quality of the learning experience is central to the ethos of the College. To ensure this, the College recognises the need to continuously monitor and improve the learner experience that it offers.
The College will monitor its learning experience as follows:

_Quantitative feedback from learners once per semester.
_Qualitative feedback from class representatives once per semester.
_Faculty feedback collected through Programme Boards.
_Technical assessment of the virtual learning environment twice per year.
_Feedback received in the External Examiner’s Report(s).
_Review of the College’s Teaching, Learning & Assessment strategy once per year.

Furthermore, the College will ensure that it is kept abreast of developments in the area of teaching & learning by ensuring its staff interact with relevant communities of practice. This may entail one or more of the following on an annual basis:

_Staff and/or faculty attending conferences on teaching & learning. Such as those hosted by HECA, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning, and the International Conference on Engaging Pedagogy.

Monitoring the Learning Experience

_Staff and/or faculty presenting papers at conferences on teaching & learning. Such as those hosted by HECA, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning, and the International Conference on Engaging Pedagogy.

_Staff and/or faculty reviewing contemporary literature on teaching & learning.

_The College facilitating a workshop on teaching & learning approaches for staff and faculty.

5.2

Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy

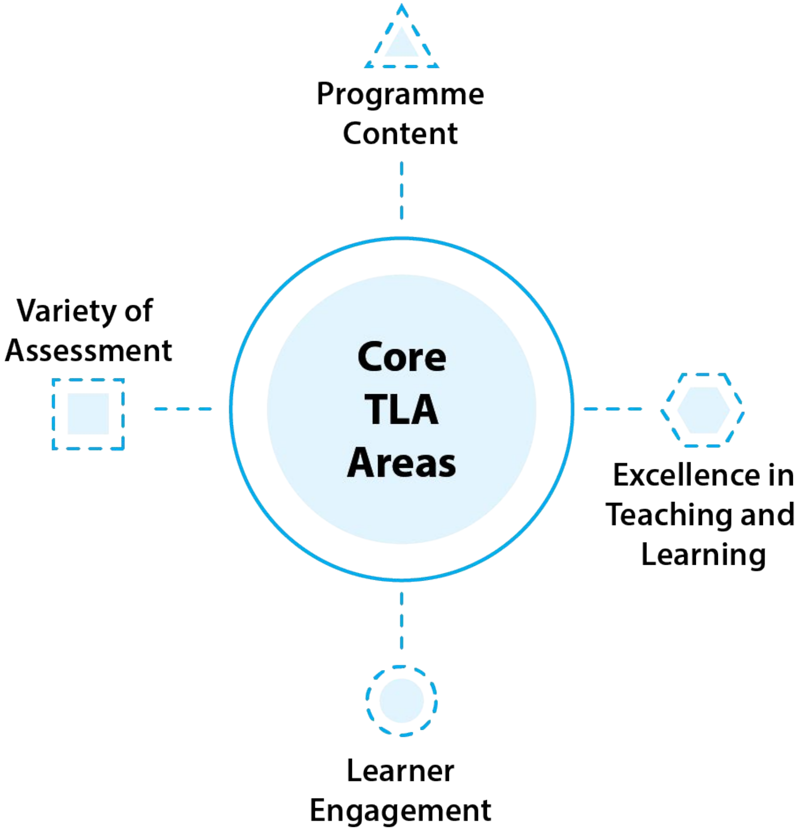
The College currently adopts a predominantly face-to-face teaching approach that is complemented by its virtual learning environment (VLE) MOODLE.The College is committed to the continuing adoption of technology to enhance its Teaching and Learning approach. Its current use of technology is largely confined to its VLE, which acts as a support mechanism for its face-to-face teaching approach.

Dorset College is committed to developing a strategy on digitally enhanced learning as part of the overall development of the College. The College will engage with relevant stakeholders to ensure that any such development is appropriate and relevant to the particular field of learning and learner and is in line with College Mission and Values.

The College adopts a varied teaching and learning strategy that is intended to engage learners in a variety of ways, and adopt strategies that are level and programme appropriate. The College also views the assessment used for individual modules as a means to support the overarching teaching and learning strategy of the programme. The discussion hereunder provides an outline of the overarching teaching and learning strategy for a programme, and how the assessment strategy supports same. The teaching and learning strategy for each module will also be outlined in the individual module descriptors.

Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy

The overarching Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (TLA) Strategy of the College is guided by four core areas:



Programme Content

Variety of Assessment

Core TLA Areas

Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Learner Engagement

The Core Teaching, Learning, and Assessment areas

Programme Content

The College endeavours to ensure that the content of its programmes is both engaging and challenging, and also cognisant of the skills that will be of assistance to learners for employability upon graduation. To ensure that its programme content achieves this, the College initially develops its MIPLOs, which are informed by the appropriate awards standards. These MIPLOs then inform a programme's MIMLOs, which should align to the MIPLOs. The College is also conscious that the MIMLOs are both theoretically aware, and practically applied – that is, a programme's modules are built on a foundation of ensuring the learner is aware of the requisite theoretical arguments/perspectives within a disciplinary area, but also is exposed to how such theoretical perspectives are practically applied in work-based scenarios.

Programme Content Goals

1. To ensure that MIMLOs are benchmarked against those of other leading educational institutions.
2. To ensure that modules are theoretically informed and practically applied.
3. To facilitate learner input into the devising of a programme content.

The Core Teaching, Learning, and Assessment areas for Dorset College

Excellence in Teaching and Learning

The College recognises that its faculty should not only be well-informed in their disciplinary area, and thus, a module's content, but they should also be well-informed on best practice with regards the delivery of such content. Therefore, the College endeavours to ensure that its faculty are informed on Teaching and Learning theories, and on the variety of potentially effective teaching strategies. The College is also aware that ensuring that its faculty have the requisite knowledge in this area will involve staff professional development. Therefore, the College has committed to providing financial support for some of its faculty to undertake a Masters' in Teaching and Learning and facilitates members of its faculty to attain the digital badge in Teaching Strategies.

Teaching and Learning Goals

1. To ensure that faculty are informed of teaching and learning theories, and effective teaching strategies.
2. To facilitate faculty in furthering their knowledge in this area, through providing continuous professional development opportunities.

The Core Teaching, Learning, and Assessment areas for Dorset College

Learner Engagement

The level of engagement from learners is key to ensuring that the educational experience that they have during their studies in the College is a fulfilling one. The transition from purely didactic to a more interactive learning environment has as a prerequisite, an engaged learner body. The College is keen to harness the potential of such a learning environment but facilitating as much engagement as possible with its learners.

Learner Engagement Goals

1. To provide an engaging and challenging programme content, delivered through engaging teaching and learning strategies.
2. To explore how technology can be used both inside and outside the classroom to enhance learner engagement.
3. To ensure an emphasis on employability skills, particularly in the award year of a programme.
4. To explore how a ‘learner voice’ could be further incorporated into various aspects of a programme, such as indicative syllabus and assessment.

The Core Teaching, Learning, and Assessment areas for Dorset College

Variety of Assessment

As educational programmes continue to move towards being structured through learning outcomes, a by-product of this has been the assessment of the learning outcomes. This has led to an increasing focus on the assessment instruments by learners, as performance in such instruments tend to be the key tangible outcome that is recognised from a programme of learning. Aside from the worthy debate as to whether this is appropriate, it has resulted in an increasing focus on assessment. The College is conscious to ensure that the assessment instruments that it uses on all programmes are appropriate at the module level, but also cohesive at the programme level. Further to these key considerations, the College is also conscious that the learner workload is appropriate but not overly arduous, and that a variety of assessment instruments are utilised. To ensure the former, the College is guided by the notional learning hours detailed within the ECTS credit system, and for the latter, the College is cognisant of not over-using some instruments and disregarding others – for example, the College recognises the value of the examination as an assessment instrument but is conscious of an over-reliance on examinations.

Assessment Goals

1. To ensure a variety of assessments are utilised at each stage of a programme.
2. To recommend learners have a proportionate number of examinations within the overall context of the MIPLO’s and the programme assessment strategy.

The Core Teaching, Learning, and Assessment areas for Dorset College

3. To ensure the learner's assessment workload is both challenging and balanced at each stage of a programme.
4. To encourage learners to attempt all elements of an individual module's assessment strategy with a view to passing the module overall.

To ensure that its teaching and learning approach maintains its currency, the College will:

_ monitor its teaching and learning approach on an annual basis. This monitoring will incorporate learner feedback and lecturer feedback on existing and new approaches to teaching and learning adopted by the College. It will also review assessment marks, attendance and participation at classes where a new teaching and learning approach is adopted.

_ send a contingent of its staff to conferences on teaching and learning annually.

_ facilitate at least one teaching and learning workshop for its faculty annually.

5.3

Flexible Learning Pathways

As stated in policy 5.2 in this section, the College adopts a primarily face-to-face teaching approach, which is supported by technology through its VLE. However, the College is cognisant that this teaching approach is not appropriate or best suited to all learners. Furthermore, the College also recognises the limits to the education provision that it can offer to the necessary quality standard.

Therefore, the College commits to:
_providing flexible learning pathways where it can. Ordinarily this would include allowing learners to defer part of a programme (subject to the mitigating circumstances being accepted by the College), and providing learners with alternative assessment instruments where needed

_allowing learners to undertake a programme using an alternative teaching approach where that teaching approach has been validated by the College for the delivery of that programme

_providing learning material and/or resources that may be required to assist the learning experience

_utilise technology to assist the learning experience, such as interactive whiteboards, library services and laptops in the classroom

_having dedicated personnel in place to co-ordinate learning supports, such as supplementary academic writing classes, mathematics classes and assessment workshops.

Flexible Learning Pathways

_facilitating learners to meet with their lecturers outside of the scheduled classroom times (appointment only) which forms part of their contract of employment.

5.4

Mutual Respect in Learner-Teacher relationship

The College is committed to providing an educational provision that is learner-centred. This means that the operation and management of the College is ultimately influenced by first considering how the learner is best served. Being learner-centred, the College is conscious of ensuring that the learner is treated with dignity and respect during their studies with the College. However, the College also recognises the responsibilities of the learner. These responsibilities include developing an autonomy over their learning, being responsible for their learning, and having respect for those who are assisting them in their studies.

The learner-teacher relationship is arguably the most critical relationship in the learning experience. A harmonious relationship can greatly assist the learning process, and help the learner achieve their potential, but a fractious relationship can become a significant hindrance.

Therefore, the College will:

_Develop a charter of mutual respect between learners and teachers with input from both parties.

_Ensure that both learners and teachers are aware of the policy and charter of mutual respect that it insists upon. This will be achieved through reference in the Learner Handbook and Employee Handbook.

Mutual Respect in Learner-Teacher relationship

_Investigate all instances reported from either learners or teachers where the counterpart was not deemed to act in a mutually respectful manner. Where it is found that either the learner or the teacher infringed on the ideal of mutual respect, the College’s disciplinary procedure will be followed.

5.5

Learner Complaints & Appeals

As previously stated, Dorset College is a learner centred educational institute. Hence, it tries to ensure learner involvement with the development and review of as much of its policies as is appropriate. The College also realises that there may be instances where its ideals of learner centric, mutual respect and inclusion are not met. For such instances, the College has procedures in place for Learner Complaints and Appeals.

Learner Complaint Procedure

	Procedure Stage	Responsibility	Evidence
1.	**Written Complaint:** If a learner wishes to make a formal complaint about their experience in the College, they will be advised that such complaints should be made in writing and sent to the Programme Manager/Academic Operations in the first instance. Where the complaint involves the Programme Manager, it should instead be sent to the Academic Operations Director. The complaint should include as much detail as possible as to the nature of the complaint. Where it is about College facilities, these should be specifically detailed, and their alleged inadequacies and/or deficiencies highlighted. Where a complaint relates to a member of the College's staff, the incident that is the focus of the complaint should be detailed, with the alleged behaviour of the staff member clearly outlined.	**Learner** **Programme Manager/Academic Operations/ Director of Academic Operations**	**Written Complaint**

Learner Complaint Procedure

	Procedure Stage	Responsibility	Evidence
2.	**Investigation of complaint:** All complaints are investigated under the auspices of the AMG. The AMG will ordinarily assign an individual to co-ordinate this investigation. An investigation will explore the nature and details of the complaint. If the complaint is in regard to College facilities, the investigator will review these facilities to assess if they are fit for purpose. If the complaint is in regard to a member of the College's staff, the investigator may interview the staff member to whom the complaint has been made against and/or anyone else (learner or staff member) who may have witnessed the incident that provides the context for the complaint.	**Academic Management Group**	

Learner Complaint Procedure

	Procedure Stage	Responsibility	Evidence
3.	**Report of investigation:** The investigator shall submit their report of the investigation into the complaint to the AMG. Where a member of the AMG is the subject of the complaint, that person will be omitted from the circulation of the report. The AMG will then consider the report at its next meeting. The report will have a recommended outcome that the AMG will consider, but not necessarily adopt. The AMG has the ultimate authority on how to respond to this complaint.	**Academic Management Group**	**Investigation Report** **Minutes of AMG**
4.	**Outcome of investigation:** The AMG must have a 2:1 majority for a valid decision. The AMG has discretion as to what potential outcomes they may decide. All decisions must be evidence based and supported by the investigative report. Typically there are 10 working days from a leaner complaint to the AMG decision which may be extended, on notice to the learner, if necessary due to the complexity of a complaint/availability of information.	**Academic Management Group**	**Minutes of AMG**

Learner Appeals Procedure

	Procedure Stage	Responsibility	Evidence
1.	**Written Appeal:** If a learner is not satisfied with the outcome of their compliant as determined by the AMG, they are entitled to appeal this outcome to the AQC. Depending on the scheduling of the AQC, this appeal may be facilitated through email interaction and then formally noted at the next AQC. An appeal must be submitted within 3 working days. The appeal must detail the reason for the appeal. Specifically, it must state the reason for their dissatisfaction with the outcome from the AMG. If an appeal does not include this, it will not be considered by the AQC.	**Academic Quality Committee**	**Written Appeal**
2.	**Review of appeal:** The AQC will give each appeal an initial	**Academic Quality Committee**	

Learner Appeals Procedure

	Procedure Stage	Responsibility	Evidence
	screening to assess if it merits investigation. Where an appeal is made without sufficient evidence or support for why the learner believes the initial outcome was dissatisfactory, the appeal will not be progressed and the learner will be notified of this. If the AQC deems the appeal to have merits, it will ordinarily appoint an individual to review the outcome of the AMG. This review will focus on the decision taken by the AMG, and the merits of this decision.		
3.	**Report of review:** The investigator shall submit their report of the review of the appeal to the AQC.	**Academic Quality Committee**	**Review Report** **Minutes of AQC**

Learner Appeals Procedure

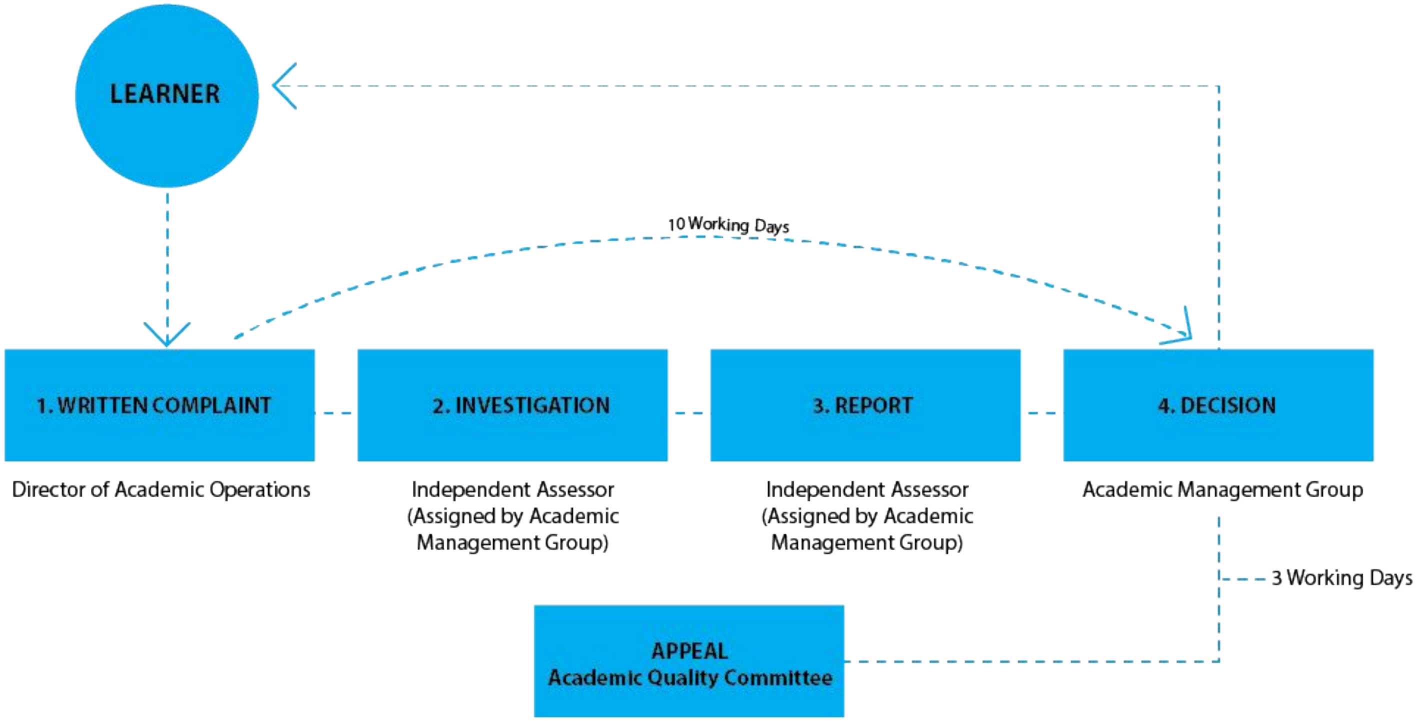
	Procedure Stage	Responsibility	Evidence
	The AQC will then consider the review either through email communication or at its next meeting. If the review is considered through email communication, it will be formally noted at the next scheduled AQC meeting. The report will have a recommended outcome that the AQC will consider, but not necessarily adopt. The AQC has the ultimate authority on how to respond to this review.		
4.	**Outcome of review:** The AQC must have a 2:1 majority in favour of the accepted outcome to the complaint. The AQC has discretion as to what potential outcomes they may decide. Whatever the decision is should be evidence based and	**Academic Quality Committee** **Academic Management Group**	**Minutes of AQC**

Learner Appeals Procedure

Procedure Stage	Responsibility	Evidence
supported by the investigative report. Where the AQC decides to uphold the appeal, it will ordinarily request a fresh investigation to be conducted by the AMG. This investigation will be conducted by a different investigator and the report from which be sent to the AQC for its consideration.		

Learner Complaints

Forms provided by Programme Administrators
Process managed by QA Officer/ Examinations Officer



LEARNER

10 Working Days

1. WRITTEN COMPLAINT
Director of Academic Operations

2. INVESTIGATION
Independent Assessor (Assigned by Academic Management Group)

3. REPORT
Independent Assessor (Assigned by Academic Management Group)

4. DECISION
Academic Management Group

3 Working Days

APPEAL
Academic Quality Committee

5.6

Learning Environment

The College recognises *learning environment* as a descriptive term that encapsulates a broad array of its infrastructure and facilities. Its learning environment includes its physical infrastructure as well as that of any potential outreach centres owned by another party, or off-campus environments such as work placements.

The College will:

_Ensure all classrooms are fully equipped with the requisite hardware, such as a computer, projector and speakers, and furniture for learners.

_Ensure that Wifi is available throughout its buildings.

_Ensure that all programmes or modules that have an ICT component will be taught in a computer laboratory.

_Ensure that all of its computer laboratories are equipped with a sufficient number of computers for a class cohort. Thus, the ratio of computers to learners will be at least 1:1.

Learning Environment

_Increase the e-resources available in its library to include more eBooks.

_Maintain the operational efficiency of its virtual learning environment and continue to improve the learner experience of this platform through adoption of plug-ins that will enhance the virtual learning environment.

_Have staff available to support its learning environment. This includes the College librarian, IT manager, and programme administration staff.

_Consult with learners on an annual basis to enquire as to the effectiveness of the learning environment. This will help inform the continued improvement of its environment.

_Review its learning environment on an annual basis to ensure they are maintained to an appropriate standard and that additional facilities and/or supports can be added to its learning environment.

The College does not currently teach in outreach centres or engage in collaboration with other providers for the delivery of its awards. However, where the College to commence such arrangements, it would commit to the policy details outlined above that cover its learning environment.

Learning Environment

The College currently offers work placement as an optional component on some of its programmes. Although the College does not foresee significant changes in its provision of work experience in the short-term (such as having work experience/placement as a larger component of a programme), it is still conscious of the need to ensure the appropriateness of the environment where existing learners may gain ECTS credit for learning acquired in the workplace.

Therefore, the College will:

_Ensure that each company that is facilitating work experience for a learner is fully informed on what is entailed. This would ordinarily entail an email communication to the appropriate person in the company with details of the requirements of the work experience.

_Visit the facilities of each company that is facilitating work experience to ensure they are appropriate and fit for purpose.

_Have a designated liaison person internally for the learner to contact with work placement queries.

_Request that the work placement provider informs the College and learner of a nominated contact in their organisation for work placement queries.

5.7

Review of Teaching & Learning Policies and Procedures

The College will review these Teaching and Learning policies and procedures on an annual basis. The following individual(s) will be involved in this review:

Registrar	Director of Academic Operations	Programme Manager
1 Lecturer	QA Officer	1 Learner

Thank you.