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# Quality Assurance Handbook

SETANTA COLLEGE

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## Section 2: Documented Approach to Quality Assurance



SETANTA  
College

## 2.1 Quality Assurance Policy for Setanta College

### 2.1.1 Definition

The term “quality assurance” is used to describe the processes that seek to ensure that the learning environment reached an acceptable threshold of quality. UNESCO defines quality assurance (QA) as “.an ongoing continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving) the quality of an education system, institution or program.”

In an education and training context, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) outlines that quality assurance has to do with matters such as:

- Whether the education, training, research and related services provided by a provider are fit for their professed purpose
- The trustworthiness of the qualifications awarded being recognised
- The net contribution of the education and training provision to the common good
- Accountability, openness and transparency
- The standards of awards

### 2.1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set the framework within which the Quality Assurance Systems of Setanta College will be developed, monitored, maintained and improved and through which a culture of quality will be developed and maintained within the College.

The policy also has the purpose of complying with the following –

- a) The requirement of QQI as set out in its Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines that the College implements and documents a policy for Quality Assurance
- b) The requirements of QQI as set out in its policies regarding Private Providers, Blended Learning and Collaborative and Transnational Programmes
- c) The requirement of various sporting and well-being bodies which are stakeholders of Setanta College that the training provided for them and their organisations is properly accredited through a quality-assured system

The following documents provide overarching guidance in establishing a Quality Assurance system at the College:

- Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.
- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI.
- Assessments and Standards (Revised 2013)
- Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (Revised 2013)
- Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining (Revised 2015)
- Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (QQI March 2018)

- Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training – QQI 2017
- HET and Apprenticeship Programme Validation Manual – QQI 2018
- Policy and Criteria for Making Awards – QQI 2017

Since Setanta College is part of the European Higher Education landscape, this policy also has regard to the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education \(2015\)](#) published by ENQA.

### 2.1.3 Scope

This policy applies to the policies and procedures of Setanta College and to those who work with or for it including its Learners, management and tutors.

The policy particularly applies to those individuals and structures which have direct responsibility for Quality Assurance within Setanta College. These include –

- The Academic Council
- Programme Boards
- Examination Boards
- College Registrar
- Academic Director
- Quality Assurance Officer
- Programme Leaders
- Chairperson of the Academic Council

### 2.1.4 Policies for Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance within Setanta College is delivered through –

- a) Strategies
- b) Values and their associated behaviours
- c) Policies
- d) Procedures
- e) Quality Culture Creation
- f) Risk Management

### 2.1.5 Policies for Strategy Development

Strategy is defined as 'a general direction set for an organisation and its various components to achieve a desired state in the future. Strategy results from the detailed strategic planning process.

The following is the policy for Strategy Development for Setanta College.

- a. The College will adopt a Strategic Plan incorporating its mission, vision, values, goals, objectives and strategic actions.
- b. The development of the strategy will involve all within the College as well as external stakeholders
- c. The development of the Strategy will be the responsibility of Senior Management
- d. The adoption of the Strategy will be the responsibility of the Board
- e. The implementation of the Strategy will be overseen by Senior Management
- f. All strategic decisions of the College will be guided by the Strategy and such strategic decisions will be proofed against the Strategy's goals and objectives
- g. Achieving and assuring high quality will be one or more of the goals of the Strategy
- h. The Strategy will form the basis of an Annual Strategic Review of achievements and challenges
- i. The Strategy will be reviewed at least once every three years
- j. The Strategy will be disseminated to all internal stakeholders of Setanta College and its key elements will be published in a manner which is consistent with commercial sensitivity.

### 2.1.6 Policy for Policy Development

Policies and procedures are, between them, designed to influence and determine all major decisions and actions, and all activities which take place within the boundaries set by them.

A policy is defined as the principles, rules, and guidelines formulated or adopted by an organisation to reach its long-term goals and typically published in a booklet or other form that is widely accessible.

The following is the policy regarding policy development within Setanta College.

- a. Setanta College will develop a programme of policy development which is specific and time-defined
- b. The development of policies within the QA sphere will be undertaken by the person with responsibility for the specific area to which the policy applies
- c. Policies will be developed in a collaborative and inclusive manner with input from all relevant stakeholders
- d. The adoption of policies in the area of QA will be the responsibility of the Academic Council and in other areas of the Senior Management or the Governing Board
- e. Each policy will be recorded in writing and any unwritten set of principles, rules or guidelines which purports to be a policy will have no standing. Unrecorded or unadopted custom and practice will not be deemed to be a policy
- f. Policies will be clear and unambiguous and written in a manner which will ensure that they can be understood easily by all stakeholders

- g. Policies will be tested for their practicality and the extent to which they are capable of being implemented within the structures and processes of Setanta College. Any policy which may not be capable of being implemented in a fair and consistent manner will not be adopted
- h. Policies will contain clear criteria in accordance with which decisions will be made. Where exceptions to a general rule within a policy are possible the criteria which will allow such exception to be invoked will be clearly stated
- i. Policies will reflect good practice within the sector and the norm of sectoral policies will be considered when policies are being developed or reviewed
- j. The effectiveness of policies will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and where a policy is not achieving its intended outcomes it will be amended outside of its planned review date if necessary
- k. Each policy will have an owner who is responsible for its implementation and for making suggestions for its amendment
- l. Each policy will have a recorded date of adoption, the name of the entity by which it was adopted, the name of the owner of the policy and the date by which a review of the policy must be completed or commenced

#### 2.1.7 Policy for Procedures

Procedures are defined as the specific methods employed to express policies in action in day-to-day operations of the organisation. Procedures are the rules, steps and stages of process which must be followed in order for a specific policy to be deemed applicable.

The following is the policy for procedures of Setanta College –

- a. Setanta College will develop a programme of procedure development which is specific and time-defined, and which is related to the programme for the adoption of policies referred to above.
- b. Each policy shall have an associated procedure for its implementation unless the owner of that policy certifies that no such procedure is required for that specific policy.
- c. The development of procedures within the QA sphere will be undertaken by the person with responsibility for the specific area to which the procedure applies
- d. Procedures will be developed in a collaborative and inclusive manner with input from all relevant stakeholders
- e. The adoption of procedures in the area of QA will be the responsibility of the Academic Council and in other areas of the Senior Management or the Board
- f. Each procedure will be recorded in writing and any unwritten set of principles, rules or guidelines which purports to be a procedure will have no standing. Unrecorded or unadopted custom and practice will not be deemed to be a procedure.
- g. Procedures will be clear and unambiguous and written in a manner which will ensure that they can be understood easily by all stakeholders and that the steps to be taken by them in invoking a policy are clear as is the order in which they must be taken, and the time-lines involved.



- h. Procedures will be tested for their practicality and the extent to which they are capable of being implemented within the structures and processes of Setanta College. Any procedure which may not be capable of being implemented in a fair and consistent manner will not be adopted.
- i. The effectiveness of procedures will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and where a procedure is clear and effective it will be amended outside of its planned review date if necessary
- j. Each procedure will have an owner who is responsible for its implementation and for making suggestions for its amendment
- k. Each procedure will have a recorded date of adoption, the name of the entity by which it was adopted, the name of the owner of the procedure and the date by which a review of the procedure must be completed or commenced.

#### 2.1.8 Policy for the Creation of a Culture of Quality

The impact of having a quality culture within the working environment is often greatest when it forms part of a coherent, organisation-wide approach.<sup>1</sup>

At the core of a quality focused culture in education is the principle of all staff continuously trying to improve how they work and the quality of support, engagement and outcomes for Learners and stakeholders. This requires a systematic approach based on iterative change, continuous testing and measurement, and the empowerment of frontline staff.<sup>2</sup> Fundamental to the principle of quality improvement is an understanding that those closest to complex quality problems (frontline staff, Learners and tutors) are often best placed to find the solutions to them.

The delivery of more efficient and higher-quality support requires a significant long-term commitment and cultural change based on quality improvement principles.<sup>3</sup>

These principles relate to:

- a) Having a very clear rationale for why all stakeholders should commit to the development of a culture of continuous quality improvement
- b) Assessing and ensuring that staff are ready for fundamental change
- c) Fully understanding the implications that a quality improvement approach entails and what it has for the organisation's leadership

The following will be the policy of Setanta College for the creation of a Culture of Quality –

- a. Senior management will honestly assess whether there is a shared vision that delivering programmes and support for Learners and tutors is the organising principle of their work.

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<sup>1</sup> Dixon-Woods and Martin 2016

<sup>2</sup> Ross and Naylor 2017

<sup>3</sup> Dixon-Woods and Martin 2016

- b. Senior management will openly espouse the principles of a quality culture and the principles of a learning organisation and ensure to commit the resources and facilities necessary to create sufficient staff engagement and enthusiasm for adopting new ways of working where necessary to create this culture.
- c. A clear, unifying vision for improving quality at multiple levels within the organisation will be developed to ensure co-ordination and alignment between teams and individuals.<sup>4</sup> Staff will be engaged and participate in developing this vision so that it becomes part of an organisation-wide strategy that will stand the test of time.

#### 2.1.9 Policy for Risk Management for Quality Assurance

Risk Management is defined as the identification, evaluation, and prioritisation of risks followed by coordinated and economical application of resources to minimise, monitor, and control the probability or impact of negative events.

Setanta College has adopted an organisational Risk Management Policy which applies to the general activities of the organisation. The following is the policy for risk management as it applies to Quality Assurance.

- a. Risks to Quality Assurance will form part of the overall consideration of risks carried out by Setanta College in accordance with its Risk Management Policy and specific attention will be given to the Quality Assurance area which potential risks are being considered.
- b. Each identified risk will have a mitigation measure or measures assigned to it relative to the likelihood and potential impact of the risk being realised.
- c. Each mitigation measure will have an owner assigned to it who will be responsible for ensuring that the mitigation measure as identified is implemented.
- d. The effectiveness of mitigation measures will be reviewed on a regular basis by the owner who will report on this effectiveness to the appropriate body.
- e. Risk Management in the area of Quality Assurance will be a standing item on the agenda of the Academic Council.

#### 2.1.10 Areas for which policies will be developed

- a) Setanta College has ensured that policies have been developed in the following areas and these policies are regularly monitored and reviewed. In line with regulatory and legal policies the College will update and where necessary will create additional policies.
- b) Policy for quality assurance, its governance and management
- c) Design and approval of programmes
- d) Learner-centred learning, teaching and assessment
- e) Learner admission, progression, recognition and certification
- f) Staff, faculty and adjunct faculty recruitment, management and development
- g) Learner supports and the provision of learning resources

- h) Information and data management
- i) Public information and communication to stakeholders
- j) Transnational education
- k) Online and blended learning
- l) Self-evaluation, monitoring and review of programmes internally and externally
- m) Self-evaluation, monitoring and review of the institution internally and externally

#### 2.1.11 Policy Control Sheet

<b>Policy Area</b>	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance
<b>Policy Title</b>	Quality Assurance
<b>Approval Date</b>	3/9/2019
<b>Effective Date</b>	3/9/2019
<b>Review Date</b>	1/9/2020
<b>Relevant Supporting Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI</li> <li>- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.</li> <li>- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI.</li> <li>- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), 2015.</li> <li>- Assessments and Standards (Revised 2013)</li> <li>- Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (Revised 2013)</li> <li>- Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining (Revised 2015)</li> <li>- Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016)</li> <li>- Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (QQI March 2018)</li> <li>- Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training – QQI 2017</li> <li>- HET and Apprenticeship Programme Validation Manual – QQI 2018</li> <li>- Policy and Criteria for Making Awards – QQI 2017</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring Procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Induction surveys</li> <li>- Learner feedback</li> <li>- Tutor feedback</li> <li>- Programmatic Review</li> <li>- Cyclical Review</li> </ul>