



The Open Training College
Student Handbook 2018-19
(Version 3:0 September 2018)

For students of the:

- ***B.A. in Professional Social Care (Disability) –
Year One, Year Two & Year Three***
- ***B.A. (Honours) in Professional Social Care (Disability) –
Year Four***



Q&Q AWARD

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FOREWORD

This Student Handbook has been prepared for students of the Open Training College (OTC) who are undertaking the following programmes accredited by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at level 6 and Level 8:

- BA (Ord.) in Professional Social Care (Disability) -
Year One, Year Two (Level 6) and Year Three (Level 7)
- BA (Hons.) in Professional Social Care (Disability) -
Year Four (Level 8)

This Student Handbook introduces the College and describes its administrative arrangements and how these will affect you as a student. It also outlines in detail College regulations and procedures that you need to follow.

This Handbook is intended to be used by you as a reference manual during the course of your studies. It is amended and updated at the beginning of each academic year to include relevant changes to College policy and practice. It is therefore essential that you read and familiarise yourself with the contents of the Handbook at the start of your programme/module. If you do not understand any of the information presented in any part of this handbook you are required to contact your tutor immediately for clarification.

The College wishes to emphasise that, while every effort is made to ensure accuracy, the material in this handbook is subject to alteration or amendment in the light of changes to regulations or in policy or of financial or other necessity.

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SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION**1.1 Welcome from the College Director**

Dear Student

Welcome to the Open Training College. If you are returning for the next year of your programme we wish you a successful and enjoyable academic year ahead. If you are a new student we extend a warm welcome and wish you a smooth transition to your new course of study.

Since our foundation in 1992, the Open Training College has developed an excellent reputation in the area of disability, and more recently the wider non-profit/voluntary sectors. As a college we are committed to adult education and to making high quality educational opportunities available to adults working, or aspiring to work, in human services. You can be assured that you have chosen to study with a college of repute. In 2010 the College received an Aontas Star Award for its contribution to adult learning opportunities in Ireland. We are very aware that a large part of our success is due to the commitment of our students, a responsive and dedicated staff team and the agencies who have supported the College since its inception.

As a college we remain committed to the pursuit of excellence, and a high standard of customer care. If, at any stage of your time with us, you feel we could improve any aspect of what we do, please do make your views known. Our wish for you is that your time with us will prove to be a challenging, rewarding and enjoyable experience. Please remember that we are committed to you and your learning and that your course tutor is there as your main support.

This handbook contains valuable information about the College, its services and regulations. Please read it carefully now and retain it where you may access it should need arise.

Best wishes for a successful, enjoyable and productive time with the College. Thank you for choosing to study with us and we look forward to working with you.



Dr. Karen Finnerty

College Director

1.2 College Background and Mission

The Open Training College was established in 1992 as part of [St. Michael's House](#), to provide learning opportunities for staff in the disability sector. We now offer a range of programmes for those working in disability, voluntary and not-for-profit services, from three-day specific skills programmes to accredited degrees in Management and Applied Social Studies.

We also offer in-service training and consultancy services to agencies, contribute to trans-national project work, professional seminars and conferences, and programmes within other third level institutions.

We are a self-funded, not-for-profit entity. Our income is generated by student fees, project work and consultancy work.

The programmes offered by the College provide students with recognised qualifications that are accredited by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). QQI was created by an amalgamation of four bodies that have both awarding and quality assurance responsibilities: the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB).

All programmes are designed using best practice informed by a thorough understanding of the adult learning process. They provide and stimulate diverse learning experiences that build on students' existing skills and knowledge. Each of our programme modules contain clearly articulated learning outcomes, around which assessment procedures are structured. This ensures transparency and consistency in the assessment process.

The College utilises the *Supported Open Learning Model* for programme delivery, which combines open learning materials with practical assignments, workshops and a comprehensive online and tutorial support system. This allows students to continue in their current employment while availing of supported study in their own time.

We view our students as colleagues committed to the common cause of enhancing the lives of service-users of disability, not-for-profit and voluntary services. The College values the experience students bring to their studies and so offers a strongly applied bias in the application of learning

through programme assessment methods. The input of all stakeholders is sought and welcomed in relation to all College matters.

All College staff are professionals who have prior experience in human services and education. They bring together the appropriate knowledge and skills to facilitate learning and to advise and assist our students. Together with our guiding principles, this creates a learning environment where students feel valued and respected.

The College's programmes and other activities are evaluated using Quality Assurance policies and procedures that are informed by a wide variety of stakeholders, including the staff team and students, graduates and employing agencies.

1.3 College Aims, Ethos and Values

Aims

In its work the College aims to:

- ✓ Provide a strong inclusion focus, drawing on the tremendous surge of developments which have taken place in the disability and not-for-profit sectors since the late 1970s
- ✓ Attend particularly to the needs of staff working in services (disability and not-for-profit) with no formal third level qualifications
- ✓ Maintain a strong applied bias in the context of a clear theoretical framework
- ✓ Ensure academic rigour in all work with students
- ✓ Challenge students to evaluate present practices and to incorporate newer approaches into their work on an ongoing basis
- ✓ Ensure that programmes are available nationally, equally accessible to staff in Donegal as in Dublin
- ✓ Ensure access, transfer and progression opportunities in line with national best practice
- ✓ Use the *Supported Open Learning Model* as a robust programme delivery model which minimises attrition and ensures a high success rate
- ✓ Maintain and develop national and international links both to encourage the development of new approaches and enhance the status of the College
- ✓ Respond to the on-going changes and developments happening in the disability and not-for-profit sectors nationally
- ✓ Secure its funding base through a range of approaches in the coming years
- ✓ Develop the scope and range of training products offered by the College

Ethos and Values

➤ **Equality**

It is the policy of the Open Training College to ensure that students are aware of equality issues, and have the capacity to promote equality and combat discrimination in the areas of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious beliefs and membership of the travelling community. The College is committed to deliver its programmes and related services in a manner that accommodates diversity, combats discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity.

➤ **Enhancing the Status of People with Disabilities**

The College seeks, in all of its programmes, to enhance the status of people with disabilities through the use of positive language and imagery, and by supporting their inclusion into ordinary life. The main work of the College is to develop the understanding and competencies of staff working with people with disabilities, in line with the above values.

➤ **Fundamental Principles**

All College programmes are underpinned by fundamental principles. These principles apply to all people involved with, or impacted upon, by College work. The principles of supporting empowerment, honouring rights, including individualised service models delivery and in partnership apply to the College's dealings with all students and others, and to how the College trains and educates students through its materials and workshops. We aim to ensure that on completion of programmes these principles have not been merely 'studied' by students but have become part of their fundamental way of working with people.

➤ **Valuing Programme Participants as Colleagues**

The College views programme participants as colleagues committed to the common cause of enhancing the lives of people in receipt of health and personal social care services. Accordingly, the College values the often considerable experience which participants bring to their studies, and operates a strongly applied bias in the application of learning and in the formal assessment methods.

➤ **Close Working Relationships**

In line with its vision, the College sees itself interacting directly with employers and service delivery organisations; working with existing, experienced staff in developing and improving the quality of services delivered to people. The College is committed to working closely with disability and not-for-profit agencies in the development of its programmes, and to offer programmes which create minimum disruption to services.

1.4 Programmes Offered by the College

Please note: The College will make every effort to ensure programmes are run as advertised, however all programmes are subject to an adequate number of participants, and the College reserves the right to make changes to advertised programmes or commencement dates as required.

The College offers the following programmes:

BA (Ordinary) in Professional Social Care (Disability): NFQ Level 7

The BA (Ordinary) in Professional Social Care (Disability) has been designed and developed to provide cutting edge thinking that will assist people to provide excellent person-centred services to those living with a disability. On completion of this programme students will hold a primary qualification, which is unsurpassed in the excellence of its materials, approach and philosophy. This qualification will enable students to apply for posts carrying the Social Care Professional salary scale, as it is one of the approved programmes arising from the report of the Joint Committee on Social Care Professionals (2002). Students will also have a progression route to studies at Level 8: Bachelor of Arts (Honours).

BA (Honours) in Professional Social Care (Disability): NFQ Level 8

The BA (Honours) in Professional Social Care (Disability) has been designed and written to facilitate learners to develop the skills, knowledge and competencies to become highly skilled and informed workers/managers contributing to the future development of quality and rights-driven services for people with a disability. Staff members who achieve this qualification will prove invaluable to agencies in meeting the challenges arising from the changes in the sector including the move to statutory quality standards (HIQA), professionalisation of the social care role (CORU), effective service planning and implementing real person-centred services.

Certificate in Applied Management: NFQ Level 6 (Minor)

The Certificate in Applied Management offers managers and deputy managers working in not-for-profit and voluntary sector services the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to carry out the first-line management role effectively. Employment in Human/Non-profit services is not a pre-requisite for entry to this programme. However, due to the applied nature of the programme, employment status will be considered in support of all applications.

Higher Certificate in Arts in Applied Management: NFQ Level 6

The Higher Certificate in Arts in Applied Management offers managers and deputy managers working in the not-for-profit/ human services sector an opportunity to further develop key management skills and explore in-depth management issues from the perspective of the not-for-profit/human services sector. The programme is designed specifically as an add-on programme for the holders of the Certificate in Applied Management. However, all relevant applications will be considered.

BA (Ordinary) in Applied Management: NFQ Level 7

The BA in Applied Management provides managers, deputy managers and supervisors working in the not-for-profit /human services sector an opportunity to further enhance the higher management and academic skills of critical analysis, research and effective thinking in order to become influencers of developments and initiators of change leading to improved, quality service provision. This Bachelor of Arts in Applied Management programme has been designed specifically for managers, deputy managers and supervisory staff working in the non-profit/human services sector (for example, disability, youth, community development etc.) who wish to develop their skills in planning, designing, implementing and leading within modern, person-centred services.

Certificate in Supported Employment

This certificate comprises two modules leading to a Special Purpose QQI award at Level 7 of the NFQ. The programme provides the student with a comprehensive introduction to Supported Employment, and an overview of how policy and legislation developments have influenced thinking and disability service provision in Ireland and how this relates to the evolution of Supported Employment. Participants on this programme will develop the essential employment facilitator skills needed to place people in meaningful employment.

Certificate in Facilitated Learning

This certificate is a single module leading to a QQI Minor award at Level 6 of the NFQ. The objective of this programme is for the student to design, develop and implement an individual training plan to teach a service user a meaningful skill or task. Programme participants will be proficient in the use of Task Analysis and the instructional strategy of 'Systematic Instruction'.

Certificate in Managing for a Positive Behavioural Culture

This certificate is a two-module programme leading to a Special Purpose QQI award at Level 7 of the NFQ. The first module aims to provide the participant with the knowledge, skills and capacity to generate a multi-element behaviour support plan for an individual who has been labelled as challenging. The programme also addresses the managerial skills and capacities required to

implement a positive behavioural support plan that will produce clear quality of life outcomes for an individual. This requirement demands that the participant will be able, with the support of a periodic service review, to identify standards, monitor staff performance in pursuit of those standards and provide effective feedback for a staff team on their performance with regard to the standards.

The College also offers the following programmes:

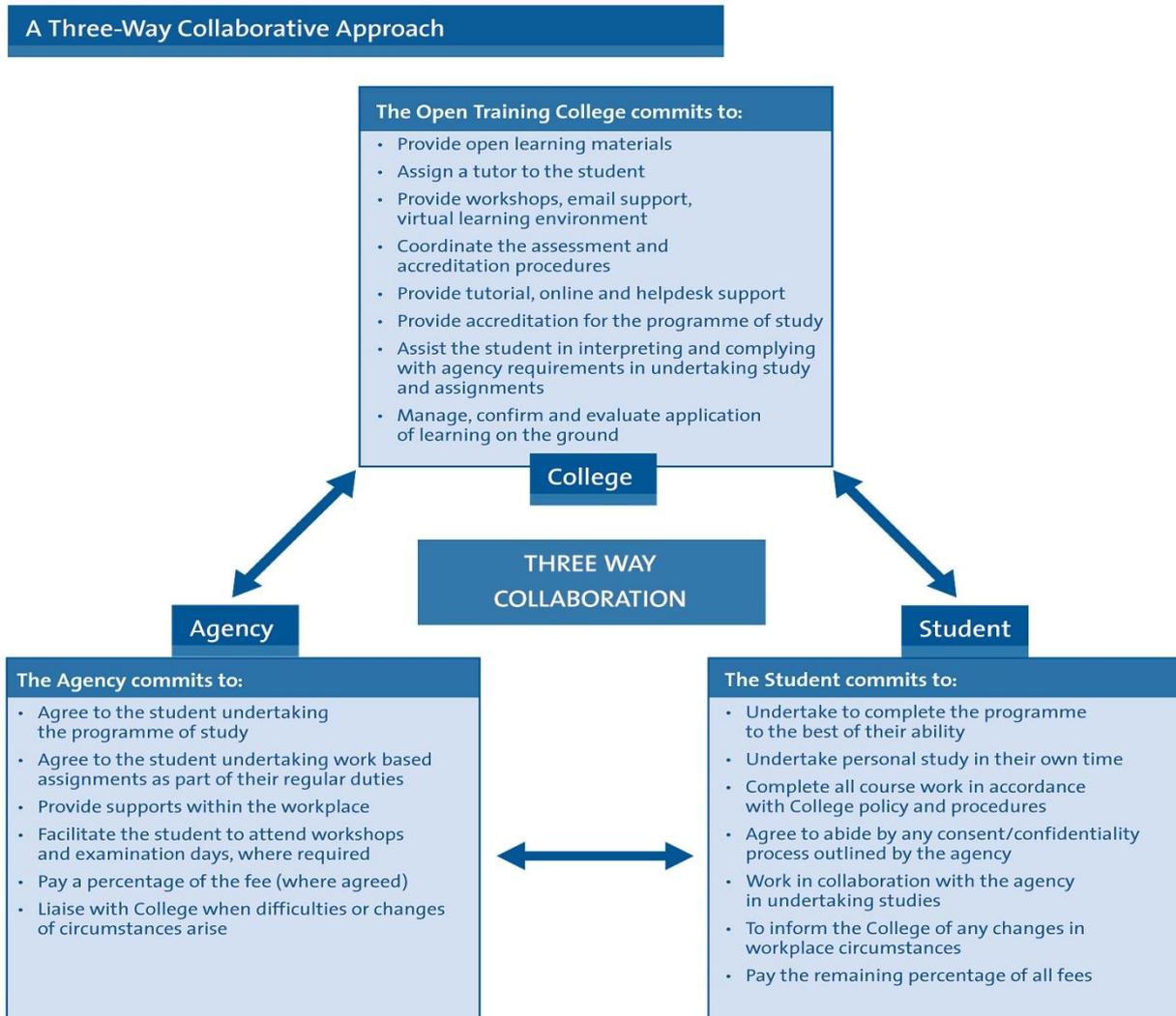
No.	Course Title	Level of Award - + Type
1	Bachelor of Arts in Professional Social Care (Disability)	Level 7 - Major
2	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Professional Social Care (Disability)	Level 8 - Major
3	Certificate in Applied Management (Human Services)	6 - Minor
4	Higher Certificate in Arts in Applied Management (Human Services)	6 - Major
5	Bachelor of Arts in Applied Management (Human Services)	7 - Major
6	Certificate in Managing for a Positive Behavioural Culture	7 - SP
7	Certificate in Supported Employment	7 - SP
8	Certificate in Facilitated Learning	6 – Minor (HE)
9	Certificate in Training and Development	6 – SP (FE)
10	Certificate in Community Development and Leadership	6 – Major (FE)
11	Certificate in Community Development Practice	5 – Major (FE)
12	Certificate in Intellectual Disability Practice	5 – Major (FE)
13	Certificate in Health Service Skills	5 – Major (FE)
14	Certificate in Exploring Disability	Level 6 - Minor
15	Certificate in Focus on the Individual	Level 6 - Minor
16	Certificate in Communication and Interpersonal Skills in Social Care	Level 6 - Minor
17	Certificate in Empowerment and Advocacy	Level 6 - Minor
18	Certificate in Social Care Practice and Ethics	Level 6 - Minor
19	Certificate in Active Inclusion	Level 7 - Minor
20	Certificate in Current Issues in Social Care: Mental Health, Elder Care and Children	Level 8 - Minor
21	Certificate in Supporting Individualised Living and Alternative Services	Level 8 - Minor
22	Certificate in Quality and Risk in Service Delivery	Level 6- SP
23	Certificate in Supporting and Working with Families	Level 7- SP
24	Certificate in Autism, Wellbeing and Positive Behaviour Supports	Level 7- SP
25	Certificate in Essential Employment Law	Level 6 - Minor
26	Certificate in Key Management Skills	Level 6 - Minor
27	Certificate in Managing Service Quality and Safeguarding	Level 6 - Minor
28	Certificate in Managing for Regulation and Inspection	Level 6 - Minor
29	Certificate in Human Resource Management and Supervision	Level 6 - Minor
30	Certificate in Leadership and the Learning Organisation	Level 7 - Minor
31	Certificate in the Manager as Coach and Mentor	Level 7 - Minor

1.5 The College Staff Team

Name	Role	Contact (email)
Karen Finnerty, D.Soc.Sci. B.Ed. (Hons.), CISM, M.Sc., FIITD	College Director	karen.finnerty@opentrainingcollege.com
Aine Melinn, B.A. (Hons.), M.A., AFPsSI	Assistant College Director	aine.melinn@opentrainingcollege.com
Ronnie Harrison B.A. (Hons.), M.Phil.	Manager of Academic Affairs	rharrison@opentrainingcollege.com
Raymond Watson B.A. (Hons.), PG Dip FHE, M.Sc.	Head of E-Learning and Library Services	raymond.watson@opentrainingcollege.com
Noelín Fox, PhD B.Soc.Sci.	Course Director - Applied Social Studies/Social Care Programmes	Noelin.Fox@opentrainingcollege.com
Brendan Collins B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Soc. Int., Cert. Mgt.	Course Director - Management Programmes	Brendan.Collins@opentrainingcollege.com
Claire Hopkins B.A. (Hons.), H.Dip.Ed., M.Ed., MIITD	Course Director – FE, CPD and Short Programmes	claire.hopkins@opentrainingcollege.com
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Louise Littlefield B.A. (Hons.)	Administrative Assistant	louise.littlefield@opentrainingcollege.com
Monica Lyons ECDL	Administrative Assistant	monica.lyons@opentrainingcollege.com
Viv Menzies Dip. Marketing, ECDL	Administrative Assistant	vmenzies@opentrainingcollege.com
Ciara Nealon	Assessments Assistant	assessments@opentrainingcollege.com

1.6 The Partnership Approach and Three-Way Collaboration

Participation on our Social Studies programmes is a partnership between the student, the Employer Agency and the College. The role of each partner is illustrated in the following diagram:



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1.6.1 Change in student employment circumstances

At application and re-registration stages all students of Open Training College Social Studies programmes are notified of the requirement for each student to be employed or volunteer in an appropriate position for at least 10 hours per week in order to meet the registration and assessment requirements of these programmes. Students of these programmes are therefore required to notify their Tutor immediately of any change in their employment circumstances, e.g. break in employment for any reason, including suspension from work, extended period of leave/absence, change of employer or supervisor etc. Following such notification from a student the Tutor will review the student’s current workload and course requirements and, if necessary and appropriate (as

determined by the College) generate a timetable of extended deadlines to facilitate the student to continue to meet the course requirements during the period of disruption to their employment. Following resumption of normal employment circumstances, the student will be required to provide updated information of their employment status, to be signed and stamped by their employer.

In the event that a change in an individual student's employment circumstances is disclosed to the College by a third party the Tutor will seek confirmation of their employment status directly with the student and/or employer.

Any action taken by the College in response to a change in a student's employment circumstances will be in accordance with the registration and assessment requirements of the programme only and the College will not become involved in any organisational investigations or procedures relating to the period of non-employment.

1.6.2 Communication with employer agencies

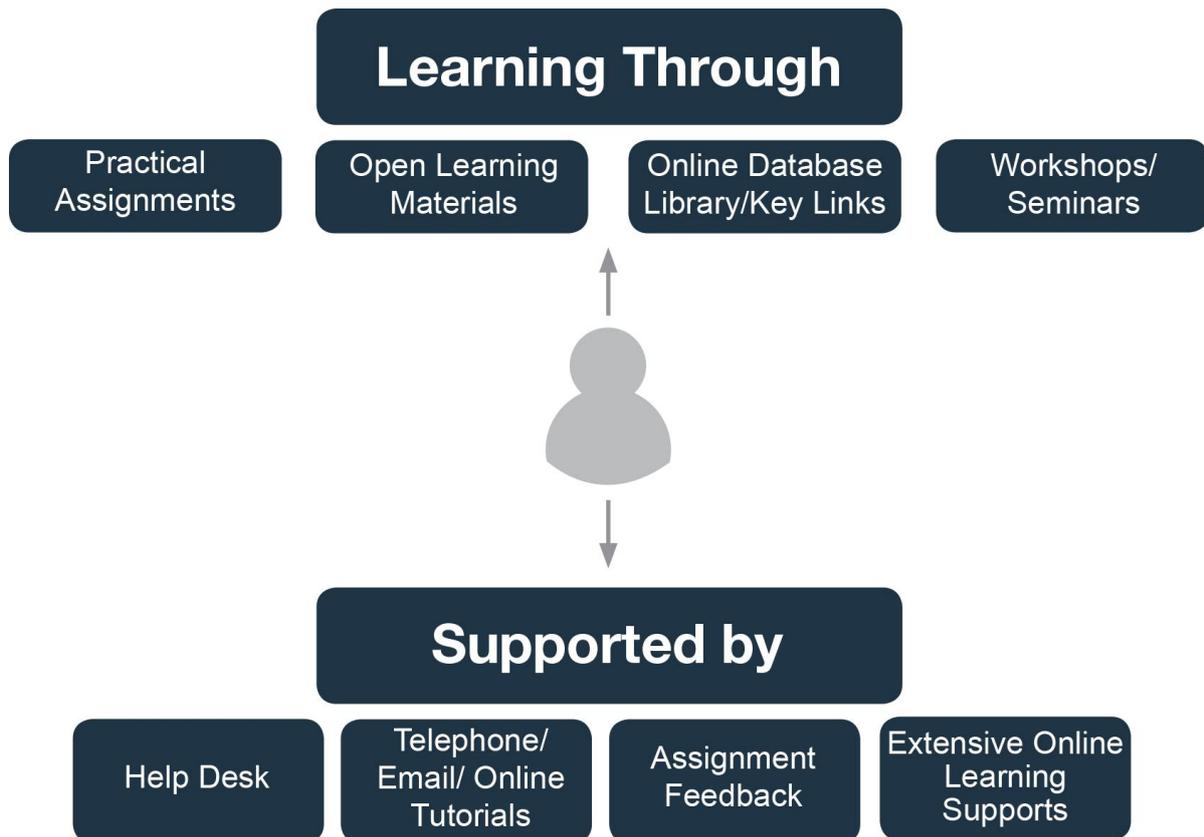
When an agency has paid any part of student's fees or provided any support for the student's period of study, the student is advised to maintain contact with the relevant personnel in the agency in relation to their course; especially if any issues arise that means they cannot complete the course of study within an academic year.

Upon request, the College will provide specific and relevant information on the student's status (e.g. current student/withdrawn) to an agency that directly supports that student.

1.7 The Supported Open Learning Model

The Open Training College is committed to delivering programmes with a comprehensive support system that facilitates effective learning. Flexibility and accessibility are key characteristics of any strategy devised to provide learning opportunities for adults. The *Supported Open Learning Model* is always evolving to ensure that the flexibility of the model is optimised. The College recognises that managing learning can be difficult while juggling other commitments, to that end this model ensures that students are supported to effectively manage their learning through timely supports.

The following diagram outlines the Supported Open Learning Model, as employed by the Open Training College.



The OTC Supported Open Learning Model

The student ***learns through*** the following key strategies:

Open learning materials

The College provides high quality open learning materials that are regularly updated. The materials are structured to cater to the needs of adult learners, through the provision of separate sections that support each learning outcome. The materials are accompanied by a series of self-directed learning activities.

Online database library/key links

The College provides access to a number of key information resources through its Moodle platform: MyOTC. These resources include an online database of key readings and access to online journal libraries (Emerald Library and EBSCO).

Practical assignments

A key component of the assessment of students' learning is their application of that learning to their place of work. This process is assessed using a variety of media, including written reflection, participation in group discussions and the completion of learning activities.

Workshops

Group workshops are offered (for each module) to provide students with the opportunity to collaborate with other students and develop their knowledge, skills and competencies according to the learning outcomes associated with the module. These opportunities for group learning also provide an excellent opportunity for students to network, make contacts, and discuss practical issues with their peers.

Students are **supported** in this learning through the following key support structures:

Tutorials

Tutorial supports are provided through a variety of media including, telephone, e-mail, online and face-to-face methods. Any or all of the following may be discussed during tutorials:

- a student's progress with the learning materials
- assignment preparation and feedback
- work-based support
- revision of study topics
- local study groups
- additional issues that may arise relevant to the learning process

Students are allocated an individual tutor to support them with their studies. The named tutor may change during the academic year at the discretion of the College. In such an event the Course Director will ensure changes are communicated to the student(s) in a clear and timely fashion, and will ensure supports are maintained during any period of change.

Please note that associate tutors work with the College on a contract and part-time basis. Contact should only be made with associate tutors according to their personal guidelines. In matters of urgency or emergency, contact should be made directly with the College.

Feedback (Formative and Summative)

The College provides numerous opportunities for students to obtain feedback on their learning and understanding as they progress through each module. These opportunities include online learning activities, peer and tutor feedback through online discussion forums and tutorials. Following each module assessment the student is furnished with detailed written feedback, which clearly outlines the student's performance against the key learning outcomes of that module. Students can expect to receive this feedback via e-mail approximately 6 weeks following the assessment submission date.

Helpdesk Support

The College provides immediate office hour support on matters related to IT, academic or practice issues. To avail of this support students should call the College number (01 2988544) between the hours of 8am and 4pm Monday to Friday.

Workplace Support

Workplace support is usually provided by the student's line manager, or another supporting professional (e.g. Occupational Therapist, Psychologist). S/he mainly provides practical support in organising applied assignments, signing off on supervised work relevant to the programme and facilitating the student's professional development.

E-learning Support and Library Services

The College provides E-learning support to students on any of the following:

- Logging on to MyOTC
- Submitting assignments
- Accessing module material
- Completion of online activities
- Use of the library and library databases

The E-learning team can be contacted at elarning@opentrainingcollege.com

The team consists of:

- Raymond Watson: Head of E-learning and Library Services
- Niav McEvoy: E-learning support

1.8 Quality Assurance

*In common usage the term 'quality assurance' (QA) means 'the maintenance of a desired level of quality in a service or product, especially by means of attention to every stage of the process of delivery or production.'*¹

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Legislation specifies that quality assurance processes must form an integral part of the work of Irish Higher Education organisations ([Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#)). The Open Training College works with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), which is responsible for awards.

See: <http://www.QQI.ie>

The Open Training College's Quality Assurance Model for programmes reflects the requirements of the 2012 Act.

The Quality Assurance policies and procedures have been designed to ensure that every activity carried out by the Open Training College is completed to a quality standard within the context of the College's ethos, mission, guiding principles and andragogical practice. The College has a designated person whose role it is to oversee the implementation of the policies and procedures outlined in the College's Quality Assurance Document (QuAD).

Quality Assurance Reports

Quality Assurance procedures produce a significant amount of information each year pertaining to the success and development of programmes, assessment results and completion rates. This information is collated for each programme at the end of each academic year, and is made available to students (via My OTC).

Student of the Year

The College awards a prize for Student of the Year, based on performances in the academic year just completed, in programmes leading to QQI awards. The prize is intended as a reward for academic excellence and as an encouragement for further study. It consists of a specially designed medal and a parchment. Presentation of the prize is made at the annual conferring ceremony.

¹<http://www.qqi.ie/Publications/QA%20Guidelines%20and%20Criteria%20for%20Provider%20Access%20to%20Initial%20Validation%20of%20Programmes%20Leading%20to%20QQI%20Awards%20-%20HET.pdf> – Accessed 20-08-2015

Diploma Supplement

On successful completion of their programme, in addition to receiving certification of their QQI award, students will receive a Diploma Supplement. The purpose of the supplement is to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification with which the supplement is associated. The Diploma Supplement contains the student's grades for each of the assignments completed, including any fail and/or pass by compensation grades awarded. For further information about Diploma supplements visit http://www.europass.ie/europass/euro_dip.html

Replacement Diploma Supplement fee: €45

1.9 Code of Professional Conduct

Apart from ensuring that students successfully achieve an academic qualification, the Open Training College is also firmly committed to contributing to and informing best practice in respect to the developing roles of social care professionals and managers working within services.

The Open Training College offers students the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills to support their professional practice and to have these formally acknowledged by the accreditation of qualifications. The College's Aims, Ethos and Values underpin the delivery, design and implementation of all its programmes and practice. As developing professionals, students are expected to reflect these in their general attitudes and behaviour, and behave in a manner which is civil and professional.

Students of the Open Training College are required to:

- Actively participate in all planned workshops and adhere to the code of etiquette for workshop attendance and participation (see sections 7.2 & 7.3 of this handbook)
- Inform the college of any change in employment circumstances e.g. Break in employment for any reason, suspension from work, extended period of leave/absence, change of employer or supervisor etc. (section 1.6)
- Comply with all assessment requirements and regulations (section 6)
- Submit assignments by dates identified on their programme calendar (sections 6.3, 6.4 & 6.5)
- Clearly reference work that is not their own in assignments (section 6.11)
- Complete a statement of anonymity and consent and declaration of authorship for all assignments

- Be present for all examinations (section 6.7)
- Adhere to normal examination procedures during examinations (section 6.7)
- Phone their tutor at the prescribed time for tutorials and keep in regular contact with their tutor via email (section 4.1)
- Keep their fees account up-to-date (section 3.1)
- Comply with the acceptable usage policy for the open training college e-learning environment (section 8.1)
- Actively participate in the e-learning environment (section 4.1)
- In all dealings with the college, treat the college, its staff and other students with courtesy and respect at all times
- In return students can expect to be treated at all times by the College and its staff in a manner that is respectful, courteous, fair and equitable in accordance with the College Aims, Ethos and Values

Any student who fails to comply with any aspect(s) of this Code of Professional Conduct will be subject to the appropriate sanction or consequences, which are outlined in the relevant sections throughout this Handbook and in communications with students at workshops and during tutorials.

1.9.1 Learner Contracts

If a student has failed to achieve assignment deadlines or maintain contact with the College or utilise the supports appropriately, the College will implement a Learner Contract with the student.

The Learner Contract will outline conditions for the student which may include any new assignment deadlines, reiterate the importance of using supports and create learning milestones for the student. The Learner Contract will include the consequences of the breach of any of the stated conditions which could include temporary withdrawal to the next academic year.

The Learner Contract must be signed by both the student and the Course Director.

1.10 Provision of Information for Learners

The Open Training College in compliance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Education and Training Act (2012), will inform learners of the following:

- Full details of the standard of knowledge, skill or competence required for successful completion of the programme and attainment of an award.
- Full details of the award, the awarding body and where the programme is placed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

- In the case whereby the course/ programme does not result in an award the College will provide details (where appropriate) of relevant courses/programmes that students can transfer/progress to.
- Details of available RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) processes.
- Relevant details of any PEL (Protection of Enrolled Learners) arrangements in place.

Enrolled learners will be notified in writing, in accordance with section 67 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, of any changes to PEL information, made available within 14 days of the College becoming aware of any change.

Information will be made available in the following ways:

- College Website
- College Brochure and Marketing Materials
- College Open days and Information Sessions
- Participation in Conferences and educational recruitment fairs

1.11 Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL)

Open Training College (OTC) has learner protection arrangements in place with respect to enrolled learners on all QQI validated courses in accordance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The current PEL policy is contained at Appendix 2 of this handbook.

1.12 Provision of References

References for current and past students of the College may be provided by Course Directors only. References provided by the OTC will only include relevant academic information and will not include professional practice information.

Where such a reference is requested for employment purposes it will be limited to the following information:

- Statement of current student status (i.e. currently registered, graduated, withdrawn etc.)
- Brief information about programme of study and period of registration (recipient will be directed to the Diploma Supplement for more information)

Where a reference is requested for academic purposes (i.e. progression to further studies in another institution) the information provided will be based upon the requirements of the institution to which the student is applying.

1.13 Complaints Procedure

The Open Training College prides itself on the quality and standards of the programmes and services it delivers, and on its relationship with each individual student. As part of Quality Assurance procedures students are regularly asked for their feedback on all aspects of programme and service delivery, which informs the Programme Boards, and subsequently amendments and improvements to programmes and services. The allocation of a personal tutor to all students also provides a safe environment in which students can air any grievances they may have and discuss alternative supports that will work towards resolving their situation at a local level.

However, it is recognised that not all such complaints will be resolved satisfactorily at this level, thus the following procedure is presented to provide students with the opportunity to take any unresolved complaints to the management of the College for further consideration. It is the policy of the College to take all valid complaints seriously and to strive for a speedy, equitable, timely and courteous solution.

In making a complaint the complainant can expect:

- Listening: We will listen in a courteous and professional manner
- Responsiveness: We will respond in a timely and sensitive way
- Feedback: We will keep the complainant informed of how the complaint is being processed
- Learning: We will use the information generated to help us improve our service

All complaints that highlight gaps in College policy and procedures will be reviewed and utilised to develop policy and procedure for introduction in the following academic year. Policy and procedures relating to all College regulations are communicated to students annually through the Student Handbook and on the College website.

How to make an informal complaint

All students are encouraged to air their grievances in the first instance with their tutor and/or Course Director. To make an informal complaint students can raise an issue with their tutor through the tutorial process using telephone or e-mail communication, or face-to-face with a tutor at a

workshop. The tutor will discuss the situation with the student and attempt to generate positive solutions in order to resolve the issue. In the event that a resolution cannot be satisfactorily met the formal complaints procedure, outlined below is available to all students.

What constitutes a formal complaint?

A formal complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction with service or treatment received while participating in any Open Training College programme, which impacts negatively on the success or wellbeing of the student in question, and which requires the involvement of College management to resolve. Formal complaints relate to matters that cannot be addressed through another procedure, e.g. the appeals procedure in relation to assessment or plagiarism.

Who can make a complaint?

Any student on any programme of the College can make a formal complaint, in the event that the issue being raised cannot be resolved satisfactorily at a local level.

How to make a formal complaint

A formal complaint must be made in writing to the Course Director. This can be sent via letter, e-mail or fax. The Course Director will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 days.

How will formal complaints be handled?

The nature of the complaint will determine how it is dealt with. The nature of the complaint and appropriate action(s) will be determined by the Course Director.

In the case that a complaint represents a situation involving (against) an OTC staff member and involves HR issues then the relevant HR policy and procedure will apply.

In the event that a complaint involves an academic matter (other than assessment) then the complaint may be reviewed by the appropriate sub-committee of the Academic Council (e.g., Registration and Admissions Committee, Assessment Committee).

In the event that the complaint refers to another aspect of College business the Course Director will review all relevant information, policy and procedures and make a decision.

The Course Director will communicate with the complainant regarding the avenue and action(s) being taken to address his/her complaint.

Appeals Process

If the student is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint or its handling s/he can appeal the decision to the Academic Council. The Director will review all relevant information and documentation, may meet with the complainant and/or other parties and seek external advice (if required and respecting any matters of confidentiality). The decision of the Academic Council will be communicated to the complainant in writing and is final.

The College recognises rights under the Freedom of Information Acts.

SECTION 2: ADMINISTRATION

2.1 Administration Staff

Your administration team, which will support you during the year, comprises:

- Conor Murray: cmurray@opentrainingcollege.com
Corporate Services Manager - oversees all administration support
- Judy Kavanagh: judy.kavanagh@opentrainingcollege.com
College Administrator - key contact for fees and registration
- Louise Littlefield: louise.littlefield@opentrainingcollege.com
Administrator and Assignment Co-ordinator - key contact for assignments -receipt and feedback
- Monica Lyons: monica.lyons@opentrainingcollege.com
Administrator - key contact for My Learning Centre and Turnitin queries
- Viv Menzies: vmenzies@opentrainingcollege.com
Administrator - key contact for website, student surveys and course module distribution
- Ciara Nealon: assessments@opentrainingcollege.com
Administrator - key contact for assignments, submission and feedback

The administration team can be contacted on (01)2988544, 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday.

2.2 Student Registration Procedures

Continuing Registration Continuing registration is the process by which the College tracks an individual student's progression and continued participation on programmes. Therefore, all students who wish to continue with their programme of study must complete a continuing registration form for each academic year. This also applies to students who wish to return to the College to complete outstanding modules, from which they had withdrawn or are required to repeat.

Continuing Registration on a programme is limited to the timeframe in which College programmes must be completed. All 3-year programmes must be completed within a timeframe of 5 years, 2-year programmes in 4 years and 1-year programmes in 3 years. Any student who does not successfully complete their programme of study within the required timeframe will be required to re-apply for the course, and will be subject to the full application procedures and related fees. Each student will be contacted in writing by the College Administrator with details of their re-registration requirements/limitations for each year. ****Please note that student places on a programme are not guaranteed if the re-registration process is not completed within the timeframe outlined by the***

College Administrator each year. Late returns of the re-registration forms will also incur an administration cost.

2.3 Data Protection

The Open Training College fully respects students' right to privacy, and will not collect any personal information about students without their permission. Any personal information volunteered to the Open Training College will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality, strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Acts, 1998 and 2003, and will conform to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which came into force in Ireland in May 2018. Any information provided in this way is not made available to any third parties (*except in the case of Protection of Enrolled Learner (PEL) arrangements where Open Training College (OTC) may have learner protection arrangements in place with respect to enrolled learners on all QQI validated courses in accordance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*), and is used by the Open Training College only in line with the purpose for which it was provided.

Details and relevant results will, in any case, be shared with QQI for the purpose of student certification. The specific use of student data is accepted when Terms and Conditions are accepted by the student at the time of student registration. Any student may opt to not have their data shared in the ways outlined here, and having opted in, may also opt out at any stage, by informing the College.

The GDPR policy is contained at Appendix 1 of this handbook.

2.4 Data Management

Academic Information:

All marks achieved by students in assessments are recorded and maintained in secure electronic files, which are updated on completion of each module.

Prior to the meeting of the Examination Board, the agreed marks are transferred to QQI broadsheets and it is these which are finalised, ratified and signed on conclusion of the Examination Board meeting. Electronic copies of the broadsheets are maintained on computer file indefinitely, to facilitate the provision of transcripts and reprints of Diploma Supplements.

For each year of her/his studies with the College, each student is assigned a student box, which is maintained by their Tutor and in which the following are stored:

For programmes where assignment work is submitted in hard copy form:

- All work submitted by the student for assessment;
- Completed rubric for each assessment;
- Copy of written feedback given to student on assignments;
- Copies of appropriate documentation regarding assessment supports and/or accommodations implemented;
- Records of assessment appeals and outcomes.

For programmes where assignment work is submitted electronically:

- All exam work completed by the student for assessment;
- Copies of appropriate documentation regarding assessment supports and/or accommodations implemented;
- Records of assessment appeals and outcomes.

In addition to hardcopy records, all assignments (excluding appendices) submitted through Turnitin.com are maintained indefinitely as electronic files, and rubrics, with feedback to students, are filed and maintained indefinitely on the College's secure IT system.

On conclusion of the Appeals Process timeframe hardcopies of all ratified assessment scripts and related materials will be destroyed (using a certified document destruction contractor) within 4 weeks. Students are advised to keep a copy of all work, which they submit to the College for assessment, as this cannot be returned.

Where a student has withdrawn from their studies, the following system applies to the storage of students work:

- Students' work that has been assessed and ratified by the Examination Board will be destroyed within 4 weeks of the Examination Board meeting, as the corresponding credits will have been awarded to the student by this time.
- Assignments and examinations, which have been completed but not ratified by the Examination Board, will be considered invalid after a two-year period.
- The work of any student, who wishes to return to the Open Training College more than two years following withdrawal, will be reviewed individually by the Course Director, and the student may be required to attend a viva voce and/or resubmit work. This is to ensure that the students' knowledge and skills are sufficiently current and relevant for them to continue with their studies.

Tutorial Information

The tutorial support function generates significant records regarding an individual student's progress. The College is committed to ensuring that sufficient data is gathered and stored to ensure the ongoing provision of a high standard of service and support to students, while respecting individual student needs for confidentiality.

The following records are maintained for the period of student registration on a programme to ensure continuity in the provision of tutorial supports, to facilitate any transition in tutors and to ensure consistency in the application of College policy and procedures:

- Individual student tutorial records,
- Assignment extension applications,
- Medical certificates,
- Records of all online activity of students, including assessment activities completed online.

Tutorial information which may be called upon after student graduation is maintained by the College indefinitely. This information may be relevant to students who progress to further education or who appeal assessment results to the accrediting bodies, for example. The following records are maintained indefinitely by the College:

- All formal written correspondence between tutors and students;
- All original documentation relating to additional supports or assessment accommodations implemented (e.g. for reasons of disability/medical condition/specific learning difficulty);
- Records of assessment appeals and outcomes;
- Records of disciplinary procedures and outcomes (including any investigation regarding plagiarism).

SECTION 3: MONEY MATTERS

3.1 Fees

The Administration Team is responsible for communicating with students regarding the payment of fees. Course Directors and Tutors are not in a position to answer any questions from students regarding fees.

Programme Fees cover:

- ✓ Open Learning Materials
- ✓ Online Materials
- ✓ Library access
- ✓ Tutorials and email support
- ✓ Workshops (please note that accommodation fees for overnight stays are not included)
- ✓ Registration and accreditation
- ✓ Personalised access to the College E-learning environment and supports
- ✓ IT training and support
- ✓ Assessment process, including detailed written feedback on assignments
- ✓ Helpdesk support

Student Fees Policy

As part of the application/re-registration process at the beginning of each academic year, students are asked to complete an application/re-registration form in which they commit to paying their fees for the full academic year. The signature on that form commits the student to paying fees on time.

The signature on the form commits a student to pay the total amount of fees for that year, even if they decide to withdraw from the programme without completing all the modules.

Where an agency is making a contribution towards annual student fees, students are still responsible for the payment of all fees.

Fees are non-refundable.

In the case of students who withdraw from their course of study, fees that have been paid in advance will be fully credited to the student's account if the student returns within 12 months of the withdrawal date. 50% credit will apply to students returning within 24 months of the withdrawal date. Students returning after 24 months are liable for full fees applicable at that time.

Fees instalments option

Students have a choice of paying fees all at once at the start of the academic year or through instalments during the academic year. Instalment deadline dates are as follows:

-December 1st

-February 1st

-April 1st

Fees must be paid directly to the College through the online IMS (Information Management System).

If, for an unusual reason, payment cannot be made in this way, it is possible they may be paid by cheque, postal order, bank draft or by credit card (this method will incur an additional admin. fee). In those cases, all payments should be made out to the Open Training College (send fees for the attention of Judy Kavanagh, Open Training College, Prospect Hall, Willowfield Park, Goatstown, Dublin 14). Do not send cash to the College. It is advisable to make use of Registered Post when sending fees or assignments to the College.

Where an agency is making a contribution towards annual student fees, students are still responsible for the payment of all fees. Students are instructed to pay all personal instalments prior to any payments expected from their agency. Students should contact the Administration Team if they are unclear about any aspect of fees instalments.

Late fees:

If a student is paying by instalments and has missed a deadline by more than 2 weeks, it will be necessary for the Open Training College to withdraw all student supports.

This means that student supports such as access to My Learning Centre, and distribution of assessment feedback, will not be available to the student as long as there are outstanding fees. The College will email a message (1st reminder) to each student confirming that supports have been withdrawn until payment is received and total fees are up-to-date. The message will include a revised deadline date by which full payment of outstanding fees is expected.

If a student is still in arrears for a period of 2 weeks after the revised deadline date, the College will email a letter (2nd reminder) containing a withdrawal form and will request the immediate return of a completed withdrawal form from the student, along with payment of any outstanding fees.

If the College does not receive payment or the completed withdrawal form after a further 2 weeks from the reminder date, the College will post a letter (3rd & final reminder) to the student explaining that the College must accept that the student has withdrawn from the programme and they will not

be put forward for registration with QQI. A student who has already withdrawn is prohibited from returning to study with the Open Training College if there are any outstanding fees.

The student can appeal in writing to the Course Director within 2 weeks of receiving the 3rd and final reminder. The College will offer short-term support to any student who is the victim of extenuating circumstances and who can evidence documents to support their unusual and extreme situation. The student and College must agree on repayment terms submitted in writing by the student to the College. Student supports will remain withdrawn until all the relevant documents have been reviewed fully and a decision has been made by the Course Director. The student will be notified of the decision immediately. Any further appeal from this stage will go through the normal College appeal/complaint channels, to the relevant sub-committee of the Academic Council (i.e., the Registration and Admissions committee), in the first instance, with the Academic Council itself being the next and ultimate level of appeal.

All outstanding fees owed, due to extenuating circumstances during the academic year, must be paid by June 15th.

The College continues to offer the greatest of flexibility to all students regarding payment of fees. The various instalment plans relative to each course are explained each year to all learners attending Applicants' Day. If student circumstances change after this, it is the responsibility of the student to communicate with the Administration department.

Agency Support

A portion of the programme fees may be paid by the participant's agency. Individual fee arrangements are agreed between the applicant and their agency prior to the commencement of the programme. Therefore, invoices are issued to the student. Negotiation with agencies in relation to fees will not be undertaken by the College in any circumstances. Where there is a delay/issue in the College receiving agency fees, students are still expected to pay their contributions on the required dates on the instalment plan, which will be prior to the instalment date for agency fees. Students are then expected to liaise with their agency to expedite the payment of said fees.

3.2 Tax Relief

For programmes of one year or more, tax relief is available at the lower rate. Tax relief is available for the portion of fees paid by the student. In order to claim tax relief for tuition fees you will need to do the following:

Go to www.revenue.ie and type 'IT 31' into the search box.

1. Download and print off form **IT 31 Tax Relief for Tuition Fees form**.
2. Complete the form and send it with the receipts to your regional Revenue office.
3. If requested by the revenue service, contact the College office to request a specific tax receipt for the total amount of your fee payments.

(Details are also available on the www.revenue.ie website)

3.3 Miscellaneous Costs

Miscellaneous costs that may be incurred during the programme of your studies include:

Hardcopies of Learning Materials €125.00 (Year 3 - €150) – Single Module - €25

The Open Training College retains the copyright in all programme materials. Students receive access to all materials online as part of the programme fee.

Students are not permitted to copy materials or pass them to third parties without the express written consent of the College.

Purchasing Hardcopies

Each module will be mailed to the student's residence as the module is released online. Please contact the Administration department if you wish to purchase hardcopy learning materials. The deadline for ordering your complete set of hardcopy modules occurs in September each year.

Bridging Fee €295.00

A fee is charged for applicants who participate in the Bridging process.

Re-registration Fee €295.00

Students who withdraw will be required to pay a re-registration fee on returning to their studies. Students who are spreading completion of their programme over additional academic periods (only by prior agreement made at application stage) will not incur a re-registration fee during the already agreed additional period.

Late Re-Registration Fee €100.00

Students who fail to complete the re-registration process within the specified timeframe will incur a late re-registration fee.

Failure to submit a complete re-registration form will warrant the return of the form to the student, which may delay the process and result in a late fee being charged due to a missed deadline.

Repeat Exams €150.00

Students who avail of a re-sit examination for whatever reason will be required to pay an administration fee.

Repeat Module Fee (pro rata based upon programme fees)

Where students are required to repeat a module due to failure of that module in the previous academic period a repeat module fee will apply per module. Repeat module fees cover the student's attendance at the workshop, learning materials, MyOTC access, tutorial support, formative and summative assessment.

Formal Appeals €25.00

The College charges a fee in relation to appeals. A refund will be issued in the case of a successful appeal.

Exemptions

Students who are granted an exemption from a module or modules, pay their fees for the year on a pro-rata basis based on the number of modules they must complete in full.

All fees are communicated to students on the commencement of each academic year.

Increase in Fees: All fees are reviewed annually and may be subject to increases.

SECTION 4: LEARNER SUPPORT

4.1 Supports for Students

The College is committed to delivering programmes with a comprehensive support system that facilitates effective learning. This is done through the **Supported Open Learning Model**, as illustrated in section 1.7 of this handbook. College experience over a long number of years indicates that students who utilise the supports regularly and appropriately fare better in assignments/examinations and tend to achieve higher grades in their overall award.

**Please note that these supports are available equally to all students of the College. It is the responsibility of individual students to familiarise themselves with the supports and to make regular and effective use of supports relevant to the requirements of their programme.*

The full Student Learning Support and Pastoral Care Policy and Guide is at Appendix 3 of this document.

4.2 Supports for Students with a Disability/Specific Learning Difficulty

The Open Training College operates the principle of inclusive access to learning materials and opportunities for all students. This is achieved through the *Supported Open Learning Model* and the College's Virtual Learning environment *MyOTC* (see section 1.7 of this Handbook), which facilitates the presentation of learning materials in a variety of formats and provides multiple opportunities for students to dialogue with staff and collaborate with other students.

However, it is recognised that some students who present to the college with specific learning support requirements (e.g. medical condition, specific learning difficulty, physical disability, mental health issue etc.) may require additional individual consideration and accommodations to provide them with equal opportunity to succeed on their chosen programme.

The following procedure outlines the process, which will be undertaken by the College to identify and implement appropriate and reasonable supports for such students.

Procedure For Verifying and Designing Individualised Learner Supports

1. Learning/medical support requirement is disclosed/discovered

- Initial discussion with tutor/member of academic course team (interview, in the case of applicants)

2. Verification of support requirement by nominated educational/health professional

- Existing report conducted with regard to Third Level academic study
OR
- OTC verification form completed by appropriate health professional

3. Learner supports agreed and implemented

- Learner Support meeting
- Learner Support Plan
- Regular review of supports

1. Disclosure/discovery of a learning or medical support requirement

At application stage all applicants are requested to disclose details of any learning or medical support requirements they have and wish to make the College aware of, in their initial application form.

The application form states that any student who discloses any requirement at this stage will receive advice and guidance from a member of the academic course team. The applicant is also directed to information on the College website regarding available learner supports.

Students will also have the opportunity to disclose a support requirement at any stage of their studies with the College through the tutorial process, which facilitates ongoing individual communication between tutor and student. Any student who discloses in this manner will be directed to the following procedure. This also applies to any student who develops/discovers a support requirement which they did not have or were not aware of at the time of application.

All information relating to a medical/disability diagnosis provided by applicants/students will be treated sensitively and as confidential information.

2. Verification of support requirement

Following disclosure/discovery by the student, verification of the indicated support requirement will need to be provided by an appropriate professional. This verification can be done through the provision of an existing evaluation report conducted with regard to Third Level academic study.

Where an appropriate evaluation has not been carried out to date the student will be required to supply a completed report by an appropriate nominated professional from the list below.

Indicator	Accepted medical consultant/specialist report
Visual Impairment/Blindness	Ophthalmologist OR Ophthalmic surgeon
Hearing Impairment/Deafness	Professionally qualified Audiologist
Physical Disability	Orthopaedic OR other relevant Consultant such as a Rheumatologist or Paediatrician
Neurological Condition (incl. Brain injury, speech & language disabilities)	Neurological Condition: Neurologist OR other relevant consultant Speech & language disabilities: Speech and Language Therapist
General learning disability	Appropriately qualified Psychiatrist, Psychologist, OR Neurologist
Specific learning difficulty: Dyslexia Dyscalculia Dyspraxia ADD/ADHD Asperger's Syndrome/Autism	Appropriately qualified Psychiatrist, Psychologist, OR Neurologist AND Occupational Therapist (in the case of Dyspraxia) who is a member of their respective professional or regulatory body
Mental Illness: Anxiety Disorders Mood Disorders Eating Disorders Impulse Control & Addiction Disorders Personality Disorders	Psychiatrist
Significant Ongoing Illness	Epilepsy: Neurologist Diabetes Type 1: Endocrinologist Cystic Fibrosis: Consultant Respiratory Physician Gastroenterology Conditions: Gastroenterologist Others: Relevant consultant in area of condition or consultant registrar/Registrar

3. Support meeting

Following satisfactory verification of a support requirement, (and offer and acceptance of a place on the course in the case of applicants) a support meeting will be arranged between the student and a member of the College academic team. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the learner's requirements in detail and to ensure the College can provide adequate supports to the learner to allow them equal opportunity to succeed on their programme of study. General supports available

for learners are outlined in this policy and are communicated to learners on the College website and in the Student Handbook; these supports will be individually tailored and matched to the learners' needs as reasonable and appropriate. At this stage, and where available, the applicant/student will be asked to supply an academic reference from their most recent school or college placement, outlining supports they have previously received and their impact.

Following this meeting a *Learner Support Plan* will be devised for the individual. This plan constitutes the formal agreement between the College and learner and will have specified review dates (at least following first module, mid-year and end of year) attached to the plan to ensure the continued relevancy and appropriateness of the supports being provided. This plan will also be reviewed and adapted (as needed) in consultation with the student as part of the process of continuing registration.

Some of the supports that have been provided to learners to date include:

1. Supports for Students with a Physical/Sensory Disability:

- Venue checks to ensure accessibility and appropriate facilities
- Physical modifications to the training and examination environment e.g. seating arrangements, sound amplification etc.
- Learning materials provided in accessible, modifiable electronic formats
- Learning materials developed using multimedia, including [ScreenR](#) and [Articulate](#)
- Additional time allocated to complete assessments
- Alternative assessment formats, e.g. [Viva Voce](#)
- Support of a scribe to complete examinations
- Access to open source assistive technology software, e.g. [Screen Reader](#), [Browse Aloud](#)

2. Supports for Students with a Specific Learning Difficulty, e.g. [Dyslexia](#), [Dyscalculia](#), [Dysgraphia](#)

- Alternative assessment formats, e.g. [Viva Voce](#)
- Support of a scribe to complete examinations
- Additional time allocated to complete assessments
- Spelling and/or grammar waiver for assessments
- Extended individual tutorial support
- Provision of lecture materials in advance of lectures/workshops

**Please note that these accommodations are provided to individual students to support and facilitate their successful participation on their programme. The College remains cognisant of providing a fair*

and equitable service to all students. Therefore, these accommodations will not be available to any student without professional, written confirmation of disability/learning difficulty.

4.3 Supports for Students Experiencing Difficult Personal Circumstances

The College recognises that the majority of the student body is comprised of adults in full-time work and with significant family and social commitments. To this end efforts will be made to support students who experience difficult personal circumstances during the course of their studies.

If a personal or professional situation affects your ability to complete your studies or to meet an assignment deadline it is imperative that you contact your tutor as soon as possible to explain the situation. Your case will then be discussed with the Course Director and additional supports provided if deemed necessary. The confidential nature of any information disclosed will be respected at all times by the staff of the College.

**Please note that additional supports will only be provided in extenuating circumstances and are at the discretion of the Course Director. Independent confirmation of circumstances may be sought at the discretion of the Course Director.*

SECTION 5: WITHDRAWING FROM YOUR PROGRAMME

5.1 Procedures for Withdrawing from your Studies

Students may decide at any stage to withdraw from their programme for personal or other reasons. A **decision to withdraw** is appropriate for those students who intend to continue their studies after a period of time (within the course completion policy) or who no longer wish to continue their studies with the College and who do not intend to return.

For a student withdrawing from a programme of study with the Open Training College, the following procedures must be followed:

1. The student discusses their options with their Tutor and/or Course Director
2. Following the decision for a student to withdraw a Withdrawal Notification Form must be completed by the student and returned to the College Administrator. This form is available on request from the College
3. Return dates for students who have withdrawn will be inputted into the database and the College, prior to their re-commencement date, will contact them. A re-entry fee is applicable on returning to study with the College

In making a decision to withdraw from their studies students are reminded of the requirement to complete their programme within a specified timeframe. All 3-year programmes must be completed within a timeframe of 5 years, 2-year programmes in 4 years and 1-year programmes in 3 years. Any student who does not successfully complete their programme of study within the required timeframe will be required to re-apply for the course, and will be subject to the full application procedures and related fees.

In addition, fees that have been paid in advance will be fully credited to the student's account if the student returns within 12 months of the withdrawal date. 50% credit will apply to students returning within 24 months of the withdrawal date. Students returning after 24 months are liable for full fees applicable at that time.

If a student has successfully completed a module(s), it/they will be accredited on an individual basis, enabling students to receive credits for the work they have completed to date. The College will issue a transcript, which may be used as proof in applying for access, transfer or progression.

Where a student has withdrawn, the following system applies to the storage of students work and the lifespan of credits achieved (taken from section 2.4 of this handbook):

Assessed assignments/examinations that have been ratified by the Examination Board/QQI will be kept for three years and then destroyed, as the corresponding credits will have been awarded to the student by this time.

Assignments and examinations, which have been completed but not ratified by the Examination Board/QQI, will be considered invalid after a two-year period. In this case students who wish to return to their studies with the College will have to re-take those modules.

The work of a student who wishes to return to the Open Training College more than two years following their withdrawal, will be reviewed individually by the Course Director, and the student may be required to attend a viva voce and/or resubmit work. This is to ensure that the students' knowledge and skills are sufficiently current and relevant for them to continue with their studies.

SECTION 6: ASSESSMENT

For details of supports available to students in completing assessments please refer back to section 4 of this handbook and to Appendix 3 (Full policy and Guide).

All assessment tasks conducted by the Open Training College are designed in accordance with the learning outcomes for the module, stage and programme being undertaken by the student. Assessment activities for each module, stage and programme are defined in the relevant Assessment Strategy documents, which are available to all students through MyOTC. All assessment is conducted in accordance with the QQI Assessment and Standards (Revised 2013) policy document (see www.QQI.ie)

Assessment of a student's work by the Open Training College is carried out for the following reasons:

1. To ascertain that students meet the standards agreed with the accrediting bodies in order to qualify for their award and also to maintain and ascertain equivalence with similar academic qualifications offered by other institutions.
2. To provide a mechanism through which students are given feedback on their learning.
3. For Tutors and the College to evaluate the efficacy of the *Supported Open Learning Model* in delivering knowledge and in facilitating the development of skills and professional attitudes.

6.1 Modular Assessment

All Open Training College Programmes are delivered and assessed in a modular format. This means that once a student has successfully completed and passed all the assessment activities they have completed that module and do not have to return to it for assessment purposes for the duration of their studies.

However, Open Training College programmes have been carefully designed to allow for each module to build upon the learning from the previous module. Therefore, knowledge gained and skills learned from previous modules will be of great value to students in completing assessments and students are encouraged to refer to information from all modules covered when completing assessment activities.

Students are advised that programmes may change as a result of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement processes, and as a result students returning to their studies after a period of withdrawal may be required to complete additional modules in order to meet the updated requirements of their chosen programme.

6.2 Types of Assessment

Formative/Continuous Assessment

Formative, or continuous assessment refers to *ongoing* activities that students are required to complete as part of a module. These activities have been designed to ensure that the required learning occurs and that students actively engage in a timely manner with the learning materials and supports provided by the College. Activities and requirements will vary depending on the programme and module being studied but may include online activities, discussion of articles and case studies, quizzes, tutorials and journal postings. Specific details of required activities will be communicated to students at the beginning of each module. Completion of these activities may be necessary in order for a student's work for a module to be summatively assessed, or may have marks attached to its completion, which count towards the overall grade for that module.

Please note that marks may be gained by the completion of formative/continuous assessment activities. When this is the case this will be clearly indicated to all students in the assessment guidelines for the module.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment refers to the work a student submits at the end of a module, which is then graded and which determines the students overall grade for that module (and their overall grade for their qualification in an award year). Summative assessment may be carried out using different assessment methods, for example applied assignments and/or written examinations. The College has always striven to achieve a balance between practical assignments and examinations as Open Training College students are all working adult learners.

Applied Assignments

Assignments are often applied in that students are required to carry out specific tasks in their workplace and to relate their learning to their practice and discuss how they have done this in their assignments.

To help with the successful completion of applied assignments students are advised and encouraged to identify someone in their workplace who can provide support and guidance in both academic and practically related matters.

Assessment guidelines are provided at the beginning of each module. Students have approximately 6-8 weeks to complete each assignment/project, the timeframe for completion will depend on the assignment requirements and the academic calendar.

Assessment due dates are provided to students on commencement of their programme. These dates are clearly indicated on the programme calendar.

Examinations

Written examinations will also be utilised as an assessment method for programmes. There are several reasons for this practice:

- Examinations are an integral part of third level programmes and facilitate the development of the essential skills of a third level graduate.
- A mixture of assessment techniques presents a fairer assessment situation as different students prefer and excel with different assessment methods.
- Examinations support the prevention of plagiarism in educational institutions.

Modules that are assessed by examination will be clearly indicated on the Programme Calendar and supports for students in preparing for and sitting exams will be provided through the support mechanisms described in section 4 of this handbook.

There are specific rules and regulations relating to examinations, which are outlined in section 6.7.

6.3 Submitting your Assignments

Assignment Presentation and Structure

All assignments are submitted electronically through both Google Drive and Turnitin.

All assignment work must be typed for electronic submission using:

- ✓ Font Size 12
- ✓ A consistent font (either Times New Roman or Arial)
- ✓ Align Text Left
- ✓ Double spacing

For details on how to submit your assignment using Google Drive, Turnitin and how to present and structure your assignment, please see the supporting documentation/activities in the 'MyOTC Online Module 2018-19 and the 'Study Supports' section in the online login page area. Students

experiencing any technical difficulties submitting their assignment can contact the e-learning team at: elearning@opentrainingcollege.com.

Statements of Anonymity and Consent

For legal and ethical reasons it is important that information concerning an agency, its staff, service-users and customers be used respectfully and with care within the context of applied assignments. Students are required to sign off on a statement of Anonymity and Consent which confirms that they have taken appropriate measures to obtain consent from and protect the identity of people and organisations relevant to that assignment.

Submission dates and deadlines

Dates for the submission of each assessment are included on the Course Calendar which students are provided with at the beginning of each academic year. Students are expected to take responsibility for ensuring that all assessments are submitted to the College on or before the final submission date.

Copies

Students **MUST** keep a copy of all work sent to the College. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all their work is backed up. Google Drive can be used for the purpose of storing your work.

6.4 Requesting an Extension

Students who are not registered with the College as requiring additional supports due to a disability/medical condition/learning difficulty (see section 4 of this handbook for more information) may only request deadline extensions for two of the module assignments during an academic year, however please note that ***requests for a deadline extension will not be accepted for the final module of each year.***

In adverse personal circumstances, or where a student experiences a period of ill health, a two-week extension for submission of an assignment may be requested.

The procedures for requesting an extension to an assignment deadline are as follows:

1. An email must be sent to your tutor. The e-mail must contain the following details:
 - Your name
 - Year code
 - Tutor's name

- Assignment/module title
 - The main reason for the request (e.g. medical, family issues, work issues)
 - And the date you have agreed to submit your assignment by. (This date is normally two weeks after the original deadline.)
2. If you are applying for an extension for reasons of ill health, a medical certificate is required and must be sent to the Tutor, who will convey it to the Course Director.
 3. If a further two-week extension period is required, an additional application must be made to the Course Director, following the same procedures outlined above.

The Course Director's decision on extensions is final and no extension is deemed to exist without confirmation by the Tutor/Course Director as appropriate. Further confirmation of circumstances necessitating an extension may be sought at the discretion of the Course Director. Evidence of work completed to date may also be sought at the discretion of the Course Director.

Students who submit assignments after the designated submission date without having agreed an extension with the Tutor/Course Director will be subject to penalties.

**Please note that feedback for assignments with an extended submission date will not be available until 6 weeks after the extended submission date.*

6.5 Penalties for Late Assignments

Students who submit assignments after the designated date without having followed the correct procedures and applied for an extension will be subject to the following penalties on the first two late submissions:

- Up to one week late: A penalty of 5% will be applied (For example a mark of 55% will be downgraded to 50%)
- 1-4 weeks late, a penalty of 10% will be applied (A mark of 55% becomes 45%)
- 4 weeks late or more the student is deemed to have failed that assignment. In such an instance the procedures for failed assignments will apply (see section 6.8)

In the case where a student has not been granted an extension, having followed the procedures outlined in section 6.4 above the College will not accept more than two late submissions. **Third and subsequent late submissions will not be accepted.**

6.6 Word Count Policy

To ensure students acquire the skill of word count compliance through appropriate editing and to ensure any student does not gain unfair advantage through exceeding a word count limit, the College will implement the following application of penalties for non-compliance.

The word count limit for each assignment will be outlined in the assignment guidelines provided for each module. Word count can be checked by both the student and the tutor through the use of the word count tool on Turnitin.com. (Students should ensure that the work uploaded into Turnitin.com is the assignment being submitted, from the first word of the Introduction to the last word of the Conclusion. No other part of the assignment submitted as any additional piece of work will be included in the word count).

If a student breaches the word count limit (breach is defined as **10% below** or **10% above** the stated word count), the following penalties will apply *per stage* of a programme:

The first assignment submitted that breaches the stated word count limit will lead to a warning in the feedback provided and the highlighting of word count as an issue in the Assignment Presentation and Structure Feedback Sheet.

The second assignment submitted that breaches the stated word count limit will lead to the application of a 5% penalty to the total assignment mark, and a repeat of the warnings outlined above.

The third (and any subsequent) assignment submitted that breaches the stated word count limit will lead to the student being asked to resubmit the assignment. The resubmission will be subject to a maximum mark of 40%.

6.7 Examinations

Examinations are a component of all QQI programmes run by the College. The procedure for the running of examinations for each programme is as follows:

1. Students are made aware from the outset which modules are assessed by examination. Examination dates and venues are set. These will be indicated on the course calendar and the relevant Assessment Strategy documents.
2. Approximately two months prior to the date examination papers and associated marking rubrics are drafted by the tutor and submitted to the Course Director for approval.
3. On approval of the Course Director, draft papers are forwarded to the External Examiners for review and comment (by registered post).
4. On receipt of External Examiners comments, papers and marking rubrics are finalised and approved by the Course Director.
5. Students undertake examinations at designated venues.

Examination Regulations

1. Candidates are expected to:
 - Raise their hand if they have a query about the exam paper, wish to go to the bathroom, require more paper etc. ;
 - Fill in all exam scripts with relevant details e.g. exam number, date, module number and module title ;
 - Use their exam number rather than their name on exam scripts ;
 - Hand in all written materials (including notes) to invigilators at the end of the exam ;
 - Remain seated if finished early.

2. Any student who wishes to leave the examination hall during an examination may do so only with the permission and under the supervision of one of the invigilators. Only one student may leave the hall at any one time.
3. No student may leave the examination hall in the fifteen minutes immediately before the time that the examination is scheduled to end.
4. All students must cease writing and put down their pens at the end of the examination. Any student who does not comply with this regulation may be considered to be in breach of regulations and subject to disciplinary procedure.
5. Invigilators will give time check calls at appropriate times during and before the end of each examination.
6. It is the personal responsibility of each student to ensure that his or her completed examination script is handed to and accepted by an invigilator. It is not sufficient for any student simply to leave an examination script lying unattended on their examination desk when they leave the hall.
7. Students must endeavour to ensure that their handwriting is legible. Where an examination script is illegible a student may be required to attend the College for a 'viva voce' oral examination or to re-sit the examination paper.
8. In case of any unforeseen event during any examination, or in case of typographical errors on any question paper, the decision of the chief invigilator will be announced to the students sitting the examination. This decision will be notified to the Manager of Academic Affairs and will be taken into consideration by assessors when the particular examination scripts are being marked.
9. A candidate must not (under any pretext whatsoever) speak to or have any communication with any other candidate; such communications will be regarded as a breach of the Examination Regulations. If a candidate needs to ask a question or obtain an extra answer booklet, s/he should raise his/her hand and one of the invigilators will attend to him/her.

Illness During an Examination

A distressed or ill candidate may be permitted to leave the examination hall temporarily during an examination, accompanied by an invigilator, and subsequently return to complete the examination, provided the continuity and quality of supervision is not affected. The Senior Invigilator may, if deemed necessary, give a time extension to such a candidate at the end of the examination equal to the period of absence, or arrange for such a candidate to complete the examination in a separate room under separate supervision.

Should the candidate fail to complete the examination s/he can re-sit the supplemental examination, subject to terms and conditions.

Unauthorised Materials in an Examination

A candidate who is found to have unauthorised materials in his/her possession in the Examination Hall shall be deemed to be in breach of the Examination Regulations.

The unauthorised materials will be removed and retained by the Invigilator who will make a written report to the College. The candidate will be allowed to complete the examination.

The same procedure will be followed where a candidate or candidates is/are considered by the Invigilator to have copied or to have attempted to copy.

Each candidate held to be in breach of the Examination Regulations shall be referred to the Disciplinary Committee (sub-committee of the Academic Council) in advance of the relevant Examination Board meeting and a report from the Disciplinary Committee shall be placed before the Examination Board. The Disciplinary Committee's report will make a precise recommendation to the Board.

Breaches of Examination Regulations

The procedures in relation to a student suspected to be in breach of examination regulations is as follows:

The Disciplinary Committee will review the student's infringement(s) and if it is decided that he/she is in breach of examination regulations, appropriate sanctions will be applied, which may include:

- The examination in question being declared void and the student being required to re-sit it;
- All written examinations of that series of examinations completed by the student being declared void;
- The student not being permitted to re-sit that series of examinations until the period of one year has elapsed;
- Other forms of assessment undertaken during the academic year also being declared void if this is considered appropriate or necessary;
- The student not subsequently being eligible for consideration for an award with merit or distinction.

In addition to its recommendations to the Examination Board, the Disciplinary Committee may, at its discretion, impose other sanctions.

Communication of Examination Results

All examination results are subject to final review by External Examiners, the relevant Examination Board and QQI.

Exam results will be communicated in accordance with the procedures for assessment feedback outlined in section 6.9 of this handbook.

Venues

Normally only one exam venue in Dublin is organised. However, in the event of a substantial number of students coming from one area, a second exam venue may be arranged, at the discretion of the College.

Assessment Procedures for Examinations

The procedures for the assessment of examinations are the same as those procedures outlined in section 6.8 of this handbook.

Repeat Examinations

The procedure in relation to repeat examinations applies to two distinct groups:

- Students who do not attend on the first set date;
- Students who attend the first date and subsequently fail to achieve a pass grade.

1. Students who do not attend on the first set date:

Any student, who is prevented for a genuine reason from sitting an examination, is permitted to sit it at the supplemental examination. Students who are unable to sit an examination must notify the College as soon as possible of the reasons for their absence. This must be followed by a written explanation within 3 days. The College accepts only the following reasons for non-attendance at an examination:

- Own illness or injury (confirmed by medical certificate)
- Illness or injury of a student's child (confirmed by medical certificate)
- Family bereavement
- Birth of baby / fostering / adoption of a child
- Unforeseen event of a serious nature (The College reserves the right to decide the seriousness of any event)

Students who fail to sit an examination for an insufficient reason may sit the supplemental examination in that subject at the discretion of the College. Insufficient reasons include any event not covered by the list above, for example being on holiday outside the country. Such students may be subject to a maximum mark of 49% in their exam. This is at the discretion of the Course Director. Any such decision will be based on the individual circumstances of the student in question.

2. Students who attend the first date and subsequently fail to achieve a pass grade:

Students who sit their examination but fail to achieve a pass grade are permitted to re-sit the examination at the supplemental examinations. The maximum mark available to students repeating their exam for this reason will be 40%.

The College charges a fee to students who have to sit supplemental examinations. The fee amount is communicated to students on the commencement of each academic year.

Procedure in relation to the running of Repeat Examinations

The Open Training College runs supplemental examinations as follows:

1. Supplemental examinations are scheduled in the College as appropriate, normally during early autumn each year. This is indicated on the programme calendar.
2. Approximately two months prior to the examination date supplemental assessment papers and associated marking rubrics are drafted by the tutor and submitted to the Course Director for approval.
3. On approval of the Course Director, draft papers are forwarded to the External Examiners for review and comment (by registered post).
4. On receipt of External Examiners comments, papers and marking rubrics are finalised and approved by the Course Director.
5. Students undertake examinations at designated venues.
6. The procedure for the correction of supplemental exams is the same as that outlined in section 6.8 of this handbook.

6.8 Assessment results and standards

Grading Scheme for Assignments and Examinations

The grading scheme used by the College in relation to QQI programmes is as follows:

Programmes at level 6 and 7:**Programmes at level 8:**

70% and over	Distinction	70% and over	First Class Honours
60% - 69%	Merit (Grade 1)	60% - 69%	Second class honours (Grade 1)
50% - 59%	Merit (Grade 2)	50% - 59%	Second class honours (Grade 2)
40% - 49%	Pass	40% - 49%	Pass
35% - 39%	Pass by Compensation	35% - 39%	Pass by Compensation
0% - 35%	Fail	0% - 35%	Fail

Further information on the assessment of learners is available from the QQI Website (<http://www.qqi.ie>).

Failed assignments

Any student who achieves less than 40% is deemed to have failed in that particular module. Any student who fails a module is permitted to re-submit it (to a limit of three modules per stage), or where eligible can pass by compensation (applies to a maximum of two modules).

The **procedure for resubmission of failed assignments** operates as follows:

1. The Director/Tutor briefly reviews all assignments prior to formal assessment against the marking rubric. If an assignment looks likely to fail, it is immediately assessed and cross-marked.
2. At the discretion of the tutor, if a fail grade is awarded, the student may be facilitated to resubmit this assignment ONCE within a three-week period. However, the maximum mark attainable will be 40%. (***Please note that students will only be permitted to resubmit assignments for a maximum of three modules in any academic year***). Students who are required to resubmit an assignment will be notified by e-mail.
3. Feedback for resubmitted assignments will not be available until 6 weeks after the resubmission date.
4. If a student fails to meet the pass standard in an assignment resubmission, the following options are available to the student:
 - The student may officially withdraw from their place for a year or more by completing the Withdrawal Form (see section 5.1) and take time to upskill themselves in areas which cause difficulty.

- Continue with the following modules, in the knowledge that they have failed the preceding one(s) and await the External Examination process for the final ratification of their grades. All students' work is presented to the External Examiners and Examination Board for review. Students who have failed assignments must accept that if the Examination Board agrees with the assessors' decision, they may not be able to progress into the following year and will need to repeat the module(s) the following academic year. In an award year where a fail grade is ratified for any module and the student returns to repeat the module this will be recorded as a "second sitting" and as such the student will be ineligible for an award with merit or distinction, except in cases where extreme mitigating circumstances exist.

Students who are returning to the College to repeat a module/modules that they have previously failed will be required to complete all assessment requirements of the module(s) in question in the academic year of the repeat, and will be required to pay the appropriate module fee.

Pass by Compensation

A student who fails to attain the required pass standard in either one or two of the modules (not to exceed one-third of the total credit value for that year, i.e. 20 credits in a 60-credit stage) may, if eligible, pass the assessment(s) by compensation.

Compensation may be applied on the following basis:

The Examination Board will review the student's work for the year. If it is considered that there is sufficient evidence that the majority of the learning outcomes for the years' modules have been demonstrated, a student may be eligible to pass the module(s) by compensation.

- Where the number of modules in the academic year consists of five or more modules, compensation may apply in the case of only two (to be worth not more than one-third of the total credit value for that year when combined);
- The marks obtained in the module(s) being considered for compensation must not be lower than 35%, where the pass standard is 40%;
- The pass standard must be reached on the first attempt in the remaining modules. (*Aggregate excess marks above the pass standard obtained in other modules must be at least double the deficiency in the modules being considered for compensation*).
- Compensation can only apply where all the modules as listed on the approved programme schedule for a year/stage are presented at the same sitting of the Examination Board. This means that students may not use exempted modules or modules completed in previous academic years for compensation purposes.

- Compensation may be applied only to enable a student to pass in the year as a whole. It may not be applied to grant exemptions or additional exemptions

Combined Assessment

In relation to modules that have a combined assessment of assignment and examination, or any other assessment method, students must achieve a minimum of **35%** in each component in order to avail of a combined mark. For example a student who achieves 34% or lower in the examination component would have to re-sit the examination component.

Progression eligibility

In normal circumstances a student is required to pass all modules in a stage in order to progress to the next stage of their programme. However, in extreme mitigating circumstances a student may be permitted to progress with missing credit. Missing credit may not exceed 10 credits in a 60-credit stage.

6.9 Assessment Feedback

Following each assignment or exam students will be provided with written feedback on their performance against the assessment criteria and module learning outcomes.

Feedback will be provided in two parts:

1. A rubric will provide a breakdown of the results and identify areas of achievement and improvement for reference in future assignments.
2. A copy of your assignment with comments will also be provided.

Please see the supporting documentation in the Student Support Area online.

Feedback will be emailed to students approximately 6 weeks after the submission date for assignments. Feedback on assignments will NOT be sent through the post. The date for when feedback will be sent out will be posted on MyOTC.

Please note that feedback on assignments will not be available prior to this date.

Feedback for resubmitted and/or assignments with an extended deadline will not be available until 6 weeks after the resubmission/extended date.

Feedback will not be issued to any student who has failed to upload their assignment to Turnitin.com.

Feedback documentation includes:

- ✓ Statement of the learning outcomes for the module and indication of the student's performance on each learning outcome.
- ✓ Allocation of marks, and details of provisional* grade.
- ✓ Individualised comments on student's work and advice on how to improve your grade.
- ✓ Presentation and structure checklist.

**Please note that all grades are provisional until agreement at Examination Board*

6.10 Assessment Appeals Procedure

Following assessment grades and feedback being issued to students, tutors will be available to discuss same with students who wish to query their assessment outcome or who require assistance with understanding their assessment outcome.

Where a student is dissatisfied with the application of the assessment process in relation to the assessment of their assignment or examination, the following appeals procedure applies.

Students may appeal to the College for their work to be re-checked and/or reviewed.

RE-CHECK means the administrative operation of checking the recording and the calculation of marks (This is not considered a formal appeal).

REVIEW means the re-consideration in detail of all or part of the existing assignment and/or examination material where feasible by the internal and/or external examiner(s).

Any request for a formal Review must be made in writing to the appropriate Course Director and signed by the student.

The written submission for an appeal must identify the elements of the assignment or examination for which the review is being sought. It must also specify the grounds on which the review is sought and must contain all the information that the student requires to have taken into account in the review.

The grounds for re-checking and reviewing must be specified under the following three headings:

1. The assessment/examination procedures of the College have not been properly implemented.
2. The procedures do not adequately cover the student's individual requirements

3. Compassionate circumstances related to the candidate's examination situation were made known to the College by the candidate prior to or during the programme of the examination concerned of which the Board of Examiners were unaware.

The **appeals process** is as follows:

1. Having specified the details outlined above, the student may appeal in writing to his/her tutor within three weeks of receiving the grade/feedback and additional feedback will be given.
2. If, following discussion with his/her tutor, the issue has not been resolved to the student's satisfaction, he/she may request in writing to the Course Director that their work be further cross-marked by the Course Director and feedback will be given.
3. If, following steps one and two, the student wishes to make a further appeal, he/she may request in writing to the College Director (within a period of three weeks following feedback from the Course Director) that his/her work be reviewed by the External Examiners and the Assessment Committee and a recommendation made to the Academic Council. The Council will review the appeal and determine the final grade to be awarded.

Changes to a grade made at Examination Board

Any student in an award year whose overall grade changes as a result of a decision made at the Exam Board meeting will be notified of this change, by phone, by the Course Director or tutor. In such instances the student may appeal this decision, in writing, to the College Director, within 5 days of being notified of the change. This appeal will be considered by the Academic Council.

The decision of the Academic Council is final and the result will be forwarded to QQI. Students are advised that, as a result of any of the above appeal procedures their grades may go up or down.

The College charges an administration fee in relation to student appeals, which is refundable in the case of a successful review.

6.11 Plagiarism

It is the policy of the Open Training College to provide students with a clear definition of what plagiarism is; give guidelines as to how it can be avoided; inform students about the steps that will be taken should they be suspected of, or found to have plagiarised material in their assessments; and the resulting sanctions and penalties that may be applied.

We believe that the procedures relating to suspected acts of plagiarism must be clearly understood by all stakeholders and must be applied consistently, taking into account the responsibility to be fair and equitable to all learners. Consistent with best academic practice, plagiarism is viewed seriously by the Open Training College and can, following a rigorous investigation process, result in expulsion of the student concerned. All investigations into suspected plagiarism, including initial discussions, are recorded and maintained on a student's permanent file. Students are informed that under Freedom of Information a student has the right to request access to all documentation and reports arising from investigation into suspected plagiarism in their work.

Plagiarism is the act of submitting another person's work as one's own. Plagiarism comes in many shapes and forms ranging from the copying, without acknowledging the source, of whole sections of published works, to the un-acknowledged use of text, diagrams, illustrations or formulae taken from unpublished works e.g. other students' work. Plagiarism may also arise from cheating in exam situations, fabrication of evidence, collusion or collaboration.

When a student submits any piece of work for academic assessment, that act makes the implicit statement that the work is his or her own and that it is being presented specifically and uniquely for the purpose of credit towards their final result. When a student submits work as their own, without adequately acknowledging its source, they are in breach of professional and academic good practice and ethics.

Key steps in the prevention of plagiarism in Higher Education include providing students with a clear definition of what plagiarism entails, giving guidelines as to how it can be avoided and informing students about the penalties that will be applied should they be found to have plagiarised material in their assignments. Information on how to avoid plagiarism and how to reference correctly in assignments is covered with students during tutorials, in MyOTC learning materials and as a virtual tutorial in the online Study Skills module.

The increased inclusion of E-learning methodologies by the College and the consequential result of students using the Internet as a learning resource encourage students to access textual material in electronic format. This widens the potential for the plagiarism of electronic materials. 'Turnitin' is an online plagiarism detection resource utilised by both students and Colleges as a plagiarism prevention and detection resource. In order to highlight any unoriginal work, the software compares uploaded documents (i.e. student assessments) to:

1. A database of journals/books
2. A database of assignments submitted by other students
3. Articles published directly on the Internet

All Open Training College students are required to submit their assessments through the Turnitin website.

Procedures to be taken by the College if a student's work is suspected of plagiarism

The following diagram and explanatory notes illustrate the steps that the College will take if a student is suspected of plagiarism. It is anticipated that, where possible, the process be completed as quickly as possible and within the timeframe of eight weeks. Please note that incidents of plagiarism will be maintained on a student's permanent record, and that the process described below will apply for the full period of their registration, regardless of progression within a course or onto a new course.

Level	Process	Documentation
Level 1 (Pre Plagiarism)	Tutor identifies lack of referencing skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student notified - Initial exploratory discussion with student by telephone - Information Gathering 	Note made on tutorial form and/ or rubric Student directed to appropriate Study Supports
	Tutor identifies possible case of plagiarism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classify Offence - Refer to Course Director 	Letter to student informing them of progression to level 2 investigation Report A
	Tutor concludes there is no case of plagiarism to be answered at this level	Letter to student informing them of finding of no case of plagiarism to be answered
Level 2	Student case referred to Course Director <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviews Report A - Meets with investigating Tutor - Meets with student 	Report B
	Course Director decision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classify Offence - Determine sanction/penalty <i>or</i> - Refer back to Tutor <i>or</i> - Refer to College Director 	Letter to student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student accepts <i>or</i> - Appeals to Disciplinary Committee
Level 3	Student case referred to College Director <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviews all documentation - Meets with Course Director and investigating Tutor - Forms Panel of Enquiry 	Report C
	College Director decision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classify Offence - Determine sanction/penalty and meet with the student <i>or</i> - Refer back to Course Director - Form Panel of Enquiry 	Letter to student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student accepts <i>or</i> - Appeals to Disciplinary Committee
Appeal	Student appeal received by Disciplinary Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviews all documentation - Meets Tutor/Course Director/College Director as appropriate 	Disciplinary Committee report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appeal to Academic Council (AC)
	Disciplinary Committee decision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classify Offence - Determine sanction/penalty 	Letter to student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AC decision is final - No appeal

LEVEL 1

At the 'Pre Plagiarism Learning Level' the tutor will identify any pre plagiarism errors due to lack of referencing skills and direct the student to the appropriate supports provided by the College to support appropriate student behaviour in this area. Should the student disregard the need to develop these skills or demonstrate more serious plagiarism (e.g. copying directly from another student's work) the investigation will move to Level 2 or 3 as deemed appropriate.

Reasons a tutor might suspect a possible case of plagiarism:

1. Specifically identified text by 'Turnitin' software as containing an unacceptable amount of material taken directly from identified sources.
2. Un-cited text copied from College materials.
3. Incongruity in style of writing e.g. deviation from students' own voice, use of advanced academic writing.
4. Inconsistency of fluency and spelling.
5. Change in formatting e.g. font, headings, margins; inconsistency of I.T. style e.g. very complicated table/chart having been inserted etc.
6. Lack of flow and/or development of topic. Paragraphs inserted that are inconsistent with previous points made – evidence of cutting and pasting.
7. Work that is very similar or the same as another students work².
8. Work that is very similar or the same as the student's previously assessed work.
9. A piece of work written to a much higher standard than the student's previous work.
10. Suspicion that the student may have had assignment written for them by another person – 'ghost' writing.

This list is not exhaustive and the tutor may commence an investigation based on any reasonable suspicion. Following initial analysis the tutor may decide that there is no case of plagiarism to be answered. In this instance the student's attention will be drawn to the incident and feedback provided through the assessment rubric. If the tutor confirms that a possible case of plagiarism has occurred the investigation continues to the information gathering stage as follows.

The tutor notifies the student of the situation and has an initial exploratory discussion by telephone. Following this, the tutor commences the information gathering process. Information gathering may

² In a situation where two current students have presented the same/similar work both students will be subject to the plagiarism policy and procedures and both may have penalties applied as appropriate. In the case of a current student presenting work which seriously overlaps with that of a previous student the current student will be dealt with through these procedures and the previous student will be informed of the situation. The current student in question however will not be identified in this communication. There will be no exceptions to this practice.

include but is not limited to review of previous work, discussion with a previous tutor, and review of assignments of current or former students, and consideration of any explanation/comments offered by the student in the initial telephone conversation. Students are made aware that their previous work may be reviewed as part of an investigation to provide background information about their standard of work.

On completion of the information gathering stage the tutor compiles a written report (Report A) and based on the evidence makes a decision as to whether or not there is a case of plagiarism to be answered. In making his/her decision, in addition to the information gathered the tutor will also consider:

1. The Declaration of Authorship Form and the Student Handbook terms and conditions Statement that have been submitted by the student stating that they have understood the nature of plagiarism and its implications as outlined in the Student Handbook.
2. Was the information about plagiarism and its implications made sufficiently clear?
3. Has the student misunderstood the above?
4. Is this a first incident?
5. Previous performance and assessment results from completed assignments.
6. The student's participation in programme/attendance at workshops etc.
7. Extenuating personal circumstances?
8. Has the issue arisen due to any oversight by the College?

If the tutor decides that yes, there is a case to be answered they will notify the student of this outcome in writing and refer the case for consideration to the Course Director. The student may exercise their right to appeal to the Disciplinary Committee at this stage, and will be informed of this in the letter from the tutor.

If the tutor decides that there is no case of plagiarism to be answered they will also notify the student of this outcome in writing.

Level 1: Minor Offence Classification		
Criteria		Penalties/Sanctions
Amount/Extent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low percentage from individual source identified by Turnitin 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflective grade: deduct marks for referencing portion of assignment and/or 2. Reflective grade: deduct marks for portion of assignment with referencing errors
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic referencing error 	
Level/Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many direct quotes 	
Additional Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence of deliberate attempt by student • Extenuating personal circumstances 	

LEVEL 2

Student case is referred to the Course Director by Tutor who has completed investigation at Level 1. The student has received notification of this development by the tutor.

The Course Director commences the information gathering process, which will include but is not limited to a review of Report A, meeting with the investigating tutor and meeting with the student. On completion of the information gathering stage the Course Director compiles a written report (Report B) and, based on the evidence, makes a decision as to whether or not there is a case of plagiarism to be answered at Level 2 or above.

If the Course Director decides that yes, there is a case to be answered they will classify the offence as Level 2 (major) or Level 3 (grave). In the case of a Level 2 offence the Course Director will determine a sanction/penalty (see below for sanctions/penalties available at Level 2) and will notify the student of this outcome in writing. In the case of a Level 3 offence the Course Director will refer the case to the Disciplinary Committee for further investigation at Level 3; the student will also be notified of this outcome in writing. The student may exercise their right to appeal to the Disciplinary Committee at this stage, and will be informed of this in the letter from the tutor.

If the Course Director decides that there is no case of plagiarism to be answered at Level 2 the case will be referred back to the investigating tutor for sanction/penalty at Level 1; the student will be notified of this outcome in writing.

Level 2: Major Offence Classification		
Criteria		Penalties/Sanctions
Amount/Extent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High percentage from individual source identified by Turnitin 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Viva voce Fail grade awarded with opportunity to resubmit (cap of 49%) Award bare pass mark (40%) Fail grade awarded without opportunity to resubmit (re-take module)
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat offence 	
Level/Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced stage of programme 	
Additional Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliberate attempt by student No evidence of formative engagement with supports and materials 	

LEVEL 3

Student case is referred to the Disciplinary Committee by Course Director who has completed investigation at Level 2. The student has received notification of this development by the tutor and has not exercised their right to appeal to the Disciplinary Committee.

The Disciplinary Committee reviews all documentation relating to the investigation to date and meets with the investigating Course Director and Tutor to discuss the case, and based on the evidence available decides whether or not there is a case to be answered at Level 3.

If the Disciplinary Committee decides that yes, there is a case to be answered they will classify the offence as Level 3 (grave) and give a determination of an appropriate sanction/penalty (see below for sanctions/penalties available at Level 3). The Committee will arrange a meeting with the student to reiterate the plagiarism investigation process, findings and outcome to the student and inform them of the sanction/penalty to be applied, and of their right to appeal any decision to the Academic Council. Following this meeting the Course Director will notify the student of this outcome in writing; the student may exercise their right to appeal to the Academic Council at this stage, and will be informed of this in the letter from the Course Director.

If the Course Director decides that there is no case of plagiarism to be answered at Level 3 the case will be referred back to the investigating tutor for sanction/penalty at Level 2; the student will be notified of this outcome in writing.

Level 3: Grave Offence Classification		
Criteria		Penalties/Sanctions
Amount/Extent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High percentage from individual source identified by Turnitin 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Fail grade awarded without opportunity to resubmit or proceed (defer year) Reduced award classification Expel student with credits Expel student without credits
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple offences 	
Level/Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced stage of programme 	
Additional Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliberate attempt by student Blatantly plagiarised material No evidence of formative engagement with supports and materials 	

APPEALS:

At any stage of the Plagiarism process a student may appeal to the Disciplinary Committee for the handling of their case/sanctions imposed to be reviewed. Appeals must be made in writing to the chair of the committee within two weeks of correspondence regarding the plagiarism investigation.

The Disciplinary Committee is a subcommittee of the Academic Council, chaired by the Assistant College Director/Manager of Academic Affairs, and includes one independent external person and an internal person who has not been involved in the case.

The Disciplinary Committee will:

- Review all documentation and evidence arising from the investigation to date
- Review documentation and evidence arising from any previous plagiarism investigations relating to the student
- Meet with the investigating Tutor/Course Director as appropriate
- Meet with the student

Following this review the Committee will decide whether or not there is a case to be answered.

If the Disciplinary Committee decides that yes, there is a case to be answered they will classify the offence as Level 1 (minor), Level 2 (major) or Level 3 (grave), and will determine a sanction/penalty according to the level of the offence and will notify the student of this outcome in writing.

If the Disciplinary Committee decides that there is no case of plagiarism to be answered the student will be notified of this outcome in writing.

All decisions of the Disciplinary Committee are noted by Academic Council.

A final report comprising detailed notes on the review by the Committee and its decision will be maintained on the student's file in compliance with the GDPR retention policy (Appendix 1).

6.12 Quality Assuring assessment in the OTC

The Open Training College implements carefully designed assessment procedures for the assessment of both assignments and examinations. These ensure that each piece of a student's work is considered on its own merit, and is marked to the same standard and at the appropriate level demanded by the accrediting body. Marks are awarded for learning that has a balance, appropriate to the module, between theory and practical application.

Student work is assessed against specific criteria and learning outcomes from a standardised marking rubric, which has been designed in accordance with the learning outcomes of the associated module. These are clearly stated in the Assessment Strategy documents and in assessment feedback, which students receive following each module.

The assessment of students' work is undertaken in the first instance by the Open Training College and then validated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland following an external examination process and ratification by the Examination Board. This system enables students to hold credits in the event of having to interrupt their programme of study.

Internal and External Verification

Internal verification: Although different tutors mark assignments, each assignment is marked in exactly the same way. To ensure that this process is undertaken in accordance with the rubric a random sample of at least 10% of assignments from each module are cross-marked by an additional tutor. In exceptional circumstances (for example where a discrepancy exists between a first and second marking) a third marking will be carried out by the Course Director.

Following the cross-marking process, students are provided with written feedback on their assignment and a provisional grade. The grade is provisional until agreement at Examination Board. Late assignments may not receive written feedback.

External verification: To further verify the assessment process, and to ensure that the assessment procedures meet the standard required as agreed with QQI, External Examiners examine a sample of assignment work and may often choose to view all the students' work from a year group.

External Examiners

The function of the External Examination process is to ensure adequacy and equity of marking procedures and standards and consistency of OTC standards with national standards. In particular the External Examiner(s) ensure/s that appropriate standards with regard to Pass, Merit and Distinction are applied and that comparability of standards between institutions is achieved and maintained as far as is feasible. In the Open Training College, External Examiner(s) are appointed as Programme Board External Examiner(s), with responsibility for a particular set of programmes.

Specific Duties of External Examiner(s)

External Examiner(s) review and comment on the drafts of all examination papers and marking rubrics before the question papers are finalised. External Examiner(s) have the right to make such suggestions, criticisms, deletions, additions and amendments, as they deem appropriate.

External Examiners review a representative sample of assessment material presented by students, including borderline cases. However, in the Open Training College External Examiners may often view all work for all students. When a sample is used the sample is drawn on a basis agreed between the Internal and External Examiner(s). It always includes a sample of work achieving high, middle and low marks. On programmes with larger groups a sample of students work may be sent to the examiner in advance and the balance of the group reviewed during the External Examiners' visit. It is College policy to ensure that the External Examiner(s) sees sufficient material to enable him/her to form a judgement as to the appropriateness of the marking at all levels of classification.

External Examiner's Visit to College

Completed and corrected assignments and assessments are reviewed by the External Examiners during the External Examiner's visit, which normally happens once per year per programme on completion of the academic year. During the External Examiner's visit programme work undertaken by students is made available in addition to all programme materials, marking schemas, rubrics, on-line work, assessment papers and scripts. College staff are available to External Examiners for the total duration of the visit for discussion where necessary and to answer any queries or questions. External Examiners also review appeals requests at this stage. External Examiners may also meet with a number of students to discuss the students' experience of studying with the Open Training College.

In visiting the College, the duties of External Examiner(s) are:

- To review borderline cases and, if necessary, interview such students
- To review the work of students who have requested a review through the appeals procedure, and make a recommendation to the Examination Board on the mark to be awarded in relation to the appeal
- To agree with the respective Internal Examiner(s) the proposed final marks/grades for consideration by the appropriate Examination Board
- To attend appropriate meeting(s) of the Examination Board as required
- To provide feedback to the College on the overall standard of marking and student academic achievement and to make suggestions for improvements

Examination Board

On completion of the External Examiner's visit the Examination Board meets. The Examination Board agrees all marks for all modules for all students being submitted by the College at that time. It is during this process that a student's work can be graded up or down following discussion by the Board. Students who are 'borderline' are discussed in this forum and a decision made based on the cumulative evidence presented by College staff in consideration of the views of the External Examiner(s). The Examination Board also finalises a recommendation for forwarding to Academic Council in relation to student appeals.

The Examination Board meetings for each programme are held in accordance with regulations and procedures laid down by the College's Quality Assurance procedures. The following people normally sit on the Board:

- External Examiners
- Manager of Academic Affairs
- Course Director and Tutors
- Administrative staff as necessary

The proceedings and deliberations of the Examination Board are strictly confidential; under no circumstances can any person attending a meeting of an Examination Board disclose to any other person a decision of the board or any document, information or opinion considered, conveyed or expressed at the meeting.

The Chairperson and Secretary to the Board, and all of the Examiners (External and Internal) present at the meeting sign the broadsheet(s) of results on conclusion of the meeting.

Final Ratification of Results

The broadsheets and recommendations of the Examination Board are agreed and signed off on at the end of the Exam Board meeting. There may be cases where the Academic Council makes final decisions in relation to student appeals. All finalised results are then forwarded to QQI for conclusion of the process.

It is only on completion of all the above stages that a student can progress to the Conferring of Award.

6.13 Supervisor Forms

All students on degree programmes are required to submit a supervision form signed by their work supervisor in relation to each designated module for which an assessment is undertaken. This form is an integral part of the assessment of these modules and results for the module will not be released until the signed form has been received and stored on the College's assignment log.

SECTION 7: WORKSHOPS

7.1 Purpose of Workshops

Each workshop provides a unique opportunity for students to:

- ✓ Learn from the presentations
- ✓ Network with other students
- ✓ Establish and maintain local study groups
- ✓ Meet with their tutors, face-to-face
- ✓ Contribute their own experiences of learning and practice to the student group
- ✓ Learn from other students' experiences of learning and practice
- ✓ Extend their learning from the programme materials
- ✓ Widen their reference base for their assignments
- ✓ Where relevant, listen to and learn from professional practitioners
- ✓ Enhance their overall learning experience

7.2 Attendance at Workshops

Workshops provide a key learning environment in which the college facilitates students to further their learning by listening to lectures and specialist speakers, completing work in groups and taking part in discussions with tutors and other students. Students are required to attend each module workshop for the full duration. Failure to meet the required workshop attendance will lead to the application of a 10% penalty being applied to the total assessment mark of the module workshop missed. Students will still be required to complete all assessment requirements. The Course Director can request to meet with any student to review their ongoing participation in the programme.

Students will be asked to sign in at the beginning of a workshop and sign out at the end. Significant lateness of arrival or earliness of departure will result in 50% of the workshop attendance being subtracted, at either or both ends of the day, and the relevant penalty being applied pro rata to what has been set out in the previous paragraph.

In exceptional circumstances, students may not be subject to a penalty. Students are required to inform the Course Director in advance, where possible of their reasons for their absence. This must be followed up with a written explanation within three days and supported by relevant documentation. The College will accept the following reasons for non-attendance:

- Own illness or injury (confirmed by medical documentation)
- Illness or injury of students' child (confirmed by medical documentation)
- Family bereavement
- Birth of a child
- Adoption
- Marriage/ Civil Partnership (own or immediate family)
- Court appearances/ Jury duty
- Unforeseen event of a serious nature (the College reserves the right to determine the 'seriousness' of the event)

7.3 Workshop Etiquette

Students are encouraged to articulate and discuss professional experiences that relate to the workshop content. Workshops provide opportunities for students to explore alternative viewpoints and this may involve challenging their own and their employers' perspectives and practices. It is therefore essential that students, tutors and speakers mutually create a learning environment in which all participants feel comfortable and respected, and behave in a manner, which is professional and civil. Issues such as confidentiality, peer support and strategies for effective group work will be discussed at the first workshop of each academic year. It is expected that all those participating in the workshop will comply with the fundamental principles of the Open Training College as outlined in College Aims, Ethos and Values and the Code of Professional Conduct.

The following behaviour is not acceptable during a workshop:

- ✘ Mobile phones being left on and ringing
- ✘ Mobile phones being used to either make or receive calls or text messages
- ✘ Recording a workshop using a mobile device (unless sanctioned by the College)
- ✘ Students disturbing the rest of the student group by talking amongst themselves
- ✘ Students interrupting the speaker or other students
- ✘ Disruptions caused by students joining/leaving the workshop at any stage other than designated break times
- ✘ Sleeping during a workshop
- ✘ Students under the influence of alcohol or narcotic substances

*Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

A student who behaves in any of the ways listed above or in any other way, which is deemed to breach the College Aims, Ethos and Values and/or the Code of Professional Conduct, will be subject to the following process. Please note that acts of incivility will be maintained on a student's record

for the duration of their studies with the College and that this process will apply for the duration of a student's studies with the College, for example an act of incivility in a student's first year will incur the appropriate penalty, any subsequent breaches of civility will incur more severe penalties regardless of the student having moved into a new stage of their programme.

The stage at which this process is entered and the severity of the penalty applied will be determined by the frequency, duration and impact upon the environment of the student's behaviour.

Stage 1:

At the first occurrence of a behaviour which breaches College regulations the student will be alerted to the issue(s) raised and asked to discuss the impact of their behaviour, at a time deemed appropriate by the tutor.

Stage 2:

At the second occurrence of a behaviour which breaches College regulations the student will be issued with a verbal warning. This will be followed up by confirmation of the warning in writing from the Course Director, which will detail the behaviour(s) in question and the possible further penalties that may be applied.

Stage 3:

Any further occurrence of a behaviour which breaches College regulations will require the student to meet with the Course Director to discuss their continued participation on the programme. The student will be required to sign a learner contract to commit to the College regulations regarding behaviour towards tutors and other students for the remaining duration of their studies with the College. The Course Director may decide to refer the issue to the Disciplinary Committee. The maximum penalty applicable is compulsory withdrawal from the programme.

In line with College policy in other areas, a student may take an appeal from any decision of an Academic Council sub-committee (here, the Disciplinary Committee) to the Academic Council, for final decision and written notification to the student.

7.4 Workshop Venues

The College uses a variety of external venues for the workshops, including regional educational institutions and hotels with appropriate training facilities.

The College works closely with all venues to ensure the safety and well-being of its students. Although every effort is made to ensure that arrangements run smoothly and efficiently, students are asked to be aware that Open Training College tutors cannot be held responsible for the quality of the food or beverages in the venue.

Open Training College students are asked to be aware that we share the facilities with other students and guests and it is expected that they will act in a considerate and responsible manner while on the premises.

Currently, the majority of workshops connected to your programme, are held at:

Marino Institute of Education, Griffith Avenue, Dublin 9
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http://www.mie.ie/

SECTION 8: MyOTC

8.1 Acceptable Usage Policy

E-Learning and 'My OTC' are essential tools of the Open Training College. Through these media the College hopes to continue to increase and enhance supports for students.

As with any of the College services, the College aspires to deliver the best service we can but we can only do this in partnership with students. One of our objectives through e-learning is to provide students and staff with a means to develop their I.T. skills and to enhance their learning experiences. It is only through adherence to the following Acceptable Usage Policy that we can ensure that our e-learning environments will be enjoyable and comfortable learning arenas, like any of the College's workshops, tutorials etc.

Student users must accept responsibility for all actions and content which they post within the Open Training College e-learning environment, noting that the following is unacceptable:

1. The posting or inclusion into assignment work of copyright/trademarked materials. (Work submitted for assessment will be verified for plagiarised material).
2. The disclosure of an individual's password for another student's use. (Students are responsible for all communications originating from their account).
3. Use of another student's account.
4. Use of inappropriate language i.e. language that is obscene, defamatory, threatening or offensive.
5. Posting of material that may encourage criminal conduct.
6. Anonymous postings to the discussion boards.
7. Transferring computer viruses or other codes that interfere with other users' use of the e-learning environment or their personal computers.
8. Emailing tutors / College with material that is not related to the programme e.g. jokes, circulars etc.

Students are requested to:

- ✓ Install virus-checking software onto their computer before they start their programme and undertake to keep this up to date. Free virus-checking software can be downloaded from the following site: <http://free.grisoft.com>
- ✓ Notify the College immediately if they identify a security problem on the system.

- ✓ Ensure that they put in place on their own personal PCs, adequate measures for backing-up their work
- ✓ Back up every assignment onto their hard drive and onto a removable disc for their own records

Student users must be aware that opinions expressed on discussion boards and in chat rooms are those of the individuals and not of the Open Training College. (Remember: you should be very careful that any postings on discussion boards etc. are your own – do not try to represent others, including your employing agency, without permission).

Violation of the Acceptable Usage Policy may result in the termination of the student's right to access and use of the e-learning environment.

Furthermore, other disciplinary actions may follow.

Responsibilities and Guarantees of the Open Training College:

1. The Open Training College is not responsible for unexpected downtime of the e-learning environment.
2. Loss of data due to interruptions in the Internet service is not the responsibility of the Open Training College but that of the user's Internet service provider.
3. The Open Training College will not be responsible for the loss of data caused by a computer or electronic virus. It is the responsibility of the student to implement procedures for the backing up of data and virus checking.
4. The Open Training College reserves the right to monitor user activity, for quality assurance and security reasons.
5. The Open Training College reserves the right to review, move or delete materials at its own discretion, including postings to discussion boards, bulletin boards and chat rooms, which it considers to be in breach of the Acceptable Usage Policy.
6. The College reserves the right to monitor all online activity rigorously and will take action, including legal action, for any serious breach of this policy.
7. The Open Training College will not be responsible for links posted by users in its system.
8. No member of the Open Training College will knowingly give out a user's personal contact details without their permission.

Privacy Policy

Personal identifying information includes names, addresses, contact details, date of birth, job details etc. Any such information volunteered by you through the process of using the OTC website will be treated as confidential by the Open Training College. It is not the OTC's policy to share this information with any third party. However, users must be aware that any personal identifying information voluntarily posted to public areas of this website may then be accessible for use by others. The Open Training College cannot prevent this.

Under the Qualifications and Quality (Education and Training) Act 2012, all Colleges offering QQI awards of three months or longer must make arrangements for the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL – Appendix 2), in the event of a programme ceasing to be offered by the College. In light of this, information relating to the PEL arrangements for your particular programme can be found on the Open Training College website (www.opentrainingcollege.com) page for your course. In addition, all students will be asked to sign/accept (online) that they are aware that in the very unlikely event of PEL arrangements being invoked, their personal records, including online submissions may be transferred to a "Protecting College" in order to allow teach-out of a programme and that these records will be held by an independent host in the interim, and may also subsequently be shared with QQI and other relevant government agencies.

Graduates

All graduates will have access to the Open Training College e-learning environment and their college email for a period not to exceed six months from their graduation date. Graduates will be advised one month in advance of their termination date.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Academic Council	A committee which is made up of senior academic and management staff of the College, academics from other third level bodies, a student representative and/or people with a disability who have knowledge and experience of third level education and service provision, which meets three times per year to oversee the academic responsibilities of the College and also to make final decisions in relation to student appeals.
Academic Year	This refers to the period from September to July during which the college is running its programmes. The OTC is closed during August each year.
ACCS (Accumulation of credits & certification of subjects)	System in operation among accredited third level institutions, which allows for credit (following successful completion of assessment) to be achieved and maintained by a student in a flexible way.
Appeals	The formal process of taking a grievance or complaint from the programme level, through the relevant sub-committee of the Academic Council to the Academic Council itself, as an ultimate arbiter. Appeals may be resolved at any stage of the process and do not need to progress unless they are not resolved to the appellant's satisfaction, at earlier stages.
Applicants' Day	A one-day event which all new applicants must attend to find out information about the programme they are applying to and attend an interview with a College Tutor.
Assessment	Assessment is the process of critically reviewing students' work and deciding if it meets the criteria (Learning outcomes) for that stage of the programme. An assessment may be carried out using a variety of techniques, including assignment and exam.
Assignment	An assignment is a set piece of work required for student assessment.
Borderline	Where a student's grade falls on the cusp (i.e. 1-2% either side) of the grade threshold. E.g. where the pass threshold is 40%, 39%-41% represents borderline grades.
Bridging	Process of applying for entry into a programme at a level higher than the first stage. This process involves submitting a piece of work for assessment.
Broadsheet	Record of all student assessment grades being presented to QQI for certification.
Bursary	Financial assistance in paying fees, which is available to selected students experiencing hardship.

Candidate (re. exam)	Student sitting an exam.
College Director	Person responsible for overseeing all College activities.
Conferring	Formal ceremony at the end of a programme, at which all successful students, from Level 7 awards and above, are presented with their award parchment and diploma supplement.
Course Director	Person responsible for overseeing all activities of a specified programme or set of programmes.
Course/Programme	Validated body of modules, which make up an award (Major, Minor, Special Purpose).
Credit (ECTS)	Academic value attached to a module, based upon system determined by QQI: European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).
Cross marking	Process of assessment by additional tutors to ensure consistent standards across all tutors' assessment.
E-Learning	Learning using the Internet and ICT.
Etiquette	Appropriate, polite and respectful behaviour.
Exam	Technique used to assess student learning on a module/programme. Set format and date/time in which work is to be completed.
Exam Board	A committee consisting of External Examiner(s), Academic Manager, Course Director and tutors which meet following the external examination process to discuss and agree upon student assessment grades.
Exemption	Where a student does not have to complete an assessment for a module/part of a module, due to prior learning they have proven to the College.
Extenuating Circumstances	<p>A restricted list of serious/extreme circumstances, which may allow for a specific category of withdrawal from a programme, as a reason for waiver on workshop attendance requirements or as grounds for extension on an assignment.</p> <p>An indicative list of such circumstances includes:</p> <p><u>Serious Illness</u>: Self, Partner, Child</p> <p><u>Loss of Job</u>: Self, Partner</p> <p><u>Death of immediate family</u>: Partner, Mother, Father, Brother, Sister, Child</p>
External Examination	Process whereby representative(s) from similar programmes in other higher education institutes review the standards and effectiveness of OTC programmes.

QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Human Services	All organisations providing support services to individuals.
Invigilator	Person who is responsible for overseeing the implementation of exam regulations.
Late submission	Submission of an assignment after the set deadline date.
Learning Outcomes	Defined knowledge, skills and abilities that a student is expected to have achieved upon completion of a module.
Marking Schema/Rubric	Guidelines and criteria by which all tutors grade assignments.
Module	A unit of learning within a programme. Consists of written/electronic learning materials, online activity and assessment.
MyOTC	The online learning services of the Open Training College.
Pass by compensation	A decision, made by Examination Board to pass a student, who scores between 35 and 39% on an assessment, but meets the basic criteria of the necessary learning outcomes.
Prior learning	Learning which occurred prior to participation on a programme of the OTC and which may entitle the application to exemptions within the programme. This learning may have taken place either through formal or informal channels. Acceptable standards of prior learning will vary depending on the programme being applied for.
Progression	Progression represents movement from one stage of a programme to the next. This includes progression from one year of a programme into the next and also progression from one module of a programme to the next.
Quality Assurance (QA)	When QA is mentioned/discussed it refers to the processes of evaluation and feedback the College undertakes to ensure the effectiveness of the standards of its programmes and activities.
Ratification	Formal procedure of agreeing and finalising assignment grades.
Reasonable Accommodation	Changes which are made to an assessment method to allow a person with a disability/learning difficulty/medical condition to participate equally and with potential success in the assessment.
Resubmission	The process of editing/re-completing an assignment, which failed to meet the pass grade and re-sending it in for assessment.
The College	The Open Training College (OTC), St. Michael's House
Tutorial	Scheduled support (either via telephone, e-mail or face to face) in completing

	a module, from a named tutor.
Unauthorised materials (exams)	Materials e.g. books, notes, recordings, mobile phones etc. other than those specified as being allowed in the exam room.
Viva Voce	An alternative/additional assessment technique whereby a student gives an oral account (recorded and in the presence of the tutor) of their response to a set assignment/exam question.
Withdrawal	When used in reference to your programme of study, this means postponing your studies on a programme to the following (or subsequent) academic year. Withdrawal may be temporary or permanent. A case may be made to a relevant Course Director to be designated "Withdrawn under extenuating circumstances".
Workshop	Group learning opportunity which involves lectures, guest speakers and group activities.

APPENDIX 1 – GDPR Policy

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR) POLICY

OPEN TRAINING COLLEGE

1. INTRODUCTION

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), effective May 2018 confers rights on individuals as well as responsibilities on organisations processing personal data. Personal data, both automated and manual are data relating to a living individual who is or can be identified, either from the data or from the data in conjunction with other information.

2. PURPOSE

To outline how the OTC complies with its legal obligations in respect of data protection.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students, prospective students, staff, stakeholders and suppliers of the Open Training College (OTC) whose data is stored on College systems or in handwritten or hard-copy filed formats.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

OTC has existing arrangements in place with respect to data protection, under the Data Protection Acts of 1988 and 2003. These arrangements are hereby supplemented with regard to the Data Protection Act, 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR- Regulation (EU) 2016/679).

OTC will ensure that the following core principles of the GDPR are adhered to:

1. Lawfulness, Fairness, Transparency
2. Purpose limitation
3. Data minimisation
4. Accuracy
5. Storage limitation
6. Integrity and confidentiality
7. Accountability

Specifically, OTC will strengthen its response to data protection responsibilities by:

- (1) Revising all forms and methods of data collection to ensure that data subjects are informed in advance of all possible and specific uses of information, so that the subject may chose to opt-in or not.
- (2) Ensuring that data subjects are informed of an opt-out option at any time, having opted in, and that a clear route to activation of this option is provided to all subjects.
- (3) Minimising data storage, so that unwarranted storage is deleted, within the following parameters:

Area	Maximum Storage Time
Student Results	Indefinite – the College is required to retain data relating to student results, so that such information is available to students at any given future date, in order that they may verify their results, particularly in relation to progressing to other programmes.
Financial Records	7 years – to comply with Revenue and SMH (St. Michael’s House) policies.
Student Assessments and Feedback	5 weeks from ratification of results by the relevant Examination Board. This allows for the appeal window to have closed.
Other data: Communication with and information stored relating to any of the data subjects outlined in (3.) Scope, above. For example, emails, written notes and letters to/from the data subject.	According to the current OTC GDPR Action Plan and in any case, no more than 7 years.
Student e-mail accounts	6 months after graduation.

- (4) Keeping all stored data safe and secure, with appropriate back-up arrangements.
- (5) Using all data only for the purposes which are agreed by the informed consent of the data subject. Written consent to such usage is also to be stored securely and in the case of students seeking QQI awards, specific consent will be stored on the pro forma consent forms supplied.

(6) Adding additional security for “Special Categories of Data”. These will be stored with additional password protection, with access only to nominated staff members, such as the Programme Director or relevant Programme Administrator.

(7) Complying with any and all Subjects Access Requests (SARs) within the statutory timeframe allowed.

(8) Notifying the designated organisational Data Protection Officer (DPO) and Data Protection Commissioner of any personal data security breaches within 72 hours of such a breach occurring.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The College Director has ultimate executive responsibility for the effective development and implementation of academic policies. The Academic Affairs Manager has overall delegated responsibility for coordinating the day to day operation of the policies and the development, maintenance and monitoring of supporting procedures. All staff members are responsible for pursuing the implementation of these policies in relation to data storage activities with which they are involved as part of their daily duties.

Further specific responsibilities are outlined in the Procedures attached to this policy.

6. DEFINITIONS

Data means automated and manual data. Automated data means any information on computer, or information recorded with the intention that it be processed by computer. Manual data means information that is recorded as part of a relevant filing system or with the intention that the data form part of a system.

Data Controller means a body that, either alone or with others, controls the contents and use of personal data.

Data Processor means a person who processes personal data on behalf of a data controller but does not include an employee of a data controller who processes such data in the course of his employment.

Data Subject means an individual who is the subject of personal data.

Data Protection Officer (DPO) means the individual who is identified and designated by the organisation as having ultimate responsibility for data protection within the organisation; including the duty to report any data breach to the Data Protection Commissioner.

Personal Data means data relating to a living individual who is or can be identified either from the data or from the data in conjunction with other information that is in, or is likely to come into, the possession of the data controller.

Processing means performing any operation or set of operations on the information or data, whether or not by automatic means, including:

- Obtaining, recording or keeping the information, or
- Collecting, recording organising, storing, altering or adapting the information or data,
- Retrieving, consulting or using the information or data
- Disclosing the information or data by transmitting, disseminating or otherwise making them available, or
- Aligning, combining, blocking, erasing or destroying the information or data.

Relevant Filing System means any set of information relating to individuals to the extent that, while not computerised, is structured, either by reference to individuals or by reference to criteria relating to individuals, in such a way that specific information relating to a particular individual is readily accessible.

Special Categories of Data (formerly Sensitive Personal Data) means personal data which relate to specific categories defined as:

- The racial or ethnic origin, the political opinions or the religious or philosophical beliefs of the data subject
- Trade union membership
- The physical or mental health or sexual life of the data subject
- The commission or alleged commission of any offence by the data subject or

- Any proceedings for an offence committed or alleged to have been committed by the data subject, the disposal of such proceedings or the sentence of any court in such proceedings.

Subject Access Request (SAR) means a request, made by an identified data subject, for provision of data held by an organisation on that data subject. All data requested must be supplied to the data subject within 30 calendar days and there cannot be a charge for fulfilling this obligation on the first such request from a data subject. Second and subsequent requests may attract a charge.

7. RELATED DOCUMENTATION

This policy should be read in conjunction with *GDPR policy Procedures*.

8. CONTACTS

The Academic Affairs Manager/Corporate Services Manager.

Policy Title:		General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
OTC Policy No		1808
Version		1.1
Date approved: September 2018	Date policy will take effect: September 2018	Date of Next Review: Annual
Approving Authority:		Academic Council
Document Owner/Contact:		Academic Affairs Manager Corporate Services Manager
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:		- Procedure for Data Protection: Open Training College - GDPR Audit -QQI student consent form -OTC GDPR Action Plan
Audience:		Public – accessible to anyone
Reference(s)		- EU General Data Protection Regulation, 2018 (<u>Regulation (EU) 2016/679</u>) - Data Protection Act, 1988 - Data Protection (Amendment) Act, 2003 - Data Protection Act, 2018

APPENDIX 2 – PEL Policy

PROTECTION OF ENROLLED LEARNERS (PEL) POLICY
OPEN TRAINING COLLEGE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 contains provisions for the protection of learners enrolled in programmes of education and training (Part 6, S. 64-67). The legislation applies to all education providers (other than those specifically exempt under legislation) and to any course of 3 month duration or longer where fees have been charged. QQI has developed protocols to facilitate providers in the fulfilment of their legal obligations with regard to PEL.

As summarised by QQI, the 2012 Act seeks to ensure that:

- (1) Learners have an opportunity to complete a programme leading to an award, or
- (2) Learners are refunded the moneys most recently paid if a programme ends before they complete it, and
- (3) Learners are provided with adequate and accurate information about the programme that they wish to pursue and about the protection in place for them in event that the programme ceases prior to their completion.

2. PURPOSE

To outline how the OTC complies with its legal obligations in respect of the protection of enrolled learners.

3. SCOPE

Protection of learners enrolled in OTC, QQI approved, undergraduate and postgraduate accredited programmes of 3 months duration or longer where moneys have been paid by, or on behalf of the learner.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

OTC has learner protection arrangements in place with respect to enrolled learners on all QQI validated programmes of 3 months duration or longer, where moneys have been paid in advance of delivery of programme by, or on behalf of the learner, ensuring learners' education at OTC is

protected, and in accordance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Part 6 “Protection of Enrolled Learners”.

OTC strives to ensure that all its programmes are taught out and finished. The purpose of the policy and related 'Protocols and Procedures on PEL document' is to facilitate OTC's reaching workable and tangible PEL solutions across all relevant programmes, for its continuation to completion. Arrangements which facilitate learners to complete their studies, is the preferred PEL option and approach for QQI and OTC, as this accommodation is in the best interests of the learner.

In addition OTC seeks to strengthen public confidence by:

(1) Having a refund policy in place which will be communicated to students in their programme documentation and made publicly available on the website;

(2) Making arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners known to the Designated Awarding Body, if collaborative arrangements are not already agreed and stated within the joint contractual agreements;

(3) Minimising risk through appropriate control and monitoring activities, including:

- a) Designing and delivering programmes in accordance with contractual agreements with the Designated Awarding Body and in compliance with national Quality Assurance requirements and guidelines;
- b) Fulfilling corporate governance and financial reporting and regulatory obligations;
- c) Conducting risk assessment activities during the programme design stage and programme evaluation stage, and analysing environmental threats.

Learner Protection insurance is provided by O’Driscoll O’Neil and underwritten by Hiscox Insurance Company Limited. This insurance policy provides either for the completion of the programme or the return of fees most recently paid in line with the 2012 Act.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The College Director has ultimate executive responsibility for the effective development and implementation of academic policies. The Academic Affairs Manager has overall delegated responsibility for coordinating the day to day operation of the policies and the development, maintenance and monitoring of supporting procedures. Course Directors and Tutors are responsible for pursuing the implementation of these policies in relation to the activities of their programmes.

6. DEFINITIONS

Enrolled Learner: student fully registered with the College. Application form accepted and required fee/part fee paid – for the purposes of completing an accredited programme of 3 months duration or longer.

7. RELATED DOCUMENTATION

This policy should be read in conjunction with *PEL Policy procedures*.

8. CONTACTS

The Academic Affairs Manager/Corporate Services Manager

Policy Title:		Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL)
OTC Policy No		1802
Version		1.1
Date approved: September 2018	Date policy will take effect: September 2018	Date of Next Review: Annual
Approving Authority:		Academic Council
Document Owner/Contact:		Academic Affairs Manager Corporate Services Manager
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:		Procedures for PEL
Audience:		Public – accessible to anyone
Reference(s)		The Qualifications and Quality Act (Education and Training), 2012 Statutory Instruments relating to PEL European Standards and Guidelines for QA in the European Higher Education Area

APPENDIX 3 – Student Learning Support and Pastoral Care Policy and Guide

STUDENT LEARNING SUPPORT AND PASTORAL CARE POLICY

OPEN TRAINING COLLEGE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Open Training College (OTC) seeks to provide a supportive teaching and learning environment that is responsive to individual student needs. Such support is fundamentally based on the Supported Open Learning (SOL) Model and is targeted at all stages of the student lifecycle.

The academic entry levels for each programme are regularly monitored, benchmarked and adjusted where necessary, to ensure that students entering OTC programs have the academic proficiencies which will give them a realistic chance to successfully complete their chosen programme. At the same time OTC recognises that, for a wide variety of reasons, students may not find it easy to achieve the academic results of which they are capable. This document outlines the academic and pastoral care support available to all students.

2. PURPOSE

This policy defines who can avail of OTC learning support and identifies what services are available within this provision.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students registered with the OTC who wish to avail of Learning Support.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Our aim is to foster independent learning through the provision of online resources, one-to-one sessions and group workshops.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The OTC will ensure that our service is responsive to student need and delivered in a timely manner. In addition, we will undertake regular evaluations of our service and address any issues which may arise. At each stage we will respect the student's privacy and confidentiality.

The Course Directors, will liaise with other OTC staff to arrange additional supports such as assistive technology, academic tuition and alternative formats.

Students are expected to disclose learning support or pastoral care needs to the OTC at interview or as early as possible in the student life cycle. College welcomes all feedback from students and see it as a vital element to the development and enhancement of the service we offer to students.

6. DEFINITIONS

The OTC defines learning support as the following suite of services:

- Supported Open Learning (SOL)Model
- Guide to Learning Support and Pastoral Care Services
- Orientation Programme
- MyOTC Induction Programme
- Students at Risk Intervention Contract
- Individual Academic Tutor Support Record Template
- Provision of Support for Students with Disabilities and or Specific Learning Difficulties
- Student Progression, Exclusion and Graduation Policy and Procedure
- English Language and Academic Assistance
- Library
- Information Technology
- Individual Academic Tutors
- In-workshop consultation
- E-learning consultation
- Online facilitators
- Course Director consultation

Policy Title:		Student Learning Support and Pastoral Care Policy
OTC Policy No		1807
Version		1.0
Date approved: June 2018	Date policy will take effect: September 2018	Date of Next Review: 3 years
Approving Authority:		Academic Council
Document Owner/Contact:		Academic Affairs & QA Manager
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supported Open Learning (SOL)Model ▪ Guide to Learning Support and Pastoral Care Services ▪ Orientation Programme ▪ MyOTC Induction Programme ▪ Students at Risk Intervention Contract

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual Academic Tutor Support Record Template ▪ Provision of Support for Students with Disabilities and or Specific Learning Difficulties ▪ Student Progression, Exclusion and Graduation Policy and Procedure
Audience:	Public – accessible to anyone
Reference(s)	<p>QQI QA and Validation Policies and Guidelines (2016-2018)</p> <p>European Standards and Guidelines (2015)</p>

GUIDE TO LEARNING SUPPORT AND PASTORAL CARE SERVICES

This guide is intended to provide staff and students with information regarding the facilities and resources that are available to students to support them with the academic demands of their programmes. The guide also outlines the expectations and responsibilities of staff to identify students with pastoral care and learning support needs and to direct them to or provide them with appropriate resources. Students deemed in need of specialist support services or academically 'at risk' are defined and the support strategies in place for these students described.

1. Orientation and Transition to Higher Education

All students are required to complete an Orientation Programme prior to commencement of their study with College. The Course Director is responsible for the delivery of the orientation programme to all students. The orientation programme encompasses a range of educational, programme planning, independent self-directed study, e-learning and social information sessions. These include:

1. Registration, creation of ID and enrolment check;
2. Learning Management System and IT systems introduction;
3. Online Library orientation;
4. Programme and workshop attendance planning;
5. Individual Academic Tutor allocation;
6. Academic expectations including use of Turnitin and plagiarism;
7. Student Support Services information;
8. Orientation sessions are supported through appropriate resources posted on the website and the Student Learning Management System;
9. The Tutor/Workshop Presenter or delegated member of staff is responsible for checking student attendance and following up with students who do not attend or who arrive late.

Orientation and follow up procedures are designed to ensure that all students are appropriately inducted into their programme.

2. Identification of Individual Student Needs

Close scrutiny of students is maintained by tutors and workshop presenters. Attendance rolls are taken at each class and assignment submissions are monitored. Students who fail to attend regularly and/or who fail to submit one or more assessments are contacted by the Tutor and/or Course

Director. The Tutor and or Course Director may identify these students as having learning support needs.

Learning support needs of students may arise from issues associated with:

- English language
- literacy
- study techniques
- time management
- organisational skills
- work demands
- personal issues
- I.T.
- the requirements of the programme

Learner support needs may be identified:

- by poor attendance or poor assessment outcomes
- during initial discussions with academic staff during Orientation
- by self-referral by a student
- when a workshop presenter/tutor has identified that a learner is experiencing difficulty (this may be by observation in workshop or upon analysis of assessment items submitted early in the term)
- when a learner seeks assistance from the Tutor or Course Director or some other member of staff
- after a student subject evaluation survey
- during an interview with a student
- as part of an intervention strategy agreed between the learner and the Course Director

3. Ongoing Student Learning Support

Programmes commence during Orientation to assist students with the transition to a tertiary level study regime. The programmes include workshops, individual interviews with students and informal support provided by tutors. The support programmes utilise a wide range of resources:

a) English Language and Academic Assistance

English language and academic advice workshops and resources include such topics as essay writing, report writing, referencing, avoiding plagiarism, using Turnitin, making oral presentations, and examination tips.

b) Library

Library information sessions are held during Orientation. Additional tutorials/workshops are scheduled throughout the year to assist students to most effectively utilise the range of electronic databases and library resources. These tutorials/workshops are designed to improve information literacy skills of students.

c) Information Technology

Through the dedicated e-learning support team, e-learning and information technology staff members are available to help students with the technology available to them and with connectivity and access issues related to their programme. All queries will be responded to within 48 hours.

4. Individual Academic Tutor

Individual Academic Tutors provide regular assistance, covering topics such as time management, exam preparation, essay and report writing, referencing, avoiding plagiarism, library research, and guidance on how to transfer learning into practice. Other topics are covered as required, with the objective of helping students to improve their performance.

Individual Academic Tutors will meet with students in person, if required, in addition to providing support online or by phone.

Documentation of students seeking support

Records are maintained by the individual Academic Tutor of students referred for additional academic or English language support. The individual Academic Tutor also keeps records of students seeking assistance. Summary data form part of the educational metrics reported to the Teaching and Learning Committee.

5. General Academic Staff Consultation

In-workshop consultation

Individual student consultations with the subject lecturer, tutor or other appropriate academic are an integral part of the learning experience for each subject. OTC's normal programme pattern

provides face to face workshops/seminars/lectures and a structured tutorial. Further tutorials are scheduled to allow students the opportunity to clarify points of confusion, discuss aspects of the subject in more detail and obtain feedback on their assignments, both in draft form and on completed work.

The scheduled times of workshops and tutorials are given to students on commencement of their studies, online (by use of MyOTC) and provided individually to students. If a tutor considers that additional times for consultation are required, at particular times of the programme, then these may be arranged with the approval of the Course Director.

E-learning consultation

The College's online environment is a platform that utilises Moodle 3.4, Google Education Products, Turnitin and a variety of databases including EBSCO and Emerald. The College's main aim is to ensure that the online environment is accessible and usable by all learners, regardless of previous learning experience.

Each module of the degree course is placed on a bespoke virtual learning area, MyOTC Learning Centre, on the College's virtual learning environment. The module is divided into units and each unit contains module material, key links, documents, videos, learner activities and discussion groups. Through Moodle's conditionality function the tutor can structure the learning into a defined learning pathway so that the learner can only progress by completing well defined conditions. Each module has quick links to a number of resources including the college online library and databases, excellent best practice external resources, and key apps. This function can provide an indication of a student having IT or content difficulties and alerts the tutor to provide a response.

The modules are supported by a virtual tutorial developed through Articulate Storyline that, through multimedia supports, allows the learner to engage with the materials in an interactive way and caters for a variety of learning styles (visual, auditory, reading). Another support is the Open Training College range of informative podcasts where the College interviews experts and academics in the relevant areas of social care, management and adult study.

Students use the Google education apps for email, assignments, college calendar and assessment feedback. The student has to engage with Turnitin to ensure that their assessment work is original.

Due to the demographic profile of the students that access the Open Training College, the College is keen to ensure that each student who enters the online learning environment is ready to learn effectively through the platform and processes involved.

7. Online Supports

Online induction programme

A key area of support is an online induction programme that students are required to complete prior to commencing their studies. It provides them with the key skills required to study effectively online.

1. *The induction course is made up of the following sections:*

Unit 1 – Internet Essentials

Unit 2 – Your Open Training College Email Account - Your key communication tool with the College

Unit 3 – MyOTC Learning Centre - Where you do most of your learning

Unit 4 – Google Docs/Drive (See Online videos) – How to submit your assignment to the College

Unit 5 – Turnitin – How to check for any plagiarism issues

Unit 6 – Accessibility Issues – How to adapt your computer

Unit 7 – Survey Monkey Feedback – How to provide the College with feedback

The induction programme is delivered by an industry expert in adult learning online.

2. *Learning and Development in Higher Education*

College has developed a new 5 credit module for first year students on the degree programmes; this module, *Learning and Development in Higher Education*, delivered through a blended learning mix of online and workshop, provides a solid foundation for students on which to build their learning. It supports students – particularly those with minimal experience of education – to develop their academic skills and identify their preferred learning styles and therefore ensures the best possible start for each learner to learn and study effectively on the degree programme. This module may be offered to students on other programmes, as a learning support.

Each programme and module is enhanced by an individual web based support site. The module web page provides students with access to subject resources and also includes a ‘chat room’, ‘forum’ and group email facilities that allow for the posing of questions by students and tutors and response by both students and tutors. Such community based facilities are moderated and controlled by the year tutor.

All students enrolled in a module have access to the module web page. The Course Director is responsible for checking following commencement of a programme to ensure that all students have utilised the platform.

All students and tutors have unique OTC email addresses which are the primary conduit for academic and administrative information and enquiries. Students are encouraged to contact tutors directly by email if they have any questions that will not wait until the next tutorial session. OTC tutors are required to read and respond to their emails in a timely fashion.

3. *Online facilitators*

Facilitators of modules delivered in workshops and online provide students with information on the support they provide in their welcome email and in the Student Handbook. Students are required to respond to the welcome email to confirm they have received and read the Student Handbook. Students are contacted in the first week to ensure they understand the programme and assessment requirements and clarify any concerns or questions they may have. Facilitators contact students on a regular basis and also use the Discussion Forum for regular contact.

Students have access to any of the online support staff regarding their studies. These include dedicated online e-learning staff members who provide support to students who have queries or problems.

4. *Consultation with Course Directors*

Course Directors are available for individual consultations at times when they are not engaged in teaching or associated administrative duties. Course Directors are normally full time permanent staff. Appointments can be made by email.

Course Directors provide a range of academic and programme management advice, from programme planning and subject enrolments, to dealing with appeals and progression issues.

8. Students at risk

Definition

Students are required to attain minimum academic standards. The individual Academic Tutor monitors the academic performance of students against the minimum academic standards at the end of each term.

Students do not meet minimum academic standards in a programme if they:

1. fail a particular module of study more than once; or
2. fail two or more of the modules of study attempted in an academic year.

Students who do not meet the minimum academic standards are deemed to be “at risk”. The individual Academic Tutor will arrange for academic counselling for all students who are deemed to be “at risk” and also advise such students of the possibility that conditions may be placed on their enrolment going forward.

Intervention support strategies

During the academic counselling session the tutor and the student will determine what additional support will be provided to the student. This may include, but is not limited to, the student:

- a) attending academic skills programmes;
- b) attending tutorial or study groups;
- c) receiving individual case management;
- d) attending counselling;
- e) receiving assistance with personal issues which are influencing progress;
- f) receiving mentoring;

or

- g) a combination of the above and a reduction in programme load.

Intervention contracts/documentation

Students deemed at risk are required to complete and sign an Intervention Contract that stipulates the steps agreed with the tutor to give them the appropriate level of academic support.

The individual Academic Tutor is required to record the details of any student deemed ‘at risk’ and placed on an intervention contract. Summary data of students on intervention contracts form part of the educational metrics reported to the Teaching and Learning Committee.