



ICHAS

Section 3 - Policies and Procedures associated with Quality in ICHAS

Subject:	Policy on Risk Management		
Date Approved by Academic Council:	August 2021		
Applicable QQI Core Standard	Governance and Management of Quality		
Description of Standard		Date due for Revision	February 2024

CONTEXT

The Board of Management is responsible for managing risks and reporting to the President and Governing Authority. This is normally through the Vice President (Corporate Affairs).

It is arguable that the overarching single biggest risk associated with privately funded (independent/voluntary) higher education providers relates to viability. Viability, in this context has two major subsets, namely financial and academic viability. Both are inter-related, but for the purposes of clarity and good governance, need to be distinctly addressed. Within that context, the overall governance structures reflect managerial and governance structures which take due cognisance of both commercial and academic governance. The Board of Management and Governing Authority are especially anxious to protect Academic autonomy while ensuring the financial viability of the College. This imperative applies to all Colleges, whether in the Voluntary or State Funded Sectors. The Governing Authority and Board of Management are structured to ensure that the voice of both Corporate and Academic Management is heard and are equally satisfied that there are appropriate and adequate 'checks and balances' in place to ensure that the commercial viability of the college is managed appropriately, but likewise that arrangements are in place to mitigate any possibility of any undue influence of commercial interests in relation to academic decision making and governance.

Outside of those key principles of Academic Autonomy, perhaps the most obvious risk associated with Independent/Private Voluntary providers is the potential for such Colleges to cease trading with attendant risks to the seamless continuation of learners' studies. The Qualifications & Quality Assurance (Education & Training) Act (2012) stipulates that a provider should put appropriate arrangements in place for the protection of enrolled learners on programmes of three months duration or more - where moneys have been paid by, or on behalf of the learner, to the provider for a programme of education and training.

This legal requirement is made of all independent/voluntary providers, and each

provider is expected to have a Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) policy and set of procedures in place. Within that context, ICHAS has learner protection arrangements in place with respect to enrolled learners on all relevant QQI validated courses, ensuring their educational journey at ICHAS is protected, and in accordance with the requirements set out in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012). The current arrangements are with two other providers from the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA) in respect of each QQI course, which is longer than 12 weeks in duration, whereby learners will either transfer to similar courses provided by the other providers or preferably, will continue their existing course, with responsibility for its completion transferred to one of the other providers in the unlikely instance of a trigger event. This is facilitated through membership of the HECA PEL Scheme.

The second obvious potential risk relates to the autonomy of academic decision making. Academic decision making should not be influenced by commercial considerations and in that regard, it is important that Academic and governance structures take due account of this imperative. As set out in the Governance Section, the College has robust and intricate structures in place which ensure the autonomy of Academic decision making.

There are specific risks associated with all forms of online delivery that must be attended to. Most notably are those risks associated with cyber security, GDPR, and technological stability. The College will also ensure that resources are devoted to the management of risks associated with learner accessibility, engagement, and the integrity of assessment.

POLICY STATEMENT

ICHAS takes a systematic approach to risk management, and this has allowed for the development of a system to establish and maintain an internal system which identifies, assesses and manages areas of risk in relation to potential events or situations so that reasonable assurance can be used to manage all risks.

Governing Authority holds ultimate accountability for reviewing the system of risk management. The Governing Authority will advise, review, and provide direction to the Board of Management on risk management. This Policy supports the Governing Authority in meeting its responsibilities in this regard. The College’s risk management policy tries to manage both positive and negative risks in addition to current and emerging risks.

SCOPE

Applies To	Staff	Students	Both	
	✓			
Responsible for Implementation	Vice President (Corporate Affairs)			

Responsible for Monitoring & Review	Vice President (Corporate Affairs)	Vice President (Academic Affairs)	Registrar	Quality Assurance & Enhancement Officer
			✓	

DEFINITIONS

Risk is an inherent part of life, but it may vary in terms of potential level, impact and magnitude. Risks can be either positive (i.e., opportunities) or negative and may be either 'Current' and 'Emerging' Risks.

A '**Current**' risk may include a single issue, or combination of risks, that can seriously affect the performance, future prospects or reputation of the College.

An '**Emerging**' risk is a type of risk which has not been experienced or one which did exist before or perhaps has not been encountered for a number of years.

Positive risks or opportunities are uncertain but favourable events which, if they occur, would positively impact upon the strategic objectives of the College.

A **negative risk** is defined as an uncertainty which gives rise to potential events which, were they to occur, would impact negatively on the College by not allowing for strategic objectives to be obtained or by doing reputational damage to the College.

RELEVANT GUIDELINES/ POLICIES INFORMING THIS POLICY

- QQI (2014a) Re-engagement with QQI: Overarching Policy for all Providers.
- QQI (2014b) Re-Engagement with QQI; Policy and Criteria for Renewed Access to QQI Validation for Voluntary Providers of Higher Education and Training.
- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI, 2016)
- [ENQA \(2018\) Considerations for Quality Assurance of e-learning provision - available at https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Considerations-for-QA-of-e-learning-provision.pdf](https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Considerations-for-QA-of-e-learning-provision.pdf)
- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) et al (2015) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2016) Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines Developed by QQI For Independent/Private Providers Coming To QQI On A Voluntary Basis
- Government of Ireland (2012) Qualifications & Quality Assurance (Education and Training Act).

Linked Policies & Procedures

Linked Policies	Policy on the Protection of Enrolled Learners
Linked Procedures	Procedures associated with Risk Management Procedures associated with Protection of Enrolled Learners