QA 2.1 Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

Contents

1 Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

1.1 Policy Owner

The policy owner is the QA Committee.

1.2 Purpose

The *QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)* serve as a national benchmark for the standards of education and training providers quality assurance policies in Ireland. Page 9 of these guidelines explicitly states that 'the quality assurance system is fully documented; there are robust, documented policies and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of provision.'

The purpose of this policy is to create a policy that ensures the Cenit College quality assurance system is fully documented in a detailed and transparent manner. This policy will address the policy initiation, the policy development, approval, implementation and monitoring and review stages that all new policies must pass through.

Cenit College has in so far as possible integrated the quality assurance best practices from all our awarding bodies into our QA policies and procedures, thereby creating one single comprehensive QA system. Having one QA system ensures a more comprehensive, efficient, and accurate QA system for the entire organisation.

Furthermore, the College also ensures that the quality assurance system for QQI validated programmes of education and training integrate with the management of other quality / legislative / regulatory responsibilities such as Health & Safety, Employment, Child Protection, Finance, Human Resources and other relevant policies.

All our policies and procedures are prepared in using the following related legislation:

- QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)
- QQI Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- QQI Statutory Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (2018)

1.3 Scope

This policy applies to all Cenit College staff and its wider stakeholders. Each individual policy sets within the 'Scope' section, the intended parties who are to comply with the provisions in the respective policy. These can be all of Cenit College staff, some staff or even stakeholders.

1.4 Responsibilities

Policy QA 1.1 Governance and Management Structure outlines the specific responsibilities for Quality Assurance relating to each role within Cenit College. These are summarised as follows:

QA Manager: Responsible for:

- Preparing the New Policy Development Approval Form (or adjustment form)
- Appointing the New Policy Development Team
- Writing the new Policy Document

(For further details see section 1.7.8 QA 1.1 Governance)

Quality Committee: Responsible for:

- Overseeing the approval of minor changes to existing policies and
- Ensuring the Quality Manual has been updated for any new policies and these have been communicated to the Cenit College staff and other relevant stakeholders

- Ensure compliance with regulatory and legislative requirements.

(For further details see section 1.6.4 QA 1.1 Governance)

Academic Committee: This committee has the ultimate responsibility for Quality Assurance oversight within Cenit College. It is responsible for approving all new academic quality assurance policies and major changes or updates to existing ones.

(For further details see section 1.6.1 QA 1.1 Governance)

Board of Directors: The Board of Directors is responsible for approving all new corporate quality assurance policies and major changes or updates to existing ones.

(For further details see section 1.5.1 QA 1.1 Governance)

1.5 Policy Statement

Cenit College policies will be developed in accordance with the process detailed in this policy document. They should be:

- Presented in the format of the template designed by Cenit College. This ensures consistency of format.
- Formally approved by the appropriate committee as outlined in each policy document.
- Accessible to staff and other intended audiences in a format suitable for easy viewing.
- Compliant with relevant legislation.
- Compliant with relevant benchmarks (i.e. national standards such as QQI).
- Clearly marked with their policy name and all associated forms and documents referenced therein.

1.6 Procedure

Quality Assurance, continuous improvement and enhancement of quality are embedded at all levels in Cenit College and form part of Cenit College's strategic plan. All objectives and targets in this strategic area are aligned to Cenit College's vision and mission. Changes in Cenit's strategic objectives or targets may require a change to scope of Cenit's QA framework. This has already occurred when Cenit broadened its QA scope to include online/blended provision. QA Policy development in Cenit College evolves through the following stages, as detailed in the diagram below.
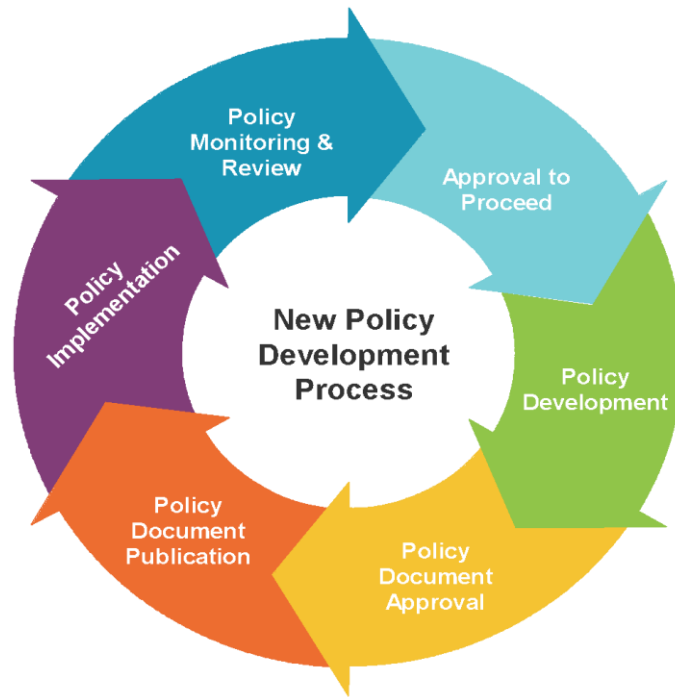
Fig 1 New Policy Development Process

1.6.1   Approval to Proceed

This phase commences when an individual brings forth the idea for the development of a new policy idea or amending an existing policy to the Quality Assurance Manager. This initiation must be accompanied by a rationale for developing a new policy or amending an existing one. This may arise from the changes that have been made to:

- Legislation, regulations, standards, or codes
- Existing policy documents
- Governance decisions
- Accreditation Standards or requirements
- Cenit College Strategies
- Factors arising from feedback from sources such as committees, reviews or evaluation processes.

Benchmarking should be undertaken across other education and training providers to identify their responses to similar changes. Cenit College might benefit from good practices already identified in this respect.

This request for a new policy must be submitted on the New Policy Development Approval Form. The New Policy Approval form contains the following information:

- The rationale for developing a new policy
- Benchmarking undertaken
- Stakeholders Consulted
- Signed by the appropriate Manager

The Quality Assurance Manager will assess the rationale and consider its justification. If developing a new policy is an appropriate action, the Quality Manager will then commence the policy development phase.

Amendments to current policies should be initiated by the senior executive team member responsible for the policy area (Responsible Officer) or by the Director/Manager responsible for implementing policy in that area (Responsible Offices) with consultation with other offices as appropriate. Any amendments to current policies must be lodged to the Quality Assurance Manager on the Policy Amendment Approval Form. It contains the following information;

- The rationale for developing a new policy
- Benchmarking undertaken
- Stakeholders Consulted
- Signed by the appropriate Manager

The Quality Committee will *oversee* any minor changes to existing policies.

1.6.2 Policy Development

Once approval to proceed with the development of the new policy has been granted, the Quality Manager (who will be the policy writer) will:

- Create a project team that will be responsible for the development of the policy. This team will consist of the QA Manager, a representative from the policy area or of a committee that is initiating the new policy and an expert in that general subject matter who can be either internal or external to Cenit College.
- Develop a new policy development plan.

Following the appointment of the project team, the QA Manager will:

- Review the information in both Part A and B of the *New Policy Approval to Develop Form* and any documents supporting the benchmarking details provided in the form.
- Identify the committee responsible for approving this policy (Academic or Management)
- Identify the policy owner.
- Main stakeholders.
- Those to whom the policy applies (as identified in the section called 'Scope').
- Locate existing policy documents that might be implicated by the development of the new policy.
- Consider the stakeholders that need to be consulted in order to develop the policy.
- The Cenit College policy document template must be used.
- Consider how to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy.
- Consider how the policy is to be communicated and implemented and devise a plan.
- Draft the policy document in consultation with the project team and relevant stakeholders.

Cenit College considers consultation with the relevant stakeholders as an important factor for successful policy development. During the consultation process, staff will provide critical knowledge from an operational perspective, experts can streamline the procedure and Senior Management can provide strategic input.

Prior to submitting the policy document to the relevant authority for approval, the project committee will conduct a final review of the document. Noting any changes in the version control section. The project team will prepare an implementation plan.

Should any existing documents require amendment due to the development of this new policy they are subject to the same quality assurance process as new policy documents.

1.6.3   Policy Document Approval

The Board of Directors or the Academic Committee will as appropriately consider the policy document for approval. The respective approval authority will ensure that:

- The policy is in the require template
- The document is produced as a result of a consultative process
- The document owner and its scope has been identified
- The roles and responsibilities are detailed
- All related issues, including other documents needing revision, have been addressed
- The document addresses the reasons for the policy gap
- Should all policy documents be in order, the approving authority approves the document the policy will be signed and dated.

1.6.4   Policy Document Publication

Once the document has been approved by the appropriate committee, the QA Manager will send the policy document and supporting material (such as forms) to the IT Manager to be published. The original document and materials will be located on our secure network, within a Policy Documentation folder. Staff will be sent an email informing them of publication of a new or updated policy. This email notification will contain a link to the policy document. See section 1.8 for access to these policies. Moodle will be updated for learner access.

Policies will also be published on the Cenit College website.

1.6.5   Policy Implementation

The QA Manager with oversight from the Quality Assurance Committee is responsible for implementing the new policy in accordance with the policy implementation plan. Should any issues be discovered during the implementation stage, the policy will be sent back for amendment. Amendments to existing policy documents are subject to the same quality assurance process as new policy documents.
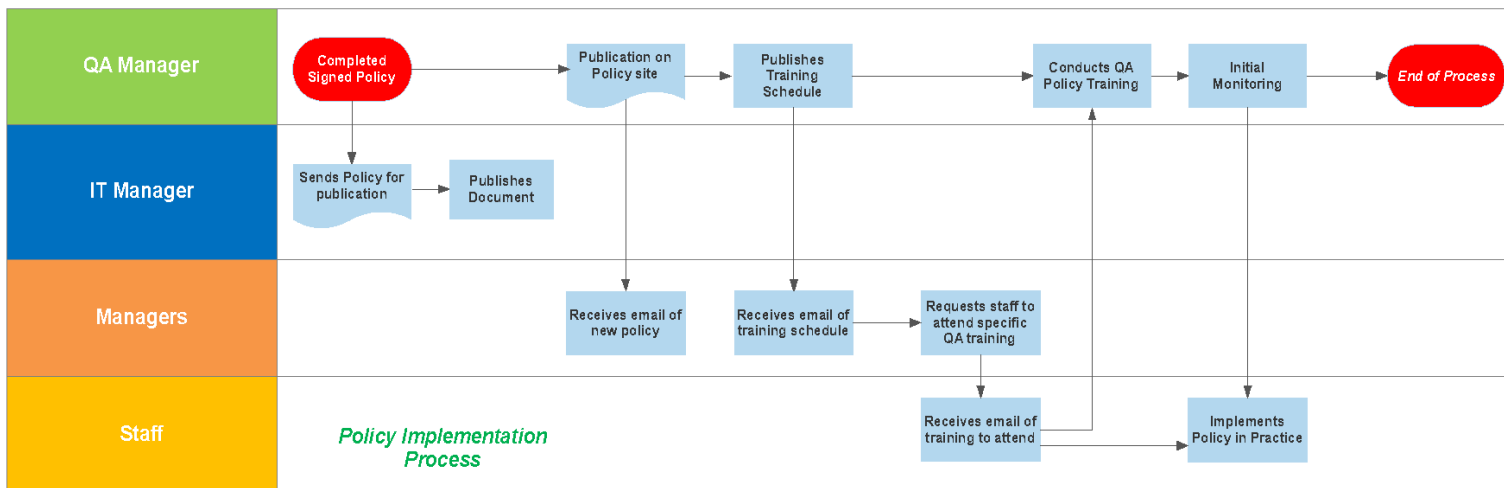
Implementation procedure;

The implementation process associated with a new policy is as follows:

1. Once the policy has received final approval from the Academic Committee, the QA manager will send the policy along with supporting material (such as forms) to the IT manager to publish.

2. An email will be sent to all relevant stakeholders informing them that a new policy has been published. These stakeholders include managers.
3. The managers will inform their staff of the new policy that is relevant to their role.
4. For every new policy, there will be staff training. The QA Manager is responsible for conducting this training as part of the policy implementation plan. Usually this is a webinar.
5. The QA manager will publish the training schedule.
6. The relevant area managers will inform their staff of their mandatory requirement to attend this training. The training will go through the policy and demonstrate a practical example of how it will work in the relevant area. The training will cover staff roles and responsibilities to the QA system and individual policies. For managers, the training will cover information they need to provide to their staff (including staff roles and responsibilities to the QA system and individual policies).
7. For new policies, the QA manager will work with staff to ensure the process is carried out correctly. This means conducting an initial process review and monitoring exercises. This provides surety that all stakeholders can implement the policy in practice.
8. Amendments will follow the same process as the above. If the amendments are of a minor nature, it may be sufficient to train just the manager. The manager in turn can provide their staff with the instructions.

The learner handbook contains details of all policies relevant to a learner. The training manager will ensure that any new policy (if relevant) is updated in the learner handbook. At induction, the learners will be informed of the location of the policies and be given a brief overview of them.

Online/Blended learners will have the policy links on their homepage (this links to their Moodle location). To continue to the learning material, they must confirm via the confirm button that they understand the policies.

Fig 2 New Policy Implementation Process

1.6.6 Policy Monitoring and Review

There will be an initial monitoring after the new policy comes into practise. Thereafter, this policy will be monitored by the QA manager through the annual audit.

Monitoring mechanisms include;

2   New Policy Approval to Develop Form
3   Amendments to Policy Approval Form
4   New Policy/Amendments Implementation plan
5   Training schedules for policy training
6   Feedback formal and informal on the policy

6.1 Policy Documents

The policy documents in Cenit College have been organised into eleven key areas aligned to the policy areas outlined in the *QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016*). These are outlined in table 1 below.

The following standards of practice are observed when documenting policies and procedures:

- Each of the eleven policy areas include individual documented policies and procedures, aligned to the policy area.
- Cenit College has developed a structured template that ensures consistency across all policies. This template includes information such as: Policy Owner, Purpose, Scope, Responsibilities, Policy Statement, Monitoring and Review and Version Control.
- The monitoring mechanisms detailed within the policy document identify the frequency that the monitoring occurs and the person responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and procedure.
- Supporting documents have been used to ensure compliance across the QA framework. These are referenced in the policy documents. QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016) is an example of a supporting document referenced.
- Supporting materials such as templates, forms, learner handbook and documents have been developed to support the implementation of the policies.

Cenit College Quality Assurance Areas Aligned to the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)	
QA1	Governance and Management of Quality
QA2	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance
QA3	Programmes of Education and Training
QA4	Staff Recruitment, Management and Development
QA5	Teaching and Learning
QA6	Assessment of Learners
QA7	Support for Learners
QA8	Information and Data Management
QA9	Public Information and Communication
QA10	Other parties involved in Education and Training
QA11	Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Table 1 Key Policy Areas

Cenit College is committed to ongoing monitoring and review across all its operational areas. These policies ensure that operations are carried out effectively and efficiently. In order to verify this, the following monitoring mechanisms are used:

Program monitoring and review mechanisms

- Continuous Learner and Tutor Feedback (formal and informal)
- End of programme learner feedback forms
- Employer feedback
- Periodic self-evaluation
- Feedback from Assessments via the EA and IV reports
- Actions arising from boards or committees
- Review of any data relating to both learners and programmes
- Analysis of the data
- Ongoing programme review

Other QA monitoring mechanisms

- In-built monitoring mechanisms within the policies and procedures
- QA audits
- Accreditation body Audits
- Other mechanisms as determined

All our staff and stakeholders are committed to a process of continuous improvement in our quality standards. This culture of continuous improvement is achieved through the continuous process of monitoring and self-evaluation.

See QA 11.1 Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review for further details on the specific policy monitoring mechanisms for each relevant policy.

6.2 Access to Policy Documents

Once a new policy is developed and approved all stakeholders (including staff) Staff will be sent an email. This email will provide a link to enable staff to access the relevant policy documents on our secure network.

Learners will have access to the policies that are relevant to learners via the learner handbook and where relevant Moodle. At the commencement of each programme of study the learners will be informed at induction of the Cenit College QA system and where documents can be accessed. The learners will also be informed of the policies that affect them and their entitlements under these policies.

Blended and Online learners can access the policies from the landing page, which contains a link to the policy section on Moodle. They must confirm that they have read and understood them via the confirm button.

The policies can also be viewed on the Cenit College website.

6.3 Compliance with Regulatory and Legislative Requirements

It is the responsibility of the Quality Manager to ensure that all the policies are in compliance with regulatory and legislative requirements. Where new requirements are in place the process is as follows;

- Quality Manager will read the new regulations
- If developing a new policy is an appropriate action, the Quality Manager will seek approval to develop the new policy from the Board of Directors (for all management related policies) or Academic Committee (for all academic related policies). This must be submitted on the New Policy Development Approval Form. The process outlined in section 1.6 above should be followed.
- Should an existing policy need adjustment as a result of legislative or regulatory changes then the Quality Manager completes the Policy Amendment Approval Form and submits it to the Quality Committee for approval. (Section 1.6)
- As part of the annual audit, there is a further check to ensure that there are no regulatory or legislative changes.

6.4 Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored by the QA manager through the annual audit.

Monitoring mechanisms include;

- New Policy Approval to Develop Form
- Amendments to Policy Approval Form
- New Policy/Amendments Implementation plan
- Training schedules for policy training
- Feedback formal and informal on the policy

6.5 Version Control

Version	Date	Description	Originator	Approved by
1	20/01/2022 14/02/2024	Final Policy Approval QQI Approval	QA	AC QQI