



AN FORAS RIARACHÁIN  
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION

# QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

# **IPA Quality Assurance Procedures**

**Approved by UCD's Academic Council Quality  
Enhancement Committee (ACQEC)**

**17 October 2018**

## INTRODUCTION

The review of the IPA's Quality Assurance policies and procedures by its Designated Awarding Body, UCD, has statutory footing from Part 3 (and in particular section 37) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. This provides the entire context for the current submission document.

These procedures were submitted to UCD in May 2017 and subsequently approved by UCD's Academic Council Quality Enhancement Committee (ACQEC) on 17 October 2018.

The procedures have been mapped to the 'Procedures for the Approval of UCD Linked Provider Quality Assurance Procedures.' The procedures also draw on: QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016); Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015) [ESG] Part 1: Standards and Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance; QQI's Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines (2014); QQI Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies (2016).

In accordance with the 2012 Act and having been approved by UCD, these procedures have been published and a copy lodged with UCD. These procedures will be periodically reviewed and enhanced by the IPA to ensure that they remain fit-for-purpose and appropriately aligned with relevant sectoral, national, international and Designated Awarding Body policy/procedural changes.

### Guidance Note on Document

- The sections in this document are ordered from A-R.
- At the very beginning of each section, **highlighted in blue**, are the quality assurance criteria that the section explores.
- Immediately beneath those criteria, **highlighted in green**, is a reference to the sections that should be read in conjunction with this particular section. In this submission document, the IPA has framed the response in Section A as an anchor to the whole document; Section A should be read by all readers to get an understanding of both the IPA itself and Quality Assurance (QA) within the IPA.
- Each section opens with Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements.
- Each section then proceeds under clear headings and sub-headings.
- Links to the policies and procedures discussed in each section are provided throughout.

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## **IPA Academic Policies & Procedures Referenced in Document**

[Access, Transfer, and Progression Policy](#)

[Admissions Policy and Criteria](#)

[Assessment Regulations and Procedures](#)

[Complaints \(Non Assessment-Related\) Policy and Procedures](#)

[Disciplinary \(Non-Assessment\) Policy and Procedures](#)

[Exam Administration Policy and Procedures](#)

[Governance, Oversight and Quality Framework](#)

[Learner Charter](#)

[Library Policy, Procedures, and Charter](#)

[Marks and Standards](#)

[Module Programme Review Policies and Procedures](#)

[Policy for Protection of Enrolled Learners](#)

[Procedures for Appeal of Examination Results](#)

[Procedures for Creating and Revising Course Manuals](#)

[Public Information Policy](#)

[Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#)

[Student Feedback and Participation Policy](#)

[Teaching and Learning Policy](#)

## **Other IPA Corporate Policies & Procedures Referenced in Document**

[Strategic Plan 2017-2021](#)

[Privacy Policy and Cookies on IPA website](#)

[Student Data - Privacy and Confidentiality](#)

## **IPA Quality Assurance Reports Referenced in Document**

[Internal Review of IPA QA Processes 2016-2017](#)

[Comprehensive Student Survey Report - October 2015](#)

[Postgraduate, Undergraduate, and Special Purpose Examination Statistics Reports 2010-2015](#)

## 1. General Criteria

<b>A. The quality assurance system is embedded and maintained on a cross institutional basis</b>
<b>Note:</b> This section should be read in conjunction with all Sections/Criteria
<b>Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements</b>
<p>The quality system in place in a higher education institution must be determined by the institution's scale, scope and purpose. This is a fundamental principle outlined in QQI's Policy on QA Guidelines - the 'QA Context Principle'. Before demonstrating how the IPA's QA system is embedded, with the totality of the IPA's education community implementing QA in a coherent and cohesive way, we will provide a short overview of the IPA's origins, role, organisational structure and student base. From there, we will outline the governance and management structure that underpins the QA system, and finally, the QA chain of responsibility, QA framework and QA processes through which we promote, achieve and maintain an embedded and cross-institutional QA culture.</p> <p>First, though, we wish to reference a Review of QA Processes that the IPA conducted in 2016, as it underpins the QA system under development since April 2017.</p>
<b><u>Review of QA Processes 2016</u></b>
<p>The IPA has undergone a number of critical developments in the production of its documented QA policies and procedures in the last two decades, with an internal effectiveness review preceding each stage of development.</p> <p>In the late 1990s, the IPA generated a handbook of quality assurance processes that would govern, inform and drive critical academic and administrative activity in the IPA. This coincided with both the Universities Act of 1997, which made it a legal requirement for universities to 'establish procedures for quality assurance aimed at <i>improving</i> the quality of education and related services', and the granting to the Institute of a Recognised College status by the NUI in 2001 (subsequently the IPA became a Recognised College of UCD in 2011).</p> <p>That early QA Handbook was reviewed over 2005 and 2006 when the IPA brought its entire suite of accredited programmes and research activity under the same roof: the Whitaker School of Government &amp; Management at the IPA. The scope of the QA handbook was significantly enlarged. The QA processes tracked the entire academic cycle, and discrete areas received individual focus in separate sections of the handbook: academic and administrative structures; student admissions; student records; designing and reviewing modules/programmes; course management – academic &amp; administrative; student support; assessment &amp; examinations; access, transfer &amp; progression; student feedback; student complaints; and student discipline. The QA Handbook was submitted to NUI in 2007 as part of the accreditation relationship. Sections of the Handbook have been reviewed internally on a cyclical basis since then.</p> <p>In 2016, the IPA instigated an internal review of the QA processes related to its delivery of academic programmes (hereafter designated 'the Review'), which was led by the assistant registrar. The Review was influenced by a number of factors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) national developments in the areas of quality assurance, access, transfer &amp; progression, provision of education to international students and protection of learners as provided for in the 2012 Qualification &amp; Quality Assurance Act;</li></ol>

- b) publication of revised standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area that were endorsed by the Bologna Follow-up Group in the autumn of 2014 and received Ministerial approval in May 2015;
- c) publication by QQI of statutory core and sector specific guidelines that, under legislation, the IPA is obliged to have 'regard to' in QA procedures;
- d) statutory requirement to establish these new procedures 'as soon as practicable after the issue of [QQI] guidelines';
- e) commitment by the Designated Awarding Body, UCD to review the Institute's QA processes in 2017 as provided for in the 2012 QQA Act;
- f) need to provide for QA developments in the IPA Strategic Plan;
- g) recognition that the QA Handbook as a whole was due a major review to accommodate procedural and policy changes in the IPA, and ensure its alignment with UCD's policies, procedures and requirements.

The Review focussed on the Institute's *academic-related* policies and procedures. The IPA's corporate HR policies and corporate governance procedures, which are managed by the HR manager and Company Secretary/Director of Finance and Support Services respectively, are being reviewed separately in 2018 and therefore do not feature in the Review. The Review was conducted in an open and critical manner with the objective of identifying where and how the Institute needed to improve its existing and functioning QA system in order to enhance education delivery and to comply with QQI and awarding body requirements.

The Review made 13 recommendations, which formed the framework for an enhancement of the IPA QA Framework in late 2016-early 2017. Responsibility for acting upon the recommendations remained with the assistant registrar and the quality support team, with the support of the Head of Education and members of the Faculty Committee who, under the guiding principles of a coherent and embedded QA system, contributed to the further development of the IPA QA system.

For a record of the Review's recommendations and follow-up actions, please click [Review of IPA QA Processes 2016-2017](#).

Naturally, the QA system and processes described in this QA Approval document evolved out of the Review, and reference to the Review will be made throughout the document, when and where appropriate.

### **Who We Are and What We Do**

1. The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) [www.ipa.ie](http://www.ipa.ie) was founded in 1957 as a result of the deliberations of a group of public servants who identified a need for the professional education of Irish public sector employees, and for the analysis and evaluation of public management and policy-making.
2. The IPA is a state supported body (and registered charity) under the aegis of the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform (DPER), from which it receives an annual block grant (25% of total income). The Institute is a registered company, limited by guarantee and complies with requirements of the 2014 Companies Acts, though its employees are considered public servants. The IPA is also a higher education institute and its programmes are externally accredited. The Institute is not in receipt of funding from the HEA. The Institute generates most of its income through student fees and government training and consultancy services. As a public sector body, the IPA complies with relevant legislation that applies to public sector bodies – Ethics in Public Office Act, Comptroller and Auditor General Act 1993 and Freedom of Information Act, among others. The



IPA complies with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016; there are clear policies, procedures and frameworks in place to cover the role of the IPA Board, the financial management of the organisation, internal and external audit functions, public procurement, risk management, ethics in office, staff conduct and confidential disclosure. In terms of HR, there are policies and procedures in place for the recruitment, retention, development and management of staff. These policies, and related pension, pay and leave arrangements, are subject to directives issued by DPER. The IPA submits financial statements to the C&AG on an annual basis for statutory audit, and its annual accounts are approved at the AGM. The IPA also reports annually on its performance to DPER. The IPA publishes an annual report, outlining its key work, developments and finances. The reports from 2008-2016 are available at <https://www.ipa.ie/corporate/annual-report.232.html>.

3. The remit and work of the IPA differs somewhat from other educational providers in that it is multi-faceted – in addition to accredited third-level education, the Institute specialises in public sector training & development, consultancy and advisory services, commissioned research and publishing. While the IPA is a Recognised College of UCD, and the memorandum of agreement is between the IPA and UCD, the IPA division responsible for the provision of accredited third-level programmes is the Whitaker School of Government & Management. The QA policies and procedures governing academic programmes in the School are outlined in this document. In addition, QA processes relevant to IPA corporate services, such as HR, Finance and Facility Management, are discussed in this document where appropriate. Further information on IPA corporate governance & HR processes are also provided later in this section.
4. The IPA considers itself as a practitioner-focussed or ‘applied learning and research-informed’ institution; although research active it is not a research led institute. The third-level programmes on offer satisfy the administrative, management and public policy formation requirements of the public service. The learning outcomes associated with IPA programmes place a premium on the development of professional skills and knowledge within an academic framework (and vice versa).
5. From its beginnings in the early sixties, a School of Public Administration was established within the Institute for the purposes of educating public servants. There were two key programmes – a Diploma in Central Administration and a Diploma in Local Administration, both having Intermediate, Final Part I and Final Part II exams. The school evolved into the Institute’s Education Division, which gradually introduced a comprehensive suite of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the areas of public management, business studies, policy analysis and governance. The IPA combined its accredited degree, sub-degree and research programmes under the Whitaker School of Government and Management in 2004. The School was launched by An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD to coincide with the award of Fellow of the IPA to the late esteemed public servant TK Whitaker.

The IPA’s degree and selected sub-degree programmes were first accredited in 1982 by the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) and its legal successor, the Higher Education & Training Awards Council (HETAC). Later the Institute was granted Recognised College status from the National University of Ireland (2001). Since 2011, the Institute has been a Recognised College of University College Dublin, which accredits the Institute’s third-level programmes.

6. The IPA’s position as a Recognised College of UCD provides for the accreditation, validation and award of qualifications, approval and enhancement of programmes of study, and quality assurance and enhancement generally. These activities are overseen by joint IPA-UCD committees such as the *Strategic Management Committee* and *Joint Academic Programme Board (JAPB)*. More information on the responsibilities of these committees and their reporting relationships are provided later in this section.

7. The IPA currently offers National University of Ireland qualifications awarded by its Designated Awarding Body, UCD, in the following categories:
  - a) special purpose certificates, diplomas, professional certificates & diplomas at levels 6-9 on the NFQ;
  - b) Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and Bachelor of Business Studies (Hons) undergraduate degrees (level 8 major awards);
  - c) Postgraduate Diplomas in Public Management and in Policy Analysis (level 9 major awards);
  - d) Master of Arts, Master of Science in Business & Management and Master of Economic Science in Policy Analysis (level 9 major awards);
  - e) Doctorate in Governance (level 10 major award), which is jointly offered and managed with UCD under UCD processes.

See [IPA Courses](#) for more details.

8. IPA students are professionals employed in a range of public or private sector environments. The average age of an IPA student is mid to late 30s; many have families of their own. The programmes, therefore, have professional applications, flexible study options and interim award mechanisms: students can accumulate modules on a phased basis; students in different parts of the country can avail of blended learning via a combination of distance education and residential weekends in Dublin and local tutorial centres; students can also take undergraduate degree classes in the evenings at the IPA Headquarters; degree students can achieve awards of a certificate, diploma and postgraduate diploma as they progress to the final part of the undergraduate and postgraduate degree cycle. Many of these options are outlined further in Section M, Criterion 7, Support for Learners.
9. The IPA educates 1800+ students every year. These are predominantly engaged in part-time study. Approximately 1200 of these receive exit and interim qualifications annually.
10. The IPA contains a dedicated Research Division, which focuses on applied, commissioned research. The research agenda is closely integrated with the government's public service reform programmes. Key objectives are to increase awareness and stimulate informed debate and further thinking on the key management issues of the day. As the only dedicated full time resource devoted to the study of public management in Ireland, the research team has played and continues to play a vital role in the development of the public services in Ireland, providing an evidence base for informed commentary and teaching that supports public service reform.
11. The IPA also contains a Library, which has a comprehensive collection of material on management and business studies. It houses books and journals on a wide range of subjects including law, politics, economics, management, accounting, criminology, the EU, healthcare, finance, local government and sociology. As well as this there are a range of electronic resources and databases that the library makes available to all students. IPA librarians are on hand to assist students in their studies and their search for information. (See <https://www.ipa.ie/about-us/library.268.html> and the IPA's *Library Policy, Procedures and Charter* at [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).
12. Since its establishment in 1957, the IPA has been at the forefront of public management education, training and research in Ireland. In addition to educating thousands of public servants – across all grades and in all sectors – the Institute has played a very significant role in public management research, publishing, consultancy and capacity building.

The Institute's research team works extensively with government departments, state agencies and local government and has particularly strong links with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and with the County and City Management Association. Two major research streams of note are the State of the Public Service research series and the Local Government research series, reports from both of which are available from [www.ipa.ie](http://www.ipa.ie). The OECD review team that undertook the review of public services in Ireland in 2008 acknowledged that the body of knowledge generated by the research team of the Institute provides a unique and authoritative research asset.

*Administration* is the peer-reviewed journal of the Institute. It has been published quarterly since 1953. As the principal journal concerned with Irish public administration and its development, it seeks to combine original scholarship on public administration from a variety of disciplines with the insights and experiences of practitioners. In addition to research articles, which are double blind peer reviewed, the journal welcomes comments on articles, opinion pieces, letters, notices, reports and reviews. The journal is part of Elsevier's Scopus database, the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature. See <https://www.ipa.ie/publications-categories/administration-journal.2884.html>.

The IPA's **Ireland – A Directory** is now in its 52nd year. The most recent edition includes details on both the private and public sectors with over 9,000 organisations listed. This popular and successful one-stop database also includes statistics and general information on various social and economic topics concerning Ireland. The Directory complements the hundreds of books that the IPA has published in the fields of public management, public policy, social science, economics, housing, local government, healthcare management, criminal justice and education. The Institute is the main publisher for TK Whitaker's articles and books from the 1950s onwards.

The IPA has also played a significant role in capacity building in the Irish public sector and internationally, winning many projects to reform public management systems. Most recently, the Institute has worked on merger proposals for Cork City and County Councils and on the reform of three central government departments and a number of government agencies in the Republic of Cyprus. Previous work internationally has involved strengthening public administrations in developing African economies, notably in Zambia and Tanzania, and assisting Eastern and Central European countries in transforming their public apparatus as part of the EU accession process. The IPA has also placed significant emphasis on cultivating and developing strategic partnerships with established development partners, including the EU, UN and Irish Department of Foreign affairs.

Such work goes in tandem with the IPA's core mission of educating and training Ireland's public servants through its wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

### **IPA Governance & Management**

13. Corporate Governance is defined as 'the system and procedures by which enterprises are directed, controlled and managed' (Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016). State bodies, according to the Code of Practice, must serve the interests of Government as shareholder, the taxpayer and all other stakeholders, pursue value for money in their endeavours (including managing risk appropriately), and act transparently as public entities. The Board and management must accept accountability for the proper management of the organisation. High standards of corporate governance in State bodies are critical to ensuring a positive contribution to the State's overall economic efficiency, competitiveness, social cohesion and regional development.

The Code sets out the basic framework of rules to be adopted by publicly funded organisations, such as the IPA, in the achievement of best practice corporate governance. The best practice provisions

relate both to internal systems and to external relations with the Government, the relevant Minister (in the IPA's case the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform), and the Minister for Finance, where appropriate.

The following areas have been identified in the Code as the elements with which corporate governance must be concerned:

- Strategic and corporate planning
- Annual budgets
- Compliance with statutory obligations
- Procurement
- Major contracts
- Disposal of assets and access to assets by third parties
- Audit and risk management
- Reporting and accountability arrangements
- Appointment, remuneration and assessment of CEO performance and CEO succession planning
- Tax compliance
- Business conduct

The IPA is fully cognisant of its obligations under the Code of Practice. Governance in the IPA is based on organisational structures, management arrangements, and processes, procedures and controls that address the above features and are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity and inclusiveness.

The Institute's Corporate Governance Manual sets out how the IPA endeavours to be as fully compliant as practicable with the Code. The Manual provides a clear and comprehensive summary of the principal aspects of corporate governance for the IPA Board, its senior management and staff. It is also intended to ensure that Board members are fully informed of their legal responsibilities and that they are familiar with statutory provisions relevant to their position and the organisational issues, policies and procedures that inform their role. These policies and procedures provide the Board with a framework of governance structures and processes that allow it to objectively and effectively assess management and corporate performance.

The Manual is maintained by the Director of Finance and Support Services. The Manual comprises two chapters and eighteen appendices structured as follows: Introduction, Role of the Board, the chairman and the executive; the Institute's 2017-2021 Corporate Strategy; the Board's schedule of matters; the Board's legal obligations; the terms of reference for the Board's three sub-committees, namely the Administration Committee, the Finance and Strategy Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee; Institute's Internal Audit Charter; the Board members' code of conduct; the ethics in office procedures and staff conduct code; the IPA's main financial procedures; public procurement regulations; the IPA's IT governance procedures; the IPA's risk management framework and confidential disclosure policy; and, finally, the IPA's Revised Constitution (or old Memorandum and Articles of Association) updated in line with the 2014 companies Act and the Revenue Commissioner Charity Regulations (2016).

The fifth version of the Corporate Governance manual is currently being signed off by the Board. There have been a number of developments which necessitated a new version, notably the publication by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform of the Corporate Governance Code for State Agencies (September 2016) and the Board's approval of a number of new corporate governance obligations.

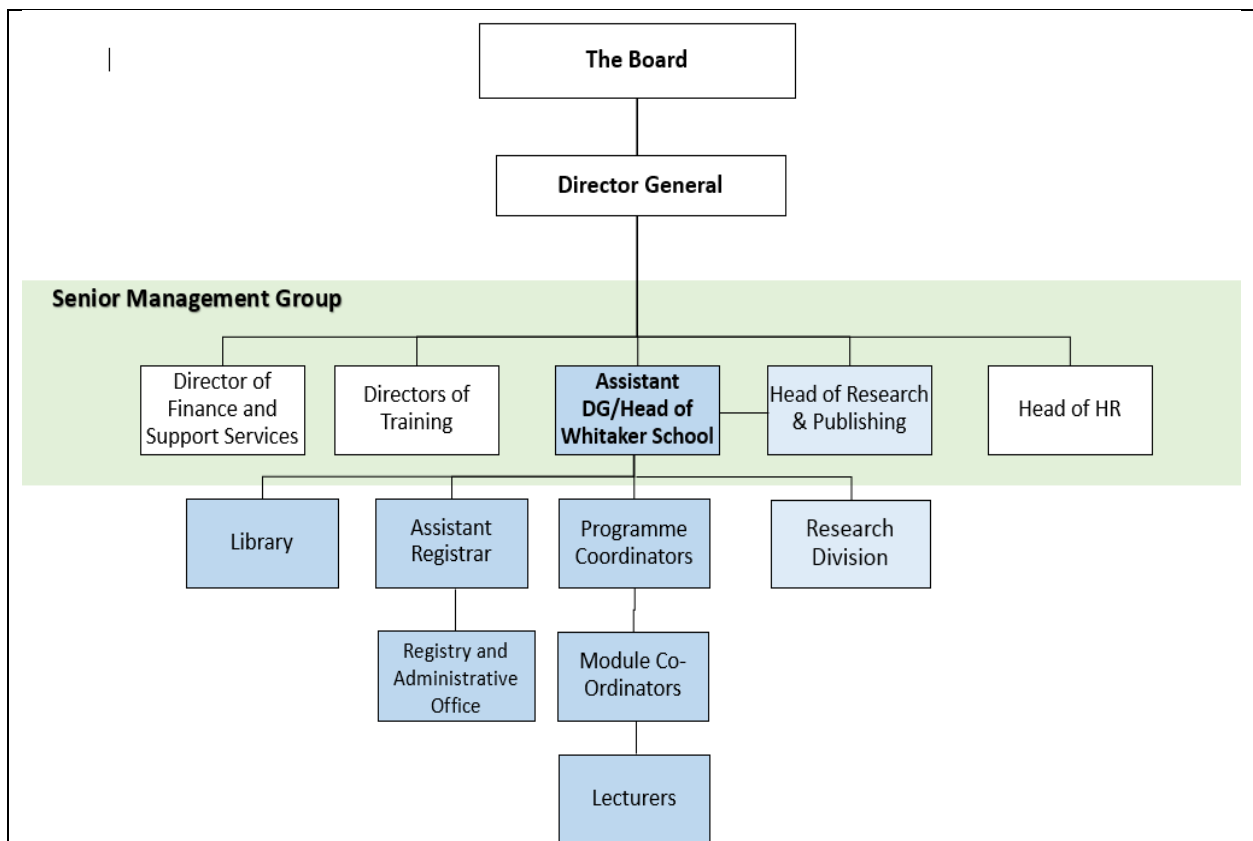
The IPA has a dedicated HR unit which deals with human resources. The HR unit manages a fair and transparent process for the recruitment, retention and development of permanent full and part-time staff within the IPA.

The HR unit has documented policies and procedures on matters relating to the recruitment, development, management, and work and behavioural practices of IPA employees. These are accessible in the official staff handbook and available to all staff on the internal intranet. Current documents in the handbook include:

- Recruitment Policy and Procedures; Transfer, 'Acting' Policy and Procedures
- Training and Development
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Dignity at Work
- Grievance Procedures
- Disciplinary Procedures
- Job-Sharing Scheme
- Health and Safety
- Flexible Working Hours: Guidelines to Scheme
- Leave Regulations (Annual Leave, Parental Leave, Paternity Leave, Bereavement Leave etc)
- Flexibility Agreement
- Staff Payments - Remuneration, Travel and Subsistence
- Policy on Email and Internet Usage
- Work Life Balance Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Partnership Committee
- Role of the HR Unit
- Role of the Union
- The Institute's Pension Scheme
- Income Continuance Plan

These HR policies are routinely updated as required in line with legislation and DPER guidelines. The HR Office has scheduled a review of the complete suite of policies between Autumn 2017 and 2018.

14. The IPA is a relatively small institution that operates under a board of directors. It has a hierarchical organisational structure with discrete and integrated divisions operating under a Director General and a team of senior managers. There are defined staff roles, responsibilities and reporting relationships for all staff. The organisation chart below provides a diagrammatic representation of the IPA structure. The succeeding narrative provides more information on each layer. Note that the boxes highlighted in blue make up the Whitaker School, which is the provider of accredited programmes. The ancillary corporate QA processes, such as governance, HR recruitment and development, financial management, risk management, data protection etc., that support the IPA, have been detailed above and also feature elsewhere in this QA Approval document where appropriate.



### IPA Organisation Chart

- a) The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) sets out the role of the Board as being ‘collectively responsible for leading and directing the State body’s activities’. The Board provides strategic guidance to the State body, and monitors the activities and effectiveness of management. Board members should ‘act on a fully informed basis, in good faith, with due diligence and care, and in the best interest of the State body, subject to the objectives set by Government’.

Accordingly, the IPA Board is responsible for the setting of strategy, the monitoring of strategic performance, approval of the risk management framework, ensuring compliance, monitoring stakeholder relations and for overseeing the governance and management of the Institute.

Specifically, the Board exercises its responsibilities through the following functions which shall be reserved for decision by the Board:

1. Approval of Corporate/Strategic Plan
2. Ensuring that effective arrangements are in place to both implement the Corporate Plan and review progress regularly
3. Approval of annual budgets and monitoring of implementation
4. Acquisition or disposal of assets, whether property or plant or machinery where the value of these assets exceeds €150,000. Determination of appropriate thresholds for the various levels of office-holders.
5. Approval of major investments and capital projects, and the terms of contracts related to these projects.
6. Approval of borrowing of money and banking arrangements.
7. Appointment of Director General and assessment of his/her performance.

8. Approval of appointments to grades of Executive Director and upwards, determination of the salaries of those grades, and approval of performance pay awards for those grades to which it applies.
9. General oversight of appointments and remuneration policy, and application of pay increases.
10. Approval to the terms of the superannuation scheme and variations to it, subject to approval by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.
11. Ensuring that good governance practices are in place and taking reasonable steps to ensure that the Institute complies with its statutory obligations.

The Board consists of not less than three members (who shall be unrelated and independent of each other) and not more than fourteen members comprised as follows:-

- (a) two shall be civil servants (not being officers of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform) of whom one shall be an officer of the Department with responsibility for Local Government and one an officer of the Department with responsibility for the Health services;
- (b) one shall be a secretary general;
- (c) one shall be a city or county manager;
- (d) one shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Health Service Executive or his/her nominee;
- (e) two shall be chief executive officers of state-sponsored bodies, of whom one shall be an officer of a commercial state body and one shall be an officer of a non-commercial state body;
- (f) one shall be representative of associations or unions of persons engaged in the public service;
- (g) one shall be a representative of universities, faculties or colleges of universities or third-level educational institutions;
- (h) one shall be an officer of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform;
- (i) one shall be a representative of the students of the Institute;
- (j) one shall be a member of the staff of the Institute elected by them;
- (k) one shall be the Director General of the Institute;
- (l) one who may be co-opted by the Board

The members of the Board (other than the Director General of the Institute and the member to be co-opted by the Board) are elected or nominated to office in accordance with regulations governing the Board. Each member of the Board holds office from and including the seventh day before the commencement of the Annual General Meeting held next after their election or nomination and ceases to hold office on the day on which the succeeding members of the Board take office prior to the commencement of the third Annual General Meeting held thereafter. A list of current Board members can be found at <https://www.ipa.ie/corporate/board-members.233.html>.

The Board operates through its scheduled monthly meetings and three standing Board subcommittees. The subcommittees include:

- Finance and Strategy Committee, which reviews strategic and financial management activity including the corporate plan, annual budgets, annual accounts, banking arrangements, financial controls and performance indicators

- Administration Committee, which monitors the Institute's tactical operating performance, including capital works, land acquisition, pay and benefits, and human resource issues
- Audit & Risk Committee, which reviews annual financial statements and strategic processes for risk, internal control and governance, and which advises the Board on matters relating to internal and external audit activity, management of risk, corporate governance requirements, anti-fraud policies etc.

A comprehensive account of the Board and its sub-committees, including composition, terms of reference, role and duties, operating procedures, conduct and expectations are outlined in the IPA Corporate Governance Manual. Of particular relevance are chapter 2: Role of Board, Chair and Executive, and the Governance Manual's own appendices 4-8, which cover 'Schedule of Matters Reserved for the Board,' 'Board Legal Obligations,' 'Code of Conduct for Board Members' and 'Terms of Reference for the Administration Committee, the Finance and Strategy Committee, and the Audit Committee'.

- b) The Director General is responsible for day-to-day management of the Institute's business and for ensuring that the policies of the Board are effectively implemented. The DG is responsible for leading the delivery of strategy and the implementation of governance and risk-management processes. He/she is also responsible, with the Chairperson and the board secretary, for ensuring that the agendas for the Board are properly managed and that the Board has the necessary advice to carry out its functions. The DG exercises this role through the following responsibilities:
1. The direction and management of the Institute in accordance with policies approved by the Board.
  2. The initiation and development of plans and proposals for the development and adaptation of Institute policies and activities to meet changing circumstances and to achieve approved objectives.
  3. The organisation and control of the staff and work of the Institute to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of plans and programmes.
  4. The control of capital and income and expenditure budgets as approved by the Board.
  5. The development and maintenance of appropriate relationships between the Institute and various branches of the Irish Public Service to meet identified needs.
  6. The development and maintenance, as appropriate, of contacts with bodies in Ireland and other countries to ensure access to knowledge, expertise and information relevant to the objectives and activities of the Institute.
  7. The representation of the Institute, as required and the maintenance of good public relations.
- c) Each member of the senior management group (SMG) is entrusted with driving business functions (education, research, training & consultancy, and corporate services such as finance and HR). The SMG works with the DG on strategy related matters, which in turn are overseen by the Board. The SMG is responsible for the implementation of strategy, and the management of activities and resources required to fulfil the Institute's strategic objectives. Members of the Senior Management Group (SMG) of the IPA may be invited to attend Board meetings for items of business, where relevant, and be entitled to speak and advise the relevant meeting when requested to do so by the Chairman.
- d) The Assistant DG/Head of the Whitaker School is the SMG representative with responsibility for leading and managing the Whitaker School and its staff; for developing, directing and managing the IPA's suite of academic programmes; and for maintaining academic standards. The overall



responsibility for QA development, implementation and evaluation also lies with the Assistant DG/Head of School. The Assistant DG/Head of School is a member of the Education Committee, IPA-UCD Strategic Management Group and chairs the IPA-UCD Joint Academic Programme Board.

- e) The assistant registrar manages the Whitaker School Registry and Administrative Office and is responsible for academic affairs and academic administration. The assistant registrar liaises with awarding/accrediting bodies, co-ordinates QA activity, and provides a secretariat for Faculty, Examination Boards and the Education Committee. The assistant registrar liaises with the IPA's module/programme co-ordinators and distance education specialist to develop, deliver and evaluate courses. The assistant registrar co-ordinates the work of administrative staff to provide a range of services to students and staff including admissions, records, assessment and programme organisation. See below for more information on the Registry and Administrative Office. The assistant registrar reports to the Head of the Whitaker School/Registrar.
- f) The editor/distance education specialist, and programme and module co-ordinators have direct responsibility for the development and maintenance of education courses and associated course material in modules and programmes.

The editor/distance education specialist assists programme and module coordinators in the creation and revision of high-quality course manuals. The specialist edits the material submitted by lecturers/authors and oversees the production and distribution of manuals. The specialist also advises and assists programme and module coordinators in developing the web-based resources that the Whitaker School uses to deliver programmes through distance education.

Module co-ordinators manage individual modules or groups of cognate modules, which in some cases can constitute a specialised programme in themselves. Module co-ordinators:

- Manage and monitor associate lecturers
- Ensure the correct and timely dissemination of information to lecturers and associate lecturers in order for them to carry out their duties
- Ensure that courses and course manuals are kept up-to-date, relevant and of an acceptable standard
- Assist in the planning of tutorials, seminars, distance and evening courses
- Assist in the delivery of tutorials at regional study centres
- Deal with issues that may arise in the development and delivery of educational courses under their remit
- Deal with students in relation to issues that may arise and give guidance and support where necessary
- Ensure that courses are handled by staff professionally and in accordance with the principles and ethos of the institute
- Provide direction and help to staff where necessary in order that education delivery is in keeping with quality assurance standards
- Carry out regular reviews of course effectiveness through standard research processes and advising the Faculty committee on any issues that require attention
- Carry out assigned lecturing and assessment duties as required
- Participate in course reviews, committees and sub-committees as required.

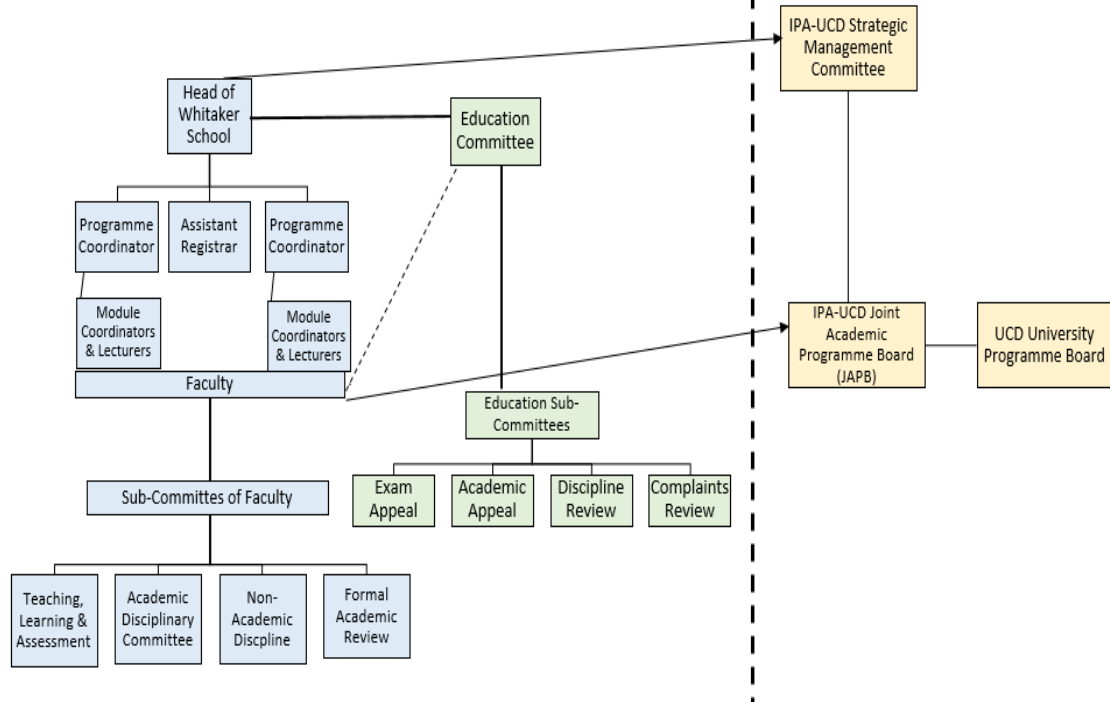
Programme co-ordinators fulfil these same duties but are responsible for managing the module co-ordinators and co-ordinating the delivery of modules across specific programmes.

Positions within the School invariably combine a number of functions. For instance, the individual programme co-ordinators teach, manage associate staff and co-ordinate modules/programmes, but they also have roles in research, consultancy and quality. Module and programme co-ordinators have management and administrative duties, which they carry out in conjunction with the administrative team.

The module & programme co-ordinators and editor/distance education specialist work under the direction of the Head of the Whitaker School, who is responsible for setting targets, allocating work and monitoring performance. These staff (along with the assistant registrar and Head of School/Registrar) also constitute the Faculty Committee, which is the IPA's primary academic group, responsible for the development, management and review of the Institute's third-level programmes (see below for more information).

- g) The Whitaker School Registry and Administrative Office, comprising two administration managers and administrative staff at various grades, carries out the following academic support activities: Admissions, Records, Assessment, Exams, Conferring, Quality Assurance, Lecturer and Student Services, and Committee support. The administrative team breaks into core groups for the management of specific cohorts of students, such as undergraduate and postgraduate students. The administration and registry team work under the direction of the assistant registrar and the Head of the Whitaker School, who are responsible for directing and developing academic/administrative support and for setting targets and monitoring performance. Administrative staff also participate in structured monthly meetings led by the assistant registrar for the purposes of planning, co-ordination, monitoring and review.
  - h) The IPA makes effective use of academics and senior practitioners from public sector bodies and higher education institute to assist in the delivery of programmes. These associate lecturers are managed by programme and module coordinators. Under the supervision of IPA co-ordinators, associate lecturers, along with permanent IPA lecturers, are responsible for delivering classes, setting and correcting student assessment, and reviewing and updating learning materials. There are approximately 50 associates used in the delivery of IPA programmes. Further information on the roles and management of these lecturers can be found under both section J, Criterion 4 and section L, Criterion 6.
15. The IPA also has a strong committee structure to underpin the Institute's Quality Assurance, thus supporting the separation of responsibilities, the provision of checks-and-balances in the decision-making process, and the monitoring and controlling of activity. These committees comprise internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders include the IPA Board, Education Committee, advisory committees, lecturers, students, and staff members in general. External stakeholders are considered to be anyone who has a vested interest in the development, functions, organisation and workings of the Institute; these include, inter alia, the accrediting university, employers, alumni, QQI, Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) and so on. The IPA governance structure, incorporating the stakeholders, is described in the chart below:

## Whitaker School Committees



- a) The Faculty Committee is the Institute's primary academic group. The Committee has responsibility for the development, management and review of the Institute's accredited courses and course material, namely course design, delivery, co-ordination & administration, assessment, quality assurance and related academic affairs. The Committee comprises the Head of the Whitaker School, assistant registrar, distance education specialist/editor, and the School's programme and module coordinators.

The Faculty Committee works with and is directly responsible to the Head of the Whitaker School. It meets three times each academic semester. Representatives of the Faculty Committee are also members of the IPA-UCD Joint Academic Programme Board, a group of IPA and UCD academics and managers responsible for overseeing the delivery and quality of IPA programmes as part of the accreditation relationship between the two institutions (see below). All Faculty Committee members are also invited to attend meetings of the Institute's Education Committee, an advisory/consultative body of stakeholders.

The Faculty Committee is composed of:

- Assistant Director General/Head of the Whitaker School (Chairman)
- Assistant Registrar
- Programme co-ordinator: Government & Politics, Law, Public Administration
- Programme co-ordinator: Business and Management
- Module co-ordinator: Financial Accounting
- Module co-ordinator: Law & Administration of Justice
- Module co-ordinator: Healthcare & Management
- Module co-ordinator: Politics & Policy, Local Government Management
- Module co-ordinator: European Studies
- Module co-ordinator: Economics
- Module co-ordinator: Organisation & Employee Development

- Module co-ordinator: Human Resource Management
- Editor/Distance Education Specialist

The terms of reference for the Committee are to:

- Ensure that standards appropriate to higher level courses are met in curriculum development and review, teaching methods and materials, student assessment and quality evaluation systems etc. and report on such matters to the Head of the Whitaker School and the IPA-UCD Joint Academic Programme Board and IPA Education Committee.
- Co-ordinate the delivery and assessment of IPA accredited programmes.
- Participate in the development of new courses under the oversight of the Head of School.
- Review lectures and distance education courses, and advise on the preparation and review of texts and other teaching materials required by students.
- Oversee the work of module co-ordinators and subject teams in the interests of curricular and inter-disciplinary co-ordination.
- Review and develop appropriate delivery methods, student supports and assessment methodologies.
- Review the conduct of examinations and act as internal exam review board in advance of the formal Board of Examiner meetings.
- Adjudicate on matters relating to student discipline.
- Participate in the IPA-UCD Joint Academic Programme Board towards maintaining and improving quality assurance in relation to the Institute's education services.

The Faculty Committee sub-divides into a number of sub-committees to deal with specific routine and non-routine matters. There is a standing Teaching, Learning & Assessment sub-committee. The other sub-committees allow for focus on specific issues that arise, and are constituted as required. Sub-committees report to the Faculty Committee with observations and recommendations. Examples of Faculty sub-committees are:

- Academic Disciplinary Committee – forum for the hearing of breaches of assessment regulations & procedures referred to it by the Head of the Whitaker School. The composition, scope and operating procedures for this group are outlined in the Institute's *Assessment Regulations and Procedures* ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).
- Non-Academic Discipline Committee – forum for the hearing of breaches of the rules of discipline of a non-assessment nature referred to it by the Head of the Whitaker School or an appropriate person delegated by the Head of School. The composition, scope and operating procedures for this group are outlined in the Institute's *Disciplinary (Non-Assessment) Regulations and Procedures* ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).
- Formal Academic Review Committee – Faculty sub-committee which, under the direction of the Head of School/Registrar or assistant registrar, will review exam related disputes that arise after a re-assessment of scripts has been conducted. The composition, scope and operating procedures for this group are outlined in *Procedures for Appeal of Exam Results* ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).
- Teaching, Learning & Assessment Committee – group established to advance the IPA's policies, procedures and critical reflections around teaching and learning and assessment. Terms of reference are to review IPA teaching, learning and assessment procedures and strategies, and report to the Faculty Committee on possible areas of improvement and development, taking particular account of:

- developments nationally and internationally in teaching and learning
- the teaching & learning & assessment methodologies of most relevance to the IPA student body and to programme delivery methods
- student feedback on teaching, learning and assessment
- e-learning developments
- quality assurance requirements.

In its deliberations on teaching and learning and its recommendations to Faculty, the Group is guided in particular by the research undertaken by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and the resources provided by that body. Further information on the IPA's approach to teaching, learning and assessment can be found in the Teaching & Learning Policy ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

The Faculty Sub-committees meet as directed by Faculty or Head of School, and its members are drawn from suitably qualified members of the Faculty Committee agreed by the Committee.

b) The primary role of the IPA's Education Committee is to advise the Whitaker School on how best to respond to the education requirements of the civil service and wider public sector. The Education Committee primarily assists the Head of School and the Faculty Committee by acting in a consultative/advisory capacity on a range of strategic and practical issues. The Committee's terms of reference are:

- To advise the Institute on how it can best respond to the education requirements of the civil service and wider public sector
- To monitor developments in the public service in terms of their educational implications for public servants, and to advise on how the Institute might respond to such developments in educational terms
- To monitor the effectiveness of existing educational programmes and to advise on changes to meet the needs of the public service
- To monitor quality improvement procedures appropriate to the size of the IPA's education provision
- To review progress from time to time on the extent to which approved goals and objectives are being achieved

The Education Committee is composed as follows:

- Chairman
- Nominee of the Chief Executive Officers of the Health Service Executive
- Nominee of the City and County Managers Association
- Nominee of the Department of Finance/DPER
- Head of the Whitaker School/Registrar
- Assistant Registrar
- Representatives of Academic members of IPA Faculty
- Representative of part-time lecturers
- Representative of Graduates
- Representative of Students
- Representative of Civil Service departments
- Representative of Training Officers
- Representative of the Garda Síochána
- Representative of the Defence Forces

- Representative of State Agencies
- Co-opted member

The terms of appointment of members are linked with their professional roles and are determined by the stakeholders. Individual members of the Faculty Committee are invited to attend meetings.

Meetings are held three-four times a year and additional meetings are held as required. The Head of the Whitaker School may establish task groups or committees from time to time to draft position papers and responses to issues raised at meetings for the Education Committee's information.

The Committee receives progress reports on IPA programme activity at each meeting. QA is a running agenda item at such meetings; the external stakeholders who make up the bulk of the membership provide clear and independent advice on QA related issues. They receive progress reports and review policies, procedures and analyses of data and trends. Their opinions and advice feed directly into development and evaluative activities.

A sub-committee of the Education Committee can be formed at any time at the discretion of the Education Committee to carry out its assigned tasks under its remit.

There are presently four sub-committees that serve as independent and final arbiters in various student appeals processes relating to academic (and non-academic) breaches, discipline and complaints. These are constituted as required. These sub-committees include the Examination Appeals Committee, Academic Appeals Committee, Complaints Review Panel, and the Discipline Review Panel.

- Examinations Appeal Committee – considers appeals from students on foot of decisions made by the Formal Academic Review Committee. The Education Committee appoints three members to the Examinations Appeal Committee. Further information on the scope and operating procedures for this group are outlined in the Institute's *Procedures for Appeal of Exam Results* ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).
- Academic Appeals Committee – considers appeals from students on foot of decisions made by the Academic Disciplinary Committee. The Education Committee appoints three members to the Academic Appeals Committee, two of whom are members of the Education Committee (third is independent of the IPA). Further information on the scope and operating procedures for this group are outlined in the Institute's *Assessment Regulations and Procedures* ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).
- Discipline Review Panel – considers cases where the student contests the decision of the Discipline Committee in formal cases of non-assessment related breaches. The composition, scope and operating procedures for this group are outlined in the Institute's *Disciplinary (Non-Assessment) Regulations and Procedures* ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).
- Complaints Review Panel – considers student appeals against the decision of the Head of School after investigating a formal written complaint from the student. The composition, scope and operating procedures for this group are outlined in the Institute's *Complaints (Non-Assessment) Policy & Procedures* ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

The Education Committee has had in excess of 176 meetings. The current Chairman is former Secretary General to the Government & former Chairman of the Public Appointments Service.

c) The IPA-UCD Strategic Management Committee provides a high-level link between the IPA and its Designated Awarding Body UCD. The Committee oversees issues relating to inter institutional arrangements and developments. The Strategic Management Committee has the following specific functions, namely to:

- manage the strategic development and direction of the alliance;
- where appropriate, establish specific management and liaison sub groups to build links between UCD and the Recognised College in specific areas (for example, research, library, information technology and e-learning infrastructure, academic publishing, or internationalisation) or to manage specific joint projects;
- establish guidelines for the application of financial arrangements between the institutions;
- be available to mediate issues which may arise from time to time about how financial arrangements should apply in specific cases;
- monitor the implementation of this agreement.

The Committee is composed of the following members:

- Chief Officer of the Recognised College (Director-General/CEO/President)
- Chief Academic Officer of the Recognised College (Dean/Registrar/Head of Academic Affairs)
- Nominee(s) of the Board of the Recognised College
- Registrar of UCD or nominee
- Principal(s) of the relevant UCD College(s) or nominee(s)
- Nominee of the Registrar of UCD
- The Committee may co-opt additional members as required to successfully conduct their business.

The Director General of the IPA and Head of the Whitaker School/Registrar are members of IPA-UCD Strategic Management Committee, as are senior academics and management staff of UCD.

The IPA-UCD Strategic Management Committee reports to the IPA Board, and is also ultimately accountable to the UCD Governing Authority.

d) The IPA-UCD Joint Academic Programme Board (JAPB) is responsible to the University Programme Board and to Academic Council of UCD for the design, development, regulation and quality of all programmes, and for overseeing the delivery of all programmes, offered by the Institute of Public Administration, which lead to awards of the Designated Awarding Body.

The key functions of the board are to oversee and assist the academic and professional development, implementation and review of IPA and joint education and research activities, with particular reference to:

- i. Advising on emerging trends in research and education in public policy, management and administration;
- ii. Ensuring that programmes support the separate and joint strategic objectives of IPA and UCD;
- iii. Overseeing the development of IPA and joint programmes and submitting proposals for their accreditation to UCD Academic Council;
- iv. Overseeing the student assessment and examination process and approving examination results for submission to UCD Academic Council;

- v. Advising and assisting in the recruitment of high-calibre academic and research staff to deliver IPA and joint programmes;
- vi. Overseeing quality assurance processes and ensuring that their implementation is consistent with that for other academic units in the University;
- vii. Facilitating periodic institutional reviews;
- viii. Overseeing the selection, admission, retention and exclusion of students registered to these programmes.

The JAPB is composed of the following members:

- 5 members nominated by the Board of IPA, on recommendation of the Director-General (to include the Registrar of the IPA);
- 4 members nominated by the Registrar of UCD (to include a member of UCD Registry);
- Two students of IPA programmes;
- The Assistant Director General/Head of School acts as the Chair of the JAPB.
- Additional academic, administrative or student members may be co-opted by the Board to ensure appropriate expertise is available to conduct its business effectively.

The Head of the Whitaker School/Registrar and representatives from IPA Faculty are members of the JAPB, along with senior academics and management staff of UCD.

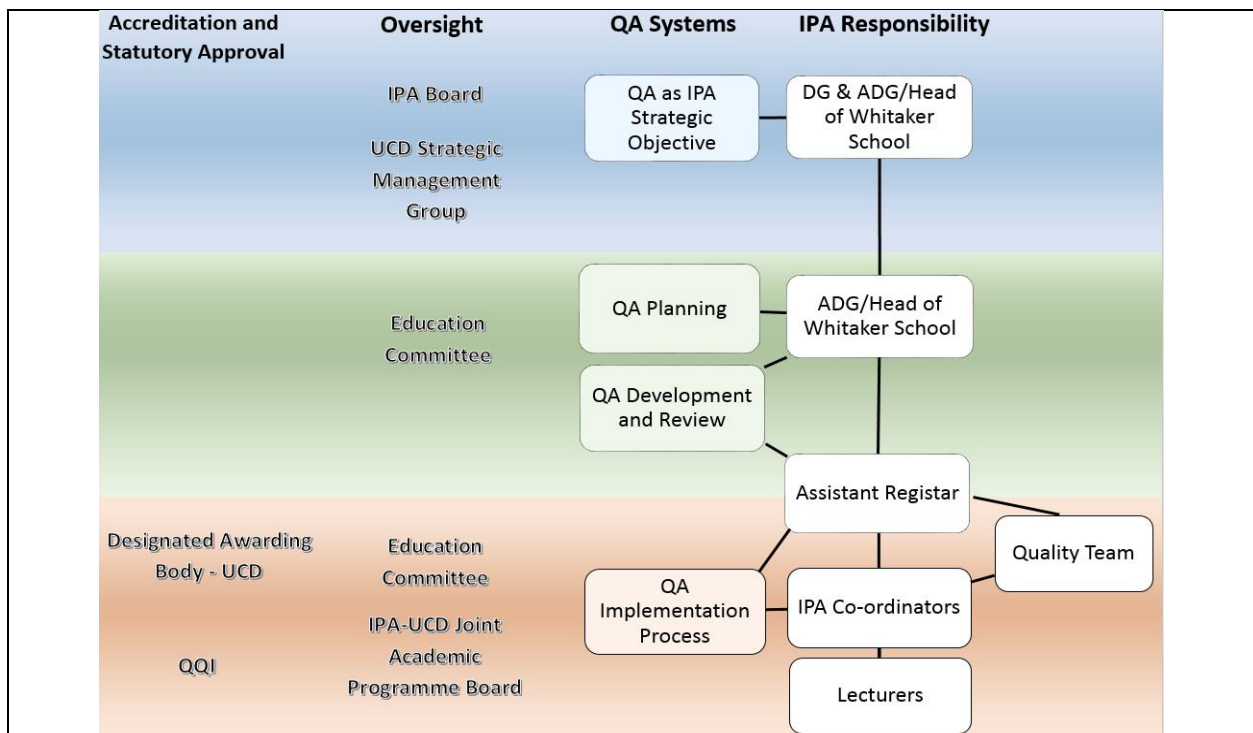
The JAPB meets at least twice per semester. Detailed duties and Terms of Reference can be found at [http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/tor\\_ipa.pdf](http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/tor_ipa.pdf).

### **Governance and Responsibilities of Quality Assurance System**

16. Both the system of governance and the management structures described above provide the central underpinning mechanisms for the establishment and maintenance of an embedded and comprehensive quality regime. They constitute the formal framework whereby objectives, strategies and policies are developed, decisions are made and plans are implemented.

QA is also explicitly embedded in each layer of the governance and management structure in the IPA. At each level, there are clear lines of responsibility for appropriate QA-related activities and there are defined reporting relationships and advisory/oversight committees, as can be seen from the illustration below:





- a) At the top level, the Institute’s [Strategic Plan 2017-2021](#) positions QA as a key strategic objective for the IPA: ‘To develop further a quality assurance regime to establish, maintain and enhance the quality of our accredited education programmes in line with university requirements.’ The consequent actions that the IPA will pursue at an operational level include:
- Establish a QA framework and revise existing QA policies and procedures in line with national and European requirements
  - Secure approval for QA processes in line with QQI requirements
  - Publish approved QA policies and procedures on IPA website
  - Review effectiveness of the implementation of QA policies and procedures in line with QQI requirements.
- b) The DG has ultimate responsibility for corporate Institute-wide leadership and management. The DG, working in conjunction with the ADG/Head of School, is also responsible for the delivery of Quality Assurance as a strategic objective, which is monitored by the Board.
- c) The overall responsibility for QA development, implementation and evaluation lies with the ADG/Head of School and is overseen by the Education Committee.
- d) The ADG/Head of School/Registrar, in conjunction with the assistant registrar, is responsible for QA development and local implementation. The Education Committee and the IPA-UCD JAPB are kept abreast of QA work, as QA is a standing item on the agenda for both groups.
- e) The assistant registrar oversees the work of a quality team to support and facilitate the implementation of QA. The Quality team comprises Whitaker School staff members (academic and administrative) who have quality-related duties.
- f) The Institute’s principal academic unit – the faculty committee – has a key role in the implementation of QA. The faculty committee comprises the ADG/Head of School/Registrar, assistant registrar, and programme and module co-ordinators. Members of faculty contribute to and approve QA policies and procedures. Faculty members, in their roles as managers,

administrators and academics, also play a central role in the day-to-day delivery and assurance of quality in the IPA by giving effect to the policies, procedures and monitoring mechanisms that they have helped to develop. Faculty members are also involved in QA review activities.

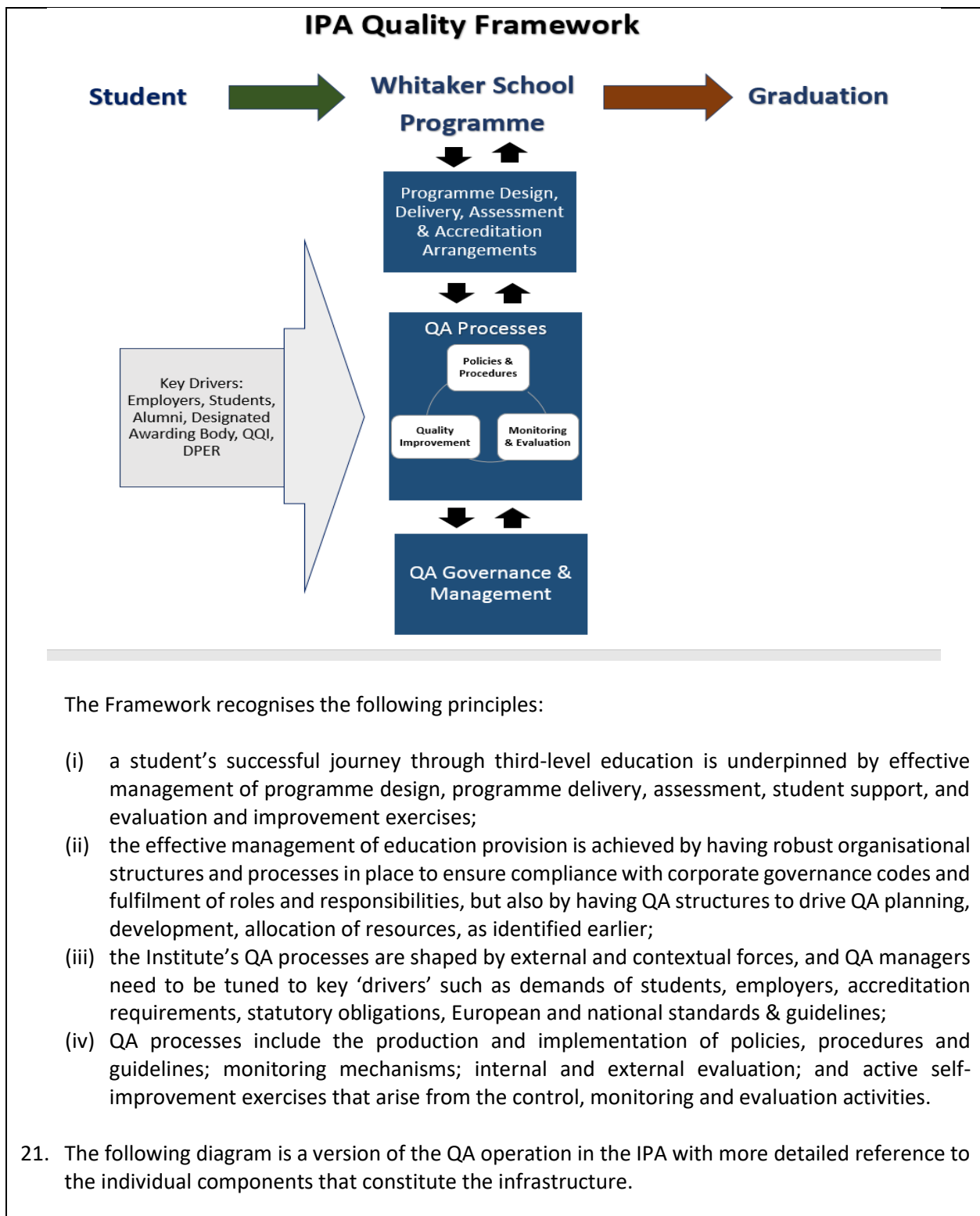
- g) The module and programme co-ordinators are responsible for managing and monitoring the quality-related activities of lecturers/associate lecturers – teaching, course content, module reviews and revisions.
- h) As stated in 11 (c) and (d) above, there are also committees that have a remit to review the IPA's QA development and operations: IPA Education Committee and IPA-UCD Joint Academic Programme Board. QA is a standing item on the agenda of both Committees. These committees receive oral and written reports relating to QA such as progress reports and updates; development plans; draft policies and procedures; programme reports, student surveys and exam statistics.

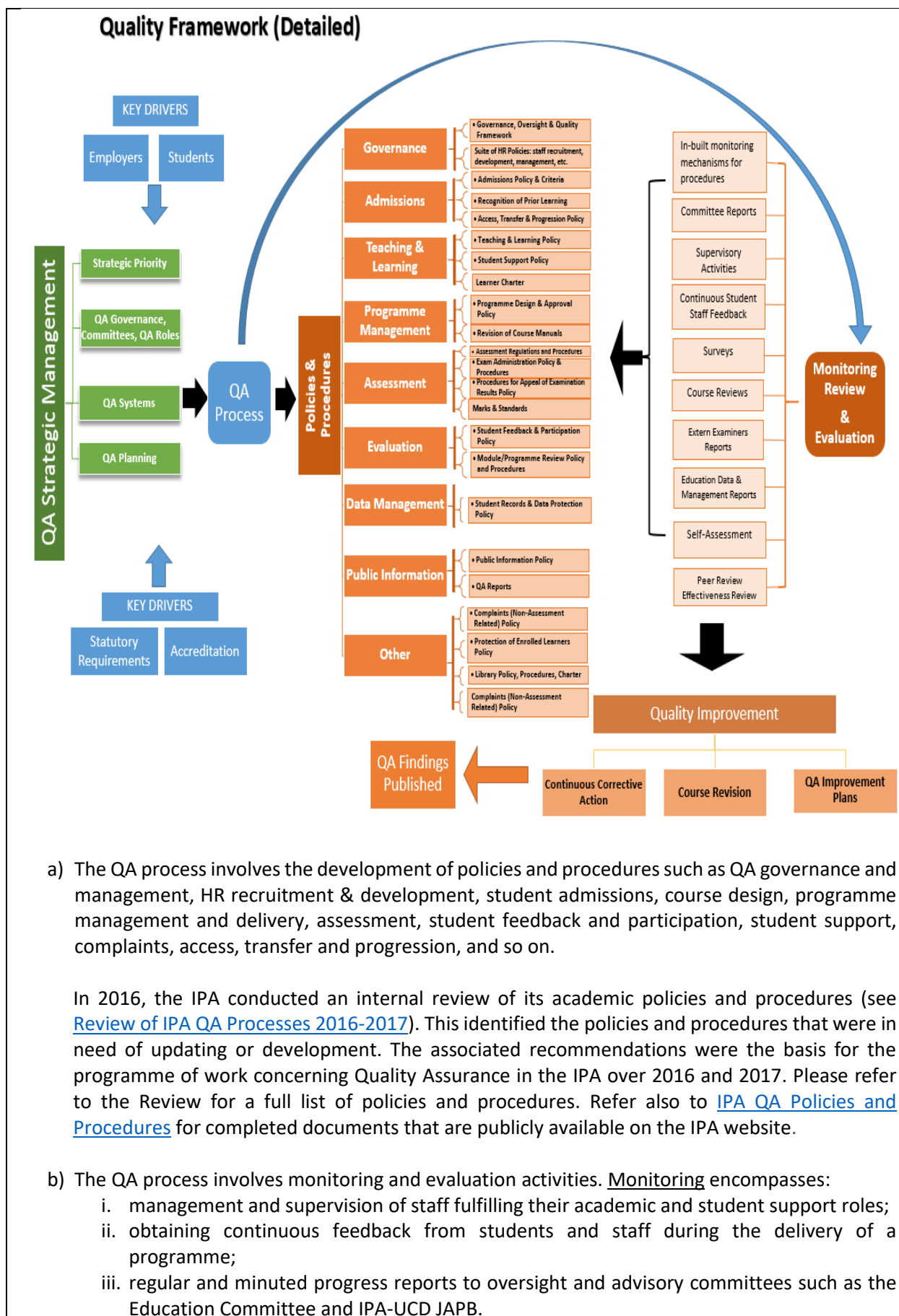
Recent QA related reports reviewed by the Education Committee and IPA-UCD JAPB have included:

- Position concerning national and European quality assurance developments particularly on statutory requirements under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.
- Satisfaction survey of entire student body and graduates 2014
- Postgraduate & Undergraduate (Major Award Degree & and Special Purpose) Examination Statistics Report 2010-2015
- Discussion on assessment related policies and procedures
- Review of QA Processes 2016 & Recommendations & Action Plan

### **Quality Assurance Framework**

17. The aim of the IPA's Quality Assurance system is to enhance the effectiveness of learning, teaching and assessment, and of the Institute's management of these core activities. When we ask ourselves – 'what are we trying to do?' 'how well are we doing it?' 'how do we know we are doing it well?' and 'are we making improvements?' – the answers should be coming back to us continually, and not just periodically after an evaluation exercise. The act of embedding QA activities across a whole range of vital academic and administrative services delivered on a day-to-day basis is critical to the successful implementation of a quality-led culture. Indeed, such embedded activities are critical to the IPA's operational success and reputation in the public service.
18. Consequently, the IPA assures and enhances the quality of its education provision by embedding QA mechanisms that comprise clear, articulated policy statements; best-practice guidelines; regulations; procedures and actions, and in-built monitoring, evaluation and compliance procedures.
19. The IPA's QA system is informed by Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) guidelines (particularly the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines), as well as UCD procedures for the Approval of UCD Linked Provider Quality Assurance Procedures and International Best practice.
20. The IPA has devised a QA Framework, which provides for development and implementation of QA activities.





a) The QA process involves the development of policies and procedures such as QA governance and management, HR recruitment & development, student admissions, course design, programme management and delivery, assessment, student feedback and participation, student support, complaints, access, transfer and progression, and so on.

In 2016, the IPA conducted an internal review of its academic policies and procedures (see [Review of IPA QA Processes 2016-2017](#)). This identified the policies and procedures that were in need of updating or development. The associated recommendations were the basis for the programme of work concerning Quality Assurance in the IPA over 2016 and 2017. Please refer to the Review for a full list of policies and procedures. Refer also to [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#) for completed documents that are publicly available on the IPA website.

b) The QA process involves monitoring and evaluation activities. **Monitoring** encompasses:

- i. management and supervision of staff fulfilling their academic and student support roles;
- ii. obtaining continuous feedback from students and staff during the delivery of a programme;
- iii. regular and minuted progress reports to oversight and advisory committees such as the Education Committee and IPA-UCD JAPB.

- iv. regular evaluation of key activities encompassing annual and periodic survey of students about academic and support services; annual module reviews; periodic course reviews; extern examiner review; analysis of examination statistics, student feedback used by the IPA for accountability and enhancement purposes.

To assist the teaching, administrative and management staff, each set of policies and procedures comprises a cover sheet making explicit reference to monitoring and evaluation activities that are critical to the successful implementation of that particular policy/procedure. Please refer to section P, Criterion 10, for more detailed reference to these monitoring and evaluation activities.

- c) The QA Process accommodates reviews of the effectiveness of IPA policies, procedures and monitoring mechanisms, as provided for under the 2012 QQA Act. Please see section P for more information.
- d) The QA process involves self-improvement activity (see diagram), encompassing continuous improvement action from staff supervision and staff-student feedback during programme delivery; module and programme enhancements from extern reports, annual module reviews, programme reviews, student surveys; self-improvement plans from programme and Institute evaluations. Please see Section P for more detail on recent improvements as result of QA reviews.

22. In summary, specific features of the QA process include:

- A strong and continuous procedure for curriculum review and enhancement
- Systematic review, revision and production of learning materials to comply with our extensive provision of distance education material to students
- Mechanisms for annual external feedback on assessment via external examiner reports
- Systematic student participation and feedback
- Student representation at all levels including the Board of the IPA (and relevant sub-committees), the Education Committee and the UCD-IPA Joint Academic Programme Board.

The accreditation relationship with our Designated Awarding Body imposes a robust and independent QA approval process. Furthermore, the joint representation by UCD and IPA on strategic management and academic programme boards provides oversight in terms of IPA direction and maintenance of academic standards. Please see section P for more detail on these QA mechanisms.

23. One of the recommendations of the 2016 Review of QA processes was that all QA policies, procedures, guidelines and regulations relating to Education provision should be publicly available on the IPA website in pdf format. This is in compliance with QQI guidelines. Up to this point, relevant documentation, particularly pertaining to assessment matters, appeals and complaints, appeared in print form in course handbooks and electronically on Moodle, the student on-line resource platform. The IPA has recently renovated its corporate website and the Institute's QA Policies and Procedures are publicly available on the website (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

24. At the beginning of each set of policies and procedures that govern academic activity, the IPA makes explicit reference to the nature of the document and the mechanisms by which the relevant procedures will be implemented and monitored, thus providing clarity for internal staff and stakeholders around purpose, action, responsibility and status. The summary and version control details, which preface each set of policies and procedures, are structured as follows: (a) purpose; (b) scope; (c) contents; (d) audience & communication; (e) contextual guidelines; (f) related IPA policy; (g) policy owner & implementation; (h) key implementation actions; (i) monitoring, review

& continuous improvement; (j) definitions; (k) revision history, commencement date & date of next review.

25. From 2017, the policies, procedures, guidelines, and regulations that make up the IPA's QA processes will be reviewed on a systematic basis every 3 years, though adjustments will be made as required in the interim. The 'date for next review' is indicated at the beginning of each document. The clarity around dates will ensure a fit-for-purpose and contextually relevant QA system. The criteria under which this systematic review occurs are laid out in the *Governance, Oversight & Quality Framework* (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

**B. The quality assurance system should support public confidence in the provider institution and its capacity to provide programmes to agreed standards.**

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Sections A and O.

**Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements**

Supporting public confidence in the IPA as a leading higher education provider for the public sector is a central objective for our Quality Assurance. QQI, in their Policy on QA Guidelines, have identified public confidence as a core principle that underpins a provider's approach to QA in education - 'Public Confidence Principle'. For the IPA, the need to engender confidence is especially important given our role: the Institute is involved in professional education where the key stakeholders are (i) practicing public servants; (ii) public service units that sponsor those students; (iii) the designated awarding body that accredits the programmes and makes the awards; (iv) the government agencies under whose aegis we come as a partly funded state body, and by extension the taxpayer; and (v) the various other regulatory and statutory agencies to which we are obliged to adhere.

How does the IPA's quality assurance system support public confidence? And how does the IPA *demonstrate* that the system supports public confidence? Essentially, the critical work of the IPA in establishing, maintaining, evaluating and enhancing the quality and standards of its education activities must be effective, but the work must also be *recognised* as effective.

1. As outlined in Section A, the IPA has a strong governance system, which is based on organisational structures, management arrangements, and processes, procedures and controls that are designed to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity and inclusiveness. The Institute's governance and management arrangements support primary corporate activities such as strategy development and implementation, provision of education & training, corporate financial control, risk management, audit functions, corporate HRM supports, statutory compliance and so on. For instance:

- There is an internal organisational structure that works down from the Director General to the ADG/Head of the Whitaker School/Registrar and further down to the assistant registrar and programme co-ordinators and lecturers to ensure that core objectives are met and education services are provided. The work of the Whitaker School in designing and delivering academic programmes and assessing student performance is underpinned by a range of documented policies and procedures.
- The Director of Finance and Support Services is responsible for the Corporate Governance Manual, which sets out how the IPA endeavours to be as fully compliant as practicable with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016. The Manual provides a clear and comprehensive summary of the principal aspects of corporate governance for the IPA Board, its senior management and staff.
- The HR unit manages a fair and transparent process for the recruitment, retention and development of permanent full and part-time staff within the IPA. The HR Manager is responsible for documented policies and procedures (official staff handbook) on matters relating to the recruitment, development, management, and work practices and behaviour of IPA employees.
- The IPA has mechanisms to ensure appropriate separation of responsibilities, checks-and-balances in the decision-making process, and monitoring and control activities. These include: board of directors (IPA Board); Education Committee serving as a consultative body of public

service stakeholders; faculty committee with key academic decision-making responsibilities; Education sub-committees serving as independent and final arbiters in various student appeals processes relating to academic (and non-academic) breaches, discipline and complaints; IPA-UCD Strategic Management Committee; joint IPA-UCD Academic Programme Board; internal and external auditors; reporting relationships to Department of Public Expenditure & Reform. These are functioning units and bodies with their own terms of reference, schedules and minutes.

Together, the IPA's organisational structures, management arrangements, committees, corporate and academic processes underpin the IPA's capacity to perform as a successful higher education provider in a competitive and regulated environment. Their functions and operations act as guarantors of quality.

2. Also, as outlined in Section A, there is sufficient strategic, operational and oversight activity to establish QA as an explicit and rolling area of concern for the Institute. The Institute's [Strategic Plan 2017-2021](#) positions QA as a key strategic objective for the IPA. Progress on the QA strategic objective will be monitored by SMG and the IPA Board as part of their periodic review of IPA Strategy. While the Head of the Whitaker School/Registrar and assistant registrar drive QA operations with the assistance of the quality team, the faculty committee comprising the Head of School/Registrar, assistant registrar, distance education specialist, and programme and module co-ordinators, contribute to the development, day-to-day implementation and evaluation of quality. QA is also monitored by the Education Committee and the Joint IPA-UCD Academic Programme Board.
3. The IPA's Quality Assurance system is informed at every step by Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) guidelines (particularly the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines), as well as UCD procedures for the Approval of UCD Linked Provider Quality Assurance Procedures and international best practice.
4. Public confidence in the IPA's capacity to provide programmes to agreed standards is supported by the Institute's policies and procedures which:
  - a) Cover a wide range of academic and support services, including student admission and progression; programme design and delivery; student assessment; teaching & learning; student engagement & feedback; programme review, evaluation and revision; and student support. See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#).
  - b) Cover corporate activities such as staff recruitment and development, financial control, audit procedures, risk management and assurance, corporate governance, data protection and management, public information.
  - c) Provide for the evaluation of appropriate statistical data and stakeholder analysis to further enhance our Education provision (see also sections C and P).
  - d) Provide for a rigorous programme/module design and approval process and a similarly rigorous programme/module review process to ensure that course design and delivery meet the standards required by learners and employers (see also sections I).
  - e) Provide for involvement of students in the academic development of programmes through representation across key decision making fora (IPA Board, Education Committee, IPA-UCD JAPB, and through student feedback surveys (see also sections C and F). From September 2017, we will be further strengthening through staff/student Representative Groups.
  - f) Provide for appropriate levels of external judgement on academic standards with reference to national peer institutions, such as extern reports and programme evaluation (see also sections C, F, K and P).



- g) Are developed and implemented in conjunction with the IPA faculty, thus ensuring that key academic and management personnel are involved in establishing best practice criteria, but also in maintaining and monitoring academic standards.
  - h) Are available on the IPA website and relevant student portals and documentation. See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#).
  - i) Are routinely monitored. At the beginning of each set of policies and procedures, the summary sheet makes explicit reference to purpose, status and the mechanisms by which the relevant procedures will be implemented and monitored. This device provides clarity for internal staff and stakeholders around action, responsibility, as well as identifying the evidence base by which the implementation of the procedure (and the effectiveness of the implementation) can be reviewed.
5. Public confidence is also supported by the publication on the IPA website, and on relevant student portals, of the following:
- a) QA governance and management documentation, IPA Annual Reports, Board membership, quality framework, and QA policies and procedures as informed by QQI, ESG and UCD guidelines (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#))
  - b) details on programmes with reference to qualification title, NFQ level, duration, cost, progression arrangements, module descriptors, learning outcomes, delivery methods (also in IPA's hard copy prospectus) [IPA Prospectus](#)
  - c) admission requirements and application information (also in IPA's hard copy prospectus)
  - d) course and assessment regulations, Marks & Standards
  - e) student appeal mechanisms
  - f) executive summaries of student feedback and examination statistics (forthcoming)
  - g) periodic institutional effectiveness review procedures and improvement plans, and details of the implementation of quality improvement plans as informed by QQI, ESG and UCD guidelines.
6. Public confidence is supported by the accreditation relationship with UCD. The IPA-UCD Joint Academic Programme Board and the IPA-UCD Strategic Management Committee establish inter-institutional agreements and cooperation as specified within the Memorandum of Agreement. The IPA-UCD JAPB provides oversight of IPA programmes and development to UCD. UCD also have a rigorous programme approval system in place.
7. Public confidence in the IPA as a state body is supported by our compliance with statutory obligations e.g. – Ethics and Public Offices Act, Comptroller and Auditor General Act 1993, and Freedom of Information Act, Equal Status Acts 2000-2015 – and codes of conduct such as the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016. The most obvious obligation in the academic arena is the submission and review of the IPA's quality assurance procedures to UCD under s.37 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. This very document is part of this process. The IPA also complies with s.56 of the Act in relation to Access, Transfer and Progression, and Part 6 of the Act in relation to Protection of Enrolled Learners. Policies in relation to these areas can be found on the IPA website. (See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

### C. Quality assurance findings are systematically analysed and drive quality enhancement

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Sections A, D and P

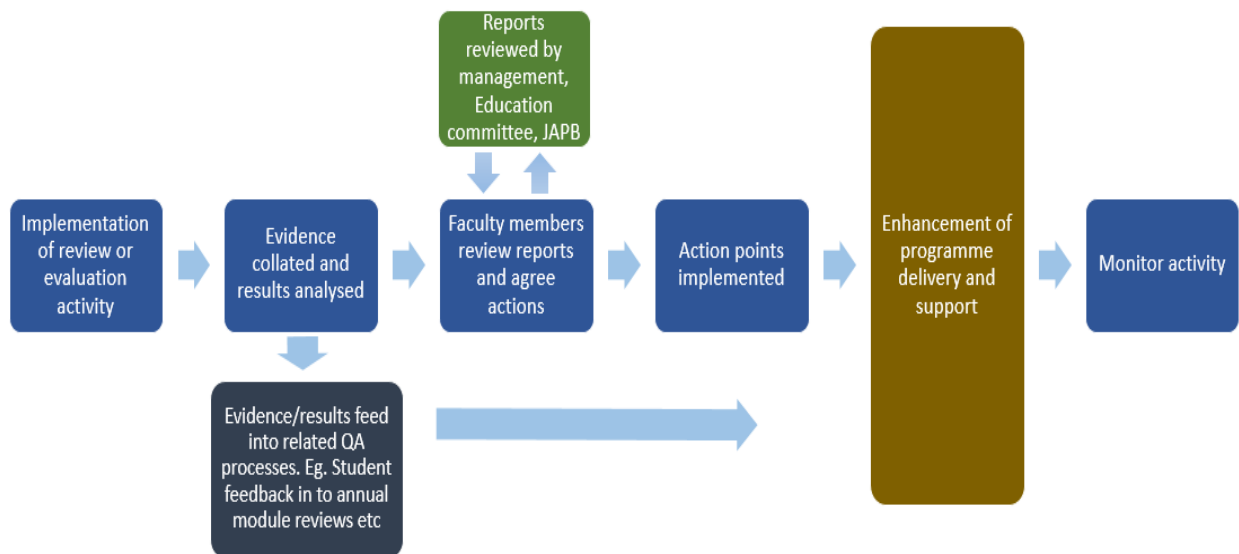
#### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

Continuous improvement must be the goal of a quality assurance process (Continuous Improvement Principle - QQI Policy on QA Guidelines). The IPA understands, therefore, that it:

- (i) must give appropriate consideration to the findings of internal and external evaluation;
- (ii) should provide for appropriate layers of moderating and supervisory processes to analyse findings in a co-ordinated and strategic way;
- (iii) should include clear decision-making and follow-up procedures for improvement (action plans) as part of any evaluative mechanisms;
- (iv) must establish management and governance structures for oversight of the self-improvement cycle.

Quality Assurance findings are generated and analysed at various levels within the IPA. As you will see from the diagram below, there is an integrated approach, with findings feeding into other forms of evaluation and also feeding into decision-making at higher-levels. Examples of this flow are in evidence in the principal QA mechanisms outlined below.

#### Process for Analysing QA Findings



The principal mechanisms for the generation of QA findings in the IPA are:

- 1) Student evaluation of IPA programmes & services
- 2) Student participation on committees
- 3) Extern examiner feedback
- 4) Annual module review
- 5) Programme review
- 6) Data analysis and reports (exam statistics, progression rates etc)
- 7) Quality Effectiveness review

A description of these QA mechanisms and the key means of reviewing and acting upon the findings are outlined in the sections below.

### **I. Student evaluation of IPA programmes & services**

The IPA recognises students as an integral part of the academic learning community. Student contribution to the delivery and support of programmes is an essential element in the creation of good practice and an essential part of the Institute's drive to continuously improve and enhance the quality of teaching and the learning experience.

The IPA conducts a periodic student evaluation every 4 years. The IPA has also introduced a system of *annual* evaluation to complement the periodic evaluation, as recommended in the internal Review of QA Processes and reflected in the updated *Student Feedback and Participation Policy & Procedures*. See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#).

The annual questionnaire evaluates overall programme satisfaction, but is designed to gather information on specific modules, such as the quality of teaching and learning materials; assessment & feedback; academic support and learning resources. In preparation for the introduction of the annual evaluation, the IPA conducted a pilot survey in the Spring of 2017, targeted at 840 graduates from 2016. The response rate averaged at 49%, which is significant. The results were also positive. Overall satisfaction (Excellent and Good) in the award stage of the BA was 91%, while it was 77% in its BBS equivalent. Overall satisfaction (Excellent and Good) in the postgraduate courses was respectively: 91% in the MA, and 75% in the MSc in Business & Management.

When framing the pilot annual survey, the objective was to balance brevity with effectiveness – in other words, make it quick and easy for the students to fill out and for us to analyse, while capturing genuinely useful information that would feed into the annual module reviews, which are being introduced from the 2016-2017 academic year. The survey questions finally approved by faculty were influenced by standardised course evaluation surveys in higher education in the UK and Australia – the CEQ and the NSS. The CEQ (Course Experience Questionnaire) was developed in Australia in the 1990s and is used widely in Australia and the UK. The NSS (National Student Survey) was developed in the UK and is used by every university there since 2005.

The IPA was satisfied with the questions and structure of the pilot survey (successful response rate) and, therefore, in April 2017, proceeded to survey students about the modules they undertook in the 2016-2017 academic year. A total of 1525 students were surveyed. The response rate averaged at 63%. The results were very positive. For example: 94% of final year students in the BA and 96% of students in the BBS rated the overall quality of their programmes as Very Good or Good. Positive figures were returned for the earlier years too; in first year of the BA 86% of students rated the programme as Very Good or Good, with 82% of their BBS counterparts rating the same for their programme. Postgraduate programmes had similarly positive results with 97% of students in the final year of the MA rating the overall quality of their programme as Very Good or Good, and 89% of their MSc colleagues rating the same for their programme.

## 2015/2016 Survey Results

Programme	BA4	BBS4	MA2	MSc2
How would you rate the overall quality of the programme?	91%	77%	91%	75%

## 2016/2017 Survey Results

Programme	BA1	BA2	BA3	BA4	BBS1	BBS2	BBS3	BBS4	MA1	MA2	MSc1	MSc2
How would you rate the overall quality of the programme?	86%	80%	79%	94%	82%	77%	69%	96%	86%	97%	93%	100%

N.B. The above represents the percentage of students in each programme who responded to the relevant question as Very Good or Good.

The student survey produced very good data on teaching methods and learning materials for close to 80 modules. The graduate data for 2016, and subsequent annual student feedback, will form part of the overall assessment criteria that the module and programme co-ordinators utilise when conducting the module review and completing their review pro-forma (see below). The surveys continue to be conducted on an annual basis.

The IPA plans to continue to conduct a periodic evaluation of the student body – both live students and graduates. This will obviously evaluate the quality of teaching, learning materials and student support in more depth than the annual version, but it will continue to focus on broader concerns such as programme structure, delivery methods, assessment strategies, relevance to a learner’s profession, academic support, and related student experience of the Institute: quality of infrastructure, administration and student support services. The last periodic survey was conducted in 2014 and reported upon in 2015 [See [IPA Public Information](#)]. The next, due in 2018-19, will be preceded by a review of questions to ensure they both complement the standardised annual survey, and reflect international benchmarks such as the CEQ (Course Experience Questionnaire) in Australia and the NSS (National Student Survey) in the UK.

Feedback from the periodic student evaluations is also systematically analysed. The results are presented as a report to the Faculty Committee, which reviews the findings and approves action points arising. The report and action points are presented to the oversight and advisory bodies such as the Education Committee and Joint IPA-UCD Academic Programme Board as part of the standing discussion items on quality. (The 2014 survey was reviewed by the Education Committee at the 169<sup>th</sup> meeting in October 2015 and by the IPA-UCD JAPB in December 2015.) Control of the report is managed by the assistant registrar and quality team: they record observations from the committees and progress on action points. The report and action points also form part of the overall assessment criteria that a programme co-ordinator utilises when conducting a programme review, but these periodic reports also feed into the annual module reviews.

### II. Student participation

The IPA secures student participation on its various committees. There is a student representative on the IPA Board and Audit sub-committee. There is an undergraduate and postgraduate student representative on the Joint IPA-UCD Academic Programme Board. The Education Committee has an additional alumni representative in addition to an undergraduate and postgraduate representative. These meetings are regular and minuted. Appropriate action taken by the staff of the Whitaker School on foot of deliberations at these meetings is reported upon at subsequent meetings.

The IPA is clear that it requires more mechanisms to hear the ‘student voice’ and to incorporate that voice into academic decision-making and enhancement. The age profile, professional orientation and dispersed nature of the student body taking programmes by blended learning presents a challenge for the formation

of common student representative bodies seen on larger university campuses. The IPA's decision to survey all students annually is an attempt to redress this deficit. Furthermore, and in line with recent enhancements to the *Student Feedback and Participation Policy & Procedures*, the IPA is currently developing Staff-Student Representative Groups, a participative mechanism that will allow students to raise issues about content or delivery, and bring students and staff together on a systematic basis to resolve them. See Section F for more information.

### **III. Extern Examiner Feedback**

Extern Examiner Feedback is an essential independent means by which quality is verified and enhanced within the IPA in the course of the academic year. The role of the extern examiner provides for appropriate levels of external judgement on academic standards with reference to national peer institutions. The underpinning policy and procedures for this form of evaluation can be found in *Marks & Standards*.

The extern examiners approve the standard of assessment questions and their alignment with the stated objectives and outcomes of a module. The observations and judgements of the extern examiners, arising from the review of student work, form part of the overall assessment criteria that a module and programme co-ordinator will use when completing module reviews in May/June after the principal assessment period has concluded.

Furthermore, the official Extern Examiner Reports, which the externs submit to the Designated Awarding Body after the examination board meetings, are reviewed by UCD according to UCD's own review policy. These reports are then forwarded to the Director General of the IPA later in the autumn with observations and then on to the relevant co-ordinators for discussion at Faculty Committee meetings. The co-ordinators take responsibility to make any recommended adjustments to their modules not already addressed in the module review exercise at the end of the previous academic year. Please see section P for more information on how IPA engagement with extern examiners leads to programme enhancement.

Further information on the appointment of externs, their duties and length of service can be found in section Q, 11.3 [Expert panellists and extern examiners](#).

### **IV. Annual Module Review**

From the 2016-2017 academic year and onwards, the IPA began to conduct systematic reviews of modules on an annual basis. The module review is co-ordinated by the module or programme co-ordinators responsible for the management of the module. The review is being conducted in conjunction with the lecturer delivering and assessing the module.

The review consists of two stages: (1) lecturer/examiner evaluation and (2) module co-ordinator evaluation. The module review uses feedback from:

- student achievement and progression data (exam results & related data)
- lecturer/examiner evaluation
- student evaluation

and, where appropriate, from:

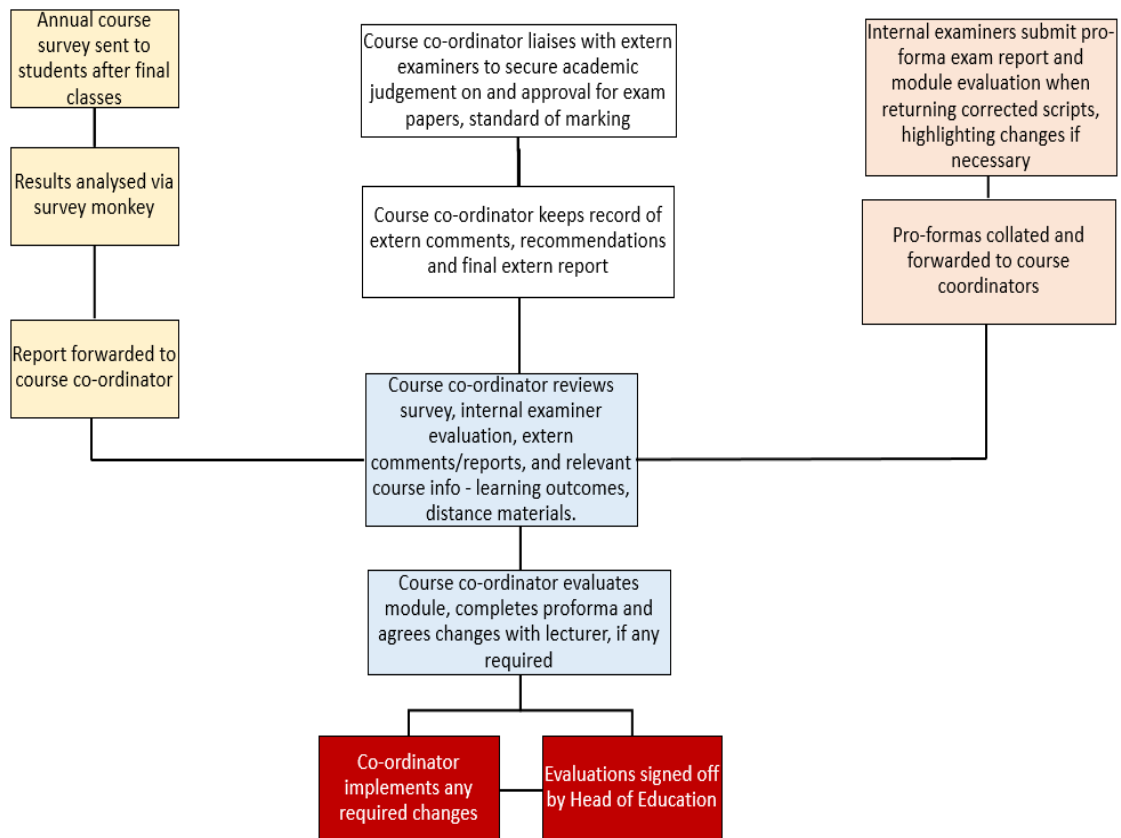
- internal and extern examiners
- module and programme co-ordinators

To facilitate the process of review, lecturers/examiners and module/programme co-ordinators complete a module review pro forma (sample available in *Module/Programme Review Policy and Procedures* found in [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)). The pro-forma addresses the key areas to be evaluated – appropriateness and success of the module aims, learning outcomes, teaching methods, assessment

strategies and resources provided – but also allows for concerns to be raised and resolutions to be identified.

The diagram below outlines the process.

## Annual Module Review System



The module review begins when the lecturer/examiner returns the examination marks (see section of diagram on right).

First, the lecturer/examiner completes Parts A & B of the Module Review Form. Part A focuses on distribution of marks/grade classifications and identifies aspects of the assessment that worked well and less well. Part B focuses on the appropriateness of the module aims, learning outcomes, teaching methods, materials and assessment strategies. Lecturers/examiners will confirm whether previous amendments to module content or delivery were successful. Examiners will also identify corrective action for unsuccessful elements of module or assessment delivery, to be discussed at a later point with the co-ordinator. Lecturers/examiners will also identify necessary work to distance education materials in line with point IV above.

Next, the module co-ordinators review the lecturer's/examiner's assessment, along with student feedback (see section on left) and extern comments (section in top-centre). The co-ordinator completes Part C of the Module Review Form, which involves an acknowledgement that he or she has:

- (i) reviewed the internal examiner/lecturer's evaluation in Parts A & B;
- (ii) reviewed the student evaluation of the module and any minutes from relevant Staff-Student Representative Groups and any other feedback from students, staff, employers and/or

consultants on additional material to be included in the curriculum or particular skills to be developed;

- (iii) reviewed student achievement and progression data (exam results & related data)
- (iv) reviewed the extern's formal evaluation of the module, if available at that point;
- (v) consulted with the examiner/lecturer on the progress and effectiveness of the module;
- (vi) consulted with the extern examiner during the assessment phase;
- (vii) consulted with the Distance Education specialist on the relevancy and accuracy of material in the Distance Education manuals.

The co-ordinator will also identify what changes, if any, are required for the module based on the feedback from examiner/lecturer and students, discussions with the Distance Education specialist, or information gathered by him or her during the delivery of the module.

Completed forms are signed, in turn, by the lecturer/examiner, module/programme co-ordinator and Head of School, thus supporting enhancement and accountability through sequential review and monitoring activities.

### **Programme Reviews**

The Institute recognises that the process of programme review is iterative, and that much of this business (both of review and amendment of programmes and modules) takes place at different times and through a variety of mechanisms during the monitoring year. The continuous amendments of Distance Education and updates to modules have naturally brought enhancements to the programmes.

The IPA expects that the introduction of systematic student evaluation and annual module review from the 2016-2017 academic year will further enhance the standard of programmes. In the case of special purpose diplomas with low credit values, the evaluation of the small number of inter-related modules that constitute the programme will act as a programme review. In other words, for these minor programmes, any of the concerns normally involved at a higher programmatic level – such as overarching judgements and decisions about coherence, direction, admissions, delivery methods, assessment methods and weightings – are reasonably addressed at modular level.

The IPA recognises the importance of conducting more formal programme reviews with external contributions, especially for those larger undergraduate and postgraduate programmes with multiple streams and modules. Given the small size of the IPA, programme reviews naturally occur at the thematic level – programmes in the Accounting, HR, Healthcare, Local Government areas and so on will be reviewed together.

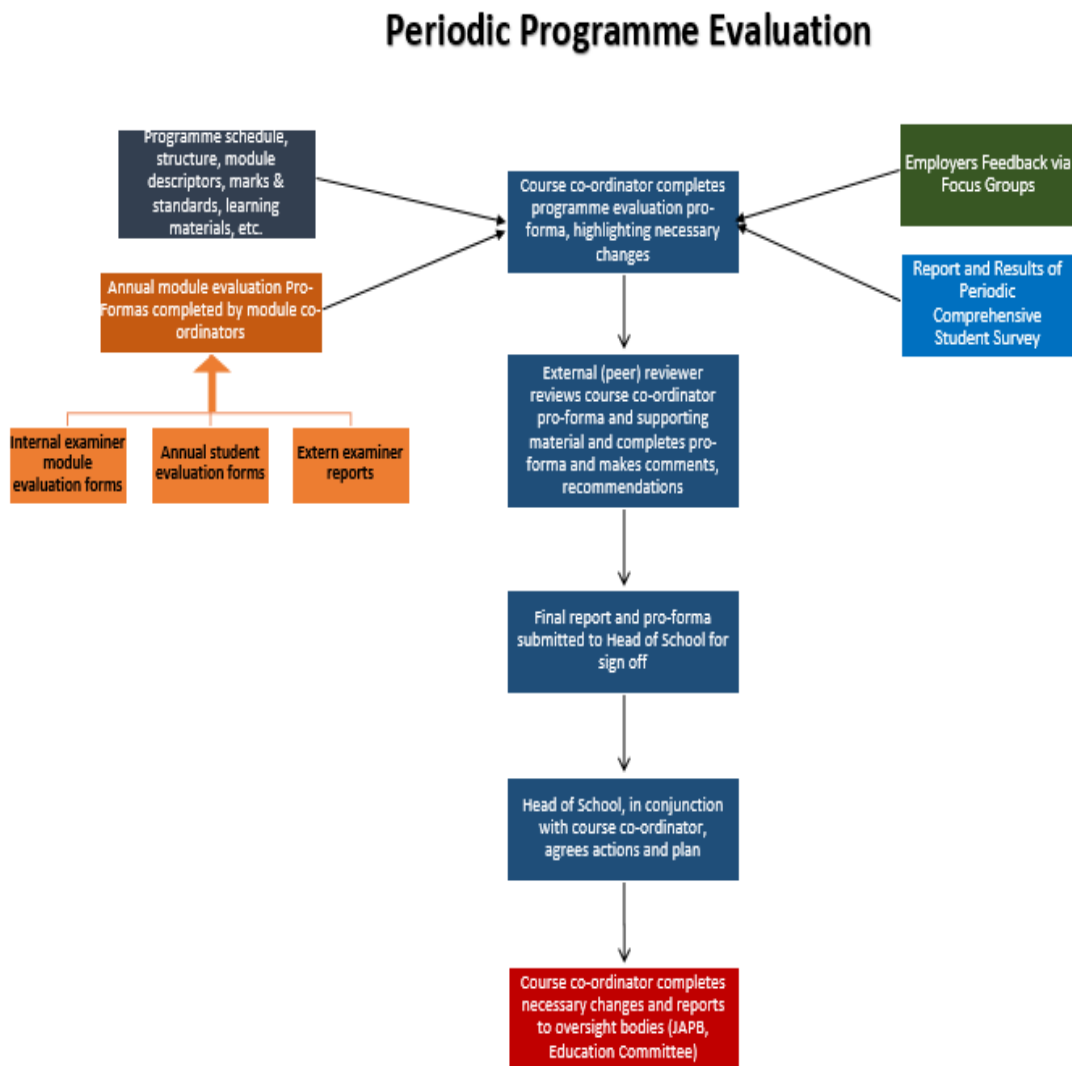
The IPA has conducted a small number of these, most recently a review of the HR subjects at each stage of BA and BBS degree. With the participation of the previous and the current Extern Examiner, the contents of each subject module at each stage were reviewed to minimise overlapping, to provide for cross-subject coordination, and to provide for inter-stage progression. All subject module specifications had been updated, and a new procedure instituted to ensure that, between course-work and examinations, all specified learning outcomes for each subject are fully assessed each year.

During 2016 the subjects on the accounting stream of the BBS programme were assessed. The assessment included a review of programme structures, subject syllabuses, the balance of practice and theory and the structure and standard of the examination questions. It encompassed benchmarking our degree programme against the syllabus and examination papers of relevant professional accountancy bodies. The review also addressed matters relating to programme regulations including admission requirements, approaches to examining students, pass marks, graduation requirements and resit arrangements.

Following this review, submissions were made to professional accounting bodies, all of whom reconfirmed exemption entitlements for graduates of our degree.

Notwithstanding the above, significant retrenchment in the public service following the recession has presented the IPA with a challenging environment in which to carry out these reviews. Recent easing of recruitment controls, however, has recently permitted the IPA to proceed with planning activities for periodic and systematic review of programmes.

The principal steps in programme evaluation are illustrated below:



The Programme Review incorporates a review of approved programme schedules, module descriptors, learning materials, marks & standards, exam statistics and progression rates, employer feedback, relevant annual module review reports, annual and periodic student feedback.

The Review involves both an internal and external review element. The IPA has devised pro-formas for both the co-ordinator's contribution (internal review) and peer reviewer's contribution (external component). The internal programme review will be led by the programme co-ordinator and involve the course team. The course team comprises the lead programme co-ordinator and module co-ordinators responsible for the individual modules and, where appropriate, the associate lecturers involved in the



modules. The external review will be conducted by an academic or senior public servant or similar professional from a professional body or employer organisation. The external reviewer will be nominated by the Head of the Whitaker School taking into consideration the recommendations of Faculty members and extern examiners.

The programme co-ordinator and peer reviewer will use the Programme Review pro-forma to document the performance of the programme against a range of quality parameters. The peer reviewer will also be invited to confirm that the standard of the programme is comparable to other institutions with which he or she is familiar. The reviewer will be invited to raise any additional concerns or recommend improvements not identified at earlier stages of the review process. Completed forms are signed by the peer reviewer and made available to the programme co-ordinator and Head of School. The Head of School reviews and signs both internal and external Programme Review Forms. The Head of School approves the recommended changes and discusses the implementation plan with the programme co-ordinator.

The co-ordinator completes the necessary changes and reports back to the oversight and advisory bodies, such as the JAPB and the Education Committee.

The Institute is currently planning a number of programme reviews and will publish the findings in due course. Policy and procedures for a programme review, along with samples of the review pro-forma, are provided in the *Module/Programme Review Policy & Procedures* (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

#### **QA Effectiveness Review**

Finally, as outlined in section E, the QA Process involves reviews of the effectiveness of IPA policies, procedures and monitoring mechanisms, as provided for under legislation. The Self-Assessment Report made as part of the IPA review will provide the Institute with an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of its own policies. Corrective measures can then be put in place to remedy any shortcomings. The external component of the review, conducted by the Designated Awarding Body, will provide the perfect external and independent review process to ensure that the IPA's policies and procedures are effective. The IPA's Quality Improvement Plan, in the wake of the review, will allow the IPA to make improvements to the effectiveness of its policies that might have been missed in all the intervening steps.

**D. Key findings from quality review are published and agreed actions are followed-up.**

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Sections A, C, O and P

**Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements**

The IPA commits to maximising its transparency by publishing key findings from principal quality review activities, albeit if necessary in a redacted form in cases where findings may be commercially sensitive. Before findings can be made publicly available, and agreed action points implemented and monitored, systematic collection and analysis of data must occur. Our commentary on that phase is outlined in the preceding Section C, which should be read in conjunction with this response to Section D.

Ultimately the follow up on all QA review activities is the responsibility of the various levels of governance within the IPA, as outlined in Section A. The Board, the Director General, the SMG, the Head of the Whitaker School, the Faculty Committee, the Education Committee, and all teaching and administrative staff, have an individual responsibility to utilise and feed the QA review findings for each activity described below back into their day-to-day roles.

The QQA Act 2012 calls for the Designated Awarding Body to approve the Quality Assurance procedures of the linked provider. This QA Approval document itself – in effect an overview of existing and planned IPA Quality Assurance policies, procedures and enhancements – forms part of this key quality review exercise. The QA processes, as set out in the present document, have been approved by UCD and will form the basis of an effectiveness review at a later point. The IPA has published this report on its website as part of the approval process.

The QQA Act 2012 calls for the effectiveness of the Institute’s implementation of its QA processes to be evaluated at least once every seven years after the awarding body has approved the processes (commonly referred to as the Institutional Review). The periodic effectiveness review comprises the self-assessment report and peer review. Together, they generate the most important findings in terms of Quality Review. The self-assessment will be the IPA’s own judgement as to how it is performing while implementing QA activities. The IPA understands that it will be a practical and balanced evaluation, with an identification of areas for improvement.

The peer review is the independent oversight that guarantees the quality of the IPA. It is the summation of the QA process and makes recommendations on foot of an evaluation of the Institute’s self-assessment report and site visit. The peer review will be published.

Following this, the IPA will generate a Quality Improvement Plan: essentially agreed actions that constitute the IPA’s response on how it can better itself as a result of the findings of the self-assessment report and peer review report. The Plan will be published, and progress on its implementation will be monitored by UCD. The IPA will also publish the progress reports.

In a sense, the Quality Improvement Plan and related progress reports mark the final step in one QA cycle and the beginning of a new QA cycle. The IPA recognises, however, that QA is iterative and the periodic evaluations are preceded by other publishable quality review activities.

In anticipation of the self-assessment exercise, and as part of its preparations for the approval of its QA procedures, the IPA has conducted an internal review of the QA processes related to its delivery of academic programmes (hereafter designated ‘the Review’), which was led by the assistant registrar. The Review made 13 recommendations, which formed the framework for an enhancement of the IPA QA Framework in late 2016-early 2017. Responsibility for acting upon the recommendations remained with the assistant registrar and the quality support team, with the support of the Head of Education and

members of the Faculty Committee who, under the guiding principles of a coherent and embedded QA system, contributed to the further development of the IPA QA system. A record of the Review and the recommendations and follow-up actions form part of the Institute's QA publically available work (See [IPA Public Information](#)).

For instance, Programme Reviews are conventionally staged at more frequent intervals than the effectiveness reviews. The IPA has recently reviewed its Business degree programme as part of exemption arrangements with professional accountancy bodies, and revised its suite of HR subjects on the undergraduate programmes in conjunction with the extern examiner. However, due to staff constraints since 2008 (and discussed further in section L), the IPA has not been in a position to conduct a series of systematic Programme Reviews. That is not to say that programmes have gone unchanged. Review functions that encompass the key objectives of the Programme Review have occurred mainly in the review and revision of distance education manuals, reflecting change in the module content and structure of programmes on which the manuals are based. Please see section P for more information.

Notwithstanding the substantial work undertaken, the IPA recognises the requirement for systematic annual module reviews and periodic programme reviews. Following the Review of QA Processes in 2016, the IPA has updated its policy and procedures for module and programme review and enhancement, as outlined in the *Module/Programme Review Policy and Procedures*.

The systematic and annual review of modules began in May 2017. The Institute envisages that Programme Reviews will occur at the thematic level – programmes in the Accounting, HR, Healthcare, Local Government areas and so on being reviewed together. Given the Institute's size, this method is a more effective use of resources. The review will have both an internal and external (peer) component. See section P for more detail and the proposed sequencing of Programme Reviews. The IPA undertakes to publish the findings of Programme Reviews in due course.

A key part of the IPA's monitoring and enhancement of standards and performance is the analysis of student feedback, data, trends and the production of reports with key findings and future action. These reports include a periodic survey of both live students and recent graduates, and a five-year report on examination statistics. The IPA keeps a log to accompany such reports to maintain a record of (i) key groups/committees that discussed the findings and agreed the action points, and (ii) progress in relation to the action points. At the end of a module or during a programme review, the report and action points form part of the overall assessment criteria that a module and programme co-ordinator utilises when conducting the module review or programme review. For more detailed information on follow-up enhancements from these QA activities, please see Section P. The most recent Student Survey Report and the reviews of Examination Statistics (as agreed by faculty and also reviewed by the Education Committee and IPA-UCD JAPB) form part of the Institute's QA publically available work (See [IPA Public Information](#)).

In addition to publically available QA reports, the IPA has a central repository for Whitaker School staff on its internal drive with minutes of key groups, extern evaluation forms, full survey results and examination statistics reports.

**E. Quality assurance policies and procedures are documented and accessible, and their effectiveness periodically reviewed.**

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Sections A,D, H, O and P

**Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements**

As stated already under Section A, the IPA has revised its documented QA policies and procedures a number of times, with an effectiveness review preceding each stage of development.

In the late 1990s, the Institute moved to document more systematically its own internal regulations and procedures, particularly in the area of examinations and appeals, and distributed these to students in course documentation. This coincided with both the Universities Act of 1997, which made it a legal requirement for universities to 'establish procedures for quality assurance aimed at *improving* the quality of education and related services', and the granting to the Institute of Recognised College status by the NUI in 2001 (subsequently the IPA became a Recognised College of UCD in 2011). There were new standards and procedures for course approval and examinations that conformed to policy, standards and procedures applicable to a recognised college of the NUI.

Following a review exercise in the mid-2000s, the QA Handbook was reassessed over 2005 and 2006. The impetus for such work resulted from a restructuring process within the IPA in 2004-2005 that brought the IPA's entire suite of accredited programmes and research activity under the same roof: Whitaker School of Government & Management. Another impetus was the development of the National Framework of Qualifications and its explicit focus on student learning outcomes defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

The IPA's review of its QA processes adopted the 2005 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The Institute consulted QA systems in other universities, and it was particularly guided by the QA processes in place in Queen's University Belfast, with which the IPA was running a joint Doctorate in Governance. The IPA also enlisted the assistance of an international expert in quality assurance, who helped establish a comprehensive blueprint for quality in the IPA.

The QA processes tracked the entire academic cycle, and discrete areas received individual focus in separate sections of the handbook: academic and administrative structures; student admissions; student records; designing and reviewing modules/programmes; course management – academic & administrative; student support; assessment & examinations; access, transfer & progression; student feedback; student complaints; and student discipline. These procedures were collated in a QA Handbook and circulated to staff. Students received relevant sections in their course documentation.

Since 2007, the IPA has updated sections as part of its internal review cycle and as a result of continuous feedback and experience, mostly notably in the area of examination irregularities, plagiarism, discipline and appeals.

In 2016, the IPA instigated a review of the QA processes related to its delivery of academic programmes. National developments in QA and a new awarding body relationship in the decade since 2007 made a review of the QA system a priority for the IPA. In particular, the Review was influenced by a number of factors:

- a) national developments in the areas of quality assurance, access, transfer & progression, provision of education to international students and protection of learners as provided for in the 2012 Qualification & Quality Assurance Act;

- b) the publication of revised standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area that were endorsed by the Bologna Follow-up Group in the autumn of 2014 and received Ministerial approval in May 2015;
- c) the publication by QQI of statutory core and sector specific guidelines that, under legislation, the IPA is obliged to have 'regard to' in QA procedures;
- d) the statutory requirement to establish these new procedures 'as soon as practicable after the issue of [QQI] guidelines';
- e) commitment by the Designated Awarding Body, UCD to review the Institute's QA processes in 2017 as provided for in the 2012 QQA Act the need to provide for QA developments in the IPA Strategic Plan;
- f) the recognition that the 2006 QA Handbook was due a major review to accommodate procedural and policy changes in the IPA.

The Review focussed on the Institute's *academic-related* policies and procedures. The IPA's corporate HR policies and corporate governance procedures, which are managed by the HR manager and Company Secretary/Director of Finance and Support Services respectively, are being reviewed separately in 2018 and therefore do not feature in the Review.

The Review, led by the assistant registrar, was conducted in an open and critical manner with the objective of identifying where and how the Institute needed to improve its existing and functioning QA system in order to enhance its education delivery and to comply with QQI and awarding body requirements.

The Review identified 13 associated recommendations, which formed the framework for an enhancement of the IPA QA system in late 2016-early 2017. Responsibility for acting upon the recommendations remained with the assistant registrar and the quality support team, with the support of the Head of the Whitaker School and members of the Faculty Committee who, under the guiding principles of a coherent and embedded QA system, contributed to the further development of the IPA QA system.

Please refer to [Review of IPA QA Processes 2016-2017](#) for a record of the recommendations, follow-up actions, programme of work and progress in respect of each set of policies and procedures.

Current documented policies and procedures that underpin the IPA's delivery of accredited third-level programmes include:

*Access, Transfer & Progression Policy*

*Admissions Policy & Criteria*

*Assessment Regulations and Procedures*

*Complaints (Non-Assessment Related) Policy & Procedures*

*Disciplinary (Non-Assessment) Policy & Procedures*

*Exam Administration Policy & Procedures*

*Governance, Oversight & Quality Framework*

*Learner Charter*

*Library Policy, Procedures and Charter*

*Marks & Standards*

*Module/Programme Design and Approval Policy (under review)*

*Module/Programme Review Policy & Procedures*

*Policy for Protection of Enrolled Learners*

*Procedures for Appeal of Examination Results*  
*Procedures for Creating and Revising Course Manuals*  
*Public information Policy*  
*Recognition of Prior Learning*  
*Research Strategy (in progress)*  
*Student Feedback & Participation Policy*  
*Student/Pastoral care and Support Policy (in progress)*  
*Teaching & Learning Policy*

These policies and procedures are available for review while the policies “in progress and “under review” in brackets after them will be put on the website in due course. See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#).

The effectiveness of the policies and procedures will be reviewed in a number of different ways. As the IPA has introduced a system whereby the key monitoring and implementation mechanisms and key responsibilities are identified at the head of each policy and procedure (cover sheet), the success and effectiveness of the procedures will be clear on a day-to-day basis.

At a more systematic level, the policies and procedures themselves are reviewed every 3 years as set out in the ‘date of next review’ item accompanying the policy and procedure. The criteria under which this systematic review occurs are laid out in *Governance, Oversight & Quality Framework*. See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#).

At a higher level, the effectiveness of the IPA’s policies and procedures is assured by the periodic institutional review conducted by UCD, our Designated Awarding Body. The Self-Assessment Report made in advance of the institutional review provides the IPA an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of its own policies. Corrective measures can then be put in place to remedy any defects.

One of the recommendations of the Review was that all QA policies, procedures, guidelines and regulations relating to Education provision should be publicly available on the IPA website in pdf format. Up to this point, relevant documentation, particularly pertaining to assessment matters, appeals and complaints, appeared in print form in course handbooks and electronically on Moodle, the student on-line resource platform. The IPA has been renovating its corporate website since 2016, and the new website was launched in April 2017. The Institute’s QA Policies and Procedures were made available on the new website. See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#).

While the IPA is a Recognised College of UCD, and the memorandum of agreement is between the IPA and UCD, the IPA division responsible for the provision of accredited third-level programmes is the Whitaker School of Government & Management. The QA policies and procedures governing academic programmes in the School are outlined in this document and available on the website at the link above. In addition, QA processes relevant to IPA corporate services, such as HR, Finance and Facility Management, are discussed in this document where appropriate. QA processes relevant to corporate services and governance are also documented and fully accessible.

For instance, the Corporate Governance Manual, which is managed by the Director of Finance and Support Services, sets out how the IPA endeavours to be as fully compliant as practicable with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, 2016. The Manual provides a clear and comprehensive summary of the principal aspects of corporate governance for the IPA Board, its senior management and staff. The Manual covers the role of the Board, the chairman and the executive; the Board’s schedule of matters & legal obligations; the terms of reference for the Board’s three sub-committees,

namely the Administration Committee, the Finance and Strategy Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee; Institute's Internal Audit Charter; the Board members' code of conduct; the ethics in office procedures and staff conduct code; the IPA's main financial procedures; public procurement regulations; the IPA's IT governance procedures; the IPA's risk management framework and confidential disclosure policy.

The IPA also has a suite of documented policies and procedures on matters relating to the recruitment, development, management, and behavioural and work practices of IPA employees. These are accessible in the official staff handbook provided to all employees and available on the staff intranet. These policies include Recruitment Policy and Procedures; Transfer, 'Acting' Policy and Procedures; Training and Development; Equal Opportunities Policy; Dignity at Work; Grievance Procedures; Disciplinary Procedures; Health and Safety; Staff Payments - Remuneration, Travel and Subsistence; Paternity Leave Policy; Bereavement Leave Policy; Code of Conduct; and Role of the HR Unit.

**F. Procedures for quality assurance should include appropriate opportunities for student participation and independent external representation.**

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Sections A, C, Q & P

**Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements**

**Student Participation**

The IPA recognises that its students are its primary stakeholders. Students are an integral part of the academic learning community. Student contribution to the delivery and support of programmes is an essential element in the creation of good practice and an essential part of the Institute's drive to continuously improve and enhance the quality of teaching and the learning experience.

The 'student voice' must be adequately accommodated in academic decision-making and enhancement activities. The IPA has longstanding mechanisms for securing student participation. And, arising from a recent review of QA Processes and a review of policy and procedures in this area, the IPA has plans to augment these opportunities for formalised staff-student consultation, as outlined below and in the *Student Feedback and Participation: Policy & Procedures*.

The IPA secures student participation on its various committees. These committee meetings are regular and minuted. Appropriate action taken by staff on foot of deliberations at these meetings is reported upon at subsequent meetings. (1) There is a student representative on the IPA Board and Audit sub-committee. The student representative on the IPA Board contributes to the Institute's development at a strategic level. (2) There is an undergraduate and postgraduate student representative on the Joint IPA-UCD Academic Programme Board and on (3) the Education Committee. The Education Committee also has an additional alumni representative. These representatives form part of the oversight mechanism for academic development and performance monitoring: they receive progress reports and they review policies, procedures and analysis of data and trends. Their opinions and advice are valued as equally as that of other members and taken on board during these important validating steps. Finally, (4) while Faculty Committee, reflecting the IPA's structure, is concerned with internal academic administration and management issues, the IPA invites the IPA's Education Committee or IPA-UCD Joint Academic Programme Board student representative to meetings of the Faculty Committee as appropriate on matters concerning the planning and delivery of programmes.

The fact that the students are mid-career professionals, with practical organisation and management experience of their own, is a very valuable resource for the IPA. As stated above, the IPA plans to maximise the input of these professionals at a programme level.

The IPA is introducing staff/student representative committees to provide a forum whereby IPA staff and students can meet in a structured fashion to exchange information and to identify and address areas of concern that may arise during the course of the academic year. Specifically, these staff-student representative groups:

- allow programme co-ordinators, lecturers and students to raise and address issues about programme curriculum and programme teaching, learning and assessment;
- enable students to have an input into the monitoring and improvement of the programmes;
- facilitate greater communication between students and staff within the Institute;
- encourage student contribution to decision-making within the Institute.

There will be three Staff-Student Representative Groups – (1) postgraduate degree; (2) undergraduate degree; (3) special purpose awards group. Each of the three groups will meet twice a year. The date



of meetings and protocols will be provided to student representatives at the beginning of the academic year. Additional meetings will be arranged as necessary. More information on Staff-Student Representative Groups and the guiding protocols is outlined in the *Student Feedback and Participation: Policy & Procedures* (See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

As IPA students visit the IPA in the evenings or weekends, module and programme co-ordinators are on hand to ensure that programme delivery runs smoothly. It also provides an opportunity for staff to consult with students on a regular and informal basis outside these formalised staff-student representative groupings. It is through this informal mechanism that many issues are resolved swiftly.

Also from 2017, under new procedures, all students have an opportunity to provide regular and systematic feedback through annual surveys. The annual questionnaire evaluates overall programme satisfaction, but is designed to gather information on specific modules, such as the quality of teaching and learning materials; assessment & feedback; academic support and learning resources. The results will be fed into the systematic annual module reviews, another new departure for the Institute. (See *Module and Programme Review Policy & Procedures* in [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)). Given the geographically dispersed profile of IPA students, and the tuition methods used to facilitate their personal circumstances, these anonymous, on-line surveys powered by Survey Monkey will afford them an opportunity to participate in programme enhancement activities.

The IPA will continue to conduct a periodic evaluation of students. The survey of the student body – both live students and recent graduates – will obviously evaluate the quality of teaching, learning materials and student support in more depth than the annual version, but it will continue to focus on broader concerns such as programme structure, delivery methods, assessment strategies, relevance to a learner's profession, academic support, and related student experience of the Institute: quality of infrastructure, administration and student support services. Students are also invited in the survey to identify future programmes and progression opportunities that they would like to see developed. The last periodic survey was conducted in 2014 (see Report on the [IPA Public Information](#) section of the corporate website). The next comprehensive survey is due in 2018-19.

Again, these surveys afford students an opportunity to participate in programme enhancement activities. These surveys are analysed by programme and module co-ordinators and feed into course reviews (see *Module and Programme Review Policy & Procedures*). In addition, the results of the comprehensive survey are analysed and presented as a report to the Faculty Committee, which reviews the findings and approves action points arising. The report and action points are then presented to the oversight bodies such as the Education Committee and IPA-UCD JAPB for additional comments as part of the standing discussion items on quality. Please see Section P for more information on the enhancement activities that resulted from the last periodic survey.

### **Alumni**

The IPA is a specialist educational organisation in that it teaches public management, policy and governance to students who are in full time employment in the public sector and are a natural part of our stakeholder involvement. The IPA has educated public servants who have progressed to occupy all grades of the public service. As such, the Institute is primed to take advantage of the professional networks that its alumni have. The IPA already has good formal and informal links with alumni through its regular professional forums and conferences. The Institute also engages alumni as associate and guest lecturers. An alumni representative sits on the IPA Education Committee. More recent graduates are encouraged to participate in quality enhancement through surveys.

The IPA is aware that a more systemised approach to engaging and interacting with our alumni would have mutual benefits for both parties, especially in terms of discussion groups around governance,

management and policy. Such networks would also raise the profile of the IPA. The IPA compiled a database of graduates from 1960s through to 2000s with the intention of acting on the valuable alumni resource. However, staffing challenges in recent years in the IPA have slowed down development. In its recently published IPA Strategic Plan, however, the IPA has announced its intent to advance the 'alumni' project through the period 2017-2021.

### **Independent External Representation**

Independent external representation comes in many forms in the IPA:

- Oversight committees & boards
- Extern examiners
- Programme review
- Effectiveness review

In the paragraphs below, we summarise the principal mechanisms for accommodating external representation. We would recommend, however, that readers consult Section A in conjunction with these paragraphs to get a fuller description of the oversight committees and boards – purpose, terms of reference, duties and appointment. We would recommend that readers consult Section Q, Criterion 11.3 for more information on the duties, appointment and tenure of extern examiners. Similarly, we would direct readers to both Section C and Section P, Criterion 10 for more information on programme and effectiveness reviews.

The general function of the IPA Board is to oversee that the ethos and principles on which the Institute was founded is protected and supported by the development of the institution's mission, objectives and strategies. The Board sets strategy, monitors strategic performance, approves the risk management framework, ensures compliance, monitors stakeholder relations and oversees the governance and management of the Institute. The Board operates through its scheduled monthly meetings and three standing Board subcommittees. The subcommittees include the Finance and Strategy Committee, which deals with strategic financial management issues including capital works; the Administration Committee, which monitors the Institute's tactical operating performance, including human resource issues; and the Audit Committee, which deals with auditing structure and process, risk assessment and governance matters.

The Education Committee provides a forum for external representation. Representatives of higher education, the public service, alumni, students and faculty meet (1) to advise the Institute on how it can best respond to public sector education requirements; (2) to monitor the effectiveness of existing educational programmes; (3) and to monitor quality improvement procedures. The key external stakeholders are senior officers from government departments, public sector agencies and business bodies. Individual members of faculty are invited to attend meetings, which occur three-four times a year.

The Committee acts in an advisory/consultative capacity on both strategic and practical issues. QA is a running agenda item at such meetings; the external stakeholders who make up the bulk of the membership provide clear and independent advice on QA related issues. They receive progress reports and review policies, procedures and analyses of data and trends. Their opinions and advice feed directly into development and evaluative activities.

The Education Committee also provides members for some of the IPA's mainly external subcommittees that serve as independent and final arbiters in various student appeals processes relating to academic (and non-academic) breaches, discipline and complaints. These sub-committees include the Examination Appeals Committee, Academic Appeals Committee, Complaints Review Panel, and the Discipline Review Panel.

The IPA-UCD Strategic Management Committee manages the strategic development and direction of the alliance between the IPA and the designated Awarding Body, as well as the implementation of the MOA. The Joint Academic Programme Board is responsible to the University Programme Board and to Academic Council of UCD for the design, development, regulation and quality of all programmes, and for overseeing the delivery of all programmes, offered by the Institute, which lead to awards of the Designated Awarding Body. Together, these joint IPA and UCD committees provide an important opportunity for input from our awarding body. They play a key role in the IPA's QA procedures.

Extern Examiner Feedback is an essential independent means by which quality is verified and enhanced within the IPA in the course of the academic year. The role of the extern examiner provides for appropriate levels of external judgement on academic standards with reference to national peer institutions. The observations and judgements of the extern examiners, gathered during the examination process, at Examination Boards and afterwards in the Extern Examiner Report, also form part of the overall assessment criteria that a module and programme co-ordinator utilises when conducting the module review and completing their review pro-formas.

Programme Reviews will occur at the thematic level – programmes in the Accounting, HR, Healthcare, Local Government areas, and so on, will be reviewed together. Procedures for a programme review will comprise an internal and external (peer review) element. To facilitate the process of review, both the programme co-ordinator and external reviewer will complete pro forma Programme Review Forms, which document the performance of the programme against a range of quality parameters such as appropriateness and success of the programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment strategies. The peer reviewer will also be invited to confirm that the standard of the programme is comparable to other institutions with which he or she is familiar. The reviewer will be invited to raise any additional concerns or recommend improvements not identified at earlier stages of the review process. Procedures for the review and a sample of the pro forma are provided in the *Module and Programme Review Policy & Procedures*.

The most comprehensive role for external assessors will be during the Effectiveness or Institutional Reviews, particularly at the peer review stage. The peer review is the independent oversight that guarantees the quality of the IPA. It is the summation of the QA process and makes recommendations on foot of an evaluation of the Institute's self-assessment report and site visit.

## 2. Specific Criteria

### G. Governance and management of quality assurance (including a QA policy)

#### Criterion 1:

There should be a system in place to oversee the education and training, research and related activity of the provider to ensure quality. Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders. Quality assurance procedures should form part of a coherent system, which is central to the promotion of a quality assurance culture within the institution – such as: a description of QA processes; identification of roles and responsibilities for the implementation and oversight of QA; systematic analysis of QA findings; evidence of self-monitoring processes – how is the effectiveness of QA processes assessed?

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Section A & P

#### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

We would direct readers to our response to Section A, in which we outline the IPA's governance and management structures, QA framework and associated QA processes, which together underpin the promotion and achievement of an embedded and coherent QA system. We also direct readers to Section P, where we lay out our monitoring, self-evaluation and review mechanisms.

The governance and management of quality assurance in the IPA is based on the development of objectives, strategies and policies for quality and the assurance to stakeholders that educational programmes are well-structured, managed, monitored, reviewed and improved. Management gives effect to these policies and objectives, thus ensuring that IPA programmes are being continually enhanced and that IPA students receive a high quality education.

The IPA has a comprehensive QA system in place comprising policies, procedures, regulations and guidelines. These are publicly available on the IPA website and cover every aspect of education, training, and research within the Institute. *Module and Programme Review Policy & Procedures* (See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

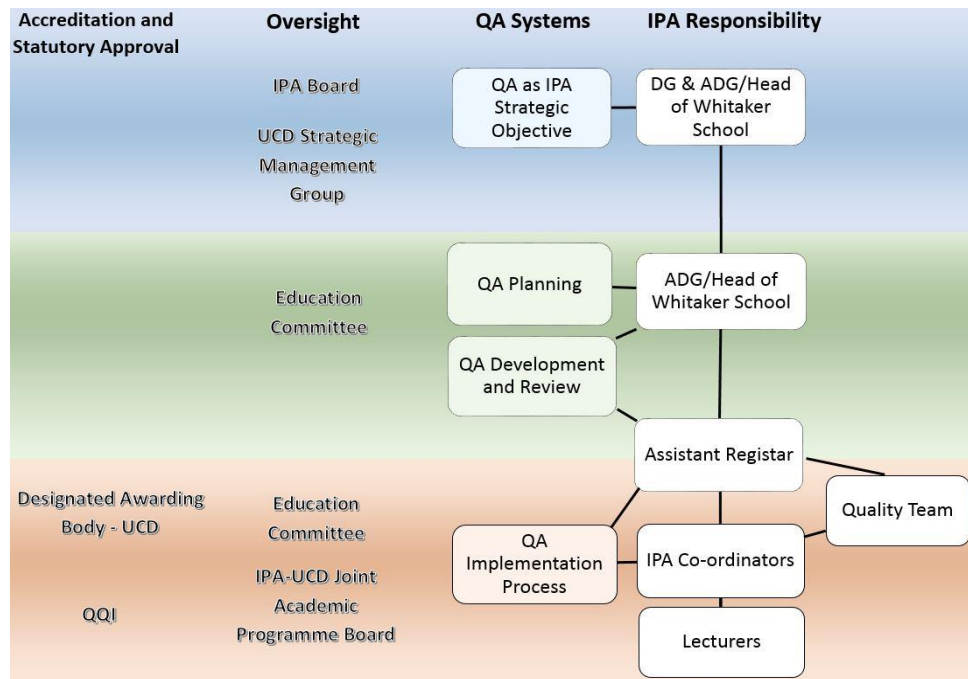
QA is not only manifest in the myriad policies, procedures, regulations and guidelines, it also forms part of the top-level direction for the organisation. The Institute's [Strategic Plan 2017-2021](#) positions QA as a key strategic objective for the IPA: 'To develop further a quality assurance regime to establish, maintain and enhance the quality of our accredited education programmes in line with university requirements.' The consequent actions that the IPA will pursue at an operational level include:

- Establish a QA framework and revise existing QA policies and procedures in line with national and European requirements
- Secure approval for QA processes in line with QQI requirements
- Publish approved QA policies and procedures on IPA website
- Review effectiveness of the implementation of QA policies and procedures in line with QQI requirements.

The strategic interest in QA ensures that quality as an objective permeates throughout the organisation from the top level through to classroom delivery and office support.

Independent and external stakeholders are included in the governance and management of quality assurance. Stakeholders external to the IPA make up the majority of members on the Board and on the Education Committee. The Board has an interest in QA at a strategic level and the Education Committee has a role in overseeing the operation and reviewing individual policies and procedures. The IPA-UCD JAPB and the IPA-UCD Strategic Management Committee provide fora for valuable oversight and feedback from one of our key external stakeholders, UCD.

The QA system within the IPA is implemented, and its implementation is monitored, at various different levels. See diagram below.



- The DG, working in conjunction with the ADG/Head of School, is responsible for the delivery of Quality Assurance as a strategic objective, which is monitored by the Board.
- The overall responsibility for QA development, implementation and evaluation lies with the ADG/Head of School and is overseen by the Education Committee.
- The ADG/Head of School/Registrar, in conjunction with the assistant registrar, is responsible for QA development and local implementation. The Education Committee and the IPA-UCD JAPB are kept abreast of QA work, as QA is a standing item on the agenda for both groups.
- The assistant registrar oversees the work of a quality team to support and facilitate the implementation of QA. The Quality team comprises staff members (academic and administrative) who have quality related duties.
- Module and programme coordinators, in their roles as managers, administrators and academics, and IPA lecturers also play a central role in the day-to-day delivery and assurance of quality in the IPA by giving effect to the policies, procedures and monitoring mechanisms that they have helped to develop. These individuals are also involved in QA review activities.

To guide staff, the key implementation actions are identified on the cover page of each policy, procedure, guideline and regulation. Key monitoring and review mechanisms are also provided on each cover page to facilitate completion and standardisation of operations.

Fundamentally, the effectiveness of the IPA's QA processes are measured by the standards reached in the Institute's delivery of programmes. The key mechanisms for the evaluation of these standards and of the student experience are:

- A strong and continuous procedure for curriculum review and enhancement
- Systematic review, revision and production of learning materials to comply with our extensive provision of distance education material to students
- Mechanisms for annual external feedback on assessment via external examiner reports
- Systematic student participation and feedback
- Student representation at all levels including the Board of the IPA and Audit sub-committee, the Education Committee and the UCD-IPA Joint Academic Programme Board

Under the QQA Act of 2012, the effectiveness of the IPA's QA processes will be assessed by the institutional review conducted by the Designated Awarding body every 7 years. This review and the arising reports, particularly the Quality Improvement Plan generated by the IPA after the findings of the review are published, are clear demonstrations that quality assurance is a lived experience and something continuously pursued.

## H. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

### Criterion 2:

The quality assurance system should be documented; there should be robust, documented policies and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of provision. The documented quality assurance system sets out the provider's commitment to quality in terms of programme provision, research and related activities as appropriate. It also refers to arrangements for the internal evaluation or review and continuous improvement of the effectiveness of the policies and procedures.

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Section A & E

### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

We would direct our readers to Section E, in which we outline the evolution of our QA Processes, most particularly the recent revision and documentation of QA policies and procedures arising from an internal review in 2016. We also direct our readers to Section A, where we provide detailed information on the QA system, comprising: (i) QA policies and procedures; (ii) monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; and (iii) follow-on enhancement actions.

IPA policies and procedures track the entire academic cycle: student admission and progression; programme design and delivery; student assessment; staff recruitment and development; teaching & learning; student engagement & feedback; programme review, evaluation and revision; student support; data management and public information. (See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#).)

All QA policies, procedures, guidelines and regulations are published on the IPA website in pdf format. In an effort to ensure as much transparency as possible they are publicly available.

The policies and procedures themselves are reviewed both on a continuous basis as required and also on a systematic basis every 3 years. The criteria under which this systematic review occurs are laid out in the Governance, Oversight & Quality Framework as each of these procedures includes a date for a review.

The effectiveness of the policies and procedures is reviewed in a number of different ways. Key monitoring mechanisms and key implementation actions are inbuilt into each policy and procedure, and are presented on the front cover sheets. These summary sheets delineate the key persons responsible for implementation and review. These cover sheets facilitate an audit of implementation and represent the lower level day-to-day review of the effectiveness of policies and procedures.

At an intermediate level, the effectiveness of the IPA's QA processes are measured by the standards reached in the Institute's delivery of programmes. The key mechanisms for the evaluation of these standards, and of the student experience, are:

- A strong and continuous procedure for curriculum review and enhancement
- Systematic review, revision and production of learning materials to comply with our extensive provision of distance education material to students
- Mechanisms for annual external feedback on assessment via external examiner reports
- Systematic student participation and feedback
- Student representation at all levels including the Board of the IPA, the Education Committee and the UCD-IPA Joint Academic Programme Board

More information on these mechanisms can be found in Section P.

At a higher level, the effectiveness of the IPA's policies and procedures is assured by the periodic institutional review conducted by our Designated Awarding Body as well as all the constituent steps that make up the institutional review. The Self-Assessment Report made in advance of the institutional review provides the IPA an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of its own policies; corrective measures can then be put in place to remedy any defects. The peer review phase provides the perfect external and independent review process to ensure that the IPA's policies and procedures are effective. The Quality Improvement Plan conducted by the IPA in the wake of the institutional review allows the IPA to make further improvements to the effectiveness of its policies.



## I. Programmes of Education and Training

### Criterion 3:

3.1 Programme development and approval: the development and approval of new programmes should be conducted in a systematic way, and be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education.

3.2 Learner admission, progression and recognition: there are pre-defined and published regulations, which are consistently applied, covering all areas related to learner admission, progression, recognition and certification of awards. Access policies, admission processes and criteria are established and implemented consistently and in a transparent manner, and as appropriate, in accordance with national policies and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression.

3.3 Programme monitoring and review: Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of a programme is used as an opportunity to evaluate and enhance the programme with the benefit feedback from staff, students, external examiners, employers, student progression data etc.

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Sections A & P

### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

#### **3.1 Programme Development and Approval**

In addition to such internal challenges as greater accountability, organisational efficiency and pay adjustments, the public service has to respond to the evolving complexity of Irish society through the implementation of legislation, formation of public policy and management of services which underpin our lives. Public service work environments are as complex, fast changing and increasingly specialised as those of private sector employees. Public servants require new and advanced forms of knowledge and skills, and the development of new programmes forms an integral component of the Institute's mission.

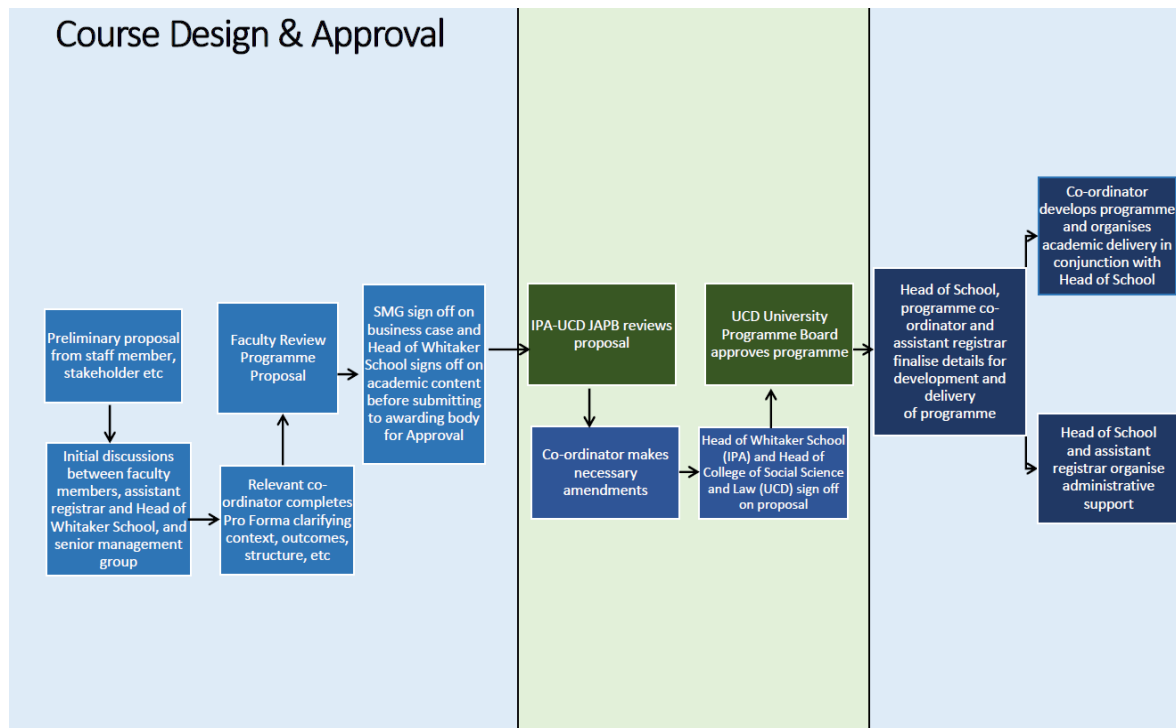
Ideas for new programmes arise in a number of ways including engagement with public sector managers and training officers, discussion with advisory groups of stakeholders, most notably the Education Committee, as well as student feedback through surveys. IPA co-ordinators also review public sector trends and gaps in the market to develop new programme ideas.

New accredited programmes in the IPA proceed through an internal approval process and, because they need to be accredited, they also must be approved externally by the Awarding Body. There are a number of principles which underpin and provide the rationale for these developmental steps:

- A. There should be a systematic approach to programme design and development to provide clarity around responsibilities, purpose, resource implications and adequate lead-in times for development.
- B. There should be sufficient clarity around the objectives, learning outcomes and size of a programme from early on, and relevant co-ordinators and staff should be aware of the implications of its introduction.
- C. The design phase of the programme should involve sufficient reflection on how the programme structure, content and assessment methodologies match the learning outcomes.

- D. There should be a recognisably significant demand for programmes and resources should exist to enable the IPA fulfil its obligations and reach expected academic standards.
- E. There should be an external validation of the programme.

The developmental steps that a new programme idea must go through before approval are outlined in detail in the IPA’s Programme/Module Design and Approval Policy and Procedures (currently under review). The process is also outlined below:



- 1) The first step is the initial idea generation where there is engagement with a public service body or an advisory committee or when a coordinator seeks the approval of the Head of the Whitaker School to develop a programme idea further. The proposed programme is discussed initially at faculty and at Senior Management level. Considerations include: Is the programme workable? Will it meet the required academic standard? Does it fit with the Institute’s core mission? Are there sound academic and financial reasons for its introduction? Has the Institute sufficient resources to develop and implement the programme.
- 2) If the outcome of discussions is successful, the coordinator then fills out a pro forma which outlines in detail the following information: proposed title; qualification; NQF level – certificate/diploma/degree; credit size; course objectives; rationale, target group and evidence of likely demand; outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and competence; proposed modules and general academic content; teaching and learning methods; assessment methods; reasons for introducing programme; resources required. Not only does the pro-forma provide the basis for internal approval but it helps to clarify early on the purpose, relevance and resource implications of the proposed programme.
- 3) This pro forma is then submitted to the Head of School, who brings it to faculty for consideration and evaluation.

- 4) The Head of School also presents the proposal to the Senior Management Group (SMG), who are responsible for signing off on the business case for the introduction of the programme. Thereafter, the Head of Whitaker School signs off on the final academic document. This completes the internal phase.
- 5) Once approved internally by the IPA, successful programme proposals are submitted to the IPA-UCD Joint Academic Programme Board (JAPB). This is a board comprising IPA and UCD faculty. Given the obvious familiarity and expertise of the UCD faculty with UCD internal programme approval processes their advice and feedback is very useful. The JAPB also invites relevant UCD subject experts to give their views on the proposed programme. The IPA programme team incorporates the feedback from the JAPB and finalises the proposal. The JAPB then approves the proposal to go forward to the UCD University Programme Board.
- 6) Finally, once the final proposal has been signed by the Head of Whitaker School and countersigned by the Head of the College of Social Sciences & Law in UCD, the required pro-formas are forwarded to the UCD University Programme Board. As UPB may query aspects of the proposal and request detailed replies from the IPA, programme co-ordinators are aware that final confirmation might not be forthcoming for several months and factor this into the programme delivery schedule (co-ordinators allow at least 12-18 months for the design and approval process).

After approval is secured from the awarding body, the programme team then set about developing the course materials and commissioning authors for the distance education manuals where necessary. Meanwhile, the assistant registrar sets up the administrative support for the programme.

The programme is then monitored and evaluated as per the processes outlined in Criterion 10, Section P, though during the first iteration extra monitoring occurs and appropriate adjustments are made.

### **3.2 Learner Admission, Progression and Recognition**

#### **Admission & Access**

The IPA is committed to continuous professional development for public servants and to widening participation in third level education for mature public servants coming back to education after a long gap. The IPA also attempts to increase access to applicants who meet specific socio-economic criteria: between 2012 and 2016 the IPA received Springboard funding for its MSc in Business & Management and sub-degree programmes in project management and business studies.

Furthermore, the IPA is committed, where it is practicable and possible from within its resources, to increasing and enhancing educational and personal development opportunities for people with disabilities and medical conditions. Should a student have a disability or suffer from a documented medical condition, which he or she believes could hinder full participation in an educational programme, he or she is invited to contact the Registrar and discuss, in complete confidence, the issues involved. The IPA, for its part, undertakes to work positively towards the resolution of any difficulties identified.

The IPA has an *Admissions Policy & Criteria* in place that complies with NUI matriculation requirements and appropriate to the profile of the Institute. The policy appears on the Institute website. See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#).

Programme entry requirements are also communicated in application brochures, relevant student handbooks and on the Institute's website along with programme details. The IPA is a provider of professional education and does not accept school leavers through the CAO system. The majority of applicants for undergraduate programmes, therefore, enter under mature student status. Prospective undergraduate students who do not meet the mature student age threshold and minimum matriculation requirements may apply for an IPA programme by completing a Special Case Application Form. The Form allows the candidate to outline alternative educational achievements, work experience and reasons for applying. Applicants are encouraged to seek support from their employers for their chosen programmes and are requested to provide a letter of recommendation from their employers. Grounds for acceptance include Leaving Certificate results that are marginally below matriculation requirements combined with substantial work experience in a related area, and/or evidence of previous commitment to further study/training combined with substantial work experience in a related area.

Applicants for postgraduate programmes must have a degree at Honours classification, or an equivalent qualification. Prospective postgraduate students who do not meet the entry requirements, but who hold senior positions in the public service (assistant principal or principal officer), may be matriculated on the recommendation of the IPA Faculty committee under RPL arrangements.

#### Recognition of Prior Learning

The IPA has adopted a strong Access, Transfer and Progression policy in line with its requirements under s.56 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression are informed by the QQI Policy Restatement "Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training". See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#) for the IPA's *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy*.

The Institute of Public Administration recognises the importance of lifelong learning and widening access to education. The Institute is committed to recognising the achievements and attainments of learners, and their development of skills and talents, whether such formation comes from the academic or professional arena, or life experience. Indeed, since the 1990s, the IPA has been promoting learning as a life-long process and practised the awarding of exemptions and advanced entry to applicants who merited them, believing that recognition of prior learning provides a fair and justifiable incentive for further study. The IPA's RPL practice developed from our engagement with higher education institutions, whereby external students, on completion of their level 6 full-time award, could access the IPA's level 8 part-time programmes.

The Institute understands Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to mean "the process by which prior learning is given a value. It is a means by which prior learning is formally identified, assessed and acknowledged" (NQAI, 2005). RPL encompasses all forms of prior learning, including formal learning (certified/accredited learning); non-formal/informal/experiential learning (learning outside the formal education system, through the workplace and through experience). The IPA uses RPL to:

- A. gain admission to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in cases where applicants may not meet the standard published admission requirements.
- B. award credit towards a programme of study (which may include module credit or advanced entry to a programme) so that an individual does not duplicate learning outcomes already acquired.

Prospective students make effective use of the IPA's RPL policy, particularly in the area of prior formal learning. In fact, the number of students registering for a particular academic year tends to

exceed the number of successful students progressing from the previous lower stage. The RPL advanced entry levels, historically, are most pronounced at stage 3 of the four year degree, which is the most significant year for student intake after stage 1 (30%-40% of students at that stage are advanced entrants). Additional intakes at stage 2 and stage 4 are also substantial. Progression rate data from undergraduate degree programmes between 2011-2015 confirm this pattern. For instance in 2011, 53 students successfully completed stage 2 of the BA, but the intake for stage 3 in September 2011 was 108. The pattern is consistent across each of the academic years under review.

The IPA has also an academic 'bridging' programme to facilitate level 6 IPA diploma students in local government, healthcare and civil service etc to transfer to advanced stages of the BA degree programme. There are usually 40 students taking the programme annually.

The assessment of non-formal and informal learning has, heretofore, been a challenge for the IPA due to the Institute's size and constraints on resources. Presently, such mechanisms are more frequently employed in postgraduate programmes than undergraduate programmes. For instance, public servants who hold senior positions in the public service (assistant principal or principal officer or above) may be matriculated on the recommendation of the IPA Faculty committee.

The Institute has procedures in place to ensure that the assessment of a student's prior learning is consistent, transparent and equitable, and in keeping with academic integrity, the Institute's ethos and current national developments. These are published in the IPA's *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy* ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

#### Progression

In the IPA, progression is the means by which students, on successful completion of an IPA programme, can progress to another IPA programme. The IPA has transparent paths of progression from the lowest to the highest level of awards. IPA students can progress internally from a range of programmes at certificate level to programmes at diploma, bachelor's degree and Masters level, right up to a Doctorate in Governance. The Registrar's Office has established approved progression pathways between programmes, which are published in the IPA's Application Brochure. The eligible criteria and conditions, and procedures are also laid out in the *Access, Transfer & Progression Policy* (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#) for more details).

#### Transfer

In the IPA, 'transfer' is the process by which a student can transfer internally from one IPA programme to another by being awarded general credit (no grades associated with the grade) to recognise learning outcomes already achieved in the previous programme. External transfers from another higher education institution are handled under the Institute's Recognition of Prior Learning procedures.

#### Certification of Awards

In relation to the completion of an IPA programme of study, the assistant registrar liaises with the Awarding body to arrange for the awarding of certificates, diplomas and degrees. The undergraduate and postgraduate office as applicable handle all relevant details and arrangement for the graduation ceremony and provide all official documents required by students including:

- Certificate of Attendance
- Statement of Results
- Transcript

### Data collection

Data for admission, RPL and progression is collected annually to enable the IPA to improve and take action where appropriate. More information on this can be found under Section N, Criterion 8.

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### **3.3 Programme Monitoring and Review**

The IPA has in place strong course management practices, as well as a *Module/Programme Review Policy and Procedures* (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)). This ensures the smooth functioning of the course as well as ensuring that any issues or problems are addressed and remedied as they occur.

Subject and course co-ordinators are responsible for monitoring the progress of students and programmes. This involves:

- a. ensuring that programmes have a formalised academic calendar, course outlines, outcomes, assessment strategies, learning materials, distance education manuals, teaching staff
- b. ensuring that teaching staff and students are notified regularly by the administrative office about upcoming weekend and evening classes
- c. meeting students and lecturers during weekend classes to ensure the smooth running of the programmes and to resolve any issues at the earliest opportunity
- d. arranging with the assistant registrar for the assessment of the relevant modules
- e. reviewing assignment and examination marks returned by associate lecturers
- f. liaising with the extern examiner to confirm academic standards in assessed work
- g. reviewing the performance of students in the various modes of tuition (lectures at the IPA, and lectures at regional centres, distance education)
- h. identifying unusual patterns and discrepancies, and feeding findings into course reviews and amendments.
- i. Reviewing student feedback and conducting annual module reviews and
- j. revising modules and learning material as necessary in consultation with the associate lecturer, assistant registrar and distance education specialist.

The registry and administration office supports the co-ordinators in their programme monitoring by supplying student feedback; annual statistics relating to student progression; pass/failure/withdrawal rates and the numbers of students in each award classification. This data allows coordinators to properly review the modules and programmes respectively and make informed decisions as to what improvements are needed.

Notwithstanding the critical interventions that continuous monitoring allows, the principal monitoring mechanism is the more formal module and programme evaluation.

### Formal module and programme evaluation

It is good practice for staff to periodically evaluate modules and programmes. Advances in knowledge alter the scope and content of courses and the angles of enquiry; changing social contexts require more appropriate sets of skills for learners; and the changing profile of the student, particularly the working student, in an era of lifelong learning, demands more flexible and effective tuition arrangements.

The Institute recognises that the process of review is iterative, and that much of this business (monitoring, review and amendment) takes place at different times and through a variety of mechanisms during the year. While the process of monitoring is iterative, the Institute recognises that modules and programmes are systematically reviewed by the lecturer, the module/programme co-ordinator responsible for the management of the course, and a peer reviewer.

From the 2016-2017 academic year and onwards, the IPA is facilitating a systematic review of modules on an annual basis. The module reviews are being co-ordinated by the module or programme co-ordinators responsible for the management of the module. The reviews are being conducted in conjunction with the lecturer delivering and assessing the module. The review assesses student performance, assessment successes/problems and general teaching effectiveness.

The review consists of two stages: (1) lecturer/examiner evaluation and (2) module co-ordinator evaluation. The module review uses feedback from:

- student achievement and progression data (exam results & related data)
- lecturer/examiner evaluation
- student evaluation

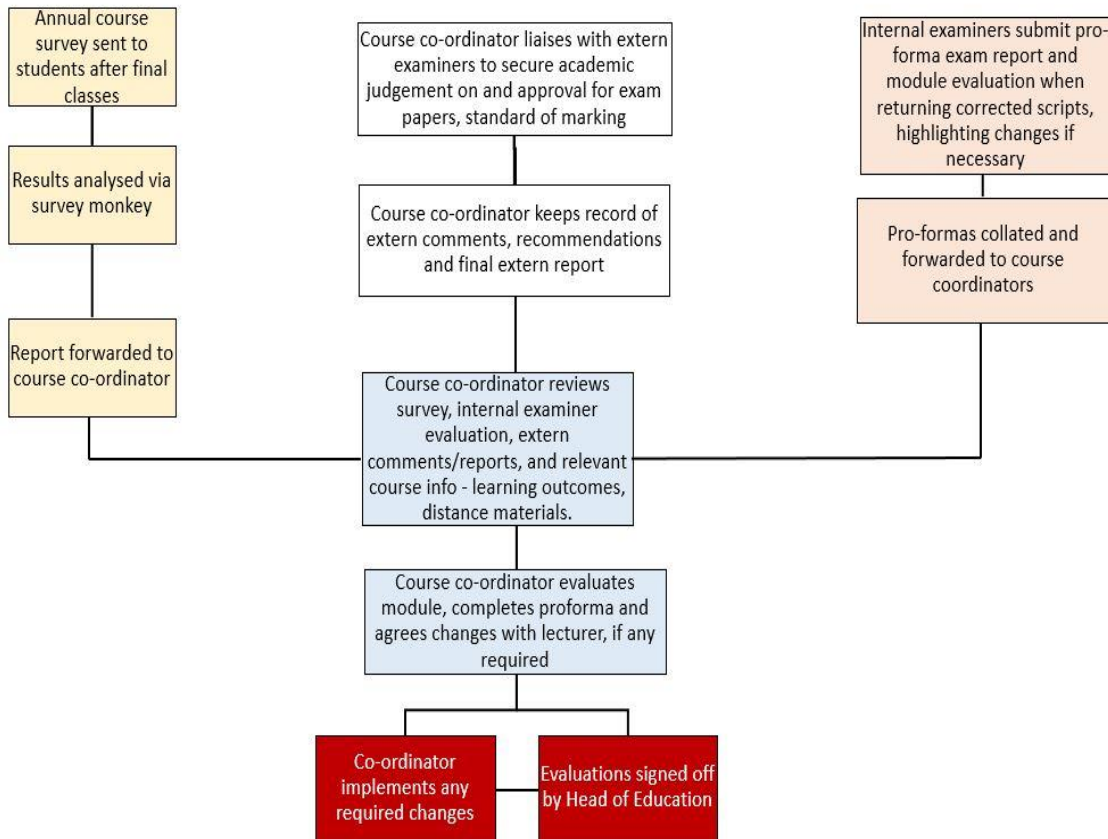
and, where appropriate, from:

- internal and extern examiners
- module and programme co-ordinators

To facilitate the process of review, lecturers/examiners and module/programme co-ordinators complete a Module Review pro forma. The form addresses the key areas to be evaluated – appropriateness and success of the module aims, learning outcomes, teaching methods, assessment strategies and resources provided – but also allows for concerns to be raised and resolutions to be identified.

This annual module review process is illustrated as follows:

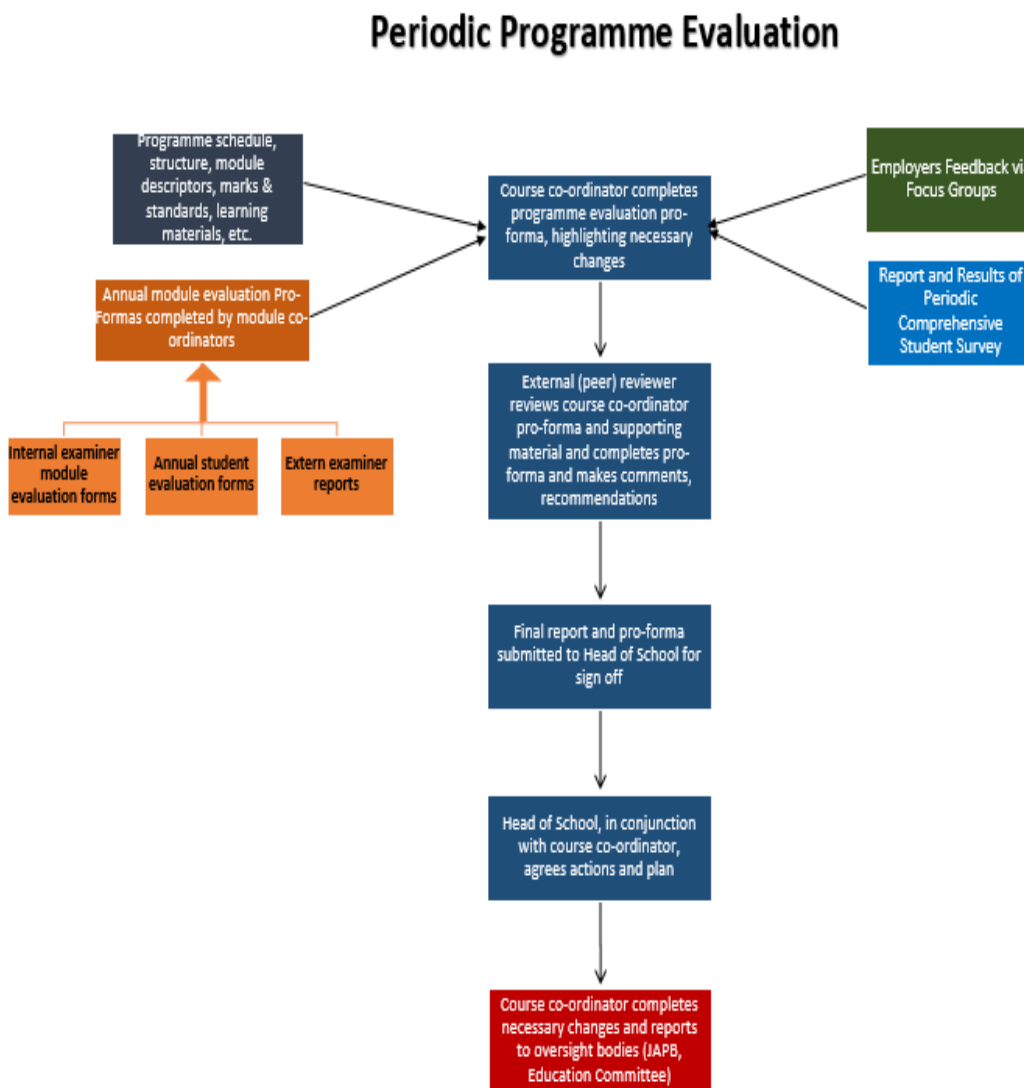
### Annual Module Review System



A full description of the process is outlined in Section P: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review. See also *Module/Programme Review Policy and Procedures*, which can be found in [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#).

As well as the annual module review, programme co-ordinators and a peer reviewer evaluate the continuing relevance and performance of each programme on a periodic basis. Programme reviews incorporate examiner/lecturer evaluation, module/programme co-ordinator evaluation, student evaluation, staff/student committees. Improvement measures are implemented in consultation with examiners in respect of each module. IPA Faculty are currently reviewing plans for a cycle of impending programme reviews. The schedule is available in section P of this document.

This periodic programme review system is illustrated below:



A full description of the process is outlined in section P: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review.



### Revision of a Module/Programme

On foot of the above reviews as well as from student feedback or informal monitoring during the year, it is common that there will be minor alterations to modules to maintain relevance and freshness. These can include changes to title, aims, objectives, outcomes, syllabi, programme content and delivery methods.

Where changes are proposed after a review, the Head of School will approve the proposed changes and implementation strategy. The module/programme co-ordinator will be responsible for implementing the changes and will liaise with the lectures/examiners and Distance Education specialist to complete the work.

If the revisions are substantial or a new module is required, which necessitate approval from the awarding body, the Head of School will put in place procedures to secure such approval. These revisions are recorded on the relevant UCD PDARF form and submitted to the IPA-UCD Joint APB for approval. Lecturers, therefore, should be aware that final confirmation might not be forthcoming for a period spanning one or more committee meetings with the awarding body.

## J. Teaching and Learning

### Criterion 4:

The quality of the learning experience is monitored on an on-going basis. The provider should have an open community that values critical reflection and fosters personal and professional development for both learners and staff. Staff should be appropriately qualified and experienced. The linked provider should demonstrate that it engages with the wider national and international community of practice to enhance teaching and learning. The provider should also ensure that the programme level and each programme's learning environment are appropriate – this will include: physical premises, equipment and facilities; learning off-campus; collaborative learning contexts; learning resources.

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Section A, C, F, L & M

### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

#### 1. What does quality in teaching and learning mean for the IPA and how is it monitored?

The Institute of Public Administration values the opportunity to contribute to the personal and professional development of its students, who are drawn from public and private sector organisations. The academic experience of these professional learners is essential to the successful maintenance and development of the Institute's role as the country's leading public sector development agency. That is why the Institute is committed to high standards of service delivery, whether in teaching, research, administration or student support.

The Institute undertakes to pursue excellence in the manner in which it engages with all members of the learning community and is dedicated to the enhancement of the learning experience for students. In recognition of the changing needs of the public service, and the increasingly complex society it serves, and the influence of technology on all aspects of education, the Institute believes that the development of knowledge and understanding must be above all student-centred, flexible, and creative.

Teaching and student learning are distinct, although related, phenomena. Each needs to be reflected upon separately and together and continuously improved. Proper consideration of teaching and learning results in fundamental questions about, among other matters, the types of knowledge and skills that our students wish to obtain, what constitutes effective teaching at the Institute, and how our students learn best. The IPA's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Group, a Faculty sub-group, is charged with formulating answers to such questions and submitting recommendations for improvements.

Such reflection is also iterative of course and part of the general work of any educational institution. IPA programme and subject coordinators are in regular contact with associate lecturers and with students and are quickly alerted to, in particular, problems in the quality of teaching. However, approaches to teaching and learning should seek less to react to problems (such reaction is for other elements of the QA system) than to propose recommendations that improve how students are taught and how they learn. Such proposals require a formal forum if they are to be properly assessed and decided upon.

#### *The IPA student body and quality in teaching and learning*

IPA students are mature, professional learners. They generally possess experiential knowledge of the areas in which they are pursuing formal studies. Their teaching and learning needs are not the same as those for, say, school-leavers. They want to be taught and to learn in ways that will challenge and develop them personally, will advance their career and will improve their contribution

to the work of their sector, department, unit, etc. As with all education, such development occurs in the first instance through obtaining knowledge and better critical understanding, but it also occurs through a contextualising process whereby students come to appreciate theoretical and conceptual analysis that explains and critiques the practice that they come across in their working lives. For example, many of our students encounter, in myriad ways, the divide between the administrative and political systems in public management. Through their formal studies with the IPA, they come to understand and intelligently question the rationales – economic, legal, managerial, etc., – for that divide and the consequences thereof. In face-to-face tuition, course manuals, e-learning, and self-directed projects, the IPA seeks to develop deep understanding as opposed to ‘surface’ learning.

#### *Monitoring quality in teaching and learning*

The quality of students’ learning experience at the IPA is monitored through the IPA Quality Framework and through several QA systems and mechanisms. These are explained in detail elsewhere. Of particular relevance to this section are the student feedback processes (including annual surveys) and the annual module reviews. The student feedback processes (outlined in detail in Sections C, F, and M) let students evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and make suggestions for improvement. The annual survey, for example, elicits information on current teaching and learning methodologies. The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Group (TLAG) outlined below, is currently working on augmenting our survey templates to improve the quality of response we have around teaching and learning. The module review process (outlined in detail in Section P) consists of two stages: lecturer/examiner evaluation and (2) module coordinator evaluation. In the first of these, the lecturer/examiner has to complete a pro forma document in which, among other things, they can comment on issues around teaching and learning they may have encountered over the course of the year. In the second stage, the module coordinator, taking account of both the comments of the lecturer/examiner and the data from the student survey, records the issues to address and proposed improvements.

Finally, in the course of their everyday duties, module coordinators are of course in regular contact with lecturers and students in order to monitor the topics covered at seminars, student satisfaction with the lecturer’s teaching style and methodologies, and lecturer perspectives on whether a class is learning at the appropriate pace and to the appropriate standard.

#### *The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Group*

In order to improve the IPA’s policies, procedures and critical reflections around teaching and learning, the Institute, in 2016, established, as a sub-group of Faculty, a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Group. Its purpose is to review IPA teaching, learning and assessment procedures and strategies and report on improvement and development, taking particular account of:

- developments nationally and internationally in teaching and learning
- the teaching & learning methodologies of most relevance to the IPA student body and to programme delivery methods
- student feedback on teaching, learning and assessment
- e-learning developments
- quality assurance requirements.

In its deliberations on teaching and learning and its recommendations to faculty, the Group is guided in particular by the research undertaken by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and the resources provided by that body.

The TLAG has produced a *Teaching and Learning Policy*. This can be found at: [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#). The Group is the main driver of the policies, strategies, and critical reflection around

teaching, learning and assessment. Among the early outcomes of its deliberations have been changes to the assessment weightings in certain programmes for the 2016-2017 academic year.

In the Review of QA Processes in late 2016, the Institute outlined its intention to regularise meetings of the Group as it was providing a valuable space for critical reflection.

## **2. An open community where critical reflection and personal and professional development are nurtured**

The type of learning community that an institute provides is a consequence of its culture. That culture, in turn, is formed by the students that attend an institution and the people that teach them. With regard to the latter, the IPA's particular student demographic means that a collegial and open education community is the natural setting. The age and experience of our students mean that teaching and learning is a joint endeavour by staff and students. For example, in the classroom and elsewhere, IPA students will often be able to offer informed commentary on the economic, legal or management complexities of particular public service delivery. They may have direct experience of how a particular aspect of public management has determined strategic or operational matters in their sector. Lecturers must be able to respond and build upon commentary, using it to advance the learning experience for both the individual students and the wider class. This is not something that those teaching younger, less experienced students usually have to address.

That fact – that students are equal participants in the learning community – is further reinforced by the autonomy that students are given. At various levels, but particularly at postgraduate level, there is a wish to build a sense of autonomy in our students so that they can work as independent learners. Dissertation meetings and guidance provide students with the confidence and tools to work well on their own and to master the skills that academic scholarship requires.

The IPA combines education, research, training and publications activities. As a result, there is a collaborative ethos whereby the skills and resources of one division (e.g. research) feeds into the work of another (e.g. education) and vice versa. As a small Institution with a variety of activities, it is important that collaboration between staff is promoted.

The dedicated IPA Research Division focuses on applied, commissioned research. The research agenda is closely integrated with the government's public service reform programmes. Key objectives are to increase awareness and stimulate informed debate and further thinking on the key management issues of the day. As well as raising awareness and stimulating debate at a national level, the research conducted by the Research Division feeds into the teaching and learning conducted in the Institute. Lecturers use the published research to inform their teaching and keep it as relevant and up-to-date as possible.

The IPA values diversity and attends to the diversity of learners and their needs. In particular, it attends to the needs of those adult students who, because they are 'time poor', cannot pursue traditional methods of study. The Institute provides very flexible learning pathways, offering students the chance to progress from one programme to another, to exit programmes after certain stages with an award, and to take programmes over longer periods.

The Institute is also committed, where it practicable and possible within its resources, to increasing and enhancing educational and development opportunities for students with disabilities and medical conditions. Arrangements are in place, for example, to accommodate the examination needs of those who cannot take the standard approaches.

### **3. Staff qualification and experience**

#### *Full-time staff*

As per Section L, the IPA has a dedicated HR unit. The HR unit manages a fair and transparent process for the recruitment, retention and development of all staff.

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (report of the strategy group) notes regarding the development of teaching skills that '[i]t is not sufficient for academics to be experts in their own disciplinary area; they also need to know how to teach that discipline'. The institute has taken four concrete steps to adapt to this:

- I. Employ and evaluate academic staff not solely on academic qualifications but on communication skills, academic and professional knowledge and achievements, experience, and student feedback.
- II. Support and monitoring of new recruits. Help in the development of lecturing staff through professional training, the acquisition of skills, the attainment of further qualifications and staff teaching exchanges with partner institutions.
- III. Provide clear guidelines in relation to student expectations and organisational ethos.
- IV. Ensure that teaching staff have clear and transparent values that include treating all students equally, reflecting on practice and making recommendations to improve course effectiveness and student engagement, and keeping the needs of the student to the forefront in all education processes.

The Institute's Training and Development Policy encourages the development of individual skills and abilities towards the achievement of their full potential. Within budgetary constraints, financial support is available for suitable third level programmes for all staff members. Study leave and leave for examination are also provided for staff partaking in approved courses. Of the Whitaker School's 12 full-time academic staff, seven have PhDs and five have Masters-level qualifications.

The continuous professional development of staff with regard to teaching and learning suffered due to the numerous constraints imposed by the recession. The IPA, as with most other institutions, struggled to fully provide the resources that would give staff the opportunities to further develop their teaching skills and to reflect upon emerging student needs. One of the remits of the TLAG is to establish clear mechanisms for peer dialogue and support and to assist staff in enhancing their teaching and learning approaches.

#### *Associate lecturers*

Ensuring the quality of associate lecturer teaching is also essential. Associate lecturers are recruited from experts in their field either as academics or practitioners, or both, in the subject area. IPA associate lecturers include barristers, senior public servants, accountants, and members of regulatory bodies. The IPA's use of associate staff, its focus on applied learning and its reputation in the public sector are a strong compensation for the various challenges it faces with permanent staffing. As stated elsewhere, however, academic development of associate staff is a challenge for the Institute in terms of cost and expectation. The associate staff are busy professionals who have little capacity to take on further responsibilities.

Associate lecturers are provided with an induction to ensure that they are fit for the job as well as to ensure that they understand the specificities of the IPA and its learner profile. Associate lecturers are inducted and supported by programme co-ordinators, both academically and administratively: they are provided with module content, learning objectives, assessment requirements, IPA student profile, teaching approaches, IT facilities and classroom management. Programme co-ordinators meet with the Associate lecturers each semester (and as issues arise) and at year's end to monitor

and review progress. The guidelines and direction for IPA programme co-ordinators on inducting, managing and supporting associate lecturers are also outlined in the Associate Lecturer's Handbook.

The IPA Associate Lecturer Handbook, which is provided to associate lecturers, contains information on duties, responsibilities, timetables, deadlines, administrative processes and guidelines/protocols on teaching approaches and classroom management, which relate specifically to IPA students as both mature and blended learners information on assessment. The Handbook includes grade descriptors and guidelines for assessing material and providing feedback to students. These guidelines incorporate relevant feedback from students on the assessment process, gathered during annual surveys.

The Panopto video resource (outlined below) provides a new and efficient way to induct new lecturers regarding IPA policies and practices around teaching and learning. Those lecturers using Panopto to provide video lectures are given full training, provided with templates and advised on the verbal and behavioural practices considered optimum for such lectures. The TLAG considers how the Institute can best support and advise associate staff on teaching and learning methodologies.

To-date, the teaching and assessment practices of associate lecturers have highly commended them to our students. Issues in the quality of teaching practice are managed by the module co-ordinators. From 2017, the deliberations from the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Group will assist them in this regard.

#### **4. Engagement with the wider community on teaching and learning**

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Group is tasked with researching and advising faculty on what the national and international communities are producing on teaching and learning practice at third level. Given the size of the IPA and that Group, its engagement with the wider community has to be selective. To that end, the Group has decided to engage principally with the members and resources of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, which was established by Government in 2012.

It should also be noted that the IPA has exceptional networks throughout the broader public service, networks that enable it to be a focus point for proposals and plans for the education needs of the public service. In formal (e.g. IPA Education Committee) and informal (e.g. module coordinator requests) ways, the IPA engages with the public sector community to improve its offerings and teaching and learning methodologies. For example, guest lectures and presentations from public servants that have an unrivalled knowledge and understanding of particular public management concepts and issues are a regular feature on IPA programmes.

## K. Assessment of Learners

### Criterion 5:

The linked provider's assessment framework establishes the institution's approach to the assessment of learners in both formal (where it leads to certification) and, as appropriate, in-house assessment. The framework should also include the administration of assessment, procedures and systems for the security and integrity of the assessment process, such as assessment materials and processes; assignments; exam scripts; project work, appeals and record of learner achievement.

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Section A

### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

Assessment drives and measures student learning. It is inextricably linked to programme objectives and learning outcomes. The IPA's assessment processes are predominantly based on the concept of Assessment of Learning (AoL), comprising a combination of continuous assessment and terminal examinations, though the IPA also engages in the practice of Assessment for Learning (AfL), primarily in the formative feedback provided by examiners in continuous assessment and through self-directed work tasks embedded within the specially commissioned distance education manuals. See Section M & P for information on Assessment for Learning in the course manuals.

The integrity of the IPA's Assessment of Learning (AoL) processes is based on the principles of secure, transparent and equitable management.

The IPA's assessment processes are governed by four separate documents: *Marks and Standards*, *Exam Administration Procedures*, *Assessment Regulations*, and *Procedures for Appeal of Examination Results*.

#### **Marks and Standards** ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#))

To support examiners and students, *Marks and Standards* provides, as far as reasonably practical, clear, consistent and fair processes concerning assessment and marking of student work, student progression and award eligibility. The document outlines grade descriptors, marking scales & classifications, requirements for progression and eligibility for awards. The document outlines procedures for compensation, supplementary examinations, mitigating circumstances and leave of absence, and the monitoring of student progression. The document also covers the role of IPA examiners/ extern examiners and Board of Examiners.

*Marks & Standards* also provides for systems to ensure that assessment is appropriate and fairly applied to all students. For instance, internal examiners are sent the following documentation to assist them prepare assessment questions and mark scripts:

- (i) guidelines and arrangements for submission of continuous assessment assignment titles, examination questions and associated marking schemes and solutions;
- (ii) guidelines for marking continuous assessment assignments which outline the importance of (a) marking consistently and appropriately, (b) providing detailed formative feedback to enable the student to develop their learning and future assessment practice, (c) deadlines to ensure that students receive timely feedback to enable them to learn from the assessment process;
- (iii) guidelines for marking exam questions;
- (iv) grade descriptors to facilitate consistency of marking.

Internal examiners are also provided with relevant assessment information in the Associate Lecturer's Handbook:- grade descriptors; guidelines for assessing material and providing formative feedback to students; timeliness for such feedback and submission deadlines.

Extern examiners approve the standard of assessment questions and their alignment with the stated objectives and outcomes of a module. They also provide for appropriate levels of external judgement on academic standards with reference to national peer institutions. Accordingly, extern examiners receive:

- (i) course documentation – module descriptors, course outlines, distance education materials
- (ii) draft exam papers from examiners and model answers/marking schemes
- (iii) sample of students' assessed work
- (iv) relevant exam statistics for comparative review

Finally, students receive:

- (i) programme handbooks that state clearly how modules will be assessed, and when, and what weightings are allocated to the different components;
- (ii) guidelines on writing assignments, avoiding plagiarism, studying and preparing for exams, and exam guidance (approaching the exam paper etc);
- (iii) grade descriptors to outline what is expected of them in assessed work and what marks are allocated to varying levels of knowledge, skills and competence;
- (iv) timely feedback on assessed work during the academic year to enable them to learn from the process;
- (v) informal feedback as requested on examination scripts (also outlined in Procedures for Appeal of Examination Results);
- (vi) clear procedures and guidelines concerning absence from examinations, release of examination results, feedback on examination results, appeal of results, re-assessment of material & supplementary exams;

The IPA's *Marks and Standards* are informed by the Active NFQ Standards for Higher Education (<http://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Active-NFQ-Standards-for-HE.aspx>), in particular the Award Standards for Business the Awards Standards for Generic Major Awards. Heretofore, relevant sections of the document appeared in the student programme guides and were sent to examiners during the correction phase to support consistency of marking. For the 2017-2018 academic year, the document will appear on the Institute's new website.

#### **Exam Administration ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#))**

The Exam Administration Procedures cover the entirety of the management of the exam process including:

1. the preparation & production of exam papers
2. staging & conduct of exams
3. correction of scripts
4. checking of marks
5. release of marks to students.

The overriding purpose of the procedure is to ensure the security, integrity, accuracy and fairness of the IPA's exam administrative process. For instance, as part of these procedures, the IPA:

- (i) Issues clear instructions to examiners on preparing exam papers, marking schemes and solutions; and on how to submit papers to the IPA.
- (ii) Provides a secure system for in-house preparation of papers, for internal/external review of papers, for production, storage and distribution of exam papers to venues and safe return to the IPA of exam material.



- (iii) Issues guidelines to exam personnel on exam venue conditions, conduct of examinations, and required invigilation practices.
- (iv) Issues guidelines to students detailing exam venue protocols and breaches of exam regulations (and the consequences of such breaches).
- (v) Issues clear instructions to invigilators to regulate the exam environment.
- (vi) Has mechanisms to provide clear and timely assessor feedback to students on submitted work.
- (vii) Has a comprehensive system for processing student assessment work, double-checking of totals.
- (viii) Holds both internal faculty and external review of scripts and associated marks (post-correction period).
- (ix) Establishes (as per Marks & Standards) a formal Board of Examiners to consider and approve examination results.
- (x) Arranges (as per Marks & Standards) for Extern reports to be submitted to the awarding body assessing and approving the standard of examination questions, marking schemes, marking of student work, exam administration and the conduct of boards of examiners. Extern reports and awarding body comments are made available to course co-ordinators for review and action.
- (xi) Compiles statistics on student exams, appeals etc

#### **Assessment Regulations ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#))**

The Assessment Regulations ensure the integrity of the assessment process by providing clear, transparent and fair regulations to students, and furthermore by establishing procedures to handle any alleged breaches of these regulations. The procedures in place for the handling of alleged breaches ensure a fair and impartial resolution of academic misdemeanours. The successful operation of these procedures is underscored by the following actions:

- (i) Examination regulations, and sanctions up to and including expulsion for breaches, are clearly laid out in programme handbooks supplied to students each year on registration. They are also posted on Moodle. These Regulations also appear on the IPA website.
- (ii) Students are required to sign a declaration agreeing to familiarise themselves with IPA regulations, policies and procedures.
- (iii) Clear guidelines are provided to students on plagiarism and proper referencing. Programme documentation also outlines the gravity of plagiarism offences and identifies a range of sanctions up and including expulsion. Use of plagiarism detection software. Students are further required to sign a declaration which states that work they submit for assessment is their own.

#### **Procedures for Appeal of Examination Results ([IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#))**

The Procedures for Appeal of Examination Results provide formal, clear and fair procedures for the handling of student disputes over exam results. The procedures provide a multi-tiered approach (see below) whereby results can be rechecked and remarked where necessary. The successful operation of the appeals process is underscored by the following:

- (i) Procedures for Appeal of Examination Results are provided to students in their programme guides and on Moodle. From 2017, these Regulations will also appear on the IPA website.
- (ii) Procedures provide an opportunity for students to obtain informal feedback on their examination performance and have calculations checked (stage 1).
- (iii) Procedures provide students with a fair, transparent and structured suite of follow-up actions in the event of academic disagreement or notification of mitigating circumstances,

including opportunities to have scripts re-assessed (stage 2), to view scripts and, in the event of continued disagreement, to request a formal academic review of case (stage 3).

- (iv) Procedures include a Formal Appeal process – an independent and final arbiter – to handle cases where the student has grounds to believe that the academic review was not properly carried out by the IPA (stage 4).

#### **Assessment of Learners: Monitoring & Review**

Monitoring & review in the assessment area is extensive. The following are examples:

- (i) The IPA places exam administration as a running agenda item at Administrative meetings and Faculty meetings during the exam period to monitor activity and ensure regular communication between administrative staff and course- and subject-coordinators, assistant registrar and Head of Education.
- (ii) The IPA requests that invigilators complete pro-formas documenting exam hall incidents and confirming that agreed procedures were followed. These are held by the assistant registrar.
- (iii) The IPA holds debriefings after examinations to highlight any issues that can be addressed in advance of the next examination session.
- (iv) The IPA requires internal examiners to complete reports with corrected scripts, providing commentary on the standard of student material, question choice, appropriateness of questions etc. From 2017, these exam reports will be complemented by annual module evaluation pro-formas, identifying issues for further programme enhancement, and they will be reviewed by module and programme co-ordinators.
- (v) The IPA works with extern examiners during the assessment period, an essential independent means by which quality is verified and enhanced within the IPA. Extern examiners provide for appropriate levels of external judgement on academic standards with reference to national peer institutions. The extern examiners approve the standard of assessment questions and their alignment with the stated objectives and outcomes of a module. The observations and judgements of the extern examiners, arising from the review of student work, will also form part of the overall assessment criteria that a module and programme co-ordinator utilises when conducting the module review and completing their review pro-formas in May/June of each year.
- (vi) The IPA holds Pre-Board of Examiner review meetings to review scripts and monitor associated marks (post-correction period) and identify discrepancies, anomalies, special cases, and mitigating circumstances etc.

As part of enhancements in the assessment area, the IPA will provide post-exam programme statistics to co-ordinators for review and action in the 2017 session (in addition to the summary module exam stats supplied to externs for comparative purposes).

Further monitoring and review occurs in the form of formal reports. IPA examination statistics and progression rates are framed in a report every five years. The last set of reports was generated in 2015 for the academic years 2010/11 to 2014/15. For the undergraduate degree and undergraduate special purpose programmes, the results of 5,650 students were examined across the BA (Hons), BBS (Hons) and one-year specialised Certificate and Diploma programmes. In respect of postgraduate programmes, the results of approximately 700 students were examined. [See [IPA Public Information](#)]. The 'Issues Arising' section of the Report details some of the key issues and led to developments in courses delivery and assessment (as also described under section P of this document).

Finally, the Teaching, Learning & Assessment group, a sub-committee of faculty, was formed in the spring of 2016 to review IPA practice in relation to learning and assessment, and to recommend appropriate developments and changes to Faculty.

One of the considerations by the committee in 2016 was the allocation of marks afforded to continuous assessment assignments. Such considerations were also informed by the 2015 periodic student survey, in which students advocated a greater weighting of marks for continuous assessment, and the 2016 reports on Exam Statistics, which saw low numbers of higher grade classifications in some programmes. Consequently, for 2016-2017, the IPA standardised the exam/assignment weighting of postgrad programmes – now standing at 70:30 rather than 80:20 to better recognise the work done in assignments. The assignments weighting of the BA 1 programme was also increased from 80:20 to 75:25.

The following is being planned for review in 2017 & 2018: plagiarism, range of assessment practice (Assessment for Learning/Of Learning/As Learning).

## L. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

### Criterion 6:

Institutions should take responsibility for the quality of their staff and provide them with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively. For example, they should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Sections A and J

### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

The IPA has a dedicated HR unit which deals with human resources for the Institute. The HR unit manages a fair and transparent process for the recruitment, retention and development of permanent full and part-time staff within the IPA.

The HR unit has documented policies and procedures on matters relating to the recruitment, development, management, and work and behavioural practices of IPA employees. These are accessible in the official staff handbook available to all staff on the internal intranet. Documents in the handbook includes:

- Recruitment Policy and Procedures; Transfer, 'Acting' Policy and Procedures
- Training and Development
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Dignity at Work
- Grievance Procedures
- Disciplinary Procedures
- Job-Sharing Scheme
- Health and Safety
- Flexible Working Hours: Guidelines to Scheme
- Leave Regulations
- Flexibility Agreement
- Staff Payments - Remuneration, Travel and Subsistence
- Policy on Email and Internet Usage
- Work Life Balance Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Partnership Committee
- Role of the HR Unit
- Role of the Union
- The Institute's Pension Scheme
- Income Continuance Plan
- A Guide to the Telephone System
- How to use the Voicemail

These policies and procedures are updated in line with legislation and circulars from the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, under whose aegis the IPA operates. For instance the Paternity Leave Policy and the Bereavement Leave Policy were approved in May 2017 and circulated to staff at that time. The HR Office is scheduled to conduct a complete review of all HR policies and procedures in 2018.

The IPA is compliant with the Employment Equality Act 1998 and 2004 and has an Equal Opportunities Policy and Dignity at Work Policy as part of the IPA Staff Handbook. Furthermore, the

IPA also includes relevant provisions on equality and diversity, and disability. The IPA has carried out a disability access audit to assist in the improvement of its provision in the area of disability awareness and accommodation. The IPA is also compliant with all state body governance requirements.

Two of the policies in the official staff handbook are particularly germane to Criterion 6: (a) the Recruitment Policy and Procedure and (b) the Training and Development Policy. These policies ensure that necessary talent is both attracted to and retained in the Institute, as well as ensuring that proper training is received by all staff. Job descriptions and specific requirements are available for all posts. Applicants for posts are short-listed and interviewed by a panel, comprising members internal and external to the IPA. Interviewees are rated according to set criteria to ensure that they possess the qualifications, experience, interpersonal skills and aptitude for the relevant administrative, management or teaching post. Successful applicants are subject to a probationary period and established public service performance management and effectiveness reviews.

All new staff in the IPA are given a rigorous induction comprising sessions with the HR Office and information sessions with various divisional representatives to familiarise them with the workings of the IPA as a whole. New staff are provided with induction sessions by their relevant Unit/line manager. Furthermore, new staff are provided with training on Student Information systems. Additional staff training is made available to employees on a periodic basis and as required in line with their requests and/or recommendations from a line manager. Staff can avail of a mentoring programme whereby they can receive advice and guidance from designated coaches. These strong induction and support mechanisms help to ensure that staff are well equipped to carry out their duties.

The IPA, as a third level provider, understands the importance of continuous and life-long learning; as such it encourages all staff to engage in training and education programmes. The payment or part-payment of fees for other agreed and relevant training and education courses, and attendance at conferences and seminars, both within the IPA and outside, is decided on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the relevant line manager. For all approved courses, study leave of up to five days in each year of the course, as well as leave for examination days, is granted subject to the needs of the section. Detailed staff profiles and training records are kept by the HR unit.

The IPA is a relatively small institution and this brings challenges. The ability of the IPA to compete with larger research-focused universities in attracting top-level experts is a clear issue. Permanent posts within the Whitaker School invariably combine a number of functions. For instance, the School comprises the Head of School/Registrar, assistant registrar, Distance Education Specialist, module/programme co-ordinators, researchers, two administration managers and administrative staff at various grades. The assistant registrar is responsible for academic affairs and management of academic administration. The Distance Education Specialist has responsibility for Distance Education texts and e-learning, as well as certain quality assurance responsibilities. Similarly, the individual programme co-ordinators teach, research and manage programmes and associate staff.

The Whitaker School Registry & Administration Office carries out the following support activities under the direction of the assistant registrar and the Head of the Whitaker School: Admissions, Records, Exams, Conferring, Quality Assurance, Teaching & Learning. The administrative team breaks into core groups for the management of specific cohorts of students, such as undergraduate and postgraduate students. Module and programme co-ordinators also have management and administrative duties, which they carry out in conjunction with the administrative team.

The IPA organises functions such as Quality Assurance, e-learning, and teaching and learning development in such a way that they can be carried out by small teams comprising teaching and administrative staff members who devote part of their time to these activities under the direction of the assistant registrar and Head of the Whitaker School.

The integrated work environment is a clear advantage for corporate efficiency and student experience, but can act as a constraint on resources. The embargo on public service recruitment added greatly to these pressures in the period 2008-2014, though staff managed to keep the teaching and assessment processes moving. As the IPA secured approval from the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform to begin filling vacant posts, the Institute had more time for self-reflection, evidence gathering and assessment of effectiveness. Consequently, the Institute produced student survey reports, exam statistics and a review of quality processes from 2015 onwards.

The staffing challenges often result in the necessary sidelining of desired activity. The Teaching, Learning & Assessment group, a sub-committee of Faculty, has not had an opportunity to work on as many projects as it would like. Members use the forum to reflect on the most up-to-date teaching models and related pedagogical concerns, and the effectiveness of the IPA learning environment and assessment practice, before returning to Faculty with recommendations. In 2016, the group made recommendations in terms of assessment weightings, which were implemented for the 2016/17 academic year. In the Review of QA Processes in late 2016 the Institute outlined its intention to regularise meetings of the committee as it was providing a valuable service in providing a forum for reflection and review.

In addition to the focus on permanent staff, the IPA recognises the importance of the associate lecturers who do a large amount of teaching. IPA Associate lecturers are recruited on a framework basis every three years following public advertisement. The HR office is responsible for establishing the panel of associates through open advertisement, and for managing the contracts of the successful, suitably qualified panellists.

Thereafter, the module and programme co-ordinators manage the associate lecturers. New appointees are provided with a comprehensive induction, detailing the requirements of the job, the profile and ethos of the IPA as an applied learning institution serving the public sector, and the expectations of students. The coordinators (under the line management of the Head of School) monitor the associates by meeting them on a regular basis during the teaching year to discuss any issues arising. Co-ordinators liaise with associates to generate learning materials, revise modules and manage the assessment process. The associate staff are supported by the administrative offices.

As a further development of the IPA's management of associates, arising from the Review of QA processes in 2016, the IPA has introduced new developments:

1. Associate Lecturer Handbook for purposes of induction and information resource. Handbook includes duties, responsibilities, timetables, deadlines, administrative processes, guidelines/protocols on teaching approaches and classroom management, grade descriptors and guidelines for assessing material and providing feedback to students.
2. Annual student feedback on the quality of teaching (pilot survey of recent graduates conducted in Spring 2017 and survey of 1500 'live' student conducted in April 2017 and annually thereafter).
3. Associate lecturers to evaluate on an annual basis the content and learning materials of the modules they teach and the quality of student performance (Part A & B of the Annual Module Review pro-forma completed by lecturers/examiners).

4. Opportunity in the annual module review pro-formas for associate staff to provide feedback on their academic experience (teaching, assessment and any other issues they wish to raise with co-ordinators).
5. IPA co-ordinators to complete special section of annual module review pro-forma (part C) confirming that they have also reviewed the module and associated extern comments, student feedback and evaluations completed by associate lecturers.

The IPA's use of associate staff, its focus on applied learning and its reputation in the public sector are an effective complement for the module and programme co-ordinators. Not only are the associate lecturers suitably qualified, but most of them are senior public sector officials, experienced professionals and tenured academics from other institutions who are interested in the connections between theory and practice in the respective sectors or organisations of their students. Furthermore, the fact that programme delivery occurs at weekends and in the evenings facilitates IPA associate staff. However, academic development of associate staff is a challenge for the Institute in terms of cost and expectation. The associate staff are busy professionals who have little capacity to take on further responsibilities.

To-date, the integrity and professionalism of IPA associates as expert practitioners have highly commended them to IPA students. And variations in the quality of teaching practice will continue to be managed by the module co-ordinators, who from 2017, will also have student feedback and deliberations from the Teaching, Learning & Assessment group to assist them to streamline teaching practices and standards across the associates they manage.

Despite the challenging environment faced by the IPA over the past decade, the service to students has always been kept to the forefront. The student satisfaction ratings attest to this. In the last comprehensive periodic survey of students in 2014 (conducted every 4 years), recent graduates and students gave a very high satisfaction rate for each of the programmes in increasing knowledge and understanding. Furthermore, across all questions, an average of 82% of respondents rated the Institute as either 'Very Good' or 'Good'. This ranges from 92% satisfaction ('Very Good' or 'Good') with the quality of programmes in increasing knowledge and understanding, 90% satisfaction with the quality of weekend seminars/tutorials, 89% satisfaction with the quality of evening classes at the IPA, and 84% satisfaction with the quality of distance education manuals to a comparatively lower, but still a majority, rating of 60% satisfaction with Moodle. There was also a high satisfaction rating with the efficiency of the administration and support services (86%), another important rating given the requirement for flexible and varied course delivery structures in the IPA.

## M. Support for Learners

### Criterion 7:

Institutions should ensure that the learning environment is appropriate to support student learning and a positive student experience generally. Learning resources should be updated and expanded as necessary to reflect up-to-date approaches and student needs. The range of learning resources and student supports should be reflected in a coherent and integrated framework and include: academic and pastoral supports; careers and other guidance; access to library, information and computing services/resources; and appropriate student representation opportunities for students to communicate feedback.

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Sections A and J

### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

Support for learners in the IPA needs to be understood in the context of the IPA's size and student profile. The IPA does not take students through the usual CAO post-leaving certificate route. The students are professionals in their thirties, forties and fifties engaged in full-time employment and studying part-time. They either take the programme at the IPA in the evenings and at weekends, or remotely through a blend of distance education and weekend tutorials. Some students also periodically attend classes on block-release from work during the week.

The IPA's physical size and human resources reflect the dispersed nature of programme delivery. The team of programme and module co-ordinators manage a larger team of associate lecturers who prepare distance education materials and teach classes at weekends and in the evening. The academic staff and students are supported by a tight and busy administrative office.

The learning and support environment for students in the IPA, therefore, naturally reflects the unique profile of its students. Significant resources are dedicated to ensuring a rich learning environment for the IPA's students. Supports are primarily academic and administrative in nature. The principal requirements from IPA students for a positive learning experience are that the programmes should have:

1. flexible programme delivery;
2. up-to-date course content, learning materials and classroom teaching from a combination of academics and industry practitioners, thus upholding academic standards and the applied learning ethos of the Institute;
3. a range of academic and student supports befitting the delivery methods, especially distance education, and appropriate to the profile and size of the Institute;
4. friendly, supportive and welcoming staff;
5. regular opportunity to provide feedback on programmes and quality of student support.

#### 1. Flexible programme delivery

IPA programmes are specifically designed for adults who want to obtain a nationally recognised qualification while keeping their various commitments. The IPA's students are professional learners; they are simultaneously studying, pursuing their careers, and attending to their family obligations. It is in recognition of their circumstances that the IPA delivers its programmes in flexible ways. What does this mean in practice?

First, it means that students can take a programme no matter where they live. While all students will attend the IPA campus for scheduled periods, they do not have to live in Dublin. Second, for our



undergraduate degree programmes, students can choose to study in the way that best suits their circumstances: they can attend evening lectures at the IPA campus, or they can take the programme through a blend of distance education and classes and, subject to availability, additional tutorials at a designated regional centre. Third, our undergraduate certificate and diploma programmes vary between those that require periodic weekday attendance and those that require periodic weekend attendance. The delivery method offered becomes another factor in programme choice. Finally, postgraduate students receive their tuition entirely through blended learning; their time on campus occurs at weekends.

Students also have control over the duration of a programme. They can opt to take their degree programmes by Subject Accumulation, which allows them the flexibility of completing the required subjects for a particular stage on a phased basis (over a number of years depending on the number of subjects taken) before being permitted to progress to the next stage of study (e.g. from stage 1 to stage 2). The reduced workload in a given academic year leaves students free to honour any other career, family or personal commitments while assuring them that they are accumulating credits towards the final award.

Subject Accumulation goes some way towards helping IPA students to negotiate work, family and financial pressures. However, given the student profile, greater accommodations are necessary. The IPA offers such students a leave of absence from the course for the remainder of the academic year or for the next academic year.

Finally, the IPA allows students, once the normal academic requirements are met, to enter programmes at different stages and/or to obtain exemptions from certain modules.

The fact that IPA offers such flexible ways of learning is an enormous support to students returning to education. It would simply not be possible for many of our students to obtain a qualification if a rigid 'one-size-fits-all' approach was taken to programme delivery. Lifelong learning is only possible if the regular responsibilities adults face are factored into programme provision. From the Institute's perspective of course, such flexibility brings very many, often competing, demands, including those around timetabling, classroom capacity, administration, staging of assessment, alignment between self-directed study and classroom tuition, the provision of high-quality learning material, and teaching methods that enable students work effectively on their own. The Institute strives to meet these demands, but they represent a significant challenge.

## **2. Up-to-date and high quality materials and teaching reflecting the IPA's applied learning ethos**

As most students are taking their programme through some form of blended learning, the IPA works to ensure that they receive course material that is accessible, interesting, up-to-date and in line with the module/programme learning objectives. Further information on the procedures that the IPA follows in reviewing and revising its learning materials can be found here in *Course Manual Review Policy & Procedures* (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

Course material consists of textbooks from commercial publishers and supplementary online resources, which is standard academic practice, but the IPA also supplies specially commissioned distance education manuals for each module. The course manual follows the agreed curriculum and aims to be an accessible and summative overview of a subject. The manual is printed at the IPA. Each manual is divided into lessons, with objectives, well-signposted content, self-assessment tools etc as standard. In this regard, the learning materials are not just learning tools but forms of student support. In the 2015 periodic survey of students, respondents singled out the policy of supplying distance education manuals as a very helpful asset and commented favourably on the value of obtaining the content of a course at the beginning of their module.

The distance education students are given, as part of their course fee, the above materials. They receive all the hardcopy material at their orientation seminar, so no time is lost sourcing the core textbooks, etc. Such measures mean that some of the familiar barriers to successful completion (e.g. extra costs) are overcome.

By the time students attend their orientation seminar, students will also have been registered on Moodle, the learning management system used by the IPA, and will have received their login details. Further details on Moodle and online support are below.

When students attend a seminar at the IPA, they are entitled to expect excellent and engaging teaching that both explains the subject at hand and prepares them for their self-directed study and research. The IPA's associate lecturers are very much aware that their students are 'time poor' and that seminars must make very efficient use of the allocated time. In addition to formal consultations at the start and end of the academic year, subject coordinators are in regular contact with associate lecturers, seeking updates on, for example, what was covered at a seminar, questions (administrative and academic) that students raised, and how, from the lecturer's perspective, a class is faring in its critical understanding of a module.

Students' views on whether the IPA lecturers are teaching in an excellent and engaging fashion are obtained through annual surveys.

The IPA is an institute of applied learning. The knowledge and skills that students gain are being applied to their professional lives. As a result, its associate teaching staff is a deliberate mix of academics and expert practitioners. This mix enables students to grasp the connections between theory and practices in their sector or organisation.

### **3. Academic and student supports**

#### Moodle, on-line learning & panopto videos

The IPA uses two main platforms to deliver online teaching and support to its students: Moodle and Panopto.

1. Moodle is a very well-established learning management system, generally seen as very stable from an IT perspective. The IPA has been using Moodle since 2007. In addition to providing students with all the requisite administrative information and with guidance on effective ways to study and undertake research and assignments, the site acts as a very comprehensive document repository. Should students miss a seminar or wish to re-familiarize themselves with a topic, they will find all the material – slides, handouts, recommended readings – used and referred to at a particular seminar on Moodle. Lecturers and subject coordinators also regularly upload journal articles, reports, weblinks, and so forth to Moodle.

While Moodle is a user-friendly platform, the importance of having expert administrators—versed in both front-end functionality and back-end technicalities—cannot be understated. The IPA also employs the services of a IT consulting company to assist it in with Moodle software upgrades and site design.

2. Panopto is a video recording platform for teaching that enables online lectures to be created and distributed with minimal hardware. Video presentations and lectures created with Panopto sit on Moodle. Increasingly, the IPA is providing online video lectures to supplement the hardcopy material students receive and the seminars they attend. These

lectures – which are mobile-responsive and do not require any third-party software – are accessed through Moodle. They currently focus on introducing modules and establishing core programme requirements, advising on academic writing and research, and preparing students in certain programmes for the topics to be covered at their seminar events.

Within the resources available to it, the Institute is committed—taking cognisance of both student views and the developing literature on the efficacy or otherwise of such modes of learning—to increasing the quantity and quality of its online support. Further detail on the Institute’s plans and procedures around online learning are outlined, in summary form, under Criterion 10, Part IV: Systematic review and revision of learning materials.

#### Co-ordinator support

The bulk of academic support is provided by the programme and module coordinators as well as the assistant registrar and the Head of the Whitaker School. From 2017, as a further enhancement of its induction practices, associate lecturers will be provided with a handbook, which details the support and guidance that they are expected to give students. The handbook is currently in draft format and is largely updated from an earlier version.

#### Guidance Notes

In addition to the general support provided by subject and course coordinators, as well as associate lecturers, academic support is also provided in specific contexts such as inductions for first year students, guidance notes for Distance Education students, and students involved in writing assignments and dissertations.

#### The student/supervisor relationship

The student/supervisor relationship is a particularly important one requiring time and care. The IPA recognises this and has its own separate guidelines on Dissertation Supervision. These specialised, context specific guidelines clarify the requirements of both the supervisor and student, and thus ensure that students conducting research receive adequate support.

#### Administrative office

Students are supported by a tightly organised and busy centralised administrative office, a ‘one-stop-shop’ for students and staff that manages registrations, payments, student records, lecture arrangements and timetables, course handbooks, assessment administration and conferring. Work in the office is largely determined by the stage of the academic cycle in play at a particular point.

The centralised and co-ordinated academic administration facilitates greater effectiveness and efficiency in staff-student relations. Busy professionals, who are ‘time poor’, can receive a range of services at the one point. Staff also become familiar with students and recognise how their responses to student problems can impact on many aspects of the student’s life. Students have traditionally rated the efficient and friendly customer service very high. For instance, 91% of the MA degree graduates in 2016 rated the administrative services as ‘very good’ or ‘good’; 95% of the 2016 BA degree graduates rated the administrative services as ‘very good’ or ‘good’; 96% of the BBS graduates rated the administrative services as ‘very good’ or ‘good’.

These results carried through in the 2016-2017 survey. For instance 95% of year 1 BA students rated the administrative office as ‘very good’ or ‘good’, with 98% of their stage 4 counterparts rating the same. In Year 1 of the MA, 92% of students rated the administrative office as ‘very good’ or ‘good’, with similar figures (89%) rating the same in the Year 2 of the MA.

### 2015/2016 Survey Results

Programme	BA4	BBS4	MA2	MSc2
How would you rate the services provided by the administrative office?	95%	96%	91%	100%

### 2016/2017 Survey Results

Programme	BA1	BA2	BA3	BA4	BBS1	BBS2	BBS3	BBS4	MA1	MA2	MSc1	MSc2
How would you rate the service provided by the administrative office?	95%	88%	82%	98%	63%	90%	73%	88%	92%	89%	84%	100%

N.B. The above represents the percentage of students in each programme who responded to the relevant question as Very Good or Good.

#### Library and electronic resources

The IPA Library contains books, periodicals, reports, and statistical data on a wide range of subjects, including law, politics, economics, management, accounting, criminology, the EU, healthcare, finance, local government, and sociology. There are two reading rooms and comprehensive computer and printing services. IPA librarians are on hand to assist students in their studies and can be contacted by phone, by email or in person.

The Library provides information, reference and lending services to IPA students, members and staff. A postal service is available to distance education students and to students studying at regional centres. The Library catalogue can be accessed from the IPA website—[www.ipa.ie](http://www.ipa.ie)—as well as from computers in the Library. Requests for books and articles can be placed by email, fax, telephone or in person. Up to three books may be borrowed for two weeks, and books that are already on loan can be reserved. In addition, copies of books on certificate, diploma and degree course reading lists are available for reference.

Full-text electronic databases and journals are available to students by clicking on the Electronic Resources button of the Library catalogue. These include Ebsco Business Source Premier, a searchable database that provides full-text access to more than 7,400 scholarly business journals, covering management, public management, economics, finance and accounting. The Library also provides wireless internet access for students using laptops. For *Library Policy, Procedures and Charter* see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#).

#### Students with learning difficulties/disabilities

Inclusiveness and equality is central to the Institute's policy. The IPA does not discriminate on any of the grounds outlined in the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015. The Institute has relevant provisions on equality and diversity, and disability, in both its *Admissions Policy* and *Learner Charter*.

The IPA, in so far as is practicable within its resources, makes special accommodation for students with disabilities. The Institute does not have a dedicated disability officer, but the administration team under the supervision of the administration manager and assistant registrar accommodates students with learning difficulties/disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Such support is conventionally provided for in assessments where students are provided with a computer, a scribe or additional time during the exams, whichever is required. As far as possible, and within the constrained resources of the Institute, other services have been provided in the past: sign language interpreters etc. In 2017, the IPA carried out a disability access audit to assist in the improvement of its provision in the area of disability awareness and accommodation.

### On-campus facilities

As well as the library the IPA has a modern business centre with computers, printing and faxing facilities all available. Students are also provided with access to online learning facilities through the Moodle platform, this allows students to access lecture PowerPoints, suggested readings and additional notes, as well as uploading assignment among many other functions. Wireless internet access is provided throughout the institute.

Lecture rooms are modern, bright, with significant amounts of natural light, and contain up-to-date teaching aids: whiteboards, flip charts, document cameras, large AV screens, computer for lecturers and internet access. Computer rooms come fully equipped with modern desktop computers (and partitioned if necessary) to accommodate up to 60 students.

#### **4. Friendly, supportive and welcoming staff**

In survey feedback and recommendations, students have consistently singled out the IPA's personalised approach in its dealings with students, whether in the classroom, library, administrative offices or reception areas. The IPA recognises that the needs of its part-time students, as mature professionals, are different to more conventional students in their early twenties, who are often living away from home. For instance, IPA students do not demand on-campus medical and psychological services, as they avail of these services in their communities and workplaces. The IPA provides social spaces and a canteen with complimentary tea/coffee and biscuits. There have been no requests from students for on-campus clubs and societies, reflecting the limited spare time professionals have outside their classroom commitments, which mainly occur in the evenings after work and at weekends.

IPA students expect the Institute to be understanding about their circumstances as professionals, home-carers and students. They want the IPA to take account of these circumstances when classes are timetabled and academic deadlines are set. They expect the IPA to have structures to accommodate them when they face difficulties at work or at home. They need IPA staff to be understanding and flexible in these circumstances. Accordingly, the Institute implements a strong customer service, and all new staff are informed about the IPA student-centred ethos and structures.

#### **5. Opportunity to provide feedback on programmes and quality of student support**

##### Student surveys

Prior to 2016, the IPA conducted periodic student evaluation every 4 years. In 2017, the IPA introduced a system of annual evaluation to complement the periodic evaluation, as recommended in the internal Review of QA Processes in 2016 and reflected in the updated *Student Feedback and Participation Policy & Procedures* (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

The annual questionnaire evaluates overall programme satisfaction, but is designed to gather information on specific modules, such as the quality of teaching and learning materials; assessment & feedback; academic support and learning resources. In preparation for the introduction of the annual evaluation, the IPA conducted a pilot survey in the Spring of 2017, targeted at 840 graduates from 2016 (response rate: 49%).

The IPA then proceeded to survey 1500 current students about the modules they have undertaken in the 2016-2017 academic year. The annual student feedback has formed part of the overall assessment criteria that a module and programme co-ordinator utilises when conducting the module review and completing their review pro-forma (see below). This process will occur annually.

The IPA will also continue to conduct a periodic evaluation of students. The survey of the student body – both live students and recent graduates – will obviously evaluate the quality of teaching, learning materials and student support in more depth than the annual version, but it will continue to focus on broader concerns such as programme structure, delivery methods, assessment strategies, relevance to a learner’s profession, academic support, and related student experience of the Institute: quality of infrastructure, administration and student support services. The last periodic survey was conducted in 2014 [See [IPA Public Information](#) for the report]. The next, due in 2018-2019, will be preceded by a review of questions to ensure they both complement the standardised annual survey, and reflect international benchmarks such as the CEQ (Course Experience Questionnaire) in Australia and the NSS (National Student Survey) in the UK.

#### Student representation

Students are represented on the Education Committee, IPA Board and Audit sub-committees. Students are also represented on the IPA-UCD Joint Academic Programme Board. The IPA is introducing staff/student Representative Groups to facilitate student input to programme delivery and related QA policies, procedures, guidelines and regulations on a more systematic basis. It will allow students to raise issues about content or delivery, and bring students and staff together on a more structured basis to resolve them. By getting such feedback, programme co-ordinators are in a strong position to manage the student’s academic experience by responding to difficulties as they arise. More information on Staff-Student Representative Groups is outlined in *Student Feedback and Participation: Policy & Procedures* (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

#### Review mechanisms

A range of data reports continuously feed into programme planning and effective quality enhancement in the area of student support. The following is a list of statistics and information disseminated by the Head of the Whitaker School and assistant registrar in support of self-monitoring at programme level:

- Student feedback reports generated from the results of the annual and periodic student surveys.
- Student enrolment, advanced entry, progression rates and examination statistics prepared by the assistant registrar.
- Annual module reviews and programme reviews.

The mechanisms for generating and reviewing these reports are outlined in Sections C and P.

Notwithstanding the measures taken by the IPA to build up the range and quality of its student support, the area remains a challenging one for the Institute. The IPA is small and integrated enough to offer students an efficient and friendly service, and this is a distinct advantage for our students. The Institute’s reputation, public sector expertise and its flexible education delivery options are critical for our students. But the blend of distance education and weekend classes inevitably brings its own difficulties. Students need to be self-disciplined and motivated. They need to compensate for the fact that some subjects lend themselves better towards distance education (social science subjects) than other numerical and legal type subjects do. While the IPA engages in induction exercises to prepare students for blended learning, their journey is harder and, consequently, their perception of student support is different and will never reach the rating level provided by a class-based student. The IPA was made aware of this during the comprehensive survey of students and graduates in 2015. While over 74% of respondents rated academic support as either ‘Very Good’ or ‘Good’, individual respondents stated that they would like more tuition time and guidance, and some indicated confusion about what type of academic support was available to them outside weekend contact.

Ironically, our examination statistics reveal that these students do equally well as the class-based students in examinations. In the BA degree programme, for example, there was little difference in the exam success rate between IPA-based and distance education students across the 5 years under review 2011-2015. If anything, distance education students had marginally better exam success rates. However, in terms of grades, IPA-based students had marginally higher combined 1H and 2H1s than distance students. 1Hs in general were particularly low across both tuition methods. These results also revealed lower completion rates for stage 1 students in comparison to other stages. [See [IPA Public Information](#)].

The IPA is conscious of these pressures, and staff are continually exploring ways of further developing the range of available supports to the vulnerable groups. The assistant registrar, distance education specialist/editor and some faculty members have visited higher education institutions with similar profiles to learn about their range of student mentoring supports. The IPA has also developed a policy on student support to underpin the continuous work necessary to support all students, but most particularly the blended learning students.

In the past twelve months, the IPA has increased tuition on some of its modules that students find most difficult; this development arose on foot of a recommendation resulting from the 2015 periodic student survey. Also, in that survey, over 60% of respondents rated Moodle as 'Very Good' or 'Good'. While still a majority rating, this was much lower than the positive ratings in other areas and elicited suggestions for improvement. Both 'live' students and graduates indicated the IPA should make greater use of digital technologies; greater use of Moodle among lecturers; and greater promotion of Moodle in the IPA. [See [IPA Public Information](#)]. Consequently, the Institute has increased its range of on-line videos, as outlined earlier, and has put in place an e-learning plan.

## N. Information and Data Management

### Criterion 8:

Reliable information and data should be available to inform decision making and to ensure that the linked provider knows what is working well and what needs attention. Controls and structures should be in place to generate specific data/reports for the management of self-monitoring and planning processes. Evidence should also be provided that relates to, for example: information systems to support data capture and analysis e.g. progression data; KPIs; student information systems e.g. maintain secure student records; policies and procedures for data protection and freedom of information requests.

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Section A, C & P

### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

As outlined in detail in Section C and Section P (Criterion 10), the IPA uses a number of different data sets to inform its decision-making across the different levels of the organisation. The information gathered is used in support of programme planning and effective quality enhancement. The main data collected includes:

- Enrolment and advanced entry figures
- Examination statistics
- Extern examiner feedback
- Student feedback
- Annual module reviews
- Education activity summaries for the IPA Board, IPA Annual Report, Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, Comptroller & Auditor General

Underpinning the IPA's information and data management activity are:

1. Data policies
2. Information systems to capture data
3. Mechanisms to generate & review evidence and data

#### 1. Data Policies

The IPA has a Privacy Policy and a Student Data – Privacy & Confidentiality Statement in place (see [here](#)). The implementation of the policy was audited by the Institute's internal auditors in 2016. The auditors focussed on collection, storage and dissemination of student information. The outcome was favourable, with minor recommendations arising. The Institute has implemented these recommendations, e.g. communicating to students that the IPA complies with data protection requirements. In preparing for its responsibilities under GDPR, set to come into force in May 2018, the IPA has been guided by public service codes and publications.

#### 2. Information systems to capture data

The IPA's long-standing student management system was custom-made and built on a Microsoft access platform. In 2015, the Institute introduced a new student management system, with greater reporting functionality. The new student management system is a system developed by an Information Systems Company, Tribal Group. Tribal operate internationally in more than 55 countries and serve over a thousand higher education, further education and vocational institutions. The Institute avails of Tribal's offering for smaller institutions called EBS.

The primary function of EBS is to maintain student records. These records include student data, programme/subject details, exams results etc. Other functions include:



- Enquiries
- On-line Applications
- Programme Calendar
- Timetabling
- Attendance register
- Curriculum configuration

The administration office under the direction of the assistant registrar ensures that comprehensive learner information on the database is maintained securely and accurately. Learner information is controlled through systematic data checks against application forms (control reporting exercise). Students are made aware of the importance of accurate contact information, especially as memos, timetables, exam results and graduation parchments require the correct name and address.

In 2015, the internal auditors reviewed the student records and payments system in place. The outcome was favourable, with minor recommendations arising.

### 3. Systems to generate and review evidence and data

The IPA has instituted set timelines and procedures for gathering and reviewing data for accountability and enhancement purposes. Many of these procedures have already been outlined in detail in Section C and Section P (Criterion 10). See the table below for a summary of key activity. This data in its totality is considered as part of the periodic quality review by the Institute and this information enables self-monitoring and planning at programme, school and Institute level.

Key Data Activity	Collection period	Collection Mechanism	Responsibility	Data Considered by	Wider Audience
Enrolment and advanced entry figures	Enrolment Figures: September/October	Student management system	Registry Office	Head of School & Assistant Registrar	IPA Management & Education Committee & IPA Board
	RPL Data: November			Faculty	Education Committee & IPA-UCD JAPB
Examination statistics	Every 5 years for formal report	Student management system	Registry Office	Faculty Committee & Education Committee & IPA-UCD JAPB	Executive Summary made available to Students & General Public
	Annually post-exam boards	Student management system			
Extern examiner Reports	March-June (extern engagement with IPA co-ordinators)	Contact with programme co-ordinators.	Accrediting body	Programme co-ordinators	Faculty
	Annually extern engagement with accrediting body post-exam board period	Accrediting body collects Extern reports and forwards them to IPA		Head of School	

<b>Student Feedback</b>	Annually (April-May)	Survey Monkey Survey Monkey	Registry Office	Programme Co-ordinators	Faculty
	Periodic survey every 4-5 years			Faculty Committee & Education Committee & IPA-UCD JAPB	Executive Summary made available to Students & General Public
<b>Annual Module Reviews</b>	Annually (May-June)	Pro-Formas submitted by lecturers/examiners	Programme Co-ordinators	Programme Co-ordinators & Head of School	Faculty & Extern Examiners

## O. Public Information and Communication

### Criterion 9:

Public information refers to the information that linked providers communicate and publish about their activities, including their education and training programmes, research and related services; their quality assurance policies, procedures and reports relating to quality review and other appropriate quality evaluation processes. Public information should be clear, accurate, objective, current and accessible. What are the processes to review and update information?

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Sections A,B,D & E

### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

The Institute of Public Administration is committed to operating in an open and transparent manner. To this end, the Institute endeavours to provide timely, accurate, relevant and easily accessible information about its objectives, purpose and activities to both internal and external stakeholders, which include staff, advisory and oversight committees and boards, and current and prospective students.

On a corporate level, the IPA publishes its annual reports on the IPA website. The Corporate section of the website also contains information on IPA Board members, corporate responsibility, freedom of information, privacy statement, and IPA Scheme 2015 – 2018 Under Section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003. See <https://www.ipa.ie/about-us/corporate.2328.html>. The latest Institute Strategic Plan 2017-21 contains a number of strategic objectives that promote communications and public engagement – development of a marketing & communications strategy and the development of a stakeholder engagement strategy ([Strategic Plan 2017-2021](#)).

Each year, in its undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses, the IPA publishes descriptions of programmes, qualification titles and levels, admission requirements, fees and payment methods, progression routes, tuition methods and locations, module summaries and means of assessment. The information is clearly laid out and contains details to facilitate prospective students make a choice about a programme. These pages are replicated on the IPA website [www.ipa.ie](http://www.ipa.ie).

Enrolled students receive academic calendars, timetables, reading lists, course requirements, regulations, and related assessment and disciplinary policy and procedures in print form and electronically via moodle. For blended learning students the IPA produces their entire suite of lectures in the form of chapterised lessons in a distance education manual. Thus, uniquely, students are aware of the detailed content of the programme from the beginning.

On foot of recommendations made in the IPA's 2016 Review of QA Processes, the Institute has developed its Public Information and Communication activity, as follows:

- 1) It now has a *Public Information Policy* in place (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).
- 2) The IPA website has been redesigned; all QA policies and procedures are now publicly available, thus enhancing public confidence (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).
- 3) For prospective students, there is a wide variety of supporting documents relating to the student lifecycle included on the IPA website e.g. distance learning study guides and exam preparation guidance.
- 4) While module summaries and key programme facts appear in application brochures and on the website, the IPA is in the process of working with all module and programme coordinators to ensure that correct and up-to-date module descriptors are publically available (under discussion).

- 5) The website will also accommodate Institutional Reviews, and Quality Improvement Plans as these are conducted under the 2012 QQA Act.
- 6) Presently, QA related reports on examination statistics and student surveys are available to IPA faculty members in the Institute's internal system (and circulated to members of relevant oversight committees for discussion at meetings). A sample of these can be consulted [See [IPA Public Information](#)].
- 7) The website also provides information on the Institute's research and book publications. In Ireland, the research team work extensively with government departments, state agencies and local government. Two major research streams of note are the State of the Public Service research series, and the Local Government research series, reports from both of which are available from [www.ipa.ie](http://www.ipa.ie). The IPA also has an extensive list of publications in the fields of public administration, public policy and social studies.

The IPA has processes in place to update all its programme details and QA policies and procedures. The distance education specialist/editor, who is responsible for the application brochure and website, works with the relevant academic and administrative staff to update programme details on an annual basis (each spring) for the following academic year. Changes in course content or the development of new courses or changes to existing course design will be immediately reflected in the Institute's website and literature. Any changes required during the course of the academic year will be notified to students individually.

The IPA has a system for reviewing and updating QA policies and procedures. The formal system does not preclude any continuous corrective action required during the course of the academic year on foot of informal student, faculty and stakeholder feedback and changes in legislation. Under the new system, every policy and procedure has a 'commencement date', 'date of next review' and 'revision history' to provide version control and to facilitate monitoring. Each policy and procedure also has a Policy Owner who is ultimately responsible, in conjunction with the quality team, for ensuring that a review is carried out. The *Governance, Oversight & QA Framework Policy* outlines the means by which the review will be conducted (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)). Updated policies and procedures will be published on the new website, replacing the obsolete versions. Such changes will be brought to the attention of students and all relevant stakeholders.

## P. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

### Criterion 10:

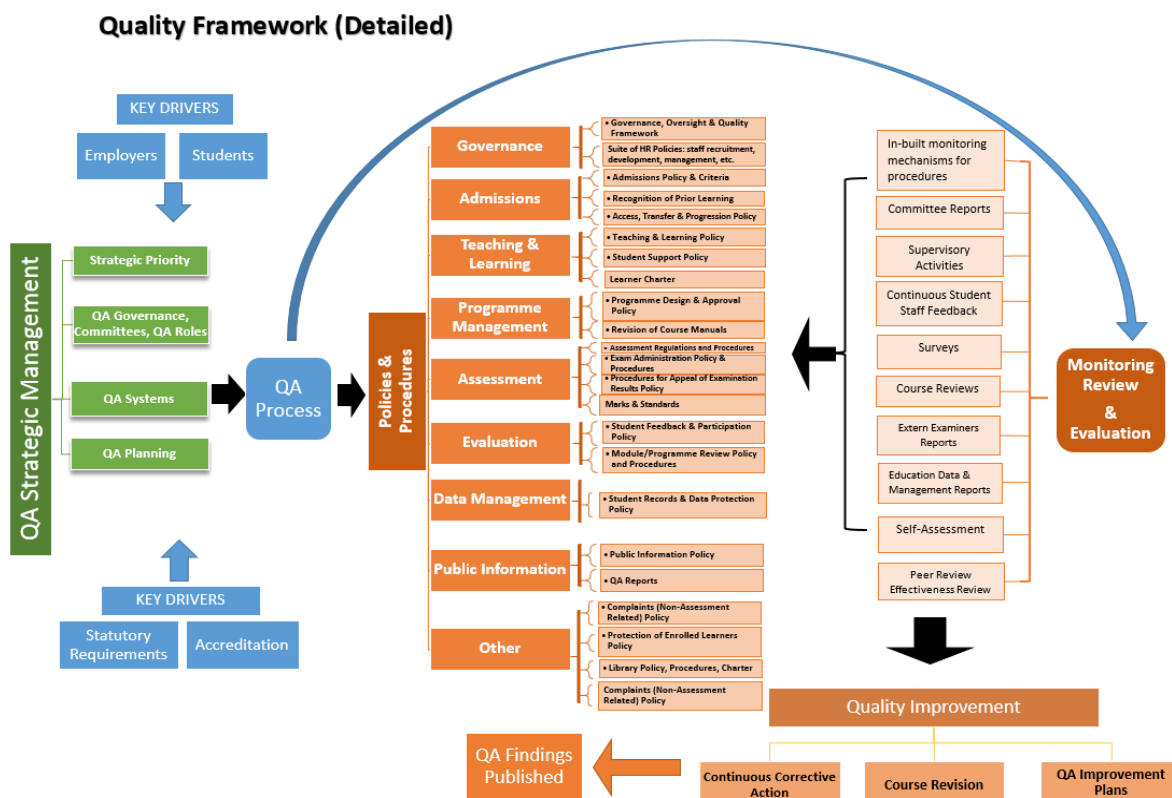
Review and self-evaluation of quality (both internal and external processes), including review of programmes of education, training and research and related services, is a fundamental part of a providers quality assurance system. The purpose of such self-evaluation includes monitoring standards and the student experience; ensuring that modules and programmes remain up-to-date; to identify areas that need improvement; and to evaluate the effectiveness of the quality assurance mechanisms used. This monitoring and review should lead to continuous improvement of the institutions provision and supporting systems. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Sections A, C, D & E

### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

The Institute's programmes are designed to meet the evolving needs of public sector professional learners. These programmes require constant monitoring and review to ensure that they remain relevant and effective. Advances in knowledge alter the scope and content of courses and the angles of enquiry; changing social contexts require more appropriate sets of skills for learners; and the changing profile of the student, particularly the working student, in an era of lifelong learning, demands more flexible and effective tuition arrangements.

If continuous improvement is the goal of a Quality Assurance process, then self-evaluation and review are the necessary mechanisms to gather the supporting evidence for the monitoring and enhancement of standards and the student experience. The illustration below captures the QA system in place in the IPA, a system which recognises monitoring and evaluation as a key part of the infrastructure.



The detailed components occupying the centre ground constitute the policies and procedures for governance, HR, admissions, programme management, assessment etc. Identified on the right-hand side are the key activities that enable us to monitor and evaluate the academic standards and delivery provided for in the policies and procedures. The findings and related action points for self-improvement are outlined at the bottom of the illustration. Such action points come in the form of continuous corrective action from staff supervision and staff-student feedback during programme delivery; module and programme enhancements on foot of extern reports, annual module reviews, programme reviews, student surveys, exam statistics; and formal programme and Institute evaluations and QA improvement plans.

The IPA has multiple means of monitoring standards and the student experience, and for identifying areas of strength and weakness. These means include formal and informal (or routine management) exercises and internal and external assessments. Together, they constitute a monitoring and review system.

1. Routine (informal) monitoring occurs at the level of day-to-day course management through –
  - a) management and supervision of staff fulfilling their academic and support roles:
    - the IPA's close management chain from Head of School to programme/module coordinator to associate lecturer, as outlined under General Section A, underpins the effectiveness of the monitoring regime in place;
    - full-time staff are subject to performance reviews;
    - the structure of the administrative support offices whereby students and staff have a 'one-stop-shop' for all services also guarantees tight control under the direction of the assistant registrar and Head of School/Registrar.
  - b) continuous feedback from students and staff during the delivery of a programme;
    - the IPA's student profile – as experienced practitioners in a variety of policy-making and service delivery roles – marks them out as vocal and able respondents. The IPA's intimate size and course management structure ensures that we can swiftly and flexibly adjust delivery to accommodate any issues arising; eg by providing extra tuition and support; by adjusting learning materials; by resolving disputes with lecturers or examiners.
  - c) regular and minuted progress reports to the oversight and advisory committees such as the Education Committee and IPA-UCD JAPB;
    - progress reports on the educational activity and QA work are standing items on agendas. These committees are also provided with regular QA related reports e.g student surveys, examination statistics etc. These committees have student representatives.
  - d) teaching, administrative and management staff adhering to the implementation and monitoring mechanisms identified at the front of each set of policies and procedures, and holding evidence for such action as specified;
    - following recommendations made in the IPA 2016 Review of QA Processes, the IPA has introduced, at the beginning of each set of academic policies and procedures, explicit reference to the purpose and nature of the document and the mechanisms by which the relevant procedures will be implemented and monitored, thus providing version control and clarity for internal staff and stakeholders around purpose, status, action and responsibility.

2. The IPA gives appropriate consideration to the findings of formal internal and external evaluation. Findings are analysed in a co-ordinated and strategic way at various levels within the IPA, with clear follow-up procedures for improvement (action plans) feeding into other forms of evaluation and also feeding into decision-making at higher-levels.

Monitoring as a result of periodic evaluation encompasses:

- I. Student evaluation of IPA programmes and services, which feeds into the annual module reviews and programme reviews;
- II. Analysis of examination statistics, student feedback used by the IPA for accountability and enhancement purposes;
- III. Mechanisms for annual external feedback on assessment via external examiner reports;
- IV. Systematic review and revision of learning materials to comply with our extensive provision of distance education material to students;
- V. Continuous curriculum review and enhancement;

### **I. Student evaluation of IPA programmes & services**

Prior to 2016, the IPA conducted periodic student evaluation every 4-5 years. In 2017, the IPA introduced a system of annual evaluation to complement the periodic evaluation, as recommended in the internal Review of QA Processes and reflected in the updated *Student Feedback and Participation Policy & Procedures*.

The annual questionnaire evaluates overall programme satisfaction, but is designed to gather information on specific modules, such as the quality of teaching and learning materials; assessment & feedback; academic support and learning resources. In preparation for the introduction of the annual evaluation, the IPA conducted a pilot survey in the Spring of 2017, targeted at 840 graduates from 2016 (response rate: 49%).

When framing the annual survey, the objective was to balance brevity with effectiveness – in other words, make it quick and easy for the students to complete and for the IPA to analyse, while capturing genuinely useful information that would feed into the annual module reviews, which we also introduced for the 2016-2017 academic year. The survey questions finally approved by Faculty were influenced by standardised course evaluation surveys in higher education in the UK and Australia – the CEQ and the NSS. The CEQ (Course Experience Questionnaire) was developed in Australia in the 1990s and is used widely in Australia and the UK. The NSS (National Student Survey) was developed in the UK and has been used by every university there since 2005.

The IPA has progressed beyond the pilot survey and, in 2017, completed a survey of 1525 students about the modules they have undertaken in the 2016-2017 academic year (response rate: 63%). The annual student feedback for 2017, and subsequent feedback, forms part of the overall assessment criteria that a module and programme co-ordinator utilises when conducting the module review and completing their review pro-forma (see below). This process will occur annually.

The IPA will also continue to conduct a periodic evaluation of students. The survey of the student body –both live students and recent graduates – will obviously evaluate the quality of teaching, learning materials and student support in more depth than the annual version, but it will continue to focus on broader concerns such as programme structure, delivery methods, assessment strategies, relevance to a learner’s profession, academic support, and related student experience of the Institute: quality of infrastructure, administration and student support services. The last periodic survey was conducted in 2014 [See report at [IPA Public Information](#)]. The next, due in 2018-19, will be preceded by a review of questions to ensure they both complement the standardised annual survey, and reflect

international benchmarks such as the CEQ (Course Experience Questionnaire) in Australia and the NSS (National Student Survey) in the UK.

Feedback from the periodic evaluations is systematically analysed. The results are presented as a report to the Faculty Committee, which reviews the findings and approves action points arising. The report and action points are presented to the oversight and advisory bodies such as the Joint IPA-UCD Academic Programme Board and Education Committee as part of the standing discussion items on quality. Control of the report is managed by the assistant registrar and quality team: they record observations from the committees and progress on action points. The report and action points also form part of the overall assessment criteria that a programme co-ordinator utilises when conducting a programme review, but these periodic reports also feed into the more regular annual module reviews.

## **II. Analysis of examination statistics, student feedback**

As outlined in Sections C and D, a key part of the IPA's monitoring and enhancement of standards and performance is the analysis of data and trends. As stated above, periodic evaluation of students is a long-standing mechanism used by the IPA to generate evidence for QA enhancement. Another key mechanism is an analysis of examination statistics.

While the IPA gathers examination statistics on an annual basis, these are framed in a report every five years. The last set of reports were generated in 2015 for the academic years 2010/11 to 2014/15. The exam results for 5,650 undergraduate students were examined across the BA (Hons), BBS (Hons) and one-year specialised Certificate and Diploma programmes. In respect of postgraduate programmes, the results for approximately 700 students were examined. [See [IPA Public Information](#)]. Each of these reports contained an issues arising section to assist with programme enhancement. These reports passed through the Faculty Committee and oversight and advisory committees such as the IPA-UCD JAPB and Education Committee. The relevant programme co-ordinators held the responsibility of implementing the recommendations. Furthermore, these reports and action points form part of the overall assessment criteria that a module and programme co-ordinator utilises when conducting the module review or programme review.

Following the 2016 QA Review, the IPA has instituted a log to accompany such reports to maintain a record of:

- (i) key groups/committees that discussed the findings and agreed the action points, and
- (ii) progress in relation to the action points.

The IPA will make the executive summary for such reports (agreed by faculty and also reviewed by oversight bodies) available on the IPA website, as appropriate.

## **III. Extern Examiner Feedback**

Extern Examiner Feedback is an essential independent means by which quality is verified and enhanced within the IPA in the course of the academic year. The role of the extern examiner provides for appropriate levels of external judgement on academic standards with reference to national peer institutions. The underpinning policy and procedures for this form of evaluation can be found in *Marks & Standards* (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

The extern examiners approve the standard of assessment questions and their alignment with the stated objectives and outcomes of a module. They review grading patterns of examiners, and they benchmark student performance against peer institutions. The observations and judgements of the extern examiners, arising from the review of student work, play a role in enhancing modules and



programmes. Observations can assist in determining the continued relevancy of course topics, learning outcomes and assessment methodologies. This is why the IPA has a mechanism for utilising their expertise and advice. Extern feedback forms part of the overall assessment criteria that a module and programme co-ordinator utilises when conducting the module reviews in May/June following the principal assessment period for exams. The Institute also engages externs in broader reviews of modules/programmes as necessary.

Furthermore, the official Extern Examiner Reports, which the externs submit to the awarding body after the examination board meetings, are reviewed in UCD according to UCD's own review policy. These reports are then forwarded to the Director General of the IPA with observations later in the autumn and circulated to the relevant co-ordinators for discussion at Faculty Committee meetings. The co-ordinators take responsibility to make any recommended adjustments to their modules not already addressed in the module review exercise at the end of the previous academic year.

Further information on the appointment of externs, their duties and length of service can be found in section Q, Criterion 11.3 [Expert panellists and extern examiners](#).

#### **IV. Systematic review and revision of learning materials**

IPA students taking their programme through blended learning receive comprehensive course material. There are three main components: a specially commissioned course manual for each module, an essential textbook from a commercial publisher for each module, and supplementary online material and support.

##### ***Course Manuals***

The course manual follows the agreed curriculum and aims to be an accessible and summative overview of a subject. The manual is printed at the IPA.

The provision of course manuals imposes important disciplines on academic staff. It ensures that all courses are committed to paper, in a relatively comprehensive form, in advance of the commencement of the programmes. The provision of manuals also acts as an important quality-control mechanism, not just for the process of blended learning but also for the delivery of seminars and tutorials and the setting of assignments and examinations. It is most useful that, in advance of the academic year, academic staff have worked through the course material to arrive at well-informed judgements about the content (especially areas that, as exam statistics and other metrics show, students find difficult), the pacing of learning, the essential textbooks that students receive as part of their fee, the choice of assessments and the extent to which the course is successfully meeting the learning objectives.

The review and revision of course manuals are the responsibility of the subject coordinators. However, in acknowledgement of the considerable challenges involved in revising and printing a very large number of manuals, the Institute employs, as part of its academic faculty, an editor/distance education specialist.

Systematic review and revision of course materials involves cooperation and formal meetings between the editor, the module coordinator and the lecturer, and are agreed by the Head of School. Efforts to continuously improve the quality of course material and to align with revised quality assurance procedures, however, including more robust procedures on evidence gathering and documentation, have resulted recently in the development of a new process. This is set out in the *Course Manual Review Policy & Procedures* (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)). The review and

revision process is now fully incorporated into the annual module review. That review is a more rigorous, data-driven exercise.

- The annual module review completed by subject coordinators determines, among other things, whether a manual is to be reviewed and the scale of that revision.
- If a manual is to be revised, module coordinators—with reference to the data from examiners, student feedback, and their own analysis—document, on a Module Review Form, their judgment on the scale of the revision that a manual requires and its particularities.
- If the revision is deemed minor (*i.e.* it principally involves remedying typographical errors, minor content errors and/or making minor updates), the coordinator records this fact on the module review pro-forma and consults with the editor on implementing the relevant changes, having regard to stock levels, production processes, etc.
- If the revision is deemed major, the subject coordinator, after recording this fact on the module review pro-forma, must complete a Manual Review Form.
- A clear series of steps, as outlined in the procedures referred to above, then follows.

Given the number of manuals that are printed each year, it is only possible to revise a select number each year. However, the *Procedures for Creating and Revising Course Manuals* provide clear documentary evidence for what action has been taken and what action remains to be taken.

### **Textbooks**

Choice of essential textbook is determined by the lecturer and module coordinator. Textbooks are chosen on the basis of their applicability to the module objectives and the programme level, their complementarity with the course manual, and their general standing in the academic literature. Where relevant (and possible), textbooks that have an Irish dimension are preferred. The IPA buys textbooks in bulk and provides them free to distance education students at orientation seminars.

Analysis of the textbook provided for a module is based on the annual module review. Lecturers can state, in the narrative, any problems with the textbook that their students receive. However, the most appropriate and preferred time to replace a textbook is when a manual is being revised. When a textbook is to be replaced, the subject coordinator can order review copies of different titles so that the lecturer can make an informed judgment on the books available.

### **Online Support**

The IPA policy on online support, which notes the broad approach that the Institute takes to the use of technology to teach and support our students, is currently under review. This policy makes clear the Institute favours a complementary model, where classroom time and hardcopy material are supported, not replaced, by online modalities.

As noted earlier in the section on Student Support, the IPA currently uses two main systems for online support of programmes: Moodle and Panopto. Moodle is a well-established learning management system. Panopto is a video lecture and webinar platform. The Institute has made good use of Moodle across all of its programmes for many years. There are distinct pages for each programme, and students only see material relevant to them. The IPA Moodle site is easily navigable and is unencumbered by software requirements. The IPA's use of Panopto has successfully moved through a pilot phase and is being rolled out.

The responsibility for the online support provided on a programme lies, as with all the other elements, with the module coordinator. However, given the particular pedagogical, technical and resource issues that online provision raises, it is necessary to have proper fora where information can be shared and different perspectives aired. The deliberations and recommendations of these fora can then, via

faculty and other meetings, be relayed to subject coordinators and their opinions canvassed. In this way, a virtuous circle is created, one that contributes to quality assurance in this area.

While various members of staff had been involved in the provision of online material over several years, the Institute, in 2016, recognised the need to review its policies and procedures in this area. The result was an Institute-wide E-learning Committee. Three members of the IPA's Teaching, Learning & Assessment Group sit on the E-learning Committee. They make sure that the direction and plans agreed at the latter are aligned with the broader pedagogical assessments of the former.

The E-learning Committee has a very practical focus and is tasked with: reviewing the Institute's current practice around the online elements of programmes, recommending what specific online resources should be incorporated into IPA programmes, and suggesting how any changes might best be achieved.

With regard to Moodle, the E-learning Committee has suggested that the Institute should:

- Retain and improve the two online systems (Moodle and Panopto) it uses rather than move to any of the various alternatives eg Adobe Connect, Camtasia, Blackboard.
- Review the design and appearance of the IPA Moodle site. While the current site is clear and easily navigable, more recent versions of Moodle allow aesthetic and design improvements. This will be completed in 2018.
- Establish a new Service Level Agreement with an IT consultancy company to ensure that moodle software is upgraded as often as necessary and that the site is secure from cyberthreats.
- Streamline and clearly demarcate the lines of responsibility for providing programme content on Moodle and for administering the site. This is under review and currently being considered by management.
- Provide continual annual training to academic and administrative staff on using Moodle and Panopto.
- Add to the library of video lectures already created on Panopto, focusing on lectures around orientation, module introduction, and student support. In this regard, project plans are in development and have to be brought to Faculty.
- Ensure that these lectures follow an established format and have high production values.
- Improve mechanisms and protocols so that video lectures are watched by students. Research has shown that in the absence of clear direction, on-line content can go unused. The IPA plans to incorporate explanations of video lectures into orientation seminars to boost take-up.
- Formally register statistical data on usage. From 2017, a centralised depository of statistics will be available to co-ordinators to allow them to make judgement on the success and effectiveness of video lectures.

## **V. Continuous curriculum review and enhancement**

Notwithstanding the substantial work undertaken on an annual basis by the distance education and relevant programme teams to the IPA's DE manuals and, by implication, the module content and structure on which the manuals are based, the IPA recognises the requirement for systematic annual module reviews and periodic programme reviews. Following the Review of QA Processes in 2016, the IPA has updated its policy and procedures for module and programme review and enhancement.

### ***Annual Module Reviews***

From the 2016-2017 academic year and onwards, the IPA began to conduct systematic reviews of modules on an annual basis. The module review is co-ordinated by the module or programme co-

ordinators responsible for the management of the module. The review is being conducted in conjunction with the lecturer delivering and assessing the module.

The review consists of two stages: (1) lecturer/examiner evaluation and (2) module co-ordinator evaluation. The module review uses feedback from:

- student achievement and progression data (exam results & related data)
- lecturer/examiner evaluation
- student evaluation

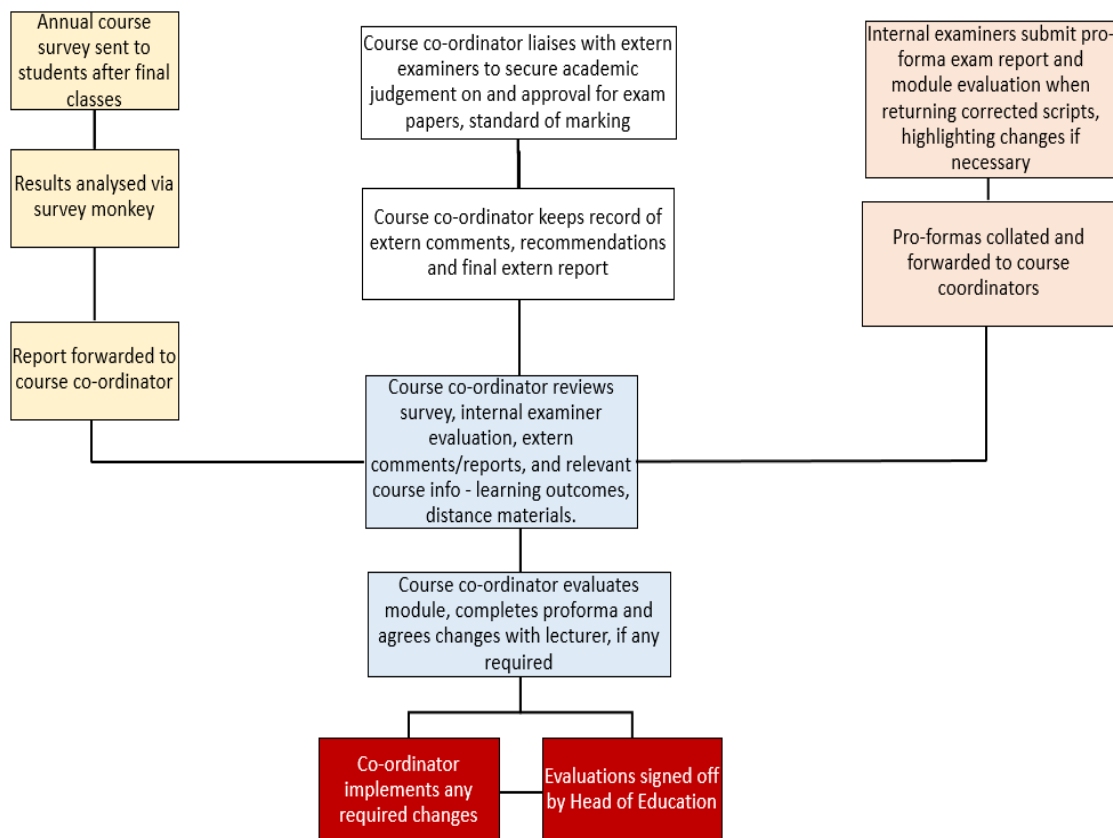
and, where appropriate, from:

- internal and extern examiners
- module and programme co-ordinators

To facilitate the process of review, lecturers/examiners and module/programme co-ordinators complete a module review pro forma (sample available in *Module/Programme Review Policy and Procedures* found in [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)). The pro-forma addresses the key areas to be evaluated – appropriateness and success of the module aims, learning outcomes, teaching methods, assessment strategies and resources provided – but also allows for concerns to be raised and resolutions to be identified.

The diagram below outlines the process.

### Annual Module Review System



The module review begins when the lecturer/examiner returns the examination marks (see section of diagram on right).

First, the lecturer/examiner completes Parts A & B of the Module Review Form. Part A focuses on distribution of marks/grade classifications and identifies aspects of the assessment that worked well and less well. Part B focuses on the appropriateness of the module aims, learning outcomes, teaching methods, materials and assessment strategies. Lecturers/examiners will confirm whether previous amendments to module content or delivery were successful. Examiners will also identify corrective action for unsuccessful elements of module or assessment delivery, to be discussed at a later point with the co-ordinator. Lecturers/examiners will also identify necessary work to distance education materials in line with point IV above.

Next, the module co-ordinators review the lecturer's/examiner's assessment, along with student feedback (see section on left) and extern comments (section in top-centre). The co-ordinator completes Part C of the Module Review Form, which involves an acknowledgement that he or she has:

- I. reviewed the internal examiner/lecturer's evaluation in Parts A & B;
- II. reviewed the student evaluation of the module and any minutes from relevant Staff-Student Representative Groups and any other feedback from students, staff, employers and/or consultants on additional material to be included in the curriculum or particular skills to be developed;
- III. reviewed student achievement and progression data (exam results & related data)
- IV. reviewed the extern's formal evaluation of the module, if available at that point;
- V. consulted with the examiner/lecturer on the progress and effectiveness of the module;
- VI. consulted with the extern examiner during the assessment phase;
- VII. consulted with the Distance Education specialist on the relevancy and accuracy of material in the Distance Education manuals.

The co-ordinator will also identify what changes, if any, are required for the module based on the feedback from examiner/lecturer and students, discussions with the Distance Education specialist, or information gathered by him or her during the delivery of the module.

Completed forms are signed, in turn, by the lecturer/examiner, module/programme co-ordinator and Head of Education, thus supporting enhancement and accountability through sequential review and monitoring activities.

### ***Programme Reviews***

The Institute recognises that the process of programme review is iterative, and that much of this business (both of review and amendment of programmes and modules) takes place at different times and through a variety of mechanisms during the monitoring year. The continuous amendments of Distance Education and updates to modules have naturally brought enhancements to the programmes.

The IPA expects that the introduction of systematic student evaluation and annual module review from the 2016-2017 academic year will further enhance the standard of programmes. In the case of special purpose diplomas with low credit values, the evaluation of the small number of inter-related modules that constitute the programme will act as a programme review. In other words, for these minor programmes, any of the concerns normally involved at a higher programmatic level – such as overarching judgements and decisions about coherence, direction, admissions, delivery methods, assessment methods and weightings – are reasonably addressed at modular level.

The IPA recognises the importance of conducting more formal programme reviews with external contributions, especially for those larger undergraduate and postgraduate programmes with multiple streams and modules. Given the small size of the IPA, programme reviews naturally occur at the thematic level – programmes in the Accounting, HR, Healthcare, Local Government areas and so on will be reviewed together.

The IPA has conducted a small number of these, most recently a review of the HR subjects at each stage of BA and BBS degree. With the participation of the previous and the current Extern Examiner, the contents of each subject module at each stage were reviewed to minimise overlapping, to provide for cross-subject coordination, and to provide for inter-stage progression. All subject module specifications had been updated, and a new procedure instituted to ensure that, between course-work and examinations, all specified learning outcomes for each subject are fully assessed each year.

During 2016 the subjects on the accounting stream of the BBS programme were assessed. The assessment included a review of programme structures, subject syllabuses, the balance of practice and theory and the structure and standard of the examination questions. It encompassed benchmarking our degree programme against the syllabus and examination papers of relevant professional accountancy bodies. The review also addressed matters relating to programme regulations including admission requirements, approaches to examining students, pass marks, graduation requirements and resit arrangements. Following this review, submissions were made to professional accounting bodies, all of whom reconfirmed exemption entitlements for graduates of our degree.

Notwithstanding the above, significant retrenchment in the public service following the recession has presented the IPA with a challenging environment in which to carry out these reviews. Recent easing of recruitment controls, however, has recently permitted the IPA to proceed with planning activities for periodic and systematic review of programmes. The proposed sequencing of Programme Reviews is outlined below:

#### **Undergraduate Degree Programmes**

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Date of Programmatic Review</b>
Bachelor of Arts in Public Management	2019/2020
Bachelor in Business Studies	2019/2020

#### **Specialist One-Year Undergraduate Programmes**

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Date of Programmatic Review</b>
Certificate in Civil Service and State Agency Studies	2018/2019
Certificate in Health Services	2017/2019
Certificate in Housing Studies	2018/2019
Certificate in Local Government	2019/2020
Certificate in Managing Change	2018/2019
Certificate in Public Procurement	2020/2021
Diploma in Civil Service and Stage Agency Studies	2018/2019
Diploma in Health Services Policy	2017/2019
Diploma in Healthcare Management	2017/2019
Diploma in Human Resource Management	2017/2019
Diploma in Law	2019/2020
Diploma in Local Government Studies	2019/2020
Diploma in Management	2018/2019
Professional Diploma in Health Economics	2018/2019
Professional Diploma in Housing Studies	2018/2019
Professional Diploma in Human Rights & Equality	2020/2021

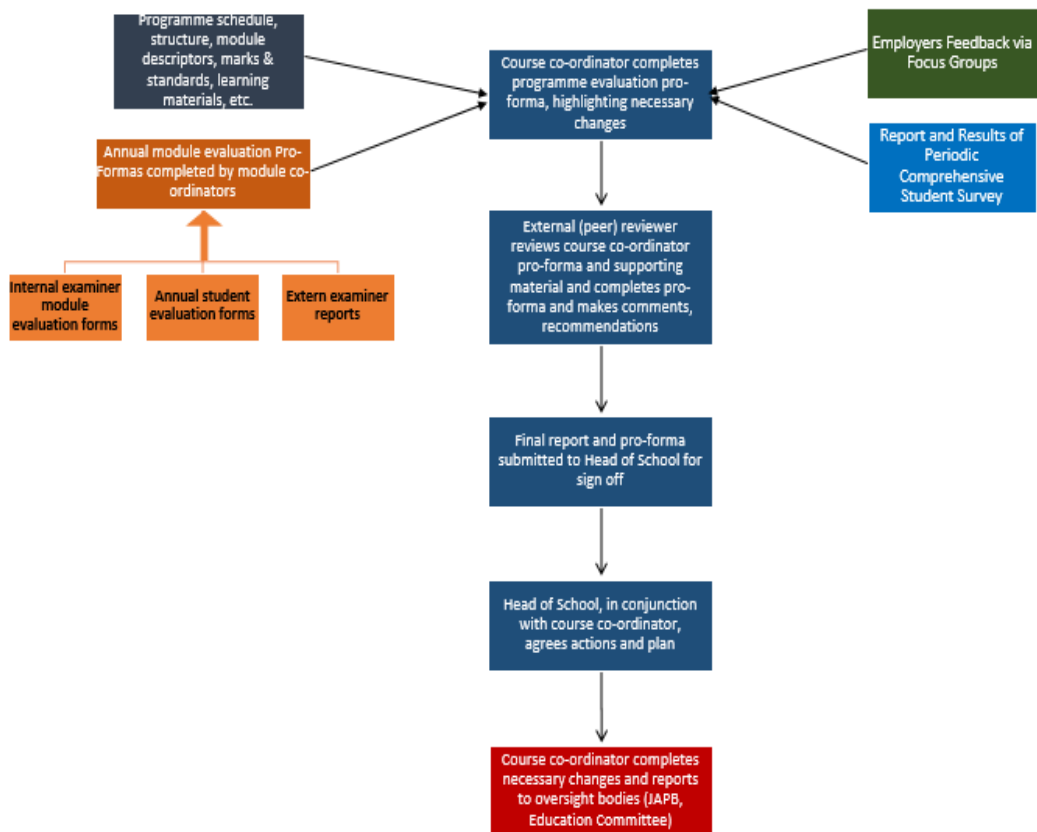
Professional Diploma in Managing Change	2018/2019
Professional Diploma in Official Statistics	2018/2019
Professional Diploma in Public Procurement	2020/2021

**Postgraduate Programmes**

Programme	Date of Programmatic Review
Professional Certificate in Governance	2018/2019
Master of Economic Science in Policy Analysis	2019/2020
Master of Arts	2020/2021
MSc Business and Management	2020/2021

The principal steps in programme evaluation are illustrated below:

**Periodic Programme Evaluation**



The Programme Review incorporates a review of approved programme schedules, module descriptors, learning materials, marks & standards, exam statistics, employer feedback, relevant annual module review reports, annual and periodic student feedback.

The Review involves both an internal and external review element. The IPA has devised pro-formas for both the co-ordinator’s contribution (internal review) and peer reviewer’s contribution (external component). The internal programme review will be led by the course co-ordinator and involve the course team. The course team comprises the lead programme co-ordinator and subject co-ordinators

responsible for the individual modules and, where appropriate, the associate lecturers involved in the modules. The external review will be conducted by an academic or senior public servant or similar professional from a professional body or employer organisation. The external reviewer will be nominated by the Head of the Whitaker School, taking into consideration the recommendations of Faculty and extern examiner.

The programme co-ordinator and peer reviewer will use the Programme Review pro-forma to document the performance of the programme against a range of quality parameters. The peer reviewer will also be invited to confirm that the standard of the programme is comparable to other institutions with which he or she is familiar. The reviewer will be invited to raise any additional concerns or recommend improvements not identified at earlier stages of the review process. Completed forms are signed by the peer reviewer and made available to the programme co-ordinator and Head of School. The Head of School reviews and signs both internal and external Programme Review Forms. The Head of School approves the recommended changes and discusses the implementation plan with the programme co-ordinator.

The co-ordinator completes the necessary changes and reports back to the oversight and advisory bodies, such as the JAPB and the Education Committee.

The Institute is currently planning a number of programme reviews and will publish the findings in due course. Policy and procedures for a programme review, along with samples of the review pro-forma, are provided in the *Module/Programme Review Policy & Procedures* (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).

#### **QA Effectiveness Review**

Finally, as outlined in section E, the QA Process involves reviews of the effectiveness of IPA policies, procedures and monitoring mechanisms, as provided for under legislation. The Self-Assessment Report made as part of the IPA review will provide the Institute with an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of its own policies. Corrective measures can then be put in place to remedy any shortcomings. The external component of the review, conducted by the Designated Awarding Body, will provide the perfect external and independent review process to ensure that the IPA's policies and procedures are effective. The IPA's Quality Improvement Plan, in the wake of the review, will allow the IPA to make improvements to the effectiveness of its policies that might have been missed in all the intervening steps.

#### **Evidence of QA Improvements**

The table below provides some of the recent improvements made on foot of programme evaluations and QA related reports. These improvements are in addition to revisions and updates that arose from routine programme management.

Key QA Activity	Description of Activity	Evaluation Mechanism/ Report	Period
Review of QA Policies & Procedures	New and revised policy and procedures for quality assurance; admissions; access, transfer & progression; recognition of prior learning; student assessment; course design, delivery & review; student support; student engagement & feedback; marks & standards; academic misconduct &	Review of QA Processes 2016	Revised Policies and Procedures effective from April 2017



	discipline; public information; data protection; protection of enrolled learners; complaints			
	Policy owner, revision history and date of next review established in respect of each document.			
<b>Mechanisms for monitoring QA activity</b>	Monitoring & review processes established for principal academic & administrative activities	Review of QA Processes 2016	2016	
<b>Layers of moderation and review to ensure that results and findings are systematically reviewed and acted upon</b>	Timelines, mechanisms and resources established for systematic collection and review of key QA related data: exam results & progression data; student surveys; module reviews; programme reviews etc	Review of QA Processes 2016	2016	
<b>Annual Student Feedback Mechanism</b>	New policy/procedure on Student Feedback & Participation initiating annual module/programme surveys to complement periodic surveys	Periodic Student Survey Report 2015 & Review of QA Processes 2016	Effective from April 2017 (pilot survey conducted for 2016 graduates in March 2017)	
<b>Annual Module Review Mechanism</b>	Revised policy/procedure on Module/Programme Reviews initiating annual module reviews	Review of QA Processes 2016	Effective from May 2017	
<b>Review and Revision Mechanism for Distance Education Learning Materials</b>	New policy/procedure on Distance Education Learning Materials to include mechanisms for systematic updating of materials	Review of QA Processes 2016	2017	
<b>Management of Associate Lecturers</b>	Updated lecturer handbook for purposes of induction	Review of QA Processes 2016	Currently in preparation	
	IPA co-ordinators to review student feedback on an annual basis	Review of QA Processes 2016	In progress	
	IPA co-ordinators to review annual module reviews completed by associate lecturers	Review of QA Processes 2016	In progress	
<b>Student Information Management System</b>	Comprehensive new student system introduced to cover management of student records, fees, curriculum, assessment and reporting	Corporate Review 2013/14	Live since 2015	
<b>Academic Support</b>	Extra support for stand-alone, level 7 diploma programmes, which have a broader social science orientation. Eg 25% extra tuition for one-year 60-credit Diploma in Law	Undergraduate Exam Statistics 2011-2015	Effective from 2016	

		Distance education students in degree programmes have higher absent rates at the exam than lecture students. The IPA is reviewing the learning environment and support mechanisms for 'remote' learners.	Undergraduate Exam Statistics 2011-2015 & Periodic Student Survey 2015	Ongoing
		Moodle & Panopto: The IPA has embarked on developing on-line components for its programmes. The introduction of webinars and on-line instruction will particularly help blended learning students. The additional support will have a positive bearing on grades achieved by weaker students and those facing significant work and family pressures.	Undergraduate & Postgraduate Exam Statistics 2011-2015 & Periodic Student Survey 2015	On-going
	<b>Meetings</b>	Agree schedule of meetings for standing committees – Education Committee, Faculty Committee, Teaching, Learning & Assessment Group, Joint Academic Programme Board	Review of QA Processes 2016	Ongoing
		Generate 'minute bank' with minutes of relevant committees on shared drive for staff consultation	Review of QA Processes 2016	On-going
	<b>Website</b>	Place QA framework, marks & standards and policies & procedures on website as per QQI guidelines	Review of QA Processes 2016	April 2017
	<b>Student Performance</b>	On foot of the very low number of 1H grades in the BA, particularly at stage 4 of the BA and stage 4 of the HR stream of the BBS, co-ordinators are working with lecturers to make comprehensive use of marking schemes, particularly the 60%-69% and 70%-100% grade bands, where warranted	Extern recommendations and Report on Exam Stats 2011-2015	2015, 2016 and ongoing
		At stage 4 of the BBS, in particular, the IPA has been working to introduce more varied types of exam question into numerically based accounting & tax subjects discipline to moderate the number of 1Hs		
		A lower number of students reach the point of examination in stage 1 of the BA and BBS. The IPA is reviewing the learning infrastructure in place and the adequacy of student support at these crucial early stages.	Report on Exam Stats 2011-2015	In Progress

		<p>The IPA has standardised the exam/assignment weighting of postgrad programmes – now standing at 70:30 rather than 80:20 – to improve 1H results across the spectrum and to align closer with other colleges</p>		2016	
		<p>Increase in contact hours and supervisory direction for students at the dissertation phase of their studies to ameliorate the deferral rate and facilitate an enhanced opportunity for first and second class honours.</p>	<p>Report on Postgraduate Exam Statistics 2011-2015</p>	In place	
	<p>Extra tuition for subjects considered more difficult on the Financial Management stream of the MSc.</p>	In place			
<b>Qualification Title and Level</b>	<p>The IPA has been reviewing the suite of special purpose certificates and diplomas, particularly the NFQ level assigned to them. The high results (1Hs) for the certificates and diplomas confirm that a raise in level is justified for the participant profile involved. This has resulted in the upgrading of qualifications from level 6 certificates/diplomas to level 8 professional diplomas e.g. Professional Diploma in Housing Studies and Project Management. Participants and public sector employers are satisfied that the title of Professional Diploma and the upgraded content are more fitting for them as practitioners.</p>	<p>Undergrad Certificate &amp; Diploma (special purpose) Exam Stats 2011-2015</p>		<p>2014-2016 and the IPA will continue to seek approval for other upgrades</p>	

## Q. Other Parties involved in Education and Training

### Criterion 11:

11.1 Peer relationship with the broader education and training community: collaborative and partnership arrangements, both in Ireland and overseas, should be made with reputable bodies and are subject to appropriate internal and external quality assurance. The nature of all such arrangements that are in place with national and overseas educational establishments should be published on the provider's website.

11.2 External Partnerships: quality assurance procedures include provision for engagement with external partners, and should include a formal due diligence stage. Any transnational arrangements in which the provider is involved should be published.

11.3 Expert panellists and extern examiners: the quality assurance procedures should include explicit criteria and procedures for the recruitment and engagement of external, independent, national and international experts (where appropriate). The names and affiliations of expert panellists, examiners and other external experts associated with the provider should be collated and monitored by the provider.

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Section A

### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

#### **11.1 Peer relationship with the broader education and training community**

The IPA actively encourages staff to participate with the wider education and training community. IPA staff have varied professional links to public sector institutes and research programmes including:

- Membership of the network of Directors of European Institutes and Schools of Public Administration.
- Membership of team of cross-European academics undertaking a European Commission sponsored project "Support for developing better country knowledge on public administration and institutional capacity building" (European Public Administration Country Knowledge – EUPACK). The project was established to enhance knowledge and understanding of the status and reform dynamics of public administration in EU Member States, as well as the contribution of external support for improving its quality, with a view to better targeting EU support in this area in the future. The project builds on previous cross-European collaborative work in relation to the COCOPS project (Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future: a public management research consortium).
- Research links with the Public Management Institute, University of Leuven; Hertie Institute, Berlin; and European Institute of Public Administration
- Active participation in the European Group of Public Administration (EGPA), a regional group of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences whose purpose is to strengthen contacts and exchanges among European specialists in public administration, both scholars and practitioners.
- Membership of the International Research Group on Policy and Programme Evaluation. (INTEVAL)
- Linkage with the OECD public governance directorate
- Participation in the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education

- Attendance at relevant conferences and seminars.

The Institute has a long-standing relationship with a range of professional bodies, including the professional accountancy bodies, (CIPFA, ACCA and CIMA), the Marketing Institute of Ireland and professional HR bodies (CIPD). Graduates of IPA degree programmes gain exemptions from these bodies should they wish to pursue courses leading to the professional qualifications awarded by these bodies.

The IPA engages regularly with the training officers of public sector bodies and uses staff from bodies such as the Central Statistics Office and the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission in delivering customised professional diploma programmes.

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### **11.2 External Partnerships:**

The Institute does not have any jointly awarded degree programmes. The IPA offers tuition for selected undergraduate programmes at a number of regional centres in Ireland. In response to a government invitation the IPA has delivered its MA in Leadership & Strategy in the Seychelles. These programmes, which are delivered by the IPA at locations outside the Institute campus, are governed by IPA Marks and Standards.

Furthermore, in the case of IPA programmes delivered externally the Institute follows a process of:

- Due diligence investigation of potential partners
- Clarification with potential partners of Marks & Standards
- Clarification of roles in complying with Marks and Standards
- Publication of any agreements with external partners
- Engaging on an inaugural pilot programme and reviewing this programme after the first cycle
- Reviewing the programme after three cycles.

The IPA is aware that the current DAB (UCD) does not permit any linked provider to establish a partnership with a third party to deliver an award of the DAB. When a collaborative partnership is proposed, it will be referred to the IPA-UCD Joint Academic Programme Board, and as appropriate, cognisance will be taken of QQI guidelines.

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### **11.3 Expert panellists and extern examiners:**

The role of IPA extern examiners are outlined in *Marks and Standards* (see [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)). Extern examiners play a vital role in the wider context of quality assurance. They review the standard of examination papers, monitor the IPA's assessment of student performance and confirm that standards achieved within subjects or courses compare favourably with peer institutions. As such, they guarantee to students and stakeholders that the Institute meets national and international academic standards.

In addition to accountability, the IPA greatly values the input of extern examiners for enhancement purposes. Both the engagement with externs during the assessment phase and the final Extern Examiner Reports are critical sources of review and development for the IPA.

Extern examiners are also invited to attend examination board meetings at the IPA, which validate the marks awarded by examiners. Externs submit an Extern Examiner Report to the Awarding Body to confirm that they are satisfied with (i) the fairness and consistency of marking, (ii) the comparability of results with other institutions familiar to them and (iii) the administration of assessment. Extern examiners may also be consulted in relation to matters arising from examination appeals.

The appointment of extern examiners within the IPA remains a function of UCD. The Institute nominates externs based on their qualifications and experience and their familiarity with the public sector or the applied learning sector. Guidelines and information about the role of Extern Examiners and documentation available to assist externs can be accessed on the UCD Subject Extern Examiners webpage at: [http://www.ucd.ie/registry/assessment/staff\\_info/subjectextern.html](http://www.ucd.ie/registry/assessment/staff_info/subjectextern.html).

The IPA maintains a database of extern examiners. The IPA also holds a record of extern comments. Many of these comments have direct bearing on exam papers and grading, but extern comments also play a role in enhancing modules and programmes. Comments can assist in determining the continued relevancy of course topics, learning outcomes and assessment methodologies. This is why the IPA has a mechanism for feeding these comments into the system of annual module reviews.

The Institute also engages externs in broader reviews of modules/programmes as necessary. With the participation of the previous and the current Extern Examiner for HR subjects in 2015 and 2016, the contents of each HR module at each stage of the BA and BBS degree programmes were reviewed to minimise overlapping, to provide for cross-subject coordination, and to provide for inter-stage progression. All subject module specifications have since been updated, and a new procedure instituted to ensure that, between course-work and examinations, all specified learning outcomes for each subject are fully assessed each year.

In general, a period of appointment of not more than three years at any one college is envisaged for extern examiners. The re-appointment of an extern examiner who has completed a three-year term will be considered by UCD in exceptional cases only.

In terms of expert panellists beyond the role of externs, the IPA engages peer reviewers to review key areas or activities, such as distance education manuals or programmes. These reviewers are selected based on their (i) academic standing; and (ii) senior public sector experience. Previous reviewers have included a Secretary to the Government and Head of School in DCU. For future cycles of programme reviews, the Institute plans to secure the recommendations of Faculty and externs to identify appropriate peer reviewers.

## R. Comprehensive Quality Assurance Framework

### Criterion 12:

Institutions should have Quality Assurance mechanisms that are interconnected and reflect a coherent system. The Quality Assurance Framework should be comprehensive and embedded at all levels of the institution's activities. The quality assurance procedures should also be consistent with Section 28 of the Qualification and Quality Assurance Act 2012.

**Note:** This section should be read in conjunction with Section A

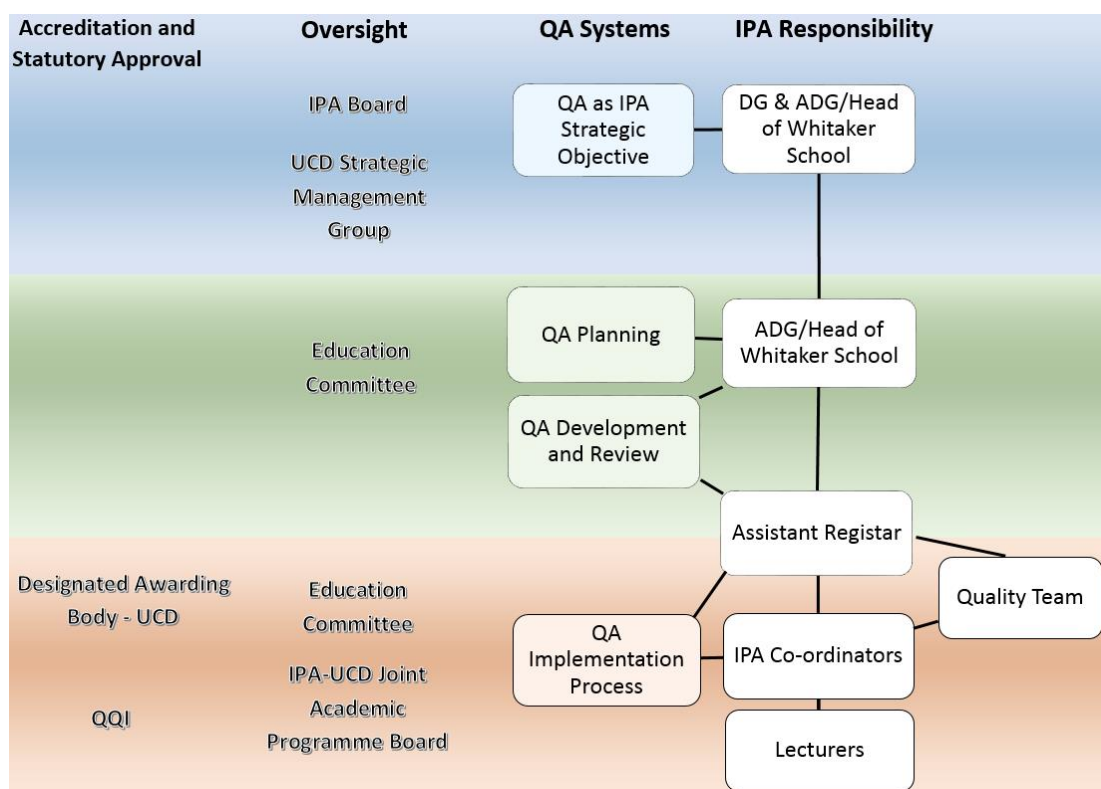
### Commentary/Evidence Source/Planned Enhancements

We would direct readers to our response in Section A, where we outline the IPA's QA framework and associated QA processes, which together underpin the promotion and achievement of an embedded and coherent QA system. Section A also provides a profile of the IPA and the Institute's governance and management structures, which provide an appropriate context for its QA Framework.

Below, we are repeating a relevant extract from Section 1 on our QA Framework.

### The IPA Quality Assurance System

1. QA is embedded in each layer of the governance and management structure in the IPA. At each level, there are clear lines of responsibility for appropriate QA related activities and there are defined reporting relationships and advisory committees, as can be seen from the illustration below:



- a) At the top level, the Institute's [Strategic Plan 2017-2021](#) positions QA as a key strategic objective for the IPA: 'To develop further a quality assurance regime to establish, maintain and enhance the quality of our accredited education programmes in line with university requirements.' The consequent actions that the IPA will pursue at an operational level include:
- Establish a QA framework and revise existing QA policies and procedures in line with national and European requirements
  - Secure approval for QA processes in line with QQI requirements
  - Publish approved QA policies and procedures on IPA website
  - Review effectiveness of the implementation of QA policies and procedures in line with QQI requirements.
- b) The DG has ultimate responsibility for corporate leadership and management. The DG, working in conjunction with the ADG/Head of School, is also responsible for the delivery of Quality Assurance as a strategic objective, which is monitored by the Board.
- c) The overall responsibility for QA development, implementation and evaluation lies with the ADG/Head of School and is overseen by the Education Committee.
- d) The ADG/Head of School/Registrar, in conjunction with the assistant registrar, is responsible for QA development and local implementation. The Education Committee and the IPA-UCD JAPB are kept abreast of QA work, as QA is a standing item on the agenda for both groups.
- e) The assistant registrar oversees the work of a quality team to support and facilitate the implementation of QA. The Quality team comprises staff members (academic and administrative) who have quality related duties.
- f) The Institute's principal academic unit – the Faculty Committee – has a key role in the implementation of QA. The faculty committee comprises the Head of School/Registrar, assistant registrar, and programme and module co-ordinators. Members of faculty contribute to and approve QA policies and procedures. Faculty members, in their roles as managers, administrators and academics, also play a central role in the day-to-day delivery and assurance of quality in the IPA by giving effect to the policies, procedures and monitoring mechanisms that they have helped to develop. Faculty members are also involved in QA review activities.
- g) The module and programme co-ordinators are responsible for managing and monitoring the quality-related activities of lecturers/associate lecturers – teaching, course content, module reviews and revisions.
- h) As stated in 11 (c) and (d) above, there are also committees that have a remit to review the IPA's QA development and operations: IPA Education Committee and IPA-UCD Joint Academic Programme Board. QA is a standing item on the agenda of both Committees. These committees receive oral and written reports relating to QA such as progress reports and updates; development plans; draft policies and procedures; programme reports, student surveys and exam statistics.

Recent QA related reports reviewed by the Education Committee have included:

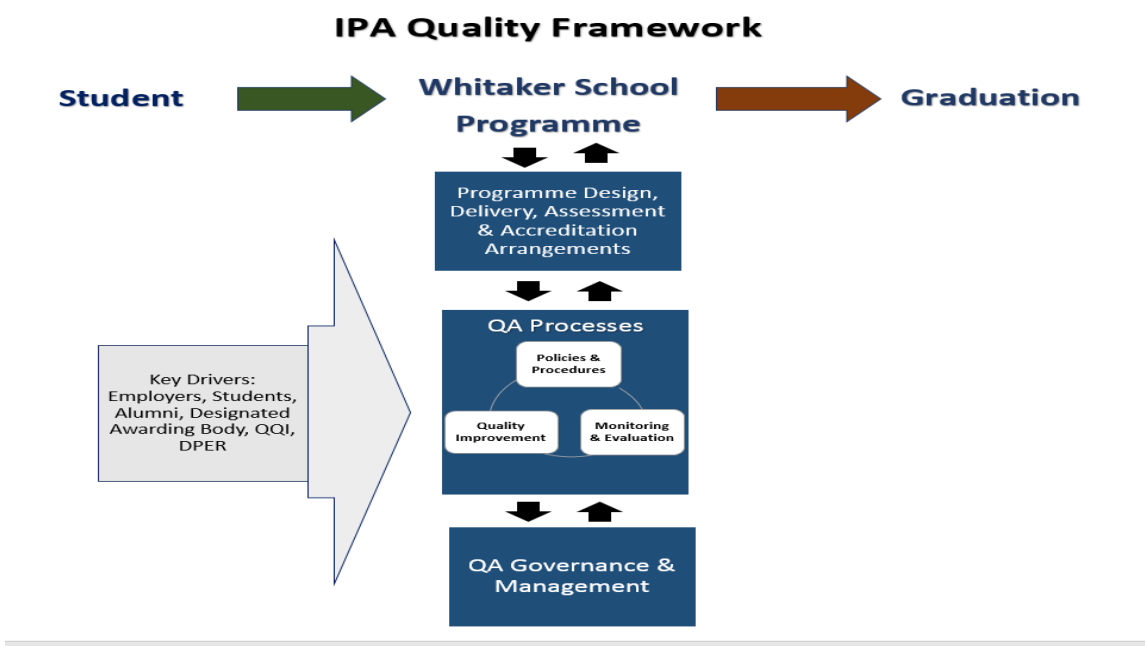
- Position concerning national and European quality assurance developments particularly on statutory requirements under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.
- Satisfaction survey of entire student body and graduates 2014



- Postgraduate & Undergraduate (Major Award Degree & and Special Purpose) Examination Statistics Report 2010-2015
- Discussion on assessment related policies and procedures
- Review of QA Processes 2016 & Recommendations & Action Plan

### **Quality Assurance Framework**

2. The aim of the IPA’s Quality Assurance system is to enhance the effectiveness of learning, teaching and assessment, and of the Institute’s management of these core activities. When we ask ourselves – ‘what are we trying to do?’ ‘how well are we doing it?’ ‘how do we know we are doing it well?’ and ‘are we making improvements?’ – the answers should be coming back to us continually, and not just periodically after an evaluation exercise. The act of embedding QA activities across a whole range of vital academic and administrative services delivered on a day-to-day basis is critical to the successful implementation of a quality-led culture. Indeed, such embedded activities are critical to the IPA’s operational success and reputation in the public service.
3. Consequently, the IPA assures and enhances the quality of its education provision by embedding QA mechanisms that comprise clear, articulated policy statements; best-practice guidelines; regulations; procedures and actions, and in-built monitoring, evaluation and compliance procedures.
4. The IPA’s QA system is informed by Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) guidelines (particularly the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines), as well as UCD procedures for the Approval of UCD Linked Provider Quality Assurance Procedures and International Best practice.
5. The IPA has devised a QA Framework, which provides for development and implementation of QA activities.

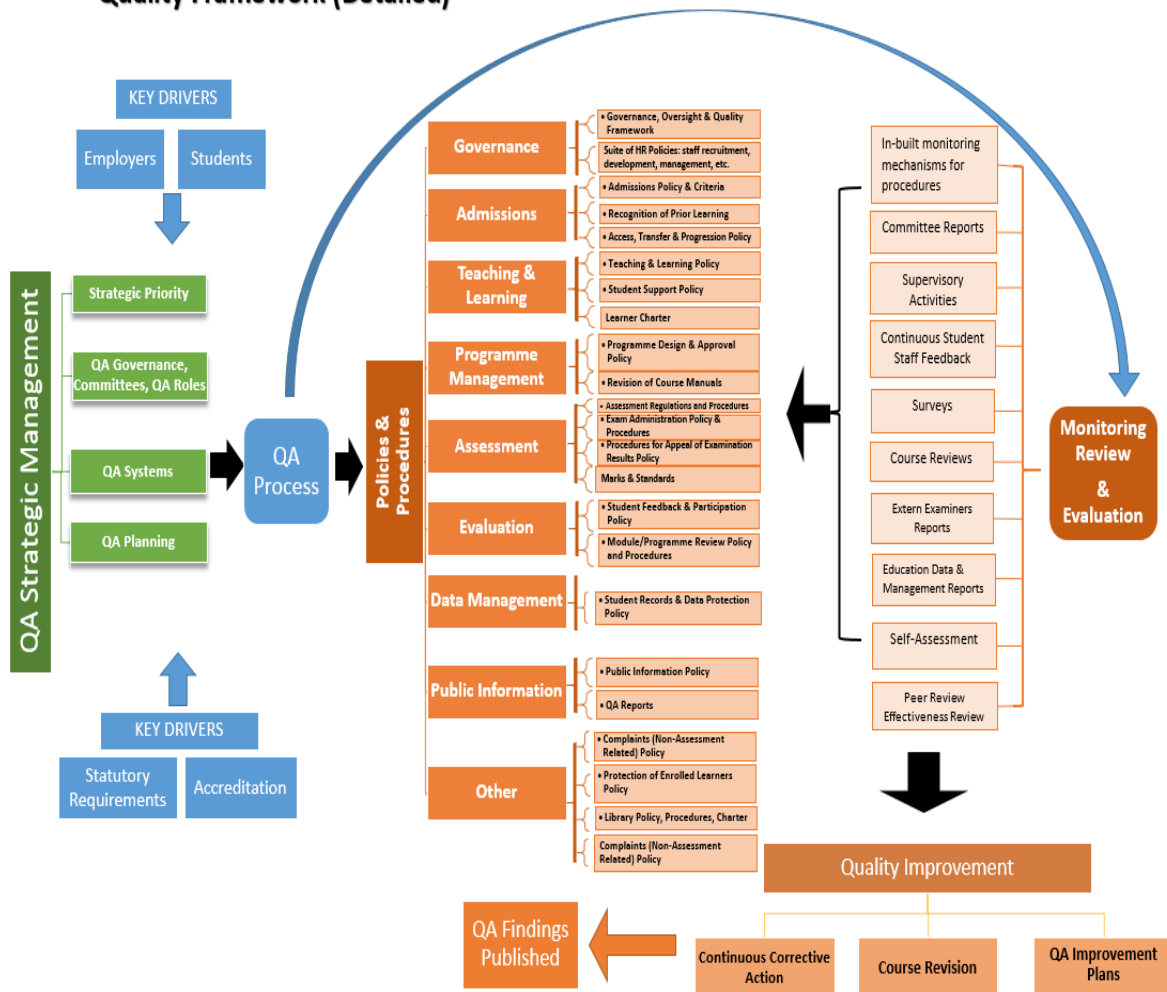


The Framework recognises the following principles:

- (i) a student's successful journey through third-level education is underpinned by effective management of programme design, programme delivery, assessment, student support, and evaluation and improvement exercises;
- (ii) the effective management of education provision is achieved by having robust organisational structures and processes in place to ensure compliance with corporate governance codes and fulfilment of roles and responsibilities, but also by having QA structures to drive QA planning, development, allocation of resources, as identified earlier;
- (iii) the Institute's QA processes are shaped by external and contextual forces, and QA managers need to be tuned to key 'drivers' such as demands of students, employers, accreditation requirements, statutory obligations, European and national standards & guidelines;
- (iv) QA processes include the production and implementation of policies, procedures and guidelines; monitoring mechanisms; internal and external evaluation; and active self-improvement exercises that arise from the control, monitoring and evaluation activities.

6. The following diagram is a version of the QA operation in the IPA with more detailed reference to the individual components that constitute the infrastructure.

### Quality Framework (Detailed)



- a) The QA process involves the development of policies and procedures for QA governance and management, HR policies, student admissions, course design, programme management and delivery, assessment, student feedback and participation, student support, complaints, access, transfer and progression etc.

In 2016, the IPA conducted an internal review of its policies and procedures (see [Review of IPA QA Processes 2016-2017](#)). This identified the policies and procedures that were in need of updating or development. The associated recommendations were the basis for the programme of work concerning Quality Assurance in the IPA since 2016. Please refer to the Review for a full list of policies and procedures and [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#) for those completed and available publicly.

- b) The QA process involves monitoring and evaluation activities. Monitoring encompasses:
- i. management and supervision of staff fulfilling their academic and support roles;
  - ii. obtaining continuous feedback from students and staff during the delivery of a programme;
  - iii. regular and minuted progress reports to oversight committees such as the Education Committee and IPA-UCD JAPB.
  - iv. regular evaluation of key activities encompassing annual and periodic survey of students about academic and support services; annual module reviews; periodic course reviews; extern examiner review; analysis of examination statistics, student feedback used by the IPA for accountability and enhancement purposes.

To assist the teaching, administrative and management staff, each set of policies and procedures contains a cover sheet making explicit reference to monitoring and evaluation activities that are critical to the successful implementation of that particular policy/procedure. Please refer to section P for more detailed reference to these monitoring and evaluation activities.

- c) The QA Process accommodates reviews of the effectiveness of IPA policies, procedures and monitoring mechanisms, as provided for under the 2012 QQA Act. Please see section P for more information.
- d) The QA process involves self-improvement activity (see diagram section at end of page), encompassing continuous corrective action from staff supervision and staff-student feedback during programme delivery; module and programme enhancements from extern reports, annual module reviews, programme reviews, student surveys; self-improvement plans from programme and Institute evaluations. Please see section P for more detail on recent improvements as result of QA reviews.

7. In summary, specific features of the QA process include:

- A strong and continuous procedure for curriculum review and enhancement
- Systematic review, revision and production of learning materials to comply with our extensive provision of distance education material to students
- Mechanisms for annual external feedback on assessment via external examiner reports
- Systematic student participation and feedback
- Student representation at all levels including the Board of the IPA, the Education Committee and the UCD-IPA Joint Academic Programme Board

The accreditation relationship with our Designated Awarding Body imposes a strong and independent QA approval process. Furthermore, the joint representation by UCD and IPA on strategic management and academic programme boards provides oversight in terms of IPA direction and maintenance of academic standards. Please see section P for more detail on these QA mechanisms.

8. One of the recommendations of the 2016 Review of QA processes was that all QA policies, procedures, guidelines and regulations relating to Education provision should be publicly available on the IPA website in pdf format. This is in compliance with QQI guidelines. Up to this point, relevant documentation, particularly pertaining to assessment matters, appeals and complaints, appeared in print form in course handbooks and electronically on Moodle, the student on-line resource platform. The IPA has renovated its corporate website. The Institute's QA Policies and Procedures are now publicly available on the new website. See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#).
9. At the beginning of each set of policies and procedures, the IPA makes explicit reference to the nature of the document and the mechanisms by which the relevant procedures will be implemented and monitored, thus providing clarity for internal staff and stakeholders around purpose, status, action and responsibility. The summary sheets and control version details, which preface each set of policies and procedures, are structured as follows: (a) purpose; (b) scope; (c) contents; (d) audience & communication; (e) contextual guidelines; (f) related IPA policy; (g) policy owner & implementation; (h) key implementation actions; (i) monitoring, review & continuous improvement; (j) definitions; (k) revision history, commencement date & date of next review.
10. The policies, procedures, guidelines, and regulations that make up the IPA's QA process are reviewed on a continuous basis as required and also, from 2017, on a systematic basis every 3 years. The date for next review is provided at the beginning of each document. This will ensure a fit-for-purpose and contextually relevant QA system. The criteria under which this systematic review occurs are laid out in *Governance, Oversight & Quality Framework* (See [IPA QA Policies and Procedures](#)).