

Document Title/Reference	Student Support Policy
Purpose	To create a learning environment in the IPA which befits the student demographic.
Scope	All aspects of the student experience e.g. student admission, programme delivery, assessment and certification
Contents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policy Statement 2. Access & Enrolment 3. Access to Lecturers, Administrative Support & Library 4. Support: Academic Delivery 5. Support: Academic Assessment 6. Support: Facilities 7. General Supports & Pastoral Care 8. Student Evaluation of Supports
Audience	All Staff, students and other relevant stakeholders
Contextual Guidelines	ESG 1.6 'Learning Resources and Student Support' QQI Core Guidelines 7.1 (b)
Related Policy	<u>Learner Charter</u> <u>Admissions Policy</u> <u>Exam Administration</u> <u>Student Feedback & Participation Policies & Procedures</u>
Key Implementation Mechanisms	Arrangements for provision of flexible approaches to programme delivery and assessment; provision of supports for students with disabilities and students with special learning requirements; actions by academic and non-academic staff.
Key Monitoring Mechanisms	<p>The Head of Education is responsible for ensuring that the Institute's student support procedures are followed. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for student support as well as oversight by the Head of Education ensure the rigorous monitoring of this programme.</p> <p>Also feedback both formally, in surveys etc., and informally help to improve the Student Support in the IPA.</p>

Revision History	Version 1 – effective from December 2006 Version 2 – effective from September 2017 Version 3 – effective from Sept 2021
Commencement Date	September 2021
Date of Next Review	2026
Policy Owner	Registrar

1. Policy Statement

The Institute of Public Administration is committed to creating a learning environment with adequate student supports and resources. The Institute recognises, and communicates to its students, that undertaking a part-time programme through blended learning is a substantial commitment; students need to be self-disciplined and motivated when undertaking their studies. Notwithstanding this, the Institute is also aware that its primary student group are professionals, balancing their studies with work and commitments outside work. Many students may not have enrolled in a higher education institute in some time or this may be their first third-level qualification.

Accordingly, the IPA interprets student support to cover diverse areas such as programme access, delivery and assessment, and includes flexible enrolment and tuition options, assessment supports, academic guidance etc. These are informed by best practice and external Quality Assurance guidelines and standards. Supports are clearly communicated to students in course documentation to ensure they are aware of mechanisms available to them to facilitate their studies.

IPA inclusiveness and equality is central to the Institute's policy. The IPA observes the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 and prohibits discrimination on the grounds laid out in the Act. The Institute has relevant provisions on equality and diversity, and disability, in both its [Admissions Policy](#) and [Learner Charter](#). The IPA is also mindful of its statutory obligation under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 which established a positive duty on public bodies to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect the human rights of staff and the people to whom services are provided.

2. Access & Enrolment

2.1 Non-Regular Admissions

- 2.1.1 The majority of students access IPA programmes through regular mature student matriculation arrangements. The IPA will also establish alternatives to consider applicants falling outside these regular routes.
- 2.1.2 Provisions will be made for special case applicants who do not qualify as mature learners (under 21). Procedures will be available in the IPA's Admissions Policy.
- 2.1.3 Students with sufficient professional and or academic experience may apply for access to a course via Recognition of Prior Learning which provides them with exemptions from certain modules / stages of a programme. Students may also transfer to other IPA programmes. Procedures are outlined in the [Access, Transfer and Progression Policy](#).

2.2 Admission of Candidates with Disabilities

- 2.2.1 The Institute of Public Administration 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 those with medical conditions. Applicants with a disability, or documented medical condition, which he or she believes could hinder full participation in an educational programme, are invited to contact the registrar and discuss, in confidence, the issues involved. The IPA, for its part, undertakes to work positively towards the resolution of any challenges identified.
- 2.2.2 The Institute expects that first-time applicants with a known disability or medical condition will engage with the Institute prior to admission to facilitate a mutually satisfactory accommodation before the commencement of studies.
- 2.2.3 To ensure that students with special requirements are given appropriate student and academic support, such applicants are required to submit with their application forms an assessment of their disability or medical condition by a relevant medical/psychological practitioner. The IPA reviews these cases and recommends, as appropriate and so far as is practicable, exam accommodation, academic assistance or administrative support. These recommendations are guided by current legislation on access to education for students with special needs, advice from national disability associations, practice in other third-level institutions and the Institute's financial, human, and physical resources. The applicant is then notified of the outcome.
- 2.2.4 Applications for special support may be received during the academic year from registered students who, because of illness or accident, find that they are unable to fully participate in a programme of study or examination. These cases are subject to the same assessment procedures as those for first-time applicants to a course.

2.3 IPA Disability Audits

The IPA will undertake periodic disability access audits to assist in the improvement of its provision in the area of disability awareness and accommodation.

3. Access to Lecturers, Administrative Staff and Library

The IPA is aware of the need for part-time students to have opportunities to engage with academic, library and administrative staff.

3.1 Academic Staff

IPA Lecturers/Coordinators, who are responsible for the management of modules, are responsible for the academic welfare of students registered on those modules. They will provide a means for students to contact them and resolve queries both of an academic and non-academic nature. They are also responsible for relaying any queries or issues to associate teaching staff where relevant and appropriate.

3.2 Administrative Staff

Students will have access to administrative staff for support as appropriate (i.e. questions concerning enrolment, fees and other practical matters). The Institute will ensure that students requiring support on administrative matters will receive an efficient and helpful service, providing timely and well-considered responses to queries and requests, as outlined in the Learner Charter.

3.3 Library Facilities

3.3.1 Library staff are available to students both in-person and remotely to facilitate students undertaking their studies through 'Distance Education'.

3.3.2 The IPA Library will offer a postal facility for students who cannot visit the physical premises.

3.3.3 The IPA Library will continue to develop its online presence and repository of journal and e-books to facilitate remote learners.

4 Support: Academic Delivery

The Institute's policy is to develop programme delivery methods that best support the profile of its geographically dispersed, part-time professional students.

4.1 Delivery Approaches

4.1.1 The IPA will pursue, as far as practicable, a flexible blended learning approach comprising a blend of live classes, pre-recorded content and specially commissioned course texts to support the academic development of its students. These requirements will be factored into the design of IPA programmes.

4.1.2 The IPA will continue to develop its online presence to facilitate remote learners.

4.1.3 The IPA will offer, as far as practicable on degree level programmes, opportunities for students to take programmes on a phased basis by accumulating credits towards a final award.

4.1.4 The Institute will implement structures to accommodate students facing financial or time constraints and advertise these in student documentation. This will include phased payment of fees, accumulation of credits, interim and exit awards and leave of absence as outlined in [Marks & Standards](#) and the [Access, Transfer and Progression Policy](#).

4.2 Learning Supports

4.2.1 The Institute will provide as appropriate, additional academic supports for students (e.g. guidelines on academic writing, study guides) at a general and or programme specific level.

4.2.2 These supports shall be informed by student feedback and requests as well as guidance from IPA Faculty and Teaching, Learning & Assessment Group.

4.3 Technology Supports

- 4.3.1 The Institute will continue to develop its technology supports in line with its development of blended classroom/online learning, to include IT Support helplines, administrative assistance, instructional videos and documentation.

5 Support: Academic Assessment

The Institute's policy is to provide the student with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge under a well-ordered and conducive exam regime and to protect the integrity of the exam process through secure, accurate and effective administrative processes.

5.1 Assignment & Exam Support

Whilst recognising that the onus on the student to complete assignments and examinations to the best of their ability, the Institute will provide support and guidance to allow students present work of a good standard.

- 5.1.1 Lecturers will provide clear expectations of what is expected from an assignment, such as the word count, referencing requirements and format for submission.
- 5.1.2 The IPA will provide guidance on Moodle and in class about preparing assignments and examination material to cover writing technique, referencing, plagiarism, study skills and related content.
- 5.1.3 Students will be provided with access to the Institute's *Marks and Standards* and Grade Descriptors to assist them identify appropriate academic expectations.
- 5.1.4 The IPA will engage with students who have individual questions regarding coursework presented for correction.
- 5.1.5 Students will receive clear communication in course documentation about the manner in which assignments are submitted and examinations are taken. The Registrar's Office will issue advance guidance on examinations to students, including: examination dates and times; rules and regulations for the sitting of the examination; a timeline for results being issued and details of appeals and supplemental examinations when appropriate.

5.2 Feedback on Coursework

- 5.2.1 Academic staff will provide appropriate, timely feedback on assignments to assist a student's learning and provide constructive points for improvement. Feedback will be informed by the IPA's approved Grade Descriptors.
- 5.2.2 The IPA will arrange for further feedback provided on a one-to-one basis should a student request it.

- 5.2.3 Rules and Regulations governing examinations will provide fair and reasonable opportunities for students to receive feedback from the IPA on their examination performance and to appeal results if appropriate.

5.3 Mitigating Circumstances

The Institute recognises that, at times, professional responsibilities and domestic circumstances in a student's life may give rise to a need for extra support from the IPA.

- 5.3.1 The IPA will make arrangements for the late submission of coursework without penalty where there is a valid reason for such action. The IPA will communicate to students in course documentation the grounds in which these arrangements are permissible. The Institute reserves the right to request supporting evidence from a student prior to granting special arrangements e.g. a medical certificate.
- 5.3.2 The Institute will have in place special accommodations for students who are unable to present for examinations. The IPA will communicate to students in course documentation the grounds in which these arrangements are permissible. The Institute reserves the right to request supporting evidence from a student prior to granting special arrangements e.g. a medical certificate.
- 5.3.3 Exam Invigilation staff will be briefed on the Institute's Exam Administration Policy & Procedures and will provide support for students to accommodate issues arising on the day of examinations e.g. if a student is ill.
- 5.3.4 Students with learning difficulties or those with specific additional needs may request extra supports as appropriate for their examination. These will be handled on a case-by-case basis. For example, there are arrangements (computers, scribes, extra time) to accommodate the examination needs of those who cannot participate the standard approaches.
- 5.3.5 The IPA will arrange to provide necessary guidance and support to students experiencing difficulty in examinations. This will involve guidance on exam technique or assistance with difficult subject areas.

6 Support: Facilities

6.1 IPA Facilities

- 6.1.1 The Institute will provide support for students who attend its premises for classes and study by ensuring all facilities are of a high standard and well maintained.
- 6.1.2 The library shall be available to students, with hours set to accommodate students who are working full time.

- 6.1.3 Students will be provided with sufficient break-times between classes as well as complimentary kitchen facilities, lunch, tea / coffee and biscuits.
- 6.1.4 The Institute shall follow all relevant legislation and guidelines surrounding building management, health and safety requirements, including undertaking periodic disability access audits to assist in the improvement of its provision in the area of disability awareness and accommodation.
- 6.1.5 Where students are completing their studies via distance education, the Institute shall ensure that regional facilities used for tuition or examinations are of a high standard and provide ease of access for students.
- 6.1.6 Online platforms used for student learning shall be well maintained, with clear instructions provided to students for use. Material shall be well organised to allow for ease of access.

7 General Supports and Pastoral Care

7.1 General Pastoral Care

- 7.1.1 The Institute recognises that, owing to its main student demographic, students will receive most pastoral supports off-campus via their community or employer, including medical and counselling services, extracurricular activities and career support.
- 7.1.2 Nonetheless, IPA staff will engage with all students in a courteous and empathetic manner and provide supports as appropriate (e.g. change of status, leave of absence, assignment extension, feedback and guidance).

8 Student Evaluation of Supports

The student voice is accommodated through a number of mechanisms such as the annual student surveys, graduate surveys and student participation on Boards, as outlined in the [Student Feedback & Participation Policies and Procedures](#).

- 8.1 The evaluation of student support will form part of annual surveys distributed to students. The evaluation will include administrative support, guidance and advice, programme delivery and feedback on performance.
- 8.2 Student Feedback will be reviewed by IPA Lecturers/Coordinators during their annual module review exercise.
- 8.3 An assessment of student support will be incorporated into the periodic analysis of aggregated annual student feedback, as provided for in *Student Feedback & Participation Policies and Procedures*.

- 8.4 A record of remedial steps taken to resolve student issues will be maintained and incorporated into the Institute's QA Activity Records.
- 8.5 The Head of Education will ensure that there is a system in place for providing students with feedback on the action taken as a result of their comments.