Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

LINKED PROVIDER POLICY FRAMEWORK

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1 Introduction

1.1 Executive Summary

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin ("Trinity" hereinafter), is a Designated Awarding Body with prescribed responsibilities under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, as amended, and the QQI Sector-Specific Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies. These responsibilities apply in respect of arrangements with higher education institutions seeking or receiving validation of programmes of education and/or research leading to awards of the University of Dublin or Trinity College Dublin[1]. Under the Act, such providers are referred to as linked providers. Where Trinity makes an award in respect of a programme offered by a linked provider, it must include in its own Quality Assurance procedures to approve, monitor and review the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each of its linked providers.

Such procedures will cover:

a. Approval of the quality assurance procedures of linked providers whose programme(s) leads to an award of University of Dublin or Trinity College Dublin, having regard to QQI QA guidelines.
b. Monitoring of programmes leading to awards of the designated awarding body.
c. Review by Trinity of the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures established and implemented by the linked provider under Section 37 of the 2012 Act. The review of a linked provider shall be carried out by Trinity in accordance with the procedures for cyclical review established by QQI. Procedures should include the provision to send QQI a copy of the report of the review.
d. The withdrawal by Trinity of approval of a linked provider's quality assurance procedures under Section 39 of the 2012 Act. This will include procedures to forward notice of any such withdrawal to QQI.
e. The appointment of an independent appeals person for the purposes of hearing an appeal under Section 39 of the 2012 Act.
f. The hearing of an appeal under section 39 of the 2012 Act.

Once a relationship with Trinity has been recognised, linked providers have a responsibility under the Act to establish procedures in writing for quality assurance for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of education, training, research and related services that they provide, and to submit a draft of the proposed procedures to the relevant designated awarding body for approval. The Quality and Qualifications Act 2012 and the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines place responsibility with the provider for the mechanisms and procedures adopted to achieve and maintain a desired level of quality. The onus is on the

[1] The Academic Awards Policy states that Degrees are awarded by the University of Dublin and Certificates and diplomas are awarded by Trinity College Dublin.

provider at all times to ensure procedures are fit-for-purpose and compliant with legislation, regulation and good practice in each jurisdiction in which it operates.

1.2 Purpose and Benefits

The purpose of this framework is to outline the process for:

a. The establishment of a relationship between Trinity and a new Linked Provider.
b. The approval of a Linked Provider's new Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures.
c. The approval of revisions to a Linked Provider's existing Quality Assurance Policies.
d. The institutional (cyclical) review of a Linked Provider.
e. The Linked Provider appeals process.
f. The approval of a new validated academic programme with a Linked Provider.
g. The approval of changes to a Linked Provider's existing validated academic programmes.
h. The Governance pathway for Linked Provider Quality Assurance Processes.

The benefits of this Framework are the consolidation into one location of procedures governing the establishment of relationships with new linked providers and the quality assurance of existing linked providers, making the procedures easier to access and navigate.

1.3 Scope

This Framework applies to:

- Institutions that are currently Linked Providers of Trinity.
- Institutions that may seek Linked Provider status with Trinity and intend to provide taught and research programmes leading to Trinity degrees and other qualifications.
- Linked providers' academic, non-academic and statutory quality assurance policies and procedures.
- Linked providers' taught and research programmes that are validated by Trinity and lead to Trinity awards.

1.4 Definitions

"Designated Awarding Body (DAB)" – an institution authorized to make awards of degrees and other qualifications. This designation is established under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Acts, 2012.

"Linked Provider (LP)" – A linked provider is a provider that is not a designated awarding body but enters into an arrangement with a designated awarding body under which arrangement the Linked Provider provides a programme of education and training that satisfies all or part of the prerequisites for an award of the designated awarding body.

"Associated College" – For historical and institutional reasons, providers now classified as Linked Providers were previously referred to as "Associated Colleges." Trinity and certain existing providers may continue to use the term "Associated College" in institutional or customary usage. For the avoidance of doubt, under the QQI Act 2012 such providers are Linked Providers. Accordingly, for the purposes of this policy framework, any reference to an Associated College shall be construed as a reference to a Linked Provider, and the term "Linked Provider" shall be used throughout this framework. The term "Associated College" does not denote, and shall not be taken to denote, any different legal status, regulatory category, or substantive relationship.

"Associated College Degrees Committee (ACDC)" – Joint coordinating committee chaired by the Trinity Registrar, with members from both the Linked Provider and Trinity with a focus on programme validation and academic matters.

"Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC)" – A sub-committee of Trinity's University Council that looks after undergraduate academic matters, policies and programme approval, similar to Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) for graduate programmes.

"Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)" – A sub-committee of Trinity's University Council that looks after postgraduate academic matters, policies and programme approval, similar to the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) for undergraduate programmes.

Academic Policies – Policies that are concerned with academic matters and are related to the delivery of programmes, the wellbeing of students, academic integrity and student progression through programmes, including appeal.

Non-academic Policies/Procedures – Policies that are concerned with non-academic matters, often focused on Human Resource matters, the running of the institution, unrelated academic programmes and core business policies.

Policies with Statutory Basis - Policies having a statutory basis are derived from legislation and are legally binding. These policies require external review and assurance.

1.5 Principles

- Trinity conducts due diligence and risk assessment in respect of the partnerships that it enters into and programmes that it validates.
- Quality, and its assurance, is the primary responsibility of the linked provider. It involves planning, defining, assessing and improving practice.
- Successful quality assurance systems are efficient, well communicated and integrated into the normal activities of the linked provider's operations and are fit for context and purpose.

2 Procedures for Establishing a Relationship with a Prospective Linked Provider

2.1 Overview

Trinity may consider establishing a linked provision relationship with a prospective Linked Provider. This section describes the procedures Trinity follows when considering and, where appropriate, establishing such a relationship.

2.2 Procedural Elements

2.2.1 Procedural Element 1: *Initial consideration of a potential linked provision arrangement*

An initial enquiry from a Higher Education Institution seeking consideration as a prospective Linked Provider shall be referred to the Provost and the Registrar (the College Officers) for review. The College Officers shall consider the enquiry and determine whether further evaluation of the proposed arrangement is strategically aligned with the University's priorities.

Where the College Officers agree, in principle, to consider further the establishment of a linked provision arrangement, the steps set out below shall be followed.

2.2.2 Procedural Element 2*: Due Diligence*

A Working Group shall be established to undertake due diligence in respect of the proposed linked provision arrangement and to make a recommendation to the Board. In carrying out its work, the Working Group shall assess whether the proposed academic linkage aligns with Trinity's strategic priorities and shall determine whether any reputational risk to Trinity, the wider sector, and/or the national qualifications system may arise in connection with the prospective Linked Provider.

The membership of the Working Group shall be determined by the Provost. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer or the Registrar shall serve as Chair of the Working Group. The Working Group may include additional members with appropriate expertise in quality assurance, governance, finance, and relevant academic disciplines, including the Head or Heads of School whose discipline or subject area is most closely aligned to that in which the Linked Provider provides education and training, as required to support the due diligence process.

The due diligence process shall include an assessment of the applicant's academic provision, financial sustainability, governance arrangements, commitment to student representation, quality of teaching staff and teaching standards, student supports (including facilities and services), and quality assurance and enhancement procedures. The Working Group shall prepare a report, together with a recommendation, for consideration by the Board. The Board shall consider the recommendation of the Working Group and determine whether to approve the establishment of the linked provision arrangement.

For the purposes of the due diligence process conducted by the Working Group, the prospective Linked Provider shall provide such documentation as is necessary to enable assessment of the proposed linked provision arrangement. This shall include, but shall not be limited to:

- Legal status, reputation and compliance;
- Financial sustainability;
- Organisational structure, governance and management of quality and enhancement;
- Equality, diversity and inclusion policies;
- Quality assurance and enhancement system that ensures the prospective Linked Provider has regard to QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines.

The Quality Officer shall advise the prospective Linked Provider on the nature of the related documentation required, which may vary depending on the context. At a minimum, the prospective Linked Provider shall submit an evidence-based self-assessment demonstrating how it complies with the relevant statutory QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines.

During its review of the prospective Linked Provider's Quality Assurance procedures, the Working Group shall assess the extent to which those procedures meet the relevant quality assurance requirements. Depending on the context, the Working Group may reach its conclusions based on a desk review and discussion of the documentation submitted.

As part of the due diligence process, provision shall be made for at least one site visit to be conducted at the prospective Linked Provider by the Working Group, including meetings with key stakeholders and a review of relevant learning facilities and resources. Depending on the context, the Working Group may seek third-party input to inform its assessment.

Trinity is required to approve a Linked Provider's Quality Assurance Procedures. The policy and process for approval are outlined in the subsequent chapter "Initial Approval of a new Linked Provider's Quality Assurance Procedures".

2.2.3 Procedural Element 3: *Approval of the prospective linked provider as a recognised Linked Provider of Trinity*

The recommended outcome of the due diligence process shall be communicated by the Working Group to Board. The recommendations will be formally approved by Board.

Following approval by Board, the Registrar shall notify the Linked Provider in writing of the outcome of the application process. The decision of the Board shall be final and shall not be subject to appeal. Following approval of the academic linkage, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) shall be developed between Trinity and the recognised linked provider. The MoU shall be signed by the Provost and the Head of the recognised Linked Provider.

In the event of the termination of an MoU, Trinity College Dublin and the recognised Linked Provider shall ensure that the termination does not affect their respective obligations to students already enrolled on the relevant programmes as at the date of termination.

2.3 Related Documents

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)
- Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies

3 Initial Approval of a New Linked Provider’s Quality Assurance Procedures

3.1 Overview

Linked providers are responsible under §28(1) of the QQI Act 2012 to *“establish procedures in writing, for quality assurance for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of education, training, research and related services the provider provides”*. §33 (1) of the Act requires that in establishing procedures under §28(1) of the Act “*a linked provider shall submit a draft of the proposed procedures to the relevant designated awarding body for approval”*.

Quality Assurance Procedures shall comply with relevant legislation, have regard to QQI’s Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, and take account of relevant European or international standards, such as the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESGs). In addition to these requirements, Trinity may require the Linked Provider to develop and implement specific Quality Assurance procedures or policies, where necessary, to support the effective governance, monitoring, and oversight of linked provision arrangements.

3.2 Scope

This initial approval process is a ‘once-off’ requirement under the Act. The process by which Trinity will, on an ongoing basis, review and approve a Linked Provider’s new and revised procedures is outlined in Chapter 4 (Ongoing Approval of Quality Assurance Procedures of Existing Linked Providers).

3.3 Procedure

3.3.1 Notification

Trinity shall notify the Linked Provider of its responsibility to develop and submit Quality Assurance procedures, within a specified timeframe. These Quality Assurance Procedures shall have regard to QQI’s Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. Where appropriate, Trinity may require the Linked Provider to develop and submit additional policies or procedures beyond those specified in statutory guidelines to ensure that institutional and regulatory requirements are fully met.

The Linked Provider is required to submit **academic procedures** to Trinity for approval in respect of validated academic programmes, the quality of teaching and learning, and the student experience of teaching and learning on those programmes.

The Linked Provider is required to submit to Trinity **non-academic procedures**[2] which fall within the legal and corporate responsibility of the Linked Provider as a separate legal entity. Such procedures shall be submitted to Trinity for noting, rather than approval. An authorised officer of the Linked Provider shall self-certify the quality of non-academic policies. The template for the Self-Certification of Non-Academic Quality Assurance Procedures is provided in Appendix 1. Where any such procedures have a statutory basis, the Linked Provider shall provide evidence that they are fit for purpose and comply with current national legislation in Ireland.

3.3.2 Submission of Policies

The Linked Provider shall submit its academic Quality Assurance Procedures to Trinity for approval. The Linked Provider may submit a draft version of these procedures, in advance, to the Trinity Quality Office for formative advice prior to formal submission.

The submission of draft Quality Assurance Procedures for approval to Trinity should occur during statutory term.

Upon receipt of draft Quality Assurance Procedures, designated Trinity staff shall conduct an initial desk-based review to confirm the completeness of the submitted documentation and to determine the appropriate approval pathway. Where a procedure is determined to be academic in nature, the procedure for the approval of academic policies shall be followed (refer to section 3.3.3). Where a procedure is determined to be non-academic in nature, the procedure for the approval of non-academic policies shall be followed (refer to section 3.3.6).

3.3.3 Establishment of Panel

The Trinity Registrar shall establish a Review Panel to consider the submitted quality assurance procedures and make a recommendation to the Quality Committee.

The Review Panel shall evaluate the submitted Quality Assurance procedures for compliance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act (2012), due regard to the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, including the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESGs), and any relevant topic-specific Quality Assurance guidelines. The procedures shall also have regard to the policies, procedures, and guidelines of Trinity and, where required, shall align with relevant Trinity policies to ensure consistency with institutional and regulatory requirements.

The Review Panel shall write a Panel Report with recommendations to either:

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[2] Non-academic policies and procedures are those institutional rules and processes that regulate operational, administrative, welfare, safeguarding, employment, financial, and legal or statutory matters within a higher education institution, excluding matters which relate to academic programmes, the quality of teaching and learning and the student experience of teaching and learning on those programmes.

- approve the proposed procedures;
- refuse to approve the proposed procedures but make such recommendations to the provider as it thinks appropriate;
- refuse to approve the proposed procedures.

The report of the Review Panel will be communicated in writing to the Linked Provider to advise on the recommendations of the Review Panel.

3.3.4 Outcome of the Review Panel Consideration

Where the recommendation of the Review Panel is to approve the proposed Quality Assurance Procedures, the report and the proposed procedures shall be submitted to the Quality Committee for consideration. Where the Quality Committee recommends approval, the procedures shall be submitted to Council for final approval of the proposed outcome.

Where the recommendation of the Review Panel is either to refuse to approve the proposed procedures but make such recommendations to the provider as it thinks appropriate or refuse to approve the proposed procedures, the Review Panel shall provide the Linked Provider with written recommendations identifying the areas requiring revision. The Review Panel shall invite the Linked Provider to address these matters and propose a timeframe for resubmission to Trinity.

The resubmitted Quality Assurance Procedures shall be reviewed by the Review Panel. Where the Review Panel is satisfied that the recommendations have been addressed, the revised procedures shall be submitted to the Quality Committee for consideration. Submission to the Quality Committee shall occur only once the Review Panel confirms that the identified deficiencies have been adequately addressed.

Where the Quality Committee recommends approval of the revised procedures, the procedures shall be submitted to Council for final approval.

3.3.5 Approval and Publication

On approval of the proposed procedures, the Linked Provider must, under §33 (3) of the Act, publish the procedures on its website and provide a copy of the procedures as published to Trinity's Quality Office.

Linked Providers may appeal the decision of Trinity in relation to the outcome of the approval process. The appeals procedure is detailed in Chapter 6 below.

3.3.6 Submission of Non-Academic Policies

The Linked Provider shall submit its non-academic policies to the Trinity Quality Officer in accordance with the procedures set out in this section. Draft non-academic policies and procedures shall be submitted to Trinity within statutory term.

Linked Providers shall provide evidence of external review of non-academic policies and procedures that have a statutory basis. Such external review may be undertaken either by an appropriately qualified individual or by a body recognised as having relevant authority. Acceptable evidence shall normally take the form of a formal letter (e.g. Auditor's Letter, Legal Opinion, or equivalent certification such as a current Health and Safety Certificate). The letter shall identify the policies reviewed by title and confirm that the procedures are fit for purpose and compliant with relevant national legislation. Where a non-academic policy or procedure does not have a statutory basis, an authorised person within the Linked Provider shall submit a declaration confirming that the Linked Provider is satisfied that the relevant policy or procedure is fit for purpose (see Appendix 1). Non-Academic Policies shall be approved by the Linked Provider's management in accordance with internal governance procedures prior to being submitted to Trinity.

Non-academic policies/procedures shall be submitted to the Quality Committee for noting. Following consideration by the Quality Committee, the procedures shall be submitted to the Board for noting.

Following noting of the proposed procedures by the Board, the Linked Provider shall, under §33(3) of the Act, publish the procedures on its website and provide a copy of the procedures as published to Trinity's Quality Office.

3.4 Costs Associated with Initial Approval of a Linked Provider's Quality Assurance Procedures

The initial approval of proposed quality assurance procedures is a once-only requirement. There is no charge levied by Trinity in terms of the quality assurance of proposed quality assurance procedures in respect of academic programmes, the quality of teaching and learning and the student experience of teaching and learning on those programmes.

The Linked Provider is expected to meet all costs associated with its own internal quality assurance and the required external review and assurance of procedures in respect of non-academic and related services procedures which fall within the legal and corporate responsibility of the Linked Provider as a separate legal entity, and which have a statutory basis.

3.5 Related Documents

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012;
- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016);
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015);
- Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies;
- Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners;
- Topic Specific: Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes;
- Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and

Higher Education and Training;

- Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training.

4 Ongoing Approval of Quality Assurance Procedures of Existing Linked Providers

4.1 Overview

The previous chapter addresses the initial approval of Quality Assurance Procedures for new Linked Providers. This chapter outlines the arrangements for the review and approval of new or revised Quality Assurance Procedures developed by existing Linked Providers following initial approval.

A Linked Provider may, on its own initiative, develop new or revised Quality Assurance policies or procedures for submission to Trinity for approval. In addition, Linked Providers shall maintain their Quality Assurance Procedures under regular review and shall conduct a formal review at least every five years. Any new or revised policies or procedures arising from such review shall be submitted to Trinity for approval in accordance with this policy.

Amendments to existing policies or the development of new policies may arise, for example, in response to changes in legislation, updates to QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, requirements of Professional Accreditation Bodies, or developments in a Linked Provider's educational provision.

Trinity may also notify a Linked Provider of its responsibility to develop and submit specific Quality Assurance Procedures and, where appropriate, require the development of additional policies or procedures beyond those specified in statutory guidelines to ensure that institutional and regulatory requirements are fully met.

Trinity is required under §33(1) of the Act to review and approve such procedures on an ongoing basis.

4.2 Scope

This ongoing approval process is a requirement under the Quality and Qualifications Act (2012) and applies to existing linked providers with whom Trinity has entered into formal arrangements in respect of validated programmes of education.

The Linked Provider is required to submit **academic procedures** to Trinity for approval in respect of validated academic programmes, the quality of teaching and learning, and the student experience of teaching and learning on those programmes.

The Linked Provider is required to submit to Trinity **non-academic procedures**[3] which fall within the legal and corporate responsibility of the Linked Provider as a separate legal entity. Such procedures

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[3] Non-academic policies and procedures are those institutional rules and processes that regulate operational, administrative, welfare, safeguarding, employment, financial, and legal or statutory matters within a higher education institution, excluding matters which relate to academic programmes, the quality of teaching and learning and the

shall be submitted to Trinity for noting, rather than approval. The Linked Provider must self-certify the quality of non-academic policies. Where any such procedures have a statutory basis, linked providers must provide evidence of external review and assurance that they are fit-for-purpose and comply with current national legislation in Ireland.

The effectiveness review of approved quality assurance procedures required under §37 (1) (a) of the Act (i.e. an external Quality Review) is covered by the "Quality Review Procedures for Higher Education Institutions (Linked Providers) delivering programmes of education and research leading to Trinity College Dublin or University of Dublin Awards" (see also Chapter 6 below).

4.3 Procedure

4.3.1 Notification

A Linked Provider shall notify the Trinity Quality Office in advance of its intention to submit new or revised Quality Assurance policies or procedures for approval.

Trinity may also notify a Linked Provider of the requirement to develop new Quality Assurance policy or to revise an existing policy where changes in legislation, regulatory requirements, institutional requirements, or operational circumstances make such development or revision necessary.

A draft submission of Quality Assurance Procedures may be submitted by the Linked Provider in advance to the Trinity Quality Office for formative advice prior to formal submission for approval.

The Linked Provider shall submit any new or amended Quality Assurance procedures to the Quality Office at Trinity during statutory term.

An agreed timeframe for review by the Review Panel or designated personnel, and for subsequent consideration and progression through the appropriate governance channels, shall be established following such notification. Submission of policies shall be subject to these agreed timelines, and policies shall be considered by the Quality Committee, Council, or Board only where they have been submitted in sufficient time to allow for proper review and preparation and where any recommendations made by the Review Panel or designated personnel have been addressed, in accordance with the procedures set out in this policy.

4.3.2 Submission

Upon receipt of draft Quality Assurance Procedures, designated Trinity staff in the Quality Office shall conduct an initial desk-based review to confirm the completeness of the submitted documentation and to determine the appropriate approval pathway.

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student experience of teaching and learning on those programmes.

4.3.3 Determination of Approval Pathway

The appropriate approval pathway shall be determined according to the nature of the proposed change to an existing policy (minor or major) and the type of policy concerned (academic or non-academic). The Trinity Quality Officer shall determine the classification of the proposed change (i.e. minor change to existing Academic Quality Procedure, major change to existing Academic Quality procedure) and the type of policy (i.e., Academic Quality Procedure or non-Academic Procedure) for the purposes of applying the appropriate approval pathway.

4.3.3.1 Approval of Minor Changes to Existing Academic Quality Assurance Procedures

Where an amendment to an existing policy is determined to be minor in nature, the policy/procedure shall be subject to review by personnel within Trinity with relevant experience in the development of comparable policies.

Where personnel reviewing a policy determine that no further amendments are required, the policy/procedure shall be submitted to the Quality Committee for approval.

Where personnel reviewing a policy/procedure make recommendations for further amendment, those recommendations shall be communicated to the Linked Provider. The Linked Provider shall address the recommendations and resubmit the revised policy/procedure to Trinity for further consideration.

Proposed revised policies shall be submitted to the Quality Committee for approval only once the Linked Provider has addressed the recommendations arising from the review and the resubmitted policy has been confirmed as complete by Trinity.

4.3.3.2 Approval of New or Major Changes to Academic Quality Assurance Procedures

Where a submitted draft policy/procedure is new, or where the level of change to an existing policy is determined to be major in nature, the Trinity Registrar may establish a Review Panel to consider the policy/procedure.

The Review Panel shall evaluate the submitted Quality Assurance procedures for compliance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act (2012), due regard to the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, including the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESGs), and any relevant topic-specific Quality Assurance guidelines. The procedures shall also have regard to the policies, procedures, and guidelines of Trinity and, where required, shall align with relevant Trinity policies to ensure consistency with institutional and regulatory requirements.

The Review Panel shall prepare a report setting out its findings and shall make a recommendation to the Quality Committee. The recommendation of the Review Panel shall be one of the following:

- approve the proposed procedures of the Linked Provider;
- approve the proposed procedures subject to recommendations; or

- refuse to approve the proposed procedures.

Where the Review Panel recommends approval of the proposed procedures of the Linked Provider, the report and the proposed procedures shall be submitted to the Quality Committee for consideration.

Where the Review Panel makes recommendations for further amendment or sets conditions, the Linked Provider shall address those recommendations or conditions and resubmit the draft procedures to Trinity for further review by the Review Panel.

In the case of refusal, Trinity shall provide feedback from the Review Panel to inform any future submission. The Linked Provider shall address the matters identified by the Review Panel and resubmit the draft procedures for further review.

Resubmitted procedures shall be considered by the Review Panel, and only where the Review Panel is satisfied that the recommendations or matters identified have been adequately addressed shall the draft procedures be submitted to the Quality Committee for approval.

4.3.4 Outcomes of the Approval Process by the Quality Committee and Council

The Quality Committee shall consider the Review Panel's report and shall recommend the Panel's recommended outcome to Council for approval. The Quality Committee may also recommend approval of the proposed policy/procedures subject to specific recommendations and timelines for future enhancements to be achieved within a specified timeframe.

Where the Quality Committee makes recommendations for amendments to the proposed policy/procedures, the Linked Provider will resubmit the draft policy/procedures for approval by the Quality Committee taking account of the recommended amendments.

Where the Quality Committee approves the proposed policy/procedures, or approves them subject to recommended amendments being made, the procedures shall be submitted to Trinity's Council for final approval.

On approval of the proposed procedures by Council, the Linked Provider shall, under §33 (3) of the Act, publish the procedures on its website and provide a copy of the procedures as published to Trinity's Quality Office.

4.3.5 Approval of Non-Academic Quality Assurance Procedures

The Linked Provider shall submit its non-academic policies to the Trinity Quality Officer in accordance with the procedures set out in this section. Draft non-academic policies and procedures shall be submitted to Trinity within statutory term.

Linked Providers shall provide evidence of external review of non-academic policies and procedures that have a statutory basis. Such external review may be undertaken either by an appropriately qualified individual or by a body recognised as having relevant authority. Acceptable evidence shall normally take the form of a formal letter (e.g. Auditor's Letter, Legal Opinion, or equivalent certification such as a current Health and Safety Certificate). The letter shall identify the policies reviewed by title and confirm that the procedures are fit for purpose and compliant with relevant national legislation. Where a non-academic policy or procedure does not have a statutory basis, an authorised person within the Linked Provider shall submit a declaration confirming that the Linked Provider is satisfied that the relevant policy or procedure is fit for purpose (see Appendix 1). Non-Academic Policies shall be approved by the Linked Provider's management in accordance with internal governance procedures prior to being submitted to Trinity.

Non-academic policies/procedures shall be submitted to the Quality Committee for noting. Following consideration by the Quality Committee, the procedures shall be submitted to the Board for noting.

Following noting of the proposed procedures by the Board, the Linked Provider shall, under §33(3) of the Act, publish the procedures on its website and provide a copy of the procedures as published to Trinity's Quality Office.

4.4 Costs Associated with Approval of a Linked Provider's Quality Assurance Procedures

There is no charge levied by Trinity in terms of the quality assurance of proposed quality assurance procedures in respect of academic programmes, the quality of teaching and learning and the student experience of teaching and learning on those programmes.

The Linked Provider is expected to meet all costs associated with its own internal quality assurance and the required external review and assurance of procedures in respect of non-academic and related services' procedures which fall within the legal and corporate responsibility of the Linked Provider as a separate legal entity, and which have a statutory basis.

4.5 Related Documents

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)
- Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies
- Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners
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5 External "Effectiveness" Review of a Linked Provider's Quality Assurance Procedures

5.1 Overview

§32 (1b) of the Quality & Qualifications Act 2012 requires Trinity to have in place a procedure to review the effectiveness of the implementation by linked providers of quality assurance procedures established under §28 of the Act, and §37(1a) requires that such 'effectiveness reviews' be conducted at least once every seven years and from time to time as Trinity thinks appropriate. Prior to the conduct of an effectiveness review, linked providers must have undergone a review of their quality assurance procedures (see Chapter 3 above).

5.2 Scope

This external review process is a requirement under the Quality & Qualifications Act 2012 and applies to existing linked providers with whom Trinity has entered into formal arrangements in respect of validated programmes of education and research.

The scope of the review operates at both institutional and academic programme level and is informed by the scale and complexity of the academic provision (taught and/or research).

The review shall:

- undertake a critical evaluation of the performance and direction of the institution in terms of its mission, strategy, and education provision;
- review the effectiveness of the implementation of Linked Provider Quality Assurance policies and procedures as approved by Trinity;
- assess the governance and management structures, education, research and other provision, internal and external communications and relationships, and human, financial, and infrastructure resources;
- evaluate compliance with relevant statutory requirements and guidelines (i.e., QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines).

5.3 Procedure

5.3.1 Notification

Following initial approval by Trinity of a Linked Provider's Quality Assurance Procedures under §33(1) of the Act, Trinity shall agree a timeframe for the conduct of a quality review with the Linked Provider. In determining the timing of the review, Trinity shall take account of existing commitments under agreed Memoranda of Understanding, the timing of other external review or accreditation processes, the provider's strategic priorities and Trinity's schedule for quality reviews.

The timing of subsequent reviews shall be guided by the seven-year review cycle prescribed by the Act and by relevant institutional, regulatory, and strategic considerations. Linked Providers shall normally be notified in writing approximately 18–24 months in advance of a scheduled review.

5.3.2 Payment

The direct and indirect costs of the External Quality Review will be met in full by the Linked Provider. The estimated costs associated with a quality review will be agreed in a Schedule to the existing Agreement between the Trinity and the Linked Provider, with the actual costs billed as part of the annual invoice by Trinity to the Linked Provider in the year in which the actual costs are expected to be incurred.

5.3.3 Selection of Reviewers

The Linked Provider shall be requested to propose a minimum number of twelve suitably qualified nominees for consideration as External Reviewers.

Student member(s) shall be included on the Review Panel in accordance with relevant national and European quality assurance standards. Trinity shall seek nominations from students who have completed training under the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP).

The Linked Provider institution shall not contact potential nominees with a view to canvassing their interest in participating in the review. All contact with the nominees is to be made via the Quality Office.

The nominees proposed by the Linked Provider shall be reviewed by a Selection Panel convened by Trinity to determine the composition of the Review Panel. The Selection Panel, chaired by the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and comprising the Dean of the relevant Faculty, the Academic Secretary, and the Trinity Quality Officer, shall select suitably qualified External Reviewers and, where appropriate, identify reserve candidates, taking account of the scope and requirements of the review.

5.3.4 Self-Assessment Exercise

The Linked Provider must develop a Self-Assessment Report (SAR), which forms the principal source of information for the External Review team. The SAR should respond to the agreed scope in terms of the following lenses:

- Compliance – mandatory legislative, regulatory, statutory requirements and reporting, nationally and internationally.
- Quality assurance - governance frameworks i.e. institutional responsibility as evidence through committees, policies/procedures/processes, standards, data collection, monitoring and reporting.
- Quality enhancement – demonstration of effectiveness, improvement themes/projects/initiatives.

The SAR should have a strategic focus, be forward looking, and provide an appraisal of the quality assurance processes that support the key areas outlined in the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, and agreed sector and topic specific quality assurance guidelines, policies and codes that apply to the Linked Provider's context and provision.

Responsibility for the development of the SAR and for ensuring the engagement of internal and external stakeholders in the development of the SAR, and in the site visit for the review, rests with the Linked Provider. Guidance on the development of the SAR is available from the Trinity Quality Office.

5.3.5 Development of the Review Schedule

The schedule of meetings for the review shall be developed in consultation with the Quality Office.

The Trinity Quality Office will disseminate the final SAR, associated appendices and the review schedule with the Review Team in accordance with the agreed timelines.

5.3.6 Review Site Visit

Trinity College Dublin shall be responsible for coordinating travel and logistical arrangements for the Review Team, including travel, accommodation, and related support, arranging an independent note-taker to record meeting outputs for use by the Review Team, facilitating reasonable requests from reviewers to adjust the review schedule, and responding to information requests from the Review Team during the on-site review.

The Linked Provider shall be responsible for arranging suitable meeting facilities for the site visit, including reserving an appropriate base room for the Review Team, liaising with meeting participants before and during the site visit, and providing on-site hospitality and catering.

The on-site review shall conclude with a feedback session to the Linked Provider at which the Review Team will present the preliminary outcomes of the review and the main themes to be addressed in the review report.

5.3.7 Review Report

The External Review Team shall submit a draft report to the Quality Office within three weeks of the site visit setting out the findings of the review.

The Quality Office shall forward a copy of the draft report to the Principal/Director of the Linked Provider, who shall be invited to provide any factual accuracy corrections to the Quality Office within one month, in accordance with §37(7) of the Act.

The Quality Office shall communicate any factual accuracy corrections to the Review Team and shall request submission of the final report within two weeks.

The Linked Provider shall submit a formal response to the findings and recommendations of the review report.

The final report of the Review Team, together with the response from the Linked Provider, shall be considered in the first instance by the Trinity Quality Committee and subsequently submitted to University Council and the Board for consideration and approval.

Following approval by the relevant governing bodies, the review report shall be published on the Trinity website in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

In accordance with §37(9) of the Act, Trinity shall provide a copy of the final report to QQI.

5.3.8 Post-Review Follow-up

Following the approval of the Review Report, the Linked Provider shall draw up an Implementation Plan (IP) to address the recommendations in the review report within an agreed timeframe. The Implementation Plan will be submitted to the Quality Committee in the first instance and from there to University Council and the College Board for approval.

Within twelve months of approval of the Implementation Plan, a formal Progress Report will be submitted to the Quality Committee, and then to Council and Board.

An informal report on progress against the Implementation Plan and Progress Report will form part of the scope of the annual monitoring conducted at the Annual Dialogue Meeting.

Where, during its review, Trinity identifies significant deficiencies in the adequacy or effectiveness of a Linked Provider's Quality Assurance Procedures or their implementation, Trinity may issue directions to the Linked Provider in accordance with section 38(1) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 in relation to those issues.

5.4 Withdrawal of Approval of the Linked Provider's Quality Assurance Procedures

Where Trinity considers that directions issued to the Linked Provider have not been complied with, Trinity shall notify the Linked Provider in writing that it proposes to withdraw its approval of the procedures and shall include the reasons for the proposed withdrawal.

Within one month of receiving the notice of withdrawal, the Linked Provider may submit in writing to Trinity any observations it has on Trinity's reasons for proposing to withdraw approval of the procedures.

Where, following consideration of any observations received, Trinity continues to consider the Quality Assurance Procedures to be significantly deficient, Trinity shall withdraw its approval of the procedures by notice in writing addressed to the Linked Provider. The notice shall state the reasons for the withdrawal, shall specify the date from which the withdrawal shall take effect, which shall not be earlier than the date of service of the notice on the Linked Provider, and shall include the reasons for the withdrawal. Trinity shall provide a copy of the notice to QQI.

5.5 Appeals

Where a relevant designated awarding body withdraws approval, the linked provider concerned may appeal against that withdrawal to an independent appeals person appointed by the relevant designated awarding body for that purpose (see Chapter 6 Linked Provider Appeal Procedure).

5.6 Related Documents

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)
- Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies
- Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners
- Topic Specific: Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes
- Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training
- Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training

6 Linked Provider Appeal Procedure

6.1 Overview

Where Trinity has carried out an effectiveness review of a Linked Provider's Quality Assurance Procedures and withdraws its approval of those procedures under §39(3) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, the Linked Provider concerned may appeal that decision to an Independent Appeals Person (IAP) appointed by Trinity for that purpose. In accordance with the Act, Trinity shall maintain procedures for the consideration of such appeals.

In accordance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Trinity is required to have in place procedures which cover:

- The appointment of an independent appeals person for the purposes of hearing an appeal under Section 39 of the 2012 Act.
- The hearing of an appeal under Section 39 of the 2012 Act.

6.2 Scope

This appeals process is a requirement under the Act and applies to existing linked providers with whom Trinity has entered into formal arrangements in respect of validated programmes of education. Appeals other than those taken against the decision by Trinity to withdraw its approval of a linked provider's QA procedures as a result of an effectiveness review are not within the scope of this appeals process.

6.3 Procedure

6.3.1 Notification of Withdrawal

Trinity will inform the Linked Provider, in writing, that it proposes to withdraw its approval of the procedures established by the Linked Provider under §28 of the Act and state the reasons for the proposed withdrawal.

The notice should state that the Linked Provider may submit observations in writing to Trinity about the reasons for the proposed withdrawal set out in the notice. The observations must be submitted not later than one month after the service of the notice on the Linked Provider by Trinity.

Where, after consideration of any observations submitted to Trinity by the Linked Provider, Trinity continues to consider that the directions issued to the Linked Provider under §38 (1) of the Act have not been complied with, or there are serious deficiencies in the implementation of the quality assurance procedures, it shall withdraw its approval of the procedures established by the Linked Provider under §28, by notice in writing addressed to the Linked Provider, as stated above.

6.3.2 Notification of Appeal

Where a linked provider intends to appeal against the withdrawal of approval of its quality procedures, a Notice of Appeal must be submitted within 20 working days of the date of notification of Trinity's decision to the Linked Provider withdrawing approval of the QA procedures.

Appeals must be made in writing, stating the grounds of appeal, with supporting evidence; using the prescribed Notice of Appeal form (see Appendix 2).

Appeals must be sent via email to Registrar@tcd.ie or by registered post with 'Notice of Appeal' clearly written on the envelope, addressed to:

Office of the Registrar,
West Theatre,
Trinity College,
Dublin 2,
Ireland.

6.3.2 Appointment of an Independent Appeals Person

When a Notice of Appeal is received, Trinity shall appoint an IAP to hear the appeal. The IAP shall be:

- Independent of Trinity College Dublin;
- Have no conflict of interest regarding either party;
- Have an understanding of the procedural framework for quality assurance in Irish higher education;
- Have experience of chairing hearings, inquiries, tribunals or equivalent – such as a barrister/solicitor or a former Registrar.

The linked provider will be informed of the proposed IAP.

If the Linked Provider has any objections to the proposed IAP, these must be sent in writing to the above email or address as detailed above in section 6.3.2 within 5 working days of notification of the proposed IAP.

Trinity will consider any objections raised by the Linked Provider and decide whether or not to make any change(s) to the proposed IAP nominee(s). Trinity's decision shall be final in this regard.

6.3.3 Initial Consideration of an Appeal

The IAP may refuse to deal with an appeal if they are of the opinion that the appeal is not made in good faith or is frivolous or vexatious. The IAP will confirm the reasons for rejecting the appeal in writing to the Linked Provider and Trinity.

6.3.5 Appeal Process

Preliminary process:

- Once the IAP has been appointed, Trinity will send a copy of the appeal and any accompanying documents to the IAP and Terms of Reference for the appeal will be put in place.
- The Linked Provider may make a written submission to the IAP within 20 working days of the appointment of the IAP.
- The IAP will furnish a copy of any submission by the Linked Provider to Trinity and Trinity may make a replying submission within 20 working days of receipt of the Linked Provider's submission.
- The IAP may, at any time, require either the Linked Provider, Trinity or other relevant person or party to supply the IAP with additional information regarding the appeal, or any document that is considered relevant to the appeal.
- The IAP will specify the period within which the particulars or documentation requested will be produced.
- The IAP will furnish a copy of the Notice of Appeal and relevant supplementary documents to any other person they consider to be concerned in the matter that is the subject of appeal.

Oral Hearing

- The IAP will consider the appeal at an oral hearing, based on the documentation provided by both the Linked Provider concerned and Trinity.
- The IAP will give reasonable notification (at least 20 working days) to the parties, of the date and location of the hearing.

Terms of Reference for the oral hearing shall provide that:

- The IAP may invite persons with relevant expertise to attend and make statements at the hearing.
- If the Linked Provider and/or Trinity wish to call experts, the names, organisation and the position held and address of such experts must be provided to the IAP, at least 15 working days, prior to the hearing.
- A secretary shall be appointed to assist the IAP with the appeal if the IAP requires one.
- Privacy and confidentiality will be respected as far as possible by all parties. Disclosure about the appeal will only be made insofar as this is necessary to deal with the appeal or to the extent required by law.
- The hearing shall be recorded.
- If any party is unable to attend the hearing they must notify the IAP as soon as possible.

Where either or both parties to the appeal fail to attend the hearing, without notifying the IAP, the hearing may proceed in their absence, at the discretion of the IAP.

- In advance of the hearing, both parties will be provided with a complete set of documentation relating to the appeal, together with a list of attendees, which will include any person specifically invited by the IAP (and as appropriate the linked provider and/or Trinity). This information/documentation will be provided no later than 10 working days before the hearing.
- Linked providers and Trinity should not provide documents that they wish to retain for the future. Documents submitted will not be returned.
- The IAP (supported by a secretary if requested) will secure a location for the oral hearing.
- Oral hearings will be held in private and will be kept as informal as possible.
- At the hearing, both parties to the appeal will be entitled to be heard and to present evidence to the IAP. Both parties will be given an opportunity to present their case; each will have the right of reply and to question the other. Parties to the appeal may not be represented by another party including a legal representative.
- The IAP will complete oral hearings promptly and efficiently within a reasonable timescale. However, the IAP may have to adjourn an oral hearing for a short period, in order to review additional information supplied in the course of the hearing. If necessary, the IAP may also adjourn a hearing until a date specified by the IAP.

6.3.4 Decisions of the IAP

The IAP will normally make their decision on the appeal in writing, with reasons, within 10 working days of their review of the parties' submissions; in the event of an oral hearing within 10 working days of the completion of the oral hearing. The decision will be sent to both parties at the same time.

The outcome of the appeal process is that the IAP may:

a. Dismiss the appeal and affirm the decision of Trinity to withdraw its approval of a linked provider's QA procedures, or
b. Quash Trinity's decision to withdraw its approval of a linked provider's QA procedures, and direct Trinity to reconsider its decision.

The decision of the IAP is final.

Where an appeal by a linked provider is upheld, the relevant designated awarding body concerned shall notify the Authority of that fact within 14 days of the decision being made and upon receipt of that notice

6.3.5 Withdrawal of an Appeal

An appeal may be withdrawn by the Linked Provider at any time by notice in writing to the IAP and to Trinity. Trinity may withdraw its written notice served under § 39 (3) of the Act at any point up to the time when the IAP makes his/her decision, by notifying the linked provider and the IAP in writing.

6.3.6 Costs associated with an Appeal

The Linked Provider is responsible for any costs incurred by both the institution and any experts that they call in relation to the appeal. Trinity will be responsible for any fees and disbursements associated with the IAP.

6.4 Related Documents

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016)
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)
- Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies

7 Validation of Programmes at Linked Providers

7.1 Overview

This section sets out the regulations and procedures, with accompanying guidelines, for Linked Providers in respect of the approval of new academic programmes and major changes to existing programmes, offered in the Linked Providers and leading to degrees of the University of Dublin or Trinity College Dublin[4].

Responsibility for the quality of programmes rests with the Linked Providers themselves, with guidance from Trinity as the awarding body, and in accordance with national policy and relevant European best practice guidelines. The approval, monitoring, and review of academic programmes form part of Trinity's quality assurance processes, which are designed to provide assurance that Linked Providers have appropriate measures in place to maintain and assure the quality of their provision.

7.2 Scope

These regulations, procedures and guidelines apply to (i) institutions that are currently Linked Providers of Trinity and (ii) other institutions that may seek Linked Provider status with the University and intend to provide taught and research programmes leading to the awarding of degrees by the University of Dublin or the awarding of certificates and diplomas by Trinity College Dublin.

7.3 Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the procedures and guidelines for Linked Providers when submitting a new programme for approval or proposing major or moderate changes to existing programmes.

Trinity will seek to assure itself that programmes of study delivered by a Linked Provider which lead to awards made by the University of Dublin and by Trinity College Dublin are of an appropriate academic standard and that they adhere to University policy and procedures.

Trinity will seek to ensure that:

[4] The Academic Awards Policy states that Degrees are awarded by the University of Dublin and Certificates and diplomas are awarded by Trinity College Dublin.

a. Programmes leading to awards made by the University of Dublin and by Trinity College Dublin are designed in accordance with the University's requirements for programme design.

b. Programme aims and learning outcomes are clear and coherent and the proposed level of the award is in accordance with national standards and consistent, in so far as is reasonably practicable, with the requirements set out in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

c. Curricula, teaching, learning and assessment methods enable students enrolled on programmes to acquire the standard of knowledge, skill or competence associated with the level of that award.

d. Student support arrangements are appropriate within the Linked Provider and sufficient to enable the student to achieve their award.

e. There are sufficient resources (both learning and physical) and staffing in the Linked Provider to support the proposed programme aims and objectives.

f. The standards and quality assurance of programmes leading to qualifications in regulated occupations take appropriate account of relevant external subject benchmarks and professional requirements nationally and internationally.

7.4 Responsibilities

Trinity is responsible for ensuring that effective methods for the approval of new programmes are established and maintained, to ensure the standards and quality of proposed new programmes in the Linked Provider satisfy national and international standards and requirements and are consistent with comparable programmes offered in Trinity College Dublin.

A Linked Provider has responsibility for the design and internal evaluation of a programme before it is submitted to Trinity.

7.5 Procedure

See Section 7.4 "Validated Programmes/Strands" of the Programme and Curriculum Design and Approval Policy.

Programmes submitted for validation follow the internal approval process of the Linked Provider concerned and are considered by the related Trinity School(s), by the relevant ACDC, and recommended to the USC or GSC, as appropriate, prior to approval by the University Council.

Initial outline of programme proposal should be shared with Academic Affairs, the relevant Trinity School, and other relevant Schools to encourage early collaboration between the Linked Provider and Trinity during the design process.

Engagement with relevant Trinity Schools is required prior to the development of a programme, in order to support complementarity, alignment, and appropriate coordination across provision. Where either the Linked Provider or a relevant Trinity School has concerns regarding the proposed programme concept, the matter should be referred to the Registrar of Trinity College Dublin. Participation by professional, regulatory or employer bodies may have an integral role in both the programme design and the review and accreditation process. In such cases, the Linked Provider must demonstrate institutional oversight of its responsibilities relating to the relevant professional and/or statutory body.

Depending on the accreditation process by the professional, regulatory or employer bodies, the proposal is shared either in parallel with validation by Trinity or after validation is completed by University Council approval.

The relevant Trinity School will review any programme outline/proposal to provide expert feedback and to ensure due regard is given to existing programmes at Trinity.

Proposals should be submitted 3 weeks before the Associated College Degrees Committee (ACDC) meeting. Academic Affairs, the relevant Trinity School(s), [5]and other relevant departments will provide feedback upon submission of the full proposal.

The ACDC will either:

a. Approve the proposal and recommend to USC/GSC for approval.
b. Approve with minor clarifications and recommend to USC/GSC for approval pending clarifications.
c. Approve with major clarifications and recommend resubmission to subsequent ACDC meeting.

The Undergraduate/Graduate Studies Committee will discuss and approve the (updated) proposal and will either:

a. Approve the proposal and proceed to complete external review before progressing to University Council for approval.
b. Approve the proposal with minor clarifications and proceed to complete external review before progressing to University Council.
c. Approve with major clarifications and recommend resubmission to subsequent USC/GSC meeting.

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[5] Relevant Trinity Schools refer to the School included in the membership of the Linked Provider ACDC. This School is based in the related field of the Linked Provider i.e. Education or Creative Arts.

Prior to submission for approval by the University Council, all new undergraduate and postgraduate programme/strands' proposals are required to be sent for external review, see section 7.7 for procedures.

Programmes will not be advertised prior to their approval by University Council.

University Council will discuss and approve the proposal and will either:

a. Approve the proposal.
b. Approve with minor clarifications.
c. Approve with major clarifications and recommend resubmission to subsequent University Council meeting.

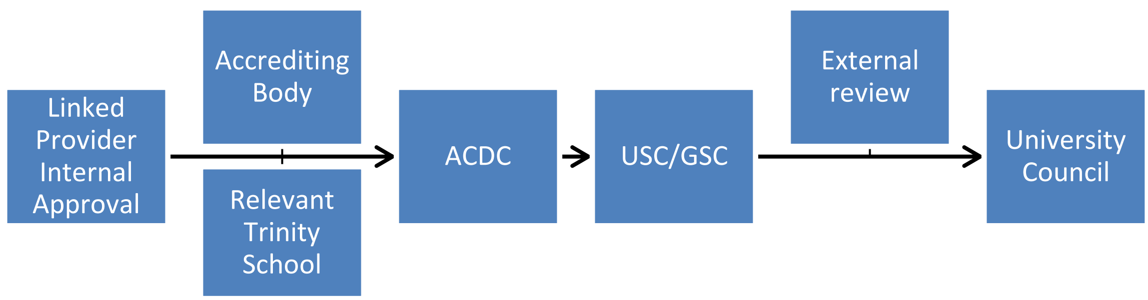

Figure 7.1: Flow diagram of approval process relating to programme/strand proposals for, and major changes to, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes validated by Trinity.

7.6 Procedures for Major Changes to Existing Programmes

Changes to validated programmes/strands/subjects, and modules will be implemented as set-out in the Programme and Curriculum Design and Approval Policy Appendix I: 'Oversight of Programme and Curriculum Changes'.

Trinity is responsible for ensuring that effective methods for changes to existing programmes are established and maintained, to ensure the standards and quality of proposed changes to validated programmes in the Linked Providers satisfy national and international standards and requirements and are consistent with comparable programmes offered in Trinity College Dublin.

Review of proposed major changes to programmes can be supported by a Subject Matter Expert (SME) in the relevant discipline area depending on the extent of the major change. The process of approval of major changes will follow the sequence as described for new programme/strand proposals in Section 7.5.

7.7 Procedures for the External Review of New Proposals of, and Major Changes to, Programmes/Strands

See also Programme and Curriculum Design and Approval Policy, Section 7.4 “Validated Programmes/Strands”.

All new programmes, new programme strands and major revisions of programmes leading to major awards in the NFQ will be reviewed by External Reviewers. All programmes leading to minor, special purpose or supplemental awards at all levels in the NFQ may be subject to external review as advised by Trinity.

An External Reviewer is appointed by the Dean of Graduate Studies and/or the Senior Lecturer/ Dean of Undergraduate Studies respectively.

Following review of the proposal, the External Reviewer shall submit a report to the Dean of Graduate Studies and/or the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and to the proposers in the Linked Provider. The external reviewer may make recommendations on the proposed programme.

The Head and/or the proposers in the Linked Provider shall incorporate the recommendations made by the External Reviewer and are offered an opportunity to respond to the External Reviewer’s recommendations via a memorandum to the Dean of Graduate Studies and/or the Senior Lecturer/ Dean of Undergraduate Studies, explaining which changes have or have not been accommodated and the rationale.

The Dean of Graduate Studies and/or the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies will decide whether to recommend the (updated) proposal to University Council based on the memorandum as submitted by the Head and/or the proposers in the Linked Provider.

The Dean of Graduate Studies and/or the Senior Lecturer/ Dean of Undergraduate Studies may set conditions based on the received recommendations which must be met by the Linked Provider prior to the admission of a student onto the programme or withhold the recommendation to University Council pending further consultation with the Linked Provider and resubmission of an updated proposal.

The suspension and cessation of existing programmes is considered a major change and will require approval by the ACDC, followed by approval by Undergraduate Studies Committee/Graduate Studies Committee.

7.8 Implementation of the Approved New Programme/Strand

The Trinity Registrar will inform the Head of the Linked Provider, in writing, of the University Council’s decision regarding the approval of a programme.

Key implementation information related to the programme/strand delivery will be confirmed by the Linked Provider to the relevant Trinity Departments (i.e. Admissions, Academic Registry, Finance).

7.9 Procedures for Moderate Changes to Existing Programmes

Changes to validated programmes/strands/subjects and modules will be implemented as set out in the Programme and Curriculum Design and Approval Policy Appendix I: 'Oversight of Programme and Curriculum Changes'.

A moderate change to a programme is classified as a change that does not result in changes to programme learning outcomes e.g. changes to modes of assessment, modules etc. Such changes should be documented and approved through the Linked Provider's internal governance structure. Any approved moderate changes shall be reported to the Associated College Degrees Committee (ACDC) for noting.

At the end of each academic year, a Linked Provider shall provide to the ACDC a summary of all internally approved moderate changes for each programme, to support oversight of the cumulative volume of change within that programme. Where two or more moderate change requests have been made to a validated programme, the ACDC may seek that further changes are discussed and approved at the ACDC.

The Linked Provider is responsible for consulting with Academic Affairs where proposed changes to an existing programme may be substantial, including where there is uncertainty as to whether a proposed moderate change should be categorised as a major change or as a new programme. Such consultation must take place before the proposal is submitted for approval.

7.10 Procedures for New Module Proposals and Moderate Changes to Existing Modules

In circumstances where the new module proposals and proposed moderate changes to existing modules do not significantly alter the structure and/or content and do not result in changes to programme learning outcomes, such changes should be documented and approved through the Linked Provider's internal governance structure. Moderate changes to a module include e.g. new modules, suspension, cessation, changes to: the title, modes of assessment, credit volume, module learning outcomes, and mode of delivery. Any approved new modules and moderate changes shall be reported to the Associated College Degrees Committee (ACDC) for noting.

The number of new modules or the number of proposed changes at once may be so substantial that the proposal should be classified and processed as a major programme change or a new programme/strand proposal. The Linked Provider is asked to consult with Academic Affairs for guidance in such instances.

Minor changes relating to module content, reading lists or change of topics in a module syllabus which do not impact on the module level learning outcomes can be signed off by the module coordinator of the Linked Provider and do not need to be reported to the Associated College Degrees Committee (ACDC) for noting.

At the end of each academic year, a Linked Provider shall provide to the ACDC a summary of all internally approved moderate changes to the modules of each programme, to support oversight of the cumulative volume of change within that programme. Where two or more moderate change requests have been made to a validated programme, the ACDC may seek that further changes are discussed and approved at the ACDC.

7.11 Related Documents

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- Curriculum Glossary
- QQI Blended and Fully Online Quality Assurance Guidelines

8 Governance Pathways for Quality Assurance Processes

8.1 Overview

Trinity has established committees to oversee the approval, monitoring, and periodic review of the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of its Linked Providers, and to consider the approval of programmes designed and delivered by Linked Providers and validated by Trinity. The remit of these committees extends to the education, research, and related activities of the Linked Providers. In this regard, the principal mechanisms supporting such oversight are the:

- Quality Committee
- Associated Colleges Degrees Committee (ACDC)
- Annual Dialogue Meeting (ADM)

This section sets out the remit of each committee and clarifies the submission pathways applicable to the committees involved in the governance of Linked Providers at Trinity.

8.2 Quality Committee

The Quality Committee is a compliance committee of the College Board and the University Council. In addition to its wider University-wide responsibilities, the Committee's remit in relation to Linked Providers is to:

- Establish and recommend for approval by Council and Board procedures for the quality assurance of Linked Providers as prescribed under the QQI Act 2012.
- Consider and make recommendations to Council/Board on external quality reviews' reports relating to the institution, validated programmes, and services' units supporting the student experience
- Consider the minutes of the Annual Dialogue Meeting within Trinity's governance arrangements for Linked Providers, thereby enabling the ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of the implementation of approved quality assurance procedures.

An overview of Linked Provider items presented to the Quality Committee, and the respective approval route to Council and/or Board, is set out in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Linked Provider items presented at Quality Committee and their pathway to Council and/or Board.

Item Type	**Quality Committee**	**Council**	**Board**
Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures			
• New Academic Policies and Procedures	To consider and recommend for approval	To note and approve	N/A
• Amendments (major/minor) to existing Academic Policies and Procedures	To consider and recommend for approval	To note and approve	N/A
• New Non-Academic Policies	To note and approve	-	To note and approve
Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review			
• External Quality Review Reports			
• Institutional Quality Review Reports	To consider and recommend for approval	To note and approve	Noting and approval
• Programme Quality Review Reports	To consider and recommend for approval	To note and approve	
• Non-Academic Unit Quality Review Reports	To note recommendations		To note recommendations
International Education Mark (IEM)			
• Update on changes to IEM state	To note any changes	To note any changes	To note any changes

8.3 Annual Dialogue Meeting

The Annual Dialogue Meeting shall provide for the annual review of the ongoing implementation and effectiveness of approved Linked Provider Quality Assurance Procedures, in order to ensure compliance with agreed arrangements. The outcomes of this review shall be noted to the Quality Committee by way of the minutes.

8.4 Associated College Degrees Committee (ACDC)

The Associated College Degrees Committee (ACDC) is a joint committee of Trinity and the relevant Linked Provider. Within its remit in relation to Linked Provider validated programmes, the Committee is responsible for managing proposals for new programmes and changes to existing programmes. Each ACDC comprises members of both Trinity and the Linked Provider and is chaired by the Trinity Registrar. The Committee operates in accordance with approved Terms of Reference and its focus is on:

- Academic matters with respect to new programme proposals, changes to validated programmes and monitoring activities with same;
- Collaboration between the Linked Provider and Trinity;
- Trinity Academic Policies and Procedures relevant to the Linked Provider.

An overview of Linked Provider items presented to the ACDC, and the approval pathway to Undergraduate Studies Committee/Graduate Studies Committee and University Council, are presented in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2: Linked Provider items considered or noted by the ACDC

Item Type	ACDC	USC/GSC	University Council
New Academic programme/strand proposals	Discussion and recommend for approval	Discussion and recommend for approval	Noting and Approval
Major changes to existing programmes	Discussion and recommend for approval	Discussion and recommend for approval	Noting and Approval
Moderate changes to existing programmes	Noting via Summary Report annually	Noting via ACDC minutes	Noting via USC/GSC minutes
New modules and moderate changes to existing modules	Noting via Summary Report annually	Noting via ACDC minutes	Noting via USC/GSC minutes
Regulations impacting new or existing programmes	Discussion and approval	Noting via ACDC minutes	Noting via USC/GSC minutes
External Examiner reports/annual review reports for validated programmes	Discussion and approval	Noting via ACDC minutes	Noting via USC/GSC minutes
University Calendar Entry [note that changes to the Calendar listing need approval separately]	Discussion and approval	Noting and approval	Noting via USC/GSC minutes
Student progression, retention and achievement outcomes, annually and by cohort	Discussion and approval	Noting via ACDC minutes	N/A
Recruitment, admissions, induction procedures for domestic, visiting and international students	Discussion and approval	Noting via ACDC minutes	N/A
Outcomes of student evaluation activities at programme and/or module level, in addition to the Irish Survey of Student Engagement and/or International Student Barometer, if applicable	Discussion and approval	Noting via ACDC minutes	N/A

A high-level overview of the approval lines for various Linked Provider items is presented in Figure 8.1

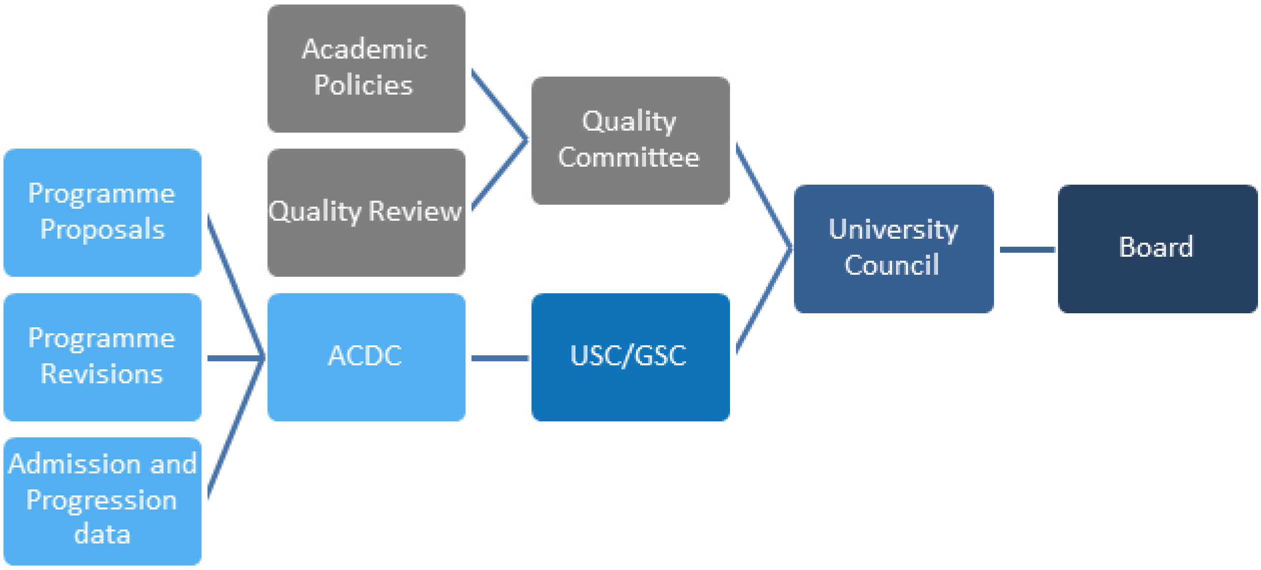

Figure 8.1: Graphic showing governance pathways of certain item groups through either Quality Committee or ACDC at Trinity. Further detail on specific items is outlined in the corresponding sections for each committee below.

9 Framework Governance and Document Control

9.1 Responsibility

The responsibility for this framework policy lies with the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Registrar, and the Quality Officer as appropriate.

9.2 Document Control

This framework policy brings together policies that were previously approved on a discrete basis. As certain chapters within the framework are newly introduced, the document shall be reviewed three years after its initial approval. The review will be undertaken by those listed in section 9.1 in consultation with existing Linked Providers.

The Linked Provider Policy Framework was approved by:

Quality Committee 7 May 2026
Council 27 May 2026
Board 17 June 2026

Date of next review:2029/2030

10 Appendices

Appendix 1: Self-Certification of Non-Academic Quality Assurance Procedures

<LOGO/Letterhead>
Registrar
Trinity College
Dublin West Theatre
College Green
Dublin 2

Dear Registrar Date:

Self-Certification of Non-Academic Quality Assurance Procedures

On behalf of the Board of <name of Linked Provider Institution> I hereby certify in my capacity as <Title> of < name of Linked Provider Institution> that the institution's quality assurance policies and procedures that relate to non-academic and related services listed in the attached signed checklist that accompany this submission:

1. Have regard to the requirements of the *Qualifications & Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines,* other QQI Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines, Policies and Codes, Trinity Agreements and Policies and those of any professional statutory accreditation body as apply to the scope of education provision as outlined under §7.3.1 of the approved Trinity Policy.

2. Have been approved by governance and management in accordance with < name of linked provider Institution> internal governance quality assurance procedures.

3. Are continuously reviewed to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose and comply with relevant legislation in Ireland and in other jurisdictions in which education is provided through third party arrangements, e.g. parent organisations, subsidiaries, collaborations and partnerships nationally and internationally.

4. Will be provided to Trinity College Dublin on request, at any time.

Yours sincerely

Signed

Title

Encls: (i) Signed checklist of non-academic and related services' quality assurance policies and procedures in place; (ii) Evidence of required external review and assurance in respect of those policies and procedures with a statutory basis.

Appendix 2: Notice of Appeal – Linked Provider

This Notice of Appeal must be completed in full and signed by the authorised person acting on behalf of the linked provider.

Section A – Contact Details

Name of linked provider:	
Address:	
Contact name (linked provider) and position held within the institution:	
Head of linked provider institution:	*(If different from above)*
Contact phone number (linked provider):	
Contact email address (linked provider):	

Please also complete sections B & C below

Section B – Grounds for Appeal

In this section, please state in full, details of the grounds of appeal and the facts and contentions upon which you intend to rely. Please reference supporting documents as appropriate, and also list these in Section C below. (Please attach additional pages as required)

Section C – Supporting Documents

Please list and attach any supporting documentation that you intend to use for the appeal

Name (please print):…………………………………………………………………………………………..

Signed:………………………………………………………………….. Date:…………………………….

Please return this form and supporting documentation to:

Office of the Registrar,
West Theatre,
Trinity College
Dublin 2
Ireland