Procedure for Assessment, Use and Monitoring of Platforms and Tools

QA Area (s)	• Teaching and Learning; Blended Learning
Applies to	☒ Staff only ☐ Learners only ☐ Staff and Learners
Policies this Procedure relates to	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy Standards for Blended Learning

1.1.1 Procedure

The College's procedure for the assessment, use and monitoring of platforms and tools has been derived from QQI's guidelines and the College's own TLA Strategy. This procedure and criteria listed within it may be adapted as appropriate over time, utilising the processes within the QAEF for ongoing review of QAEF documentation.

1.1.2 Assessment of Potential Platforms and Tools

Potential new technologies are carefully evaluated and tested by the College to determine whether they are reliable, secure and aligned to the pedagogic objectives of a module or programme prior to their use. Opportunities for staff to test new technologies are planned and controlled. If a decision is made by the College to adopt and support a new technology, staff and learner training will be facilitated.

- A new technology may be identified and proposed for use by any member of staff. In many instances, proposals may emerge from the Learning Design function within the College.

- New technologies will be assessed by the Learning Designer and at least two members of academic staff (nominated by the Director of Academic Programmes) with regard to the following criteria, as appropriate to their role within the organisation:

  o The nature of pedagogic activity that the technology facilitates, and the extent to which it is likely to be used within the College's programmes.

  o The extent to which the technology differentiates from, overlaps with or duplicates the function of existing supported technologies.

  o The ease of integration with existing supported technologies.

  o The security and reliability of the technology, and the risks associated with its use.

  o The accessibility of the technology for users with disabilities or special needs.

  o The costs associated with the technology.

  o Any other factors deemed relevant or important.

- If a high level of agreement is reached, a formal proposal to adopt and support the technology may be tabled at the Academic Council by the Director of Academic Programmes.

- Where adoption of the technology has cost and resource implications, the Academic Council, if approving the proposal, may table a recommendation to either the Executive Management Team or Board of Directors (depending on the required investment) for decision.

1.1.3 Use and Monitoring of Platforms and Tools

The effectiveness of the platforms and tools used by the College is continually monitored and reviewed, utilising feedback from learners and academic staff. There are a number of mechanisms in place to facilitate this.

- Feedback is routinely sought from learners regarding their experience at the College. This encompasses feedback on programme curricula and delivery via the VLE, quality of teaching, quality and availability of support services and effectiveness of administration.

- Additional feedback from learners regarding their experience of the College VLE and integrated platforms, including issues related to blended and online delivery, may be provided via the class representative system, and the inclusion of learner representatives on the Academic Council.

- Academic and teaching staff are able to provide feedback and raise any concerns pertaining to the VLE and integrated platforms on an ongoing basis. Additionally, Programme Annual Review provides an opportunity for academic and teaching staff to make formal input.

- All synchronous online delivery is supported by the College's Online Teaching Support who are able to raise issues and concerns on an ongoing basis.

- The Academic Council will review an annual report on learning technologies supported by the College provided by the IT Manager and Learning Design function within the College.

1.2 Policy for IT Security

The purpose of the IT Department is to provide suitable information technology and educational resources (including educational technology and any VLE provided as required by the College, identified at programme development and agreed at validation).

It is the responsibility of the Programme Lead and Head of Faculty to identify and specify the IT and computing requirements for programme delivery.

The IT department is responsible for the provision and the management of sustainable computing facilities accessible to staff and learners.

The IT department works with academics and the Education Management Committee to systematically upgrade hardware and software in line with technical developments and advise the College on more effective tools and methodologies to enhance the learner experience.

IT support services are available at all time during class delivery. Helpdesk support is available for students and lecturers during normal office hours.

The IT Manager is responsible for maintaining a comprehensive list of IT and computing resources. The IT Manager is also responsible for ensuring that all software is properly licensed and copyright protocols are respected. Other responsibilities include firewalls, backups, etc.

Details of backup and recovery are given in policy for Data Backup and Recovery.