Optimum Ltd.
Training Quality Assurance Manual

Optimum Limited

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Optimum are proud recipients of the 'Excellence Through People Award'

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INTRODUCTION

This is Optimum's Training Quality Assurance Manual. It captures the way that we implement our training quality assurance system. It is intended to be used as a resource for our staff, and for other stakeholders including employers, learners and other interested parties.

Optimum will update this manual to reflect changes in operating practice occasioned by factors such as changes in legislation, process improvement, changes in regulatory body guidance etc.

The manual itself is designed to reflect the structure of the QQI Core Statutory Guidelines, and specifically the 11 core quality assurance criteria contained therein:

1. Governance and Management of Quality
2. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance
3. Programmes of Education and Training
4. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development.
5. Teaching and Learning
6. Assessment of Learners
7. Supports for Learners
8. Information and Data Management
9. Public information and Communication
10. Other Parties involved in Education and Training
11. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Each section presents our policy and our procedure for each criterion. The method for implementing each procedure is described in terms of key activities, how these are achieved, who does them and what evidence is there to show that they have been achieved.

Welcome to Optimum Limited

Welcome to Optimum Limited, Training & Business Services. Optimum was created in 1990 to provide professional Training and Business Services & Support to companies and individuals aiming to achieve their ultimate success in business. Our training programmes are designed to increase your proficiency and competency whether it be personal development or business development skills. We support initiatives and anticipate and respond to the ever changing needs of our many learners.

As a preferred choice provider and partner to many of Ireland's leading businesses, we have learned that the key to our success is putting their success first. Our commitment to quality is enhanced by the enthusiasm of our team and our recognition of the standards you set. Through ongoing research and development and an innovative approach all of our programmes incorporate the latest concepts and approaches and best practice trends ensuring that participants do not receive an "off the shelf experience". Our core goal is to provide participants with the essential tools required to achieve their personal and business potential in a unique, stimulating and enjoyable environment

If you have any questions, please contact us. Full information on support services and relevant contact details are contained in this handbook.





Mary Harrison
Chief Executive
Optimum Limited

Ronnie Harrison
Director & CFO
Optimum Limited

optimum.

Scope of Provision

In Optimum, we are accredited for the following QQI Awards:

# Title	Code	Award Type	Level	Credit Value
Training and Development	6S3372	Special Purpose	6	30
Training Needs Identification & Design	6N3325	Minor	6	15
Training Delivery and Evaluation	6N3326	Minor	6	15
Coaching Models of Practice	6N3087	Minor	6	15
Managing People	6N3945	Minor	6	15
Leadership	6N2191	Minor	6	15
Sales and Marketing Management	6N3613	Minor	6	15
Communications	5N0690	Minor	5	15
Customer Services	5N0972	Minor	5	15
Start your own business	5N1418	Minor	5	15
Digital Marketing	5N1364	Minor	5	15
Communications	4N0689	Minor	4	15

Contact Details

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Phone number:
(01) 672 86 28

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Opening Hours are 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday from June to August and from 9.00am – 5.30pm Monday to Thursday from September to May with a 5pm finish on Fridays.

Optimum's Vision & Mission Statement

Vision

To bring inspiration and innovation to learning and development and support people to improve performance and build a sustainable future through creativity, expertise and agility.

Mission Statement

Business needs for the future – helping people and businesses to develop the skills they need to succeed

Our mission is to provide our learners and our team with an inspiring environment which promotes excellence in Learning and Development Services to all our Clients at all times and for both to enjoy the challenge of achieving success together.

Values

Our Core Values are below:

1. **Achievement** – Excellence and growth
2. **Client Focus** – Razor- sharp focus on our client's needs
3. **Integrity** – honesty and respect for all individuals
4. **Collaboration** – to provide additionality for Optimum
5. **Professionalism** – in our actions with clients, partners, and each other
6. **Courage** – to pursue knowledge and recommend continuous improvement
7. **Sustainability** -to the Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) agenda
8. **Loyalty** – to the team and our clients
9. **Fun**- Enjoyment and fulfilment in our work

Optimum's Commitment

Optimum's Supports for Learners policy is to provide comprehensive and accessible supports for learners throughout their time with us. We will ensure that they are fully informed about the range of services available to them, and all required resources are in place where and when they are needed.

Optimum will take all reasonable measures to support the general wellbeing of all learners on our programmes.

Optimum will provide learners with comprehensive administration and technical support services as well as personal and professional guidance. We will consistently seek and act on learner feedback received in relation to these services.

Optimum's responsibility to every learner is:

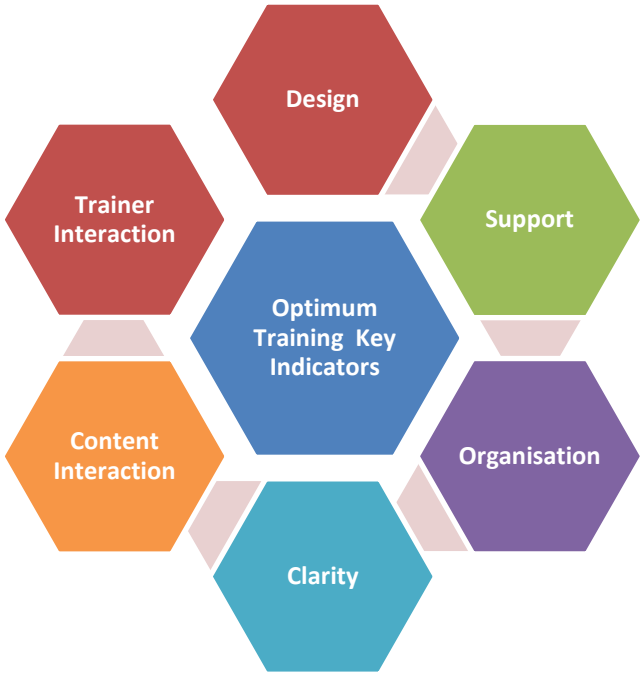
- To plan, prepare, and deliver training in a safe and suitable learning environment
- To provide support and guidance for learners for the duration of training.
- To be trained by people that are competent in the subject area.
- To source and produce relevant learning materials.
- To stimulate and sustain learner motivation and engagement.
- To be treated with equality, dignity and respect by staff and other learners.
- To discourage undesirable behaviour in a timely and appropriate manner

- To be tested and assessed in compliance with the Assessment Specification.
- To receive details of your programme of study, a published timetable, assessmentschedules and criteria.
- To communicate the existence of supports to learners.
- To provide ongoing feedback and support from your trainer/QQI Co-ordinator.
- To be asked for your feedback on the programme and the learning experience
- To ensure that learners are aware of the grounds of Appeals and Complaints.

Optimum's Teaching and Learning Approach

Optimum's preferred style of delivery is extremely interactive with tangible outcomes providing participants with a most effective learning experience. Optimum's Trainers keep the sessional topics vibrant and challenging – they possess the pedagogical competence and social skills to conduct high quality and interactive best practice training.

To ensure the highest of quality with Optimum's online or in-person training, we have outlined the following key indicators:



Optimum uses a multitude of training techniques to ensure each participant can assimilate information in his/her preferred learning environment. Each session focusses on the development of both the professional and personal skills of the participant.

Each programme will include peer learning to raise the awareness of common issues and challenges and to encourage the exchange of experience and transfer of knowledge between the participants. We believe the Trainers needs to be responsive to participants' reactions so they need to be flexible with methodology.

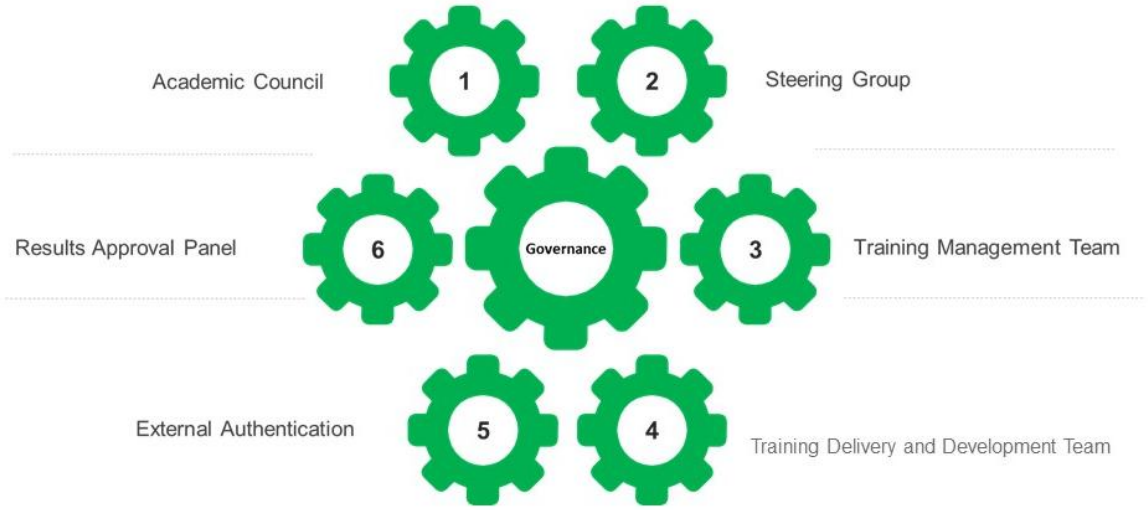
OPTIMUM'S GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW

Purpose of this document

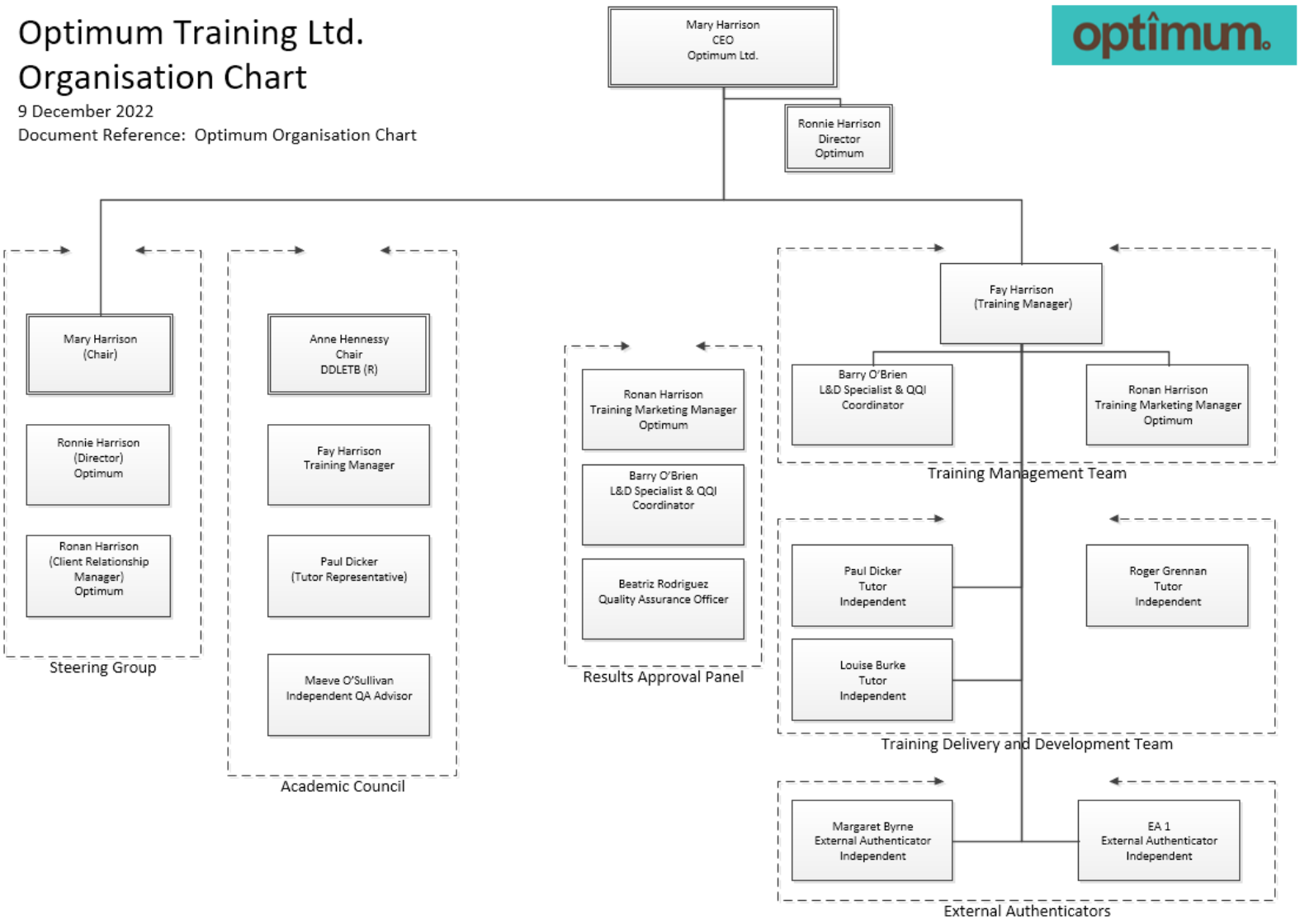
This document is intended to provide an overview of the Optimum Ltd. training governance system. It identifies the primary governance groups and individuals and describes their role within the system.

Governance Groups

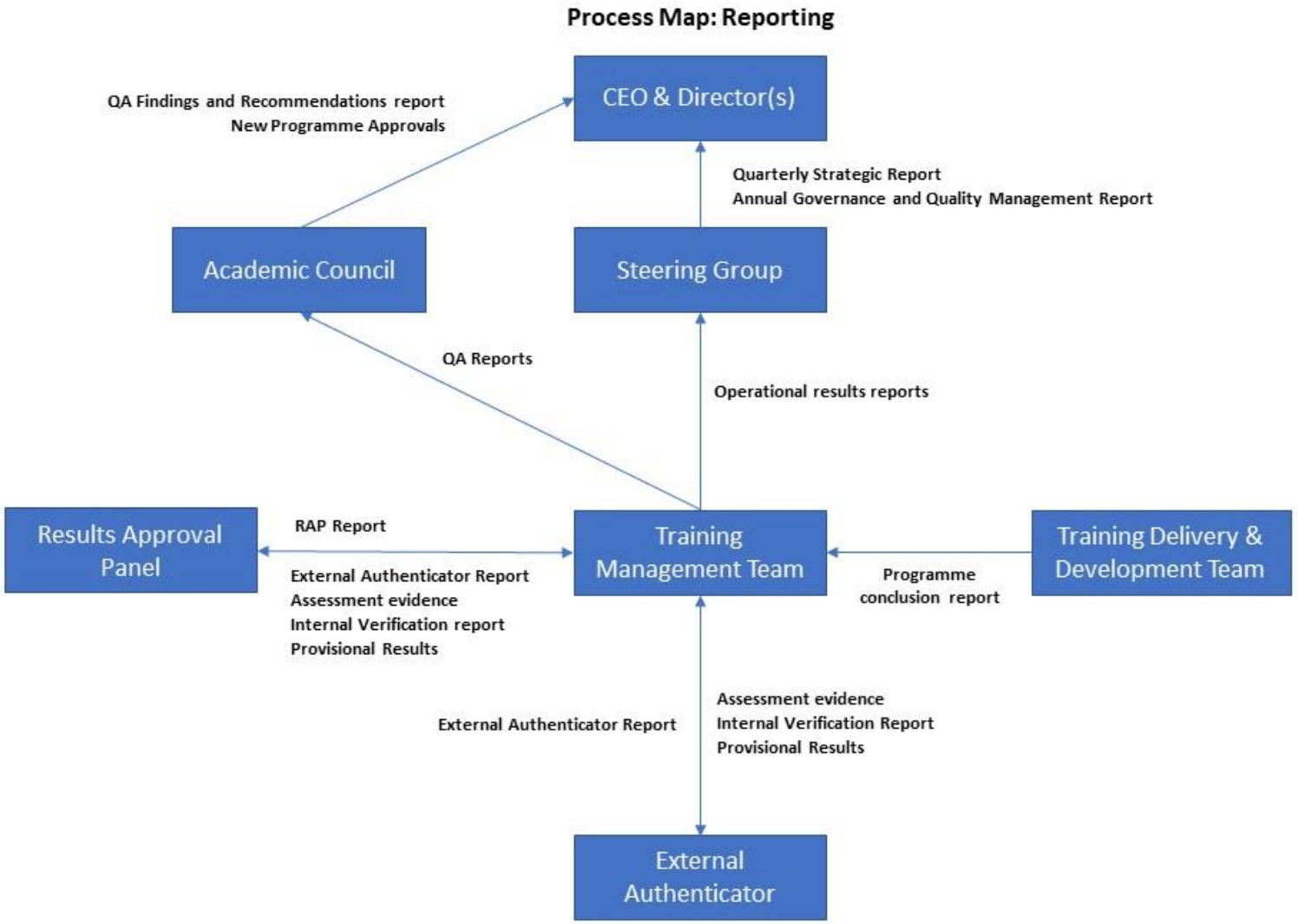
There are six main governance groups which comprise the Optimum training quality assurance governance system.



ORGANISTATION CHART



OPTIMUM REPORTING PROCESS MAP



ABBREVIATIONS LIST

Title	Abbreviation
Chief Executive Officer	CEO
Academic Council	AC
Steering Group	SG
Training Management Team	TMT
Training Delivery and Development Team	TDDT
Trainer	T
External Authenticators	EA
Internal Verifier	IV
Results Approval Panel	RAP
Quality Assurance	QA
Access, Transfer and Progression	ATP
Recognition of Prior Learning	RPL
National Framework of Qualifications	NFQ
Quality and Qualifications Ireland	QQI
Key Performance Indicators	KPIs

1. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY

Governance and Management of Quality

Policy

Optimum's Governance and Management of Quality policy is to design and implement a system to oversee and assure the quality of our training provision. The system assigns documented roles and responsibilities to governance groups and individuals to ensure the separation of decision making from decision approval. We will ensure that our governance system remains aligned to our mission and strategy, and that our staff are intrinsically involved in, and responsible for, the development and maintenance of our quality assurance.

We commit to protecting the integrity of training delivery and assessment through constant vigilance by means of comprehensive processes for self-monitoring, self-evaluation and risk management.

We will ensure that all required resources are in place to support a dynamic development and delivery environment which meets the evolving needs of learners, their employers and all other relevant stakeholders. We will ensure that decisions made in relation to our quality assurance are transparently made and clearly communicated.

Procedure

The purpose of this procedure is to implement and maintain a governance system that quality assures all aspects of our training provision, and which provides for the separation of responsibilities between those who produce or develop material and those who approve it.

1. Staff involved in this procedure.

Steering Group (SG), Training Management Team (TMT), Training Manager (TM), Academic Council (AC) Training Delivery and Development Team (TDDT)		
2. Method(s) used to carry out this procedure.		
Method	**Who does it**	**Evidence generated by this procedure**
Governance.		
2.1. Establish Optimum's operational objectives. The Steering Group sets the organisational objectives for Optimum. These objectives relate to the quality of our training and financial viability of the company.	SG	• Minutes of Steering Group meetings • ToR for the Steering Group • Annual reports

2.2. Protect the integrity of academic processes and standards.
 	
Appoint internal and external groups and individuals to assist in the design, implementation and monitoring of the Optimum quality assurance system (e.g. External Authenticator, External Examiner, Training Delivery and Development Team, QA Consultants etc.).
	SG, TMT, AC	• Agenda and Minutes with governance groups and individuals
		  ○ Steering Group
		  ○ Academic Council
		• Reports:
		  ○ External Authentications
		  ○ Internal Verifier Reports
		  ○ Feedback Forms
		  ○ Course Monitoring
		• Organisation Chart
		• Governance at Optimum
		• Competency profiles (Training Delivery and Development Team Profile).
		• Contracts of employment

2.3. Communicate Optimum's mission to all relevant stakeholders.
 	
Publish our mission on our website, in promotional materials, client proposals and in our induction materials.
	SG	• Optimum Website
		  ○ Homepage
		  ○ About Us
		  ○ Quality Assurance
		• Promotional materials

		• Learner and Staff induction materials • Contracts of Employment
2.4. Manage operational risk and future sustainability. Maintain a Risk Register to capture risks identified through QA reports and audits (e.g. external audits and financial reviews)	SG	• Agenda and Minutes of Steering Group meetings • Agenda and Minutes of Academic Council meetings • Risk Register and Risk mitigation Strategy • Reports from auditors • Accountant's reports • Feedback from Tutors (TDDT) and Learners
Management of Quality Assurance.		
2.5. Define the Optimum Quality Assurance system using policies and procedures that are aligned to our mission. Develop and maintain our Training Quality Assurance Manual (and associated documents)	TMT, TM	• Training Quality Assurance Manual (this document) • Learner Handbook • QA Policies and Procedures • Other associated documents: Organisation Charts, guides, profiles, induction materials etc.)
2.6. Assign group and individual responsibility for maintenance of quality standards. Ensure terms of reference are in place for all governance groups (Academic Council, Steering Group, Training Management Team, Internal Verifier, Training Delivery and Development Team, External Authenticators, Learner)	TMT, TM	• Terms of Reference defined in Governance at Optimum • Learner Handbook • Programme Handbooks • Contracts of Employment • Role profiles • Optimum KPIs
2.7. Assure continuous improvement through internal monitoring and self-evaluation.	SG, AC	• Feedback forms (Tutor(TDDT) and learner) • QA Reports (IV, EA)

Ensure that the continuous improvement loop is robust. This means learner and Tutors (TDDT) feedback are captured and reported for consideration and action by the Steering Group and the Academic Council		• Risk Register • Steering Group meeting minutes • Academic Council meeting minutes • Industry surveys (Learning Needs Analysis). • Revisions to the Quality Assurance Manual. • Learner Handbook • Programme Handbooks
2.8. Provide sufficient and appropriate resources to develop and maintain the quality assurance system. The Steering Group is responsible for the training budget and for approving expenditure on QA-related activity. The Steering Group will collaborate with the Academic Council to ensure that financial considerations do not compromise academic quality and integrity.	SG, AC	• Agenda and Minutes of Steering Group and Academic Council Meetings • Representation of QA in budgets and financial accounting reports. • Staffing plans • Competency Profile • Terms of Reference • Contracts of Employment • Programme improvement documents (End of Programme Reports, Risk Register etc.).
Embedding a quality culture.		
2.9. Quality Statement. Document a quality statement and ensure this statement is communicated to staff and learners.	SG	• Documented Quality Statement. • Website – Quality Assurance • Learner Handbook • Induction Tutor (TDDT) and Learner Material
2.10. Include learners and other stakeholders in the QA process. Ensure that learners and Tutor (TDDT) feedback forms are fit for purpose and that feedback received is represented in QA reports for	SG	• Completed feedback forms (learner & Tutor (TDDT)) • Feedback solicited from non-delivery staff and employers.

consideration by governance. Ensure QA reports also include the views of External Authenticators and External Evaluators. Solicit employer feedback and ensure this is reported to and considered by the governance groups.		• Learner representation on the Academic Council.
2.11. Communicate quality assurance mechanisms to learners, staff and employers. Provide staff and learners with materials which describe the quality assurance system at Optimum as it applies to them. Ensure that quality assurance procedures at Optimum are available on the website.	TMT, TM	• Learner and Tutor (TDDT) induction materials • Optimum website • Training Quality Assurance Manual (this document) • Correspondence with individual employers • Minutes of staff meetings/briefings.
3. Monitoring		
Under their Terms of Reference, the Steering Group is responsible for ensuring that Optimum has the appropriate governance and quality management structures in place, the core elements of which are described above. By examining the evidence identified against each criterion, the Steering Group will perform an annual review of the Optimum Governance and Management of Quality measures in place.		

2. DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

Policy

Optimum's Documented Approach to Quality Assurance policy is to implement a robust and clearly structured system for our policies and procedures which is aligned with the QQI guidelines and applicable legislation. We commit to ensuring that in all stages of programme-related activities, the highest quality is achieved. We will implement a clear and concise self -monitoring process with internal arrangements on areas for improvement for our programmes.
We commit to regularly reviewing our documented approaches for any required updates or amendments and ensuring that they are made publicly available in an accessible form.

We will ensure that inclusion and participation of all Optimum staff and learners is an integral part of the development of our policies and procedures.

We will strive to ensure that our procedures will foster an environment that accommodates the diverse needs of our learners and embeds a culture of quality in our staff.

We will also document our relationship with our training collaborators to ensure appropriate management of quality assurance.

Procedure

The purpose of this procedure is to document comprehensively, the quality assurance system in a transparent manner to facilitate access by all stakeholders to necessary information as required, in usable formats.

1. Staff involved in this procedure.

Steering Group (SG), Training Management Team (TMT), Training Manager (TM)

2. Method(s) used to carry out this procedure.

Method	Who does it	Evidence generated by this procedure
Documented policies and procedures.		

2.1. Training Quality Assurance Manual.
 	
Document and maintain all policies and procedures for maximum visibility and ease of access by relevant stakeholders.
	TMT, TM	• Training Quality Assurance Manual.
		• Learner Handbook
		• Supporting Policies and Procedures
		  ○ Access Transfer & Progression
		  ○ Assessment Appeals
		  ○ Compassionate Circumstances
		  ○ Disciplinary
		  ○ Equality & Diversity
		  ○ Health and Safety
		  ○ Data Protection
		  ○ Reasonable Accommodation
		  ○ Recognition of Prior Learning
		• Publication of QA on Optimum Website.

2.2. Quality Assurance Strategy. Ensure that the Quality Assurance system is part of strategic management, by building specific responsibilities into the ToR for	SG, TMT, TM	• Terms of Reference for Governance Groups • Agenda and Meeting minutes of Governance Groups

governance groups and individuals and ensuring their meeting agendas reflect these responsibilities.		• Training Quality Assurance Manual.
2.3. Continuous improvement. Ensure policies and procedures are fit for purpose and geared towards continuous improvement. Feedback loops will capture input for QA reports which will culminate in programme improvement.	TMT, TM	• Feedback procedures (defined in Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review section of this manual) • Feedback forms/surveys (Tutors (TDDT)/ assessors, learners, employers) • QA reports (IV, EA). • Self-evaluation reports. • Improvement Plans. • Revision history of Training Quality Assurance Manual & QA Policies
2.4. QA Compliance with external agencies. Monitor through periodic and ad-hoc review, the compliance of policies and procedures with QQI Guidelines, applicable legislation (e.g. Equality Legislation), regulatory guidelines (e.g. GDPR) and guidelines of other relevant parties (e.g. QQI, DES, HSA etc.).	SG, AC	• Steering Group & Academic Council Reports/Correspondence • QQI Guidelines. • QQI updates/communications. • Education, Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012 (Education and Training) • Equal Status Act, 2000. • GDPR & Data Protection • Communications from the Department of Education and Skills, Dept. of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, etc. • Revision history of Training Quality Assurance Manual. • Compliance with third party organisations (ETB) • Risk Register

A comprehensive system.		
2.5. QA involvement at Optimum. Quality assurance is embedded at all levels of the Optimum organisation. It starts with the learners and the Tutors (TDDT), from the Training Delivery and Development Team, who receive induction briefings and have the opportunity to provide feedback. Internal and external QA personnel ensure feedback is reported. Governance groups operating to ToR ensure that programme development and delivery is conducted in a quality-assured manner.	TMT, TM, TDDT	• Learner and Tutor (TDDT) induction materials • Learner and Tutor (TDDT) feedback forms • QA personnel and reports (Internal Verification, External Authentication, Results Approval, External Evaluator) • Governance Groups • Training Quality Assurance Manual • Learner Handbook • Supporting Policies and Procedures

2.6. Putting QA into practice.
 	
Optimum ensures that we translate documented policies and procedures into practice. This is achieved by implementing governance groups with defined responsibilities, by informing our stakeholder (internal and external) about our QA, and by soliciting feedback to continuously improve our provision of service.
	TMT, TM	• Organisation Chart
		• Governance Terms of Reference
		• Induction materials for Learners and Tutors (TDDT)
		• Training Quality Assurance Manual.
		• Learner Handbook
		• Supporting Policies and Procedures
		  ○ Access Transfer & Progression
		  ○ Assessment Appeals
		  ○ Compassionate Circumstances
		  ○ Disciplinary
		  ○ Equality & Diversity
		  ○ Health and Safety
		  ○ Data Protection
		  ○ Reasonable Accommodation

		○ Recognition of Prior Learning • Publication of QA on Optimum Website. • Quality Statement • Programme Guides • QA reports (IV, EA, EE, RAP) • Programme Improvement Plans • Documented objectives/Key Performance Indicators. • Surveys and Reports.

3. Monitoring

A documented approach to quality assurance is evidenced by the suite of documents that Optimum has put in place including: our organisation chart, Terms of Reference, QA manual, Learner Handbooks, Policies and Procedures, Induction materials, Forms, Reports, Website publications etc.

These documents and instruments change over time and it is the responsibility of the Training Manager to oversee the maintenance of Optimum documentation. The Training Manager will do this with in collaboration with the relevant stakeholder/group. For example, feedback forms will be updated in collaboration with Tutors (TDDT) in the Training Delivery and Development Team, QA reports with verifiers/authenticators/evaluators, Terms of Reference with the Steering Group/Academic Council. The Training Manager will review all key documents at least annually to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

3. PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Programmes of Education and Training
Policy Optimum's Programmes of Education and Training policy is to have in place, a detailed breakdown and structure for the development and design of new programmes which follows a transparent systematic approach. We consult with both internal and external stakeholders regarding new programme development to ensure consistency with our organisational strategy, and alignment with a training need that has been clearly identified. Our programmes will be subject to formal internal approval by our governance groups and ongoing monitoring by our training management team. We will review programme data and staff and learner feedback at the conclusion of every programme with a view to continuous improvement. We will ensure that our Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) policies are reviewed regularly and are in-line National Framework of Qualification and national policy requirements, and that they recognise prior learning for the purposes of access should this be required. We will capture statistical data such as completion rates, and grades, to ensure that we notice exceptions and trends that may inform future delivery and assessment.
Procedure The purpose of this procedure is to ensure programme consistency with our mission and our scope of provision which is business management and leadership.
1. Staff involved in this procedure.

Training Management Team (TMT), Training Manager (TM), Steering Group (SG), Training Delivery and Development Team (TDDT),		
2. Method(s) used to carry out this procedure.		
Method	**Who does it**	**Evidence generated by this procedure**
Programme Development and Approval.		
2.1. Programme objectives and outcomes We develop programmes to meet our organizational objectives of providing business leadership training to industry. Our QQI programmes are based on award specifications published by QQI. Programme development follows our documented development process.	SG, TMT,AC	• Documented organizational objectives published on website. • Award specifications published on QQI website • Programme Validation documentation demonstrating indicative learning outcomes. • Documented Programme Development process at Optimum (Programme development at Optimum.pdf)
2.2. Meeting industry need. We identify current and future needs of industry through internal and external consultation. We liaise with learners, employers, TDDT, ETBs and our training partners in relation possible future programmes. We also consult government and industry publications. This is the first stage in our programme development approach and the outcomes of this analysis are discussed by the Steering Group before submission for approval consideration by the Academic Council.	SG, TMT, TM, AC	• Documented Programme Development process at Optimum (Programme Development at Optimum.pdf) • Steering Group Reports • Academic Council Reports • Government Publications (e.g. Action Plan for Jobs, National Skills Bulletin, Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 etc.). • Surveys • Feedback forms from learner and tutor (TDDT) • Market Research
2.3. Ensure alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications.	TMT, TM	• Documented Programme Development process at Optimum (Programme development at Optimum.pdf)

The QQI programme validation process is predicated on compliance with the National Framework of Qualifications. Every programme must comply with an award specification which is positioned at a given level on the framework. All programmes offered by Optimum that lead to QQI awards are subject to a rigorous validation process with QQI.		• Programme Validation documentation (showing module levels, titles, learning outcome mapping, assessment mapping etc.) • QQI Award Specifications • QA Manual • Learner Handbook • Policies and Procedures
2.4. **Document the Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) considerations**. Optimum has a separate document in place which provides detailed ATP information which is reproduced in learner handbook, programme descriptors/guides and on our website.	TMT	• Access, Transfer and Progression description • RPL Procedure • RPL Application • Booking Form • Website Course Outlines • Programme Descriptors / Guides • Learner Handbook • QA Manual • Recruitment and Screening • Marketing materials describing ATP.
2.5. Ensure compliance with Health and Safety legislation. Optimum is subject to periodic Health and Safety inspections at which our signage, and management of sectoral risks are assessed. Our training facilities checklist includes checks for the items normally covered by a HSA inspection.	TMT	• Facilities checklist • Health and Safety Statement prominently displayed. • Feedback forms (if any health & safety issues are raised). • Accident reports (if any)

2.6. Plan and Deliver our programmes in a professional manner. Our programme development process describes the steps we take in developing new programmes and the reviews, approvals, and validations that form part of this process before delivery commences. Delivery is by professional Training Delivery and Development Team recruited using documented role profiles and monitored through learner and employer feedback by Optimum's governance groups.	SG, TMT, TDDT	• Documented Programme Development process at Optimum • Competency profiles for key delivery staff • Terms of Reference for Governance Groups • Monitoring Reports • QA Reports (e.g. External Authenticator, External Evaluator). • Feedback Forms from Tutor (TDDT) and Learner.
2.7. Ensure peer-review of courseware and assessments. All new programme courseware and assessments are peer reviewed as part of the development process. Training Delivery and Development Team panels discuss proposed programmes and the Academic Council review programmes prior to submission to QQI for validation.	TMT, AC	• Documented Programme Development Process at Optimum • ToR for Training Delivery and Development Team /programme developer (to participate in programme review), described in Governance • ToR for the Academic Council (for approval of programme proposals), described in Governance. • Peer-review correspondence
2.8. Ensure adequate financial resources are in place for programme development and update. The Steering Group reviews and approves expenditure. Assessment of the financial resources required for programme development and update is conducted at the first stage of the development process is and monitored thereafter. The Steering Group relies on its experience and controls to manage the company's finance responsibly.	SG	• Documented Programme Development Process at Optimum • ToR for the Steering Group • Budgets and financial planning documents

Learner admission, progression and recognition.		
2.9. Select learners in a transparent, fair and consistent manner and recognizing prior learning where appropriate in accordance with documented access requirements. Optimum advertises programmes through our public website, our correspondence with employers, the ETBs and our training partners. There is no discrimination whatsoever in the selection of learners. Recognition of Prior Learning and Reasonable Accommodations are available to learners who need them. These are advised on our website and through our recruitment processes.	TMT, TM	• Programme Marketing materials. • Publication of Access requirements (e.g. on the Optimum website). • Programme Guides • Booking forms & Application Forms • Correspondence with Learners. • Correspondence with Employers. • ATP Statement • RPL Procedure Form • RPL Application Form • Reasonable Accommodation Form • Reasonable Accommodation Application • Learner Handbook • Equality and Diversity • GDPR & Data Protection • Health and Safety

2.10. Provide programme and provider information to intending learners.
 	
Advise learners of costs, durations, course objectives and content, delivery methodology (classroom, blended learning) etc.
 	
Our website is a comprehensive resource for anyone wishing to obtain information about Optimum or our programmes.
	TM.	• Website
		  ○ Provider and Contact Details
		  ○ Award information
		  ○ Course Outlines
		  ○ Entry Requirements
		  ○ Transfer and Progression
		  ○ Timetables
		  ○ Syllabus
		  ○ Assessment Methodologies
		  ○ About Us

Information published there includes our mission, our history, our scope of provision, our quality assurance, and complete programme descriptors. We don't publish programme costs, instead inviting prospective learners to click a link to obtain a quote. Programme descriptors are also available in hardcopy through our Training Team.		○ Quality Assurance • Correspondence with individual learners from the Training Management Team • Booking Form • Recruitment and Screening Data
2.11. Monitor Progression and Completion rates Optimum monitors completion rates for all our programmes. However, we do not monitor progression since we have no internal progression routes, and it is not practical for us to track learners who progress to higher programmes with other providers.	TM.	• MS Sharepoint (where our learner records are stored) • Learner and Tutor (TDDT) Feedback • QQI infographics • Third Party (ETB) completion reports
Programme Monitoring and Review.		
2.12. Perform regular programme reviews to ensure continuing relevance and sufficiency of resources. Our Training Delivery and Development Team represent our "early warning system" for relevance and sufficiency of resources. Tutor (TDDT) feedback forms are in place to capture any issue that may arise with resources during a programme. Optimum is a small company so there are ample informal opportunities for members of the Optimum Steering Group to discuss the continuing relevance of our programmes with our contract training staff to be alerted to any changes that they foresee.	SG, TMT, TM	• Tutor (TDDT) feedback forms • Terms of Reference for our tutors (TDDT) (obligation to inform Optimum management of any programme resource issues) • Self-Evaluation Reports. • External Evaluator Reports. • External Authenticator Reports. • Programme Review Reports. • Feedback forms from all major stakeholders. • Programme improvement plans.

Every programme that we run in collaboration with the ETBs and our training partners is subject to a programme review and this provides an opportunity to address programme resources.		
2.13. **Monitor performance of the programme(s) in relation to stated programme objectives**. The key metrics for programme performance are learner numbers, attendance, completion rates, grades, learner/employer/partner satisfaction, the absence of complaints or appeals, positive reports from external QA, repeat and referred training, and continuing financial viability. The Steering Group is responsible for ensuring that these programme objectives are met and this responsibility forms part of their Terms of Reference.	SG	• Documented programme objectives • Statistical programme performance data • QQI Infographics (e.g. comparative analysis with other providers and national averages) • QA reports • Self-Evaluation Reports. • External Evaluator Reports. • External Authenticator Reports. • Programme Review Reports. • ToR for the Steering Group • Financial reports from the Financial Manager
2.14. Monitor internal programme supports. Learners can avail of a range of supports at Optimum including: our website, our Training Team, and our Training Delivery and Development Team. Telephone and e-mail support is available during normal office hours. Additional supports for learners with specific needs can be arranged through our Training Team. Prospective learners are requested to inform the Optimum Training Team during enrollment if any additional supports (e.g. language supports, wheelchair access etc.) are required. Optimum monitors these support through direct conversations with learners and employers, e-mail correspondence, and feedback forms.	TMT	• Feedback forms (learner and tutor (TDDT)) • Booking forms (requesting details of any additional supports required) • Correspondence with learners during recruitment.

2.15. Monitor training delivery facilities. Facilities are monitored with the aid of a facilities requirements list which sets out the minimum requirements for delivery to commence. The learner and tutor (TDDT) feedback forms (which specifically ask questions relating to the facilities), are an important monitoring tool.	TM	• Documented training facility specification • Facilities Checklist • Learner & Tutor (TDDT) feedback • Risk Register • Health and Safety
2.16. Publish programme completion reports to relevant stakeholders. Programme completion reports are completed for all programmes and are reviewed by the Steering Group and the Academic Council along with the QA reports (IV, EA)	TM, IV, AC, SG	• QA reports (IV,EA, RAP) • Programme completion reports (FARR – Forms of Registration and Reporting, Course Report, Optimum Training Report)

3. Monitoring

The key areas for this procedure are that Optimum has a robust programme development and approval process, that learners will find it easy to access our programmes and will be supported throughout their time with us, and that we will monitor the training programme lifecycle with a view to continuous improvement.

While there are many parties involved in the implementation of these tasks, responsibility for strategy, resourcing, and financing rests with the Steering Group. The Steering Group and the Academic Council collaborate on the oversight of the programme development and delivery process.

Monitoring of these activities takes place at their respective meetings and outcomes are recorded in Programme Improvement Plans, Risk Register and other reports as appropriate.

4. STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development
Policy Optimum's Staff Recruitment, Management and Development policy is for our senior management to take full responsibility for the quality of the staff that we employ. We conduct and encourage ongoing training for our staff to ensure effectiveness and productivity. We will facilitate and development requests from our staff and will provide as much support as possible. Optimum commits to a clear, consistent and systematic approach to staff recruitment. We will ensure that the procedures in place are fair and transparent and enable us to appoint suitably qualified staff to deliver our programmes. It is of utmost importance that all recruited staff possess the required level of experience and qualifications to fulfil their duties and responsibilities. We will ensure that the required level of teaching performance is maintained through ongoing appraisals of our delivery and assessment staff using feedback from relevant stakeholders including learners, external authenticators and evaluators, employers and our training partners. We promise to communicate to all relevant staff any feedback, amendments or updates that may result from our regular programme monitoring and review.

Optimum will endeavour to promote and encourage professional development through the encouragement of innovation in training and assessment methodologies and the strengthening the key between the Training Delivery and Development Team and employers and the broader teaching and learning community.

Procedure

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that delivery and development staff are qualified, competent, empathetic to learners, and professional in the performance of their role. Optimum will recruit and engage suitable staff through documented, transparent, equitable and ethical selection processes, and will ensure that staff performance is managed, and staff development is supported.

1. Staff involved in this procedure.

Training Manager (TM), Steering Group (SG), Training Management Team (TMT), Academic Council (AC)

2. Method(s) used to carry out this procedure.

Method	Who does it	Evidence generated by this procedure
Staff Recruitment		
2.1. Define initial recruitment needs New staff are recruited as the occasion demands, and circumstances giving rise to such recruitment include succession planning, staff leaving temporarily or permanently, new programmes, greater flexibility/resilience in our existing Training Delivery and Development Team. The Steering Group is responsible for analysing and documenting recruitment need.	TM, SG	• Recruitment meeting minutes (Steering Group) • Agreed Role Profiles. • Identification of recruitment strategy (e.g. recruitment agency, national press, industry publications, word-of-mouth etc.). • Budget allocation.
2.2. Document and maintain role profiles Role profiles are based on the activities that the role holder will be required to perform. Role profiles are generated to specify the qualifications, experience, and attributes required of the role holder.	TMT, TM	• Role Profiles for Training Delivery and Development Team /Assessors • Job descriptions / ToR (Governance at Optimum)

These criteria are expressed in terms of being either mandatory or desirable. The Training Manager is responsible for developing the role profiles and the job descriptions on which the profiles are based.		
2.3. Advertise appropriately Optimum may advertise through a number of channels. We may consult with our existing Training Delivery and Development Team, our training partners or the ETBs. We may place adverts in training-related publications, use recruitment agencies or we may go to the popular press.	TM, AC, TMT	• Correspondence with existing delivery team. • Press notifications • Web Advertisements • Communications with agencies • Correspondence with training partners/ETBs
2.4. Communicate effectively with candidates Role descriptions will be provided to all prospective candidates and our Training Manager and the broader training management team is available to answer any questions that they may have.	TM, TMT	• Correspondence with candidates. • Job application forms • Job Descriptions • Role Profiles
2.5. Conduct fair and transparent interviews The job descriptions and role profiles form the basis for the interview panel questions, and candidates are assessed on how well they meet the eligibility criteria, how well they communicate, and the level of reassurance that they provide the interview panel, that they are the right candidate for the job. Interview notes are recorded for each candidate and individual feedback will be provided on request.	TM	• Optimum's stated commitment to equitable selection processes (wherever recruitment details are published – media adverts, website etc.) • Role Profiles (as a basis for selection criteria). • Interview brief for interviewers. • Interview notes

Optimum is an equal opportunities employer and does not discriminate on any of the nine grounds of equality legislation.		• Policies:
		  ○ Equality and Diversity
		  ○ Health and Safety

2.6. Perform background checks where appropriate Optimum only provides programmes for adult learners and as such Garda vetting is not required for our delivery staff. Our background checks are reference checks and may include checks relating to the authenticity of evidence provided by the candidate.	TM	• Correspondence with previous employers/referees • Certificate checks (with awarding bodies)
2.7. Contracts of Employment. The Training Manager issues contracts of employment stating Terms and Conditions including tenure, responsibilities, performance metrics, feedback mechanisms etc.	TM	• Contracts of Employment • Terms of Reference (Governance at Optimum)
2.8. **Solicit feedback on teaching staff from learners**. Feedback forms are completed by learners at the end of every programme which provides them with the opportunity to comment on the performance of the Training Delivery and Development Team The Training Manager oversees the feedback loop but their reports are also considered by the Steering Group and the Academic Council.	TM, SG, AC	• Learner Feedback Forms & Responses • IV & EA Reports summarizing learner feedback
2.9. Conduct periodic performance evaluations.	TM	• Staff performance metrics (as defined at interview, in Terms of Reference, in Contracts of Employment, and during previous performance evaluations).

The Training Manager uses the QA reports and informal discussions with learners, employers and training partners to keep staff performance under review.		• QA reports • Correspondence with stakeholders in relation to staff performance • Monitoring Forms • Statistics from the Sharepoint records.
2.10. Maintain records of staff. The Training Team, with oversight by the Training Manager, record staff records on the Sharepoint system. These records typically include the documents generated during the recruitment cycle and any training/CPD undertaken during their tenure with Optimum.	TMT, TM	• Staff Records (CV's, Contracts of Employment, Records of Continuous Professional Development, copies of Certificates etc.)
Staff Communication		
2.11. Inform staff about how they can give and receive feedback. All staff receive induction training and a staff handbook which describe how they can provide feedback. In practice, given the size of the Optimum organisation, most feedback (other than the tutor (TDDT) feedback forms) provided informally, or through staff meetings. The Training Manager and the broader training team are available for guidance on how staff can provide feedback.	TM	• Employee induction briefings describing communications mechanisms. • Programme Descriptors • Records of staff meetings/correspondence. • Tutor (TDDT) Feedback Form

2.12. Provide programme updates to staff.
 	
The Training Manager is the staff representative on the Academic Council and provides programme updates to other members of staff including the training management team and the Training Delivery and Development Team /assessors/EA et. Al.
	TM, AC	• Staff Meetings & associated Correspondence
		  ○ New programme proposals.
		  ○ Modifications/updates to existing programmes

		○ Recommendations for EA Reporting / Peer Review Reporting / IV Reporting
Staff Development		
2.13. Identify CPD needs Indicators of the need for CPD may come from several sources. Training Delivery and Development Team may self-identify CPD need, learners or training partners/ ETB's may provide indicative feedback, legislation/regulations may change, or the programmes themselves may change. The nature of the required CDP will depend on the source of the indicator.	TDDT, TM.	• Documented CPD requests by staff • Records of Performance Appraisals/Discussions. • Staff ToR showing obligation to take responsibility for own CPD.
2.14. Provide or facilitate Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities. Optimum strives to facilitate CPD but can only do so within the constraints of available financial resources and time, and the CPD must have a sound business justification. The Training Manager will initiate CPD training and review CPD requests as the need arises.	TM.	• Records of CPD events provided by Optimum. • Evidence of CPD funding or time-off in support of CPD. • CPD completion/attendance records. • Staff training budget.
2.15. Encourage and facilitate staff engagement with the community of practice. Optimum use contract staff to provide training delivery. Our instructors work in a variety of settings. They provide training at facilities directly managed by Optimum, or they can provide training at ETB-managed facilities or at facilities controlled by our training partners. The variety of	TM	• Induction pre-meeting and briefings (to advise staff that engagement with community of practice is encouraged and will be facilitated where possible). • Inclusion of responsibilities within TOR for staff to foster and maintain communications links with industry.

these environments brings them into daily contact with other practitioners, providers, and employers in the sector, so engaging in a "community of practice" is an integral part of their working life with us. The Training Manager alerts delivery staff to their responsibility to proactively engage with the community of practice.		• Equality and Diversity Policy

3. Monitoring

The key areas for this procedure are to ensure that Optimum has defined processes in place for ensuring that our delivery staff perform their role in a manner which optimizes the potential for successful learner participation in our programmes. This comes down selecting the right staff to begin with, and helping them to maintain their skills over time.

The Training Manager holds the main responsibility for delivery staff in terms of recruitment, selection and ongoing performance. Monitoring activities are dependent on the stage of the engagement lifecycle for delivery staff as defined in the progression above.

5. TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and Learning

Policy

Optimum's Teaching and Learning Strategy is to promote a company culture that enhances the learning environment and understands the value of critical reflection and analysis in order to grow.

We ensure that all staff possess the required level of experience and qualifications to successfully deliver our programmes in their relevant discipline.

We will inform our learners about our feedback mechanisms and our procedures for complaints and appeals procedures should these be required.

We have clear and concise procedures to ensure our programme content reflects updates or advancements across our training areas and remain in line with industry best practice.

We endeavour to actively participate and engage in the national and wider international communities at our disposal to further enhance our understanding of learning and development and adapt our delivery and assessment methodologies accordingly.

We commit to learning environments that provide flexible learning pathways for learners with diverse needs, and promotes an ethos of mutual respect in the learner-tutor (TDDT) relationship.

We will use a structured and clearly staged procedure when reviewing the appropriateness of training premises and the equipment and facilities required. Checklists are in place to ensure this and are reviewed and updated on an on-going basis.

Procedure

The purpose of this procedure is to monitor and improve the learning experience on an ongoing basis in terms of programme content, delivery methodology, learner-tutor (TDDT) engagement, learning environments and to ensure that any complaints or appeals received are comprehensively addressed.

1. Staff involved in this procedure.

Training Management Team (TMT), Steering Group (SG), External Authenticator (EA), Training Manager (TM), Training Delivery and Development Team (TDDT), Tutor (T)

2. Method(s) used to carry out this procedure.

Method	Who does it	Evidence generated by this procedure
Teaching and Learning		

2.1. Monitor programme delivery to ensure fitness for purpose and consistency with best practice.
 	
The success of programme delivery is reflected in positive feedback, full attendance, high completion rates and good grades *inter alia*. It is also reflected in the absence of complaints or appeals.
 	
All programme completion data is reviewed by the Academic Council and the Steering Group. Any programme improvements recommended by these governance groups are addressed implemented by through the **Training Management Team.**
	TMT, TM, SG	• QA Reports
		  ○ External Authentication
		  ○ Peer Review
		  ○ Internal Verifier
		  ○ Tutor (TDDT)
		• Employer Surveys
		• Minutes of Academic Council & Steering Group meetings.
		• Programme Improvement Plans.
		• Performance against KPI's (progression rates, drop-out rates, certification levels etc.).
		• Learner Feedback Forms and Correspondence

2.2. Conduct research to ensure continuing relevance of the programme(s)
 	
The continuing relevance of our programmes is assured through the input and research of our training team collaborators, evaluators, employers, Training Delivery and Development Team and our learners.
	SG, EA, TM, AC, RAP	• Programme Statistics and Market Analysis
		• QA Reports
		  ○ IV
		  ○ EA
		  ○ External Authenticator

Programme metrics such as enrollment figures and inquiries are the most obvious indicators of demand, and these are kept under review at Steering Group meetings. In addition, Optimum provides training to the ETB network on foot of tenders and framework agreements. The composition of these tenders is also an indicator of learner and employer demand. The Steering Group considers this range of inputs to decide on any changes that Optimum may need to make to programme range or content.		○ Training Delivery and Development Team Tenders/Framework Agreements • Minutes of Steering Group meetings and Academic Council. • Employer Correspondence • Tutor (TDDT) and Learner Feedback Forms • Minutes of RAP Meetings
A provider ethos that promotes learning		
2.3. Provide a variety of delivery modes. Optimum's main mode of delivery is classroom-based training. Our classroom training involves presentations, demonstrations, practice exercises, role-plays, and supplemental online learning resources. During the COVID-19 Pandemic and to date, we have been providing virtual training options utilising the Zoom platform as this has been deemed to be the most reliable, safe, secure and user friendly option. We have submitted a number of updated Contingency Plans to QQI outlining our training programme procedures, updates where required to Assessments & Examinations, Authentication Processes, Incorporation of our eLearning platform My Optimum / Moodle for access to all training resources and assessment submissions, all in line with our GDPR Policies and Procedures. Our intention is to move towards a blended learning model in to order to improve delivery flexibility. Procurement of a suitable Virtual Learning Environment is a priority for us.	SG	• Website Course Outlines • Programme Guides /Descriptors • Training Proposals • Learner Handbook • Training Materials • Promotional Materials describing delivery modes • Steering Group meeting minutes and training plans

Given the financial and resource considerations for adopting new delivery modes, these decisions are made by the Steering Group.		
2.4. Promote a strong ethos of mutual respect between learners and delivery staff. Under their Terms of Reference, delivery staff are reminded of their obligation to always treat all learners with respect. Similarly, the learner induction reminds the learners of the expectations that Optimum has of them in relation to their conduct during our training programmes. Learners and tutors (TDDT) are encouraged and facilitated to provide mutual feedback (formally and informally). The Training Manager is responsible for the Training Delivery and Development Team ToR and the learner induction materials.	TM, TDDT, T	• Training Delivery and Development Team TOR • Equality and Diversity Policy • Health and Safety • Learner Handbook • Learner induction materials • Learner representation through the Steering Group. • Learner and delivery staff feedback.
2.5. Review and act upon any Complaints or Appeals received. Any learner wishing to make a complaint or appeal, may do so directly with the Training Manager, from the Training Management Team, or a Tutor from the Training Delivery and Development Team (TDDT). Complaints and Appeals Forms are available by request through the Optimum website, learner handbook or directly from the Training Management Team. The straightforward Forms are simple to complete and set out what Optimum does to address the issue(s). At all stages learners are kept up to date with progress. The Academic Council makes the final decision if Complaints or Appeals have reached Stage 2 of each process.	TMT, AC	• Website or at request: ○ Complaints Procedure ○ Complaints Application ○ Appeals Procedures ○ Appeals Application ○ Disciplinary Procedure ○ Disciplinary Appeals ○ Compassionate Consideration Policy ○ Compassionate Consideration Appeals Application • Learner Handbook • Records of any C&A received.

Learners may appeal to QQI if all internal systems have been exhausted.		• Correspondence with learners in relation to any complaint or appeal received. • Feedback received from learners in relation to their experience of the C&A process, and evidence of any actions arising.
National and International Best Practice		
2.6. **Ongoing engagement with National organisations, and review of government publications**. The Education and Training Boards (ETB) account for a very significant quantity of the further education provided in Ireland today. As a national organisation they are very representative of the current demand and future trends. Optimum works closely with these ETB's and these relationships provide insights into national provision. QQI also provide regular guidance to public and private providers, and Optimum review and acts on QQI publications as appropriate. Optimum also attends QA events hosted by QQI. Similarly, the Dept. of Enterprise and Employment produce many reports addressing the training needs of industry. The Training Manager is the point of contact within Optimum for such engagements and is responsible for information dissemination internally	TMT, TM	• Meetings and Correspondence with the ETBs • Meetings/Correspondence with Dept. of Ed. and QQI. • QQI website and publications • ETB Publications • Government Publications (e.g. Action Plan for Jobs, National Skills Bulletin, Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 etc.). • Market Analysis
2.7. Monitor the programme in relation to international best practice. Optimum only provides training within the Republic of Ireland, so there is little opportunity for international comparison.		

Learning Environments		
2.8. Ensure that learning environments (whether at Optimum or on employer premises) are fit for purpose, enabling learners to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Optimum reviews all training facilities prior to programme delivery. Optimum maintains a facilities specification list to ensure that all required equipment and consumables are in place. If any issues arise during delivery, the tutor (TDDT) contacts the Training Manager if urgent/time-critical intervention is required. Otherwise, the tutor (TDDT) may record the issue in their feedback form.	TM, TMT	• Facilities Checklist • Health and Safety Policy • Equality and Diversity Policy • Reasonable Accommodation Policy & Application • Programme-specific equipment & consumables descriptors (Facility Specifications). • Tutor (TDDT) correspondence/feedback • Correspondence with employer (where onsite programme is proposed) • Specific Validation Requirements (if any) are specified in Award Specifications. • Learner Feedback Data. • Programme Evaluation Reports
2.9. Record and address any special requirements that given learners may have in order to successfully complete the programme Optimum is committed to ensuring that our assessment practices facilitate equality and diversity of our learners' needs. It is the responsibility of learners to inform either their tutor (TDDT) or the Optimum Training Manager, of any special requirements immediately after registration to enable extra supports to be put in place for them. This will thus ensure that assessment is fair for all learners along with being reliable and consistent across Optimum's QQI training programmes.	TM, TMT	• Reasonable Accommodation Policy • Reasonable Accommodation Application • Learner Handbook • Optimum Website – Policies • Equality and Diversity • Guidance to Optimum Training Management Team to solicit any special needs during initial registration of the learner. • Correspondence with external programme coordinators (e.g. ETB, employer, training partner)

We invite learners to inform us if they wish to apply for reasonable accommodation by submitting our Reasonable Accommodation Request Application Form. Supporting evidence such as a letter from their doctor or medical professional to confirm their needs in relation to special accommodation(s) may be required. The grounds on which applications can be made include but are not limited to: ▪ Learning Difficulties ▪ Hearing Difficulties ▪ Visual Difficulties ▪ Physical Difficulties - this category is taken to include medical, sensory, mental health and behavioural difficulties as well as physical difficulties. For more information: Reasonable Accommodation Policy The Training Manager liaises with the learner in relation to special supports.		• Records of any special needs. • Training booking Forms. .

3. Monitoring

The key areas for this procedure are that programme delivery is well managed and delivered and is reflective of good national practice.

To this end the Training Manager monitors programme relevance, the delivery environment (physical and personal), and any complaints or appeals received.

The timing of any Training Manager intervention is linked to the element of Teaching and Learning in question.

6. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

Assessment of Learners
Policy Optimum's Assessment of Learners policy is to develop, validate, and conduct assessments in a manner which accommodates to the needs of the learners and their employers. We will protect the integrity of the assessment process as a means of fairly, consistently, and accurately measuring learner achievement of our standards-based programmes. Optimum will provide a proctored assessment environment for classroom-based assessments, ensuring that all required assessment equipment and consumables are in place in a timely manner. Submitted assignments will be monitored for authenticity of work. Assessment results and feedback forms will be analysed to identify any potential improvements. Optimum will provide formative assessment and feedback to learners during the programme to enhance the learner's opportunity for successful completion of the programme. Optimum will ensure that learners and the Training Delivery and Development Team are aware of their respective responsibilities in relation to demonstration of achievement of learning outcomes.

We will also ensure that all assessment inputs and outputs are securely stored and assessment information is properly captured for subsequent analysis and reporting purposes.

Procedure

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all assessment of learner achievement is appropriate to the award, fair and consistent, and conducted professionally by qualified staff in accordance with documented assessment procedures.

1. Staff involved in this procedure.

Training Manager (TM), Training Management Team (TMT), Steering Group (SG), Training Delivery and Development Team (TDDT), Tutor (T)

2. Method(s) used to carry out this procedure.

Method	Who does it	Evidence generated by this procedure
Assessment of learning achievement		
Assessment Materials		
2.1. Ensure assessments are consistent with all criteria for the relevant award (assuming certified training). QQI award specifications include criteria for assessment including learning outcomes, assessment techniques, assessment weightings etc. Optimum's programme development process ensures that assessments are peer reviewed and approved by the Academic Council before they are submitted to QQI for validation. The validation process itself involves a further examination of consistency with the criteria. Ongoing monitoring of is achieved through the work of the external evaluator, whose responsibilities include ensuring that assessment criteria are properly applied, and that marking is consistent with national standards.	TM, TDDT, T, AC	• Award standards published by Awarding Body. • Learning outcome mapping to award standards. • Validation application. • QQI Evaluator Report. • Assessment instruments.
2.2. Document marking criteria and marking schemes.	TM, TDDT, T, AC	• Documented marking criteria and schemes.

Marking criteria and marking schemes are written in the early stages of the programme development lifecycle by the developer. These establish the grade criteria and how marks are awarded. Peer reviews and Academic Council approval ensure that they are fit for purpose. Marking pro-forma exist to ensure consistency across assessors. The Training Manager is responsible for the coordination of programme development processes.		• Assessment instruments. • Award specifications. • Validation application documents.
Assessment processes		
2.3. Recruit and assign suitably qualified assessment staff. Staff recruitment procedures (described in Procedure 4 above), ensure that role profiles are used to recruit Tutors (TDDT) and Assessors from the Training Delivery and Development Team. These profiles establish minimum qualifications, experience and competencies. Appointment of new teaching/assessment staff is the responsibility of the Steering Group.	SG, TM	• Competency Profiles for assessment staff (tutors (TDDT)). • Terms of Reference for assessment staff. • Recruitment records (interview notes, CVs, verification checks etc.)
2.4. Approve assessment plans and instruments. The QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines require that there is a separation of responsibility for programme development/assessment from programme approval. To meet this requirement, assessment development is performed by subject matter experts and outcomes are approved by the Academic Council.	AC	• Documented approval sign-off of assessment plans and instruments by the Academic Council. • Award Specification. • Correspondence with Subject Matter Experts/Tutors (TDDT) • Validation application documents. • QQI Evaluator Reports.
Document and communicate the invigilation process. Our "Assessment Invigilation at Optimum" document describes the invigilation process. This process has been informed by the QQI guidelines on "Assessments and Standards (revised 2013)" as well as by our experience as training providers over many years. Invigilators are provided with copies of the procedures during induction.	TMT	"Assessment invigilation at Optimum" document. Tutor (TDDT)/Invigilator induction. "Quality Assuring Learner Assessment-ETB Sector Assessment Reference Documents (June 2018)" Assessment Invigilator Assessor Report

When invigilating programmes run in collaboration with ETBs, Optimum also uses the ETBI/FESS "Quality Assuring Learner Assessment" documents and their "Assessment Invigilator Assessor Report" which invigilators must complete.		
2.5. Develop and publish assessment plans and schedules. Assessment plans and schedules are described in our programme descriptors available through our Training Management Team. A synopsis of programme information is provided on our website with links to obtaining further information through our offices.	TMT	• Programme descriptors • Published assessment plans (techniques: practical / theory). • Assessment schedule. • Programme promotion materials (on website). • Programme Guides on Website
2.6. Communicate marking schemes and criteria to relevant tutors (TDDT)/assessors. During induction, tutors (TDDT)/assessors are briefed on the assessment processes in operation at Optimum. Documented marking schemes and criteria are provided by the Training Management Team to each assessor at the commencement of the programme, along with any forms/reports that they are required to complete.	TMT	• Tutor (TDDT)/Assessor induction materials. • Documented grading criteria and marking schemes • Assessor reports/forms.
2.7. Put measures in place to preserve the integrity of the results approval process for the avoidance of deliberate fraud or accidental error or omission. These measures to include prevention, detection and corrective action.	TM, SG	• Tutor (TDDT) induction. • "Quality Assuring Learner Assessment- ETB Sector Assessment Reference Documents (June 2018)"

Assessment malpractice at Optimum falls into two main categories, plagiarism or unacceptable behaviour. Plagiarism concerns the submission of work that is the work of another (uncredited) author. Unacceptable behaviour can be other forms of cheating (concealed notes, use of mobile phones, fabrication of data/results) or disobeying the assessment rules. Optimum uses documented invigilation procedures to prevent and detect such malpractice. Learners are informed during induction about what constitutes academic misconduct and the censure that applies for any violations. The External Authenticator and/or Internal Verifier, may also detect instances of plagiarism or other malpractice and include details in their reports. Optimum use the ETBI/FESS "Quality Assuring Learner Assessment" guidelines to inform our corrective action procedures which may involve verbal warnings, or negation of results for specific assignments or whole modules. In cases of severe, or repeat misconduct, the learner may be removed from the programme.		• Assessment Invigilator Assessor Report • QA Reports (EA) • Staff induction materials • Learner induction materials • Learner Handbook • Signed Confirmation of Authorship (for assessments provided by the learner in hardcopy)
2.8. Implement a robust Results Approval process. Results Approval involves the examination of Internal Verifier and External Authenticator reports to ensure that the intended submission of results to QQI for certification are complete, correct and compliant with assessment rules, and national standards. Results Approval is conducted by the Training Management Team, and Results Approval Reports are provided to the Academic Council for review.	TMT,RAP	• Governance at Optimum.pdf (describing ToR for RAP) • QA Reports (IV, EA, RAP)

Documented Terms of Reference for the Results Approval panel are in place.		
2.9. Solicit feedback for programme assessment improvement purposes. Programme assessment feedback can come from several sources. During programme development feedback may be received through peer review or from the Academic Council. During programme delivery, feedback may come from tutor (TDDT) or learners, and this will be captured by the feedback forms and actioned by the Training Manager or escalated to the Steering Group and/or Academic Council as appropriate. When the assessments are being authenticated the External Authenticator may propose changes through their EA report based on their perception of the Optimum assessments and their national authentication experience.	TM, AC	• Peer review documents • Feedback forms (tutor (TDDT) & learner) • Reports to Steering Group • External Authenticator Reports. • Programme Improvement Plans.
Learner work		
2.10. Make learners aware of their obligation to demonstrate their achievement of programme learning outcomes. Learner induction materials are in place to make them aware of their obligations in relation to assessment of programme learning outcomes. These are communicated to them by the Tutors (TDDT) in the Training Delivery and Development	TM	• Correspondence with learners at enrolment or on arrival at training centre. • Learner induction material • Learner Handbook • ToR for the Tutors (TDDT) /assessors (responsibility to make learners aware of their obligations).

2.11. Ensure that assessment methodologies accommodate learners as far as practicable, including those learners covered by equality legislation. Learner assessment accommodations, or reasonable accommodations may include: modified presentation of assignments/examination papers, e.g. Enlargements, scribes/readers, sign language interpreter, rest breaks, adaptive equipment/software, use of assistive technology, additional time, separate room/space Learners are requested to inform Optimum within a notified timeframe, if any such accommodations are required. Optimum reviews such requests on a case-by-case basis and will make every effort to support the learner within the constraints of Optimum's resources and any potential impact on other learners. Optimum will also support compassionate considerations where the personal circumstances of a learner may mean that assessment schedules need to be modified or assessment performance has been compromised. Grounds for such compassionate consideration may need to be evidenced by the learner (e.g. GP letters, Jury Duty notification etc.) The Training Manager will coordinate the provision of reasonable accommodations.	TM	• Learner Handbook • Supporting Policies and Procedures • Access Transfer & Progression • Assessment Appeals • Compassionate Circumstances • Disciplinary • Equality & Diversity • Health and Safety • Data Protection • Reasonable Accommodation • Recognition of Prior Learning • Publication of QA on Optimum Website. • Records of contacts with advocacy groups (language support, Irish Council for the Blind etc.), if required. • Correspondence with staff in relation to reasonable accommodation (staff induction materials) • Programme supports (personnel or infrastructure) wheelchair access, breakout rooms, accessibility software/hardware etc.)
2.12. Implement a robust system for the tracking of assessments materials submitted online. Learners submit their assessments through Moodle. Each learner has an individual Moodle sign-in. Assessments are uploaded to the tutor (TDDT)/assessor area and learners are issued with confirmation of	TM, TDDT, T	• Moodle learning platform • Guidance documents provided to the learners describing the online submission process.

receipt once the upload has been checked. Learners are alerted if any element of the assessment is missing. The Training Manager collaborates with the tutor (TDDT) in tracking and liaising with learners. Deadlines for submission of assessments are advised in the programme descriptors.		
2.13. Keep assessment records up-to-date to ensure they are available to students and staff for progress monitoring Optimum assessment records are held on a cloud-based Microsoft SharePoint server. Under their Terms of Reference tutors (TDDT) are required to provide all programme assessment data in a timely manner, to the internal verifier for recording and reporting. Requests for information are addressed by the Training Management Team and distributed to relevant stakeholders.	TMT, TDDT, T	• Assessment records on Microsoft SharePoint server. • Tutor (TDDT) Terms of Reference.
2.14. Provide formative and summative assessment feedback to learners Summative assessments are by nature, generally conducted as a final assessment whether this is an assignment completed during the programme or a written exam at the end programme delivery. Since our programmes are short-duration, there is limited opportunity for summative feedback to alter the learner's progress. However, formative assessments, such as sample questions, and sample assignments do provide useful progress feedback to learners.	TDDT, T	• Assessment records. • Records of feedback provided to individual learners. • Terms of Reference for Tutor (TDDT) /Assessors. • Learner feedback forms (soliciting their view of the feedback system).

Learners are advised in the Learner Handbook that, if necessary, they will be provided with the opportunity to re-sit, and before doing so they will be provided with an analysis of their previous summative assessment to show how they can be successful at the re-sit. Under their ToR, the tutor (TDDT) is responsible for the provision of formative and summative feedback to learners.		
2.15. Review feedback from external QA personnel QA reports by External Authenticators are reviewed by the Training Manager as part of the Results Approval process to provide insights into learner work.	TM, EA, RAP	• External Authentication Report
Records of learner assessment		
2.16. Implement and monitor appropriate physical and electronic systems for the proper storage, and protection of assessment related instruments. Only members of the Training Management Team have access to the Moodle and SharePoint servers where the assessment instruments are stored. This access is password controlled. Learner scripts are submitted online through Moodle. They are subsequently printed for marking purposes and the hardcopy is stored in a locked archiving room at our offices in Westland Square. The Training Manager is responsibility of the security of assessment instruments and scripts, and authorizes access on an as-needed basis.	TMT	• Assessment instruments on SharePoint and Moodle • Access control to physical and electronic systems. • Locked archival room
2.17. Ensure compliance with Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.	TMT	• GDPR Guidance materials • Correspondence with staff involved in records management.

Our Training Management Team includes a Compliance Officer. The role of our Compliance Officer is to alert relevant role holders to compliance matters such as GDPR. The officer attends ongoing GDPR training and reviews publications/ correspondence and act as GDPR liaison for Optimum.		• Freedom of Information Act • Data Protection Act.

3. Monitoring

The key areas for this procedure are the controls in place to assure the integrity, reliability, fairness and consistency of assessment, and the assessment records infrastructure.

The assessment system is the responsibility of the Training Manager, and they are supported in monitoring assessment by the Training Management Team, Tutors (TDDT) and External Authenticators. The Academic Council also has a role in the oversight of QA assessment procedures, and in particular in the adjudication of any assessment appeals.

Timings of monitoring events are as described in the relevant activities above.

7. SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

Supports for Learners		
Policy Optimum's Supports for Learners policy is to provide comprehensive and accessible supports for learners throughout their time with us. We will ensure that they are fully informed about the range of services available to them, and all required resources are in place where and when they are needed. Optimum will take all reasonable measures to support the general wellbeing of all learners on our programmes. Optimum will provide learners with comprehensive administration and technical support services as well as personal and professional guidance. We will consistently seek and act on learner feedback received in relation to these services. Optimum will regularly review our training environment, equipment, and other resources to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose, reflective of new developments within our scope of provision, and consistent with the award standards.		
Procedure The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the adequacy of resources available to learners is constantly monitored and required changes are made in a timely manner.		
1. Staff involved in this procedure.		
Training Manager (TM), Training Management Team (TMT), Steering Group (SG), Training Delivery and Development Team (TDDT), Tutors (T)		
2. Method(s) used to carry out this procedure.		
Method	**Who does it**	**Evidence generated by this procedure**

An integrated approach		
2.1. Provide programme resources and supports that are fit-for-purpose and cater for diverse learner populations. These supports include but are not restricted to: learner supports (academic and non-academic), IT supports, reference materials, administration), premises and equipment. The Training Management Team, tutors (TDDT), and IT Support personnel are available during office hours to assist learners as required. Optimum has a facilities list for all programmes that we run, which is maintained by the Training Management Team with the support of the tutors (TDDT). The list includes a description of required equipment and consumables. Optimum is committed to offering supports for learners that may present with a disability, specific learning difficulty, neurodivergent or have a medical condition. We will endeavour, where possible, to facilitate appropriate accommodations to meet the individual learner needs upon access and throughout the programme. Should a learner have a disability or suffer from a documented medical condition, which they believe could hinder their full participation in a programme, the learner is required to contact the Training Management Team in Optimum to discuss this in confidence. Optimum expects first-time applicants with a known disability or medical condition to inform the Training Management Team prior to admission to facilitate and accommodate the applicant prior to commencing their studies. Catering for assessment-time needs in terms of reasonable accommodation and compassionate consideration.	TMT, TM, TDDT, T	• Contact information for Training Management Team. • Facilities checklist. • Learner induction materials. • Learner Handbook • Learner Support Form • Feedback forms • Optimum Website • Optimum Management staff.

Feedback forms provide the opportunity to alert Optimum to any resource deficiencies.		

2.2. Communicate the existence of supports to learners.
 	
Learners can discuss supports during enrollment by contacting Optimum directly or through our website.
 	
Specific supports may be requested. Optimum will correspond with the learner to facilitate the request where possible.
 	
At programme commencement tutors (TDDT) provide induction briefings to learners at which available supports are discussed.
	TM, TMT	• Correspondence with learners during enrolment (pre-programme questionnaires)
		• Learner induction materials
		  • Training Quality Assurance Manual.
		  • Learner Handbook
		  • Supporting Policies and Procedures
		  • Learner Support Form
		  • Access Transfer & Progression
		  • Assessment Appeals
		  • Compassionate Circumstances
		  • Disciplinary
		  • Equality & Diversity
		  • Health and Safety
		  • Data Protection
		  • Reasonable Accommodation
		  • Recognition of Prior Learning
		  • Publication of QA on Optimum Website.
		• Contact information/links on Optimum website.

2.3. Provide programme resources that are consistent with programme standards.	TM, SG	• Programme Standards (QQI descriptors incl. specific validation requirements)

		• Optimum Programme descriptors/guides • Validation application documents. • QQI validation Evaluator Reports
Pastoral Care		

2.4. Provide context-appropriate pastoral care supports to learners.
 	
The requirement for pastoral care is limited in relation to programmes provided by Optimum since they are of short duration, and do not involve work placements. Nonetheless, during induction, learners are encouraged to alert the tutors (TDDT) or a member of Optimum staff to any issue that may be concerning them. If the learner's participation in the programme or assessments is compromised by such an issue, there are supports available described in Compassionate Considerations in Procedure 6 (above).
 	
The ToR for the Training Manager and Tutors (TDDT) remind these role holders to be sympathetic to the pastoral needs of learners.
	TM, TMT, TDDT, T	• ToR for Training Manager/Tutor (TDDT) in respect of duty of care for learners
		• Contact information provided to learners (e.g. on website and in induction materials)
		• Learner Handbook
		• Supporting Policies and Procedures
		  ○ Learner Support Form
		  ○ Access Transfer & Progression
		  ○ Assessment Appeals
		  ○ Compassionate Circumstances
		  ○ Disciplinary
		  ○ Equality & Diversity
		  ○ Health and Safety
		  ○ Data Protection
		  ○ Reasonable Accommodation
		  ○ Recognition of Prior Learning
		• Publication of QA on Optimum Website.

Access to services related to programmes		
2.5. **Review the adequacy of academic and other support services**.	TM, TMT	• Self-evaluation reports.

Learners engage with Optimum via a number of access points including: the Optimum website, the Training Management Team, the ETB programme coordinators, our tutors (TDDT), our IT systems etc. Optimum takes many steps to ensure that these access points are easy to use, fit for purpose and secure. There are measures in place to keep our website up to date, described further in Procedure 8, "Public Information and Communication". The Training Management Team is accessible by e-mail, 'phone, and the postal service. Joining Instructions advise learners of the location and access routes to the training facility. Learner induction ensures learners are aware of the contact details for their tutors (TDDT) and provides them with access to Moodle.		• External QA reports (External Evaluator, External Authenticator). • Feedback solicited from learners, tutors (TDDT) and employers. • Programme Improvement Plans. • Steering Group meeting minutes. • Information for Course Attendees (Ref: Optimum-IFCA-001).
2.6. Ensure administrative staff are appropriately trained to provide learner support effectively. New staff are provided with Induction training supported by briefing materials, and, given the proximity of staff working environments at Optimum, new staff always have direct access to experienced members of the team. Staff are familiar with the induction materials provided to learners and will be able to provide advice regarding the supports listed therein.	TM, TMT	• Records of staff training. • Staff induction materials.
Learner representation		
2.7. Understand and act upon the learner perception of the resources and supports provided, through surveys and mechanisms for direct learner representation. Learner may raise administrative issues with Training Management Team directly or may use the feedback forms to indicate any deficiencies in our administrative procedures.	TM, TMT, SG	• Correspondence with learners (e.g. e-mail) • Programme Review Reports. • Programme Improvement Plans. • Learner representation on the Academic Council

In addition, programme completion briefings with the ETB coordinator and/or our training partners my provide further insights. The Training Manager will use these formal and informal inputs to raise any issues arising with the Training Management Team or with the Steering Group as appropriate.		

2.8. Provide information to learners about programme supports and career pathways.
 	
The Optimum website & Learner Handbook will provide learners with initial information about our programme support and career pathways.
 	
During Learner Induction learners will have further opportunity to discuss this with tutors (TDDT) and the Training Management Team.
 	
The learner induction materials also provide detailed information on access, transfer and progression.
	TMT	• Learner Handbook
		• Supporting Policies and Procedures
		  ○ Learner Support Form
		  ○ Access Transfer & Progression
		  ○ Reasonable Accommodation
		  ○ Recognition of Prior Learning
		• Publication of QA on Optimum Website.
		• Optimum Training Management staff.
		• Tutor (TDDT) correspondence with learners.
		• Programme marketing materials/ descriptor.
		• ToR for Tutors (TDDT) (recognizing responsibility to foster links to industry, and community of practice).

3. Monitoring		

The key areas for this procedure are ensuring fit-for-purpose training resources and supports are available, accessible, and advised to learners.

Resource provision is the responsibility of the Steering Group (with some oversight by the Academic Council), but monitored and implemented by the Training Manager.

Interventions by the Training Manager are initiated by the programme monitoring feedback systems in place.

8. INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Information and Data Management

Policy

Optimum's Information and Data Management policy is to ensure that the data and information we capture and report is both reliable and transparent. We commit to analysing this data on an on-going basis to understand what is working well and what can be improved.

We will ensure compliance with applicable legislation, particularly in relation to Data Protection and Freedom of Information, through the offices of our appointed data protection officer, who will be responsible for the communication of legislative compliance to our staff and learners.

Our data management procedures will reflect our context and mission to provide high-quality, standards-based management training.

We will strive to maintain learner records in a secure manner and to closely monitor the completeness and accuracy of this information.

We will generate detailed reports for consideration by our governance groups to ensure continuous improvement.

We commit to having a well-designed information management system in place that can be readily accessed in a secure manner by the relevant parties.

Statistical information such as completion rates, learner satisfaction and grades will be collated for review by external evaluators.
We will ensure that our data retention periods comply with GDPR guidance, and all other applicable guidance provided by regulatory bodies.

Procedure

The purpose of this procedure is to implement and maintain a secure and robust management information system to gather, store, analyse and report on programme and learner data for the purposes of data provision and process improvement.

1. Staff involved in this procedure.

Training Manager (TM), Training Management Team (TMT), Training Delivery and Development Team (TDDT), Tutors (T)

2. Method(s) used to carry out this procedure.

Method	Who does it	Evidence generated by this procedure
Information Systems: **Learner and Management information systems.**		
2.1. Learner data capture Optimum has Implemented a learner records management system to capture all relevant learner data and provide reports and statistics. Data captured includes: personal contact information, enrolment statistics, completion rates, grades, learner satisfaction statistics etc.). The data is used for reports to internal and external stakeholders (management, awarding bodies, regulatory bodies, ETBs, partners etc.), and for measurement against our organisational KPI's. The Training Management Team collate and record learner data using inputs from the recruitment cycle, from tutor (TDDT) records, from QA reports, and from information from training coordinators at the ETBs and our training partners.	TMT	• Learner database on MS SharePoint.
Information for further planning.		
2.2. Review management information on a periodic basis.	TM, SG	• Terms of Reference for Steering Group and Training Manager to review programme information. • Minutes of Steering Group meetings.

Management information is reviewed by the Steering Group at their regular meetings. This is a mix of financial, quality assurance, operational (logistical), risk management information.		• QA Reports (e.g. IV, EA, EE reports) • Risk Register • Programme Improvement Plans.
Completion rates.		
2.3. Configure reports from the learner records/ management information system to facilitate ongoing analysis against key performance indicators. Optimum records learner data that allows us to analyse current activity and trends. We report on total learners, number of learners by programme, total completions, number of completions by programme, grade statistics, learner satisfaction rates et al. We use an MS Excel spreadsheet to capture, sort, filter and graph data points for inclusion in reports for consideration by the Steering Group.	TM, TMT, SG	• Learner registration forms and reports. • Learner results (Excel spreadsheet). • Training completion report. • List of Key Performance Indicators (internal indicators and partner agreements). • QQI Infographics. • Custom reports.
Records Maintenance and retention.		
2.4. **Implement a secure learner records management system complete with access controls and systems for backup and recovery which complies with GDPR legislation for online and paper-based records**. Security in assessment at Optimum has been informed by the QQI "Quality Assuring Assessment - Guidelines for Providers 2013." Sections 3.2.5. - 3.2.6 of these guidelines address security of assessment related processes and material, and the availability of learner records. All learner records at Optimum are stored on a cloud-based file server which is password controlled and accessible only to the Optimum management team. Backup and recovery system are in place to ensure data integrity GDPR requires that consumer data be kept private in terms of how it is disposed of, produced and managed.	TM, TMT	• Password-controlled access to data stored on MS SharePoint • Service Level Agreements with our IT support company (PMIT Solutions) for backup and restore.

The information that we store is compliant with GDPR requirements, and comprises only the information which is strictly necessary for the operation of Optimum as a training provider. Typical information includes: - learner's name - contact details - title of the QQI award / programme - any specific learner requirements - name of the tutor (TDDT) /assessor - name of internal verifier - dates and details of learner feedback - dates and results of assessment activities i.e. recorded grade - outcome of Results Approval Process, including any appeals - date award received.		
2.5. Record all learner assessment records and results. All records are stored electronically on SharePoint and Moodle, and all hardcopy materials are stored in our locked archive room at our offices at Westland Square.	TM,TMT	• Learner reports. • QQI Results Approval (QBS entries) • Transcripts/Certificates. • Learner scripts • Internal verifier reports.
2.6. Specify minimum retention periods for data taking into account the requirement for management information and compliance with regulatory and statutory bodies. Our data retention policy states that all assessment related materials and records will be maintained at least until any appeal deadline has	TMT, TM	• Documented minimum retention periods ○ Optimum maintains **learner details & assessment records** for 6 – 12 Months following RAP meeting conclusion

passed, results have been submitted to QQI and certificates have been issued. In reality, Optimum holds a number of general records for between 6-7 years prior to disposal and as outlined in our retention schedule. GDPR guidance is that "*personal data may only be kept in a form that permits identification of the individual for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which it was processed*". Optimum is currently liaising with relevant agencies on the interpretation of this.		• Guidelines from statutory/regulatory bodies. • Data Protection Policy - Data Retention Schedule Table
Data protection and freedom of information.		
2.7. Ensure that the learner records system is compliant with Data Protection legislation and is capable of providing information that may be requested under the Freedom of Information Act. GDPR gives users the right to request their personal data to be deleted. This means Optimum must be readily able to locate all instances (electronic and hardcopy) of the user data in question. Our electronic system is confined and access-controlled, while our paper records are in a locked archive room. We do not scan paper documents, so only single copies are held. The Optimum Compliance Officer is responsible for processing requests under the FoI Act.	TM, TMT	• Records of GDPR events attended. • Copy of Data Protection Act (1988 revised in 2014) in Centre Manual. • Copy of Freedom of Information Act (2014) in Centre Manual. • Correspondence with regulatory and statutory bodies • Guidelines published by regulatory or statutory bodies. • Identified resources (subject matter experts) to deal with any matters arising in relation to DP and FOI compliance
2.8. Inform learners of the measures in place to protect their personal data. Learners are informed during induction about the data that we store, our retention periods, and the process for requesting their personal data held by Optimum.	TMT, TDDT, TDDT, T	• Learner Induction Pack. • Learner Handbook • Optimum Website Privacy Policy • Data Protection Policy • Briefings to staff responsible for induction.

Typical information includes: - learner's name - contact details - title of the QQI award / programme - any specific learner requirements - name of the tutor (TDDT) /assessor - dates and details of learner feedback - dates and results of assessment activities i.e. recorded grade - outcome of Results Approval Process, including any appeals - date award received.		
2.9. Train Centre staff in DP and FoI obligations under legislation. All members of the Optimum Training Management Team has received external training in GDPR compliance. In 2020 Optimum received further update training as a consequence of the changes occasioned by COVID.	TMT, CA	• Correspondence with Subject Matter Expert (Mark Ivers). • Staff training/attendance records at DP/FoI events. • Material (e.g. handouts) provided at DP/FoI events.
3. Monitoring		
The key areas for this procedure are the capture and safekeeping of learner records in a GDPR-compliant manner which facilitates certification, data analysis, FoI requests etc. The Training Manager's responsibility is to use the broader team (IT Support, Compliance Officer, Tutors (TDDT) and the Training Management Team) to implement a suitable data management system. Key timings for monitoring events are at initial system setup time, programme completion time, and staff and learner induction times.		

9. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Public Information and Communication

Policy

Optimum's Public Information and Communication policy is to ensure that all information that we communicate to the public, is controlled and managed and is presented in a clear and accessible way.

We will ensure that our programme information is accurate and comprehensive and includes details of the award that the programme leads to (if accredited), the name of the awarding body, the level on the NFQ and information relating to access, transfer and progression.

Key findings from external evaluations will be published on our company's website in a timely manner.

Procedure

The purpose of this procedure is to comply with the provisions of the Qualifications And Quality Assurance (Education And Training) Act 2012 in relation to information provided to enrolled learners [Section 67], the preparation of quality assurance procedures and publication of self-evaluation reports [Section 28] and the publication [Section 30] of draft quality assurance procedures "*in such form and manner (including on the internet) as the Authority [QQI] directs and shall provide a copy of the procedures as published to the Authority*"

1. Staff involved in this procedure.

Training Management Team (TMT), Training Manager (TM), Steering Group (SG), Training Delivery and Development Team (TDDT), Tutor (T)

2. Method(s) used to carry out this procedure.

Method	Who does it	Evidence generated by this procedure
Public Information		

2.1. Ensure that there is a named "owner" with responsibility for the provision of information to the public in a manner which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and accessible. The Training Manager is responsible for the provision of public information. This is documented as part of their Terms of Reference. Website updates are made internally by the Training Management Team using WordPress.	TM, TMT	• Terms of Reference for Training Manager (Governance at Optimum.pdf). • WordPress content management system.
2.2. Publish any Optimum research activities as soon as practicable on the Optimum website and distribute in hardcopy to relevant audiences. Optimum performs research as part of the programme development process and findings are communicated with the programme development team, the Steering Group and the Academic Council. Optimum does not conduct research for public purposes, however, we have joined a consortium of training providers for the ETB tendering process and it is expected that this group will conduct research that may be made available publicly.	TMT, SG, AC	• Optimum Website. • Minutes of ETB Consortium meetings
2.3. Review all public information with relevant stakeholders prior to publication. The Training Manager liaises with the Steering Group, the Tutors (TDDT) and the Academic Council when new or updated information is to be published on the website. Changes may be occasioned by the addition of new programmes, modifications to existing programmes, inputs from accreditation or regulatory bodies et. al.	TM, TDDT, TDDT, T, SG, AC	• Governance group meeting minutes (Steering Group & Academic Council) • Correspondence with SMEs (tutors (TDDT)) and administration staff, reviewing information for publication.

Learner Information		

2.4. Provide all relevant programme information to learners.
 	
Optimum has descriptors in place for all programmes. These descriptors address whether or not the programme leads to an award, the name of the awarding body, award title, award level, award type, learning outcomes, assessments, ATP and RPL arrangements, reasonable accommodations et. al.)
 	
All programmes are listed on our website along with a synopsis. Links are provided to enable prospective learners to contact the Training Management Team for further information.
	TM	• Optimum Website.
		• Programme promotional materials
		• Optimum Public Information and Communication Policy
		• Learner Handbook
		• Supporting Policies and Procedures
		  ○ Access Transfer & Progression
		  ○ Assessment Appeals
		  ○ Compassionate Circumstances
		  ○ Disciplinary
		  ○ Equality & Diversity
		  ○ Health and Safety
		  ○ Data Protection
		  ○ Reasonable Accommodation
		  ○ Recognition of Prior Learning
		• Publication of QA on Optimum Website.

Publication of quality assurance evaluation reports		
2.5. **Publish the findings of Quality Assurance reports and any Improvement Plans on the Optimum website as soon as practicable after programme review**. Optimum will publish External Evaluation reports as they become available. The next evaluation report is expected to be the QQI Reengagement Report.	TM	• QQI website. • Optimum Website. • QQI Evaluator Reports. • External Evaluator Reports. • Optimum Public Information and Communication Policy

The Training Manager will coordinate the publication to the Optimum website.		

3. Monitoring

The key areas for this procedure are the review and publication of public information to provide relevant, accurate, and comprehensive information to learner and other stakeholders.

The Training Manager is the owner of the public information process and coordinates the activities of the Training Management Team, IT support, tutors (TDDT), and the governance groups.
Typical triggers for monitoring public information include the introduction of new programmes, modifications to existing programmes, new legislation, changes to programme schedules, availability of quality assurance reports etc.

10. OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Other Parties involved in Education and Training		
Policy Optimum's Other Parties involved in Education and Training policy is to ensure that we foster and maintain good external links with other awarding bodies, with other providers, and with expert panelists, examiners and authenticators. We will ensure that all collaborations and agreements with other providers fully document the respective responsibilities of each party in a manner which protects the interests of the learners and the reputation of our respective organisations. We commit to having procedures that include clear criteria for the recruitment of external independent experts. The selection process will be advised to the applicants and will include measures to avoid any potential conflict of interest that may arise during recruitment or may emerge over time. We will also continue to monitor the panel of experts that we have worked with on previous programmes to review and document any affiliations they may have.		
Procedure The purpose of this procedure is to define how we collaborate with reputable national and international awarding or accreditation bodies and organisations and external independent experts, while ensuring that all aspects such relationships are subject to internal and external quality assurance.		
1. Staff involved in this procedure.		
Training Manager (TM), Training Management Team (TMT), Steering Group (SG).		
2. Method(s) used to carry out this procedure.		
Method	**Who does it**	**Evidence generated by this procedure**
Peer relationships with the broader education and training community.		

2.1. Demonstrate that Optimum's programmes are provided in the context of reputable national and international awarding bodies and organisations. All of Optimum's certified programmes are awarded by QQI.	TM, SG	• QQI Provider Approval and Programme Validation documentation. • QQI Certificate of Validation. • Optimum Training Quality Assurance Manual • Relationships published on Optimum website.
External partnerships.		
2.2. Partnerships with external organisations will be documented and agreed. Optimum responds to tenders for training provision issued by the ETBs. On occasion these responses are directly between the ETB and Optimum, but they may also be indirectly through the Swilly Group (as main contractors). Relationships with ETBs are controlled by Framework Agreements between the main contractor and the ETB. Relationships between the main contractor and the subcontractor have separate agreements. It is usual for these Framework Agreements to have a lifespan of 4 years. The Steering Group is responsible for the management of external partnerships.	SG	• Framework agreements • Partnership Agreements
Expert panelists, examiners and authenticators.		
2.3. Recruit external panelists, evaluators and authenticators in a professional, accountable, fair and transparent manner. Optimum has appointed an external chair to the Academic Council. They have been selected based on their independence from Optimum and their in-depth knowledge and experience of quality assurance in further and higher education in Ireland.	SG	• Contracts for service • National External Authenticator Directory (QQI Awards) • Information for Prospective External Authenticators (Published by ETBI/FESS). • Terms of Reference for role holders

Historically, our authenticators were chosen from a panel which was maintained by QQI. In the future authenticators will be recruited with the assistance of the ETBs who have published guidelines for the selection of authenticators. The ETBI has convened a New National External Authenticator Directory (QQI Awards) which was activated in early 2020. Optimum has used the services of Magnos Consulting for many years to assist with external evaluation. Magnos Consulting has been providing quality assurance services to private and public training providers in the FET and HET sectors for over twelve years. The recruitment/appointment of externals is the responsibility of the Steering Group.		
3. Monitoring		
The key areas for this procedure are Optimum's relationships with external agencies and individuals including awarding bodies, training partners, authenticators, and evaluators. Monitoring these relationships is primarily the responsibility of the Steering Groups and monitoring events can be precipitated by correspondence from awarding bodies, new tenders, new partnerships or modifications to existing partnerships, programme completion or external evaluation events (e.g. reengagement).		

11. SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review
Policy Optimum's Self-evaluation, Monitoring and Review policy is to ensure that we holistically review the quality of our complete service by means of ongoing monitoring and periodic self-evaluation. We will ensure that all relevant stakeholders are encouraged and facilitated to provide input into our monitoring and evaluation systems. We will assess our findings in terms of defined and prioritised objectives, and our obligations to external accreditation bodies and statutory bodies. Upon review and self-evaluation of our programmes, we will endeavour to document and implement improvements based on our findings. We will make the outcomes available as benchmarks for future evaluations.
Procedure The purpose of this procedure is to review, evaluate and report on our provision of training services culminating in the identification and maintenance of effective practice and the documentation and implementation of service improvement plans.
1. Staff involved in this procedure.
Training Management Team (TMT), Training Manager (T), Steering Group (SG), Academic Council
2. Method(s) used to carry out this procedure.

Method	Who does it	Evidence generated by this procedure
Provider-owned internal review, self-evaluation and monitoring.		
2.1. Review internal and external QA reports and Quality Improvement Plans in preparation for external evaluation. Quality improvements are made throughout the feedback cycle and are based on inputs from learner and tutor (TDDT) feedback, survey responses from employers, partner meetings and external authentications. Key improvements are discussed and minuted at governance group meetings (Academic Council and Steering Group) and are available for review by external evaluators.	TMT, TM, SG, AC	• QA Reports (IV, EA, RAP) • Monitoring Reports. • Minutes of governance group meetings.
Internal Self-Monitoring.		
2.2. Implement a system of on-going self-monitoring which defines priority-based objectives and key performance indicators, analyses performance and acts on findings. The key priority for Optimum is learner satisfaction, followed by the achievement of documented KPIs including enrolments, completions, certification levels, grades achieved, scope of provision, employer satisfaction and compliance with any additional legislative or awarding body requirements. During programme delivery there are spot checks on how the course is progressing. At the end of the programme feedback forms are completed, and learner attendance and assessment data are recorded. This data is reviewed against the KPIs above and actioned as appropriate.	TMT	• Prioritised KPIs. • Governance group meeting minutes (SG, AC) detailing programme improvement actions. • Terms of Reference for governance groups and individuals (SG,AC, Tutor (TDDT), RAP, Training Manager), showing obligations for monitoring. • Programme Evaluation Reports.
Self-evaluation, improvement and enhancement.		

2.3. Implement a system of periodic self-evaluation. The Education, Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012 (Education and Training) sets the maximum period to 7 years, but every 5 years is a more desirable interval. The QQI provider re-engagement process commenced at Optimum in 2017-18 when QQI first announced the initiative. Since that time, Optimum has attended QQI briefings, and read the QQI published guidelines: Core Statutory Guidelines, Sector Specific Guidelines, Guidelines for Blended Learning and other guidance on completing the QQI reengagement process. Part of the reengagement process involves an assessment in the form of a Gap Analysis based on the published QQI guidelines listed above, to identify areas for improvement at Optimum. Optimum has used the finding of our self-evaluation/gap analysis to review and update our quality assurance system. In addition, Optimum has developed a pandemic contingency plan as required by QQI and has submitted same to QQI. Optimum expects to perform our next self-evaluation within 5 years using our current Quality Assurance Manual as a benchmark. Self-evaluations are initiated by the Training Manager with oversight by the Steering Group and the Academic Council.	TM, SG, AC	• Applications to QQI for provider approval (which includes self-assessment). • QQI reengagement Panel Report. • Correspondence with External Evaluators. • Self-Assessment & Evaluation reports. • COVID Contingency Plan (and associated updates)
Provider-owned quality assurance engages with external quality assurance.		
2.4. Fulfil any quality assurance obligations required by statute or consequential on requirements of any national or international accreditation system (whether statutory or voluntary).	TM, SG	• ToR for the Training Manager. • QQI Guidelines and obligations for programme validation and provider approval.

As described above, Optimum adheres to all relevant guidelines published by QQI in relation to statutory obligations under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. These are typically advised by QQI via e-mail, or by information events and are published on the QQI website. Any clarifications required may be obtained through the QQI QHelp portal which can be accessed by any member of the Optimum Training Management Team. The Training Manager is the contact person for QQI and acts as the internal coordinator for dissemination of QQI guidance.		• Statutory conditions listed in the Education, Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012 (Education and Training).

3. Monitoring

The key areas for this procedure involve self-evaluation and self-monitoring systems, guided by external quality assurance systems, aimed at programme improvement.

Responsibility for self-evaluation, monitoring and review is the responsibility of the Steering Group and the Academic Council, assisted in its implementation by the Training Management Team.

Programme completion triggers monitoring, while self-evaluations are triggered by events such as the QQI Reengagement and a self-evaluation schedule agreed by the Steering Group.

OPTIMUM POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND APPLICATION FORMS

Title	Link
Appeals Application	Click Here
Appeals Procedure	Click Here
Code of Behaviour	Click Here
Compassionate Consideration Appeals	Click Here
Compassionate Consideration Application	Click Here
Compassionate Consideration Policy	Click Here
Complaints Procedure	Click Here
Complaints Procedure Application	Click Here
Data Protection Policy	Click Here
Disciplinary Procedure	Click Here
Disciplinary Procedure Appeals	Click Here
Equality Diversity Policy	Click Here
Governance Manual	Click Here
Health & Safety Policy	Click Here
Learner Handbook	Click Here
Reasonable Accommodation Policy	Click Here
Reasonable Accommodation Application	Click Here
RPL Application	Click Here
RPL Application Appeals	Click Here
RPL Procedure	Click Here