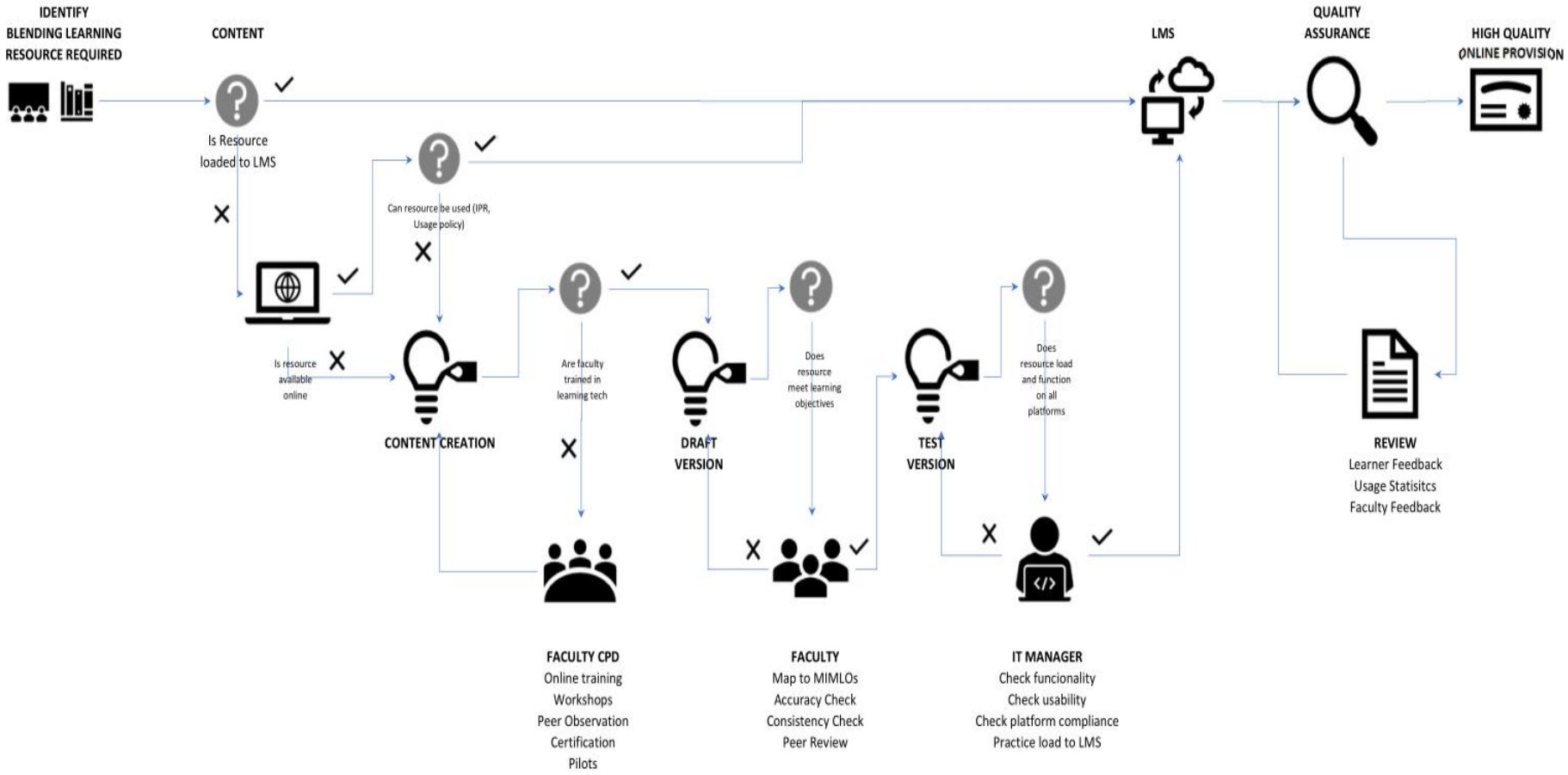
#	POLICY TITLE:	POLICY AREA:	VERSION:	DATE ADOPTED:
ST.NICHOLAS MONTESSORI	**5.3 BLENDED PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT**	5)TEACHING AND LEARNING	3.00	August 2020



Introduction and Context

As stated in **QA 5.2: Blended and Online Learning,** blended learning programmes will be developed and delivered when this mode of delivery can add value within an organisational, programme and learner experience context.

The purpose of this document is to outline an approach to the design and delivery of blended programmes and materials, taking into account

- market demand;
- stakeholder perspectives;
- benchmarking against similar programmes nationally and internationally;
- the design and implementation of learner centred, blended and online educational programmes providing students with alternative learning pathways and opportunities for self-directed learning;
- a high-quality teaching and learning experience that is comparable to the teaching and learning experience and learning environment of face to face provision;
- the safeguarding of academic standards;
- support for staff and learners engaged in blended and online learning programme provision;
- the use of digital technology facilities and learning resources that are supportive and create constructive, engaging and effective learning experiences for students;
- the appropriate technical infrastructure and technical support for programmes with a blended learning delivery mode;
- the use of previously produced learning artefacts or learning resources;
- the development of resources within the College;
- resources that may be sourced externally.

Scope: This policy applies to SNMCI staff members who are designing new programmes and to the Academic Board of the College when approving a programme or a proposal to develop a programmes.

The policy to:-

- A QQI validated award;
- A QQI validated award of the College that may also be subject to another professional, regulatory, or statutory body;
- All programmes regardless of location of provision, mode of provision, or disciplinary area.

SNMCI uses the following definitions for the purpose of programme development:

Online Learning - "A form of educational delivery in which learning takes place primarily via the Internet. Online learning can serve those who are geographically distant and without access to traditional classroom education, so it includes 'distance learning'. However, distance learners are not alone in benefiting from online learning, which is also commonly part of e-learning in mainly campus-based study programmes. In such

cases, it may be referred to as blended learning" (Gaebel et al., 2014, p17).

Face- to -Face – also known as traditional or classroom based learning, face-to-face learning is where "activity is organised around scheduled class meetings…..measured by the number of hours spent in required 'in person' class meetings in various formats, such as lectures, workshops or other traditional face to face activities" (Online Learning Consortium, 2020). In this delivery mode technology enhanced learning may be incorporated by the use of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), but the timetabling of face-to-face classes is not changed.

Blended Learning - "The integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences" (Garrison and Kanuak, 2004, p96) cited in QQI, *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning* (2018, p3).

Policy Statement

In the development of blended learning programmes SNMCI will (at institutional level) :-

- ensure that they are consistent with the College's vision, mission and strategic plan;
- ensure that they comply with all legal and regulatory obligations including intellectual property, copyright and data protection;
- ensure that programmes enhance flexibility of delivery for learners in line with the recommendations of a number of HE initiatives such as *The Higher Education System Performance Frameworks* (HEA, 2016,2018), *The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Roadmap for Digital Skills* (2015) and in particular the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* which states, 'In the coming decades, the delivery of higher education in Ireland must be characterised by flexibility and innovation.' (DES, 2011, p.61);
- ensure that blended learning programmes and resources are subject to the same quality assurance policies and procedures as apply to the planning and development of other modes of learning and also take account of additional policies and procedures which are specific to blended learning as outlined in *Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes.* (QQI 2018);
- ensure that the necessary operational and technical infrastructure is available to support the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of blended learning provision;
- ensure that all staff members who engage in the development of blended learning will be provided with the necessary training and support;

In the development of blended learning programmes SNMCI will (at programme level) :-

- ensure that the award title is consistent with QQI's Policy and Criteria for Making Awards and complies with applicable statutory, regulatory and professional body requirements;
- ensure that the programme aims and objectives are expressed clearly;
- ensure that the programme title and any embedded programme titles are clear, accurate, succinct and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders;
- ensure that the programme has the required minimum intended programme learning outcomes and that all other educational or training objectives of the programme are explicitly specified and they are consistent with the relevant QQI awards standards;

- ensure that programme information is available for all learners and prospective learners in a range of accessible formats;
- ensure that the programme's access, transfer and progression arrangements are satisfactory, including details re Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- ensure that the programme design is informed by best practice in curriculum design and that each programme/module is developed with a focus on selecting the appropriate learning design model/framework for that programme/module;
- ensure that the 'learning experience' is student centred and in line with the Montessori philosophy of active learning;
- ensure that the learning resources and delivery mechanisms are of high quality and appropriate to the programme content and context;
- ensure that the same rigorous standards apply to assessment of online components;
- test and validate programme/module delivery mechanisms in advance of programme launch;
- evaluate each blended learning programme following each cycle;
- update programmes annually to account for rapidly evolving technology and learning design context.
- include in the validated programme document:-
    - details of the delivery and assessment modes for online components;
    - details of any specific resources or delivery requirements/costs;
    - schedules of key assessment deadlines, including all online activities and continuous assessment
    - timetables specifying the time required for online discussion, forums and online activities ;
    - an account of how online components of the programme are evaluated and how learners and staff may provide feedback;
    - details of assessment issues including verification of learners identity and the authenticity of submission;

Staff Involved – – CEO; Director of Quality and Academic Affairs (DQAA); IT Manager; Instructional Designer; Programme Developers; Programme Directors; Programme Managers; Lecturing Staff; Examinations Office;

Procedure Outline	**Person/s Responsible**	**Records generated to ensure evidence of follow through**
- The College will create and maintain a technology enhanced learning and teaching plan for the delivery of blended and online learning.	**CEO/DQAA/ Instructional Designer/ Board of Trustees/CEO**	**Online Teaching and Learning Plan**
- The College will commit to investment and on-going support and review of the available learning technologies.		**Financial accounts**

- All programmes in the College whether face-to-face or blended will follow the Programme Proposal procedure. See **QA 3.1 Programme Proposal Policy and Procedure** - The College will develop content that adheres to clear pedagogical guidelines for maximising engagement. - To stay abreast of emerging development the College will engage with the work of other leaders in the field nationally and internationally; - - The College will ensure compliance with any Intellectual Property and Copyright legal obligations appropriate to a blended and online learning context - Programme developers will identify which modules, lessons or parts of lessons will be delivered wholly or partly online. Where online delivery is identified as a component of the blend, any required learning resources will be identified. - Learning resources may already exist either within the College's library of existing learning artefacts or as online resources provided by external parties. In the latter case, if IPR and usage policies allow, the learning resource will be downloaded and loaded to the learning management system (LMS). This may involve the purchasing of licences. - Where learning resources do not already exist, they will be created by the relevant faculty member(s) with support from the I.T. Manager and Instructional Designer. Faculty members will receive appropriate training. (See QA 5.2) - The programme document will include appropriate scheduling, to both meet the identified market need and to support maximum engagement and attendance. - The programme/developer/ team will ensure that assessment strategies employed in online and blended learning modules and programmes adhere to the College's general	**Proposer/Team Programme Director/ Lecturers/DQAA/ Instructional Designer** **CEO/IT Manager /Instructional Designer Lecturers/ Programme Director/IT Manager** **Lecturer/ Programme Director/IT Manager/Instructional Designer** **Programme Team** **Programme Team**	**Market research Proposal to Academic Board** **Programme documentation** **Engaging content with active discovery** **Resources** **Programme timetables and handbooks** **Assessment strategy & Range of assessment tools**

assessment policy and procedure.	**Programme Team**	**Programme documentation**
- The programme developer/team will ensure that online and blended provision will be subject to the same rigorous oversight that all modes of delivery are subject to, and that, if necessary, specific procedures will be developed and employed to ensure that this is the case.	**Programme Team**	**Programme documentation**
- The programme developer/team is responsible for compliance with legal and statutory obligations, including but not limited to, Child Protection legislation; Data Protection legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and where applicable, professional body requirements.	**DQAA**	**Review**
- A first draft will be prepared and reviewed by the DQAA to ensure that the programme meets all of the criteria for validation; Second and subsequent drafts will be prepared as necessary.	**IT Manager**	
- When the content is passed as fit for purpose by DQAA the I.T. Manager will run tests to ensure that the resource works from a functional and user experience perspective and that it is accessible across multiple platforms	**CEO**	**Contracts of Employment & IPR compliance**
- The College will ensure that all strategies and processes for the appointment, induction, training, professional development and appraisal arrangements for teaching and support staff are appropriate and specific to a blended or online learning environment. The College will also ensure that academic staff members are provided with the necessary staff development and support systems to function effectively in the delivery of blended and online learning programme provision.	**DQAA** **DQAA**	**Recorded CPD activities** **Qualifications of recruited staff** **Correspondence with validating body**
- The programme will be offered for validation. See **QA 3.2:** Programme Validation Policy and Procedure		

Policy Control Sheet

Policy	**QA 5.3 Blended Programme Development**
Version	Version 3.0
Adopted/Effective	August 2020
Supersedes	2.0
Monitoring/Next Review Date	Yearly/August 2021
Responsible Officer(s) **Designated Reviewer(s)**	CEO/ DQAA
Scope	College Wide

References

SNMCI Policy area	**5)Teaching and Learning: QA Vol 2**
Developed with reference to	QQI *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* (2016) QQI *Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes* *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG 2015) *The Higher Education System Performance Frameworks* (HEA, 2016,2018) *The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Roadmap for Digital Skills* (2015) *The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030.* (2011)
Related SNMCI Policies / Forms	**QA 5.2**: Blended Learning

Revision

Revision Number	**Revision Description**	**Originator**	**Approved By**
2.0/August 2020	Revised for application for Blended Learning Status June 2020 Renamed from Development of Online Learning Resources	Office of DQAA	Academic Board