

Quality Assurance Policy

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Introduction

International College of Contemporary Sciences ICCS is committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality and standards of its programmes and awards, in order to provide students with a high quality learning experience and to command the confidence of regulators, awarding organisations, employers and other stakeholders. The college recognises that quality assurance and enhancement are collective endeavours that require clear frameworks, robust evidence, effective governance and active engagement from staff and students. This Quality Assurance Policy therefore sets out the principles, structures and processes through which ICCS secures academic standards, assures the quality of learning opportunities and promotes continuous improvement.

The policy provides an overarching framework for the detailed procedures that govern programme design and approval, assessment and external examining, monitoring and review, and the handling of feedback, complaints and appeals. It articulates how ICCS aligns its internal arrangements with external regulatory expectations and sector reference points, while reflecting its own mission, scale and strategic priorities. The policy is intended to be read by staff, students, partners and external stakeholders who require an understanding of how quality and standards are safeguarded and developed within ICCS.

Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this Quality Assurance Policy is to provide a coherent and transparent statement of how ICCS organises and manages its academic quality and standards. It explains the aims and objectives of the quality framework, the roles and responsibilities of key actors and the mechanisms through which information about performance and risk is gathered, analysed and acted upon. The policy aims to ensure that all programmes and modules are designed, delivered and assessed in ways that are academically rigorous, aligned with external expectations and responsive to the needs and aspirations of students and other stakeholders.

The specific aims are to safeguard the integrity and value of ICCS awards, to assure the consistency and comparability of standards across programmes and cohorts, and to foster a culture of reflection and enhancement in which staff and students participate actively in improving the learning experience. The policy also aims to support informed decision making by providing reliable evidence about academic performance, to enable effective oversight by governance bodies and to demonstrate to external regulators and partners that ICCS takes seriously its responsibilities for quality and standards. In doing

so it contributes to the reputation and sustainability of the college and supports positive student outcomes.

Regulatory and Sector Context

ICCS operates within a regulatory and sector environment that places strong emphasis on academic quality, standards and student outcomes. The college therefore has regard to the requirements and expectations of the Office for Students, including conditions relating to the design and delivery of higher education courses, student continuation and completion, graduate outcomes and the reliability of information provided to students and prospective students. Where ICCS offers programmes that lead to regulated qualifications, it also complies with the General Conditions of Recognition set by Ofqual and with the regulations of relevant awarding organisations.

In addition, ICCS draws on sector reference points such as the United Kingdom Quality Code and associated guidance on programme design, assessment, external examining and student engagement, alongside standards and expectations issued by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies that accredit or recognise particular programmes. The college monitors developments in legislation, regulation and good practice and reviews its quality assurance arrangements periodically to ensure continued alignment. This policy should be read in the context of these external influences and of internal policies on assessment, appeals, complaints, reasonable adjustments, equality and blended learning.

Definitions and Key Concepts

For the purposes of this policy academic quality refers to the learning opportunities, support and resources made available to students and the way in which these enable them to achieve their intended learning outcomes. Academic standards refer to the level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate in order to gain a particular award or credit, as set out in programme and module specifications and in external reference points. Quality assurance describes the systematic processes by which ICCS monitors, evaluates and reports on the effectiveness of its provision, while quality enhancement refers to deliberate steps taken to improve that provision and student outcomes over time.

The policy also makes use of concepts such as programme, module, learning outcome, curriculum and assessment strategy, external examiner, annual monitoring and periodic review. Programme denotes a coherent set of modules or units leading to a defined award or qualification, while modules represent individual components with specified credit and learning outcomes. Learning outcomes articulate what students should know,

understand and be able to do on successful completion, and assessment strategies describe how achievement of those outcomes will be tested. External examiners provide independent scrutiny of assessment and standards, and monitoring and review processes provide structured opportunities to reflect on performance and implement enhancements.

Scope

This Quality Assurance Policy applies to all taught programmes and modules offered by ICCS, whether delivered at its own premises, at partner sites or through blended and online modes, and whether leading to ICCS awards, joint or dual awards, or awards of external bodies where ICCS has a defined responsibility for delivery or assessment. It covers programmes at all levels within the ICCS portfolio and applies to full time, part time and flexible modes of study. The policy also informs approaches to non credit bearing provision where this forms part of a pathway to accredited study or contributes to the overall student experience.

Where ICCS works with collaborative partners, including franchise, validation or other forms of partnership, this policy sets the framework within which more detailed partnership agreements and procedures are developed. In such cases, responsibilities for quality assurance and standards will be clearly defined in written agreements, but the fundamental principles articulated here will continue to apply. The policy does not normally extend to learning opportunities that are wholly outside ICCS control, but the college will nevertheless seek assurance, where relevant, that such opportunities are of appropriate quality and that information provided to students about them is accurate and reliable.

Principles of Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The ICCS approach to quality assurance and enhancement is underpinned by a number of core principles. These include a commitment to student centred provision, in which the needs, aspirations and feedback of learners are actively considered in the design and delivery of programmes, and a belief that high quality teaching, assessment and support are central to academic excellence. The college emphasises proportionality, seeking to ensure that quality processes are sufficiently robust to provide assurance and support enhancement, while avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy or duplication. It also values evidence based practice, using quantitative and qualitative data to inform decisions and to evaluate the impact of changes.

Another key principle is that responsibility for quality is shared across the institution. Quality assurance is not seen as the preserve of a single department, but as embedded

in the role of every academic and professional services colleague. The policy emphasises clear accountability, with defined roles for programme leaders, heads of department, committees and senior managers, and encourages open dialogue about quality issues. It also recognises the importance of externality, using external examiners, advisers and benchmarks to provide independent perspectives on standards and to support calibration with wider sector expectations.

Governance, Committees and Responsibilities

The Governing Body holds ultimate responsibility for the academic quality and standards of ICCS provision and receives regular reports on performance, risk and enhancement activity. It delegates operational oversight to academic governance structures, including an Academic Board or equivalent body that is responsible for approving, monitoring and reviewing programmes, policies and regulations. Sub committees or panels, such as programme approval panels, assessment boards and quality committees, may be established to focus on particular aspects of quality assurance and to make recommendations to the Academic Board or to senior management.

Programme leaders have day to day responsibility for the quality and standards of their programmes, including ensuring that learning outcomes, curricula and assessment strategies remain appropriate and current, that student feedback is considered and acted upon, and that monitoring and review reports are prepared. Heads of department or school oversee quality across a group of programmes and ensure that institutional policies are implemented consistently. Professional services teams, such as quality assurance, registry, learning resources and student support, provide specialist advice and operational support. Students play a critical role as partners in quality, through representation on committees, participation in surveys and review processes and engagement in staff student forums.

Programme Design, Approval and Modification

All new programmes and significant changes to existing programmes at ICCS are subject to formal approval processes that ensure alignment with institutional strategy, external reference points and the needs of students and stakeholders. Programme developers are expected to articulate clear aims, learning outcomes, curricula and assessment strategies, and to demonstrate how these are informed by sector benchmarks, labour market intelligence, professional requirements and feedback from students or employers. Proposals are scrutinised by panels that include external subject or professional experts and student representation, and that consider academic

coherence, resource implications, learning support arrangements and alignment with equality and inclusion principles.

Procedures are also in place for the approval of new modules and for the modification of existing programmes and modules, including changes to content, structure, delivery mode or assessment. Changes are considered at appropriate levels of authority, depending on their scale and potential impact, and are communicated clearly to students, with attention to contractual and consumer protection obligations. Where programmes are withdrawn or suspended, ICCS follows teach out or transfer arrangements that protect the interests of current students and that comply with applicable regulatory requirements.

Monitoring, Review and Enhancement

ICCS operates a structured cycle of monitoring and review to evaluate the ongoing performance of its programmes and to identify opportunities for enhancement. Annual monitoring processes require programme teams to reflect on student recruitment, retention, progression and achievement data, external examiner reports, student feedback from surveys and forums, and the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Reports highlight good practice, identify issues of concern and propose actions, which are considered and tracked by departmental and institutional committees. Themes emerging across programmes and disciplines are used to inform strategic enhancement initiatives and staff development activities.

In addition to annual monitoring, programmes are subject to periodic review at intervals determined by institutional policy and, where relevant, by awarding organisations or professional bodies. Periodic review provides a more in depth evaluation of programme fitness for purpose, academic standards, curriculum currency, learning resources and student experience, and normally involves external panel members and student input. Outcomes may include reapproval, conditions or recommendations for change and identification of innovative practice that can be shared more widely. Through these cycles ICCS aims to ensure that its provision remains current, coherent and responsive to changing contexts.

Assessment, External Examining and Academic Standards

Assessment is central to the maintenance of academic standards and to the student learning experience. ICCS ensures that assessment strategies at programme and module level are aligned with learning outcomes, provide appropriate opportunities for formative and summative feedback, and make use of a variety of methods to assess different types of knowledge and skills. Assessment criteria and marking schemes are

clearly articulated and communicated to students, and arrangements for moderation and second marking are in place to support consistency and fairness. The Assessment and Academic Misconduct Policy provides detailed procedures for conduct of assessment, handling of extenuating circumstances and investigation of alleged misconduct.

External examiners are appointed to provide independent assurance that assessment standards are appropriate and comparable with those of other providers and that assessment processes are fair and effective. They are selected for their subject expertise and familiarity with relevant sectors and make regular reports on standards, assessment practice and the quality of student work. ICCS responds formally to external examiner reports, addressing any recommendations and sharing positive comments with staff and students. Assessment boards consider student results in the light of external examiner input and ensure that awards are made in accordance with regulations and consistent with required standards.

Student Engagement in Quality Assurance

ICCS regards students as active partners in the design, delivery and evaluation of their learning and provides multiple routes for student engagement in quality assurance. Students are represented on key committees and panels, including those responsible for programme approval, monitoring and review, and are supported in fulfilling these roles through training and information. Programme level staff student forums or similar meetings provide structured opportunities to discuss teaching, assessment, resources and support, and to identify actions to improve the learning experience. Feedback from national and internal surveys, module evaluations and other mechanisms is analysed and shared with students, along with responses and action plans.

The college seeks to close the feedback loop by demonstrating clearly to students how their views have influenced decisions and changes, for example through you said, we did communications or updates in teaching sessions and online spaces. ICCS also encourages student involvement in curriculum co creation, peer mentoring and enhancement projects, recognising that such engagement can enrich learning and foster a sense of belonging. Where student feedback highlights serious concerns, these are escalated through appropriate channels, including quality and governance structures, and may inform revisions to policy, procedure or resource allocation.

Data, Information and Evidence for Quality

Effective quality assurance and enhancement rely on the availability and use of accurate, timely and relevant data. ICCS collects and analyses a range of information relating to applications, enrolment, retention, progression, achievement, awards,

graduate outcomes, assessment statistics and student and staff feedback. Data may be disaggregated by programme, cohort, delivery mode and relevant characteristics to support understanding of patterns and to identify areas of strength or concern. Dashboards or reports are made available to programme teams, managers and committees to inform monitoring, planning and decision making.

Data is interpreted in context and supplemented by qualitative evidence, such as external examiner commentary, peer review of teaching, alumni feedback and case studies. ICCS is mindful of the limitations of data and of the need to avoid simplistic or deterministic interpretations. Data governance and data protection policies guide the collection, storage and sharing of information, ensuring that it is used responsibly and ethically. The college also looks outward, drawing on sector level evidence and benchmarks where available to position its performance and to inform enhancement priorities.

Collaborative Provision and Partnership Working

Where ICCS enters into collaborative arrangements for the delivery of programmes or modules, it does so within a framework that seeks to ensure that quality and standards are equivalent to those of programmes delivered directly by ICCS. Due diligence processes assess the suitability of prospective partners, including their academic infrastructure, governance, resources and regulatory standing. Formal written agreements define the responsibilities of each party for programme design, delivery, assessment, student support, information provision and quality assurance, and set out mechanisms for communication, reporting and review.

Collaborative programmes are subject to the same or equivalent processes of approval, monitoring, review and external examining as internal provision, with appropriate adaptation to reflect local context. ICCS maintains oversight of student outcomes and experience across partnerships and reserves the right to require corrective action or, where necessary, to amend or terminate arrangements in order to protect quality and standards and to safeguard the interests of students. Partner staff may be involved in ICCS quality development activities, and good practice is shared in both directions where appropriate.

Staff Development, Scholarly Activity and Recognition

ICCS recognises that the quality of learning and teaching is closely linked to the expertise, motivation and professional engagement of its staff. The college therefore supports staff to maintain and develop their subject knowledge, pedagogic skills and understanding of quality assurance through induction, mentoring, continuing professional

development and opportunities for scholarly activity. Staff are encouraged to engage with external networks, conferences and qualifications relevant to learning and teaching and to disseminate their practice within and beyond the institution.

Participation in quality assurance and enhancement activities, such as programme design, review, external examining and pedagogic innovation, is valued and recognised in workload planning, appraisal and progression processes. Training is provided on key aspects of quality policy, assessment regulations, use of data and inclusive practice, so that staff can fulfil their responsibilities confidently and consistently. ICCS seeks to foster a community of practice in which staff share ideas, reflect critically on their work and collaborate on enhancement projects that benefit students and the institution as a whole.

Complaints, Appeals, Risk Management and Quality

Information arising from complaints, appeals and other forms of feedback relating to concerns about quality or standards provides an important source of intelligence for ICCS. The college ensures that processes for making complaints and appeals are clear, fair and accessible, and that outcomes are analysed for themes that may indicate systemic issues in teaching, assessment, communication or support. Where patterns emerge, these are considered by relevant committees and feed into monitoring and enhancement plans, alongside other data sources. Individual cases are handled sensitively and promptly, with appropriate remedies where complaints or appeals are upheld.

Quality assurance is also closely linked to risk management. ICCS identifies and assesses risks to quality and standards, such as dependence on particular staff or partners, changes in regulatory requirements, shifts in student demand or challenges in maintaining resources. Risk registers are used to record and monitor these risks and to plan mitigation. The Quality Assurance Policy, together with related procedures, provides part of the control environment through which risks are managed, by setting out clear expectations, checks and balances and routes for escalation where concerns arise.

Monitoring, Review and Continuous Improvement of this Policy

The operation and effectiveness of this Quality Assurance Policy will itself be subject to monitoring and review. Feedback from staff, students, external examiners, partners and regulators about the clarity, coherence and usability of quality arrangements will be considered on an ongoing basis. Formal review of the policy will normally take place at least every two years, or sooner if there are significant changes in regulatory frameworks, institutional strategy or the nature of provision that require adjustments to

principles or processes. Proposals for changes will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and considered by relevant committees before approval.

Revisions to the policy will be communicated clearly to staff and students, with accompanying guidance and training where needed. The aim is that the Quality Assurance Policy remains a living document that provides a stable yet adaptable framework for securing academic standards and enhancing the student experience. By embedding a reflective and developmental approach to quality assurance, ICCS seeks to ensure that its practices evolve in step with its ambitions, regulatory expectations and the needs of its diverse student body.

References

- Office for Students regulatory framework and associated conditions relating to quality, standards and student outcomes.
- Department for Education guidance and requirements relating to higher and further education providers.
- Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition and awarding organisation regulations, where applicable to regulated qualifications.
- United Kingdom Quality Code and related sector reference points on academic quality, standards and enhancement.
- Guidance from recognised sector bodies and professional or statutory organisations on programme design, assessment and external examining.
- Relevant expectations of collaborative partners, where ICCS delivers joint or franchise provision under external regulations.