Quality Assurance (QA) Manual

Skills Development Services (SDS) Unit

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)

Crofton Road

Dún Laoghaire

Co Dublin

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	Document History		
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May 2019	Ian Mannix and Cathleen Hartnett	2	Complete edit and re-draft in preparation for reengagement with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).
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June 2021	Eileen Soraghan	4	1) Section 8.4 "Facilitating Diversity" updated to new "Diversity and Inclusivity Policy". 2) Section 7.10 "Reasonable Accommodation/ Compassionate Consideration" changed to "Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment" and content changed to reference section 8.4. 3) 7.7.5 "Security around Internal Verification and External Authentication" updated. 4) 7.13 "External Authentication" updated.
December 2022	Eileen Soraghan	5	1) Amended Section 2 Governance to include details of reconstituted TAD committee and formation of Academic Council (AC) 2) Abbreviations updated: AC added, DTTAS removed. 3) Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) replaced with Department of Transport.
February 2024	Eileen Soraghan	6	1) Statement added to footer that "Documents are considered CONTROLLED in their electronic format. Other printed copies are considered UNCONTROLLED. Users must ensure that hard copies are the current version by comparing them to the version on the computer network at the time of use. 2) Header added to all pages. 3) Links to some Supporting Documents (Section 13) and Appendices removed. (These are all now available in SharePoint) Reference to publication of review reports removed (Section 12.9). 4) List of BIM programmes leading to awards on the NFQ updated in section 1.2.3.

July 2025	Eileen Soraghan	7	1) Section 1.14 Skills Strategy section updated 2) Section 1.2.3 updated with current programme list 3) Section 4 updated to reflect updated SOP on Programme Design, Development and Approval 4) Complaints section updated 5) Section 3.2 Documented Quality Assurance- Summary Diagram updated 6) Section 8.5 Learner complaints and grievances updated. 7) Section 12.9, Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and 12.10 Programme Quality Improvement Plan (PQIP) added. 8) Section 13 References and links updated

Contents

Section 1   Introduction

Abbreviations and Definitions

AC	Academic Council
AHEAD	Association of Higher Education Access and Disability (*organisation working to create inclusive environments in education and employment for people with disabilities*)
ARC	Audit and Risk Committee
BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
COC	Certificate of Competency
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CTU	Coastal Training Unit
DAFM	Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine
DPC	Data Protection Champion
DPO	Data Protection Officer
ERC	Executive Risk Committee
FET	Further Education and Training
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
FESS	Further Education Support Service
FOI	Freedom of Information
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
GMDSS	Global Maritime Distress and Safety System
HR	Human Resource
IMA	Irish Maritime Administration
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MSO	Marine Surveys Office
NFCI	National Fisheries College of Ireland
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
PAEC	Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (QQI)
PAP	Programme Approval Panel

PQIP	Programme Quality Improvement Plan
PPSN	Personal Public Services Number
PST	Personal Survival Techniques
PEL	Protection of Enrolled Learners
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
QA	Quality Assurance
QBS	QQI Business System
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
QMS	Quality Management System
RAP	Results Approval Panel
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RPEL	Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning
SEP	Self-Evaluation Panel
SER	Self Evaluation Report
SDS (Unit)	Skills Development Services (Unit) - (Formerly referred to as the Training Unit)
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
STCW	Standards of Certification and Watchkeeping
SWOT	Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats
TAD (committee)	Training and Development (committee)
TOR	Terms of Reference
UDL	Universal Design Principles

1.1   Introduction to Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)

1.1.1 About Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)

An Bord Iascaigh Mhara, (BIM) was established under The Irish Sea Fisheries Act in 1952. BIM is the Irish State agency responsible for developing the Irish seafood industry. BIM has four business units, each led by a director, who reports to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The Business Units are:

- Seafood Technical Services
- Development and Innovation Services
- Economic and Strategic Services
- Corporate Services

The Skills Development Services (SDS) Unit is part of the Corporate Services Unit.

1.1.2 BIM Mission

To support and enable an increase in value creation of a sustainable Irish seafood sector across the supply chain, from catch to consumer.

1.1.3 BIM Vision

BIM's vision is to lead the Irish seafood sector through effective support and deep expertise so that Ireland becomes the international leader in high value differentiated products that satisfy the growing demand for healthy, safe, responsibly and sustainably produced seafood.

1.1.4 BIM's Skills Strategy

BIM's Skills Strategy is outlined in *The Next Wave - BIMs Skills Strategy for a Sustainable Seafood Sector 2023-2028.* This document outlines BIM's strategic approach, to meet the challenges and opportunities facing the Irish seafood sector by the provision of modern, professional training, upskilling and education.

There are four key strategic objectives outlined in the document:

- Objective 1 - Attracting new entrants to the seafood sector.
- Objective 2 - Creating and promoting career paths in the seafood sector.
- Objective 3 - Delivering the right courses, to the right people, in the right way.
- Objective 4 - Building strategic partnerships for growth.

Each objective has associated actions and performance indicators identified for short term (year 1), medium term (years 2 and 3) and long term (years 4 and 5).

1.2   BIM Skills Development Services (SDS) Unit

1.2.1 Introduction to the SDS Unit

The SDS unit is part of BIM's Corporate Services Unit, reporting to the Corporate Services Director.

Training is delivered in multiple sites, mainly in the National Fisheries College of Ireland (NFCI), Greencastle, Co. Donegal and Castletownbere, Co. Cork, and in the Mobile Coastal Training Units (CTU's) linked to the colleges. In addition BIM offer some courses from its Head Office in Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, its regional offices (mainly Clonakilty) and in rented /leased facilities throughout Ireland.

The SDS Unit's administrative hub and quality oversight function is based in the BIM headquarters in Dún Laoghaire, Co Dublin.

BIM has developed and delivered training programmes for seafarers for over forty years. Its quality assurance (QA) system was originally approved by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) in 2006. The training programmes offered are specifically aimed at those working in the seafood industry, with specialised training offered to the sea-fishing, aquaculture, retail and seafood processing sectors.

1.2.1 Approved Training Provider

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Approved Training Provider

The SDS unit is a QQI approved training provider, meaning that BIM can develop and deliver programmes of education leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The QQI approval is for face-to-face delivery of programmes leading to awards at Levels 5 and 6 on the NFQ.

QQI is the independent state agency responsible for promoting quality and accountability in education and training services in Ireland. It was established in 2012 by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. Full details about QQI available here https://www.qqi.ie/

Marine Survey Office (MSO) -Department of Transport Approved Training Provider

The NFCI's are approved by the MSO for delivery of maritime training and education. The MSO is part of the Irish Maritime Administration (IMA) and is the regulatory authority for all Department of Transport examinations carried out within the state. The MSO is responsible for the implementation of all national and international legislation in relation to safety of shipping and the prevention of pollution of the marine environment from ship-based sources. For more information about the MSO, see https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-transport/organisation-information/marine-survey-office-mso/

The NFCI is approved by the MSO to issue certification on behalf of the Department of Transport.

1.2.3 Scope of Training Provision

QQI Validated Programmes (Leading to Awards on the NFQ)

The following BIM programmes are validated by QQI Leading to an award on the NFQ

1) Fishing Vessel Engineering Skills, Level 5, PG25360   (validated 2023)

2) Marine Engineering Processes and Operations (MEPO), Level 5, PG25370   (validated 2023)

3) Commercial Scuba Diving Operations, Level 6, PG25620   (re-validated 2024)

4) Surface Supplied Diving (Inshore), NFQ: Level 6, PG25622   (re-validated 2024)

5) Certificate in Fishmonger Skills, NFQ: Level 5, PG26350   (re-validated 2025)

Marine Survey Office (MSO) -Department of Transport Approved Programmes

Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW) for Seafarers Training Programmes:

1. Personal Survival Techniques, STCW-PST

2. Elementary First Aid, STCW-EFA

3. Personal Safety and Social Responsibility, STCW-PSSR

4. GMDSS Short Range Certificate, RAD-SRC

5. GMDSS Restricted Operators Certificate, RAD-ROC

6. GMDSS Long Range Certificate, RAD-LRC

7. GMDSS General Operators Certificate, RAD-GOC

8. Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting, STCW- FPFF

9. Advanced Fire Fighting, STCW-AFF

10. Medical First Aid, STCW-MFA

11. Medical Care Aboard Ship, STCW-MCAB

12. Updated Proficiency in Advanced Fire Fighting, STCW-UAFF

13. Updated Proficiency in Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting, STCW-UFPFF

14. Navigation Aids, Equipment and Simulation Training Operational Level, STCW-NAEST-O

15. Electronic Chart Display and Information System (Fishing), STCW-ECDIS

Certificate of Competency (COC) Training Programmes:

1. Deck Officer Skipper Full Certificate of Competency (Fishing), COC-SKF

2. Deck Officer Second Hand Full Certificate of Competency (Fishing), COC-SHF

3. Deck Officer Second Hand Limited Certificate of Competency (Fishing), COC-SHL

4. Class 3 Certificate of Competency Engineer Officer (Fishing Vessel), COC-ENG3

5. Class 2 Certificate of Competency Engineer Officer (Fishing Vessel), COC-ENG2

6. Class 1 Certificate of Competency Engineer Officer (Fishing Vessel), COC-ENG1

COC Ancillary Training Programmes:

1. Navigational Control Course (Fishing), COC-NCC

Other Department of Transport Related Training Programmes:

1. Passenger Boat Proficiency, DTO-PBP

2. Enhanced Safety Training, DTO-EST

3. General Engineering Science, DTO-GES

Other Non-Certified Training Programmes Offered by BIM

1. Basic Fish Handling and Filleting, SKL-BFHF

2. Deckhand Foundation Programme, SKL-DFP

3. Fish Handling and Filleting -Introduction, SKL-FHFI

4. Fish Quality Assessment – Advanced, SKL-FQAA

5. Fish Quality Assessment – Introduction, SKL-FQAI

6. Food Safety Induction, SKL-FSI

7. First Aid Responder, SKL-FAR

8. Fire Prevention (Half Day), SKL-FPHD

9. Fire Prevention and Safety Awareness, SKL-FPSA

10. Manual Handling of Loads, SKL-MHL

11. Seafood HACCP Workshop, SKL-SHW

1.2.4 Staff Profile

Members of staff are recruited by the BIM HR Department. All new entrants are vetted and inducted, followed by a probationary period. Staff members pass their probation if their performance is deemed satisfactory by their manager.

Staff performance is monitored on an ongoing basis through the BIM performance management programme. Staff are supported with training for Continued Professional Development (CPD) and where skills deficiencies are identified through the performance management programme.

In addition to employing full-time trainers, BIM utilise external trainers where the expertise does not exist within BIM. All external trainers are approved by senior management.

All BIM trainers are experienced in the delivery of training to adults and have the knowledge, skill and competence to deliver programmes to the required level. Trainers have extensive industry experience and must have a training/education qualification at Level 6 on the NFQ in addition to relevant subject matter qualifications and/or certification.

BIM trainers and staff members who work with learners aged 18 or under are Garda vetted and undertake child protection and safeguarding training.

1.2.5 Learner Profile

BIM's learners include:

- New entrants to the fishing industry who need to complete mandatory basic training before going to sea.

- Learners already working in the fishing and wider seafood industry, who wish to increase their knowledge, skills and competence and receive a formal qualification with a view to advancing their career.

- Learners already working in the fishing industry who need to complete mandatory refresher training programmes to update their Certification

BIM's learners' range in age from 15 to over 60. Many are early school leavers with no formal qualification prior to entering a programme with BIM. Others are learners with qualifications in other subject matter areas who wish to change career. The age profile of BIM learners who received QQI awards between 2014 and 2024 was as follows:

- <20 years: 40%
- 20-24 years: 18%
- 25-34 years: 22%
- 35-44 years: 11%
- 45-54 years: 8%
- >54 years: 1%

Between 2014 and 2024 ninety (90) % of BIM learners who received QQI awards were male while ten (10) % were female.

Section 2   Governance and Management of Quality

2.1   Governance of the SDS Unit

The BIM SDS Unit has a governance system in place which maintains oversight on all activities relating to external training and support services and aims to ensure that the SDS unit operates responsibly, ethically and effectively. This system clearly separates the responsibilities between those who design and develop programmes and services and those who approve them.

The BIM Board of Directors is supported in its work in the areas of strategy, governance, compliance, quality assurance and controls by a sub-committee structure. Responsibility for oversight and review of the operation of BIM's SDS Unit has been delegated by the BIM Board of Directors to the Training and Development sub-committee here after referred to as the Training and Development (TAD) committee.

2.1.1 Training and Development (TAD) committee

The TAD committee was originally established in January 2020. In 2022, the TAD committee was reconstituted, and a separate Academic Council (AC) formed as a sub-committee of the TAD committee. Terms of reference for both governance units were agreed by the Board of Directors in July 2022.

The main roles and responsibilities of the TAD committee are as follows:

- **Strategic Oversight**
    - Development of BIM's Training and Development Strategy for the Colleges and Coastal Training Units and the setting of appropriate strategic priorities
    - Make recommendations in respect of strategic alliances and partnerships around training and development
    - Consider and make recommendations in respect of college and coastal training unit infrastructure, technologies, resourcing, and facilities related to teaching and learning
    - Monitor progress against key milestones and strategic risks and provide feedback to the Board and Executive.

- **Academic Council Oversight**
    - To oversee the Academic Council (a sub-committee of the Training and Development Committee)

o To make relevant recommendations to the Academic Council policies and procedures relating to training and development.

- **Advisory Role**
  o Promote innovation and excellence in training, development, teaching and learning
  o Development of the Skills Unit, including courses offered, the learning experience and innovations
  o Provide advice with respect to emerging areas and areas of opportunity for BIM in line with strategic objectives
  o Advise the Board of any critical issues likely to impact on the capacity of the Skills unit to deliver appropriate training programmes.

See TAD committee Terms of Reference (TOR) for further details about the committee.

2.1.2 Academic Council (AC)

The AC is a sub-committee of the TAD committee and reports to the TAD committee. Membership of the AC includes two independent experts in education and training, a member of the college teaching staff and the Unit's Quality Officer. The SDS Unit Director may be invited to attend meetings or parts of meetings but is not a member of the Council. The Academic Council held its first meeting in November 2022.

The main role and responsibilities of the AC is to provide oversight of teaching, learning and assessment and oversight of quality and the quality documentation.

See AC Terms of Reference for further details about the council.

2.1.3 Panels reporting to the Academic Council (AC)

The following panel's report to the AC:

- Programme Approval Panel (PAP)

- Results Approval Panel (RAP)

- Programme Boards

Programme Approval Panel (PAP)

The Panel's role is to consider proposed new programmes, in light of BIM's overall strategic direction and the financial, legal and organisational implications of providing these programmes. The Panel

reviews all new programme proposals and makes recommendations to the AC regarding progressing new programmes to design and development. The AC will bring proposals to TAD for approval

When given the go-ahead from TAD/AC, PAP appoints programme leaders, members of programme design team and members of programme boards. PAP provide oversight of all activities relating to programme development and reviews all programmes prior to submission for validation and/or delivery (in the case of self-accredited programmes).

See Terms of Reference - Programme Approval Panel (PAP).

Results Approval Panel (RAP)

The role of the Results Approval Panel (RAP) is to ensure that:

- All assessment results are comprehensively and thoroughly reviewed and are fully quality assured and signed off by the Chair of the Panel prior to submission to the relevant awarding body.

- Appropriate decisions are taken regarding the outcome of the assessment, verification and authentication processes.

- BIM assessment procedures are adhered to.

- Appropriate evidence and records are available.

- Any suspected irregularities are notified to the appropriate person.

- Non-conformances are identified, notified and logged on Programme Quality Improvement Plan (PQIP) which is reviewed at the next meeting of the Panel.

See Terms of Reference - Results Approval Panel (RAP).

Programme Boards

There is a programme board in place for each programme or related group of programmes. The board is constituted when the programme is validated (QQI programmes) or signed off for delivery by PAP. Members of the boards are appointed on an annual basis by PAP. The programme Boards report to the AC. Programme Boards are responsible for regular, on-going systematic monitoring of programme provision and quality of specific programme(s) and is comprised of those directly involved in the management, delivery and assessment of the programme(s) and other significant stakeholders.

Programme boards assume the role and responsibilities of the self-evaluation panel (SEP) As part of this role, the programme boards evaluate the quality, scope, focus, direction and coverage of the all the programmes activities and provide reports and make recommendations in support of the quality assurance process.

See Terms of Reference - Programme Boards

2.1.4 Governance Structure- Summary Diagram

2.2 Risk Management

2.2.1 General Risks

BIM have risk management policies and procedures in place for the organisation. The BIM Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) - a sub-committee of the BIM Board, oversees the risk management within the organisation. All risks to implementation of BIM strategy as well as risks to the wider seafood industry are considered. The procedures developed to manage risk in the SDS Unit complies with the policies and procedures outlined in the BIM Risk Management Policy.

All business units in BIM have a risk champion. In the SDS unit, the Quality Officer is the risk champion. The risk champion Is responsible for updating the risk register on an ongoing basis and submitting the updated risk register to the BIM Executive Risk Committee (ERC) on a quarterly basis.

The risk champion works with the SDS team carrying out regular SWOT analysis to ensure that all risks are identified and appropriate controls in place. The risk management process aims to ensures that the SDS unit does not engage in activities or partnerships that could undermine the integrity of training programmes or the awards on the NFQ (where relevant). The risks considered includes:

- Dealing with incidents of academic misconduct by either learners or trainers
- Security of assessment
- Safeguarding

2.2.2 Health and Safety Risks

BIM have a Health and Safety Policy in place for the organisation. There is a dedicated Health and Safety Advisor for the organisation. The Health and Safety Advisor is based in the BIM Head office in Dún Laoghaire but travels to all BIM sites as required. In addition, each of the two colleges (NFCI, Greencastle and NFCI, Castletownbere) have a Health and safety representative on site. The Health and Safety Advisor is responsible for identifying and assessing health and safety risk in relation to BIM training provision on an ongoing basis and, working with the Programme Leaders and College Principals carries out risk assessments and maintains the *Accident and Incident Log* Full details of the role of the health and safety advisor is available in section 4.7. Health and safety risk assessment which is reviewed at TAD committee meetings.

The risk assessments consider risks to staff, learners, visitors and contractors as well as the general public where relevant. All premises, sites and equipment are considered when carrying out the health and safety risk assessment.

Risk assessments for the SDS Unit are available from the health and safety advisor.

Supporting Documents

- Accident and Incident Log
- Risk Assessment Form

2.2.3 Safeguarding Young People

BIM is committed to safeguarding the well-being of young people and to ensuring its employees and others working on its behalf (e.g. contractors, work placement supervisors etc.) are aware of their personal and professional responsibilities to promote young people's safety and welfare in accordance with Children protection and other relevant legislation. BIM's safeguarding procedures are designed to assist BIM personnel in meeting standards of good practice in relation to safeguarding young people they come into contact with during the course of their employment. implementation is a continuous process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service. BIM believes that the best interests of children and young people attending our services are paramount. Our guiding principles are underpinned by Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and current legislation such as the Children First Act 2015, Child Care Act 1991, Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 and the National Vetting Bureau Act 2012.

All employees who work directly with young people are required to familiarise themselves with BIM's safeguarding policy, procedures and risk assessments. It is important that people in such roles are aware of good safeguarding practice and of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding young adults. In addition, their supervisors and managers also need to be fully conversant with their obligations with regard to safeguarding.

BIM's Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children is available on the BIM website, see: https://bim.ie/about/corporate-governance/

2.3 Protection for Enrolled Learners (PEL)

PEL does not apply to programmes provided by BIM as BIM is exempt under section 65(5) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

2.4 Quality Policy

BIM's Skills Development Services (SDS) Unit is committed to the principles and practice of excellence. We will conform with all relevant legislation and the requirements of our awarding bodies: Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the Marine Surveys Office in the Department of Transport where applicable.

In addition, the National Fisheries Colleges of Ireland (NFCI) at Greencastle and Castletownbere will conform to the requirements of the ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System Standard for the delivery of Maritime Education and Training as outlined in the scope document

Our overall objective is to deliver the highest possible level of quality to our learners in our training services through continual improvement, employee development, recognition and social responsibility. Our quality management system provides a framework for ensuring the delivery of quality maritime education, measuring and improving our overall performance, supporting BIM Statement of Strategy and fulfilment of QQI /Department of Transport and learner's requirements.

The Senior Management Team and staff of the SDS Unit in BIM commit to this:

- By ensuring that the unit fully meets the requirements of its learners and by endeavouring to enhance the overall service to learners to ensure that they are fully satisfied with our training programme and services.

- By ensuring that the requirements of all interested parties are clearly understood so that our services can be delivered in a timely and professional manner.

- By promoting the use of a process approach and risk-based thinking; resulting in all processes being established, documented, resourced appropriately, monitored and measured to ensure

conformance to their intended results (Legal requirements, Unit Objectives, and applicable industry regulations and legislation).

- By ensuring that our entire staff is given sufficient training and development support to ensure competency for their area of work through education, training and experience, where appropriate.

- Through management's participation in the monitoring and measurement of the performance of the QMS is focused on acting on opportunities for continual improvement.

- By planning and establishing measurable objectives based on its Quality Policy for the ongoing development of the training services and our learners. These objectives are regularly reviewed and measured by management.

2.5   Scope of the Quality Assurance System

The Quality Assurance (QA) system applies to all activities associated with training provision, accredited and non-accredited, and to the work of BIM governance panels, managers, staff, contractors, external advisors, learners, and other stakeholders involved in training for or on behalf of the BIM SDS Unit. The QA system applies to the work of all staff of the SDS Unit in all locations, employees and contractors. The role of each individual staff member/contractor in assuring the quality of what they do is clearly set out in their role description and is addressed at induction.

The QA system addresses the following areas:

1. Governance and the Management of quality

2. Programme Development, Delivery and Validation

3. Staffing

4. Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

5. Public Information and Communication

6. Teaching and Learning

7. Assessment

8. Information and Data Management

9. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

2.6   Management of, and Responsibility for the QA System

2.6.1 TAD Committee and SDS Unit Manager

The TAD committee is responsible for resourcing, supporting, maintaining and ensuring the implementation and integration of the QA system within the SDS Unit, and also for monitoring the effectiveness of the QA system. The TAD committee delegates responsibility for this to the SDS Unit manager who in turn reports back to the TAD committee in relation to the effectiveness of the system.

See Role Description - Head of Centre (Manager of the SDS Unit) and Terms of Reference - Training and Development (TAD) Committee.

2.6.2 Quality Officer

The Quality Officer oversees and co-ordinates the work of implementation of the QA system on a day-to-day basis and maintains the QA manual and all associated documentation.

See Role Description – Quality Officer

2.6.3 College Principals

In addition to their general roles and responsibilities, the College Principals are responsible for ensuring that the QA system is implemented on a day-to-day basis in their respective college. The College Principal works in partnership with the Quality Officer to ensure that the QA system is implemented in full. The College Principal is responsible for the quality of programmes, the learning environment, and all associated documentation. Full details of the College Principals' roles and responsibilities including the devolved QA roles and responsibilities are outlined See 4.2 Role Description - College Principal.

See Role Description - College Principal.

2.6.4 Programme Leaders

All programmes have a programme leader assigned by the PAP. The primary role to the Programme Leader is to provide disciplinary leadership for the programme and input into the staffing, management, assessment, review, and ongoing development of the programme and support the other programme team members. The Programme Leader is a member of the respective Programme

Board (ex-officio). Programme leaders work with the Quality Officer and College Principal to ensure that all QA requirements are adhered to in the planning and delivery of the programmes they lead.

See section 4.7: Role Description - Programme Leader

All staff members and contractors have a role in implementing the QA system and this is written into role descriptions, is discussed at induction, addressed in BIM Staff Handbook and is reviewed at performance appraisals

2.7   Embedding a Quality Culture in the SDS Unit

BIM consider the following to be key enablers for embedding a culture of quality in the Unit:

- A clear and transparent commitment to quality at all levels.

- The allocation of adequate time and resources to quality planning and implementation.

- Maintaining staff engagement

- The creation of the right conditions for quality improvement

- An appropriate infrastructure in place to support staff in identifying and implementing quality improvements

To ensure this BIM:

- Encourages a cohesive attitude of "We're all in this together" and 'One BIM' i.e. governors, management, staff and contractors, learners, the industry players, BIM suppliers.

- Include time for staff away from their 'day jobs' to undertake training or participate in quality improvement activities.

- Invest in training in the tools and techniques of quality enhancement.

- Focus on processes with a 'let's fix the process' approach if something goes wrong.

- Highlight stories of success in BIM quality improvement initiatives within the Training Unit and BIM.

- Have quality enhancement as an agenda item for BIM staff and unit meetings.

- Network with and make use of quality enhancement resources developed by other Units within BIM.

- Seek feedback from staff regarding quality enhancement in BIM annual performance appraisals.

2.8   Learner Representation

The Unit has mechanisms in place to facilitate learners to make representations about matters of concern, to actively input into key aspects of our quality system and to voice opinions about the learning experience easily and openly. We ensure that the learner voice is heard through representation in key academic governance and decision-making entities, programme review and evaluation and other forms of learner consultation and feedback. We value the learner voice and learner feedback and are committed to taking timely action in response to valid issues and justifiable concerns raised through feedback mechanisms and learner representation.

2.9   Maintaining and Monitoring the QA System

BIM is committed to maintaining a system which accurately reflects BIM current operation, and which is compliant with awarding body requirements. The BIM Training Unit views quality assurance as an organic process and is continually developing the QA system to meet changing circumstances and needs. BIM have designed the QA system to be provider-owned, context-specific, fit-for-purpose and meaningful and accessible to all who are required to implement it as part of their work. To ensure this, the QA system is subject to regular review to ensure that it meets BIM needs, the needs of BIM stakeholders; particularly BIM learners, and contributes to continuously improving the quality of BIM programmes and services.

To achieve this, the QA system is integrated into normal day-to-day activities in a systematic, streamlined way. In order to ensure that the QA system is effective and achieves its aims, governors, management and staff must commit to owning the system and to implementing it on a day-to-day basis to support and underpin quality provision.

BIM invite users of the QA system for their views on the effectiveness and ease-of-use of the QA system as part of the quality reviews.

2.10   Schedule of Reports

A schedule of reports that are considered periodically by the Academic Council.

Section 3   Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

3.1   Documented Policies and Procedures

The SDS unit's documented Quality Assurance System consists of:

1. Quality Manual
2. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
3. Terms of Reference (TOR) for Key Panels and Committees
4. Role Descriptions
5. Forms and Templates

The documented system acts as a repository for all policies, supporting documentation, procedures, role descriptions, terms of reference and forms. It is designed to provide staff, trainers, learners and stakeholders with information and guidance in operating the QA system and the implementation of the processes and procedures employed to meet awarding body and organisational requirements and ensure best practice. It also outlining BIMs approach to continuous quality improvement.

The QA system is updated by the Quality Officer following the annual review and less formally on an ongoing basis detailing significant changes in the revision history using a document version control system. The Quality Officer records details of any amendments made to the QA system where policies or procedures are found to be ineffective, out-of-date or superfluous to BIM needs. The Quality Officer ensures that there is a single central authorised version of documents and only the latest version of any document is available to users and there is an audit trail of modifications to the documents. The operation of a document control system enables us to approve, review and update documents; make changes and identify revision status; control document distribution, prevent the use of obsolete documents and facilitates archiving.

Copies of the QA system is available at staff induction and relevant sections of the manual are explored in detail as appropriate (e.g. the section on assessment is gone through in detail at trainer induction). The most up-to-date copies of all QA documents are available in SharePoint. Documents are considered CONTROLLED in their electronic format. Other printed copies are considered UNCONTROLLED. Users must ensure that hard copies are the current version by comparing them to

the version on the computer network at the time of use. The Quality Officer is the Administrator and has editing rights for the QA system; all other users have viewing rights only.

3.2 Documented Quality Assurance System – Summary Diagram

Section 4   Programmes of Education and Training

4.1   **Programme Design, Development and Approval**

4.1.1   Policy

BIM programmes are designed to reflect BIM's mission and to align with the strategic plans and to meet the needs of learners and the industry sectors that BIM serves. BIM is committed to equality of access to whilst maintaining the highest levels of attainment and achievement, focusing on the individual learners' professional and personal development. Programmes are reviewed regularly in consultation with key stakeholders to ensure continuous improvement and evolving EU and national legislation and the changing training needs of the industry. Programmes are developed and reviewed in order to ensure that they:

- Meet QQI's validation requirements if they are designed to lead to an award on the NFQ

- Comply with the specification, learning outcomes and standards for the award

- Offer flexible transfer and progression paths for learners if appropriate

BIM ensures that programme structure, materials, delivery and assessment methodologies are designed to meet the needs of potential learners, meet the requirements of the awarding body (if applicable) and meet the needs of the industry sectors BIM serves.

4.1.2   Needs Identification

BIM have systems in place to ensure that programmes meet an identified need and that there is evidence available to help make an informed decision to progress proposed programmes to the design and development stage.

A study of the Current and Future Skills Requirements of the Marine/Maritime Economy to 2020 was completed in 2015 by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN). This report highlights that the workforce within the seafood sector is aging, and this will present a skills gap unless measures are put in place to attract and upskill younger workers. The report recognises that operatives and low skill roles are a major component of the marine economy but there is evidence of a shift towards more professionals being employed right across the economy including sectors such as seafood which has predominantly been a low skill employer.

FoodWise 2025 sets out a vision and strategy for the future development of the agri-food industry. It recognises that the agri-food sector will only achieve its full growth potential if it can address the skills needs within the industry. It is recognised that the sector faces challenges and there are skills gaps which must be filled in order to enable the potential of the sector to be realised "*The ability of the sector to retain, access and attract the best talent to address these skills gaps represents a key challenge towards 2025 and will define the capacity of the sector to realise 2025 growth, development and sustainability targets*".

FoodWise 2025 recommends that BIM continues to develop tailored programmes in the seafood sector to prioritise leadership and management development, technical development and sales and marketing.

BIM identify potential new programmes in the following ways:

- Networking within, and knowledge of, the industry sectors served
- Requests from employers and industry representative for new programmes
- Monitoring changing policy, regulation and legislation
- Monitoring economic climate and changing employment patterns
- Reviewing relevant reports and papers and consulting with subject matter experts and industry specialists
- Inviting suggestions from learners, graduates, trainers and the other members of programme teams
- Annual surveys of front-line staff in other BIM business units annually to ascertain where see the gaps in training and development.
- Maintaining a database of enquiries which is regularly reviewed
- The SDS unit team liaises constantly with the other BIM business units to anticipate training needs and identify skills gaps.

The identification of gaps in training and the development of programmes to meet new and emerging needs is an agenda item for BIM Training and Education Sub-Committee and BIM programme boards meetings. These topics are also considered at BIM Board level.

4.1.3 Stages in the Design and Approval of New Programmes

After a training need has been identified, the proposer completes a "New Programme Proposal Form" using the standard template form QF 17. This form will include details such as:

- Rationale for the Proposed New Programme & Training Needs Analysis
- Other Comparable Programmes (In Ireland and Abroad)
- Proposed Target Learners and Learner Profile

- Proposed Programme Outline, modules, learning outcomes, assessment strategy etc.
- Proposed Awarding Body
- Entry Requirements
- Proposed Delivery Mode
- Proposed Programme Design / Curriculum Development Team
- Proposed Programme Delivery Team
- Budget and Resources required to develop and deliver the programme

All new programme proposals are reviewed by the Programme Approval Panel (PAP) and the PAP approves the proposal before any programme development work commences

Programme Development steps will vary depending on the programme type and awarding body. Full details of the process are included in SOP-201 Design, Development, Approval and Revalidation of Training Programmes

For further details, see:

- SOP-201 Design, Development, Approval and Revalidation of Training Programmes
- QF-17 New Programme Proposal Template
- Programme Approval Panel (PAP) Terms of Reference

4.1.4 Intellectual Property

The intellectual property rights of all training programmes and materials developed by BIM are owned by BIM. Ownership of intellectual property in addressed at induction, in the Trainer Handbook and in contracts issued to trainers.

4.2   Access Transfer and Progression

4.2.1   Policy

BIM SDS Unit are committed to implementing Section 56, Part 4 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 '*Procedures for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners*' as it applies to our scope of training provision

We fully support learners in accessing our programmes, successfully participating, transferring to other programmes offered by us or other providers or progressing to higher level awards. We provide prospective and current learners with clear information so they can make informed choices regarding their choice of programme/s and the progression opportunities that are open to them. We welcome all applicants as long as they meet the stated entry requirements and we are satisfied that they will benefit from the participating in the programme. We strive to ensure that all prospective and current learners are treated fairly and equitably without exception.

BIM is committed to enabling learners to make informed choices regarding the programmes on offer; enter programmes with recognition of prior learning and without unnecessary barriers; successfully participate in a programme and transfer or progress to another programme offered by BIM or other providers leading to an award within the National Framework of Qualifications. This policy guides the Training Unit in its implementation of its legal requirements related to access, transfer and progression as set out in Section 57 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2015 and is based on the QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education (Restatement) 2015.

In 2015 QQI published an *Access, Transfer and Progression Policy Restatement 2015*. Following consultation on approaches to policy development, the *Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training* were also republished. QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* require that provider policies and procedures for learner admission, progression and recognition include 'fair recognition of education and training qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning' and that the provider ethos enables flexible learning pathways.

In addition, Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training includes explicit reference to RPL for the purposes of access, advanced entry and exemptions. RPL is also integrated into the *Further Education Strategy 2014-2019*, the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, and the *National Skills Strategy*.

4.2.2 Admissions

BIM SDS Unit operates a single admissions policy and agreed procedures for learner admission. Admission to a programme is subject to places being available and is governed by three principles:

- That the applicant is considered likely to benefit from attending

- That the applicant is suitable for the programme

- That the applicant's participation will contribute positively to the programme

Places on programmes are offered if each of the following requirements is met:

- The applicant meets the minimum entry requirements for the programme

- There is a place available to be offered, i.e. the programme is not full.

- The applicant demonstrates the capacity to successfully participate on the programme for which he/she has applied. This includes the academic, practical, and work experience placement (where applicable) elements of the programme.

- The appropriate fee is paid (by either the applicant or their employer

Subject to meeting the stated entry requirements and undertaking a successful interview (if applicable), places are offered on a first come first served basis upon full completion of the application process.

Application Process - Selection of Learners for Programmes

BIM does not register learners on a programme until it has been validated by the appropriate awarding body (if applicable).

BIM accept applications either directly from individual applicants or from employers on behalf of a group of employees/ individual employee. Note the applicant will still have to sign the application form.

Details about all programmes are available on the BIM website. For telephone enquiries, the college administrator or training administrator explains the programme details and will discuss the suitability of this programme for the enquirer. If the administrator is not able to provide the necessary information, the enquiry is escalated to the Programme Leader or College Principal. If requested copies of the progamme brochure and an application form will be emailed or posted.

Applicants are required to complete and submit the application form by email or post to BIM. They must sign the application form confirming that they meet the minimum entry requirements. The training /college administrator reviews the completed application forms to determine if all criteria are med and the applicant is deemed suitable for the programme. If the administrator is unsure if the entry requirements are met, or if they think the applicant may not be suitable for the programme they may discuss with the programme leader and/or seek further clarity/ proof of entry requirements from the applicant. For some programmes, applicants may be requested to attend an interview to determine their suitable for the programme. If an applicant is not accepted onto a programme, they may appeal the decision.

Applicants with additional needs are encouraged to apply for a place subject to satisfying the entry criteria.

Applicants may be called for interview and/or asked to submit additional relevant documentation to support their application e.g. copies of educational award certificates, character references. The discovery that an applicant has furnished false or misleading information to gain access to a programme may result in rendering an application ineligible.

Minimum Entry Requirements

The minimum entry requirements for each programme is clearly specified in the programme brochure and on the website. The entry requirements for each programme are:

- Comprehensive, clear and explicit

- Reflect the level and content of the awards being offered in the programme

- Justifiable and genuinely required for successful completion of the programme

- Reflect the access, transfer, and progression statements from the award specification

The following entry requirements are outlined where relevant:

- Minimum educational qualifications for access to the programme

- English Language Requirements

- Medical Standards

- Seafood Industry Experience

Minimum educational qualifications for access to the programme

In general access to programmes leading to an award on the NFQ, applicants must have an award at an NFQ level no more than one lower than the award associated with the programme. Each programme leading to and NFQ award will have minimum educational qualifications specified.

English Language Requirements

English language requirements are specified for all programmes. In general, the applicant must be able to read, write and communicate efficiently in English. For applicants where English is not their first language, they may be required to demonstrate proficiency in English to an appropriate level as specified by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL). The level required will be outlined in each individual course programme as some programmes will require a higher proficiency in English than others.

For courses governed by the Department of Transport, the online Marlins English Language Testing for Seafarers is used to access applicants. Marlins offer a range of products designed for assessment and training of crews. These resources are used for recruitment and training purposes by key employers in ship management, marine leisure and offshore sectors and are implemented worldwide. The Marlins English

Language Tests are taken online on the Marlins Test Platform. The tests use contemporary English testing methodology and enable employers and trainers to assess understanding of English quickly and accurately. Test users get the chance to practise each question type before they start the test and help information is available in 11 languages. A certificate of the user's result is printed out at the end of the test.

The Marlins test is compulsory for learners where English is not their first language, when applying for a place on a Department of Transport Certificate of Competency course.

Medical Standards

For some programmes applicants must meet minimum medical standards e.g. a satisfactory Seafarers' Medical Certificate examination and eyesight test is required for some Department of Transport programmes applicants.

In the case of short, physically demanding programmes e.g. Basic Safety Training, applicants are required to sign a Declaration of Fitness stating that they are fit to undertake this training and may be required to produce a signed medical certificate. BIM reserves the right to defer entry to any programme and seek the opinion of a qualified medical practitioner. There is a question on the application form to this effect.

The entry criteria from some programmes include criteria related to health standards/physical fitness as BIM must ensure that applicants for these programmes are in good health and free from an illness or disability that would be likely to interfere with their training, their own safety or the safety of others. If there is a restriction, details are set out clearly in the entry requirements.

Seafood Industry Experience

For some programmes, the applicant must be either working in a relevant section of the seafood/marine industry or be currently seeking work in the sector. This requirement will be clearly outlined in the programme brochure and on the website.

References

Applicants for longer full-time programmes may be required to provide character references and sign a voluntary consent form authorising BIM to seek information from the Gardaí and/or police in the country of origin or other relevant authorities. Failure to provide consent or verifiable character references when applying if asked to do so may disqualify candidates. Non-EEA nationals may be asked to furnish evidence that they comply with Irish immigration and work permit requirements in force at the time of application.

Interview (Admissions)

Applicants may be called for interview depending on the programme e.g. diving. Travel and accommodation costs are borne by the applicant. Applicants are requested to bring relevant documentation to the interview in support of their application. This may include a portfolio of programme work, educational certificates, medical certificates and character references. The interview is normally conducted by a panel consisting of a minimum of two staff and chaired by a senior member of staff.

Interview Process

- When candidates arrive for interview, they are briefed by the Chairperson of the Panel on the objectives and format of the interview and advised that notes are taken to assist the panel in the selection process.

- The risks associated with a career in the marine industry are outlined to all candidates at interview.

- The interview panel reserves the right to request candidates to complete a short pre-assessment or aptitude test e.g. applicants for the Level 5 Engineering programme are required to take a maths test. A list of standard questions is used at all interviews. A marking sheet is used to rate the applicants and to assist the panel in making a final selection.

- Training places are offered to suitable candidate's subject to availability at BIM's Training Centres

- Candidates are advised that is the responsibility of the learner to source a suitable work placement if it is required for the programme.

Admission Appeals

If an applicant is not accepted onto the programme, the Training Administrator contacts them and sets out clearly the reason/s why their application was not successful. Applicants are entitled to appeal this decision.

Recognition of Prior Learning

What is prior learning?

Prior learning is the knowledge, skills and competence that an individual learner already has. This may have been acquired in any of the following ways:

- Formal learning: - takes place through programmes of study or training that are delivered by education or training providers.

- Non-formal learning: - takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training, for example in work-based training, in voluntary sector activities or in community-based learning.
- Informal learning: - takes place through life experience and work experience.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment which allows learners to gain formal recognition (certification) for knowledge, skills and competence that they already have, howsoever acquired.

RPL may allow a learner to:

- Gain entry to a programme: a learner may gain a place on a programme, based on the learner's knowledge, skill and competence, gained through relevant life and work experience or through previous certification.
- Gain exemptions within a programme: for example, a learner may be granted exemptions from participating in elements of a programme, based on learning that they already have, but for which they do not have a formal certificate. The learner will still be required to produce a portfolio of evidence for assessment purposes.
- Gain credit towards an award: a learner may gain a credit towards an award using previous certification which is recognised by QQI.
- Attain an award: a learner may attain an award based on previously acquired learning for which they do not have a formal certificate.

RPL for BIM's currently validated Programmes

Because of the specialised nature of BIM's training programmes, RPL is considered in exceptional circumstances only.

Full details of the RPL process are outlined in QA-SOP-16 – Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

For further details, see:

- QA-SOP-16 Recognition of Prior Learning
- QA-12 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Application Form

4.2.2 Transfer and Progression

We investigate transfer and progression opportunities at programme design stage and submit this information to QQI as part of our application for validation.

Transfer and progression information for each programme is clearly outlined in programme brochures and on the BIM website.

Members of staff and trainers are able and available to advise applicants, learners and graduates regarding transfer and progression opportunities.

We are available to meet applicants to discuss entry requirements, funding eligibility, assessment requirements, individual specific needs or requirements for participation. These meetings are conducted by phone or in person to meet the needs of the applicant.

4.3   Registration

The Training Administrator provides details of the learners whose applications were accepted to the trainer prior to induction. If any applicant has indicated on the application form that they have any specific/additional needs these are highlighted by the Training Administrator and brought to the attention of the trainer. Details of the arrangements the Quality Officer has agreed with the applicant in response to a request is also provided to the trainer.

All learners are required to complete a **Registration Form** at Induction. The data from the registration form is inputted into BIM's Training Portal. Registration is considered complete when:

- The Registration Form has been completed
- Fees are paid in full except in a case which is deemed to be an exceptional circumstance.
- All information and supporting documentation requested has been submitted by the applicant.
- The applicant agrees to abide by BIM terms and conditions.

The provision of false or inaccurate information by an applicant may render his/her application null and void.

4.4   Learner Progression

Progression is defined by the Qualification and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 as the process whereby learner may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme, where each programme is of a higher level than the preceding programme. Learners who successfully complete a programme leading to a Level 5 minor award with BIM can progress to programmes at a higher level on the National Framework of Qualifications NFQ. BIM is committed to implementing Section 56, Part 4 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

4.5 Programme Validation and Re-validation (For programme Leading to QQI Awards)

4.5.1 Policy

BIM secures QQI validation before enrolling learners on any programme leading to a QQI award. Applications for validation are approved and signed off by the Manager of the Training Unit before they are submitted to QQI via the QBS. The Quality Officer reviews BIM's capacity to uphold the terms and conditions of validation and ensure that programmes continue to meet the validation criteria as part of annual programme review and arranges for the revalidation of continuing programmes every 5 years (or in accordance with the expiry of the duration of the validation if different). BIM understand that validation is for a maximum of five years and automatically lapses unless renewed through re-validation. BIM carry out a programmatic review to coincide with revalidation – data from this review is used to inform and support the revalidation process. BIM understands that a validated programme may be reviewed by QQI at any time and BIM facilitates such reviews.

4.5.2 Validation Process (For programmes leading to QQI Awards)

1. Submission

BIM submits an application in a standard format and consistent with QQI requirements as outlined in the published Award Specification (if applicable) and the relevant published guidelines

2. Evaluation.

 The programme is evaluated by QQI against current validation criteria.

3. Decision

The QQI Programmes and Awards Executive Committee (PAEC) validates or refuses to validate the programme.

4. Appeal

BIM may appeal the PAEC decision if validation is refused.

5. Review

QQI may review the programme at any time. If QQI decides to withdraw validation for any reason, BIM may appeal this decision.

Reference

- *QQI Policy Restatement—Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training*
- *Policy and Criteria for Making Awards*
- *Policy for Determining Awards Standards*
- *Awards Standards (HET non-apprenticeship)*
- *Awards standards for apprenticeship programmes*
- *QQI Policies and Criteria for Validation of Programmes 2016*

4.6 Programme Planning and Delivery

4.6.1 Process

The Programme Leader works with the Quality Officer in advance of programme delivery to set out a plan to facilitate the smooth running of the programme for the benefit of both the learner and trainer.

- The delivery of a programme is considered from the development stage. The programme team identify and the human, physical and academic supports and resources necessary for delivery and details are set out by the Programme Leader in the programme descriptors prior to programme delivery.
- The Manager of the Training Unit is responsible for ensuring that these are in place
- There is a Programme Descriptor is place for each programme and this is reviewed as part of annual programme review and then updated, as necessary.
- BIM encourage trainers to use an appropriate mix of training methodologies e.g. tutorials, seminars, workshops, skills-practice etc. when delivering programmes.
- The Quality Officer confirms the programme team, liaises with the training venue and monitors the number of applications.
- The Quality Officer works with the Programme Leader to review and prepare programme resources, supporting materials, equipment, learner induction pack/presentation, evaluation forms. They also confirm the programme timetable and assessment plan.

- The Quality Officer checks the website to ensure that the details of the specific programme are current and comprehensive.

- The Training Administrator prepares the Trainer Pack and the Learner Packs in advance.

- Trainers double check that the appropriate training equipment and resources are available to them and in good working order before a programme begins.

4.6.2 Selection of Premises and Maintenance of Equipment and Facilities

The Programme Leader working with the College Principals, ensures that the training premises, equipment and facilities are fit-for-purpose, suitable for learners and programmes and are maintained in such a manner to ensure the health, safety and comfort of trainers and learners. Programmes are only delivered on client premises or other public venues if the facilities meet the requirements of the programme and are judged to be fit-for-purpose, appropriate and safe. If BIM use an offsite (non-BIM) facility, the Quality Officer, or the Programme Leader benchmark the premises, equipment and facilities against BIM premises selection before entering into an arrangement to use the venue.

Supporting Documents

- Facilities Checklist

- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for equipment

- BIM Health and Safety Policy and Procedures

- Risk Register

- Accident and Incident Register

- Safety Statements

The training facilities BIM use must:

- Be accessible (preferably ground floor), be serviced by public transport and have parking facilities

- Be comfortable, well-ventilated, quiet, clean, safe and well serviced and conducive to training and learning

- Must comply with health and safety legislation

- Have access to required training equipment and supports

- The Quality Officer checks the training facilities in advance to ensure that the premises, equipment and facilities meet the needs of BIM learners and BIM programmes. The Quality Officer completes an External Venue Checklist.

- The Programme Leader investigates the facilities, equipment and premises needed at the programme design stage and are detailed in the programme descriptor.

- The College Principals and the Mangers of the other units where training is delivered are responsible for ensuring that the equipment is maintained to a high standard and is in good working order. They maintain detailed maintenance equipment records.

- The quality of the teaching and learning facilities, equipment and resources for a programme where there is an element of collaboration with another provider is reviewed prior to signing a Memorandum of Understanding.

- BIM evaluate the venues BIM use as part of BIM ongoing monitoring and evaluation and BIM ask learners and trainers for their views in evaluation forms.

- The Programme Boards review the effectiveness of equipment, training resources and facilities to ensure their continuing adequacy and effectiveness as part of their programme reviews.

- Trainers advise learners regarding facilities, housekeeping and safe access and egress including evacuation procedures and fire assembly points at induction.

4.6.3 Health and Safety

Health and safety statements are reviewed annually. BIM records details of on-site fire and evacuation drills undertaken during programme delivery. A maintenance review and risk assessment is carried out annually on BIM's own training facilities by the Health and Safety Officer. There is information on health and safety in the Learner and Trainer Handbooks, and this is highlighted it at induction. BIM maintain an accident and incident register and BIM have appropriate insurance in place to cover staff and learners. When BIM use other premises, the Health and Safety Officer reviews a copy of the premises safety statement and risk assessment in advance. There are very specific risks to health and safety on some programmes because of the subject matter e.g. diving. Risks relating to these programmes are detailed on BIM risk register because of the potential high impact.

Insurance

BIM has comprehensive insurance in relation to cover all training and related activities. Insurance cover is designed to address the high-risk environment of many of the training programs e.g. diving, firefighting. This

includes cover against accidents, third party public liability, employer's liability and other risks that enterprises are normally insured against. Insurance cover is provided for learners while they are on work experience placements. BIM also confirm that any non-BIM training facilities used are adequately and appropriately insured as part of BIM pre-delivery audit.

Section 5   Staffing

5.1   Policy

BIM ensures that all members of staff; employees and contractors have the required qualifications and expertise to provide programmes and services to learners to a high standard and to meet the meet the training and development needs of the sectors BIM serves. BIM provides appropriate support and further training to continually develop staff to ensure they are competent to design, deliver, support, evaluate and assess training programmes and assure the quality of programmes and processes. BIM seeks to ensure fair and equal opportunities for all members of staff. The full spectrum of HR policies and procedures is detailed in the HR system STRANDUM which is available to all staff. This policy applies to all staff associated with the BIM SDS Unit including and contracted trainers acting on behalf of BIM.

5.2   Responsibility

- The BIM Director of Human Resources is responsible for staffing
- The Manager of the Training Unit evaluates the need for staffing in relation to the Training Unit and advises the BIM Director of Human Resources accordingly.

5.3   Staff Recruitment

Supporting Documents

- BIM Human Resources Policies and Procedures Manual
- Statement of Required Qualifications for Trainers (programme-specific)

BIM have procedures in place to ensure that BIM attract and employ the best possible and most suitable candidates for designated roles.

Key Steps

- The Manager of the Training Unit identifies the knowledge, skills and competences for the individual roles based on the Training Unit strategic plan, programme needs and learner profile.

- The Manager of the Training Unit draw up or review existing job description/person specification/ detailed selection criteria.

- The HR Department

    o Advertises positions

    o Review CVs and cover letters

    o Invites suitable candidates to interview

    o Selects candidates

- The HR Department short-lists applicants based on the match of the applications to criteria set out in the job description/person specification and BIM Statement of Required Qualifications for Trainers and invite shortlisted candidates for interview.

- The HR Department constitutes an interview panel with a minimum of two interviewers. The Manager of the Training Unit and/or the College Principal is involved in the interview and selection process.

- Suitable candidates are selected based on:

    o Training/qualifications (trainers recruited *must have* qualifications and experience appropriate to BIM agreed scope of provision)

    o Experience

    o Suitability to role

    o Communication skills

    o Ability to work as part of a team.

- The HR Department:

    o Keeps records of the interview process, interview notes and maintain recruitment records for a period of 12 months.

    o Makes arrangements to vet the candidates if required prior to making an appointment (e.g. Garda vetting).

    o Contacts two referees (one must be the most recent employer) and get references.

    o Contacts unsuccessful candidates to advise them of the outcome of the interview process.

    o Ensures that relevant employment contracts are agreed and signed

Evidence of all recruitment and selection policies and procedures are retained by the HR Department

5.4 Statement of Required Qualifications - Trainer

BIM define a trainer as the person who delivers more than 10% of the programme content. Persons delivering less than 10% are regarded as guest speakers and are supervised by the Programme Leader. Trainers must be capable of delivering the programme specified in the relevant Programme Descriptor and have appropriate technical and pedagogical qualifications. It is trainers' responsibility to submit copies of all relevant, current award certificates and evidence of their pedagogical and professional qualifications and update them annually if there are changes.

Subject Knowledge

- Third-level qualification in the subject matter area (minimum Level 7 on the NFQ or equivalent).
- A recognised training qualification (minimum Level 6 on the NFQ or equivalent).

Experience and Skills

- A minimum of three years' experience of training/instructing adult learners.

- A minimum of three years working in the subject field/ relevant occupational experience.

- Ability be able to draw from own practical work experience to enhance training/instruction.

- Excellent facilitation, presentation, interpersonal and communication skills.

- Experience of delivering training under an agreed quality assurance system (desirable but not essential)

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Willing to avail of, and engage in, CPD activities.

Programme-Specific Requirements

There may be additional programme specific requirements for some programmes e.g. diving. In this case these are added to the statement when recruiting for the programme (Ref: *Statement of Specific Requirements – Diving*).

Additional Requirements (if applicable)

Trainers who work with learners aged 18 or under are required to undergo vetting by the National Vetting Bureau, the vetting unit of An Garda Síochána and must undertake safeguarding training.

5.5   Use of Contracted Trainers

BIM contracts the services of suitably qualified and experienced trainers to augment its own training capacity if required. BIM uses a tendering process via the e-Tenders website to recruit these trainers. Applicants are invited to complete a pre-qualification questionnaire, and a panel is established from qualified applicants usually for a 3-year period. Trainers are then appointed from this panel. Contracted trainers must meet the requirements set out in Statement of Required Qualifications.   Contracted trainers are viewed as full members of the programme teams and updated on programme-related issues. They are invited to attend programme team meetings and to input to programme development and review processes (this is set out in the Trainer Role Description).

Having a panel of suitably qualified trainers in place means that BIM is able to appoint a replacement trainer if a trainer is unavailable at short notice. Currently BIM trainers are required to let the Quality Officer know at the earliest possible opportunity if they think they might be delayed or absent from a training session. The Quality Officer selects a suitably qualified trainer from the panel and asks them to cover for the absence. BIM cancels, postpones or reschedules a programme or makes a change to the timetable in *exceptional circumstances only*. The objective is to conduct all programmes without interruption and avoid causing any disruption or inconvenience to learners.

5.6   Induction, Training and Continuous Professional Development

BIM has integrated its performance management system, Managing Performance and Developing Potential (MPDP), in all aspects of its work. MPDP allows individual, team and divisional work plans to be developed, and directly fed into the annual work programme. It also allows BIM to identify training and development needs and to ensure that staff has the skills and knowledge to meet both organisational and personal development needs. The MPDP system places a strong emphasis on continuing learning and development and motivates staff to continue their professional and personal development.

BIM endeavours at all times to identify, prioritise and meet the training development and support needs of staff. BIM promotes and encourages the upskilling and development of the administrative staff and trainers to meet changing needs of programmes and learners and the sectors BIM support.

Key Steps

- Management and core staff are developed through supported attendance at relevant events and training programmes.

- The Manager of the Training Unit hosts occasional lunch and learn events where staff members and outsiders are asked to present on a specific topic in an informal and engaging manner. The Manager invites contracted trainers to attend these events. See *Lunch and Learn Guidelines*

- BIM encourage all members of staff to engage in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and BIM allocates an annual budget for staff CPD.

- While BIM make it clear through the recruitment process that contracted trainers are responsible for their own CPD, the Manager of the Training Unit invites them to attend training events organised by BIM when relevant and appropriate and encourage them to apply for support for CPD activities if there is evidence that these activities would benefit BIM programmes and/or learners.

- BIM training staff are members of relevant professional bodies.

- BIM reviews each staff member's performance annually, discusses personal development plans on a one-to-one basis and collates feedback on completed training and development events.

- The HR Department records CPD activities on a CPD register. Contracted trainers are required to submit evidence of CPD activities on an annual basis.

- The Quality Officer reviews certification reports to check if there is a need for training for trainers in relation to assessment, particularly marking and grading.

- The Quality Officer organises CPD/topic-specific workshops for training and assessors if there is an identified need. These workshops are designed to build positive relationships and share learning. They also ensure that relevant information is presented in a uniform fashion to all trainers. Examples include

    o Marking and Grading Workshop

    o Implementing the QA System – The Trainers Role

    o Implementing Assessment Procedures

5.6.1 Staff and Trainer Induction

New staff and trainers are given a comprehensive induction at a face-to-face meeting with the Manager of the Training Unit, the Programme Leader, the College Principal and./or the Quality Officer depending on the nature and location of the role. The HR Department reviews the Induction programme annually and updates it, if necessary, to take account of new developments.

The staff member/ trainer is briefed on:

- BIM organisation and structure

- The BIM SDS Unit background, aims, ethos and values, structure and organisation.

- Roles and responsibilities of SDS Unit staff.

- The SDS Unit QA system and the staff member/trainer's role in implementing it.

- Academic and administrative procedures and regulations, including introductory training on information systems.

- Specific roles, responsibilities and requirements of the role.

- General terms and conditions of employment.

- HR and staff development policies, procedures and regulations.

5.6.2 Staff Management and Communication

BIM have systems in place to communicate with, manage and monitor staff performance to ensure that all staff members are able to perform their duties to a high standard, to identify areas of best practice and areas needing improvement.

Key Steps

- There are regular staff and programme team meetings with (informal and formal) where staff are encouraged to give feedback and views on an ongoing basis. This data is considered as part of the ongoing monitoring and review processes

- The Manager of the Training Unit issues a weekly Manager's Report detailing workload for the week ahead, activities completed during the week and external meetings undertaken.

- BIM hold annual programme review meetings.

- BIM have an annual performance appraisal and BIM provide structured feedback to staff members on their strengths and areas requiring improvement. BIM monitor the areas identified as needing improvement. The performance of contracted trainers is monitored by the Programme Leader as part of BIM monitoring and evaluation processes.

- Training Administrators are primarily responsible for day-to-day communication with trainers about all aspects of programmes and all learner issues. They do this by maintaining a high level of personal contact (face-to-face, telephone or through email) with trainers at all stages of programme delivery.

- All members of staff have a copy of the BIM Staff Manual and a copy of the BIM QA Manual. The Quality Officer communicate updates to BIM quality system annually and throughout the year if significant.

- All programme-specific information is available to trainers in print copy and via a shared online folder in advance of programme delivery. This includes timetables, assessment plan, assessment briefs, marking guidelines. This ensures consistency and clarity of information across all trainers and programmes.

5.6.3 Quality Assuring and Managing Trainer Performance

BIM have procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the performance of BIM contracted trainers.

Contracted trainers must meet the requirements set out in the *Statement of Required Qualifications - Trainer*.

All new trainers must provide a copy of their award certificates /parchment and/or transcript and BIM reserves the right to take steps to validate the authenticity of this documentation.

BIM provide all trainers with a Trainer Handbook which provides a comprehensive overview and details of BIM training operation. Trainers are required to read the Handbook in advance of induction.

Induction involves a meeting and discussion with the Training Manager/College Principal/Programme Leader and the Quality Officer. At the end of the induction session, the trainer is required to confirm that they have read the Trainer Handbook and understand and agree with the content.

BIM have a buddy system in place for newly appointed trainers whereby they are match them with an experienced trainer.

The Programme Leader occasionally sit in on a training session to observe it and the trainer. The aim of these observations is to provide formative feedback to trainers on their performance, to note examples of best practice, to ensure that trainers are delivering training as required and to get feedback from trainers. Following the observation, the Programme Leader completes a Training Observation Form which is made available to the trainer and the Quality Officer and the Manager of the SDS Unit.

Issues of concern raised and/or recommendations for improvements made by the Internal Verifier and/or the External Authenticator and agreed by the Results Approval Panel are discussed with trainers at one-to-one meetings with the Quality Officer/College Principal.

BIM expects trainers to be reflective, assess their own performance and development needs, and to work together to share best practice and support each other's development and the development of the programmes

BIM monitors trainer performance and effectiveness using learner feedback and the trainers' own feedback and evaluation of their performance, feedback from external authenticators and stakeholder feedback. The Quality Officer collects and analyses this feedback and act on it as appropriate. The performance of trainers is monitored on an ongoing basis by the Quality Officer with input from the College Principal or the Programme Leader. The Quality Officer reports any issues of concern to the Manager of the Training Unit. The Quality Officer reviews certification reports, learner feedback and external evaluator's reports for feedback on trainer performance and makes recommendations for corrective action if necessary.

If a trainer is not performing to the expected or required standards, they notified of shortcomings by the Programme Leader/College Principal who, in general, deals with deficiencies on an informal basis through discussion, counselling and appropriate assistance. Notes of these meetings are retained on the MPDP (Managing Potential, Developing Potential) for BIM staff. The Programme Leader/College Principal continues to monitor the performance of the trainer and progress regarding the remedial action agreed. If, following the informal intervention, the trainer continues to fail to meet the required standards then BIM disciplinary procedure may be invoked. The purpose of the disciplinary procedure is to help the trainer make the necessary improvements and prevent any recurrence of poor performance.

Section 6   Teaching and Learning

6.1   Policy

The SDS Unit is committed to delivering a high-quality learning experience to meet learner needs, the needs of their employers and the needs of the sectors BIM serves. The success of learners and empowering them to make a positive impact in the workplace are key goals. We believe that high quality teaching and learning provision is essential to a high-quality learner experience. Also important is a supportive and caring learning environment resulting in a high-quality learner experience, leading in turn to achievement and success. We focus on the provision of teaching and learning that supports the enhancement of knowledge and skills critical for employment and allowing learners to access and progress their chosen career path.

Our learners can expect:

- A learning experience that challenges them and opens up career opportunities

- Programmes that allow them to progress their chosen career path.

- To learn from committed, knowledgeable and skilled staff

- High quality physical facilities and supportive learning environments

6.2   Overarching Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy

BIM Training Courses

BIM's remit is to support the Seafood Industry and those working within it. The courses offered are therefore aimed at those entering the industry or those already working within the industry and wishing to progress their career in it.

The success of a learner in progressing within a clear career path in the seafood industry is the one of BIM's strategic five pillars. BIM has a stated aim "to make the sector attractive as a career and to provide a pool of well-trained talent, operating to best practice, to the industry'.

At BIM Skills Development Services, we believe that effective learning and teaching is vital to a quality learner experience and critical to the success of the learner as they progress though their working life.

To achieve this BIM Skills Development Services (SDS) Unit endeavours to:

- Provide a quality learner experience, training and certification that is directly linked to the seafood industry
- Provide excellent training facilities and equipment to enhance the learning experience
- Provide support, tutorial time and help to facilitate learning through the dedicated training staff
- Recognise that the differences in age, experience and previous training of learners require a range of strategies to support them

Learning Environment

As the training section for the Irish seafood industry, BIM actively provides a range of training courses to meet the needs of the catching, processing and retail sections of the industry.

BIM's National Fisheries Colleges of Ireland (NFCI) provide well equipped stimulating learning environments to encourage learning and teaching. Learners range widely in age and experience, from new entrants to those working within the industry for many years in senior roles.

Learners return to the Colleges for further training and certification, as they progress in their careers. This mix of learner offers an excellent opportunity for good interaction and the sharing of experience and knowledge in the classrooms, training units and common areas.

Class sizes are small, allowing trainers to fully engage with and support the learners.

A range of methods are employed in the delivery of training to accommodate different learning styles.

Peer learning is encouraged and facilitated.

Use is made of simulation, interactive, video, practical and demonstration model training aids and equipment to enhance learning.

Health and safety risk assessments and standard operating processes are adopted for any courses that may have possible hazards (e.g. using workshop machinery – fire training etc)

Strategic Aims for Learning, Teaching and Assessment:

- To provide all learners with high quality learning and teaching that encourages critical thinking
- To develop the necessary skills to enhance career progression and employability
- To provide training and skills to enable learners to develop their self-directed learning
- To provide support to learners to enable them to realise their potential
- To use assessment techniques and equipment to aid in a successful achievement.

Training & Development (TAD) Committee

The BIM Training and Development Committee is responsible for oversight of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

The SDS Unit Manager communicates decisions and the strategic thinking behind them to the College Principals and training staff. The college principals will also ensure that Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy targets are discussed in staff performance reviews to encourage them to:

- help implement the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy within their area
- work closely with all personnel who contribute to learner success

Programme Leaders (Teaching and Learning)

Programme Leaders have a defined role and responsibility for the improvement of learning, teaching and assessment in their programmes. The programme leader will

- have particular responsibility for embedding the implementation and operational outcomes in teaching practice within the College.
- Influencing and guiding personnel within the academic teams to use this strategy to improve the pedagogy which in turn will improve the student experience and success rate

- contribute to relevant staff development and scholarship activities to enhance learning opportunities across the curriculum.

All Training Staff

All members of staff who have any responsibility for learning, teaching and assessment must:

- engage with this strategy and work as part of a team to achieve learning goals, hence improve the learner's experience and success.
- actively take charge of their continuous professional development and their subject matter knowledge.
- communicate feedback of the impacts of the strategy with other staff, at staff meetings or staff reviews.

Teaching & Learning

BIM will:

- provide high quality learning and teaching that is up to date, and links to employer needs. It is based on Department of Transport / QQI requirements and seafood Industry practice.
- provide excellent resources and facilities to support learning, teaching and assessment.
- consider stakeholder input and feedback into course design
- encourage dialogue between trainers and learners which encourages learners:
  - to ask and answer questions, to listen to the to reflect on what they have learnt and how it applies to the industry in which they work.
  - to adopt an attitude to lifelong learning
- provide clear learning outcomes and requirements or criteria for success
- Seek feedback from learners on the training and how it is delivered either through discussion and learner feedback forms. This can be further enhanced by inviting learners be part of the programme review process, which evaluates the training and makes a report available for the Trainers.

Trainers

All BIM Trainers come from a background in the industry that they train in. For Department of Transport courses, the Department require the Trainer qualifications to be provided to them as part of the course approval requirements.

Trainers will use a range of techniques and approaches to develop the learners' skills and their ability to reason and evaluate.

Appropriate learning support or mentoring will be made available for learners where possible.

The Colleges offer late opening to facilitate Learners – access to classrooms, computer suite, wi-fi, and refreshments

Trainers will be encouraged to use CANVAS as a blended learning tool allowing the learner access to training videos, reference and self-assessment materials.

Assessment

Assessment for learning lies at the heart of outstanding learning and teaching and is critical to the Learner's progression and achievement. Assessment can be both formative and summative. Formative assessment (assessment for learning) is used as a preparation for summative assessment (assessment of learning).

The assessment process should help to engage the Learner, to encourage active learning and provide them with the opportunity to apply their learning to their workplace.

BIM encourages trainers to:

- Use formative assessment to help move the learning forward, by determining where each learner is at in their learning and identify where they need additional help
- Use continuous assessment rather than just at the end of a course of training, which should improve the learner's capacity to learn how to learn and their ultimate achievements
- Use self-assessment training materials on CANVAS to encourage learners to take responsibly for their understanding of the training

Assessment strategies can include questions, tasks, tests and discussions which should encourage the Learner to show their evidence of learning

Trainers should provide timely feedback that moves learning forward, to help improve the work. Dependant on the training course, this may be verbal, written comments or as marks**.** This feedback will help to identify potential issues and prevent learners performing below their potential.

Trainers should encourage learners to be the owners of their learning and to take responsibility for their self-assessment.

Inclusivity and Diversity

We strive to be inclusive and will offer reasonable accommodation and supports to our diverse range of learners wherever possible. We will incorporate Universal Design Principles (UDL) into how we design and deliver our training in the future. UDL will not only benefit students that may have a disability but will benefit all learners. Inclusivity and diversity is included in CPD for staff so that best practice can be incorporated into their training delivery.

6.3   Responsibilities

- The TAD committee is responsible for providing the resources for a quality training and learning environment.
- The Quality Officer is responsible for coordinating the conditions that lead to a quality training and learning environment
- Trainers, with the support of other members of the programme team, and learners are responsible for creating a positive, inclusive and mutually respectful learning environment

6.4   Teaching and Learning Strategies

BIM aims to create a learning environment that supports and facilitates the personal and professional development of learners, staff and all those who make an input into BIM programmes. The aim is to provide a positive, empowering, inclusive and mutually respectful learning environment that enables learners to reach their maximum potential and add value to their work. BIM is committed to monitoring and improving the quality of training and learning on programmes on an on-going basis.

The modes and methodologies of delivery are considered by the programme design team at the programme development and design stage and are chosen based on their appropriateness to the programme and the specific needs of learner profile and the themes and content of the programme. The methodologies chosen are cognisant of a range of learning styles. BIM adopts a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning. The focus of the programme content and assessment strategies is to empower the learners to take responsibility for their own learning based on sound principles of adult learning.

Formative Assessment Strategy

Formative assessment is part of the instructional process and is incorporated into classroom practice to provide the information which helps to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening. In this sense, formative assessment informs both trainers and learners about learner understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made. Trainers use formative assessment strategies consistently throughout the programmes to inform the learners and themselves about learners' progress on the programme and to help learners enhance their performance. It also helps trainers determine if what, if any, additional input is needed and to enhance their own performance. Formative Assessment Strategies used include:

Analysis of Learner Participation, Attendance and Responses

Trainers analyse participation, attendance and responses to gain knowledge about the learners' current knowledge, attitudes, and skills about the subject matter, strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles and/or the need for further, or special, assistance. The analysis of learners' classroom engagement allows trainers to modify their instruction to ensure and/or enhance its effectiveness.

Strategic Questioning Strategies

Questioning strategies are used with individual learners, small groups, or the entire class. Trainers ask learners to answer well-thought-out, higher-order questions which require in-depth thinking from the learners. The answers help the trainer to discern the level and extent of the learners' understanding.

Think-Pair-Share

The trainer asks a question and learners write down their answers. Learners are then placed in pairs to discuss their responses. Trainers move around the classroom and listen to various discussions, gaining insight into an individual's levels of understanding. The learners discuss their responses with the entire class.

One-Minute Papers

One-minute papers are usually done at the end of the day. Learners in groups (or individually) are asked to answer a brief question in writing. The papers are collected and analysed by the trainer to gain awareness of the learners' understanding.

6.5   Blended Learning

BIM is currently developing its capacity to integrate blended learning into its programmes and this will be piloted with non-credit bearing programmes.

Section 7   Assessment

7.1   Policy

BIM is committed to carrying out the assessment that:

- Meets the needs of learners

- Meets the needs of an evolving training environment

- Is clearly understood by trainers and learners

- Fair to learners in terms of access and process

- Consistent across assessors

- Fit-for-purpose in offering recognised certification to learners

- Meets the requirements of BIM awarding bodies (if applicable)

7.2   Responsibilities

- The Manager of the Training Unit has overall responsibility for the assessment process, including the appointment of an External Authenticator.
- Trainers are responsible for ensuring all assessment activities are carried out as per agreed assessment plans.
- The Internal Verifier and External Authenticator are responsible for carrying out their tasks as per agreed guidelines.
- The Results Approval Panel approves results and recommends the final approved results for certification. Significant issues arising from RAP meetings are brought to the Training and Development Sub-Committee.

7.3   Reference Documents

- *QQI Quality Assuring Assessment, Guidelines for Providers, Revised 2013*
- *NFQ grid level of indicators*

- *QQI grading criteria*

- *FETAC Guidelines for Internal Verification*

- *QBS Quick Guide for Certification V1*

- *Key Dates and Information - Awards and Certification (published annually)*

- *Department of Transport Examination Regulations*

- *Marine Notices*

- *QQI Guide on How to Reset/change QBS Password*

7.4 Overview of the Assessment Process

1. Assessment

- BIM develops and implements assessment policies, processes and procedures

- The Programme Leader devises assessment instruments, marking schemes and assessment criteria

- The trainers assess learner evidence

- The Internal Verifier records outcomes

2. Authentication

- The Internal Verifier verifies that all assessment procedures have been applied and monitors the outcome of the assessment process.

- The Manager of the Training Unit assigns an External Authenticator based on broad award/field of learning expertise

- The External Authenticator moderate's assessment results by sampling learner evidence according to the BIM sampling strategy

3. Results Approval

- The Training and Development Sub-Committee establishes a Results Approval Panel

- The Panel approves and sign-off assessment results

- The Internal Verifier make results available to learners

4. Request for Certification

- The Internal Verifier submits learner results to QQI via the QBS/the awarding body

5. Appeals Process

- BIM allow 10 days for learners to lodge an appeal of the assessment process or result
- The Internal Verifier processes appeals

7.5 Assessment Planning and Design

The Programme Leader, working with the trainers, designs appropriate assessment instruments at the design stage based on the requirements set out in the awarding body specifications.

The Quality Officer:

- Confirms the assessment timetable and all assessment instruments and signs off on final copies. All assessment instruments are dated/ version controlled.

- Schedule assessment submission dates with a view to ensuring an even spread of assessment and avoiding assessment overload for learners.

- Reviews the assessment instruments, processes, briefs, exam papers/outline solutions, marking schemes with the Programme Leader and update them as part of programme reviews or more often if necessary.

- Reviews trainer, learner, and Internal Verifier and External Authenticators feedback on assessment and decide on appropriate action based on feedback/recommendations.

- Reviews learner application forms to ascertain if there are additional support needs required and adjust, where possible and practicable.

All trainers and assessors have a copy of *QQI Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers Revised 2013.*

When designing and planning assessment, the programme team considers:

- The range of specific learning outcomes to be assessed by each assessment technique
- The assessment techniques and instruments
- The timing of assessment activities
- Any deadlines and due dates; in particular the QQI certification cut-off dates
- How marks are to be allocated and assessment criteria is to be applied

7.6   Information to Learners on Assessment

BIM provide learners with the information they need to help ensure a successful outcome to assessment. This information includes details of:

- Learner responsibilities in relation to assessment
- Assessment methods and schedules
- Reasonable accommodation available
- Policy on dealing with academic misconduct
- Repeats and appeals

BIM outline general assessment information in the Learner Handbook, on the BIM website and in programme brochures.

The trainer discusses details of assessment at induction and give each learner a copy of the timetable/assessment timetable. The trainer talks through the timetable and confirms that the learners are clear about what is required and what the learner responsibilities are regarding assessment. Trainers also emphasise the policy for dealing with incidents of academic misconduct and timely submission of assessments (also addressed in the Learner Handbook).

The trainer distributes copies of Assessment Briefs to learners at appropriate stages of the programme.

The trainer makes learners aware that reasonable accommodation for assessment is available if they need it and explains the process.

The trainer's 'check-in' with learners regularly to confirm that they are on track and are clear regarding what they need to do for assessment.

7.7   Security and Integrity of Assessment

7.7.1 Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is any action that results in a learner having an improper advantage in relation to their assessment(s) or deliberately disadvantages other learners. Examples of academic misconduct include cheating in exams, plagiarism, presenting falsified or improperly obtained data or being assisted in the presentation of assessment tasks. It can be committed intentionally or accidentally. Learners are

responsible for conducting their studies honestly, ethically and in accordance with accepted standards of academic conduct and have a duty to present only their own work for assessment.

BIM adapts a proactive, supportive, and developmental approach to the prevention of academic misconduct and learners are advised of the expectations and requirements in this regard. BIM has a consistent approach to the treatment of suspected academic misconduct, including plagiarism and to promoting a culture of academic honesty and best practice. Any form of academic misconduct is unacceptable. Cases of alleged academic misconduct are managed in accordance with assessment regulations which are designed to ensure that learners are provided with an independent and transparent system that is efficient, fair and speedy. This system safeguards the integrity of awards as well as the interests of learners and trainers.

BIM has systems and processes in place to ensure the security and integrity of assessment processes, assessment materials, instruments and records. Assessment materials refer to any documentation associated with the planning, conducting and concluding of the assessment process. Examples of assessment material include (but are not limited to):

- Assessment briefs
- Examination papers
- Solutions/Marking schemes/Model answers
- Practical/Skills Demonstration instructions
- Examination scripts
- Assessment related documentation (attendance records, room layout, invigilator's report etc.)
- Learner assessment evidence refers to any assessment evidence (hard copy, soft copy, artefacts, etc.) which forms part of a module or programme assessment.
- Assessment records include paper documentation, certification records, learner records, results sheet, electronic records / files, databases, photographs and/or digital footage.

The Quality Officer is responsible for ensuring that:

- All members of the programme team are aware of the assessment procedures which reflect the requirements of the awarding body
- Assessors and learners are aware of their responsibility in relation to the integrity and security of assessment
- Assessment storage facilities are secure with authorised access only.

- Issuing guidelines to assessors and learners in relation to academic misconduct (BIM has procedures in place for detailing with incidents of academic misconduct.

The trainer is responsible for:

- Compliance with assessment procedures which reflect the requirements of BIM and the awarding body.

- Taking due care with assessment material while it is in their possession, printing and photocopying of assessment briefs and examination papers (where applicable) so that assessment integrity is not compromised.

- Compliance with arrangements for the retention and secure storage of assessment materials and learner assessment evidence.

- Compliance with arrangements/processes on return or secure disposal of assessment evidence following certification

- Receipting of learner assessment evidence when accepting it from learners.

There is space available for assessors to mark and grade assessment evidence in a secure location in BIM. If possible, all learner evidence is retained onsite and trainers are requested to mark and grade onsite/not to remove the learner evidence from the centre. BIM has a receipting procedure in place for the sign out of assessment evidence to assessors for marking and grading (this is only done in exceptional circumstances). BIM provide trainers with a secure, locked box to store learner evidence while it is in their possession

Learners are responsible for conducting their studies honestly, ethically and in accordance with accepted standards of academic conduct. Examples of academic misconduct include cheating in exams, plagiarism, presenting falsified or improperly obtained data or being assisted in the presentation of assessment tasks.

7.7.2 Quality Assuring Assessment of Skills

The following conditions are put in place to assure the quality and integrity of the assessment of skills when carried out in either an on-the-job setting or simulated environment.

- Use of a second assessor
- Assessors briefed by the Programme Leader
- Assessors provided with a Guidelines for Assessors document
- Detailed brief and mark sheet

- Standard set of questions (questions adapted for specific context)
- Video and audio recording of the demonstration (if feasible)
- Internal Verifier and External Authenticator asked to comment
- Each assessor completes a mark sheet separately and then discuss/calibrate against each other
- Suitable resources and equipment are in place

7.7.3 Learner Receipts

Learners are required to confirm in writing that all assessment work submitted is their own. When assessment evidence is being submitted, the learner is required to sign an assessment submission form. Assessment evidence submitted via email is receipted by email. Trainers advise learners to retain a copy of all assignments submitted for reference. Marked assignments are not returned.

7.7.4 Secure Storage of Assessment Material

Assessment material (assessment briefs, required number of examination papers, solutions, marking schemes and model answers) are stored securely by a designated member of staff for each programme in advance of the assessment/examination date. Additionally, examination related documentation (invigilator report, seating plan, attendance/sign in register etc.), is stored securely, with authorised access only. On completion of an examination or assignment all learner assessment evidence together with assessment related documentation is stored in a secure location, with authorised access only.

All learner evidence collected is held securely in hard and/ or electronic format appropriate and is the responsibility of the College Principals/ Internal Verifier. There are secure locked facilities, with authorised access, to facilitate the storage of all hard copy learner assessment evidence. BIM store assessment evidence electronically on a computer network which is accessible to the Internal Verifier. The learner assessment evidence is then made available to the External Authenticator. Appropriate security is in place for networks.

Duration of Storage

On conclusion of the Results Approval Panel meeting, the Internal Verifier securely disposes (e.g. shredded/deleted from the relevant drive) of hardcopies of all assessments and related materials, which have been ratified by the Panel *except* materials pertaining to a learner who has appealed result (these are securely retained until the completion of the appeals process timeframe and then destroyed). BIM retain all records in line with current legislation and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) maximum terms, guidelines issued by the awarding body or due to a funding or regulatory/legal requirement.

QBS Password Security

The Quality Officer changes the password BIM use to access the QBS annually. Details of how to do this are outlined on the *QQI Guide on How to Reset/change QBS Password*

7.7.5 Security around Internal Verification and External Authentication

On completion of internal verification, the internal verifier moves learner assessment evidence into secure storage with authorised access to facilitate external authentication.

The internal verifier maintains a **Record of Assisted Learners**, noted and signed by learner and the invigilator, and makes it available to the external authenticator.

During the external authentication process, only authorised staff have access to the allocated room/s. On completion of the external authentication process, the internal verifier moves assessment materials to appropriate secure storage to facilitate ease of access in the event of learner appeals.

Consistency of Marking and Grading

The external authenticator is asked to record any observations/concerns in relation to marking the External Authentication Report. Any changes made to a trainers' marking by the External Authenticator are discussed by the Results Approval Panel and appropriate corrective action agreed.

7.8 Conduct of Examinations

The Internal Verifier:

- Coordinates the secure printing, storage and distribution of examination papers
- Approves the examination halls
- Organises and briefs examination invigilators
- Makes arrangements for learners for whom special/reasonable accommodation has been approved
- Arranges for the collection of examination scripts and logs all scripts
- Arranges for secure transfer of scripts to and from assessors for marking and grading

The trainer issues a notice of examination to learners at least two weeks in advance of each examination (or at Induction).

Electronic files related to exam papers are password-protected. The Internal Verifier forwards exam papers, sample solutions and marking schemes by email to the College Principal or the trainer. The password is not given in the same email. Passwords are communicated in a separate email, by text message or in person.

Examination questions for each sitting are randomly selected from a bank of examination questions by the Programme Leader resulting in a different exam paper for each sitting.

BIM appoint an invigilator for each exam, and they are required to submit a seating plan, a signed invigilators report, and a signed Examination Register to the Internal Verifier after each examination sitting. The Internal Verifier matches the signed Examination Register against the number of scripts handed in by candidates following the examination. Invigilators (usually the trainer) are briefed on exam procedures and regulations by the Internal Verifier.

Examination Papers

Instructions for candidates are detailed on each exam paper. These include the duration of the exam, the start and finish time, the date, the location, the trainers and programme leader name, the programme title, the award title and instructions regarding the number of questions which a candidate is required to attempt and the marks allocated to each question.

Errors on Examination Papers

While BIM makes every effort to avoid mistakes, errors and omissions in examination papers, occasionally an error may occur, e.g. illegible pages, missing questions, duplicated sections etc. BIM deals fairly and expeditiously with such incidents, as and when they occur, with a focus on not disadvantaging the learner in any way. The invigilator, on discovering or being informed of a problem, contacts the Internal Verifier who decides what course of action to take – contact the trainer, reissue exam, or inform learners that they will be marked out of the remaining questions, etc. If the invigilator cannot gain clarity within a reasonable time frame, learners are told by the invigilator to disregard any question / section that is affected. They are marked out of the remaining sections (e.g. if they are required to answer four sections, one of which is missing, they will be marked out of the remaining three, which will then carry the full marks for that element of assessment). In the case of there being an issue with the entire paper, the invigilator issues a new examination paper. The repeat examination paper will be the paper issued.

The invigilator record details of the incident and how it was dealt with in the Invigilator Report Form which is reviewed by the Internal Verifier who decides what corrective action is appropriate following such an

incident. Incomplete exam scripts are reviewed after the exam by the Internal Verifier. The change in the marking, or the change of paper is recorded by the Internal Verifier and makes details available to the External Authenticator in the Internal Verification report.

Repeat Examination Procedure

The Internal Verifier contacts the learner following RAP meeting detailing the result, confirming that the result has not been submitted to QQI for certification and advising them of the option to repeat the assessment. A Repeat Examination Registration Form is included in the communication

- If the learner seeks to retake the examination, the trainer sets the exam paper which is different from the original exam paper
- The College Administrator organises the time, date and invigilation of the repeat exam and advises the Internal Verifier
- The College Administrator notifies the learner in writing of the details of the examination
- The learner undertakes the invigilated examination
- The trainer marks and grades the examination script within 5 working days
- The College Administrator submits the script and mark sheet to the Internal Verifier by registered post within one week of the examination date
- The Internal Verifier then follows the standard process for internal verification

7.9   Consistency of Marking

BIM have procedures in place to ensure that the trainers mark and grade assessments consistently and fairly. Marking and grading is addressed in the Trainer Handbook, at trainer Induction and at CPD events.

All trainers use the same assessment instruments and marking schemes which results in a standardised approach to assessment and consistency in marking and grading.

The Internal Verifier monitors any irregularities or deviations from the normal distribution of marks. The College Administrators and the Internal Verifier review all marking and grading and highlights any inconsistences and discusses them with the Programme Leader and comments in the Internal Verification report. The Internal Verifier samples a selection of each trainer's marking and grading to ensure consistency across the board and observations are recorded in an Internal Verification Report. Any instances of inconsistent marking are communicated to the Results Approval Panel by the Internal Verifier.

The Internal Verifier organises a blind second marking of a sample of assessments if there is a concern about the consistency of marking.

The External Authenticator is asked to record any observations/concerns in relation to marking the External Authentication Report. Any changes made to a trainers' marking by the External Authenticator are discussed by the Results Approval Panel and appropriate corrective action agreed.

Any instances of inconsistent marking are communicated to the assessors by the Results Approval Panel through the Internal Verifier.

The quality and standard of marking and grading is a topic for trainer CPD workshops and programme reviews.

7.10 Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment

See Section 8.4.3 Reasonable Accommodation/ Additional Supports.

7.11 Assessment Performed by Third Parties

BIM have procedures in place to ensure that assessment carried out by third parties is fair and consistent. The Programme Leader/Internal Verifier briefs third party assessors and provide third party assessors with model answers and marking schemes. The Quality Officer reviews the External Authenticator's report with reference to any assessment carried out by third party assessors. If there any issues of concern, they are raised with the assessors by the Quality Officer/College Principals.

7.12 Internal Verification

BIM have procedures in place to confirm that assessment procedures have been applied consistently across all assessment activities and that assessment results are recorded accurately. The Manager of the Training Unit is responsible for ensuring that BIM Internal Verifier has adequate training, expertise, resources and time to complete internal verification to a high standard. The Quality Officer acts as Internal Verifier and Internal Verification is carried out centrally at the BIM headquarters in Dun Laoghaire. The College Administrators work in partnership with the Internal Verifier and undertake local verification.

The Internal Verifier, in conjunction with the College Administrators, sets out a Certification Plan on an annual basis with dates for internal verification, external authentication and results approval panel meetings for the year.

The Internal Verifier undertakes verification using the documented sampling strategy checking for:

- missing or inappropriate evidence

- missing or inappropriate assessment briefs

- data omission, transcription / calculation errors

- Inaccurate data entry – award codes, name spelling, results etc.

- provisional outcomes for learners

The Internal Verifier monitors any irregularities or deviations from the normal distribution of marks and highlights any concerns to the Manager of the Training Unit.

The Internal Verifier completes the process by completing the Internal Verification report, signs it and makes it available to the External Authenticator in advance of authentication. This report confirms the outcome of the IV process. It captures evidence that the internal verification process has taken place, acknowledges strengths and identifies any gaps and areas for improvement.

The Internal Verifier makes arrangements for external authentication and liaises with the External Authenticator before, during and after his/her visit.

The Internal Verifier is a member of the Results Approval Panel ex-officio and attends all meetings to present the Internal Verification report and discuss issues highlighted in the Report, particularly issues which may need be addressed with corrective action. The Internal Verifier minutes meetings of the Panel and prepares a draft of the RAP report, submits it to the Manager of the Training Unit for review and sign-off. The Internal Verification report is signed and dated by the Internal Verifier, the External Authenticator and the Manager of the Training Unit, stored securely in hard copy and electronically, maintained indefinitely and made available for monitoring purposes as needed.

7.13 External Authentication

Reference: QQI Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for External Authenticators Revised February 2015

- BIM selects and contracts suitably qualified external authenticators who can independently and authoritatively confirm that the learner evidence has been fairly and consistently assessed that the assessment process is fair, consistent and valid and that the results meet the national standards for the awards.

- External authentication takes place at the BIM headquarters in Dun Laoghaire unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Manager of the SDS signs-off on the selection and appointment of a

Quality Assurance (QA) Manual

QAM

Issue No. 06

Issue Date
30/07/2025

Page **69** of **113**

suitably qualified external authenticator on the advice of the Quality Officer who retains evidence of quality assuring the appointment.

- BIM maintains a panel of external authenticators who have been selected for their subject matter expertise and capacity to make recommendations for improvement to assessment practice and to confirm consistency with national standards. BIM does not contract the services of the same external authenticator for more than three successive certification periods.

- The internal verifier completes a detailed *Checklist for External Authentication* for each certification period and issues a *Contract and Guidelines to the External Authenticator* setting out terms and conditions and expectations. This document must be signed by the external authenticator before they undertake authentication.

- The internal verifier ensures that trainers and/or the College Principal are available if the external authenticator needs to contact them during the authentication process.

- The internal verifier invites the external authenticator to attend the Results Approval Panel meetings (to present a verbal report if the final report is not available) to comment on the outcomes of results moderation against national standards and to help us to identify strength, gaps and areas for improvement.

- The external authenticator completes, signs, dates and submits the external authentication report, using the template supplied, to the Quality Officer by the date set out in the Annual Certification Plan/agreed at contract.

- External authentication is carried out in line with the BIM's sampling strategy and the Internal Verifier supplies a copy of this sampling strategy to the external authenticator.

- The external authentication report, signed and dated by the external authenticator and the Manager of the SDS, is stored securely in hard copy and electronically, maintained indefinitely and made available for monitoring purposes as needed.

- The Quality Officer advises the external authenticator with regard to submission of a claim for payment and makes arrangements with the BIM Accounts Office to ensure that the fee is paid expeditiously (the fee is agreed when the contract is issued).

- The internal verifier records any issues identified and improvements recommended by external authenticator in the Results Approval Panel report and structure them in the form of an improvement plan which is monitored on an ongoing basis and sign-off at the next meeting of the Results Approval Panel meeting.

7.14   Results Approval and Issue of Results

The Results Approval Panel (RAP) formally reviews and approves results data and confirms that results are fully quality assured and signed off by the Chair of the Panel prior to submission to QQI and issued to learners.

BIM has terms of reference in place for Results Approval Panel (RAP).

The Manager of the Training Unit convenes a meeting of the RAP for each certification period and chairs the meetings. BIM invite the External Authenticator to attend the RAP meeting to present his/her report if this feasible. The Panel reviews learner results /outcomes, internal verification reports and external authenticators' reports at the meeting. The Internal Verifier records any issues identified and improvements recommended at the meeting and structures them in the form of a Quality Improvement Plan which she monitors on an ongoing basis. Implementation is reviewed at the next RAP meeting.

The Panel may make recommendations regarding implementing corrective action to address concerns/correct the irregularities found. If so, the Manager of the Training Unit sets out a Corrective Action Plan to address the concerns which is implemented by the Internal Verifier. The Internal Verifier records also records examples of best practice identified during the authentication process with a view to sharing these with relevant staff/trainers. A report of the meeting is prepared by the Internal Verifier and signed by the Chair/Manager of the Training Unit and retained for auditing and monitoring purposes. The Results Summary Sheets and the Final Approved Results are signed by Chair/ Manager of the Training Unit.

Requesting Certification

Following approval by the RAP, the Internal Verifier and a Programme Leader double-check all data for certification purposes for accuracy and reliability prior to requesting certification and then makes results available to learners and submits them to the relevant awarding body requesting certification. The Internal Verifier confirms that BIM has implemented all elements of the authentication process and adhered to all agreed procedures at the point of requesting certification for learners.

7.15   Issue of Award Certificates

The Internal Verifier is responsible for the receipt of award certificates from the awarding bodies and the safe and secure storage and issue of the certificates to graduates*.*

QQI issues award certificates to BIM for issue to graduates for all results received except those flagged as being under appeal according to a pre-defined schedule at the end of February, April, July, August, October and December each year.

BIM receives the award certificates from QQI approximate 2 to 3 weeks after the Final Submission Date for the certification period. Dates for the issue of certificates and final submission are detailed in the *QQI Key Dates and Information - Awards and Certification (Published Annually)*. On receipt of the award certificates, the Internal Verifier logs them and stores them securely in a locked facility until they are issued. The Internal Verifier issues the award certificates to learners within 14 days of receipt unless there are exceptional circumstances – dates are set out in the Annual Certification Plan. The award certificates are issued to graduates by registered post or collected in person and signed for. The Internal Verifier/College Administrator maintains records.

If the Internal Verifier issues the award certificates to an organisation for a group of graduates (on request) for distribution to the graduates the following procedure is followed:

The Internal Verifier:

- Sends the award certificates by registered post to a named person in the organisation who must agree to store them securely in a locked facility.
- Contacts the named person to confirm that they have arrived safely and confirm how and when they will be issued to the graduates
- Checks back on an agreed date to confirm that that they have been issued to/received by the graduates

A Final Statement for any past learner can be printed from the QBS at any time.

7.16   Learner Appeals and Complaints (Assessment)

Policy

The Unit recognises situations arise when a learner considers that they may have grounds to appeal an assessment or other decision and facilitates learners in making such an appeal. The following principles underpin the Unit's appeals process.

- It is designed to be accessible and learner-focused; easy to understand and implement for the learner

- It is a transparent process where appellants are given clear reasons for the decisions reached

- Appeals are resolved at the earliest possible opportunity

- The process in based on the principles of natural justice and gives learners the opportunity to voice their concerns in writing and in person as appropriate, giving access to the evidence to all parties and treating all documentation confidentially

- Appeals provide an important source of feedback for the Unit and supports improvement.

BIM has a process in place to facilitate any learner who wishes to appeal an assessment result or the assessment process that they consider be invalid or unfair for any reason or who wish to make a complaint about any aspect of assessment. Learners are informed about the process at Induction, in the Learner Handbook and with their statement of results.

BIM allows learners up to 10 days to lodge an appeal. Only results approved by the RAP can be appealed by the learner. BIM appeals procedures include a review of the Assessment Process for the specific learner results under appeal including, where appropriate, a review of the learner evidence and the assessment results. An appeal is assigned to an independent appeals assessor. The individual/assessor who made the original assessment decision cannot be the person appointed to evaluate the learner appeal.

The only evidence which may be presented by the learner at appeal is that which has already been presented for assessment. No new evidence may be added by the learner for the appeal. Appellants are informed of the outcome of an appeal within 14 working days. BIM does not charge an appeals fee. Following the completion of the appeal process, the Internal Verifier forwards results for the appellant to QQI as the final result. QQI issues certificates on the basis of this result.

The Internal Verifier ensure that learners are aware of:

- The grounds for making an appeal - assessment result appeal and assessment process appeal
- The maximum time allowed to lodge an appeal – 10 days
- The deadline date for lodging an appeal

The Internal Verifier:

- Logs the appeal application from the learner, logs it and submits it to the assigned Independent Appeals Assessor
- Informs the awarding body of the result change (if there is a change)

- Informs the learner of Independent Appeals Assessor's decision within the agreed timeframe

The learner:

1. Details the grounds for appeal (assessment result appeal or assessment process appeal)

2. Notes the timeframe for appeal

3. Lodges an appeal using the appeal application form

The Independent Appeals Assessor:

- Examines the learner appeal

- Investigates whether agreed assessment procedures were followed

- Makes a decision on the appeal

- Makes the decision available to the Internal Verifier within the agreed timeframe.

7.17 Feedback to Learners on Assessment

Trainers provide learners with appropriate, timely and constructive feedback on their assessments which informs their participation on the programme and helps to ensure a successful outcome to assessment. They are available throughout the programmes to provide formative feedback on a one-to-one basis and/or group basis to learners. This includes addressing areas for development, gaps in their learning or direct feedback on draft assignments completed during the programme. While marking assessments, trainers are required to comment on the assessment scripts.

Trainers provide formative feedback to learners on their progress at various stages throughout the programme and mark draft copies of assignments if learners wish to submit them (submission of drafts is optional).

The Internal Verifier issues a document entitled *Feedback to Learners – Guidelines for Trainers*

A Feedback Form is completed by the trainer for each learner. These Forms are available for review by the External Authenticator.

The Internal Verifier checks for evidence of feedback provided by the trainer on the learner evidence and comments on this in the internal verification report.

Learners asked for their views of the quality and adequacy of the feedback they received on the Learner Evaluation Form.

7.18   Corrective Action

BIM have a procedure in place to deal with errors, omissions and/or deliberate acts by learners and/or staff that might affect the validity and integrity of the assessment process. If the Internal Verifier or the External Authenticator has concerns regarding the any aspect of the assessment process, he/she submits a report to the Results Approval Panel outlining their concerns and identifying the irregularities found. The Panel makes recommendations regarding appropriate corrective action to address these concerns/correct the irregularities found.

Implementing Effective Corrective Action

Definition of Corrective Action: "*An action taken to eliminate or remedy an undesirable situation or condition*"

Examples including action taken to deals with incidents of academic misconduct, sub-standard marking, concerns regarding security around assessment. The aim of corrective action is the pinpoint the underlying root cause of the problem and put a plan in place to ensure that it does not recur.

Corrective Action Process

1. **Define the Problem** - confirm there is a real problem and not a perceived problem.

2. **Define the Scope** – confirm if the issue is widespread. Is it an issue with one trainer or one learner or more?

3. **Containment Action** - decide on a strategy to address the issue while the ultimate cause is identified and fix that. Put in place immediate checks or stop gap measures to make sure the issue is picked up if it recurs while it the root cause is being addressed.

4. **Find the Root Cause** - What is the underlying issue? For example, e.g. inconsistent marking. It may not be the fault of the trainer; the issue may be with the design of the marking scheme/assessment criteria.

5. **Plan for Corrective Action** – the Results Approval Panel makes recommendations for steps to be taken to eliminate the root cause of the problem. The Manager of the Training Unit assigns responsibility for carrying out the corrective action, usually the Internal Verifier. Ensure that the staff member to whom the action is assigned has the specific expertise required.

6. **Implement the Corrective Action** – the Internal Verifier follows through on the plan and makes it happen.

7. **Monitor and Evaluate the Corrective Action** - check if the issue recurs. If it does, question if the actual root cause was identified correctly. Do not close out on the issue too quickly. Proper follow-up is essential.

8. **Close off Corrective Action** - when the corrective action has been successfully implemented, the Internal Verifier prepares a report and submits it to the Manager of the Training Unit for sign off and to the awarding bodies if relevant. A copy of this Corrective Action Report is presented to the Training and Development Sub-Committee and at the next meeting of the Results Approval Panel.

Section 8   Learner Supports and Resources

8.1   Policy

BIM regards the provision of appropriate learner supports and resources as critical components in the creation of an effective learning environment. The Unit aims to provide an inclusive and effective learning environment to assist learners in achieving an experience that is enriching educationally, professionally and personally. The Unit is committed to supporting all learners to enhance their learning journey and to afford them the best possible chance of successfully completing their programme. BIM is committed to supporting learners with identified special support needs and providing reasonable accommodation for assessment where possible

BIM defines learning resources as the collection of materials used to conduct a programme to include, but are not limited to, a programme handbook, programme materials, presentation graphics, texts, videos, software, and other materials. Learner supports focus on what BIM does to help learners beyond the formal delivery of programme content. BIM regard the provision of appropriate learner supports and resources as critical components in the creation of an effective learning environment.

8.2   Monitoring

- Learners and Trainer Feedback – learners and trainers are asked to give their overall impression of learning resources and supports in their evaluation forms
- The adequacy of the learning resources and supports in place for each programme is examined at programme reviews, internal monitoring and self-evaluation

BIM examines learner supports and resources and the design of an effective learning environment based on specific programme profile and the learner profile at programme design stage. Details of the supports and resources in place are set out in the Programme Descriptor. The Programme Leader keeps a watching brief on the adequacy and effectiveness of learner supports and services. If the Programme Leader identifies gaps or shortfalls, they bring it to the attention of the Quality Officer/College Principal.

BIM include supports for learner as a budget item in the annual training budget and learner support/s is an agenda item for all programme board meetings. Trainers are responsible for ensuring all relevant programme documentation is distributed to learners and completed e.g. daily sign in sheets, evaluation forms etc.

Trainers induct the learners at the outset of each programme using a standard induction PowerPoint presentation. Induction includes an introduction to BIM, the awarding body and to the programme. The most important supports/services are highlighted at Induction e.g. compassionate consideration for assessment, email and telephone support. The trainers make a copy of the Learner Handbook available to learners at Induction. Details of the full range of supports and services available to learners are detailed in this Handbook.

Trainers also give a copy of a Programme Handbooks, a structured and detailed manual containing lesson plans, copies of reading materials, programme content, assessment criteria, reading/reference lists and assessment briefs for some of programmes.

Trainers provide formative and summative feedback to learners throughout the programme. Some trainers give provisional results to learners are part of the formative feedback process. In this case, the learners are advised to '*Please note that all marks are provisional until they have been approved by the Results Approval Panel and may change'*.

BIM accommodates special needs insofar as this is practicable and meets the programme needs, to ensure that learners who may need additional support can access and benefits from programmes. As well as direct support with programme content, BIM recognise that learners often needs help and guidance on administrative or personal issues e.g. delay an assignment because of sickness or cancel enrolment and postpone it to another date. The Quality Officer/College Principals is available to advise learners who may benefit from additional support from agencies. This includes NALA for learners who may have issues with literacy and the local ETB who may be able to offer English language support for those who do not meet the minimum entry requirements for programmes with regards to their level of written or spoken English.

Trainers (or Programme Leaders if appropriate) are available to meet learner on a one-to-one basis if a learner has a particular concern or an issue they wish to raise in confidence. The trainers' record details of these meetings in a Learner Meeting Report which is submitted to the Quality Officer and details are recorded on the learners' record (if considered significant). The trainers are available to learners after the programme finishes (up to the point of certification) if they need to contact them.

BIM ensures that the premises BIM use for training delivery are comfortable, well- maintained, fit-for-purpose and conducive to learning.

While BIM is not in a position to provide structured pastoral care, it aims to provide a caring and supportive environment which supports the general wellbeing of learners. If any learners present to any member of staff with a problem, they will be supported whatever way possible. If the issue is outside remit or range of professional expertise, BIM will refer the learners onto professional support services.

The College Administrators help learners on residential programmes to source suitable and comfortable accommodation and they maintain an up-to-date accommodation list in the Colleges.

8.2   Funding for Programmes

Some BIM training programmes are free-of-charge while most (short) programmes attract fees. Details of fees and allowances for specific programmes are published on the BIM website and in programme brochures. Learners studying long duration programmes _may be_ eligible for an allowance as a contribution towards their accommodation expenses. The availability of allowances is conditional on budgetary constraints and allowances may be terminated without notice.

BIM advise applicants about the possibility of receiving grant aid/funding for programme fees and, in some cases, subsistence costs through the national and European funding mechanisms. There is a portal on the website which makes application easy and assessable and there is a BIM staff member who advises learners or employers applying for grant aid/funding.

8.3   Class Representatives (Class Reps.)

At the start of each (long) programme, the Programme leader encourages learners to nominate one of the class to represent the views of the class and raise any issues that might impact on the learning experience. The trainers maintain regular contact with these class reps and discusses any issues that arise during the programme. If a trainer considers any matter arising from these discussions to be of serious concern or may

involve risk, they bring the issue to the attention of the Quality Officer. BIM has a Guidelines for Class Reps document which the trainers gives to a class rep when they are nominated.

Role of the Class Rep:

- Maintain contact with trainers to discuss any issues that arise during the programme
- Meet the trainers on an occasional basis to highlight/discuss issues
- Assist communication between staff and learners in relation to programme matters
- Act as a point of contact for learners

8.4   Diversity and Inclusivity

8.4.1   Introduction

BIM are committed to ensuring that our training services are inclusive and meet the needs of a diverse range of learners. We are committed to ensuring that we adhere to our legal obligations and endeavor to ensure that all students are treated equally at all stages of engagement with us, from application, during training delivery and during assessment. We will ensure that no student or applicant will be discriminated against, either directly, indirectly or by association on the grounds of:

- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Age (Note: there is a minimum age requirement for entry to some programmes)
- Marital status
- Family status
- Disability (See 7.10.2 below)
- Race
- Religion
- Membership of the travelling community

8.4.2   Disability

We welcome students with disabilities onto all our training programmes where possible. Examples of disabilities:

- Aspergers/Autism
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) / Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
- Blind/Visually Impaired

- Deaf/Hard of hearing

- Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia

- Mental Health Condition

- Neurological/Speech and Language

- Significant Ongoing Illness

- Physical Disability

- Specific Learning Disabilities (e.g., Dyslexia, Dyscalculia)

For some of our programme, applicants must meet minimum medical standards e.g., a satisfactory Seafarers Medical Certificate which includes an eyesight test is required for some Department of Transport courses. Some of our programmes are physically demanding and a minimum level of physical fitness may be required for the students own safety and that of others. Therefore, minimum entry requirements for some programmes will specify health and/or physical fitness criteria. All applicants must meet these minimum entry requirements. *See section 4.2.2 Admissions for further details.*

8.4.3 Reasonable Accommodation / Additional Supports

Where possible, we will offer supports that are reasonable and practical to ensure that all students are treated fairly and have an equal opportunity to successfully complete a programme with us.

Reasonable accommodations are practical changes that can be made to ensure that students can access and take part in training and assessment on an equal basis with others, ensuring that no student is discriminated against. The Equality Act 2010 states that discrimination includes a failure to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability, if without such special treatment or facilities, it would be impossible for the person to avail of the service.

Any special accommodations for assessment will be implemented in a fair and impartial manner and will neither advantage or disadvantage the learner with the disability or other learners. Reasonable accommodations can only be offered where the applicant meets the minimum entry requirements for the programme as specified above in 7.10.2.

Disability

We encourage students to disclose their disability to us in a confidential manner at application, during induction or at any stage through their training so that we may be able to offer practical supports where possible. There is no obligation for students to disclose a disability and they are made aware of this at induction. If a student does not disclose a disability to us, we will not be able to offer reasonable accommodations.

Compassionate Considerations

Supports and accommodations on compassionate grounds may be offered on a case-by-case basis, for example, where a learner experiences difficulties in completing a programme or assessment due to bereavement or other force majeure circumstances.

English Language

Where a request for additional supports relate to English language, consideration will only be given in exceptional circumstances. All applicants must meet the minimum English Language requirements for entry to the programme. Failure to meet these minimum entry requirements are not grounds for offering reasonable accommodation.

Examples of Reasonable Accommodation /Supports– During Training Delivery (Subject to approval)

- Allow use of assistive technology
- *Wheelchair accessible classrooms and facilities*

Examples of Reasonable Accommodation / Supports – During Assessment (Subject to approval)

- Allowing Additional Time for Exams (Marine Notice No. 65 of 2013 allows student with dyslexia to have an extra 10 minutes per hour during examinations)
- Scribes/readers

We will refer to AHEAD, Common Supports for students   https://www.ahead.ie/commonsupports for guidance on supporting students with disabilities.

Approval of Requests for Reasonable Accommodation and Records

All requests for reasonable accommodation are recorded on form QA-03 "*Reasonable Accommodation Request". Any* recommendations for proposed adaptations/accommodations should be approved by the college principal and quality officer in advance. The Quality Officer retains a record of all reasonable accommodation requests. If the request is refused, the learner has the right to appeal this decision.

For programmes approved by the Department of Transport, the requirements specified in Marine Notices must be adhered to when granting Reasonable Accommodation for example Marine Notice No. 65 of 2013 which sets out a Dyslexia Policy for Examination and Assessment Procedures

For QQI validated programmes, the programme leader includes details of any reasonable accommodation in assessment with the assessment material that is submitted for Internal verification. The internal verifier

notes any adaptations/reasonable accommodations on the Internal verification report and the external authenticator is notified.

8.4.4   Staff Training

One staff member in each training college has completed the *Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) "Start"* online training course, on supporting students with disabilities. The SDS unit commit to including Inclusivity and Diversity training for all staff as part of their Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The training will ensure that staff are aware of their obligations as well as opportunities for supporting all students including those with additional needs. This training will include an introduction to Universal Design Principles (UDL).

8.4.5   Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Some students may not wish to disclose their disability. In addition, some may not be aware of their disability or may never have been formally diagnosed with a disability such as a specific learning difficulty, for example dyslexia. Application of Universal Design Principals (UDL) will assist those students with a disability (whether it is disclosed or not) and it will also benefit all students.

"*UDL is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn, including students with disabilities. UDL aims to improve the educational experience of all students by introducing more flexible methods of teaching, assessment and service provision to cater for the diversity of learners in our classrooms. This approach is underpinned by research in the field of neuroscience and is designed to improve the learning experience and outcomes for all students*" (AHEAD, 2021)

UDL principals will be considered at the design stage for all new programmes and when programmes are being revalidated. Staff will be encouraged to undertake training and look at opportunities for incorporating UDL principals into their teaching where possible. Some examples would include:

- Handouts available to students ahead of classes
- Use multi-sensory teaching methods where possible (auditory, visual and kinaesthetic)
- Allow use of assistive technology.
- Encourage students to submit work done on computer rather than handwritten.
- Record classes/ allow learner to record the class.
- Use of Virtual Learning Platform (CANVAS)

- Dyslexic friendly text

References/ Documents:

- BIM Reasonable Accommodation Request Form QA-03

- Seafarers Medical Certificate ENG11

- Marine Notice No. 65 of 2013 - Clarification of Dyslexia Policy for Examination and Assessment Procedures

- Marine Notice No. 34 of 2020 Seafarer/Fisher Medical Examinations Scheme Medical and Eyesight Standards & List of Approved Doctors

8.5   Learners Complaints and Grievances

The Unit recognises and upholds people's right to express a complaint in the event that they feel they have been mistreated or disadvantaged in any way in their dealings with the Unit. The Unit takes all valid complaints seriously and strives to achieve speedy, equitable, timely and courteous solutions. The SDS Unit does everything possible to resolve complaints informally and at the earliest possible opportunity. It this is not possible; a formal complaint can be made. All complaints are reviewed in a fair and consistent manner and resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, insofar as this is possible. The Unit welcomes comments, suggestions and complaints about its performance and regards complaints as opportunities to review programmes, practice, procedures and identify areas for improvement. Complaints may come from learners, staff, trainers, employers, awarding bodies, statutory agencies and the general public.

 Trainers outline the complaints procedure at induction and in the Learner Handbook and learners are asked if they have any complaint in Learner Feedback Questionnaire.

Complaints procedures apply to all complaints from or about students

The complaints procedure comprises two stages, outlined below:

Stage 1 – Informal Complaint

Complaints can be made informally at any point to any member of staff. BIM invites learner to highlight any issues of concern to their trainer in the first instance, at the earliest possible stage with a view to having the issue resolved informally before invoking the formal complaints procedure. To make an informal complaint, learners can raise an issue with their trainer using e-mail or face-to-face communication. The trainer will

discuss the situation with the learner and attempt to generate positive solutions to resolve the issue. If a resolution cannot be reached, the formal complaints procedure, outlined below, is available to all learners. Learners should allow the trainer enough time to investigate or remedy the issue. The trainer receiving the complaint will attempt to resolve the complaint as soon as possible.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

If an informal complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the learner, or if the learner feels that they cannot make an informal complaint to a trainer, they can make a formal complaint.

- A formal complaint must be submitted in writing to the Quality Officer or College Principal within five working days of initial contact or the issue arising (or as soon as is reasonably possible).

- The Quality Officer or college principal acknowledges receipt of the complaint and outline the course of action to be taken.

- The College Principal forwards the details of the complaint to the Quality Officer and a new complaint is opened with details included on Learner Complaint Form QF-12.

- The Quality Officer carries out a preliminary investigation into the complaint. If the complaint is of a serious nature, it is escalated to the Education and Learning Development manager or Director. The investigation may take different forms depending on the nature of the complaint. This process is completed within 30 days of receipt of the complaint where possible (where the investigation takes greater than 30 days, the complainant will be notified).

- When the investigation of the complaint is complete the complainant will be notified in writing of the outcome by the Quality Officer.

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they can ask for a final review to be carried out. This request must be submitted in writing to the Education and Learning Development Manager within 10 working days.

- The Education and Learning Development Manager appoints an independent person to carry out the review. The decision arising from this review is final.

The Quality Officer maintains a Complaints Log which is reviewed at each meeting of the Academic Council.

8.6   Academic and Non-Academic Resources and Supports Available to Learners

The programme design team identify the human, physical and academic and non-academic supports and resources necessary for delivery of a programme and set out the details clearly in the programme

Quality Assurance (QA) Manual

QAM

Issue No. 06

Issue Date
30/07/2025

Page **84** of **113**

descriptors prior to programme delivery. BIM regards the provision of appropriate learner supports and resources as critical components in the creation of an effective learning environment.

Academic Resources and Supports Available to Learners

Highly trained, skilled and committed trainers and support staff many of whom are experienced practitioners with successful track records

Use of an appropriate mix of training methodologies and styles to suit learners varying learning styles

The premises used for training delivery are comfortable, well- maintained, fit-for-purpose and conducive to learning with appropriate, high-quality training equipment and resources

The provision of programme materials and Learner Packs/Programme Handbooks (structured and detailed manual containing lesson plans, copies of reading materials, programme content, assessment criteria, reading/reference lists and assessment briefs for some of programmes)

Trainers provide formative and summative feedback to learners throughout the programmes.

Reasonable Accommodation/compassionate consideration

BIM accommodates special needs insofar as this is practicable and meets the programme needs, to ensure that learners who may need additional support can access and benefit from programmes of supports that BIM can make available to learner. Examples of accommodations (this list is not exhaustive and any learner presenting with any other support need will be accommodated within reason to the best of the Training Unit's ability)

Physical modifications to the training location e.g. seating arrangements etc.

Learning materials provided in accessible format where possible.

Additional time allocated to complete assessments.

Alternative assessment formats

Advice on Access, Transfer and Progression

Non-Academic Resources and Supports Available to Learners

We aim to provide a caring and supportive learning environment which supports the general wellbeing of learners. If any learners present to any member of staff with a problem, they will be supported in whatever way possible. If the issue is outside remit or range of professional expertise, BIM will refer the learners to

professional support services. Trainers (or Programme Leaders if appropriate) are available to meet learners on a one-to-one basis if a learner has a particular concern or an issue they wish to raise in confidence. The trainers are available to learners by email/telephone after the programme finishes (up to the point of certification) if they need to contact them.

As well as direct support with programme content, BIM recognises that learners often needs help and guidance on administrative or personal issues e.g. delay an assignment because of sickness or cancel enrolment and postpone it to another date. The Quality Officer/College Administrators are available to advise learners on these issues.

If BIM identifies, during a programme, that an individual learner needs specific or special attention, then the trainers facilitate them within as much individual assistance as possible working within the constraints of programme delivery.

The College Administrators maintain an up-to-date list of accommodation available locally for use by learners on residential programmes.

Class Representatives (Class Reps) System. At the start of each (long) programme, the Trainer/College Principal encourages learners to nominate one of the class to represent the views of the class and raise any issues that might impact on the learning experience. The trainers maintain regular contact with these class reps and discusses any issues that arise during the programme. If a trainer considers any matter arising from these discussions to be of serious concern or may involve risk, they bring the issue to the attention of the Quality Officer.

Safeguarding – BIM has a detailed and comprehensive safeguarding policy and procedures in place to help ensure that any learner aged 18 or under and the members of the programme teams who work with them are fully protected

Data Protection - BIM has a detailed and comprehensive data protection policy and procedures in place to help ensure that learners personal data is fully protected and used only for the purposes for which it is intended

Health and Safety – the health and safety of learners is of paramount importance. There is a health and safety/risk assessment for each programme which is reviewed regularly by the relevant Programme Board and additional mitigating measures put in place if considered necessary. Health and safety are addressed at Learner Induction and in the Learner Handbook.

Appeals Processes. We facilitate learners who wish to appeal an assessment result/process and a process to facilitate learners who are not successful in an application for entry to a programme

Complaint Process. We have a complaints process in place which any learner who is unhappy with a programme or services can use. All complaints are reviewed in a consistent manner and resolved fairly and to the complainant's satisfaction, insofar as this is possible.

BIM have a corporate Equality and Diversity Policy in place which clearly sets out BIM's commitment to facilitating diversity and difference in all units of BIM. BIM aims to provide training which is suitable to all learners including those individuals or groups with additional or diverse needs to enable them to successfully participate in programmes insofar as this is possible and practicable. BIM identify the diverse needs of learners at the application, registration and induction stages and considers each request for reasonable accommodation of a case-by-case basis.

Learner induction. Trainers/College Principal and/or Programme Leaders induct learners at the outset of each programme using a standard induction PowerPoint presentation. Induction includes an introduction to BIM, to the Training Unit, the awarding body and to the programme. The most important supports/services are highlighted at Induction. The trainers make a copy of the Learner Handbook available to learners at Induction. Details of the full range of supports and services available to learners are detailed in this Learner Handbook.

Some BIM training programmes are free-of-charge while some programmes attract fees. Learners studying long duration programmes may be eligible for an allowance as a contribution towards their accommodation expenses. BIM advise applicants about the possibility of receiving grant aid/funding for programme fees and, in some cases, subsistence costs national and European funding mechanisms. There is a portal on the website which makes application easy and assessable and there is a BIM staff member who advises learners or employers applying for grant aid/funding.

Provision of clear, comprehensive and up-to-date information at all stages of the learning journey in accessible and user-friendly formats.

Supporting Documents

- BIM Equality and Diversity Policy
- BIM Safeguarding Policy
- BIM Data Protection Policy
- Guidelines for Class Reps

Supporting Processes

- Provision of Reasonable Accommodation/Compassionate Consideration

- Facilitating Diversity

- Appeals Process (Assessment)

- Appeals Process (Admissions)

- Complaints Process

Section 9   Information and Data Management

- Learner Record System

- Management Information System

- Completion and Attendance Rates

- Data protection

- Freedom of Information (FOI) and Access to Information on the Environment (AIE)

9.1   Policy

The Unit is committed to the collection, storage, processing, and retention of data and information which facilities informed decision-making by governance units and others. The Unit creates, maintains and manages records which document activities to a standard appropriate to meet its strategic aims and the requirements of information legislation. There are controls and systems in place to generate reports which are communicated to staff, management and governing units for self-monitoring and planning purposes. The aim of this policy is to provide a framework which enables the Unit to:

- Make informed decisions based on timely, relevant and consistent data

- Respond appropriately and promptly to information requests from stakeholders including awarding bodies.

- Protect data to best practice standards and in compliances with relevant legislation

- Protect its reputation and provide accountability over time.

9.2   Learner Record System

BIM recognises the importance of keeping accurate, secure, and up-to-date learner records and is committed to collecting, managing, maintaining and securing these records. The Quality Officer maintains a secure electronic learner record database on the BIM training portal into which the Training Administrators input the data contained on the application and registration forms (name, address, tel., email, date of birth, programme applied for, programme payment details). Records of all programmes completed by learners, and marks and grades awarded are maintained indefinitely on the database. Access to this database is password protected and limited to key staff members on a need-to-access basis.

9.3   Management Information Systems

The Training Portal can produce a range of bespoke reports including reports on attendances and training hours covers all programme instances by cost centre for any given time period. There is a report on individuals trained by location. The information in the portal provides quantitative data for statistical reporting and provides a secure system with back up for each individual's training history.

9.4   Completion and Attendance Rates

The Quality Officer maintains completion and attendance reports and made them available to external quality reviewers on request. The data contained in these reports is collected through analysis of attendance registers maintained by the trainers. The trainers monitor attendance and brings concerns to the attention of the Quality Officer or the College Principal. Attendance is one measure of learner engagement. Poor attendance *may be* an indicator that there is a problem with the programme.

A learner who wishes to exit a programme at any stage prior to programme completion or who fails to attend without being excused, is contacted by the Quality Officer or the College Principal and invited to discuss the situation and complete an Early Exit Form outlining his/her reason/s for the decision to exit the programme. The Quality Officer or the College Principal arranges for additional supports to be put in place, if possible, e.g. a one-to-one tutorial with the trainer to bring the learner up-to-speed.

Completion, attendance and early exit data is considered as part of BIM annual quality review.

9.5   Data Protection

BIM collects personal information to effectively carry out our everyday business functions and activities and to provide the products and services defined by our business type. Such data is collected from employees, customers, learners, suppliers and clients and includes (but is not limited to), name, address, email address, data of birth, PPSN, IP address, identification numbers, private and confidential information, sensitive information and bank/credit card details. In addition, we may be required to collect and use certain types of personal information to comply with the requirements of the law and/or regulations, however we are committed to processing all personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Irish data protection laws and any other relevant the data protection laws and codes of conduct (herein collectively referred to as "the data protection laws"). BIM has developed policies, procedures,

controls and measures to ensure maximum and continued compliance with the data protection laws and principles, including staff training, procedure documents, audit measures and assessments. Ensuring and maintaining the security and confidentiality of personal and/or special category data is one of our top priorities and we are proud to operate a 'Privacy by Design' approach, assessing changes and their impact from the start and designing systems and processes to protect personal information at the core of our business.

Supporting Documents

- Data Retention Schedule
- Data Protection Policy and Procedure
- Security incident management plan

Privacy Engine provides awareness training and a help-desk service for all BIM staff. A Mobile Device Management system is installed on all BIM mobile devices, and a security incident management plan is in place which is regularly reviewed and updated.

Securing Learners' PPSN

As a unique identifier for individuals, the PPSN is a valuable piece of personal information that BIM respect and safeguard against misappropriation or misuse. BIM takes all reasonable security steps with regard to storing and handling of the PPSN. BIM do not disclose a person's PPSN to anyone, unless BIM is satisfied that the person making the enquiry is entitled to that information. Access to PPSNs is limited to staff members who need to use these numbers when inputting learner data on the QQI QBS. BIM does not retain PPSNs once used for the sole purpose for which it was collected i.e. certification. All staff and trainers who come into contact with PPSNs through their work, must treat the number confidentially and securely.

BIM record learners' dates of birth for statistical purposes and to help to trace learners' records on the certification system.

BIM manage all assessment materials in a secure and confidential manner. BIM make BIM policy on the return of assessment to learners and on the disposal of all material clear to learners in the learner handbook. Once the full assessment and certification cycle is complete, including the appeals process, the Quality Officer arranges for secure destruction of assessment materials. Details of results, grades and awards achieved by learners are retained indefinitely on the Training Portal.

BIM retain both soft and hard copy of records of meeting minutes, committee and exam board meetings, external examiners reports, broadsheets of results of cohorts of learners, are maintained in secure storage for a maximum period of five years.

Before BIM embark on any collaborative provision agreement BIM review the data protection arrangements to ensure that learner data is adequately protected and can be released to BIM for submission to awarding bodies.

Data Pertaining to Learner Special Support Needs/Provision of Reasonable Accommodation

BIM are committed to supporting learners with identified special support needs and providing reasonable accommodation for assessment where possible. BIM maintain details of any additional supports and the reason for provision on BIM Learner Record System mindful of the fact that this data meets the definition of sensitive data under GDPR. This data can be accessed by staff members on a strictly need-to know basis and is the responsibility of the Quality Officer. BIM make learners aware, when applying for additional supports/reasonable accommodation that members of staff and external contractors (in particular the BIM External Authenticator) will be given access to the details and the information they supply in support of their application.

Maintenance and Storage of Learner Files

BIM maintain learner files in hard copy/paper format in head office or the Colleges for a maximum of six months following certification. The hard copy files are then removed from current file storage and are either securely destroyed or placed in BIM's file archive for a further three-year period. This data is maintained only for information which may be required by the learner in the three-year period following certification. After this three-year period of archive storage BIM destroy the hard copy records and maintain electronic copies of data including learner name, contact details, programme(s) and period(s) of study, assessment results, and overall attendance records on the Training Portal indefinitely.

Data Protection for Staff and Trainers

Staff and trainers provide their own personal data as an employee/contractor, for example their bank details, PPSN, their address etc. BIM provide the new staff members and trainers with the following documents as part of their induction pack:

- A copy of BIM's Personal Data Protection policy which outlines to staff members how and why BIM handle personal data of staff, learners, suppliers and other individuals. It outlines their responsibilities as an employee when handling personal data.

- Employee Data Protection Policy which informs the staff member how BIM, as the employer, manages personal data relating to staff.

- Privacy Notice for Learners which will detail what personal information is collected from learners, why it is collected, how it is used and how it is protected.

- Privacy Notice for Employees which will detail what personal information is collected from staff members, why it is collected, how it is used and how it is protected.

During the new staff member's induction, BIM highlight the importance of ensuring that learners personal data is stored in a locked and secure facility.

Staff members are required to let the Skills Unit Data Champion know immediately they suspect that any personal data might be lost or compromised, so that the Data Champion can implement the BIM Data Breach Procedure.

9.6   Freedom of Information (FOI) and Access to Information on the Environment

The Freedom of Information Act 1997 (FOI Act) as amended by the Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act 2003 obliged government departments, the Health Service Executive (HSE), local authorities and a range of other public bodies to publish information on their activities and to make the information that they held, including personal information, available to citizens. The Freedom of Information Act 2014 introduced a number of changes to the Freedom of Information system and widened the range of bodies to which the FOI legislation applies and also allows for the Government to prescribe (or designate) other bodies.

Since July 2016, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment has overarching policy responsibility for access to Information on the Environment (AIE) in Ireland. The AIE Regulations 2007 to 2018 gives citizens the right to access information on the environment from public authorities. FOI and AIE legislation apply to BIM.

Responsibility

- The Director of Corporate Services is responsible for Freedom of information (FOI) and Access to Information on the Environment (AIE)

- The Planning and Information Officer is responsible for implementing BIM's FOI and AIE processes and procedures.

The Freedom of Information Act 2014 provides the following stationery rights:

- A legal right for each person to access information held by BIM

- A legal right for each person to have official information relating to himself/herself amended where it is incomplete, incorrect or misleading

- A legal right for each person to obtain reasons for decisions affecting himself/herself

BIM is required to:

- Publish information to assist members of the public in their understanding of BIM and its functions

- Publish the information that BIM holds grouped under the information headings set out in the model publication scheme

- Explain the procedures to get access to information or to establish what information BIM holds

Requests for information

Member of the public are entitled to request the following records:

- Any records relating to them personally, whenever they were created

- All other records created after 21 April 1998

A record can be a paper document or information held on computer. It includes, for example, printouts, maps, plans, microfilm, audio-visual material, disks and tapes.

Section 10 Public Information and Communication

- Public Information
- Applicant Information
- Pre-Application Guidance
- Learner Information
- Publication of QA Reports
- Graduate Destinations Survey Reports (Planned for Q4 2019)
- Managing Communications within a Multi-Site Centre

10.1 Policy

BIM recognises that effective and appropriate communication is important in achieving its aims and objectives; regarding communication as a two-way process which involves both the giving and receiving of information. It is both formal and informal and both are equally valued depending on the context. There are systems and processes in place which facilities the communication of clear and consistent messages internally within the Unit, with colleagues in other BIM business units and externally the key stakeholders.

Communication Values

- We strive to communicate in a professional and appropriate manner at all times and in all contexts.

- We communicate clear, accurate, objective and up-to-date information internally and externally

- We have effective systems in place that facilitates ongoing two–way communication and receipt of data and feedback from key stakeholders.

- We communicate in an honest, timely and open manner with courtesy and respect.

- The language we use is clear, concise, easily understood and written with the audience in mind

- The media we use is appropriate to the message and the audience.

- Information published in respect of programmes leading to awards on the NFQ complies with the spirit and the requirements of the 2012 Training and Education Act

The following are the individuals/ groups BIM communicates with:

- Learners/ Applicants

- Contracted trainers

- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

- BIM Board Members

- External experts/ Industry representatives

- QQI

- MSO/Department of Transport

- Accommodation providers

- Local communities in Greencastle and Castletownbere

- Other education and training providers

- Institute of Guidance Counsellors

- Government agencies

- General public

- 2nd level school students and their parents

- BIM Collaborating Providers (If relevant)

10.2 Applicant Information

BIM publishes programme information using a number of channels. This information is reviewed and updated by the Quality Officer a monthly basis and in its totality as part of the annual review (and more often if necessary). She also checks to confirm that BIM comply with the spirit and the requirements of the 2012 Act in relation to the published information.

BIM promotes and advertises programmes using the following channels:

- BIM website

- Programme brochures

- Advertisements and press releases to industry publications/marine trade press, national and regional press

- Direct marketing

- Attendance at industry-led events and conferences

- Attendance at careers fairs and Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) events

- Entries on https://careersportal.ie/ which provides up-to-date career information to 2nd Level Learners, 3rd Level Learners, Adult Learners, Jobseekers, Parents and Guardians and Career Guidance Professionals/Providers

- Entries on QualifaX - the national database of courses and careers information

Website

The BIM website is the primary vehicle for providing information about BIM programmes and services to applicants, stakeholders and the general public. Visitors to the website can view the training calendar, access details of BIM programmes and services, career progression and be guided through the steps to apply to a programme, with appropriate direction to support and guidance from staff as necessary. The Quality Officer,

working with IT and Communications Unit colleagues, is responsible for the quality of the information on the website.

QQI Register of Providers

The Quality Officer checks the information relating to BIM on QQI register of providers and the database of awards and programmes annually and alerts QQI to any amendments/updates which need to be made. The Quality Officer also reviews the List of Currently Validated programmes and the Provider Profile supplied by QQI to check for any changes/errors.

Section 67 of the Qualifications Act 2012

Under the terms of the 2012 Act, as a provider recognised by QQI, BIM is required to provide information to applicants and learners under the following headings:

- Programme and Award Title and Code
- Name of the awarding body
- Whether the award is recognised within the NFQ
- Level of the award on NFQ, and associated credits
- Whether the award is a Major, Minor, Special Purpose or Supplemental
- Where the programme does not entitle the learner to an award that face
- Programme content
- Programme duration
- Programme fee and any other applicable fees
- Learner profile
- Application process and entry requirements
- Details of RPL if applicable
- Teaching, learning and assessment procedures
- Access, transfer and progression arrangements
- Possible employment opportunities

BIM have a programme brochure template with these headings which Programme Leaders use when organising programme information. The Quality Officer checks all public communications to ensure that the information BIM publishes is clear, accurate, objective, up to date and easily accessible and facilitates comparison, reviews it annually at a minimum but more usually prior to a programme rollout. The Quality

Officer ensures that any referencing to the NFQ is clear and accurate and BIM displays the most current version of the NFQ graphic when using it. BIM use the QQI award brand only if it is appropriate to do so noting that the QQI *corporate logo* may not be used at any time (the QQI corporate brand is separate and distinct from the QQI Award brand). BIM use the QQI Business System (QBS) to access the area for usage guidelines and downloading of the QQI Award brand logo.

Advertisements

BIM advertise in regional and national press and industry publications e.g. ShelfLife - Ireland's trade publication in the retail sector, Skipper and Marine Times, Irish seafood and maritime publications.

Participation in Conferences, Sectoral Events and Careers Fairs

Supporting Documents

- Annual Promotional Events Planner
- Evaluation of Careers/Promotional Event Form

BIM participates in relevant conferences, sectoral events and careers fairs and makes programme brochures and other promotional materials available to potential applicants and other interested parties at these events. BIM is represented at these events by staff members in the Colleges (regional events), the Quality Officer or Programme Leaders depending on the nature and location of the event.

BIM representatives evaluate the event and submit an evaluation form to the Quality Officer. The Manager of the Training Unit, with the input of the Quality Officer, decides which events BIM will attend, and an Annual Promotional Events Planner is maintained by the Quality Officer.

10.3 Pre-Application Guidance

BIM provides applicants with the information they need to make an informed choice about participation on a programme.

- Applicants are invited to contact the Training Administrator in the relevant training site by email or telephone to express their interest in applying for a place.
- The Training Administrator forwards a programme brochure to them by email and talks them through details of the programme and the application process.

- The Training Administrator advises the applicant to consider the risks associated with a career in the seafood industry, review the programme information carefully and satisfy themselves that they meet the entry criteria and that the programme is suitable for them. If they wish to progress their application they must complete and submit the application form or, if they are still unsure, the Training Administrator arranges for the person who is best equipped to guide them to contact them – usually the College Principal of the Programme Leader.

Learner Information

BIM provides relevant, accurate and up-to-date information in appropriate media and formats to current learners. Feedback from learners is also an important part of the communications process, and the methods used include feedback questionnaires and use of focus groups as part of BIM self-evaluation processes.

10.4   Learner and Programme Handbooks

The Learner and Programme Handbooks are designed to provide advice and information on all aspects of programmes and to help learners have a positive learning experience. Trainers strongly advise learners to familiarise themselves fully with these handbooks and reference them throughout the programme and this is emphasised at induction. The trainers make hard copies available at Induction and electronic copies are also available. Handbooks are updated annually in line with the updating of other programme and promotional materials.

10.5   Publication of QA Reports

BIM publish copies of QA policies, Self-Evaluation Reports, key findings in QA evaluation reports, validation reports and reports to meet awarding body requirements in an easily accessible format and location on BIM website in a timely fashion.

The Quality Officer produces an annual quality report which details QA activities of the Training Unit in the preceding year. These reports are reviewed by the Manger of the Training Unit and are presented to the Training and Development Sub-Committee for comment and consideration. The reports are made available to QQI and to BIM stakeholders and published on BIM website.

10.6   Graduate Destinations Survey Reports

BIM invite graduates of BIM programmes to participate in a survey following completion of a programme with us. The purpose of this survey is:

- To maintain communication and develop BIM relationship with BIM graduates

- To evaluate the impact of BIM programmes on graduates' careers

- To remain up to date with developments in the seafood sector and challenges faced by people employed or seeking employment in the sector

- To identify additional training needs of graduates

- To assess the continued relevance of BIM programmes in the workplace

- To monitor progression routes of graduates, regarding career and educational progression

- To inform graduates of opportunities arising for further study with us

- To inform BIM quality assurance review processes including revalidation and programme planning

The Quality Officer collates the findings from these surveys and present them in report format to the Training and Development Sub-Committee.

10.7   Managing Communications within a Multi-Site Centre

Ensuring uniform communication presents specific challenges when operating within in a multi-site centre context. Staff members are dispersed across different sites working on different schedules with different responsibilities. Communication with staff is facilitated through a combination of face-to-face formal and informal meetings and the use of technology; staff and team meetings can be either face-to-face or virtual.

The Manager of the Unit issues a weekly Manager's Report detailing workload for the week ahead, activities completed during the week and external meetings undertaken. All members of staff and contractors (as appropriate and necessary) have access to the OneDrive for Business system used by BIM. BIM utilises videoconferencing for programme board and panel meetings. The College Principals meet with the Manager of the Training Unit monthly. The Manager of the Training Unit hosts a   meeting of staff from all sites twice a year. This is usually a 2-day event with an element of CPD and a social element built into the programme. The BIM CEO usually attends.

Communication with industry is maintained through their representative groups and local contacts by BIM's regional staff as well as BIM's network of area officers.

Section 11 Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

11.1 Collaborative Provision - Current

BIM SDS Unit currently do not engage in any training related collaborative provision relationships either as a first provider or a second provider.

11.2 Collaborative Provision - Future

BIM will only operate under the approved collaborative, joint and transnational procedure of other providers.

Formal collaborative arrangements will be in place before engaging in any collaborative provision in the future. This will include detailed QA procedures covering the arrangement and will include due diligence on the reputation, legal status, standing and financial sustainability of the other party.

If BIM is the "First Provider" in future collaborations, the training will be covered under BIM's QA system. If BIM is the "Second provider", they will act in accordance with the first providers QA system.

- The TAD committee are responsible for reviewing proposals for strategic alliances and collaborative provision arrangements and confirming that they are that are in line with QQI guidelines and BIM's overall strategic mission. The TAD committee will make recommendations to the BIM Board of Directors who will have ultimate decision on entry into collaborative provision relationships.

- A formal procedure for entering into collaborative provision has been documented in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) manual. The criteria for entering into collaborative provision and the approval process are included in this procedure.

- If a collaborative provision is entered into the skills unit manager (Head of Centre) will be responsible for oversight and review of such collaborations.

11.3 Expert Panellists, Advisors, Evaluators and Authenticators

There are explicit criteria and procedures for the recruitment, selection and engagement of all external experts. BIM provides guidelines to external experts setting out conditions and expectations relating to participation. BIM requires the experts to sign a Declaration of External Experts' Interests prior to engagement setting out details of any interests that could conflict, or might appear to conflict, with their proposed role with BIM. BIM reviews the independence and expertise each time the services of an expert is contracted and retains details of the external experts used on an External Expert Database.

Section 12 Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

12.1 Policy

The Unit is committed to quality assuring all programmes and services. The self-evaluation process is enhancement-based and focused on identifying improvements to programmes, policies, structures and processes, and is regarded as critical to improving the quality of learning opportunities for all learners. In accordance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, BIM evaluates programmes leading to national awards with the involvement of management, staff, learners and an external evaluator. BIM makes the findings of self-evaluation available to relevant stakeholders and commits to implementing the priority recommendations set out in Programme Improvement Plans. BIM undertakes a self-evaluation of each programme/related group of programmes every five years. This is a wide-scale comprehensive review of all aspects of a programme and associated services and the quality assurance processes that underpins it and is timed to coincide with programme revalidation.

12.2 Monitoring of Training and Learning

BIM monitors programmes, programme materials, learners support, trainer performance, and the overall quality of the learning experience on an ongoing basis to ensure high standards, continued relevance and to capture recommendations for improvements which helps to continuously improve programmes and services. BIM collects, collates and analyses data and suggestions for improvements from trainers, learners and other stakeholders

12.2.1   Trainer Feedback

BIM consider the collection and consideration of trainer feedback to be key to the process of continuous quality improvement and, accordingly, BIM provides a range of avenues, formal and informal, to facilitate trainer feedback.

Key Steps

The requirement for BIM trainers to provide feedback on programmes and services in outlined in the Trainer Role Description, at Trainer Induction and in the Trainer Handbook. The trainer role description details the trainers' responsibility to engage in ongoing review and evaluation of programmes and services and the evaluation of their own performance as a trainer and assessor. At the end of the programme, the trainer completes a **Trainer Evaluation Form**.

The Quality Officer analyses the **Trainer Evaluation Forms**. Agreed improvements are framed in the form of a **programme improvement plan** which is tabled for discussion when the next rollout of the programme is being planned. BIM expect trainers to remain in contact with the College Principal/Quality Officer on a regular basis by email, phone or in person throughout the duration of the programme to highlight or discuss any issues of concerns that arises.

Trainers are asked for feedback at programme team meetings and meetings of the Programme Board and are centrally involved in self-evaluation exercises.

12.2.2   Learner Feedback

The Quality Officer is responsible for the collection and analysis of learner feedback. BIM regard learner feedback as being key in helping us to identify ways to improve the quality and effectiveness of BIM programmes and services. In view of this, BIM is committed to providing learners with accessible communication channels and tools, both formal and informal, to facilitate them in giving feedback and suggestions for improvements at all stages of training. BIM uses learner feedback to:

- Improve the quality of programmes and services through the development of improvement plans
- Support the enhancement of learning and teaching
- Inform CPD programmes for staff and trainers
- Enhance programme design and delivery
- Enhance BIM training and assessment strategies
- Improve the quality of learning resources, facilities, equipment and services

Trainers check-in regularly with learners to ensure that they (the learners) fully understand the learning objectives of their programme and to ask for feedback

BIM asks for feedback on programme content, workload, quality of training, adequacy of learner materials and supports, assessment and feedback, overall learning experience and administration. The learner evaluations forms include both open-ended and closed questions to collect both qualitative and quantitative-type data focussed on specific, pre-determined issues.

The completion of evaluation forms by learners is voluntary, albeit strongly encouraged and the learners have the option to anonymise the evaluation form if they so wish. Trainers highlight the importance of learners providing feedback at Induction and describe how BIM uses the data to improve BIM programmes

and services. The Quality Officer also takes feedback provided by learners in one-to-one learner interviews/meetings, e-mail and informal comments into account in addition to feedback submitted in evaluation forms.

Occasionally BIM organises focus group meetings of learners or undertake an ad-hoc evaluation. This is done primarily as part of a self-evaluation process, if there is a specific concern regarding programme delivery, or to meet a specified need or in response to a change in the delivery of a programme (e.g. introduction of a new trainer or new content).

For longer programmes, the Quality Officer invites learners to complete a short mid-programme evaluation form in addition to the (longer) end-of-programme evaluation form. BIM use hard-copy questionnaires and trainers circulate and collect the completed questionnaires. The Qualify Officer analyses the evaluation forms and frames agreed improvements in the form of a programme improvement plan which is tabled for discussion when the next rollout of the programme is being planned. If the class has a Class Rep, feedback from the Rep and issues raised by the Rep are also considered in the monitoring process.

BIM encourages learners to approach any member of staff at any stage of programme delivery to highlight areas of concern and/or give feedback. Trainers are expected to keep brief notes of the details of issues raised if considered significant. The Quality Officer or the appropriate staff member responds to short-term feedback (informal, daily and/or mid- programme) immediately or as soon as possible.

12.2.3 Feedback from Other Stakeholders

The Quality Officer invites employers, funders and industry representatives to contribute their views and to give feedback on programmes in terms of how programmes met their expectations and objectives. Employers who have sponsored a programme or a number of participating learners are asked to complete a Stakeholder Evaluation Form which help us to measure the impact of the training within the workplace and the degree to which the programme met their objectives. BIM solicits stakeholder feedback on training programme at various industry events. BIM considers and acts on feedback from External Evaluators, External Authenticators and awarding body monitoring reports.

12.3 Programme Review

12.3.1 End-of-Programme Evaluation

Scope and Frequency

All programmes are subject to regular evaluation, at least once a year, or as the validating body directs. The frequency of evaluation may also take into account any changes in legislation or industry requirements. An evaluation may be carried out on an individual programme, or a group of related programmes. There may be a combined evaluation of all programmes across a number of accrediting bodies (if applicable).

BIM reviews all programmes following completion to monitor the quality of the training and learning and to identify improvements which are implemented for the next iteration of the programme. This end-of-programme evaluation/debriefing is carried out by the Programme Leader/College Principal and the trainers. The evaluation looks at two key elements of the programme: *process and impact*. The process evaluation is based on feedback from the Programme Leader, the learners and the trainer/s and looks at how the programme was implemented, the degree of satisfaction expressed and ways the programme could be improved. The impact evaluation looks at attendance, retention and assessment outcomes. The key findings from these evaluations are recorded in an End-of-Programme evaluation form and signed off by the Programme Leader/College Principal and submitted to the Quality Officer.

The results of these evaluations inform the biennial programme reviews.

12.3.2 Annual Programme Review

The Quality Officer is responsible for planning, coordinating and supporting the process of programme review.

The Programme Board reviews and critically re-appraises the programme every year. Following the review, recommendations for updates, minor changes or improvements in the programme and related supports and services, are captured and detailed in the meeting minutes. The quality of training, programme content, delivery modes, learning resources (IT facilities, reading materials etc.), assessment, information, achievement of objectives, support services, accommodation for diversity, plans to transfer/progress to other programmes, need for further training are all considered. The Programme Leader/Board involves others stakeholder in the reviews as appropriate (employers, industry representative, funders).

The programme leader completes an annual programme report using data from:

- End-of-programme evaluations
- Certification Reports (IV/ EA/ RAP meeting minutes)
- Assessment Results
- Learner, Training and Stakeholder feedback

- Programme Leader evaluation

- Application, attendance, completion, retention and progression rates

- Appeals and complaints

- Error levels/corrective actions

- Relevance of outcomes to the marketplace

The programme leader submits the annual programme report to the Quality Officer, and this is submitted to the programme board ahead of the annual programme board meeting.

The Programme Board meets to review, discuss, and comment on the programme report. In the programme board meeting minutes, recommendations for enhancements are outlined and an action plan for implementation included.

It identifies the person(s) responsible for actions and follow-up and a timeline for implementation. Programme reports and minute from programme board meetings are sent to the Academic Council.

12.4   Annual Quality Assurance Report

The Quality Officer produces an Annual Quality Assurance Report which highlights strengths and identify areas for improvement.   The follow-up to these reports is an action plan aimed at achieving ongoing quality enhancement.   The reports and the action plans are submitted to the Academic Council for review, comment, discussion and ratification.

Report Outline

The report examines the implementation and effectiveness of each quality assurance policy area and associated procedures and contains information under the following headings:

- Activities of BIM programmes in the preceding year, this includes details relating to the delivery of the programme

- Review of collaborative provision arrangements

- Programme review statistics

- Review of KPIs

- Review of complaints and appeals registers and risk assessment register

- Assessment outcomes

- Outcomes of a review of BIM Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures/Manual

- Results of learner and trainer evaluations

- Review of communications and promotional materials

- Review of success of promotional events/promotions

- Report on recommendations implemented

- Data re evolving best practice guidelines from QQI and other relevant bodies.

- Quality Improvement Plan including recommendations to be implemented (the implementation of this Plan is monitored on an ongoing basis)

12.5 Self-Evaluation

Policy

The BIM SDS Unit is committed to quality assuring all programmes and services. The self-evaluation process is enhancement-based and focused on identifying improvements to programmes, policies, structures and processes, and is regarded as critical to improving the quality of learning opportunities for all learners. In accordance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, BIM evaluates programmes leading to national awards with the involvement of management, staff, learners and an external evaluator. BIM makes the findings of self-evaluation available to relevant stakeholders and commits to implementing the priority recommendations set out in Programme Improvement Plans. BIM undertakes a self-evaluation of each programme/related group of programmes every five years. This is a wide-scale comprehensive review of all aspects of a programme and associated services and the quality assurance processes that underpins it and is timed to coincide with programme revalidation.

Responsibilities

The Training and Development Committee is responsible for ensuring that Self-Evaluation is carried out and that the resources are in place to implement the process to a high standard.

The unit director has overall responsibility for implementing self-evaluation exercises and acts as the Self-Evaluator Coordinator.

Process of Self-Evaluation

A self-evaluation exercise facilitates the review and reporting on the quality of BIM programmes and related services. The views of learners, trainers, graduates, employers/industry and other stakeholders, all members of programme teams and of independent evaluator/s are included in each self-evaluation. The self-evaluation process involves evaluation, reflection, reviewing and reporting on the quality and effectiveness

of a programme/s using quality assurance data collated during the 5-year period being addressed by the evaluation.

Aims of the Self-Evaluation Process

- To identify and highlight areas of strengths in programmes
- To identify and highlight areas where improvements or enhancements are needed.
- To measure how effective the QA system is in achieving a consistent and high-quality service
- To confirm that BIM is meeting the needs and expectations of learners, employers and other stakeholders
- To measure the success of learners in reaching the intended learning outcomes.

The Self-Evaluation Panel (SEP)

The PAP acts as the Self-Evaluation Panel (SEP) consisting of a minimum of four members, one of which must be a learner, and appoints a Self-Evaluation Coordinator (usually the Quality Officer) to drive and coordinate the process and complete a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and Quality Improvement Plan with the input of an External Evaluator.

The PAP meets at the outset of the process to agree a timeline and plan for the process with the Self-Evaluation Coordinator and agrees the appointment of a suitably qualified External Evaluator which meet the stated selection criteria. The Panel meets again when the Self-Evaluation Report and Quality Improvement Plan are at final draft stage to approve self-evaluation findings and programme and related service improvement reports, including agreed follow-up actions.

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER)

The SER contains wide ranging programme -related information being evaluated including:

- A statement of the programme aims and objectives
- A review and critical analysis of the quality systems and processes which are in place to enable the achievement of the programme aim and objectives
- The views of the Programme Leader, trainers, past and current learners, administrative staff and other staff associated with the programme
- External Evaluator input
- An analysis of its strengths and weaknesses
- An analysis of the success of the programme to date, including access statistics

- Performance of learners including grade profiles and trends, progression and completion rates, retention, withdrawal and graduation rates

- A review of employment/advancement opportunities for learners

- The identification of resources required to deliver the programme

- A review of the teaching, assessment and learning strategy

- A review of links with employers, industry, the business and wider community

- Detail of programme changes proposed and the rationale for same

- Findings of the biennial reviews

- Findings of awarding body monitoring reports (if any)

- Legislative/regulatory changes which need to be incorporated into the programme

- Effectiveness of assessment procedures

- Recommended modifications to the existing curriculum and assessment processes

- External authenticators and evaluators report

- The levels of training and assessment skills available to the programme to ensure they are sufficient and appropriate

- Suitability and appropriateness of the physical facilities and anticipate changing needs in the future

- Current programme entry requirements and confirm their appropriateness for the current context

- Any issues raised about particular sites or with particular elements of the programme

- Recommendations for modifications to the delivery process and the operational management procedures based on feedback from stakeholders

Learner Involvement in Self-Evaluation

The Self-Evaluation Panel has a learner or a graduate as a member (usually an elected class rep if there is one). The Self-Evaluation Coordinator briefs the learner in advance regarding the process. Learner participation and representation is recorded at meetings. Feedback from learner focus groups and learner evaluations forms explicit input to the process of self-evaluation.

Selection of External Evaluator

The PAP appoints the external evaluator on the recommendation of the Quality Officer who sources referrals and recommendations from other providers and obtains CVs, details of professional qualifications and relevant experience confirming the suitability of the appointment. The evaluator is selected based on their match to the stated selection criteria and an assessment of their ability to make a positive contribution to

the process. Details of the arrangements with the external evaluator are set out in a contract which is signed by the SDS Manager and the external evaluator. The Quality Officer maintains an External Evaluator Register which has up-to-date details of professional qualifications and relevant experiences of external evaluators.

Selection Criteria for External Evaluator

The External Evaluator must be:

- Independent of programme delivery and be able to provide objective feedback
- Experienced in programme design, delivery and evaluation
- Familiar with the programme/s
- Has broad subject matter expertise and has a recognised qualification
- Capable of comparing the quality of programme(s) being evaluated with that of similar programmes
- Experienced in training and development and understands the principles of adult learning
- Able to contribute to the development and enhancement of the programme(s) being evaluated
- Familiar with qualifications frameworks and the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) in particular
- Understand evaluation procedures and methodologies of quality assurance systems

12.7 Evaluation of the Assessment Process

Internal verification reports, external authenticators' reports and Results Approval Panel (RAP) reports provide information on the quality of the assessment process. Good practice and improvements are identified at RAP meetings through a review and analysis of the IV and EA reports and a review of assessment outcomes and trends. Significant issues arising from RAP meetings are brought to the TAD committee. Follow-up on recommended improvements is an agenda item for subsequent RAP meetings. The Quality Officer reviews and evaluates the assessment/certification process after each certification period and draws up an improvement plan based on recommendations contained in the reports.

12.8 Monitoring and Benchmarking

Monitoring is a continuous process that involves collecting data to determine if BIM is meeting desired standards or targets. A key component in ensuring quality is the effective monitoring of the provision of programmes and services. It is dependent on good quality information which is achieved by systematically and consistently collecting valid and reliable data.

Use of KPIs

We define a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) as a measurable value that demonstrates how effectively we are achieving our key quality objectives

BIM regard Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which are specific and measurable, as essential tools in monitoring and evaluation as they provide reliable information on current and desired standards. BIM uses KPIs to identify where BIM is performing well, and where changes and/or improvements are needed

KPIs are only as reliable as the data collected and having shared and agreed definitions of KPIs in place. The programme design team define KPIs at the programme design stage and Programmes outcomes are benchmarked against these set standards and o corrective and/or preventive action is instigated if required. As it is not possible (or desirable) to exhaustively monitor every aspect of training provision, BIM prioritise areas where there is potential for improvement and areas that have demonstrated variability in quality.

Benchmarking Against National Standards

KPIs are also used to compare outcomes to that of other providers and to national standards. Benchmarking helps to identify where there are opportunities for improvement and where BIM have already made improvements as a result of changes made.

BIM use the reports provided by QQI annually to benchmark BIM performance against national standards. To do this BIM use the following reports:

- Grade benchmarking information
- Awards made 2010 – 2019 YTD: - certificates issued
- Grade Distribution by Year: list of all components certified since 2013 and the grade distribution for each in that year. This allows comparison of grading between components in any year.
- Grade Distribution by Component: list of all components certified in each year since 2013 and the grade distribution for each year. This allows comparison of grading within components over time.

KPI Categories

Access, Transfer and Progression

- Enrolment rates (numbers per programme)
- Profile of the learner population – age, gender, nationality, employment status,
- % of learners progressing to other programmes (higher levels of NFQ)
- Learner attrition or drop-out rates/completion rates

Certification

- Grade analysis

- Number of late submissions/applications for extensions to submission dates

- Number of corrective actions

- Number of changes made to marks/grades

- Number of appeals/% of appeals upheld

- Number of incidents of academic misconduct

- QQI External Monitoring Rating

- Learner satisfaction ratings

- Trainer Satisfaction ratings

Staffing

- % trainer turnover

- Match of trainers to selection criteria

- Number of requests for training

- Number of CPD events

- Trainers rating of their own performance (self-reflection)

- Comments from External Authenticator on trainer performance

- Number of incidents of poor trainer performance

- Learner assessment of trainer performance

Equality and Diversity

- Number requests for reasonable accommodation/% granted

- Number of complaints of discrimination

- Numbers of learners who availed of additional supports

External Monitoring and Evaluation

External monitoring is carried out by BIM's awarding bodies; QQI and the MSO. This monitoring addresses the following areas:

- Programme quality and attainment of awards standards

- Follow-up on internal and/or external quality procedures e.g. re-validation

- Registered provider status

- Tracking the implementation of policy
- Specified quality indicators, e.g. completion rates.

To facilitate monitoring, BIM supplies the following information to the awarding bodies as and when required:

- Findings from monitoring and evaluation processes
- Quality Reports
- External authenticator and evaluator details and their reports
- Detail on changes which may affect BIM status as a recognised provider
- Crisis notification (e.g. financial issues and capacity deficits, major impending media disclosures relating to academic quality)
- Completion rates report.

12.9   Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)is maintained by the Quality Officer, and it includes all recommendations/opportunities for Improvement identified from various sources for example:

- Annual Quality Assurance Report/ QQI Provider Quality Report
- Staff Observations
- QQI Reports and/or Communique
- TAD committee/AC recommendations

The QIP is updated on a quarterly basis and is reviewed at each AC meeting.

12.10 Programme Quality Improvement Plan (PQIP)

A Programme Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is maintained by the Programme Leader and Quality Officer. The PQIP includes all recommendations/opportunities for Improvement identified from various sources for example:

- QQI Validation Panel Report
- End of Programme Review
- Programme Report and Programme Board Meeting
- Internal Verification Report recommendations
- External Authenticator Report recommendations
- Results Approval Panel meeting recommendations
- Staff /Trainer Observations
- TAD committee/AC recommendations

The PQIP is updated on a quarterly basis and is reviewed at each AC meeting.

Section 13 References

- Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers April 2016 available [here](#)
- QQI Quality Assurance Policies available [here](#)
- QQI Quality Assurance Guidelines, - Core, Sector Specific and Topic Specific available [here](#)