CMIT Quality Policy and Procedures

5. Teaching and Learning policies

College of Management and IT
Southern Cross Business Park
Bray, Co. Wicklow.

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5.1 Introduction

What is the purpose of this policy?

- This policy sets out CMIT's ethos, pedagogical approach, and commitment to maintaining and improving the quality of the teaching and learning at CMIT.
- It also sets out the standards in relation to the provision, monitoring, and review of the quality of the learning experience provided by the college.
- It documents the pedagogical approach to the delivery of programmes of learning through blended provision.

To whom does this policy apply?

- This policy applies to all staff, tutors, and committee members of the college.
- The provision of a high-quality teaching and learning environment is central to the college's commitment to its learners and as such all members of the organisation are involved in its design, delivery, and ongoing monitoring.
- This policy also documents learner's responsibilities in relation to access, participation, and assessment.

Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

- The Academic Director is responsible for coordinating and implementing the teaching and learning strategy within the college.
- Employees, Faculty and Adjunct Faculty who are required to comply with this policy in the fulfilment of their roles.

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5.2 Learner focus and ethos

Blended learning delivery

- 90% of CMIT's programmes are delivered through a blended learning delivery model.
- As a dedicated blended learning provider with a proven record of accomplishment of delivering accredited blended learning programmes, the policies and procedures contained within document the pedagogical and academic considerations for successful delivery using a blended learning mode of provision.
- Blended learning is a flexible way of completing a programme of study, combining online video, self-directed learning, quizzes etc. with live classes, messaging, tutor support and feedback to allow for an accessible learning style.
- CMIT use a range of technologies to host content in a Virtual Learning Environment which enables remote learner-tutor interaction including detailed feedback following each assessment (further details on the VLE and Learning Environment are provided in section 5.4 below).
- The Virtual Learning Environment provides custom resources, including course manuals, videos, quizzes, and live online classes/webinars.
- Programmes are identified and designed based on their suitability to be delivered via blended learning.

Learner Profile

- CMIT's focus is on providing accessible training and education to adult learners.
- CMIT places learners at the centre of programmes. Our mode of delivery is a flexible blended delivery approach which is targeted at adults returning to, or furthering, their education.
- We recognise that learning is undertaken on a voluntary, self-motivated basis and the primary motivations for our programmes are: (1) to enhance or acquire new skills for existing occupations, (2) to develop skills for new occupations, and (3) acquisition of skills for personal development.
- A documented typical learner profile is in place for each programme.
- Programme prerequisites and 'equipped to participate' statements are communicated in a clear and transparent manner to ensure that learners select appropriate courses which are matched to their knowledge, skills, and experience.
- Programme scheduling and delivery considers the diverse range of learner circumstances. For example, exams and webinars are held outside of business

hours to facilitate learners in employment, and there is built-in flexibility in submission dates for assessments.

Removing barriers for learners

- We are committed to providing an accessible means for adult learners to access accredited further education, by allowing learners to take independent control of their studies.
- CMIT's delivery model removes many barriers commonly experienced by adults when accessing further education.
- Situational barriers such as time, availability of programmes, geographic constraints, impact on current employment, restricted enrolment dates etc. are alleviated by our method of delivery.
- Dispositional barriers, for example 'fear of failure,' are also reduced by our delivery methodology. Learners have direct access to their Tutor for the duration of their programme and receive formative developmental feedback following assessment submission. This one-to-one interaction reduces potential anxiety surrounding exams and of 'failure.'
- We offer built-in flexible timetabling and admissions which removes typical Institutional barriers.
- Resources, supports and tutor interactions are designed to reduce any social or anxiety-based concerns that some learners may experience in a traditional classroom setting.

Accessibility

- CMIT's delivery model removes many 'access' barriers commonly experienced by adults when accessing further education – allowing leaners to access programmes remotely, any time and at a flexible pace.
- Programmes provide a quality and meaningful learning experience which is both accredited and accessible.
- CMIT make use of innovative technologies to provide an accessible means of accessing accredited programmes to learners who may otherwise be unable to access further education.
- Individual barriers such as physical disabilities, mental health conditions and some cognitive learning conditions can be accommodated. The VLE (virtual learning environment) is compatible with assistive technologies to allow learners with specific additional needs engage and complete a programme of education with support technologies (e.g., screen readers).

Skills transfer

- 'Active learning' and 'Experiential learning' are central to programme design and delivery.
- Programmes and associated resources are designed specifically to enable the transfer of skills, competence, and knowledge through 'concrete learning,' 'reflective observation,' 'abstract conceptualisation' and 'active experimentation' (Kolb, 1984).
- CMIT measures skills transfer as a key indicator of the quality of the learning experience.

Quality as a culture

- Quality is of paramount importance to the college. There is a culture of continuous improvement within the college and quality assurance policies and procedures aim to document this as well as provide a roadmap for all stakeholders to be able recognise the commitment to quality within the college and the process of continual review and improvement undertaken.

National and International effective practice

- CMIT engages with the wider national and international community of practice to enhance and strengthen its quality assurance standards and teaching and learning approach by adopting best practice shared within the education community.
- Engagement can take many forms, attendance at national briefings (i.e., QQI briefings, forums, and events), benchmarking (both nationally and internationally), interaction with other rigorous external quality assurance examination (ISO).
- CMIT's quality system is based on Deming's quality model "Plan-Do-Check-Act" which is also the basis of the EQAVET quality cycle.
- CMIT is ISO approved and ensures activities reflect good practice initiatives within further education, EQAVET guidance, ILM policies, QQI policies, and the European Standards and Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance within Higher Education Institutions.
- CMIT complete an annual Internal audit ahead of an external ISO audit. The standard adopted is the ISO 9001 International Standard. This certification provides a robust level of externality to our Quality Assurance review process.
- CMIT benchmark grades awarded against national standards. A grade analysis is completed and presented in the Internal Verification report for each certification cycle.
- CMIT benchmark internationally using the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) Quality Assessment for E-Learning: A Benchmarking Approach (third edition) guideline. These guidelines have been developed to provide a set of benchmarks, quality criteria and notes for guidance against which blended and e-Learning programmes and supporting systems can be judged. EADTU is the leading institutional network for innovative online, open, and flexible universities and is at the heart of the modernisation agenda. It is committed to the Bologna Process and the ET2020 Strategy.

5.3 Pedagogical approach

Experiential learning

- 'Experiential learning' is central to our pedagogical approach. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is a model of learning for adult learners which is consistent with how adults naturally learn, grow, and develop (Kolb, 1984).
- The most widely used learning theory is Kolb's experiential learning cycle, which is comprised of four phases "concrete learning," "reflective observation," "abstract conceptualisation" and "active experimentation."
- **Concrete experience** – we provide learners with new experiences, or a reinterpretation of existing experiences through applied tasks, projects, simulations, and skills demonstrations. Programmes are designed to allow leaners to make meaning from their experiences encountered in a real-world context.
- **Reflective observation of the new experience** – assessments require learners to reflect, analyse and interpret concrete experiences and newly acquired knowledge and skills. Structured opportunities are provided for critical reflection to achieve new understanding. Formative feedback is also provided to allow for personal growth and development and for further reflection.
- **Abstract conceptualization reflection** – assessments require learners to develop conclusions or innovative ideas from their experience. Programmes provide structured guided practice which facilitates reflection and evaluation, both of which are required in experiential learning.
- **Active experimentation** – programmes require learners to applies their newly acquired skills, e.g., by creating a website, a health and safety policy, running a team event etc.
- Experiential Learning aligns with the needs of our target learners. Adult learners have broad knowledge and experience and brings varied perspectives from which they can draw on when completing a programme of study. Experiential learning is particularly suited to adult learners as it allows them to integrate and apply academic skills to understanding practical experiences within their own personal context.
- Programmes and associated assessments are designed to engage and facilitate learners in direct experience and guided reflection with the aim of increasing knowledge and developing skills.

Active learning techniques

- Active learning is "a method of learning in which students are actively or experientially involved in the learning process and where there are different levels of active learning, depending on student involvement...students participate in active learning when they are doing something besides passively listening." (Bonwell and Eison, 1991).
- Learners are provided with information regarding Active Learning, its meaning, its value, and ways to engage in Active Learning.
- Learners are provided with materials and resources which require active participation including discussion, problem solving, practical application, observation, reflection, analysis, and evaluation.
- Course manuals are custom designed and make use of self-revision activities to encourage learners to apply theory in a practical context.
- Case studies are provided for learners as a means of linking theory to practice and creating simulated environments for learners to apply and test their knowledge and skills.
- Quizzes are provided for learners which enable summative self-revision and require learners to actively participate in reviewing their own progress.
- Learners are encouraged to engage in open dialogue with their programme tutor throughout their programme of study.
- Assessment briefs are designed to be practical in nature, often requiring the learner to carry out a task in the context of their own environment. This allows for meaningful application of learning as well as an opportunity to practice self-reflection and evaluation.
- Tutor-led live online classes create opportunities for active learning through their structured design which includes content delivery, synchronous activities with other learners, direct live interaction with the programme tutor and live question and answer sessions to allow leaners interact with peers.
- Tutor recorded video is provided for learners. These videos are designed to complement the indicative content in the course manuals providing a further opportunity for learners to engage with the content.
- Technology is utilised to create a learning environment which is conducive to active learning. CMIT monitor, review, and assess changes and innovations in technology to identify areas for enhancement in this area.

Clear learning outcomes

- All programmes have a clearly documented set of associated learning outcomes.
- In the case of a Major award, specific learning outcomes are documented for each module of the programme.

- Assessments are designed to measure the achievement of each learning outcome in the programme descriptor.
- Learners are provided with clear statements outlining the knowledge/skills required to participate in their chosen programme.
- Assessments, and associated rubrics, are devised to measure each learning outcome.

Personal Learning Plan

- A Personal Learning Plan is completed by each learner upon commencement of their programme of study.
- This plan requires learners to identify and list their personal goals and motivations for undertaking the programme. This engages the learner on a personal level and links the programme outcomes to their personal motivations.
- Learners must complete a planned submission schedule for their assessment work. This encourages learners to take responsibility for planning their study schedule.
- Learners are asked to provide background information which informs the programme tutor of the context of the learner's motivations and learning needs. This facilitates meaningful discussion between the learner and tutor.
- Learners are advised of the Reasonable Accommodation policy and procedures to ensure they are aware of how to engage with these services if required.

Directed and self-directed learning

- The ratio of directed and self-directed learning for each programme is consistent with the ranges outlined in the QQI Guidelines for Preparing Programme Descriptors for FET programmes leading to CAS awards guide.
- Programme descriptors and validation application documents clearly document the required directed and self-directed learning hours for programmes of study.

5.4 Learning environment

CMIT Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

- CMIT delivers and maintains a VLE which is in keeping with the overall Teaching and Learning strategy and ethos of the college.
- The VLE provides and promotes a positive learning experience for all learners and encourages Active Learning.
- Detailed policies and procedures are in place to manage and oversee the quality of the VLE.

Teaching methodologies / modes

Course content

- Course content and related materials are designed specifically to address the indicative content and learning outcomes stipulated in the programme descriptor.
- Custom developed course manuals are in place for each programme. Manuals are written by qualified subject matter experts.
- They are reviewed and updated regularly to ensure content remains relevant and in line with best practice.
- Manuals use active learning techniques and include directed learning activities, case studies, self-revision activities, thus linking theory to practice activities.

One-to-one tutor support

- One-to-one tutor support is provided for each learner for the duration of their programme. This is achieved though:
- Direct one-to-one messaging where the learner may engage in one-to-one dialogue with their tutor.
- Written, formative individual developmental feedback provided by the programme tutor following each assessment submission.
- Clear and measured response times to allow learners to plan their studies accordingly.

Live online classes (webinars)

- Live online classes (webinars) are delivered by programme tutors.

- Lesson plans are in place for each webinar which documents the content and scheduling for the webinar.
- Webinar materials are designed by qualified subject matter experts and are reviewed and updated in line with changes to course content.
- Specialised webinar software is used to facilitate each of access and maximise learner interaction during each session. Webinars are scheduled outside of typical business hours to facilitate attendance by learners who experience time constraints due to employment.
- Webinars are structured to allow sufficient time for tutor led content delivery, learner interaction and exchange of idea via guided activities, assessment discussion and live question and answer sessions allowing synchronous interaction between learners and the tutor.

Tutor led videos

- Tutor led videos are provided to support content delivery.
- Videos are produced using specialised software allowing access with no additional software by the learner.
- Videos are available for the duration of the programme and can be viewed at will by leaners.
- Content is custom designed and scripted to compliment the programme content.

Self-revision quizzes

- Self-revision quizzes are in place for each programme.
- Quizzes are available to learners for the duration of their programmes. The focus on quizzes is on: (1) measuring retention of programme content, concepts, and (2) applying knowledge gains based on a scenario or micro case study.
- Quizzes are automatically graded providing instant summative feedback for learners.
- Quizzes may be used multiple times allowing learning to measure knowledge acquisition.

Guidelines, instructions, and support material

- Comprehensive guides and support materials are provided in a clear and easy to access manner for learners.
- These guides support learners in completing their programme and contain guidance on areas such as assessment formatting and presentation, referencing (including a custom designed video), and course planning and study skills.

Pastoral support

- Pastoral support is available to all learners for the duration of their programme.
- There is a dedicated Student Support Team available by phone during business hours.

Pastoral support

5.5 The role of the Tutor

Academic support

- The learner's assigned tutor is their primary point of contact for academic support during their programme.
- Tutors provide support with course queries and assessment queries.
- Learners may contact tutors directly and the tutor will reply within one working day of receiving a learner query.
- Response times are monitored as part of the college's monthly audit.

Live classes

- Tutors deliver live classes in line with the college delivery guidelines, adhering to the best practice outlined by the college.
- Lesson plans are supplied along with the class content to the tutor prior to each live class.
- Tutors review the materials provided in advance of the live class.
- All live classes are supervised to provide support to the Tutor delivering and to the monitor the delivery.
- Training is provided to tutors as required in the delivery of live classes.
- Tutors will answer learner queries during the dedicated question and answer time scheduled.

Formative feedback

- Tutors provide individual formative feedback to learners following every assessment submission. Tutors provide feedback within the timeframes set by the college.
- Feedback is developmental and provides learners with an indication of their achievement.
- Formative feedback activities are opportunities to promote and measure student knowledge and skills.
- Formative feedback is ongoing and helps tutors to identify areas for development and how to improve. Areas for further learning may be outlined in tutor feedback.
- Tutor feedback is reviewed as part of the Internal Verification process and feedback is provided to each individual tutor following each certification cycle.

Assessment

- The learner's assigned tutor is their primary assessor.
- Tutor's review and assess learner work in line with the learning outcomes, grading criteria, and assessment policies of the college.
- Tutors participate in Teaching and Learning forums and complete cross moderation and assessment standardisation exercises as required.
- Tutors complete and submit all necessary assessment documentation. This is reviewed as part of the colleges monthly MIS audit.
- Tutor grading decisions are reviewed during the Internal Verification and External Authentication processes.
- Tutor grades are compared to national standards and individual feedback is provided to each individual tutor following each certification cycle.

5.6 Learner responsibilities

Outlining the requirements to participate

- An existing skill, knowledge or competence may be required before commencing a CMIT programme. These are called 'pre-requisites' and are clearly outlined for each programme on our website.
- 'Equipped to participate' statements outline the knowledge, skills, and competence a learner requires to participate in a programme with CMIT. These competencies are published on our website for all learners.
- The 'Equipped to Participate' statements include information on: accessing the specific entry requirements for programmes, required fluency for both level 5 and level 6 in generic skills such as literacy / numeracy / interpersonal skills, information on learning effort for programmes according to their credit value and the 'notional learning effort' that is required, details on the independent learning skills required, details of language skills required, details of resources required (e.g. working knowledge of computers, access to a word processing application), details of the specific supports available, PC and software requirements to access programmes.

Statement of Learner's responsibility

- Upon enrolment, learners agree to CMIT Terms and Conditions.
- These terms and conditions are sent to all learners upon enrolment and before commencing a programme.
- These conditions include a statement of learner responsibility which is reproduced here:
- "Learners agree to adhere to CMIT's policies and procedures while undertaking their programme. In particular Learners should make themselves aware of the following policies: Teaching and Learning Policies, Assessment Policies, Learner Supports and the Learner Journey.
- Assessments must be completed to the required standard in order to receive an award/certificate. Learners may be requested to re-submit their assessments if their work does not meet the required standard. This may impact the learner's ability to complete the course within the specified time frame. Where a learner fails to meet the assessment criteria, following more than 2 resubmissions of their work, this may result in a 'Fail' grade.
- All students' submitted assessment work must be their own original work. Students must read and adhere to the plagiarism policy as described in the CMIT Assessment Policies.

- CMIT uses software to determine plagiarism in students work. The college has a strict policy in relation to plagiarism, and if plagiarism is established, the penalties, which may be applied in who or in part, include resubmission of work (where the maximum grade awarded is a pass) or exclusion from the programme.
- The cost of third-party examinations is not included in Course Fees unless specifically stated on this website. There is no cost for sitting your allocated QQI exam, however, if you do not sit your allocated exam, a re-sit fee of eur40 will be payable.
- CMIT is not responsible for storing assessment documents or submitted files, where your allocated course time has expired and you have not completed all coursework, or where you have fully completed all assessments and have been certified for your course. It is the learner's responsibility to keep a copy of their work.
- Learners agree to CMIT's Policy on the use of online messaging as described in the CMIT Information and Data Management Policy.""

Academic Integrity

- We recognise that the basis of maintaining academic integrity is built on trust and a shared set of values and behaviours.
- Academic integrity is the commitment to, and demonstration of, honest and moral behaviour in an academic setting. It assumes that all interactions between the college and learners are approached with honesty. This includes all documentation and information submitted to the college for academic purposes.
- The onus for demonstrating academic integrity lies with the learner and we expect that all learners will take responsibility for their own academic integrity and engage honestly and truthfully during their studies.
- All learners enrolling on a programme of study with the college agree to the Terms and Conditions of enrolment which include the acceptance of the colleges terms and conditions in relation to the appropriate use of college resources, and adherence to the plagiarism policy.
- Learners are expected to: use any information provided to them in an appropriate manner according to copyright and privacy legislation, acknowledge all sources of information used in completing assessment work, not present the work of others as their own, conduct research in an ethical manner in line with the college plagiarism policy and act in an honest and ethical manner throughout their academic endeavours with the college.
- With continued changes and development in digital and online interactions we expect that learners will continue to maintain academic integrity and always adhere to the college plagiarism policy.

- Engaging with other learners on social media platforms to gain an unfair advantage in an assessment (for example through the reproduction and sharing of unpublished exam information / questions, sending, or sharing assessment work produced by another learner for the purpose of its use by another learner) is an example of breaching the college plagiarism policy and any cases where this has been deemed to have taken place would be dealt with in accordance with this policy.
- The use of online assessment generators i.e., essay mills is another example of breaching the college plagiarism policy. This represents attempting to pass off the work of another person as your own.
- Learners are encouraged to be aware of the various situations which may present themselves during their studies and to always protect their own academic integrity by refusing to engage with any instances which may breach the college polices on same.
- Questions or queries in relation to academic integrity can be directed to the Quality Director at any time and will be dealt with in an open and fair manner.
- Learners who wish to research this area further may wish to access a document prepared by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) [click here to access the document.](#)

5.7 Assessment strategy

Assessment

- Assessments are validated by the awarding body as part of the programme validation process.
- Assessment is designed to: (1) provide the basis for certification for the learner, and (2) provide a means of supporting and enhancing the learner and skills transfer that takes place when undertaking a programme of study with CMIT.
- Assessment is designed and carried out to provide fair, consistent, valid, transparent, and reliable measurement of achievement of learning outcomes.
- Assessment is designed to allow learners demonstrate achievement of the programme learning outcomes.
- The assessment instruments used are consistent with the programme descriptors published by the awarding body.

Assessment design

- In addition to being designed to meet the criteria laid down by the awarding body, the college considers the following principles when designing assessment.
- Assessments are designed to facilitate formative feedback, which is a key part of the learning process.
- Assessments consider the context in which they are being delivered (i.e., blended learning) and are designed to promote fairness and consistency among a diverse and remote learner population.
- Assessment design actively seeks to deter plagiarism. This will include the use of unique case studies, simulated environments, and application to the learner's own context etc.
- Assessment design promotes 'active learning.' Learners are required and encouraged to apply their learning in a practical and meaningful way.
- Assessments will provide variety and a challenge, where possible to provide all learners an opportunity to reach their potential.
- Assessment instructions to learners will be clear. Marks and expected word counts will be provided to learners.
- The timing and submission of assessments will be scheduled to consider the profile and target learner.

5.8 Enhancing Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning staff

- Robust people management policies and procedures are in place to ensure that suitability qualified staff are in place to deliver a quality learning experience.
- Continuous development in both academic and pastoral areas will be provided to all staff to maintain a quality and consistent approach to teaching and learning.
- Fair and consistent assessment is maintained through robust policies and procedures. Methods such as tutor standardisation, cross moderation of marking, regular feedback and benchmarking against national standards are carried out to support this.
- Staff are engaged and involved in reviewing and improving teaching and learning. This includes both scheduled activities such as programme review in addition to ad hoc activities such as continuous improvement and corrective action.

Learners

- Learners have an opportunity to provide feedback on all areas of their experience including the teaching and learning experience. This feedback will be reviewed and considered in the context of improving the quality of the learning experience.
- The college is committed to recruiting learners with the prerequisite skills required to be successful in their course of study.
- Learners will be supported in developing active learning skills and engaging effectively with resources designed to promote independent learning skills.
- Learners are provided with clear and documented policies and procedures for submitting complaints on any aspect of their learning experience and learner appeals.

Monitoring and review

- The quality of the learning experience is monitored and reviewed across all areas of delivery.
- Key metrics are gathered and reported on to inform on the attainment of learning objectives.
- Periodic programme reviews are scheduled and completed in line with the policies and procedures outlined.

- Outside of formal Programme Reviews, materials are monitored and reviewed on a continuing basis to ensure changes to relevant legislation, technology, advancement in best practice etc. are updated in a timely manner.