1.1 Governance

There is a system in place to oversee the education and training, research and related activity of the provider to ensure its quality. This governance structure enforces separation of responsibilities between those who produce/develop material and those who approve it. Included in the governance structure are groups or units which (i) make decisions and (ii) approve them. Some broad examples of areas overseen by governance structures include:

- Education, training and related activities (for example, programme development prior to approval and submission for evaluation or validation)

- Internal and, where appropriate, external programme approval (validation) procedures

- Learner results prior to submission for approval as qualifications/awards and for certification

- Self-evaluation findings and programme and related service improvement reports, including agreed follow-up actions

Groups or units responsible for the oversight of education and training, research and related activities are identified in the provider's documented procedures. The terms of reference for these groups or units are documented and published. Where a provider's scale is such that it cannot support internal committees, alternative arrangements are put in place to ensure objective oversight.

Quality assurance systems include procedures that ensure (as fit for context and purpose):

a) *A system of governance where objectives are aligned with mission and strategy*

The quality assurance system focuses on how, and whether, the provider achieves its objectives and (periodically) on the suitability of the objectives in light of the provider's own mission and other criteria. Operational objectives are specified (at various levels) and are aligned with the provider's mission, strategy and obligations to external stakeholders (statutory, regulatory, professional or other).

b) *The quality assurance system is owned by the provider*

The quality assurance system is embedded and maintained on a cross-organisational basis with involvement of all provider staff. This includes all levels of management, administration, teaching staff and learners.

c) *A system of governance that protects the integrity of academic processes and standards*

Academic decision-making reflects the interests of learners and the maintenance of standards. It is independent of commercial considerations. Overall corporate decision-makers within the provider, whether trustees, owners, shareholders or others, do not exercise exclusive authority or undue influence over academic decision-making. Academic decision-makers are appropriately qualified and experienced; they are aware of available resources for programme delivery and ensure that standards are maintained.

d) *A system of governance that considers risk*

There are procedures in place for the identification, assessment and management of risk. The system of governance has procedures in place to ensure that the provider is not engaged in activities or partnerships that might undermine the integrity of the education and training offered or the awards in the National Framework of Qualifications to which they lead, either in Ireland or abroad. Risk extends to the mode of provision, for example, alternative modes of delivery not embraced by the QA system. The consideration of risk also extends to:

• maintaining academic integrity

• the avoidance of academic or other fraud associated with provision and related services

• planning to ensure capacity to provide adequate services to the number and type of students recruited

e) *A system of governance that considers the results of internal and external evaluation*

Consideration is given to the findings of internal and external evaluation and self-monitoring processes. Appropriate responses, including action plans, are developed in light of those findings and of past experience (including trends).