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Related legislation, policies, procedures, guidelines and local protocols	<p>This policy has been designed with due regard to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), Quality and Qualifications Ireland - Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), Quality and Qualifications Ireland - Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 - European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), et. al (2015), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) - Participating on evaluation panel as peer reviewer (2015), Quality and Qualifications Ireland
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1. PURPOSE

SQT is committed to engaging with reputable external bodies for any aspect of programme delivery or external peer review. Engagement with third parties is subject to appropriate internal and external quality assurance procedures.

2. SCOPE/APPLICATION

This policy applies to all relationships established by SQT that aid in the development of our knowledge and contribute to the range and quality of programmes delivered to our learners.

3. RESPONSIBILITY

The Academic Council is responsible for ensuring that SQT complies with its QA standards when establishing relationships with external parties.

4. POLICY

SQT is committed to establishing and maintaining close links with reputable national and international awarding bodies and other educational institutes in delivering its programmes. In addition to delivering QQI and NEBOSH accredited programmes, SQT also offers programmes which have been validated through our Training Partners, these are set out in Table 1 below. Comprehensive details concerning all programmes are published on the SQT website www.sqt-training.com.

Awarding Body / Institute	Approved Training Partner
International Register of Certified Auditors (IRCA)	Antaris
Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA)	Antaris
Association of Energy Engineers (AEE)	Target Energy
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)	IMS
International Food Protection Training Institute (IFPTI)	IMS

Table 1: SQT's relationship with other Awarding Bodies

It is a strategic imperative that SQT maintains formal links with key industry stakeholders and engages with the broader education and training community, such links are set out in Section 5 below. In the context of Expert Panellists and Examiners, SQT are hugely committed to applying due diligence when proposing and selecting independent expertise such as panellists for Peer Review or External Examination. Core principles and the process adopted is set out in Sections 5. Peer and External Stakeholder Relationships and Section 6. Expert Panellists, Examiners and Authenticators respectively.

5. PEER AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

SQT maintains formal links with key industry stakeholders and engages with the broader education and training community through attendance at conferences and membership of peer groups. The key stakeholder links and relationships, are as follows:

- **HECA:** SQT are a member of HECA (Higher Education Colleges Association) since 2014. HECA is the recognised voice of independent higher-level education in Ireland. HECA's main focus is on representing the independent third level sector by ensuring the highest standards of quality amongst its members.
- **Lean Six Sigma Network:** SQT initiated the formation of the Lean Six Sigma Network in 2004. This network was founded as a means of engaging a wide range of organisations that were on a Lean Six Sigma journey. The network provides a forum for Tutors and practitioners to share information, discuss technical problems and engage in continuous learning about the latest Lean Six Sigma tools and techniques. This network benefits both the members and SQT, as it works as a two-way process in sharing and learning.
- **Skillnets:** SQT delivers programmes to a range of Skillnets. These are government funded groups, tasked with identifying training programmes of direct relevance to the needs of their member organisations. These groups are categorised into a wide range of industry types such as the food & drink industry, the pharmaceutical industry and hospitality sector etc.
- **IITD (Institute of Training & Development):** SQT is a member of IITD. This facilitates networking with those involved in teaching and learning in industry and also industry trends in Training & Development.

6. EXPERT PANELLISTS, EXAMINERS AND AUTHENTICATORS

Core principles adopted when selecting external expertise for panel membership and external examination are as follows¹:

- **Competence:** It is imperative that the expert panellist has appropriate levels of experience and knowledge to offer an informed opinion on the activities and/or processes being evaluated. Competence may be demonstrated through:
 - Recognised professional standing and reputation i.e. having particular knowledge and experience in higher education and training and recognised expertise in a specific field of learning.
 - Expertise in quality assurance, programme accreditation/review and other issues relating to learning modes, teaching methodologies, assessment and learner support mechanisms.
 - Knowledge of other education and training systems; including an international context for awards/programmes/providers of a similar nature to that being assessed.
 - Knowledge of business/industrial/social/educational environment relevant to the field of learning.

¹ Participating on evaluation panel as peer reviewer, QQI - Apr 2015

- Research publications and citations as relevant to the particular panel being convened.
- **Independence:** SQT must be confident that, in so far as is possible, all panellists make impartial judgements in an independent manner, without the influence of SQT. It is important that panel members engage in the review process without any conflict of interest, or perception of conflict of interest. All independent panellists appointed by SQT are required to sign a Declaration of No Conflict of Interest. Such documents are maintained by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs.

6.1. Procedure for Selection of External Panel Members (QQI)

The selection and appointment of external panel members is managed by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs, in accordance with the core principles set out above and the following procedure:

1. Nominations for suitable Expert Panel members are sought from relevant personnel within or external to SQT.
2. Nominees are considered by the Academic Council where they are evaluated based on the core principles set out in 4.4 above. If the nominee is not considered suitable, alternatives are sought and proposed to the Academic Council until such time that a suitable candidate is found.
3. The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs proposes the nominee(s) to QQI, having been approved by Academic Council.
4. If approved by QQI, the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs makes formal contact with the proposed member. Should they agree to undertake the role, SQT provides him/her with appropriate information which makes clear their roles and responsibilities within the panel.
5. If QQI do not agree with the proposed nominee, alternative nominees are agreed by the Academic Council and the above process is repeated.
6. The following documentation is sought from the Expert Panel member and provided to QQI, if requested:
 - Curriculum Vitae
 - Signed Declaration of No Conflict of Interest

The names and affiliations of expert panellists, examiners and authenticators are maintained by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs.

7. POLICY MONITORING

Responsibility	Frequency	Methods
Director of Quality and Academic Affairs – Document Update	Per QA audit schedule	- Review of documentation as set out in QAP2-1: Ongoing Review and Update of QA Documents.
Director of Quality and Academic Affairs	Bi-Annual	- Review of auditing activities carried out by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ International Register of Certified Auditors (IRCA) ○ Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA) ○ Association of Energy Engineers (AEE) ○ Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) ○ International Food Protection Training Institute (IFPTI)

8. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version No	Approval Date	Description of Revision	Originator	Approved By
1.0	14/12/18	New Document	Senior Management Team	Academic Council