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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)
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1. PURPOSE

This policy outlines SQT's approach to and expectations for teaching and learning and the means by which it supports learners to "develop real capability".

2. SCOPE/APPLICATION

This policy applies to all programmes and all teaching staff.

3. RESPONSIBILITY

The following responsibilities apply with respect to the implementation of this policy:

- The Academic Council approves this policy.
- The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs is responsible for ensuring site wide compliance.
- All staff are responsible for ensuring compliance within their respective roles.

4. ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

In order to provide a context for SQT's Teaching and Learning policy, it is appropriate to provide an organisational context which considers the range of programmes offered and the distinctive profile of the learner cohort.

4.1. Programme Range

SQT presently offers approx. 110 programmes categorised into the following subject areas:

1. Lean Six Sigma
2. Continual Process Improvement
3. Project & Programme Management
4. Quality
5. Environment & Energy Management
6. Health & Safety
7. Food Safety
8. Life Sciences
9. Laboratory
10. Hospitals / Medical
11. Train the Trainer
12. Leadership & Personal Development

SQT's programmes vary in duration from 0.5 to 20 teaching days and many programmes involve significant learner effort hours outside of face-to-face delivery. All programmes are tutor led with one exception (International Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety). This programme is delivered

through a blended learning methodology and is accredited by the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH).

As well as offering short non-validated programmes, SQT delivers a range of programmes which are validated by the following awarding bodies:

- QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland)
- NEBOSH (National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health)
- IRCA (The International Register of Certificated Auditors)
- IEMA (The Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment)
- AEE (Association of Energy Engineers)

4.2. Learner Profile

A unique feature of SQT is its distinctive learner profile. All SQT learners are adult learners who have already embarked on their working careers, and have gained valuable experience in their respective industries. The majority of learners are in full-time employment at the time they begin their chosen SQT programmes.

SQT is located within the National Technology Park in Limerick. All administration and management functions are located on site.

Unlike many other higher education providers, SQT does not provide centre-based delivery at its location in Limerick. It offers two types of delivery options, as follows:

- **Public Programmes** are delivered at central locations, typically hotel venues across Ireland.
- **In-house Programmes** are tailored for a particular organisation and generally cater for four to fifteen learners. Such programmes are usually delivered at the company's own training facilities.

5. POLICY

Through innovation, range of programmes, exceptional teaching and learning, and its long-established reputation, SQT supports each individual learner to “develop real capability”. SQT is committed to providing a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning, which plays an important role in stimulating learners’ motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process.

SQT’s policy with respect to Teaching and Learning is directly aligned to the organisations mission which is to:

*To provide a **wide variety of relevant, effective, challenging and innovative** training and education programmes **specifically designed, developed, delivered and supported** by our panel of **expert Tutors and robust systems**, for learners in Service and manufacturing companies, public and semi-state organisations and individuals.*

*Our **focused programmes** will help our learners **overcome the challenges** they face in their day-to-day lives and contribute to their **on-going personal & professional development**.*

*We are **committed to providing recognised trusted qualifications** (where applicable) and a **quality service**, every step of the learning experience.*

6. SQT'S TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

SQT have developed a formal Teaching and Learning Strategy to build on its existing strengths, focusing on specific and measurable activities that enhance the learning experience and professional and personal development of teaching staff. The key pillars of this teaching and learning strategy are:

- 1) **DEVELOPMENT OF RELEVANT PROGRAMMES:** SQT will progressively enhance its programme offering in response to the changing environment and the needs of its unique learner cohort.
- 2) **PROVISION OF HIGH QUALITY PROGRAMME DELIVERY AND LEARNER EXPERIENCE:** SQT will consistently provide high quality delivery and support mechanisms specific to our unique learner profile with high levels of achievement and learner satisfaction.
- 3) **DEFINE AND SUPPORT GOOD PRACTICE IN ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK:** SQT will continue to develop and implement approaches to assessment and feedback that meet our programme requirements, align clearly and transparently to learning outcomes and maximise learning and performance.
- 4) **PROMOTE LEARNER ACCESS, RETENTION, PROGRESSION AND ACHIEVEMENT** SQT will continue to develop and implement approaches to support learner access to suitable SQT programmes and support learners who require assistance to achieve course completion and accreditation, (where applicable).
- 5) **PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING:** SQT will continue to support the progressive development of appropriate technology based approaches to teaching and learning.

7. TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACH

SQT is committed to the provision of a teaching and learning experience which is practical, learner oriented, well researched and industry informed. The organisations distinctive learner profile (experienced, working adult learners) is fundamental to the methods adopted in teaching and learning practices across all programmes.

SQT's Tutors support and foster the importance of delivering programmes through a combination of appropriate and fit-for-purpose teaching methods. The learning outcomes of all programmes are subsequently enhanced by exposing the learner to a variety of pedagogies. A variety of learning

methods are utilised including workshops, creative learning, mentoring, case studies, group work, problem based learning, reflective diaries, learning logs, action plans and presentations.

In the case of SQT's Lean Six Sigma (LSS) programmes, SQT's Tutors drive operational innovation through the teaching and mentoring of learners, involvement in industrial consultancy and contribution to high stake projects. Tutors are involved in researching new and innovative solutions in industrial and work related problems on an ongoing basis. By its very nature, Lean Six Sigma is often applied to solve difficult problems and Tutors are at the coal-face of this action research approach. Many research projects have involved the use of innovative technology in the relevant industry, collaborative research and development between many stakeholders.

7.1. Underlying Principles

SQT recognises the importance of distinguishing the unique qualities of adult learners so as to effectively incorporate the principles of adult learning within all aspects of its programmes. Its teaching and learning philosophy has, therefore, been underpinned in the well-grounded and acknowledged principles of adult learning (Andragogy) (Knowles, 1984)¹ as summarised in Figure 1 below. This Andragogy theory describes the specific methods which should be employed in the education of adults and their involvement in identifying their learning needs. It is consistent with the constructivist philosophy where learners are expected to reflect on their own experiences as part of an active, constructive process.

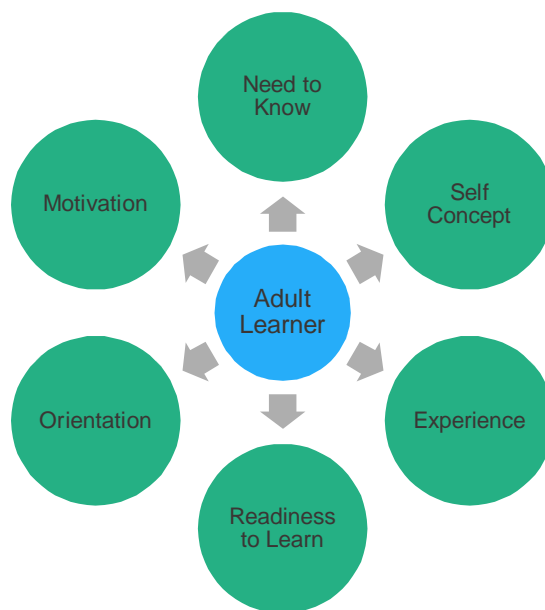


Figure 1: Principles of Adult Learners (Knowles, 1984)

¹ Knowles, M. (1984). *Andragogy in Action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

1. **Need to know:** Adults need to know why they are learning a topic before learning commences.
2. **Self-concept:** Adults need to be responsible for their decisions on education and training.
3. **Role of learners' experiences:** Adults use experiences as the basis for learning activities.
4. **Readiness to learn:** Adults are more interested in learning if there is an immediate relevance to their work.
5. **Orientation to learning:** Adult learning is problem-centred rather than content orientated.
6. **Motivation to learn:** Adults' most potent motivators are intrinsic.

This learner centred approach teaches learners how to think, solve problems, evaluate evidence, analyse arguments and in some cases, generate hypothesis. The key characteristics of this approach is to fully engage learners in learning, undertake explicit skill instruction, reflect on what they are learning and how to give them some control over the learning processes and encourage collaboration.

7.2. SQT's Implementation of Core Teaching and Learning Principles

Table 1 below defines SQT's approach to teaching and learning based on the key principles of adult learning set out above.

Core principle	Principles Adopted at SQT
Need to know	<p>Pre-course engagement: In the case of in-house courses, it is imperative to understand the learning context which would include, the context and circumstances around the business need driving the requirement for the programme. This ensures that the programme learning outcomes satisfy the desired business outcome. Time is set aside at the commencement of each programme to discuss and explore each learners particular learning needs and expectations. If necessary and in certain circumstances, learners are invited to engage with the Tutor directly in advance of the programme to discuss the learning outcomes and assessment requirements. This all provides for deeper understanding and reflection on the learners own motivation for attending and investing in the programme and consequently in their own development.</p> <p>Programme Design (Customised Programmes): SQT Tutor groups design and tailor customised programmes to meet an organisations requirement and consistently speak to and reinforce these requirements within the programme. This ensures that links are made and application of learning is clearly understood.</p>
Learners' self-concept	<p>Tutors strive, where possible, to provide control and choice to learners by encouraging self-directed learning and provide support to individual learning styles. Tutors ensure the content and approach of programmes is learner centred, offers different mediums of learning to appeal to different learning styles and encourages learners to ask for what they need to ensure the learning experience is meaningful and devoid of unnecessary complication. Small working groups within learning sessions are often chosen by the learners themselves and there is encouragement to share and add their own learning experience to these group activities.</p>

Role of learners' experiences	Tutors work to the principle that experience is the highest authority in any learning situation, to this end, they encourage the learner to draw parallels and similarities between their own experiences and what they are learning at any given time during the programme. This is achieved through regular interaction and in some programmes, through scheduled reflective practise. Learning content is also designed to allow for as much practical application of all theoretical concepts, to afford time to experience the learning in a meaningful realistic way and to allow the opportunity for feedback and reflection on the experience. This supports the building of skill and the validation of knowledge gained and applied.
Readiness to learn	Tutors embrace SQT's mission to ensure learners "develop real capability". Content is at all times developed to allow time for learners to consider the learning required to develop their skills and knowledge or solve the problem they may be experiencing in the workplace. Learners are encouraged to voice and share this in the larger group setting, with the aim of encouraging and inviting shared experiences from fellow learners and collaborative working towards meeting the individual learners learning need. Learner are invited to test their skills and knowledge through meaningful assessment and supportive feedback on what they see as working well and where there is a need or opportunity for further refinement or practice of knowledge.
Orientation to learning	Tutors understand that for learners undertaking any programme, the learning outcomes are often for them to work through, find options to or to solve a problem within the workplace or in how they are approaching or conducting their work. The Learning approach is, therefore, designed to firstly understand what the problem is and from there allow time for the learner to explore this fully in the light of awareness individually and then with the help and support of the group. SQT Tutors work to the principle that problem solving happens more effectively where more inputs are shared and received and the learners are afforded time to check their understanding, approaches and methods with all others involved in the learning experience plus other stakeholders. This includes fellow learners, tutors, work-based sponsors and mentors.
Motivation to learn	Tutors support the learning process which has its inception with the identified needs of the learner. They know that all learners come ready to learn and a key component in a successful learning experience is the space provided to encourage expression of that readiness. To this end, SQT Tutors meet the learners where they are, adopt a learner centred approach through exploring the learner context and encourage full understanding, validation and expression of the motivation factors behind the learning need. This is then referenced regularly throughout the learning intervention through reflective practice, group discussion work and plenary sessions.

7.3. Three-Way Partnership Model

Given the industry focus of SQT's programmes, it considers participation on programmes as a three-way partnership between the learner, employer and SQT. Figure 2 below provides an overview of this approach and summarises the responsibilities of each partner.

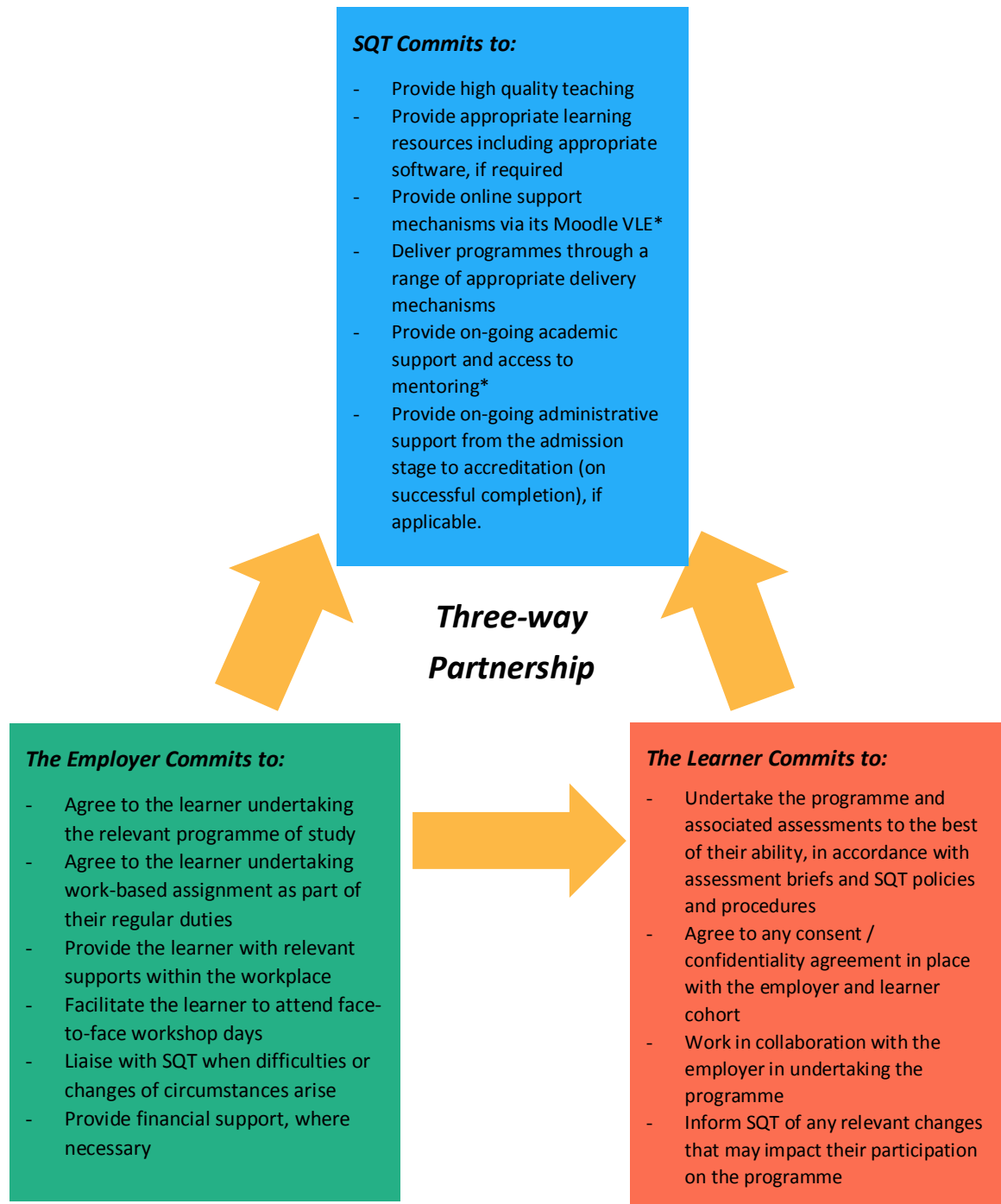


Figure 2: Three-Way Partnership

8. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Programmes are delivered at public locations (nationwide subject to demand) or at onsite training facilities in the case of in-house programmes. The objective is to provide a high-quality environment for learners and to avail of all the learning support tools relevant and available for specific programmes.

As regards public programme delivery, facilities include high specification conference rooms with state-of-the-art support technology including high speed Wi-Fi. A set of quality guidelines in the form of a training room specification applies to the physical learning environment for all programmes. This varies according to the requirements of the programme. Although this cannot always be fully adhered to at onsite training facilities, venue managers are nevertheless made aware of the requirements and informed of the importance of such. The training room specification includes items such as:

- i. Health & safety
- ii. Room layout and equipment
- iii. Learning environment considerations (air conditioning, water, light, access to fresh air, breakout space, access to work area etc)
- iv. Special requirements
- v. Security
- vi. Programme materials
- vii. Technology
- viii. Programme display

In addition, SQT utilises Moodle as its Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). This system is generally utilised for programmes with a duration of 3 days or longer. The platform provides a secure resource repository and allows for the upload of assignment submission and subsequent capture of Tutor feedback. The system is also used as a Tutor Portal which is accessible by all Tutors. This portal acts as a platform for sharing resources and experiences and is easily accessible by all Tutors. There is also the facility for learners to directly contact the Tutor, when necessary, via the portal.

9. ONGOING MONITORING AND SELF – EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES

All monitoring and self-evaluation activity is expected to identify areas for improvement and innovation. Figure 3 presents SQT’s methodology for ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement of all activities, including its programmes.

1. On-going monitoring draws on information from a variety of sources through appropriate monitoring mechanisms.
2. Feedback and information collected informs a review by the relevant operational or academic unit. For example, feedback relating to programme content may be reviewed by the programme delivery team in the first instance and then by the Programme Board. However, feedback pertaining to a venue may be reviewed by the Operations Management Team initially and subsequently noted at the Programme Board.
3. The relevant review unit determines the necessary action required (e.g. corrective action, QA update, programme update etc.).
4. Actions are collated by the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs and are included in SQT’s quality improvement plan documents (spreadsheets are used to record actions and track/monitor their implementation). These are live documents which are continuously updated by the personnel responsible for implementing the required action. The Director of Quality and Academic Affairs is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) with oversight from the Quality Committee and reports to the Academic Council. Relevant Programme Directors are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Programme Improvement Plan (PIP) and reports this to the Programme Board and Academic Council where relevant.

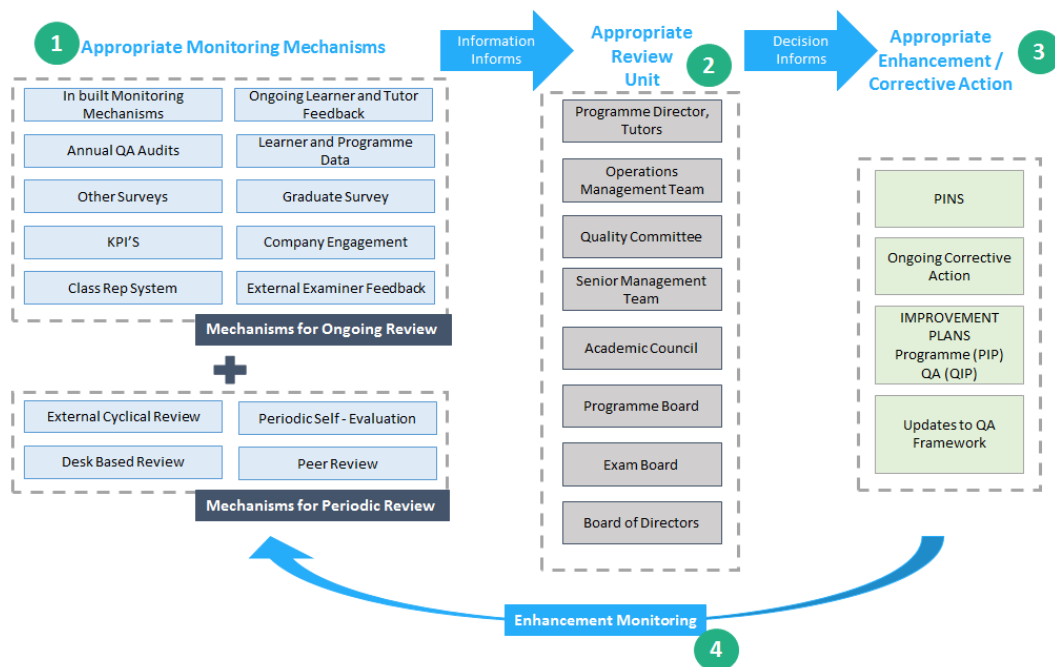


Figure 3: Ongoing Monitoring, Periodic Review and Continuous Improvement Cycle

10. TEACHING STAFF

Since its establishment in 1989, SQT has employed the services of leading subject matter experts in specific areas to ensure that exceptional expertise is available to develop, deliver and support SQT’s course offerings. It has achieved this through a partnership approach with Training Partners. This partnership approach has worked successfully with huge benefit to learners, for almost 30 years. The policies and procedures for the recruitment and monitoring of teaching staff are set out in:

- QAP4-1: Recruitment and Induction of Teaching Staff
- QAP4-3: Monitoring the Effectiveness of Teaching Staff

All staff are experts in their field with many years industry experience. Tutors participate in both pedagogical and technical development on an annual basis in accordance with QAP4-4: Professional Development of Teaching Staff. There are many ways that SQT teaching staff actively engage in new skill development on an on-going basis. For example, as part of their daily work, they are regularly exposed to new challenges that require new research, investigation and discussion which leads to new learnings. All of these, both structured and unstructured, learning mechanisms help to constantly refresh and enhance the skillset of Tutors.

Teaching staff participate in peer support activities in line with QAP4-2: Peer Review of Teaching Staff. The Peer Review system is a supportive process to assist Tutors to discover and explore different approaches to teaching within their specific discipline, using the structured assistance of a trusted peer (observer). The overall aim of the process is to enhance the learner experience through the teaching process. The table below presents a useful typology of professional development activities, including both non-accredited and accredited activities (NFETL, 2016)².

Non-Accredited			Accredited
1. Collaborative (informal)	2 Unstructured (non formal)	3 Structured (non formal)	
Learning from these activities comes from their collaborative nature	These activities are independently led by the individual. Engagement is driven by the individual’s needs/interests. Individuals source the materials themselves.	Organised activities (by an institution, network or disciplinary membership body). They are typically facilitated and have a membership body.	Accredited programmes of study (ECTS or similar)
Examples			
Conversations with colleagues, peer networking, peer observations, online blogs/discussion forums	Reading articles, following social media, self-study, watching video tutorials, keeping a reflective teaching journal/portfolio, preparing an article for portfolio	SQT annual tutor days, workshops, seminars, MOOCs, conferences, summer schools, structured collaborative projects	Professional Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters, PhD, EdD in: Teaching and Learning, eLearning, Leadership in Education, Education Policy

Table 1: Accredited Vs Non Accredited Learning (NFETL, 2016)

² National Professional Development Framework for all Staff who Teach in Higher Education (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning [NFETL], 2016)

11. POLICIES RELATING TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

SQT's quality assurance system is detailed in QAP1-1: Quality Assurance Policy. This document describes SQT's approach to the management of its quality assurance system. Furthermore, the organisations governance structures and individual roles and responsibilities with respect to all quality activities (including teaching and learning) are set out in QAP1-2: SQT Governance.

Figure 4 below highlights the key areas within the QA system which directly support this Teaching and Learning Policy. This demonstrates the pivotal role of the Teaching and Learning Policy with respect to the management, delivery and assessment (where relevant) of programmes.

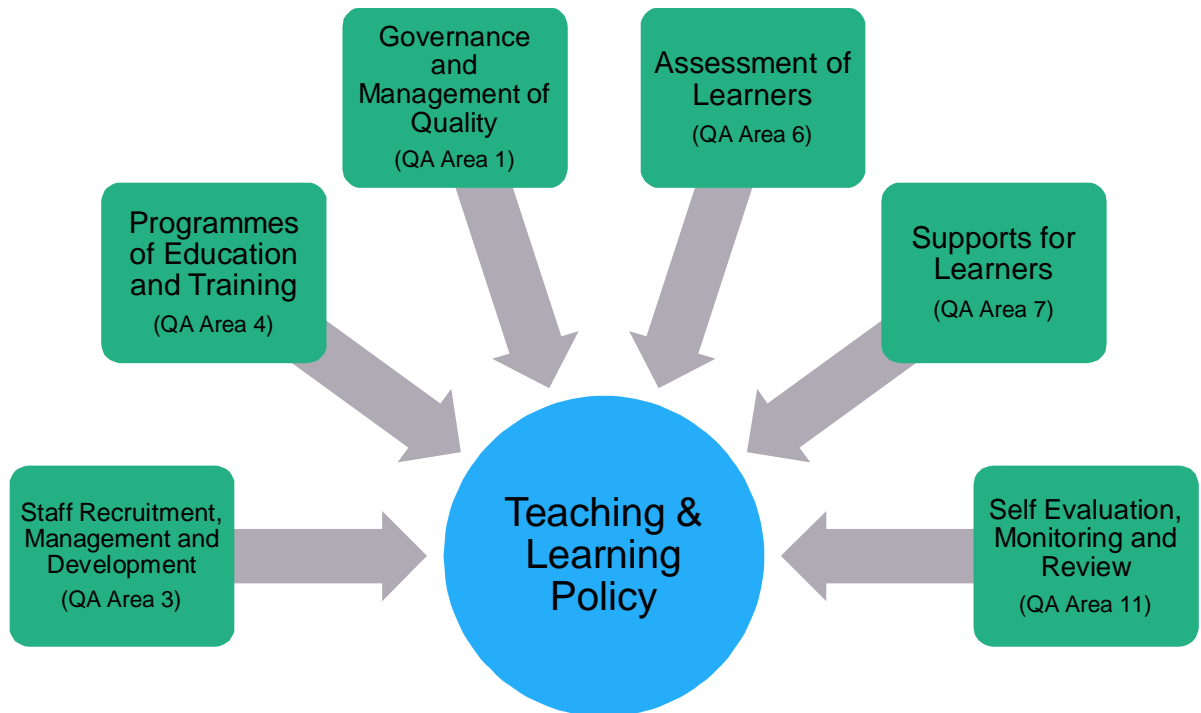


Figure 4: Key QA Areas Supporting the Teaching and Learning Policy

12. 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.
Academic Council Teaching & Learning Working Group Director of Quality and Academic	Each meeting Ongoing	- Review of progress of Teaching and Learning Strategy

13. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version No	Approval Date	Description of Revision	Originator	Approved By
1.0	14/12/18	New Document	Teaching and Learning Working Group	Academic Council

