



Quality Assurance Manual 2023 Policies &  
Procedures

# QUALITY MANUAL

## INTRODUCTION

Since 2001, O'Dwyer Safety Services has been dedicated to keeping Irish Workplaces safe. As a leading provider in the health and safety industry we provide expert knowledge to ensure our clients remain compliant with current Health and Safety legislation. We provide efficient and flexible solutions to all our clients' safety needs.

O'Dwyer Safety Services Ltd.'s aim is to provide learners with relevant and comprehensive health and safety training to facilitate learners' effective participation in workplace health and safety. OSS encourages active learner participation and is focused on providing accurate applicable information and skills relevant to the learner's workplace and current health and safety legislative requirements.

OSS is an accredited QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) Further Education (FE) provider and currently delivers a limited number of programmes in the areas of health & safety, (up to Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications). In recognition of the continued relevance and career-related opportunities that successful completion of these programmes offers learners, the Centre has undertaken a detailed review of its Quality Assurance Manual. The review included the associated processes and procedures referred to in this Handbook. The Centre will continue to place the duty of care to its learners as a key factor when making operational and strategic management decisions. Accordingly, this Manual has been rewritten to fully incorporate and/or adhere to the content contained in the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines 2016 document.

In addition, the following QQI produced documents were actively considered in the undertaking of this project:

- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- QQI Sector Specific QA (Quality Assurance) Guidelines for Independent/Private Providers 2016
- QQI Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013

Through positive engagement with all its stakeholders, both internal and external, the Centre can continually support and respond to the needs of learners at OSS. Domestic and global economies are currently facing new and unknown scenarios. Within this context, the professionally delivered, short-duration programmes provided by the Centre represent a key offering in addressing learners' requirements in a significantly changing marketplace. Operation delivery of these programmes will occur within a demonstrable overarching quality assurance structure.

OSS's success has been built around a team of skilled and committed staff, supported by a proven management team; all supported by a strong financial and business model.

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OSS currently offers an extensive range of accredited training programmes, with a focus on the Health and Safety sector. The business model continues to develop new course offerings and regularly update existing programs to ensure that all learners can develop skills required to reach their career goals and meet new legislative requirements.

OSS takes the view that a classroom-based learning process helps to create the scaffolding by which a learner may develop critical thinking skills, construct meaning and increase his/her understanding of the subject area. This approach to teaching and learning offers new methods in developing cognitive skills for learners, together with opportunities for group work supported through tutor oversight and guidance.

The Centre looks forward to providing the programmes to its learners in the coming years. The Centre additionally anticipates the continued benefits arising from the professional outcomes because of working to the QQI policies and procedures as the Centre's core underpinning quality assurance strategy.

## 1. GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURES

The governance infrastructure at O 'Dwyer Safety Services Ltd (OSS) has been established to ensure that the Centre is governed and managed effectively, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for associated responsibilities. Through the application of its governance model, OSS ensures that objective oversight is in place to ensure that the Centre is financially sustainable, and that economic management is sound. The governance model also clearly distinguishes between the institution's financial policy and the safeguarding of the quality and standards of its academic provision.

The governance structure at OSS has been designed to ensure quality in the educational and training service provided to all learners, including mechanisms to encourage continuous improvement in the management of quality. The quality assurance (QA) structure underpins the Centre's approach to realize its commitment to quality. While the Registrar has overall responsibility for the quality assurance in OSS, all staff members are key players in the development and implementation of QA. Collective responsibility is achieved through this approach.

Learners are represented on specific committees and are a key part of the QA process of the Centre. OSS recognizes that the participation of learners is a fundamental aspect of the QA process and therefore promotes learner engagement throughout the Centre. OSS values the learner perspective as a means of facilitating the enhancement of the learner experience and improving quality.

Through a cycle of planning, implementation and review, a process of continuous quality improvement is being established across the Centre. This process is interactive and collective, based upon a core structure of relevant but active committees and stakeholders (both internal and external) carrying out the procedures outlined throughout this Manual.

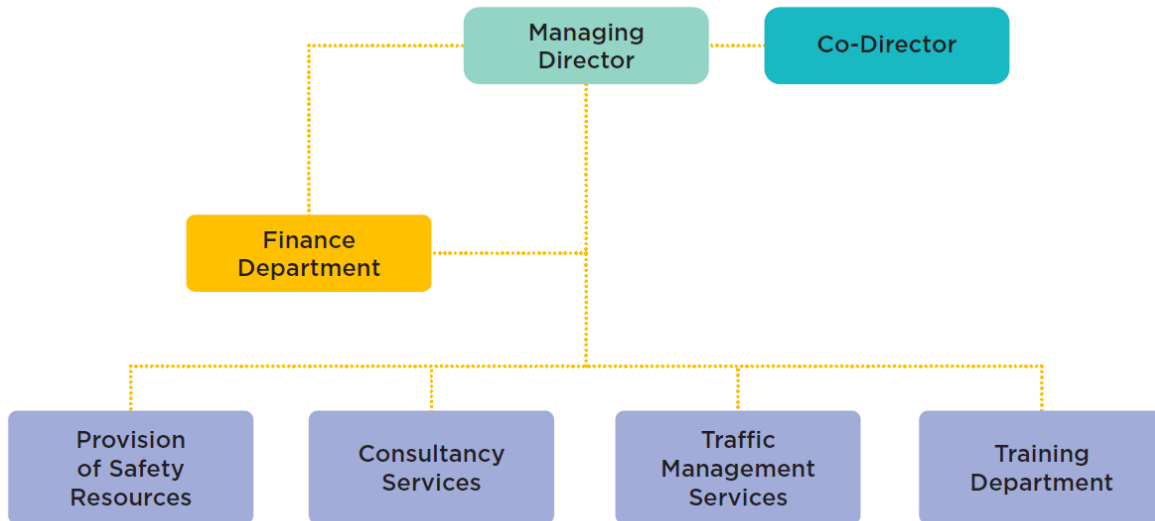
Accurate, effective, and timely communication among all OSS stakeholders is core to the effective operation of the Centre. At the heart of this are effective QA and organizational structures.

### 1.1 Overall Governance Infrastructure

The Centre's overall governance infrastructure facilitates a clear separation between the academic and commercial parts in the governance structure. This structure is in place to ensure that the academic decision-making processes (relating to the provision of education and training to learners) are independent of commercial considerations or the undue influence of the business owners.

OSS has appointed four relevant committees which represents the pinnacle of an academic governance architecture who all report to the Board of directors.

## O'DWYER SAFETY SERVICES LTD



### OSS COMMITMENT TO QUALITY-ASSURED EDUCATION AND TRAINING

At OSS, our training activities are underpinned by our robust quality assurance and our policies and procedures. Each of our policies and procedures has been developed and implemented to ensure that training is delivered in accordance with the National standards and is consistently applied across all programmes.

## 2 DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

### 2.1 Documented Approach to Quality Assurance Policy

#### PURPOSE

This policy outlines the structure within which the quality assurance (QA) systems will be developed, maintained, monitored, and improved. Through a cycle of planning, implementation, and review, a process of continuous quality improvement is being established across O Dwyer's Safety Services (OSS). These actions will ensure that the OSS QA policies and procedures are fit for purpose and allow the Centre to deliver its programmes to the highest standard while meeting statutory obligations and adhering to accrediting body guidelines.

#### POLICY STATEMENT

This policy applies to all policies and procedures identified in the QA Manual. The Centre's QA framework is based on five key stages.

OSS has reviewed its QA procedures and, as a result, updated its QA Manual. The policies and procedures outlined in the Manual have been designed to positively influence planned and systematic activities and to ensure quality requirements are met.

QA policies and procedures at OSS have been aligned with the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) 2016 Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and the 2016 Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. QQI is the independent State agency responsible for promoting quality and accountability in education and training services in Ireland. The QQI Mission is to sustain public confidence in the quality of education and training, promote trust in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and drive a culture of continuous improvement by education and training providers.

Policies and procedures have also been developed with reference to the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, the Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2015, the Disability Act 2005 and the Data Protection Act 2018. The OSS Manual has been developed to support and uphold the QQI mission and to ensure statutory and legal compliance. Policies and procedures have been further developed following consultation with staff and learners. Ongoing policy and procedure development will continue in consultation with staff, learners, and external stakeholders.

All policies and procedures documented within this Manual have been organized to facilitate ongoing management, implementation, and review. Handbook sections are classified to correspond with the QQI Core Statutory Assurance Guidelines and other relevant documents. These documents are identified within each relevant section.

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To ensure the policies and procedures continue to remain fit-for-purpose and effective as Centre circumstances change and to assist risk management through continued legal and regulatory compliance, all quality assurance documentation is subject to:

- Regular monitoring by the person(s) identified as responsible for document review.
- Regular internal quality reviews that will assess each area of the quality assurance framework.

## RESPONSIBILITY OF

The policy is the responsibility of the Registrar.

## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

To ensure that essential information is consistently provided and is available to all those affected by the policy, all OSS policy proposals conform to a standard framework. A policy and procedure template document ensures consistency in document communication and design.

Policies and related procedures are recorded centrally to facilitate ease of access and updating (where identified as being necessary). Policy and procedural documentation will be version controlled. This will allow the Centre to identify and track the development of policy and procedures over prolonged periods.

Policies and related procedures will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. Where changes are suggested or necessary, these will be addressed at regular management meetings and escalated to the Registrar.

When policies are updated, they will be presented to the Quality Committee for review and approval. Circumstances may determine the need for review outside the set QA review schedule. Where required, this will be scheduled by the Registrar. A comprehensive review of the QA framework will be completed regularly. Where possible, appointed review team members will represent operational areas other than their own



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The process will review documentation to determine the following:

- Are the policies relevant to the core area under review?
- Are the documents effective in ensuring that the interests of Centre stakeholders and the quality and standards of further education are safeguarded?
- Is the document implemented as outlined and delivering the intended outcomes for which it has been established?
- Does the document comply with statutory and regulatory obligations?
- Does the document contribute to the continued development and embedding of quality culture within the Centre?
- Are there any improvements that could be made to the documentation and the process?
- Is the document taking on board feedback collected through the various collection methods in place?

Proposals to introduce new policies and procedures or to update existing policies and procedures require approval from the Registrar and the Quality Committee before they can be considered as active.

The Registrar will document the outcomes, identified areas of best practice, and recommendations for continued improvement that are identified as outcomes of the internal review process. Actions and outcomes will contribute to the Centre Improvement Plan. The Registrar will prepare a report reviewing all outcomes, recommendations, and areas of change to policy documents. This report will be presented for review and approval to the Quality Committee.

## 3 PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### 3.1 Programme Development and Validation Policy

#### PURPOSE

OSS applies thorough processes for the development and validation of programmes of study outlined in this document. These processes will enable dialogue with internal and external stakeholders and the appraisal of new programmes by the Quality Committee and other relevant governance representatives.

#### POLICY STATEMENT

The adoption and implementation of a systematic approach to programme development and evaluation will ensure that programmes of study OSS align with policies and criteria relevant to programme validation as outlined by QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland). These include:

- OSS strategic and resource planning
- OSS quality assurance policies and procedures
- OSS monitoring and self-evaluation processes
- Learner and stakeholder feedback

OSS adopts all policies and procedures as outlined within this policy document. The OSS validation process will be evidence-based. To support this, all stakeholder input will be documented (for example, through meeting minutes, surveys, and meetings and consultation with stakeholders).

All proposed programmes submitted for validation will be developed in line with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and in adherence with the validation and criteria for the awards specified. All proposed programmes will provide a clear rationale for programme development that will subsequently be stated through the appropriate wording of learning outcomes.

Validation submissions will be subject to ratification by the Quality Committee which is solely responsible for the oversight and approval of submissions based on educational quality and relevance. The Board of Directors will be responsible for the consideration of all applications in direct relation to the Centre's overall strategy and resourcing and consider the recommendation of the Quality Committee. As a result, the final responsibility for applications for programme validation lies with the Board of Directors.

#### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Registrar.

## 3.1.1 Stage 1: Programme Identification

OSS maintains strong peer relationships with the broader education and training community and formal links with key industry stakeholders. Through engagement with external stakeholders, OSS keeps up to date with changing industry and labour force requirements. External stakeholders include local Chambers of Commerce, IOSH & Skillnet Ireland. This provides the Centre with the opportunity to identify knowledge and skills gaps which can be addressed through programme development. In addition, the ongoing research, monitoring, and review of current programmes combined with feedback from learners and staff provides insights into potential new opportunities within the area of programme development.

OSS will analyse, through research, the need for all proposed programmes to confirm that:

- A gap exists between present and desired conditions.
- A significant and measurable need exists for the proposed programme.
- The proposed programme is the correct response to meet the training need identified.
- Programme needs analysis will be informed by input from:
  - Discussions with education and training partners (e.g., Industry Advisory Boards)
  - Analysis of legislation, policy, and statutory requirements
  - Feedback (Learner, Tutor, Programme Manager, and Stakeholder)
  - Input from the Board of Directors and Quality Committee
  - Insights gained through conferences, networking events, and relevant publications.

Information from the needs analysis phase will be documented and subsequently applied to inform programme development. This will include the creation of performance objectives and indicative content to ensure proposed programmes meet the needs of target learning audiences.

## **3.1.2 Stage 2: Authorization for Programme Development - Internal**

The approval process will be scheduled within an adequate timeframe for the implementation of associated development, validation, and marketing activities.

All proposals for new programme development will be developed in direct adherence to internal and external requirements. Completed proposals will be forwarded to the Operations Committee who will review all proposals for new programme development. The Committee will forward a recommendation to the Board of Directors following a review of proposals.

The Board of Directors will determine whether the proposed programme of study will proceed. This decision will be based on the following:

- Suitability of the proposed programme as the correct measure to meet identified training needs.
- Implications of providing the proposed programme in line with Centre strategic and resource planning
- Contribution the proposed programme can make to labour market needs.
- Industry, employer, learner, statutory, and regulatory body support for the proposed programme
- Accreditation body requirements

## **3.1.3 Stage 3: Programme Development**

Where programme proposals receive approval, a Programme Development Team will be convened under the guidance of the Registrar. The Programme Development Team will be responsible for the development of a programme proposal, project plan for proposal development, and all documentation. The appointed Team will outline the:

- Programme award standard and details
- Rationale supporting the development of the proposed programme.
- Intended programme structure and content.
- Aims, objectives, and draft Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs)
- Expected demand for the programme.
- Arrangements for learner access, transfer, and progression
- Alignment of the programme with the strategic vision of OSS (OSS plans to publish its 5 -year strategic plan for 2022-2027 in Q4, 2022)

Upon completion, and Quality Committee meeting will be convened to review the programme proposal. Where the Quality Committee will approve a proposed programme reviewed against the QQI Core Validation Criteria, their recommendation and report are forwarded by consideration to the Board of Directors who approve the final submission.

## 3.1.4 Stage 4: QQI Submission Development

Where the Board of Directors approve programme proposals (based on academic merit as recommended by the Quality Committee and commercial merit), the selected Programme Development Team will work with the Programme Manager to develop programme content. Content development will be guided by the programme proposal, needs analysis, and stakeholder input in adherence with QQI Core Validation Criteria.

The Programme Manager will be responsible for the coordination of the Programme Development Team meetings. The Programme Development Team will outline the:

- Objective of the Programme
- Target Market(s)
- Structure
- Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs)
- Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs)
- Curriculum and Content
- Assessment Strategy
- Mode of Programme Delivery

In addition, the Programme Manager will coordinate with the Registrar to populate the relevant QQI programme validation documentation.

The Programme Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the final submission preparation to QQI will summaries how proposed programmes meet QQI Core Validation Criteria as outlined in the QQI Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training document. This will include the following details:

- The Centre is eligible to apply for validation of the programme.
- The programme objectives and outcomes are clear and consistent with the QQI awards sought.
- The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly biased (considering social, cultural, educational, professional, and employment objectives)
- The programme's access, transfer, and progression arrangements are sufficient.
- The programme's written curriculum is well-structured and fit-for-purpose.
- There are sufficiently qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned. If not, a plan detailing how the requisite skillsets will be sourced will be identified.
- There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned. If not, a plan to detail how the requisite resources will be sourced will be identified.
- The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners.

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- There are sound teaching and learning strategies.
- There are sound assessment strategies.
- Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided, and cared for
- The programme is professionally managed.
- The programme concept, implementation strategy, and its interpretation of QQI awards standards are well informed and soundly biased (considering social, cultural, educational, professional, and employment objectives)
- The programme's access, transfer, and progression arrangements are sufficient.
- The programme's written curriculum is well-structured and fit-for-purpose.
- There are sufficiently qualified and capable programme staff available to implement the programme as planned. If not, a plan detailing how the requisite skillsets will be sourced will be identified.
- There are sufficient physical resources to implement the programme as planned. If not, a plan to detail how the requisite resources will be sourced will be identified.
- The learning environment is consistent with the needs of the programme's learners.
- There are sound teaching and learning strategies.
- There are sound assessment strategies.
- Learners enrolled on the programme are well informed, guided, and cared for
- The programme is professionally managed.

## 3.1.5 Stage 5: Programme Evaluation

OSS will access and create an ad-hoc panel as required, drawing on the internal expert resources available within the Centre's vast panel of Safety officers and Consultants. This will facilitate swift and agile internal evaluation and review of programme validation documentation. This internal QA (Quality Assurance) desk review will evaluate the programme against the relevant QQI validation policies and criteria. Where amendments are recommended, the Registrar will meet with the Programme Manager to discuss recommendations and apply amendments. A report of the internal review findings and the associated validation documentation will be submitted to the Quality for final review and approval (prior to submission to QQI).

Following approval from the Quality Committee the Registrar will be responsible for liaising with QQI representatives to facilitate a QQI External panel visit. The Registrar will submit the finalized programme validation documentation, supporting documentation, and validation fee to QQI.

The Registrar will liaise with QQI to schedule an External Panel review and will host the panel onsite (or virtual meeting). Following the visit, the External Panel will issue the QQI Draft Expert Panel Report, the Registrar will facilitate the validation process by:

- Corresponding with QQI in relation to the findings of the QQI Draft Expert Panel Report
- Submitting requested modified documentation and plans to address pre-validation conditions and recommendations (where applicable)

The QQI Expert Panel will provide a statement detailing any final recommendations relevant to a validation to QQI. QQI will correspond with OSS to indicate one of the following outcomes:

- The proposed programme will be validated outright.
- The proposed programme, or stand-alone segment that constitutes a programme, will be validated subject to outlined conditions (including special conditions)
- The proposed programme will be refused validation.

## 3.1.6 Stage 6: Programme Authorization

Where applications for validation are successful, OSS will be issued with a QQI Certificate of Validation and the Approved Programme Schedule. The Registrar will communicate findings and outcomes of the QQI validation process to the Board of Directors and Quality Committee.

While proposed programmes can be marketed prior to validation they will be noted as subject to validation. The Registrar will liaise with the Marketing team upon receipt of validation documentation to amend/update OSS website information to reflect the status of the programme as validated.

All relevant validation documentation will be maintained by the Registrar. All validated programmes will be subject to continued monitoring and periodic review.

## 3.2 Access, Transfer, And Progression Policy

### PURPOSE

This policy outlines how the access, transfer, and progression opportunities and practices at O Dwyer's Safety (OSS) meet learners' needs within the context of programme provision. This document outlines the pathways for learners to enter, transfer between, and/or progress from programmes of education and training where possible within the scope of functions within the Centre.

### POLICY STATEMENT

The implementation of access, transfer, and progression will be monitored regularly at OSS through QA review processes. Retention, progression, and achievement statistics will be monitored on an ongoing basis by both the Programme Manager and the Registrar. The information and data gathered will be used to inform decision-making and planning in relation to programme development, staffing, assessment management, and centre resourcing.

Access refers to the process by which learners may start a programme of education and training having received recognition for knowledge, skill, or competence required. Transfer refers to the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another having received recognition for knowledge, skill, and competence acquired. Progression refers to the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme with the latter being placed at a higher level on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

OSS provides current and future learners with clear and accurate information relating to the QQI accredited programmes delivered as part of the Centre's offerings. The provision of clear information facilitates learners in identifying pathways to, from, and within programmes of study and provides learners with information about awards and qualifications that may be achieved. Transparency of communication with stakeholders is achieved using the OSS website <https://www.odwyersafetyervices.ie/>. OSS publishes programme information using the OSS website. Information is also available to stakeholders/potential learners who contact OSS directly.

The Programme Manager and Registrar coordinate the enquiries and admissions processes for learners at OSS. The Programme Manager provides information to the public via phone, website, email, and face- to-face queries.



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The OSS website provides information about awards and qualifications and provides information for learners to identify learning and progression pathways. Information includes details of the following:

- Programmes offered to learners at OSS.
- Whether or not a programme leads to an award
- Relevant awarding body for programmes of learning
- Award title for each available programme of learning
- Award type, credits attached, and NFQ level.
- Assessment information
- Refund policy
- Terms and Conditions

## **3.2.1 Access to Programmes of Study**

All learners who wish to enrol on a programme of study at OSS must satisfy the relevant minimum entry requirements for the programme. Details of programme specific minimum requirements are available on the OSS website.

## **3.2.2 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

As the QQI programmes currently delivered by OSS are classified as Minor Awards and are a maximum of five days in duration, it is not practical to facilitate an RPL policy in a transparent manner. Should the Centre decide to progress delivering Major Awards, it would plan to implement such a policy.

## **3.2.3 Induction**

All new learners who undertake a programme of study at OSS will receive an induction to OSS and their selected programme of study. OSS recognises that induction is an essential process for learners starting a programme of education and/or training.

The OSS induction process is designed to ease learners' transition to studying at OSS, and to get a more precise understanding of the relevant programme of study and structure of the study programme.

The induction process provides sufficient information on the Centre's academic policies and procedures, and information on learner and staff rights and responsibilities.

Induction also provides learners with information on the Common Awards System (CAS) and its relationship to the development of QQI awards, consistent with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Where learners have further questions regarding awards, they are invited to meet with the Programme Manager. The induction process also notifies learners of the supports available at the Centre.

## **3.2.4 Transfer**

OSS offers a range of QQI Minor Awards to a range of potential learners. The Centre has found that the requirement to transfer from one award to another is negligible and it therefore does not implement a Transfer policy. As the Centre plans to further develop its QQI portfolio in the coming five years, it recognises the requirement for an approved transfer mechanism may arise. The Centre will work to align its policies and procedures to QQI specifications in this regard.

## **3.2.5 Progression**

The majority of QQI programmes available at OSS are designed to facilitate learners to progress on to other programmes where the relevant component is a mandatory or an elective requirement.

Where learners require advice on selecting further programmes that will help plan their academic or career path, the Programme Manager will provide advice on progression routes available to learners from their programme of study. OSS maintains strong peer relationships with employers within its training sectors providing opportunities for the discussion of current issues and emerging trends. These practices enable OSS to provide general guidance on employment trends and skill requirements to learners. In addition, OSS maintains records of learner achievement and certification. To facilitate progression, learners can request information that may be required by other institutions.

## 3.3 Programme Policy Review and Version Control Policy

### PURPOSE

This document outlines the O' Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) framework for programme enhancement and adaptation based on findings of annual review and monitoring processes.

### POLICY STATEMENT

Validated programmes at OSS do not remain static entities following their validation and approval from QQI. All validated programmes will be subject to annual monitoring and review. Using insights gathered and analysed from monitoring and review processes, OSS will, where necessary, identify enhancements and adaptations to programmes based on the findings of its annual monitoring and review processes.

Ongoing monitoring of programmes, essential to ensure academic quality and standards are maintained, is informed by ongoing review of learner and tutor feedback and other data gathered through review and monitoring processes.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Registrar.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Guided by the QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, programme monitoring, and review enables OSS to evaluate programmes to:

- Ensure that programmes remain appropriate and create a supportive and effective learning environment.
- Ensure that programmes achieve the objectives set and respond to the needs of learners and the changing needs of society.
- Review the learner workload.
- Review learner progression and completion rates and where issues exist, decide on what action may be required.
- Review the effectiveness of procedures for the assessment of learners.
- Inform updates of programme content, delivery modes, teaching and learning methods, learning supports and resources, and information provided to learners.
- Update third party, industry, or other stakeholders relevant to the programme(s)
- Review programme specific QA arrangements

While the outcomes of programme review and monitoring may result in the decision to make necessary enhancements and adaptations to programmes, OSS will adhere to limits of what can be changed. Limits to programme amendments will be in direct relation to the scope of OSS's QA procedures (as approved

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by QQI). Examples of changes which may be applied to validated programmes include (but are not limited to):

- Minor changes to programme content – without altering the module or programme learning outcomes and programme schedule as outlined in the programme’s Certificate of Validation documentation.
- Changes to assessment methods based on feedback indicating current assessment methods were not meeting the objectives of the initial approved submission– without altering the QQI approved programme schedule, learning outcomes, and assessment strategy.

Where changes to programme content are determined as necessary, this will be undertaken by tutors working with the Programme Manager. All programme updates will be documented, and records will be stored by the Registrar. The Programme Manager will provide tutors with assistance as how to the programme changes and updates can be applied to the relevant academic content on the programme, prior to any content being updated.

### **3.3.1 Extensive Programme Changes**

Where programme amendments are extensive to the point that they may require consideration for the development of a new programme, any potential new programme will be subject to OSS programme development and approval processes in adherence with established QQI validation policies and criteria. Examples of ‘extensive changes’ specifically refer to changes that:

- Undermine anything that was essential to support the original validation decisions.
- Eliminate any core intended programme learning outcomes.
- Change the pre-requisite learning requirements for a given programme.

What constitutes an ‘extensive change’ to programmes will be informed by an independent expert or subject matter expert (SME).

## 4 STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1 Recruitment And Selection Policy

#### PURPOSE

This policy document outlines the policy and procedures for the selection and recruitment of staff.

#### POLICY STATEMENT

The objective of the recruitment and selection policy is to ensure the appointment of the most suitable person for a given post, based on a candidate's skills and experience. All decisions relating to recruitment and selection must be justifiable in relation to criteria as outlined in the job specification.

A fundamental part of the process is to ensure that standards of fairness and equality are maintained. OSS upholds this principle by promoting the continued development of company practices which do not discriminate unfairly on the grounds of gender, marital status, age, disability, race, colour, religious belief, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation.

#### SCOPE

This recruitment and selection procedure should be consulted by all members of staff involved in any aspect of the recruitment and selection process.

#### RESPONSIBILITY OF

Staff involved in any part of the process are responsible for upholding the policy. All Managers are responsible for monitoring the policy.

#### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

##### 1. The Position

- The recruitment and selection process begins with a vacancy to be filled, either a new position, or a vacant existing position
- The relevant Manager will confirm the vacancy to the Board of Directors.
- The relevant Manager will clarify and sign off the job specification with the Board of Directors before advertising the vacancy.

##### 2. Advertising the Position

- A suitable advertising medium both internally and externally will be determined by the relevant Manager.
- Senior Management/Managing Director will sign off on the relevant advertising approach selected.

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- The relevant Manager is responsible for filling the vacancy.

### 3. Short-listing

Short-listing is the process whereby candidates are assessed against the agreed criteria, based on information provided in the application, to eliminate unsuitable candidates and identify those candidates who best meet the criteria for further assessment. Process:

- Short-list all applicants who possess the essential criteria as stated in the job specification.
- The reasons for not short-listing unsuccessful applicants are noted.
- The Relevant Manager will contact the shortlisted candidates for an interview.

### 4. Interviews

An interview is one of the most widely used techniques in the recruitment and selection process. The interview is structured around the applicant's experience and knowledge to date regarding the skills and qualities required for the position. Process:

- First and, where applicable, second interviews are conducted by the relevant Manager. Candidates are short-listed for final interview.
- The Managing Director will conduct the final interview.

#### Interview Questions

A set of questions are agreed based on the essential and desirable criteria, which will form the basis of the job description. The interviewer must ensure that questions asked:

- Are relevant to the position.
- Are aimed at assessing the candidates in relation to the agreed criteria and eliciting information which will assist the interviewers in selecting the best candidate for the job.
- Cannot be construed as potentially discriminatory under the nine factors covered by the Employment Equality Act, 1998, i.e., gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, religion, race, family status, age, or membership of the travelling community.
- The questions that are asked must be relevant to the specific job.

#### Other Forms of Assessment

The Company reserves the right to use a variety of assessment techniques; such additional forms of assessment will include giving a brief presentation on a particular subject or completing an assessment of computing skills.

#### Assessment for Tutors

The selection and recruitment stage will initially assess the pedagogical and technical competence of Tutors. The following minimum pre-requisite requirements apply to all new Tutors:

- Pedagogical/ QQI Level qualification(s) as appropriate to specific training course/ specialism (a minimum of one Level higher on the NFQ to the programme being taught)

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- Appropriate Pedagogical/ QQI Level qualification(s) as appropriate to specific training course/ specialism, at the same level as the overall course specification that is being delivered and 4 years or more of teaching and/or training experience.

### 5. Reference Checks

Referee checks provide another source of information about the candidate(s). They should be seen as one part of the selection process.

Two satisfactory work references must be obtained for all appointments made. The references should be from two previous employers (if an employer reference is not available, a character reference can be taken, however Senior Management should be informed before taking up the reference).

### 6. Evidence of Qualifications

The Company reserves the right to request evidence of qualifications as stated on an applicant's CV (Curriculum Vitae).

### 7. Making the Appointment

Applicants should be ranked suitable/unsuitable for appointment based on:

- Assessment of CV and accompanying documentation
- Performance at interview(s)
- Further evidence (e.g., presentations, skills testing etc.)
- Reference checks
- Differences and reasons should then be discussed. (Note: The discussions should not include rumour, "general opinion," "the grapevine says," or unsubstantiated gossip)

### 8. Making Employment offers

Appointments are confirmed by the Managing Director.

### 9. Unsuccessful Applicants

Unsuccessful applicants will be issued with a letter advising them that they have not been selected for the role in question. The relevant Manager is responsible for ensuring that all unsuccessful applicants are notified.

### 10. Post Interview Feedback

The relevant Manager should provide post-interview feedback to all applicants who request it. Post-interview feedback should be constructive and be phrased in terms of the selection criteria. Any discussion of comparative skills and abilities of applicants should be avoided so that specific information about other applicants is not disclosed.

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Post-interview feedback is aimed at providing constructive assistance to unsuccessful applicants and does not imply an unsatisfactory standard of work or behaviour. Post- interview feedback should be the same for all applicants i.e., based on the specific criteria outlined for the post.

## 4.2 Staff Induction, Management and Development Policy

### PURPOSE

The objective of the policy is to ensure the Staff Introduction to OSS is communicated in an efficient and professional manner and staff roles and responsibilities, supervision and development opportunities are clearly communicated.

### POLICY STATEMENT

The Induction will cover the Mission Statement, QQI Quality Assurance, Quality Policy and Core Values as well as the information needed. Department managers will communicate staff roles and responsibilities and monitor performance and development.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

The Managing Director is responsible for monitoring and upholding the Policy.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

All Staff undertake an induction when they commence employment.

The online programme is divided into sections to assist in effective learning.

- Day One: Getting Started
- Week One: Finding Your Feet
- Your First Month: Settling In

With the resources provided in the induction, it is the responsibility of the employee to complete the contents of both the Induction and Training plan.

**Academic Tutors and Trainers** will also complete an induction which is based on the contents of their Tutor Handbook. The Tutor Handbook will cover all items required to understand the systems and procedures to be followed.



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## Introduction

As an organization, O Dwyer Safety Services specializes in the provision of quality Health and Safety Training. OSS recognizes that our store of intellectual capital and the goodwill that we build with our customers depends on how we develop you as an employee. Whether your contribution is professional, administrative, or technical areas, we work very much as an integrated team – each respecting and recognizing the other.

## Mission Statement

O’Dwyer Safety Services Ltd OSS is a growing, dynamic, and vibrant Health & Safety company. We regard change as an opportunity for our further development. Our commitment is a never-ending quest for perfection, providing even greater value and service to our customers and greater facilitating the learner’s effective participation in workplace health and safety.

This mission statement encapsulates the history and recent growth levels of OSS. Based in Limerick, Ireland, O’Dwyer Safety Services Ltd commenced operations in 2001, from humble beginnings, the company has grown. Our Offices in Limerick serve a wide range of companies, including indigenous businesses, public services, and Irish subsidiaries of multinationals. We have worked diligently with our clients over the past number of years and have experienced unprecedented growth throughout the Irish market by providing accurate applicable information about the learner’s workplace and current health and safety legislative requirements.

The induction programme is designed to assist staff in their transition into the organizations culture and workplace and to provide the information relating to the induction, including key services provided by the organizations, obligations as an employee and other useful hints to help settle staff into their new role. Staff may return to their induction programme for easy reference throughout their employment with the group.

### **4.2.1 Staff Development & CPD (Continuing Professional Development)**

OSS recognizes that the increasing focus on online and blended delivery within its training and education activities will impact its recruitment processes. These processes will include the need to recruit and develop staff with both academic and technical expertise. Therefore, the organization will make specific efforts to seek out individuals with pedagogical and assessment skills appropriate to online learning and technology.

Each department manager is expected to coach new members of staff in the spirit of personal development and continuous improvement. Learner feedback is also used by Course Co-Ordinator's and the Programme Manager to guide and support teaching staff.

A budget for Staff Development is set aside each year within the organization's overall Financial Plan, to ensure resources are available for staff training and development. Details of the Staff Development Budget are shared with the Quality Committee to ensure that appropriate training and CPD objectives are being met by OSS e.g., upskilling in blended learning techniques and instructional design.

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All new hires receive induction training on joining to enable them to integrate and become productive in their job roles from the start of their career with OSS. The Programme Manager organizes an induction programme for tutors and training support staff covering the first 1-2 weeks' activities to familiarize them with internal systems and processes, together with on-the-job training.

Annually each manager carries out a skills audit for new hires and develops training plans in conjunction with the Programme Manager. A CPD action plan is then used to identify opportunities for internal training, projects, and external courses. The Course Coordinator monitors a CPD record and feedback sheet for each member of the team.

The Programme Manager authorizes all spending on training against the budget allowance, reporting to the Operations Committee on progress in this area.

## 4.3 Equality & Diversity Policy

### PURPOSE

The objective of this Equality & Diversity Policy is to ensure that all of OSS is committed to promoting equality in all aspects of OSS activity, employment, education, and service provision and to detail how this policy will be implemented.

### POLICY STATEMENT

OSS is committed to delivering programmes of education and training and related services in the prevention of any form of active discrimination, inequality, or denial of equal opportunities, whether direct or indirect against learners, staff or other people involved with O'Dwyer Safety Services

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

The Managing Director is responsible for monitoring and upholding the Policy.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

OSS seeks to employ a workforce which reflects the diverse community at large because it values the individual contribution of people irrespective of gender, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, race, religious belief, family status or membership of the Traveller community.

All employees will be treated with dignity and respect.

OSS will use its best endeavours to provide a working environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation on the grounds of gender, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, race, religious belief, family status or membership of the Traveller community.

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OSS recognises its legal obligations including those under the Equality Act 2004, Protection of Employees (Fixed Term Work) Act 2003, Protection of Employees (Part-time Work) Act 2001 and Employment Equality Act 1998.

OSS undertakes to review periodically its selection criteria and procedures to maintain a system where individuals are selected, promoted, and treated solely based on their merits and abilities.

OSS will not tolerate acts which breach this policy and all instances of such behaviour or alleged behaviour will be taken seriously, fully investigated and may be subject to the disciplinary procedures of the business.

If an existing employee becomes disabled OSS will make every effort to retain him or her within the workforce whenever reasonable and practicable.

Whenever reasonably practicable to do so OSS will install, in existing premises, facilities for people with disabilities.

Whenever the business invests capital in new or refurbished premises every practicable effort will be made to provide for the needs of staff and learners with disabilities.

OSS will aim to promote equality opportunities for the many diverse people that may potentially be involved with the services OSS provides. O'Dwyer Safety Services is committed to maintaining a workplace environment that encourages and supports equality of opportunity and dignity in all aspects of its business. OSS seeks to comply with all legislation regarding dealing with individuals or groups fairly and legally.

It is the policy of OSS that all persons receive fair, equal, and non-discriminatory consideration and respect for their individuality and diversity irrespective of.

- Gender
- Marital Status
- Family Status
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Membership of the traveling community

OSS procedures and practices will be planned and reviewed according to this equality policy principle. All individuals, whether directly employed or contracted by us, have a duty and a responsibility to uphold this policy. OSS will not tolerate any form of bullying, discrimination, or inappropriate behaviour. Failure to comply with this policy will result in immediate disciplinary action and dismissal.

## 5 TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

### PURPOSE

This policy document outlines O Dwyer's Safety Service (OSS) approach to teaching and learning to meet the needs and expectations of all stakeholders within an environment that values critical reflection, and personal and professional development for learners and staff.

### POLICY STATEMENT

OSS operates under a clear governance structure with transparent interrelated processes. Arrangements exist to facilitate informed and independent oversight of all Centre-related matters and the constructive analysis of information gathered through internal and external monitoring and review. The roles and responsibilities of governance are logically defined and supported, and structures are in place to ensure that academic matters are separate from commercial considerations of the Centre.

The teaching and learning experience at OSS are monitored, reviewed, and progressed as part of the Centre's commitment to continuous improvement of practices. This is facilitated through a process including (but not limited to):

- Learner involvement in Centre and programme practices (for example, the role of Learner Representative)
- Insights gathered through learner and tutor feedback.
- Analysis of attendance and course completion rates
- Analysis of assessment results
- Insights gathered through peer relationships, relevant publications, and industry insights.
- Staff upskilling and professional development practices.
- Programme review and evaluation

The Centre's monitoring processes inform practices across the relevant academic areas. Separate and clearly defined operational units are responsible for maintaining records of all actions and their communication to the relevant Centre stakeholders.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager and Registrar.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

#### 5.1.1 Teaching and Learning Ethos

The teaching ethos at OSS is underpinned by a focus on learner development. The learning that occurs during programmes of study must meet changing social, economic, and labour market needs within the framework of programme learning outcomes.

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Lifelong learning incorporates the sum of all learning activities undertaken during a person's life. Through the ethos of lifelong learning, individuals are encouraged to assume responsibility for the continuous review and development of their knowledge and skills to meet challenges posed within an ever-evolving society.

OSS promotes a lifelong learning ethos supported by flexible learning, clear information, support, and advice. The learning ethos at OSS reflects the participation and needs of all OSS stakeholders. The learning opportunities available at OSS lead to qualifications that are respected by all and are achievable in manageable steps. In addition, programmes of study at OSS are relevant to the skill needs of the local economy.

Lifelong learning is particularly concerned with improving access to learning opportunities and encouraging people to take responsibility for their learning journeys. OSS recognises the importance of providing a supportive teaching and learning environment to the Centre's target learning audiences. The current learner profile at OSS represents adult learners who are typically engaged in their working careers and who are returning to education with a wide range of work and life experiences which can be used to enrich the overall teaching and learning process.

OSS programmes are aimed at supporting individuals seeking personal, social, and developmental skills to enable them to engage or re-engage in learning. The OSS teaching and learning approach is informed by the:

- Design and development of programmes based on evidenced need.
- High quality of programme delivery informed by continuous review and feedback.
- Continued focus on supportive and transparent learning experiences.
- Development of teaching and training practices that adopt best practice.
- Promotion of learner access, completion, progression, and achievement

## **5.1.2 Teaching and Learning Approach**

The programmes of study at OSS are relevant to wider society and the teaching ethos is rooted in relevant theory, society, subject-specific practices, and work life. In addition, the teaching and learning practices at OSS are designed to be relevant to practice, ensuring the Centre's learners are prepared for the workplace. The Centre focuses on pedagogical issues and the application of teaching materials using appropriate teaching methods.

OSS approach to teaching, learning is informed by an understanding of the needs of adult learners in the field of vocational education and training, and an appreciation of the challenges faced by adult learners both in developing their knowledge, practical work-based skills, and competencies, and in sustaining a motivated approach to self-directed learning.

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The design and development of programmes and teaching practices within OSS are guided by principles as outlined by Malcom Knowles to facilitate the learning experience and enable staff and learners to become effective lifelong learners.

This can be illustrated by Knowles' five assumptions regarding adult learners:

- Self-Concept – Because adults are at a mature developmental stage, they have a more secure self-concept than children. This allows them to take part in directing their own learning.
- Past Learning Experience - Adults have a vast array of experiences to draw on as they learn, as opposed to children who are in the process of gaining new experiences.
- Readiness to Learn - Many adults have reached a point in which they see the value of education and are ready to be serious about and focused on learning.
- Practical Reasons to Learn - Adults are looking for practical, problem-centred approaches to learning. Many adults return to continuing education for specific practical reasons, such as entering a new field.
- Driven by Internal Motivation - While many young learners are driven by external motivators – such as punishment if they get bad grades or rewards if they get good grades – adults are more internally motivated.

The quality of teaching and learning is monitored on an ongoing basis through tutor monitoring visits and learner feedback.

Approach to Adult Teaching and Learning - Malcom Knowles.

The teaching and learning practices at OSS are designed to be relevant to practice, ensuring the Centre's learners are prepared for the workplace. OSS focuses on pedagogical issues and the application of teaching materials using appropriate teaching methods.

OSS adopts a methodological approach to planning and delivering programmes and programme assessment and to the development of teaching and learning resources.

This includes the evaluation of teaching facilities and a close alignment between teaching, learning, and assessment approaches, work contacts and work environment challenges.

We base programme specific assessment and content on QQI determine standards of knowledge, skill and competence which are subsequently assessed through the attainment of learning outcomes.

When applying standards that ensure award outcomes and other programme data compare with other national and international providers, OSS applies the:

QQI grading criteria.

- Grid levels of indicators for the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)
- Standards as indicated in the award specification.
- Validated programme specifications.

All learning outcomes at the centre are developed with the following guidelines:

Focus on the learner and the learner process.

Precise, clear statements what learners are expected to know and understand at the end of the learning process.

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OSS adopts a methodological approach to the planning and delivery of programmes and programme assessment and to the development of teaching and learning resources. This includes the evaluation of teaching facilities and a close alignment between teaching, learning, and assessment approaches, work contexts, and workplace challenges. Teaching, learning, and assessment strategies are submitted at programme approval submission stage.

## **5.1.3 National and International Effective Practice**

The lifelong learning concept reflects the need for continuous upskilling to meet workforce needs and ensure individuals have the necessary resources/tools to manage their own futures.

OSS is linked to the broader education and training community and to employers across programme subject areas. Programme development is informed by current practices relevant to the labour force and wider professional networks. Ongoing monitoring and review of statistics to identify trends and assist with benchmarking assist the Centre in comparing award outcome and other programme data with other local, national, and international providers.

Programme specific assessment and content is based on QQI determined standards for knowledge, skill, and competence. These are assessed through the attainment of learning outcomes. When applying standards that ensure award outcomes and other programme data compare with other national and international providers, OSS applies the:

- Grid Level of Indicators for the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)
- Standards as indicated in the award specification.
- Validated programme specifications (for the award being delivered)
- QQI grading criteria.

All learning outcomes are developed within the following guidelines:

- Precise, clear statements indicating what learners are expected to know and understand at the end of a learning process/sequence.
- Focus on the learner and learning processes.

## **5.1.4 Teaching Staff**

All programmes at OSS are delivered by qualified subject matter experts in their area of delivery.

OSS is committed to the personal, professional, and pedagogical development of staff. Professional development opportunities are guided by requests from tutors as well as OSS suggested training incentives. Mandatory training is provided, and the Centre also remains abreast of relevant developments to inform proactive training decisions (including developments in new areas of technologies and the use of different training methodologies).

Staff are facilitated to attend relevant QQI-specific training and information days. The Centre provides support to all tutors through the provision of a Tutor Handbook which provides tutors with information

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most relevant to their roles. Tutors are provided access to module descriptors for each programme of study at OSS.

Module descriptors provide all the essential programme specific information (including assessment instruments and delivery materials developed in accordance with relevant QQI guidelines). Any alterations to module descriptor documentation or contents must be approved by the Programme Manager. The use of a standardized brief ensures consistency of provision (including where new tutors join the Centre).

## 6 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

### 6.1 Assessment Policy

#### PURPOSE

O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) is committed to the fair, transparent, and consistent assessment of all learners and to maintaining the integrity of awards in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and other awarding bodies.

#### POLICY STATEMENT

This policy outlines the procedures used across five assessment stages at OSS to ensure the application of fair and consistent assessment practices throughout the assessment process takes place. Assessment at OSS occurs within a rigorous quality assurance (QA) framework that is aligned to appropriate academic standards to ensure that qualifications are awarded based on appropriately assessed learning outcomes. Assessments are determined during programme design and validation and learners are provided with general assessment information as part of the learner induction.

#### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Registrar.

#### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

The Registrar has overall responsibility for the assessment process and security of assessment documentation at OSS. All assessed work is managed by tutors and retained in safe storage. Assessment records are disposed of by OSS using a secure and confidential service.

The Registrar assigns assessment duties to designated personnel, who are fully briefed on the assessment policies and procedures (in the QA Manual).

OSS applies the following principles to the Centre's management of assessment:

- Assessment facilitates the valid and reliable determination that the necessary learning outcomes have been achieved.



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- Assessment is accessible for all and allows learners to produce evidence which is measurable against standards.
- Assessment has been designed to accurately measure the skill/attainment for which it has been developed to measure, and to produce consistent assessment decisions and results.
- Assessment procedures and practices enable equality of opportunity for learners.
- The assessment framework facilitates learner progression and credibility and status of awards.
- Learners are responsible for demonstrating their learning achievement.
- Learners are fully informed of how assessment occurs.

## 6.1.1 Assessment

### a) Planning and Devising Assessment

Assessment is planned of teaching and assessment activities on all programmes. Tutors work with the Programme Manager to devise an Assessment Plan that includes the assessment techniques used, the weighting of each assessment and any assessment deadlines. Also provide a reference link when possible. All assessments must comply with the OSS assessment criteria standards. As part of this, assessments must:

- Facilitate the development of evidence that can be measured against the Award Specification learning outcomes.
- Enable learners to generate sufficient evidence to demonstrate learning outcomes have been met.
- Facilitate tutors to reach reliable decisions.

Assessment plan documents are presented to the Programme Manager for approval. Where the Programme Manager determines that the Assessment Plan is not clearly aligned with learning objectives and syllabus content, the plan is returned to the tutor for review. Completed assessment plans, once signed off by the Programme Manager, are used to populate an Assessment Brief which is available for provision to learners upon their commencement of a programme of study. Valid and reliable assessment techniques for QQI awards are grouped into the categories outlined in Table 1.

Assessment Technique	QQI Level
Portfolio	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Assignment	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Skills Demonstration	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Project	4, 5, 6
Examination	4, 5, 6
Learner Record	4, 5, 6

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## *b) Grading Criteria*

OSS's QQI programmes currently offer awards at Level 4, Levels 5 and 6 on the NFQ. The grading criteria are classified according to the conventions outlined in the QQI document 'Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013'. To ensure that learning is assessed at the correct level and that assessments are fair and consistent, tutors develop assessments guided by:

- QQI Award Specifications (available from Awards Information section of the QQI website)
- The Validated Programme Descriptor (available from the Registrar)
- National Framework of Qualifications Grid of Level Indicators (which outlines the knowledge, skills and competencies required at every level)
- QQI Award Classifications (Pass, merit, or distinction where learners achieve the standards for the award within the grading criteria)
- QQI Grading Criteria (describing what learners must attain to achieve a particular grade for an award at a particular level)

## *c) Marking Schemes*

Tutors will devise a marking scheme for assessments. Marking schemes will provide a detailed breakdown of how marks are allocated to the assessment criteria. Marking schemes should be devised per technique and use a summary marking sheet from the component descriptor to clearly communicate that the learner has achieved the intended learning outcomes. Tutors should refer to the assessment guidelines within the specific validate programme module descriptor to determine the format and weighting of the assessment. Completed marking schemes identify the:

- Marks allocated to each assessment criterion.
- Sub marks
- Total marks

## *Assessment Brief*

Tutors develop an Assessment Brief for every assignment, collection of work, learner record, project, or skills demonstration. The Assessment Brief functions as a set of instructions for learners. The Brief outlines the requirements and assessment/performance criteria of each piece of assessment relevant to learners' specific programmes of study. Assessment Briefs are also available during the Centre's internal verification and external authentication processes.

Assessment Briefs must be approved by the Registrar prior to the start of each programme of study. Assessment Briefs document:

- The assessment instrument (i.e., the specific assessment activity designed and based on a specified assessment technique)
- Clear instructions relevant to the assessments learners must complete.

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- Assessment dates and deadlines for submissions
- The weighting (marking) for each assignment

Learners are provided with a copy of the Assessment Brief specific to their programme of study. It is made clear to learners that QQI assessments are criterion referenced and that assessment judgment is based on whether learners reach the required standards of knowledge, skill, and competence relevant to the award through the demonstration of learning outcomes. It is the responsibility of learners to complete the assessment as per the instructions given in the brief.

### *d) Scheduling Assessment*

Assessment schedules are devised locally for each programme. The Programme Manager is responsible for assessment scheduling. Assessment scheduling is planned to provide tutors with sufficient time to consider learners' assessment evidence. Each devised assessment schedule must specify the date, time, and location of the named assessment. Assessment schedules also include details regarding the stage in the programme of learning at which the assessment will take place.

Tutors provide learners with information on dates for completed assessments. Learners who are absent when notification of dates are given, are responsible for informing themselves of the details.

Completed assignments are submitted to the Centre, recorded, and distributed to the tutors. To ensure the reliability of evidence, learners sign an individual authorship statement which confirms their work as original. This process enables tutors to make sound judgments on learners' achievements of the award standards with the understanding that all learner evidence is their original work.

OSS has a system for the approval and coordination of reasonable accommodation requests (for more information, see Section 7 Reasonable Accommodations Policy) and for dealing with issues of personal mitigating circumstances (for more information, see Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy).

OSS will accept late assessment submissions in exceptional circumstances. Learners must discuss this with the Programme Manager on or before the original deadline. The Programme Manager will consider each request for assessment extension on an individual basis. Where the Programme Manager approves the request, this decision and a revised assessment submission deadline will be communicated to the learner. The learner must submit the assessment evidence to the Programme Manager by the revised submission date. Circumstances relating to late submission or extension are recorded.

### *e) Assessing Learner Evidence*

OSS employs criterion referenced assessment for all QQI accredited programmes of study. Criterion referenced assessment refers to the measurement of learners' academic performance against agreed learning outcomes. This type of assessment facilitates the:

- Identification of learners' progress toward the agreed-upon standard

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- Identification of what learners have achieved and what steps tutors can take to help learners attain the desired standard or proficiency.

Tutors are responsible to grade learner evidence for each assessment component based on the detailed marking schemes developed for each assessment method or element. The use of standardized marking schemes ensures the accurate criterion-references assessment with relevance to learning outcomes for each assessment component.

Tutors record learners' results for each assessment relevant to the programme using the Provisional Results Sheet. This is returned to the Programme Manager. In addition, tutors complete the Assessment Cover Sheet provided and place this on the front of each learner's work before submission to the programme Manager. This process facilitates internal verification and external authentication processes. To ensure that tutors complete all the necessary steps in the assessment process in accordance with OSS Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures, tutors must complete a Tutor Checklist. This checklist verifies that:

- Correct assessment techniques have been applied.
- Assessments are marked correctly.

Tutors are responsible for preparing a folder with the documentation required for the internal verification and external authentication processes. All required documentation is outlined on the Checklist and provided in the Tutor Pack provided to each tutor. Using the returned Provisional Results Forms, the Programme Manager records the assessment outcomes on QBS portal. Provisional results are available to learners on request. The Programme Manager next completes the List of Learners for Accreditation Form. This is in preparation for the authentication of assessment processes.

### 6.1.2 Authentication Process

The authentication process defines fair, consistent, and transparent policy and associated procedures for marking assessment elements and for the internal verification and external authentication of assessment methods.

#### *a) Internal Verification*

OSS appoints an Internal Verifier to each programme of study. The internal verification process ensures that all assessment processes and practices are monitored and are applied correctly across the range of assessment activities. This process identifies if assessments are conducted in a manner relevant to module learning outcomes and that grading is consistently applied to reflect the standard of learner work assessed.

Internal verification at OSS is a confidential, evidence-based process that is carried out on a sample basis. The minimum sample size for the process of verification will be assessment submissions from five learners. The internal verification process takes place after the completion of learners' assessment and prior to the external authentication and results approval processes are implemented.

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The appointed Internal Verifier will be people other than those involved in programme delivery and assessment for the programme in question.

The roles and responsibilities of Internal Verifiers at OSS are guided by the QQI document 'Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers'. Internal Verifier roles and responsibilities at OSS are to:

- Check that OSS's assessment processes and procedures have been adhered to
- Monitor assessment results on a sample basis.
- Produce an Internal Verification (IV) Report

(For more information, see Internal Verification Policy)

## ***b) External Authentication***

External authentication is a QA process that ensures the objective and authoritative judging of learner assessment. The external authentication process verifies the confirmation of fair and consistent assessment practices to confirm that learners' work has reached the standard certified by their qualification within the context of the NFQ.

The external authentication process relates to programme learning outcomes, the compliance of learning outcomes to national standards, and circumstances that may affect those outcomes. The external authentication process further ensures the validity of assessment methodologies and of the outcome of assessment for learner results across each award resulting in the issue of statistically accurate and quality assured learner results.

By employing an external examination process, OSS provides an independent element into the procedures for the assessment of learners. This process supports/develops stakeholder confidence in academic qualifications offered at OSS. This policy has been developed in accordance with accrediting body guidelines. This creates a common framework and structure by which an External Authenticator can fulfil their role and ensures the process of external authentication is undertaken in a professional and transparent manner (for more information, see External Authentication Policy).

## **6.1.3 Results Approval**

### ***a) Results Approval Process***

OSS operates a results approval process to formally ratify results prior to submission to QQI. Guided by the QQI Quality Assuring Guidelines for Providers, the results approval process is adopted to ensure that appropriate decisions are taken regarding the outcome of assessment and authentication processes.

The Centre's Results Approval Panel (RAP) has been established to carry out the results approval process. Members of the RAP include an independent training professional – seconded from non-associated internal training sections, the Registrar, Programme Manager, and an appointed member of OSS administrative staff. An RAP meeting is held following every external authentication process. The Registrar

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oversees the submission of the Internal Verification and External Authentication Reports and feedback from the External Authenticator to the RAP.

The role of the Panel is to:

- Review all Internal Verification Reports and External Authentication Reports
- Review and approve assessment results.
- Sign off on approved results.
- Agree to the submission to QQI by the provider of results and the request for certification.
- Identify any issues arising in relation to the results and make recommendations for corrective action (where applicable)

The RAP compiles a report on the process which is filed for the Centre's self-evaluation process and internal monitoring process and is available to the QQI monitoring process on request.

### ***b) Communicate Results to Learners***

Following the ratification of results, results are:

- Made available to learners.
- Submitted to QQI

Following the issue of results, learners can request to meet with tutors and discuss their assessments feedback and/or results. The purpose of this feedback meeting is solely to assist learners in identifying areas to improve their academic development, if applicable. Learners must request feedback on assessments within 3 working days of receiving results.

### **6.1.4 Appeals Process**

As part of OSS's commitment to ensuring fair and transparent learner assessment, the Centre has in place clear arrangements to facilitate rechecking, reviewing, and appeals of assessment decisions, grades, and feedback provided in a constructive, timely, and effective manner.

Recheck refers to the administrative procedure of checking that all parts of assessments are recorded correctly and that no error occurred during the recording and/or calculation of grades to establish the assessment result.

Review refers to the internal procedure of examining in detail components or all parts of assessment materials. Where reviews occur, this procedure will be preceded by a recheck of the recording and calculation of grades to establish the assessment result.

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Appeal refers to a specific request to review the operation of assessment processes for the specific learner concerned. Where appropriate, the appeal will include a review of learner evidence (included in the original presentation for assessment) from the assessment results. Appeals will only be permitted if specific criterion are met. (For more information, see Recheck, Review, and Appeals Policy)

## 6.1.5 Request Certification

Following the ratification of learners' results by the RAP, the Programme Manager requests certification from QQI using the QBS system. OSS forwards certificates and other relevant documentation to learners using registered post.

## 6.2 Reasonable Accommodations Policy

### PURPOSE

The area of learner support has formed a cornerstone of O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) strategy since its formation. OSS recognises that learners at various times throughout their studies with the centre may require support of both an academic and non-academic nature. OSS's operational strategy recognises the importance of this function in its day-to-day service delivery and in relation to its strategic planning.

The management of functions at OSS uses best practice in this area that ensures that all learners are given rights to equality of treatment and ease of access to OSS's services. OSS recognises the importance of achieving a coherent and integrated approach to the provision of services and support for learners with special needs.

### POLICY STATEMENT

This policy outlines the procedures at OSS to support learners with additional and/or special needs. Learners who are impacted by mitigating circumstances (including illness or bereavement) should refer to the policy on Personal Mitigating Circumstances (for more information, see Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy).

To ensure that OSS can put in place accommodations which learners may require, learners are responsible for disclosing a special need and/or learning difficulty on the point of application to a programme of study at OSS. The centre recognizes that in practice this may not always occur and as far as possible will accommodate all valid requests even where a special need/set of special needs has/have not been initially disclosed.

Learning difficulty refers to any condition that can cause an individual to experience problems in a traditional classroom learning or online delivery context and which may interfere with literacy skills development, math's, and can also affect memory, the ability to focus, and organisational skills. OSS will guarantee reasonable accommodations where appropriate and possible within the scope of OSS provision. Where learners with special needs are unable to demonstrate their achievement of the intended learning outcomes

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through conventional assessment tasks, OSS will work to make reasonable accommodations to deal with issues that would otherwise prevent learners from demonstrating their achievement.

Reasonable Accommodations (in the context of assessment) refers to the adaptation of the assessment approach as necessary to cater for the needs of learners whose personal situation means that the assessment would otherwise be unfair, e.g., learners with a special need/set of special needs, and/or other learners covered by equality legislation.

Reasonable accommodation will not interfere with or change the intended learning outcomes of programmes of study. Assessment objectives (in the form of demonstrating specific learning outcomes are attained) which involve reasonable accommodations will be consistent with those which do not. Reasonable accommodations may apply to any assessment format and/or methodology.

Reasonable accommodations provided by OSS include:

- Examinations rest breaks
- Examinations additional time
- Spelling waiver
- Amended examinations/assessment papers (for example, increased font size)
- The use of a scribe (with any costs covered by OSS)
- Rescheduled assessment submission dates
- Sitting an examination in a separate room (with an invigilator always present)

Learners who require medical or psychological support must provide original supporting documentation to OSS. All supporting documentation must be signed by a suitably qualified practitioner.

In addition, supporting documentation should outline the accommodations required by learners. Where learners do not provide supporting documentation, OSS may be limited in its ability to offer the facility of reasonable accommodation. Notwithstanding, the Centre will work with learners to ensure as much assistance is provided, whilst not compromising the integrity of the process for all learners.

## RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.



## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Learners who wish to apply for reasonable accommodations should initially provide documentation to support a needs identification process. Learners may apply for reasonable accommodation using the Reasonable Accommodations Form. Learners submit the completed Reasonable Accommodations Form with supporting documentation (for example, medical certification) to the Programme Manager. Assistance in completing the form will be offered at any stage if it is deemed appropriate.

The Programme Manager will review the learner's application for reasonable accommodation and will decide on same as efficiently as possible. The learner will be notified of the outcome of the needs assessment. Where reasonable accommodation can be facilitated, the relevant tutor will be notified of the reasonable accommodation to be provided. (In situations where the tutor identifies that the learner may require some form of accommodation from the centre, this will be handled in a sensitive and discrete manner).

Reasonable accommodation will not interfere with or change the intended learning outcomes of programmes of study. Assessment objectives (in the form of demonstrating specific learning outcomes are attained) which involve reasonable accommodations will be consistent with those which do not. Reasonable accommodations may apply to any assessment format and/or methodology.

Reasonable accommodations provided by OSS include:

- Examinations rest breaks
- Examinations additional time
- Spelling waiver
- Amended examinations/assessment papers (for example, increased font size)
- The use of a scribe (with any costs covered by OSS)
- Rescheduled assessment submission dates
- Sitting an examination in a separate room (with an invigilator always present)

Learners who require medical or psychological support must provide original supporting documentation to OSS. All supporting documentation must be signed by a suitably qualified practitioner.

In addition, supporting documentation should outline the accommodations required by learners. Where learners do not provide supporting documentation, OSS may be limited in its ability to offer the facility of reasonable accommodation. Notwithstanding, the Centre will work with learners to ensure as much assistance is provided, whilst not compromising the integrity of the process for all learners.

## RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Learners who wish to apply for reasonable accommodations should initially provide documentation to support a needs identification process. Learners may apply for reasonable accommodation using the Reasonable Accommodations Form. Learners submit the completed Reasonable Accommodations Form with supporting documentation (for example, medical certification) to the Programme Manager. Assistance in completing the form will be offered at any stage if it is deemed appropriate.

The Programme Manager will review the learner's application for reasonable accommodation and will decide on same as efficiently as possible. The learner will be notified of the outcome of the needs assessment. Where reasonable accommodation can be facilitated, the relevant tutor will be notified of the reasonable accommodation to be provided. (In situations where the tutor identifies that the learner may require some form of accommodation from the centre, this will be handled in a sensitive and discrete manner).

## 6.3 Assessment Regulations Policy

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to describe the O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) assessment regulations applied to assist the Centre in ensuring a fair, reliable, and quality assured assessment system is in place.

### POLICY STATEMENT

OSS is committed to providing a high-quality teaching and learning experience that fosters active learning and allows learners to take ownership of their learning. The Centre is committed to ensuring that the assessment procedures applied are appropriate and adhere to QQI regulations. The Centre's Assessment Regulations apply to all assessments and examinations leading to all QQI awards. This policy applies to:

- Assessment scheduling and submissions
- Reasonable accommodations
- Personal mitigating circumstances
- Assessment malpractice
- Late assessment submission and extensions
- Management of non-attendance and non-submissions
- Recording and communicating results
- Recheck, review, appeals.
- Repeat assessment.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

#### 6.3.1 Assessment Scheduling and Submissions

Assessment schedules are devised locally for each programme. The Programme Manager is responsible for assessment scheduling. Assessment scheduling is planned to provide tutors with sufficient time to consider learners' assessment evidence and to ensure that the learner is not overburdened at any time with too many assessments scheduled for submission in the same week. Each devised assessment schedule specifies the submission date, time, and location of the named assessment. Assessment

## QUALITY MANUAL

schedules also include details regarding the stage in programmes of learning at which the assessment will take place.

Tutors provide learners with information on deadlines for completed assessments. Learners are notified that passing the work of another person off as their own, whether intentional or accidental, is plagiarism and is considered assessment malpractice.

Completed assignments are submitted to the Centre, recorded, and distributed to tutors. To ensure the reliability of assessment, learners submit a signed individual authorship statement confirming their work as original. This process enables tutors to make sound judgments on learners' achievements of the award standards with the understanding that all learner evidence is their original work.

### **6.3.2 Reasonable Accommodations**

OSS will facilitate reasonable accommodations where appropriate and possible within the scope of OSS provision. Where learners with special needs are unable to demonstrate their achievement of the intended learning outcomes through conventional assessment tasks, OSS will work hard to make reasonable accommodations to ensure that issues which would otherwise prevent learners from demonstrating their achievement (for more information, see Reasonable Accommodations Policy) are minimized.

### **6.3.3 Personal Mitigating Circumstances**

Although full learner attendance is the ambition, circumstances, and factors external to the OSS environment can impact on learners' academic performance or influence learners' ability to complete assignments and/or examinations in a timely manner. OSS may facilitate absences in the event of exceptional circumstances (for example, periods of illness and/or personal issues such as immediate family bereavement) (for more information, see Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy).

## **6.3.4 Assessment Malpractice**

Academic malpractice is defined as any act or behaviour that casts doubt on the validity of the assessment process or any attempt to obtain an unfair advantage or the awarding of marks through methods contrary to the OSS rules and regulations of assessment. OSS investigates cases of plagiarism where the learner has signed a declaration of authenticity. OSS understands that all assessments submitted electronically by learners are automatically declared by learners as authentic. Any alleged or suspected infringement of any assessment regulations, including plagiarism, will be referred to the Programme Manager.

Plagiarism refers to the process and practice of using another person's work or ideas without crediting the source or the failure to credit sources resulting in learners passing the work of others off as their own. Plagiarism in assessment includes, but is not limited to, copying work from any source without referencing that source (books, online journals, websites, magazines, videos, notes etc.).

## **6.3.5 Late Assessment Submission and Extensions**

Learners are expected to adhere to all assessment deadlines as outlined in the relevant Assessment Brief. However, OSS recognises that circumstances may arise that have an impact on learners' academic performance or influence learners' ability to attend classes or to complete assignments and/or examinations in a timely manner. OSS may facilitate absences in the event of exceptional circumstances (for more information, see Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy).

OSS may accept late assessment submissions and grant extensions in exceptional circumstances. Learners must discuss this with the Programme Manager on or before the original deadline. The Programme Manager will consider each request for assessment extension on an individual basis. Where the Programme Manager approves the request, this decision and a renewed assessment submission deadline will be communicated to the learner. The learner must submit the assessment evidence to the Programme Manager by the revised submission date. Circumstances relating to late submission or extension are recorded and presented to the Results Approval Committee.

## **6.3.6 Management of Non-attendance and Non-Submissions**

Where learners are absent from scheduled examinations or fail to submit required assessments, a detailed explanation must be submitted to the Programme Manager either before or immediately after the assessment date. Learners should provide a medical certificate if the absence is due to illness.

Where absences or non-submission occurs, the Programme Manager will consider each case on an individual basis and determine whether learners can avail of repeat assessment opportunities or a late submission facility.

## **6.3.7 Recording and Communicating Results**

Following the ratification of assessment results, these are made available to learners and submitted to QQI. Recognising the significant positive impact that feedback has on learner achievement, learners can request to meet with tutors and discuss their assessments feedback and/or results. The purpose of this feedback meeting is solely to assist learners in identifying areas to improve academic development, if applicable. Learners must request feedback on assessments within 3 working days of receiving results (for more information, see Feedback Policy).

## **6.3.8 Recheck, Review, Appeals**

As part of OSS's commitment to ensuring fair and transparent learner assessment, the Centre has put in place arrangements to facilitate rechecking, reviewing, and appeals of assessment decisions, grades, and feedback provided in a constructive, timely and effective manner (for more information, see Recheck, Review, Appeals policy). These mechanisms are based on QQI guidelines in this area.

## **6.3.9 Repeat Assessment**

OSS repeat assessment regulations apply where learners fail assessment (for more information, see Repeats Policy). This mechanism is based on QQI guidelines in this area.

## 6.4 Assessment Malpractice Policy

### PURPOSE

The management of the assessment function at O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) is underpinned by the principles of validity, reliability, and transparency. This policy document outlines the measures implemented by OSS to identify and deal with instances of academic malpractice that have a direct effect on the assessment process, teaching and learning standards, and learners' academic careers and development.

### POLICY STATEMENT

This policy indicates OSS's commitment to the pursuit of a clear and consistent approach to all suspected cases of academic malpractice, including all suspected cases of academic malpractice. The policy describes the different categories of academic malpractice and how we treat suspected academic malpractice effectively.

Academic malpractice is defined as any act or behaviour that casts doubt on the validity of the assessment process or any attempt to obtain an unfair advantage. These methods include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Plagiarizing work through the submission and use of material that has been created by another person without crediting the source, resulting in learners passing off the work of others as their own.
- Colluding by working collaboratively with other learners beyond the scope that has been authorized for the assessment type.
- Failing to follow the instructions or advice of an assessor, a supervisor, an invigilator, or OSS conditions regarding assessment/test rules, regulations, and security.
- Introducing and/or using unauthorized material/device that is not specifically required during supervised assessment/examination/test conditions unless authorized permissions have been given. This includes (but is not limited to) the use of notes, study guides, calculators, dictionaries, mobile phones, or other similar electronic devices.
- Falsifying/altering any results documents, including certificates.
- Cheating to gain unfair advantage.
- Behaving in any way that undermines the integrity of the assessment process.

To ensure that the assessment process is conducted in line with OSS quality assurance (QA) policies and procedures, all assessment staff understand and are familiar with learner assessment malpractice guidelines. Staff will also be aware of methods to develop learner understanding of guidelines relating to assessment malpractice, the avoidance of learner plagiarism, and the response to suspected assessment malpractice.

## RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

### 6.4.1 Suspected cases of academic malpractice

Suspected cases of academic malpractice will be investigated in a timely manner that avoids any disadvantage to learners. Where relevant, this may result in sanctions in instances where a review is held, and academic malpractice is identified.

Where academic malpractice is suspected, tutors will refer the matter to the Programme Manager who will review all information relating to the case of suspected assessment malpractice and decide if there is a case to answer. If the Programme Manager finds that assessment malpractice has not taken place, the event is closed, and no formal documentation is recorded.

Where learners are identified as having committed unintentional or minor instances of plagiarism (which may occur as a result of poor academic practice or errors in judgment by learners) for the first time, tutors may not impose any reduction of marks. Unintentional or minor instances of plagiarism include the learner copying or partly copying the work of another without using correct citation techniques or the learner relying heavily on information from other sources to complete assessment work.

Tutors will provide learners with support on correct citation methods and avoidance of plagiarism and advise learners of processes where subsequent instances of plagiarism are identified.

If a second instance of learner plagiarism occurs or learner(s) are suspected as responsible for any above outlined acts or behaviours that casts doubt on the validity of the assessment process or any attempt to obtain an unfair advantage occur, tutors will notify the programme manager. The programme manager will take the following actions:

- Notify the learner(s) of the issue.
- Forward learners a link to the OSS Academic Malpractice Policy
- Notify learner(s) that a review will take place and invite learners to attend.
- Inform learners of their right to respond within five working days.
- Appoint an independent training professional – seconded from non-associated internal training sections or if required a Subject Matter Expert (SME) to conduct a review and provide recommendations on the level of SME.
- Notify the learner(s) of the outcome of the review meeting.



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- Notify the learner(s) of the appeals process.
- Report the event to the Registrar.

*Note: OSS investigates cases of plagiarism where the learner has signed a declaration of authenticity.*

### **6.4.2 Investigating Suspected Academic Malpractice**

#### **Review**

The reviewer will independently assess learners' work against the assessment criteria and assess whether plagiarism has occurred and to what level. Learners will be invited to attend the review meeting.

The reviewer will make a recommendation to the Programme Manager who will notify the learner of the outcome of the review in writing. In cases where the reviewer determines that academic malpractice has not occurred, learners are notified of the outcome in writing and that all documentation will be destroyed. In cases where the reviewer determines that a case of academic malpractice has occurred, learners are notified of the outcome in writing. This notification will inform learners of the sanction to be applied, learners' rights to appeal the decision and the timeframe for appeals to be lodged. The notification forwarded to learners will include a copy of/link to the Appeals Application Form.

### 6.4.3 Learner Appeals

Following communication of the outcome of the review, applications for appeal must be submitted to the Programme Manager within five working days using the Appeals Application Form.

Learners can pursue the appeals process on the following grounds:

- The alleged malpractice was not dealt with in accordance with OSS procedures.
- New information (not available during the investigation) has become available.

The Registrar will review the appeal and documentation from the review to determine if there are grounds for an appeal. Where grounds for an appeal are present, the Registrar will notify learners of the decision that grounds for appeal exist, that this will be passed to the Appeals Committee, the date and time of an appeals Committee hearing, and that the outcome of the Appeals committee is final.

The Appeals Committee will review all documentation relevant to the investigation and reach a decision based on a voting system. Learners are informed of the outcome of the meeting by the Registrar.

OSS will retain all documentation relating to the appeal for up to one year after learners complete their programme of study.

### 6.4.4 Sanctions for Academic Malpractice

Where a minor case of academic malpractice occurs for the first time, tutors will refer learners to the Academic Malpractice policy and inform the Programme Manager that a case of academic malpractice has occurred. The incident is recorded and placed on file. Learners will be advised that any further incidents of academic malpractice may result in learners being awarded a zero grade on the relevant piece within the assessment.

If learners commit plagiarism for a second time or commit academic malpractice as defined by any act or behaviour that casts doubt on the validity of the assessment process or any attempt to obtain an unfair advantage, learners can apply to retake the assessment with the stipulation that results of this assessment work will be capped at a pass result. The incident of academic malpractice is recorded and placed on file.

## 6.5 Internal Verification Policy

### PURPOSE

To ensure academic standards are met and to ensure fair, valid, and reliable assessment practices, O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) appoints an Internal Verifier to each programme of study.

### POLICY STATEMENT

The Internal Verification Policy and related processes ensure that assessment processes and practices are monitored. Through the internal verification process, the Centre identifies if assessments are conducted in a manner relevant to module learning outcomes and that grading is consistently applied to reflect the standard of learner work assessed.

Internal verification at OSS is a confidential, evidence-based process that is carried out on a sample basis. The minimum sample size for the process of verification will be assessment submissions from five learners. Internal verification is the process by which the OSS assessment policies and procedures relating to planning, managing, and operationalizing all aspects of assessment practices will be internally verified.

The role of the internal verifier is to systematically check that the Centre's assessment procedures have been applied consistently across assessment activities where appropriate and to verify the accuracy of assessment results.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

The internal verification (IV) process takes place after the completion of learners' assessment and prior to the implementation of the external authentication and results approval processes. Internal verification is the review and evaluation of the assessment process and provisional results. The appointed Internal Verifier personnel will be persons other than those involved in programme delivery and assessment of the programme in question.

Internal verification includes checking assessment procedures that have been applied. Additionally, the internal verification process also includes the checking/monitoring of the conduct of assessment and of assessment results. This essential monitoring procedure works to ensure that learner evidence exists and that results, and grades are properly computed and recorded.

## 6.5.1 Appointing Internal Verifiers

The programme manager is responsible for overseeing the planning for internal verification. The internal verification process is also subject to internal scrutiny by our internal verification overseer. During IV planning, the following aspects are considered:

- The number of learners and tutors (assessors)
- All relevant assessment related processes and documentation (including internal verification, results approval, appeals and requests for certification)
- OSS deadlines and key dates
- QQI certification deadlines and key dates

Appointed Internal Verifiers will:

- Review assessment documentation and records
- Check that all assessment procedures were adhered to.
- Monitor results and confirm the accurate transfer and calculation of learner results.
- Acknowledge good practice and identify any non-conformances/corrective actions.
- Complete, date and sign the Internal Verification Report
- Communicate findings to relevant OSS staff.
- Carry out any other administrative duties related to internal verification.
- Make all documentation arising from the internal verification process available to external authentication personnel, the Results Approval Panel (RAP), and others as appropriate.

## 6.5.2 Internal Verification Report

Upon completion of the internal verification process, Internal Verifiers complete a written report. The Internal Verification Report is submitted to the Registrar to be securely recorded and stored.

Internal Verification Reports and insights are used to inform the external authenticator process and will be considered during meetings of the RAP.

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Where the internal verification process identifies non-conformances/corrective actions, these are immediately reported to Registrar. Where non-conformances/corrective actions are reported, the Registrar will meet with the Internal Verifier and Tutor and prepare a short report for review at the RAP meeting.

### **6.5.3 Frequency of Internal Verification**

The internal verification process occurs for each QQI certification period (where applicable).

## 6.6 External Authentication Policy

### PURPOSE

The external authentication process ensures fairness, consistency and validity of assessment and the outcomes of assessment for learner results across awards. The external authentication process ensures accurate and quality assured learner results.

### POLICY STATEMENT

External authentication is a quality assurance process at O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) which ensures the objective and authoritative judging of learner assessment. The external authentication process ensures.

The external authentication process is concerned with programme learning outcomes, the compliance of learning outcomes to national standards, and circumstances that may affect demonstrating those outcomes. The authentication process ensures fairness and validity of assessment methodologies and of the outcome of assessment for learner results across each award. The authentication process ensures accuracy, and quality assured learner results are issued.

By employing an external authentication process, OSS provides an independent element into the procedures for the assessment of learners. This process supports/develops stakeholder confidence in academic qualifications offered at OSS. Through the application of the QQI common framework and structure, the External Authenticator can fulfil their role and ensures the process of external authentication is undertaken in a professional and transparent manner.

OSS will appoint External Authenticators through the Centre's quality assurance processes. OSS shall ensure that sufficient External Authenticators are appointed so that it can be satisfied that the assessment, examination, and determination of award processes are being fairly conducted.

External authentication provides independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with national standards. The external authentication process also establishes the credibility of the Centre's assessment processes. Through external authentication, the Centre ensures that assessment results have been marked in a valid and reliable way and are compliant with the requirements for the award.

The role of the External Authenticator is to ensure consistency of assessment results with national standards and to provide independent confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners.

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The external authentication process is concerned with programme learning outcomes, the compliance of learning outcomes to national standards, and circumstances that may affect demonstrating those outcomes. The authentication process ensures fairness and validity of assessment methodologies and of the outcome of assessment for learner results across each award. The authentication process ensures accuracy, and quality assured learner results are issued.

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OSS will appoint External Authenticators through the Centre's quality assurance processes. OSS shall ensure that sufficient External Authenticators are appointed so that it can be satisfied that the assessment, examination, and determination of award processes are being fairly conducted.

External authentication provides independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners in accordance with national standards. The external authentication process also establishes the credibility of the Centre's assessment processes. Through external authentication, the Centre ensures that assessment results have been marked in a valid and reliable way and are compliant with the requirements for the award.

The role of the External Authenticator is to ensure consistency of assessment results with national standards and to provide independent confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners.

## RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

External Authenticator roles and responsibilities\* at OSS are to:

- Confirm the fair and consistent assessment of learners consistent with OSS procedures and with QQI policy on quality assuring assessment.
- Review Internal Verification (IV) Report(s) and authenticate the findings/outcomes.
- Apply the OSS sampling strategy to moderate assessment results consistent with QQI requirements.
- Moderate assessment results in accordance with standards outlined in the Award Specification

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- Visit OSS and meet with appropriate staff where required (on –site or virtually)
- Participate in the results approval process (for more information, see Section 7.1, Assessment Policy)
- Identify any issues/irregularities in relation to the assessment process.
- Recommend results for approval.
- Produce an External Authentication Report

*\*Aligned with QQI Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers (Revised 2013) and Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for External Authenticators (Revised 2015).*

## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

The external authentication process takes place after the completion of learners’ assessment and the internal verification process and prior to the finalisation of the results approval process. The External Authenticator is selected and assigned by the Registrar.

The External Authenticator will undertake to:

- Exercise their role with utmost integrity and professionalism when undertaking external authentication for OSS.
- Comply with QQI’s Further Education and Training (FET) policies and procedures specifically in relation to awards and assessment.
- Comply with OSS quality assurance (QA) policies, processes, and procedures.
- Inform OSS of any potential conflict of interest which may compromise the external authentication role.
- Inform OSS of their availability.
- Communicate appropriately with OSS and inform OSS of planned visits and information required.
- Provide constructive feedback to the Centre management and staff.
- Compile an External Authentication Report on time and based on an independent evaluation of the process and procedures.

After OSS requests a suitable External Authenticator to carry out this role, the authentication process proceeds at OSS in five stages.

### **6.6.1 Stage 1: Confirming Arrangements with OSS**

OSS contacts the External Authenticator to confirm availability and arrange their visit to the Centre.

### **6.6.2 Stage 2: Preparing for the External Authentication Visit**

To prepare for the external authentication visit, the appointed External Authenticator should:



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- Agree the terms and conditions for conducting external authentication with OSS.
- Confirm with OSS the availability of:
  - Relevant validated programmes including programme modules.
  - All relevant assessment instruments and appropriate supporting documentation (Assessment briefs, Examination papers, etc.)
  - Assessment plan(s)
  - All Learner assessment evidence
  - All learner assessment results recorded on an Authentication Report (results sheet from QBS) by learner group by minor award.
  - List of Tutors (Assessors) per module and/or class group
  - Internal Verification Report(s)

### 6.6.3 Stage 3: Conducting the Authentication Process

The Programme Manager is responsible for overseeing the planning for external authentication. As part of this planning, the Programme Manager will consider:

- All relevant assessment related processes and documentation (including internal verification, results approval, appeals and requests for certification)
- OSS deadlines and key dates
- QQI certification deadlines and key dates
- The location for external authentication to take place.

The Programme Manager meets with the External Authenticator. Both parties:

- Exchange contact phone numbers for the day
- Reconfirm the volume and duration of work.
- Confirm arrangements in relation to how the relevant assessor(s) can be contacted, if necessary
- Confirm that the external authentication process has been provided with a suitable location to facilitate the process (for example, a quiet, secure space within the building with all required resources)
- Confirm the building closing time.

The Programme Manager will ensure the visiting external authenticator is provided with: Internal Verification Report(s)

- Relevant award specifications and validated programmes
- All relevant assessment instruments and appropriate supporting documentation, for example, assessment briefs, examination papers, and marking schemes.
- All learner assessment evidence or a sample of (depending on cohort size)

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- All learner assessment results recorded on appropriate results sheet(s)
- Appropriate equipment to moderate assessment evidence produced in a multimedia format must also be provided (where applicable).

### **6.6.4 Stage 4: Moderating Assessment Results**

The External Authenticator moderates' results of awards in which they have relevant expertise in the field of learning. This is done by judging the marked evidence and relevant supporting documentation presented by OSS in accordance with the associated standards outlined in the award specification.

The External Authenticator reviews the documentation provided and should be satisfied that the minimum intended programme learning outcomes agree with the relevant awards standards. The External Authenticator applies judgments across the boundaries between bands/grades.

### **6.6.5 Stage 5: Reporting**

Upon completion of the external authentication process, the External Authenticator is asked to provide verbal and written feedback. The External Authenticator completes a written report using the External Authenticator Form and sends this to the Programme Manager within 2-3 working days of the visit.

This report is submitted to the Registrar and is securely recorded and stored.

Insights provided by the External Authenticator Report(s) will be used to inform the enhancement of quality assurance at OSS. The External Authenticator Report will be considered during meetings of the Results Approval Panel.

External Authenticators will be provided with timely and considered responses to their comments and recommendations, including information on any actions taken by the programme where applicable.

### **6.6.6 Frequency of External Authentication**

The external authentication process occurs for each QQI certification period (where applicable).

### **6.6.7 Appointment of External Authenticators**

The Registrar is responsible for the appointment of External Authenticators. In appointing External Authenticators, the Registrar will consider the:

- Recommendation of the Programme Manager
- Number of awards on offer within OSS provision
- Selection and assignment of an External Authenticators for each award based on the individual's subject matter expertise.
- Avoidance of conflicts of interest
- Appointment of alternate External Authenticators every three years relevant to each award area

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- Consultation with the person proposed for nomination to seek their consent to be nominated. Such consultation shall be without commitment to appointment as External Authenticator.

All External Authenticators will:

- Operate within the code of practice and guidelines issued by QQI in the Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers document (revised 2013).
- Have technical/subject matter expertise within the appropriate award area/field of learning.
- Have experience of delivering programme assessment or work in industry/field.
- Agree to undertake appropriate training (if required) and attend appropriate briefings.
- Have the qualities necessary to interact with learners, tutors/assessors, and senior staff members (for example, communication skills)
- Have administrative and IT skills (for example, report writing, time-management skills)

## 6.7 Assessment Feedback Policy

### PURPOSE

Feedback is a central part of the assessment process and the development and support of learning at O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS). Understanding the significant impact feedback has on learner achievement, OSS will provide feedback to learners in a constructive, timely and effective manner to support learners' academic development.

As part of OSS's commitment to ensuring fair and consistent learner assessment, the Centre has developed procedures to provide learners with feedback.

### POLICY STATEMENT

The Assessment Feedback Policy and associated procedures at OSS are learner-centred and have been designed to:

- Motivate learners to act on assessments.
- Guide learners on actions to take to improve academic work.
- Develop learners' capabilities.
- Develop learners' self-regulation skills.
- Identify and reward qualities present in learners' work.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Tutors are available to provide feedback to learners during the programme. This feedback is normally limited to verbal, group feedback. Learners can request feedback through a one-to-one meeting with tutors.

When providing feedback, tutors will refer to assessment rubrics to communicate the expectations of learners and assessments. This practice will provide learners with specific performance-related information, comparative to established standards.

All feedback provided by tutors should:

- Be productive to learners' academic development.
- Be objective and constructive in nature.

### **6.7.1 Feedback on Completed Assessment Performance**

Following the issue of approved results, learners can request to meet with tutors individually and discuss their assessments feedback and/or results. The purpose of this feedback meeting is solely to assist learners in identifying areas to improve academic development, if applicable. Learners must request feedback on assessments within 3 working days of receiving approved results.

## 6.8 Recheck, Review, Appeals Policy

### PURPOSE

As part of the O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) commitment to ensuring fair and consistent learner assessment, the Centre has developed procedures to provide procedures for assessment recheck, review, and appeals.

### POLICY STATEMENT

OSS maintains the integrity of awards with qualifications based on the validity and reliability of assessed learning outcomes. The Centre has put in place arrangements to facilitate re-checking, reviewing, and appeals of assessment decisions, grades, and feedback provided in a constructive, timely, and effective manner. These arrangements are intended to support/develop stakeholder confidence in academic qualifications offered at OSS.

Recheck is an administrative operation that involves the rechecking of the recording and combination of component scores for a module and/or stage.

Review refers to the re-consideration of the assessment decision by suitably competent individuals. Appeal refers to a specific request to review the operation of assessments at OSS.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

#### 6.8.1 Recheck

Recheck refers to the administrative procedure of checking that all parts of assessments are recorded correctly and that no error occurred during the recording and/or calculation of grades to establish the assessment result.

Learners may lodge an application for recheck of assessment based on learners' understanding that there has been an error in the calculation of the assessment result. Where rechecks occur, this procedure may result in changes to assessment results.

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Learners can submit applications for a recheck to the Programme Manager for up to ten working days following the issuing of provisional results. Applications must be submitted using the Recheck/Review/Appeal Application Form within the timeframe specified and include a payment of the relevant administration fee per assessment. Details of the administration fee are available from the Programme Manager.

Learners will normally be notified of the results of the procedure within fifteen working days of receipt of completed recheck applications.

Rechecking may result in changes to learner's assessment grades (upwards or downwards). Where learner's assessment grades are changed, any administration fees paid will be refunded.

*Note: Recheck does not include a review of the assessment performance or the merit of the mark awarded.*

### 6.8.2 Review

Review refers to the internal procedure of examining components or all parts of assessment materials in detail. Where reviews occur, these will be preceded by a recheck of the recording and calculation of grades to establish the assessment result.

Learners can submit applications for review of assessment based on their understanding that there has been an error calculation of the assessment result.

Learners can submit applications for recheck to the Programme Manager for up to ten working days of communication of assessment results. Applications must be submitted using the Recheck/Review/Appeal Application Form within the timeframe specified and include a payment of the relevant administration fee per assessment. Details of the administration fee are available from the Programme Manager.

Applications must clearly state in what respect learners consider the assessment decision erroneous. Learners are normally notified of the results of the procedure within fifteen working days of learners' applications for review.

Reviewing may result in changes to learners' assessment grades (upwards or downwards). Where learners' assessment grades are changed upwards, any administration fees paid will be refunded.

Where any change in classification is decided by the following review, the relevant External Authenticator will be notified and/or consulted. The Programme Manager submits a short report to the Registrar. This report will be presented for discussion at the Results Approval Panel (RAP).

### 6.8.3 Appeal

Appeal refers to a specific request to review the operation of assessment processes for the specific learner concerned. Where appropriate, the appeal will include a review of learner evidence (included in original presentation for assessment) from the assessment results. The OSS appeals process enables learners to appeal only concerning:

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- The assessment process – where learners perceive there to be irregularities and/or inequality in its implementation.
- Approved assessment results - where administrative or procedural errors at OSS have affected learners' assessment results.

Learners may lodge an application for appeal following a recheck and/or review. Learners who wish to avail themselves of the appeals process must have a clear rationale for the appeal and the decision to undertake an appeal is at the Registrar's discretion.

Learners who wish to lodge an appeal must apply using the Result/Review/Appeal Application Form to the Programme Manager within fifteen working days of communication of assessment results or the outcome of a Recheck or Review. Where learners lodge an application for appeal, the application must clearly state the component that specifically relates to the appeal and provide a clear rationale for the appeal. When submitting an appeal application, learners must forward all supporting documentation and payment of administration fees.

Where learners' applications for an appeal are approved, learners are notified of the decision and an appeals Committee is convened. The Appeals Committee will consist of:

- Registrar
- Two independent training professionals – seconded from non-associated Internal training sections or if required a Subject Matter Expert

The Appeals Committee will review learners' applications for appeal and will decide in relation to same as efficiently as possible. The decision of the Appeals Committee is final. The outcomes of the Appeals Committee include:

- Confirmation of the decision reached during recheck/review processes (if applicable)
- Recommendation that the assessment undergo remarking by a different tutor (assessor)

The Registrar will inform learners of the outcomes of the appeals process within fifteen working days following the convening of the Appeals Committee.

In cases where appeals are granted, this may result in a re-evaluation of the assessment outcome/grade. Where an appeal is granted, the appeals fee will be refunded. The Appeals Committee will prepare a report outlining findings and recommendations for the Quality Committee.

*Note: If learners who lodge an appeal are dissatisfied with the findings of the appeals process based on clear evidence that an irregularity has occurred, learners may continue to lodge a complaint to OSS using the Centre's complaints procedures*



## 6.9 Repeat Policy

### PURPOSE

As part of the O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) commitment to ensuring fair and consistent learner assessment, the Centre has developed procedures to provide procedures for repeat assessments.

### POLICY STATEMENT

Where learners fail assessment(s) or fail to make use of assessment opportunity (except where the programme validation states otherwise), learners are afforded the opportunity to repeat assessment.

OSS recognises that circumstances and factors external to the learning environment can impact on learners' academic performance or influence learners' ability to complete assignments and/or examinations in a timely manner. OSS may facilitate absences in the event of exceptional circumstances (for example, periods of illness and/or personal issues such as immediate family bereavement).

Where learner absence occurs during a period of submission/sitting dates for assessments or examinations, it will naturally not be possible for OSS to award learners with a grade for unsubmitted/incomplete assignments or examinations. Learners will be notified that, under certain circumstances, it will be possible to apply for consideration for personal mitigating circumstances (for more information, see, Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy). This may result in a deferral scenario being considered for the learner in question. The decision will be taken by the Registrar taking on any recommendations from the Programme Manager.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

### 6.9.1 Continuous Assessment

Continuous assessments are summative assessments undertaken for the purpose of submitting authenticated results to QQI for the request of an award. Assessments may take place during the programme of study or require learners to submit assessment(s) at the end of the programme of study (within agreed and specified submission dates). Learners are notified of the learning outcomes for the components that they are studying and the relevant award specification. Learners receive an Assessment Brief, including the assessment techniques and assessment(s) submission dates.

Learners are responsible for ensuring that they have made themselves familiar with the OSS assessment procedures and the submission deadline(s) relevant to their programme of study.

## QUALITY MANUAL

OSS repeat assessment regulations apply where learners fail an assessment. A failure grade may occur through:

- Unsatisfactory performance
- Non-submission of required assessment(s)
- Late submission of assessment(s)

### **6.9.2 Repeat Assessment**

OSS communicates results to learners following the results approval process. Learners who attain a grade below 50% in a module may be required to undertake a repeat assessment. Learners who do not pass an assessment can seek feedback on their performance (for more information, see, Feedback Policy).

Repeat assessments will be scheduled by the Programme Manager. Learners who do not complete assessments due to unscheduled breaks cannot be accepted for consideration for Personal Mitigating Circumstances. If learners are unable to complete assessment(s) due to unapproved absence, the Centre will attempt to facilitate the learner at a future date where possible (but without any impact on the integrity of the assessment process for other learners).

## 7 SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

### 7.1 Learner Induction Policy

#### PURPOSE

All new learners who undertake a programme of study at O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) receive an induction to OSS and their selected programme of study.

The induction is designed to ease learners' transition to studying at OSS, introduce learners to the skills, knowledge and demands of their chosen programme of studies, establish learners as part of the OSS learning community, and establish relationships with peers, tutors, and OSS staff. The learner induction provides OSS with the opportunity to set learners' expectations and outline those of OSS.

#### POLICY STATEMENT

The induction policy and process provide learners with key information relevant to their academic journey at OSS and explains the learners and staff rights and responsibilities.

#### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

#### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

All new learners are expected to participate in the induction process. Learner induction focuses on general OSS matters as well as programme specific matters. The induction allows new learners to become familiar with members of the Centre and get a more precise understanding of their chosen programme and the programme structure.

Learner induction takes place immediately before programme commencement (DAY 1) and includes valuable information on health and safety regulations, fire safety, toilet facilities, breaks, and other information necessary for learners' safety and comfort.

The induction process provides sufficient information on the Centre's academic policies and procedures, and information on learner's rights and responsibilities. Learners are also introduced to the following policies and procedures:

- Learner Handbook access
- Health and Safety
- Learner Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures

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- Academic Malpractice Policy
- Complaints Policy and Procedures
- Recheck, Review, and Appeals Policy
- Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy
- Unscheduled Breaks and Attendance Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy

*\* If learners are absent during induction, the Programme Manager provides learners with induction information later.*

## 7.2 Learner Code of Conduct Policy

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) Learner Code of Conduct Policy is to help establish the expectations of learners at OSS whilst ensuring the safety and protection of learners and Centre staff. The Learner Code of Conduct Policy and associated disciplinary procedures ensure a professional and safe environment exists for all.

### POLICY STATEMENT

OSS works towards ensuring a good working relationship between all staff and learners. OSS additionally commits to recognition of the value the diversity of learner experiences and expectations. In this way, OSS is committed to treating learners in a fair and transparent manner.

The Learner Code of Conduct Policy defines the learners' rights and responsibilities. These rights and responsibilities form the basis of the relationship between members of the OSS community and its learners. This document provides a clear statement of the Centres' expectations of its learners in respect of academic matters and personal behaviour. Learners themselves have responsibilities towards tutors, Centre employees, and other learners.

This policy includes updated guidelines that detail the set of recognised ethical norms (or values) and standards of acceptable conduct and behaviour at OSS. This document describes clear and transparent procedures for reporting violations, reviewing incidents and the related due processes. It is expected that stakeholders will comply with the Learner Code of Conduct Policy and that any complaints will not be of a malicious nature or for the purpose of personal gain. The Learner Code of Conduct Policy is based on the principles of natural justice and consequently, anonymous complaints cannot be dealt with or responded to.

# QUALITY MANUAL

Where disciplinary actions are applied, these will primarily be corrective and provide learners with the opportunity to amend their behaviour in line with the culture and ethos of the Centre.

This Policy and disciplinary procedures will be formally reviewed on a regular basis to reflect any legislative changes.

## RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

### 7.2.1 Learner Code of Conduct

OSS is fully committed to supporting and fostering a learning environment that provides support and respect to all.

Learners enrolled on a programme of study at OSS are expected to:

- Conduct themselves in a manner that upholds and supports the Centre's learning environment and the experiences of others.
- Work to help the creation of a learning environment adapts the principles of collaboration, mutual aid, and professional relationships.
- Avoid behaviours that may cause disruption to classes, OSS staff, or to other persons enrolled on programmes of study.
- Treat all OSS staff and other learners with respect.
- Behave in a manner that does not bring the Centre or its stakeholders into disrepute.
- Access and familiarize themselves with the specific policies, procedures, and academic expectations and regulations relevant to their enrolment in the Centre.
- Attend all classes and adhere to the guidelines detailed in the unscheduled breaks and class attendance policy.
- Avoid language or behaviours that may be considered threatening to others.

## QUALITY MANUAL

Misconduct is unacceptable or improper behaviour, or any behaviour motivated by premeditated or intentional purposes. Misconduct can include unintentional behaviour which may occur because of errors in judgment by learners or which is a minor breach of OSS regulations. Examples include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Failure to abide by OSS health and safety rules and procedures.
- Minor breaches of OSS regulations
- Unintentional and minor damage to OSS property

Misconduct also refers to any behaviour which is a serious breach of OSS regulations. Examples include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Major breaches of OSS health and safety rules and procedures
- Major breaches of OSS regulations
- Any act which results in adverse publicity or reputational damage to OSS or its staff
- Persistent rude, disruptive, or threatening behaviour towards learners, OSS staff, and OSS stakeholders
- Failure to follow any reasonable instruction given by any staff member in the performance of their duties.
- Bullying or harassment or engaging in any discriminatory behaviour
- Possession, supply, or use of illegal drugs
- Dangerous behaviour, fighting, or physical assault.
- Failure to report damage to property or premises caused by the learner.

### 7.2.2 Gross Misconduct

Gross Misconduct refers to instances where any act that destroys the relationship of trust and confidence between OSS and learners, making the relationship impossible to continue.

Examples of gross misconduct include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Signing in on behalf of another learner for assessment purposes
- Sexual offences, sexual misconduct, and/or sexual harassment
- Possession of weapons or any item that might be construed as being a weapon or dangerous substance.
- Assault on any member of OSS staff, learners, or any other OSS stakeholders
- Forgery, alteration, or misuse of OSS documents or records
- Providing false information to OSS or impersonating others with the intention to deceive
- Attendance at the Centre under the influence of alcohol or drugs

### 7.2.3 Breaches of OSS Learner Code of Conduct Process

Before making a formal allegation of misconduct, learners should first try to resolve the issue informally with the person who is the subject of the alleged misconduct or with the immediate manager/supervisor of the service. This can be done in person or through the Learner Representative. Learners can also seek the advice of another staff member or Programme Manager, as appropriate.

Where allegations are reported, the Programme Manager will initially investigate these. This investigation may result in the application of sanctions (where applicable). Depending on the nature of the allegation, and where the matter is resolved through learners' admission of responsibility, the Programme Manager may close the allegation. The Programme Manager will provide learners with a link to the Code of Conduct Policy. Where learners deny any responsibility, the Programme Manager will write a report of the incident and forward this to the Registrar for further review and action.

The Registrar will assess the information sent by the Programme Manager and determine if the case of alleged misconduct requires further action and/or investigation. If it is determined that further action and/or investigation is required, the relevant learners will be notified. This notification will inform learners of:

- The outcome of the investigation
- The appeal options open to the learner.

Where learners accept the outcome of the investigation, the matter is considered closed, and a record of the event is kept on the learners' records until the learners' completion of the programme of study.

If an appeal, the Registrar will send all information relating to the allegation of misconduct to the Appeals Committee. The Registrar will notify learners of the following:

- Learners need to attend an appeals Committee meeting and confirm their attendance in writing (within 5 working days of receiving communication from the Registrar)
- The date and time of the scheduled Appeals Committee meeting
- The location of the OSS Code of Conduct Policy and disciplinary procedures
- Learners' rights to have a colleague or family member accompany them to the Appeals Committee meeting.
- The role of the accompanying party is solely to take notes and to supply support to the party engaged in the allegation (rather than to act as a legal advocate or representative)
- The need for learners who choose an accompanying party to be present to let OSS know of this intention no less than 72 hours (about 3 days) prior to the meeting. This notification must also provide details of the identity of the accompanying party and their relationship to the named party.
- That the decision of the Appeals Committee is final.

## 7.2.4 Appeals Committee

The Appeals Committee will convene where learners submit an appeal of a decision made by the Registrar. The Appeals Committee will review all information relating to the allegations of misconduct and the learners' response/s and establish if misconduct has occurred. The Appeals Committee will notify learners of the:

- Outcome of the investigation
- Decision of the Appeals Committee as final

## 7.2.5 Breaches of Code of Conduct Sanctions

The reputation of OSS and its learners is guided by OSS's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of learning and instruction. This commitment to standards includes the creation and fostering of a learning environment to meet the expectations of its stakeholders. The Learner Code of Conduct works to ensure the safety and protection of learners, stakeholders, and trainers.

Where learners are found in breach of the Learner Code of Conduct, sanctions may apply. Any sanctions applied to cases of confirmed breaches of the Learner Code of Conduct are determined by the severity of the misconduct.

## 7.2.6 Sanctions for Breach of Code of Conduct

Where breaches of conduct occur, learners are provided with a written notification to which the offence applies. Learners are guided to the area of the Quality Assurance (QA) Handbook that refers to the Learner Code of Conduct Policy and disciplinary procedures. The incident of misconduct is recorded and placed on file until programme completion.

Depending on the severity of the misconduct, learners may be immediately required to leave the programme of study. Where this occurs, learners will be unable to register their attendance for any other programmes of study provided by OSS and fees will not be refunded. The incident is recorded and placed on file for twelve months following completion of the programme. Learners are advised that any further verified incidents of breaches of the code of conduct may be treated as evidence of gross misconduct.

## 7.2.7 Sanctions for Gross Misconduct

Where gross misconduct occurs or where learners are determined as having committed a second breach representing major misconduct, learners may be immediately required to leave the programme of study. Where this occurs, learners will be unable to register their attendance for any other programmes of study provided by OSS.



## 7.3 Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy

### PURPOSE

The management of O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) strives to ensure the academic success of learners enrolled on its programmes. Learners attending programmes of study at OSS are expected to attend all classes during the period of programme enrolment.

Full class attendance is an essential component in the academic development and engagement of learners. However, the Centre recognises that circumstances may arise that may affect learners' ability to satisfy programme requirements or to achieve their potential. For this reason, learners can request that, under certain circumstances, personal mitigating circumstances be taken into consideration.

### POLICY STATEMENT

This policy outlines the mechanisms that are available to learners who present with a mitigating circumstance that precludes participation with given elements of a programme and at certain point in time.

In the event of circumstances which affect learners' ability to participate fully in their programme of study or programme activities, learners are responsible for communicating this to the Programme Manager at OSS. Where a medical issue is a potential reason for the change in circumstances of the learner, the Centre will provide learners with assistance in locating medical services if required. If learners do not wish to discuss the nature of their absence, the Centre will advise them to contact their healthcare practitioner to arrange the relevant support and assistance.

Personal Mitigating Circumstances refers to conditions that prevent learners:

- Actively participating in or attending a programme of study during the period of enrolment
- Completing assessment activities, to the standard that otherwise would have been expected, during the period of programme enrolment.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Learners may be facilitated in taking unscheduled breaks in the event of mitigating circumstances (for example, bereavement or illness). Such periods should be verified by supporting documentation.

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Where absence occurs during a programme of study, learners must contact the Programme Manager outlining the expected duration of absence and return date. Where absence is recurring, learners must contact the Programme Manager and, if relevant, provide evidence of medical certification for the period of illness/absence.

The Centre requests learners to engage with them during periods of absence so that alternative arrangements can be identified and implemented if required. Due to the delivery structure of QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) accredited programmes available at OSS, learners are strongly encouraged not to schedule holidays during programme enrolment.

### **7.3.1 Personal Mitigating Circumstances – Procedures**

Where learner absence occurs during a period of submission dates for assessments of examinations, it will not be possible for OSS to award learners with a grade for unsubmitted/incomplete assignments or examinations.

Learners will be notified that, under certain circumstances, it will be possible to apply for consideration for personal mitigating circumstances using the Personal Mitigating Circumstances Form. Learners are advised to submit the completed form with supporting documentation (for example, medical certificate) for review by the Programme Manager. Learners can apply for personal mitigating circumstances usually for up to ten working days after their period of absence. OSS treats all valid personal mitigating circumstances in a supportive manner.

The Programme Manager will review learners' applications for personal mitigating circumstances and will decide in relation to the same as efficiently as possible.

Where learners' applications for personal mitigating circumstances are approved, learners are notified of the decision.

Where learners' applications for personal mitigating circumstances are rejected, learners will be notified of the decision and provided with rationale for the decision. If learners wish to appeal the decision, the Registrar will review the documentation, make a final decision, and notify learners in writing. The Centre recognizes that it may be a challenging time for learners and accordingly, all correspondence with learners in relation to these matters will be treated with sensitivity and discretion.

OSS treats all learner information privately and confidentially. Where personal mitigating circumstances need to be considered for assessment completion and learners submit medical certificates, these are presented at the Results Approval Panel (RAP), allowing the Panel the opportunity to consider same.

## 7.4 The Learning Venue and Equipment Suitability Policy

### PURPOSE

This policy ensures that the O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) learning venue and its facilities are appropriate to meet learners' needs and meet minimum standards outlined by OSS.

### POLICY STATEMENT

This policy outlines the minimum standard requirements to ensure a positive teaching and learning experience which can be delivered in a safe and supportive physical environment.

The management of functions at OSS ensures that all learners are given rights to equality of treatment and ease of access to OSS's services. OSS recognises the importance of achieving a coherent and integrated approach to the provision of services and support for learners with special needs. All facilities will accommodate learners with special needs.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

OSS is committed to providing a learning environment that supports the learning experience of all the Centre's learners. OSS operates in a bespoke, dedicated training centre. The Venue Suitability and Equipment review is conducted regularly. A Venue Suitability and Equipment Checklist Form is completed for this review. The Venue Suitability and Equipment Checklist Form has been designed to ensure that the Centre(s) adhere(s) to the following minimum standard requirements:

- Health and Safety (incorporating Covid-19 requirements)
- Security
- Disability Access and Facilities
- Suitability of Learning Environment
- Equipment Suitability

#### 7.4.1 Health and Safety

Learning venues and equipment must adhere to health and safety obligations. These include:

- Emergency lighting
- Adequate fire escapes

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- Assembly point noted.
- Means of raising fire alarm
- Evacuation signage/details available

OSS holds public liability insurance which provides cover for all parties attending the Centre.

### **7.4.2 Disability Access and Facilities**

Access to OSS and its training rooms is accessible to wheelchair users or people with mobility requirements. The Centre provides disabled toilet facilities.

### **7.4.3 Suitability of Learning Environment**

All training rooms provide adequate space in relation to the number of learners enrolled on a programme of study and the practical elements of the programme. Lighting, heating, and ventilation equipment is available. Room lighting is adequate and window blinds are present (where required).

### **7.4.4 Equipment Suitability**

OSS and the training room facilities provide the equipment required for the learning and assessment activities of the programme. In circumstances where programme curricula content requires specific materials to support learning, these will be provided.

## **7.5 Unscheduled Breaks and Class Attendance Policy**

### **PURPOSE**

The management of functions at O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) strives to ensure the academic success of learners enrolled on programmes of study. OSS learners are expected to attend all classes during the period of programme enrolment. Full and punctual class attendance is an essential component in the development and engagement of learners. Attendance plays a key role in creating an environment of increased participation, interaction, and learning. Consistent attendance is a contributing factor in enhancing the learning experience and facilitating the development of learning skills and learning progression. Attendance is also a key factor in ensuring OSS achieves its mission to work with individuals and organisations to help them achieve their training goals.

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

This policy explains OSS's approach to monitoring the engagement of learners on the Centre's programmes of study and engagement with the Centre.

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Although full learner attendance is the ambition, OSS recognises that circumstances and factors external to the OSS environment can impact on learners' academic performance or influence learners' ability to attend classes or to complete assignments and/or examinations in a timely manner. OSS may facilitate absences in the event of exceptional circumstances (for example, periods of illness and/or personal issues such as an immediate family bereavement).

In the event of circumstances which affect learners' ability to participate fully in their programme of study or programme activities, learners should refer to the Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy (for more information, see Personal Mitigating Circumstances Policy).

Due to the delivery structure of QQI accredited programmes available at OSS, learners are encouraged not to schedule holidays during the period of their enrolment. OSS maintains records of attendance of all learners enrolled on programmes of study. Attendance records are updated daily by tutors. Learners are required to sign up for each day of their programme of study.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Due to the delivery structure of QQI accredited programmes available at OSS, learners are encouraged not to schedule holidays or unscheduled breaks during programme enrolment.

Where unapproved absence occurs during a programme of study, learners must contact the Programme Manager. Where unapproved absence is recurring, learners must contact the Programme Manager and subsequently provide evidence of medical certification for the period of illness/absence. The Centre requests learners to engage with them during periods of absence so that alternative arrangements can be identified and implemented if required.

Learners are notified that, under certain circumstances, it will be possible to apply for consideration for personal mitigating circumstances. Learners are advised to submit a completed Personal Mitigating Circumstances Form with supporting documentation (for example, medical certificate). Learners can submit an application for personal mitigating circumstances usually up to 10 working days after their period of absence. The Centre will treat all valid cases of personal mitigating circumstances in a supportive manner.

The Programme Manager will review learners' applications for personal mitigating circumstances and will decide in relation to the same as efficiently as possible. Where learners' applications for personal mitigating circumstances are approved, learners are notified of the decision by the Programme Manager.

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Where learners' applications for personal mitigating circumstances are rejected, learners will be notified of the decision and provided with rationale for the decision. The Centre recognises that it may be a challenging time for learners and accordingly, all correspondence with learners in relation to this matter will be treated with sensitivity and discretion.

### 7.5.1 Class Attendance Procedure

OSS records and measures learners' attendance using attendance records. All learners are required to sign a programme attendance register for each attendance on a specific programme of study. OSS provides tutors with attendance records and tutors are responsible for administering the attendance record to learners.

Learners are responsible for signing the attendance record on each day of their training programme. Any attempts by learners to falsify the attendance record (i.e., by attempting to sign in another learner who is absent) will be in direct breach of the Code of Conduct Policy. Where this breach occurs, the instance will be subject to the procedures documented within the relevant policy.

### 7.5.2 Sanctions for Poor Attendance

The reputation of OSS and its learners' is guided by OSS's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of learning and instruction. Consistent attendance is a contributing factor in enhancing the learning experience. Attendance also plays a vital role in assisting OSS to achieve its objective to work with learners and organisations to achieve their personal and strategic goals. Where learners' attendance falls below a manageable level, the Centre will work to facilitate learners in completing a programme of study where possible.

## 7.6 Refunds Policy

### PURPOSE

O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) recognises that on occasions it may be necessary to provide for situations whereby learners' situations may change and require them to withdraw from a programme registration that they have committed to and paid for. The purpose of this policy is to support the provision of refunds in appropriate situations.

### POLICY STATEMENT

Learners who register for programmes at OSS agree to accept the refunds terms and conditions outlined within this policy document. OSS provides full refunds for cancellations made more than 10 working days before the programme start date. OSS must be notified of any cancellations using a dedicated email address. Learners who fail to attend or complete a programme of study are not eligible for refunds.

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Organisations may substitute learners enrolled in programmes of study prior to the start of the course without incurring additional costs. OSS must be notified of any programme transfer or change-of-date requests by email at least 5 working days prior to the commencement of the specific original programme of study.

OSS provides its stakeholders with access to the Centre's Refunds Policy on the OSS website. Potential learners will be required to indicate that they have read the Centre's Terms and Conditions (including refunds) prior to confirmation of payment for a programme of study.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

#### 7.6.1 Refund Application Process

Persons who wish to apply for refunds should email OSS directly to request the refund. All applications for refund will be handled in line with OSS's conditions of sale (as documented on the OSS website). The email must provide details of the learner(s), the specific programme the refund relates to, the method of payment used, and the rationale for the refund. Where necessary, OSS may request additional documentation be submitted to support the applicant's refund request. All applications must be provided to OSS a minimum of 10 working days before the commencement of the programme of study.

Where applications for refunds are approved, applicants will normally be provided with a refund payment within 20 working days of the refund decision. Where applications for refunds are rejected, applicants will be notified of the decision in writing and provided with a rationale for the decision.

#### 7.6.2 Programme Transfers and Change of Date Application Process

Persons who wish to substitute participants and/or change the date of a programme of study, must email OSS directly and request the programme substitution and/or change of date in writing. The email should provide details of the learner(s), the specific programme the request relates to, and the rationale for the substitution and/or change of study date. Where necessary, OSS may request additional documentation to be submitted to support the applicant's request(s). All applications must be provided to OSS a minimum of five working days before the commencement of the original programme of study.

The Programme Manager will review the application(s) and decide.

Where application(s) are approved, applicants will be notified within five working days of the decision. Where application(s) are rejected, applicants will be notified of the decision in writing.

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*Note: Applications for refunds, programme transfers, changes of date that are not lodged within the specified timeframe indicated for each application cannot be processed*

## 7.7 Learner Representative Policy

### PURPOSE

Learner Representatives will contribute to the implementation of quality assurance (QA) processes and quality enhancement at O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS). Through gathering and providing feedback on learning experiences of enrolled learners and sharing this with OSS team, Learner Representatives will ensure focus on learners' experiences is a key focus of the Centre.

The role of Learner Representative also provides learners with an opportunity to develop deeper connections with other learners and to develop negotiation, advocacy, leadership, and communication skills.

### POLICY STATEMENT

O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) will work to apply the Learner Representative Policy where it is feasible within the scope of its operations. Learner Representatives will act as the 'voice of learners' and provide representation on the views and experiences of learners at OSS. Learner Representatives will ensure that learners' views are heard and assist OSS in continually listening to and engaging with learners to improve teaching, learning, assessment, and academic experiences.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Registrar.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

It is OSS policy that all new learners receive an induction to OSS and their chosen programme of study. OSS recognises that a well-organised induction can assist learners in developing an understanding of learner responsibilities and expectations while helping learners settle into the learning environment. Learners will be notified of the role of Learner Representative. Learners will have the opportunity to volunteer for the role.

If the class signs up to the Learner Representative Policy, groups of learners can choose to select a learner representative from the group. (In classes of less than 5 days' duration there is no obligation on the group to sign up to this policy).

Where learners do not volunteer for the position of Learner Representative, tutors may select a learner representative from the entire learning group.



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Where more than one learner wishes to assume the role of Learner Representative, the remaining learners enrolled on the programme of study must endorse the appointment through a vote system. Learners will write their vote on a piece of paper. Tutors will collect the votes and count the votes. The learner in receipt of most votes will be elected as the learner representative for that group.

Learner Representatives must assume a proactive role in representing and engaging with fellow learners. Where programme-related and Centre-related matters may arise, Learner Representatives are responsible to present this matter to the Programme Manager.

## 7.8 Complaints Policy

### PURPOSE

This policy ensures that all legitimate complaints are investigated with a view to reaching a resolution in a clear, fair, and timely manner.

### POLICY STATEMENT

Complaints can provide an important source of feedback on the performance of O Dwyer Safety services (OSS) services and service delivery. As such, OSS carefully manages the registration of complaints and the hopeful progress towards attaining an agreed outcome for the parties involved.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Programme Manager. Depending on the area of complaint, the Programme manager will involve the relevant parties to the complaint.

### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

#### 7.8.1 Stages in the Complaints Process

Before making a formal complaint, learners/complainants should first try to resolve the issue informally with the person who is the subject of their complaint (if applicable) or with the immediate manager/supervisor of the service. This can be done in person or through the Learner Representative.

Learners/complainants may also seek the advice of another staff member or OSS Management, as appropriate. There may be occasions when several learners/complainants feel they need to jointly make a complaint about a problem. In these circumstances, it may be appropriate to ask the Learner Representative to speak on their behalf or to nominate a learner to act as spokesperson.

Learners/complainants can be accompanied at any stage of the process by a family member or a colleague. In all instances, the accompanying party cannot be a legal advocate or representative. Their role

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is to take notes and act as a support to the party engaged in the complaint. Discussions are between the named parties and do not involve accompanying parties. The intention to bring an accompanying party, the identity of the accompanying party and their relationship to the named party must be communicated in writing to the meeting organiser, not less than 72 working hours prior to the meeting. The complaints procedure is based on the principles of natural justice and as a result, anonymous complaints cannot be dealt with or responded to.

### 7.8.2 Stage 1: Informal Process

This preliminary stage will be a verbal process and a formal, written record will not be made. If the complaint is not resolved, then the complainant may proceed to Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.

### 7.8.3 Stage 2: Formal Process

If the complaint is not resolved informally, the learner(s)/complainant(s)/Learner Representative should complete a Complaint Form. The completed Complaint Form should be forwarded to the Programme Manager, who will escalate if required to the Registrar. The complaint should be specific and comprehensively documented. The procedures (both informal and formal) for dealing with each category of complaint are then elaborated.

#### *Complaints Procedure*

This section outlines the procedures to be followed for each of the categories of complaints (A or B) below.

#### *Category A – Specific Subject/Module/Programme Issues*

The following procedure is to be followed for complaints falling within this category:

1. Learners/complainants may complete a Complaint Form and submit it to the Programme Manager. Where the issue is resolved, the outcome is communicated to all relevant stakeholders. Where the problem is not resolved informally, the following procedure may be followed.
2. In the case of unresolved issues relating to specific subjects or modules, meetings will be set up with the tutor, the learner(s)/complainant(s), and the Programme Manager to resolve the issue satisfactorily. Such meetings should normally be completed within ten working days. Reference should be made to the programme documentation as part of this process. Both learner(s)/complainant(s) and the staff member may elect to have a representative or a third-party present at such meetings. Records are retained of such meetings, agreed, and signed by participants, and made available to each party. For issues relating to general programme issues such as course workload and timetabling, the learner(s)/complainant(s) will submit the Complaint Form to the Programme Manager to be included as an agenda item in advance of the regularly scheduled management meeting. The matter will be processed through the next management meeting and escalated to the Registrar if necessary.

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3. Where the complaint is resolved, the Programme Manager should complete a Complaint Resolution Form and inform the learner(s)/complainant(s) of the outcome. If not satisfied, the learner(s)/complainant(s) may appeal the outcome to the Registrar.
4. Where the issue is not resolved, the Registrar will review the matter and decide upon the appropriate course of action. Both the learner(s)/complainant(s) and staff member will be kept up to date on the matter.

*Note: Regardless of the category utilised above, the Registrar will receive minutes from all meetings involving any form of communication relating to any alleged complaint. The Registrar's decision will be final in all cases.*

### **Category B – Learner Services/Facilities**

Category B complaints (which relate to learner services or facilities) are initially dealt with by the Programme Manager. The following procedure is to be followed for complaints falling within this category.

Where a complaint relating to a service/facility remains unresolved, the learner(s)/complainant(s) may submit a Complaint Form and the Programme Manager will place the item on the agenda of the next Quality committee meeting (where such exists).

Where the complaint is resolved, the Programme Manager should complete a Complaint Resolution Form and inform the learner(s)/complainant(s) of the outcome. If not satisfied, the learner(s)/complainant(s) may appeal the outcome to the Registrar.

\*All complaints are logged in to our improvement log and are reviewed by the Quality Committee.

*Note: Regardless of the category utilised above, the Registrar will receive minutes from all meetings involving any form of communication relating to any alleged complaint. The Registrar's decision will be final in all cases.*

# 8 INFORMATION & DATA MANAGEMENT

## 8.1 Information Management Policy

### PURPOSE

Reliable information and data are available to facilitate informed decision-making at O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS). The Centre's Information Management Policy enables the Centre to securely control and track information and assist the Centre in ensuring compliance with statutory and legal regulations.

### POLICY STATEMENT

This policy outlines OSS's internal and public information systems used to securely collect, process, and apply information to support the development of successful academic programmes and all related activities.

The OSS Information Management System:

- Ensuring the security and proper use of all learner data, business information and other IT assets.
- Safeguarding the security of personal or sensitive information
- Ensures the Centre's continued compliance with relevant legal and regulatory obligations.
- Managing the complete lifecycle of all information in line with Data Protection and the requirements of QQI and other interested parties.

The centre is committed to full compliance with organisational obligations under data protection legislation and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The policy applies to all Centre staff, learners, stakeholders, and all Centre records and information, in both hard and soft copy.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Registrar.

## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

### 8.1.1 Learner Management System

OSS maintains learner information using a secure, customised learner management system. Information retained includes learner:

- Personal details
- Contact information.
- Assessment results
- Stages completed.
- Awards conferred.
- Classification of awards
- Certification results
- Personal mitigating circumstances detail
- Communications received from learners.

The Centre has arrangements and External technical expertise in place to facilitate robust server security systems and the automatic back-up of data in case of technical failure.

Information is maintained securely through protocols of limited access and differing levels of access. Technical support staff, security administrators, system administrators, and others may have a need for special account access privileges compared to typical or everyday users. The provision of administrative and special access accounts with a higher level of access means that granting, controlling, managing, and monitoring these accounts is extremely important to OSS's information security programme.

### 8.1.2 Information Management for Decision-making

The Centre generates reports on learner retention, progression, and completion rates which are used to inform the ongoing monitoring of programmes and all associated services. The Programme Manager is responsible for learner feedback surveys and the generation of associated reports. These reports will feed into the annual monitoring reports for individual programmes. Reports at programme, faculty and institution level are considered to identify influencing factors, determine patterns which assist in benchmarking and inform decision-making, and identify opportunities for additional data analysis that may be of benefit.

Learner achievement reports will be generated by the Programme Manager for consideration by the Results Approval Board (RAP). This information will detail the breakdown of learner performance across individual modules, and final award classification recommendation data will facilitate allowing cross

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programme analysis and comparative data. A report on analysis will be incorporated into monitoring reports, notified to the External Authenticator, and used to inform programme changes, teaching, learning and assessment strategies or learner support services.

### 8.1.3 Service Provider and Data Management

OSS maintains a main information management system to support its operations, assist in decision-making across the organisation, plus support effective communication and sharing of information with learners and other stakeholders.

The main data management platform used by OSS is cloud-based and include:

- Microsoft Office 365 – primarily email, word processing and spreadsheets to support both day- to-day office work and mobile working.

These systems collect and process data, making it available to staff who have the authority to access it. OSS uses an External managed Services provider to support its IT operations, including:

- Consultancy on IT trends and advice to meet the organisation’s changing IT requirements.
- Technical support to individual users, plus resolving any IT issues in order to maintain services to customers and other stakeholders.
- Remote monitoring to maintain systems integrity.
- Back-up and disaster recovery.
- Local server maintenance and advice on technical upgrades.
- Management of antivirus software and firewalls; and
- Compliance with software renewals and licensing.

Transitional arrangements for any upgrades or migration to new technology platforms are considered across the organisation to ensure continuity of service delivery. The Programme Manager would supervise such transitions, reporting to the Board of Directors.

### 8.1.4 Transmission of QQI certification data

OSS also maintains access to QQI’s QBS system through a two-step authentication password-protected link via [www.qqi.ie](http://www.qqi.ie). This is used by course co-ordinators to upload learner data in support of learner certification and access other QQI systems, e.g., validation services and Q-help.

The course administrator inputs certification data to QBS which is verified by the Programme Manager.

### 8.1.5 Data Protection & Privacy

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OSS gathers and maintains a variety of personal data to assist in fulfilling its contracts and the delivery of services to learners and other interested parties. This data is controlled internally to ensure its safety and integrity. Data includes:

- Learner name.
- Learner address.
- PPS number.
- Telephone number(s).
- Email address.
- Date of birth.
- Course/programme of study.
- Employer (if relevant)
- Module and certification results; and

Data is initially collected by the Course Co-Ordinator team and logged on the system from the point of initial course enquiries. It is then used by administrators and tutors throughout the learner lifecycle (registration, enrolment, study, assessment, certification plus progression) to support the delivery of the programme to learners.

OSS maintains and shares data in accordance with Data Protection Act 2018/ General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679, with a Data Protection Officer having oversight of this area, reporting to the Managing Director

The information used by OSS reflects its range of activities within the training and education sector, covering both corporate data and different formats, as shown in Figure below:

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Information types	Information formats
Electronic data (e.g., emails, word-processed documents, spreadsheets, databases, and web content)	Desktop & laptop PCs Internal servers Cloud-based servers
Hard copy documents (Including learner assignments, course notes & materials, assessment materials, award certificates, hand-written notes)	Social media feeds (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) Uploads to QBS (QQI) Mobile phone texts Website pages
Video and photo's (digital images) Audio files	Hard copy documents

*Information types & formats*

## 8.1.6 Records Maintenance and Retention

Records retention and management is an important component of the OSS process. The Centre has a need to store and manage information on general operations, student records, and finance as part of day- to-day activities. As part of a retention scheme, classes of documents are retained on different schedules based on various criteria. OSS specific record retention schedules provide a consistent policy regarding retention and disposal of educational and operational records. OSS will set records retention schedules to address legal, statutory, and compliance requirements as well as litigation needs, business processes, and data privacy concerns. Storage requirements shall be coordinated to comply with requirements for record storage.

OSS retention periods are generally determined by:

- Evaluating applicable regulatory, statutory, legal, or general state and federal compliance requirements
- Determining electronic data components collected, their purpose, and applying the appropriate retention procedure to each class of data asset.
- Identifying other internal or external entities that collect, store, archive, or use OSS information and records.

OSS operational areas shall develop procedures and documentation that implement and maintain the retention requirements as outlined in this policy. Specific procedures shall specify the retention time, archival rules, data formats, and the permissible means of storage, access, and encryption (if any).

All staff who create and maintain records as part of their duties are responsible for these records. OSS has arrangements with an external provider to support and maintain backups of all records held in the learner management system. The Registrar is responsible for the secure storage and maintenance of all assessment documentation and of all transfer of third-party information to other accrediting bodies.



## 9 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

### 9.1 Public Information and Communication Policy

#### PURPOSE

O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) is committed to ensuring that the Centre clearly communicates information to all its stakeholders. OSS works to apply the principles of attention, timeliness, and the use of appropriate language to all its communications. This ensures that all information is transparent, clearly understandable, and communicated in a consistent manner to its audience/stakeholders.

#### POLICY STATEMENT

This policy outlines information made available publicly by OSS. This policy document also outlines the procedures in place that guide OSS in approving the types and formats of information that is made public. This policy is applicable to all communications directed towards present/future learners, the public, and all other relevant stakeholders.

#### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the marketing function.

#### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

OSS understands the purpose of communication is to function in a way that is of maximum benefit to stakeholders whilst, at the same time, allowing the Centre to function as effectively and efficiently as possible. OSS and its staff operate within a transparent work culture and environment, thereby gaining the respect of colleagues and customers. To meet these objectives, OSS applies practices where public communications are transparent, clear, and accessible to all.

Public information refers to all information assets that OSS communicates and publishes relevant to its activities. This includes information relating to OSS's education and training programmes, provider information, OSS quality assurance policies and procedures, findings from quality assurance evaluations, and any other relevant content.

OSS is fully committed to providing current and future learners with clear and accurate information relating to the QQI accredited programmes delivered as part of the Centre's offerings. Transparency of communication with stakeholders is achieved using the OSS website (available at: <https://www.odwyersafetyservices.ie/>).

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Using the website, OSS publishes programme information and quality assurance documentation. Stakeholders can also access information by contacting OSS directly by telephone, using email or social media, or by speaking directly with the Programme Manager.

The OSS website provides information that has been designed to provide guidance to all stakeholders. Information relating to accurate programme and (public) award information includes details of the:

- Programmes offered to learners at OSS.
- Whether or not a programme leads to an award
- Relevant awarding body for programmes of learning (where applicable)
- Award title for each available programme of learning (where applicable)
- Award type, credits attached and NFQ level (where applicable)
- Procedures for access, transfer, and progression (where applicable)
- Assessment Information
- Programme schedule
- Refund policies
- Terms and Conditions

Quality assurance (QA) documents are publicly accessible and are located on the OSS website (<https://www.odwyersafetyservices.ie/>)

To facilitate the Centre's self-evaluation process and ensure quality of service, quality assurance policies will be reviewed and updated on the OSS website (<https://www.odwyersafetyservices.ie/>) As appropriate (for more information, see Section 10, Internal Review, Monitoring, and Self-Evaluation Policy).

Quality assurance documents are stored and made available through the Registrar. Editing access and permissions for QA documents is limited to relevant personnel.

The OSS website will provide all relevant information relating specifically to the OSS organisation. This information includes:

- QA Manual
- OSS contact and location details
- Details relating to course type and delivery.
- Company profile
- Client testimonials
- Details relating to facilities.
- Terms and Conditions

## **10 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

### **10.1 Other Parties Involved in Education and Training Policy**

#### **PURPOSE**

O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) engages with external, reputable bodies for the purposes of external peer review and programme delivery. OSS is committed to establishing and maintaining a two-way system of communication with its stakeholders and other interested parties within the training and education community.

#### **POLICY STATEMENT**

This policy outlines OSS's commitment to engaging with external partners for differing aspects of programme and service delivery and to incorporate external systems of peer review. The ongoing quality assurance management of external relationships ensures full adherence to agreed service-level agreements (SLAs) and mitigates reputational risk to OSS, the education and training sector and/or national qualifications systems associated with OSS, and Centre stakeholders.

#### **RESPONSIBILITY OF**

This policy is the responsibility of the Managing Director and Registrar.

#### **PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES**

##### **10.1.1 Peer Relationships with the Broader Education and Training Community**

OSS is a provider of Health & Safety training programmes leading to recognized qualifications and awards made on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Additionally, OSS delivers several programmes and awards which are accredited and validated by third-party institutions or awarding bodies.

Where relationships are in place between OSS and third-party institutions, these relationships are subject to appropriate internal and external QA procedures. In addition, accreditation to deliver these programmes is published on the OSS website and usually on the website of the third-party institution. The development, approval, and ongoing QA management of programmes operated in collaboration with other organizations mitigates the reputational risk to OSS, the education and training sector, and/or national qualifications systems associated with OSS and Centre stakeholders.

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Where relationships are established between OSS and external parties, the Registrar is responsible for ensuring all relationships adhere to OSS QA standards.

Opportunities to develop peer relationships include.

- Attendance at conferences, seminars, etc. to meet with other education and training professionals.
- Benchmarking exercises with other Irish training providers, sharing best practice ideas and approaches.
- Engagement with training organizations, both in Ireland and overseas, to identify new trends.

In addition to delivering QQI accredited programmes, OSS offers programmes validated and/or accredited by the awarding bodies included in Figure 7.



*Other Awarding Bodies*

### 10.1.2 Expert Panellists, Authenticators

When engaging external expertise, the Programme Manager will ensure that all external experts.

- Are qualified and competent in their subject area,
- Are briefed with the OSS QA culture, policies & processes.

OSS will select External Authenticators with specific skillsets. External Authenticators are required to moderate results for awards in fields/sub-fields in which the Authenticator has broad subject matter expertise.

Given their professional status it is expected that the External Authenticators will possess the expertise necessary to moderate results in general areas e.g., Communications.

## 10.1.3 Competencies of Expert Panellists

Potential candidates may be drawn from further or higher education communities or from other communities of practice. Competency may be demonstrated through several pathways. These include (but are not limited to):

- Free from any potential conflict of interest that may compromise their role,
- Technical and/or subject matter expertise within the appropriate award area/field of learning.
- Practical understanding of QQI's awards standards at the relevant NFQ level and in the relevant fields of learning.
- Agree to undertake appropriate training and to attend relevant briefings,
- Expertise in quality assurance, programme accreditation/review and other issues relating to teaching and learning approaches, assessment, and learner supports.
- Knowledge of other business/industrial/social/educational environment relevant to the field of learning.

## 10.1.4 Independence

Expert Panellists and External Authenticators must act with objectivity and strict impartiality. This is a core component in maintaining transparency with all stakeholders and ensuring stakeholder confidence in programmes and services offered by OSS and QQI.

OSS does not appoint individuals where there is any possibility (real or apparent) of conflict of interests between potential candidates and OSS.

All prospective Expert Panellists and Authenticators have the primary responsibility for disclosing interests that represent conflict of interest or lead to conflict of interest. Potential candidates are requested to declare in writing any relevant interests and potential conflicts of interest prior to engagement.

Where any potential conflict of interest is discovered after the engagement of an Expert Panellist or External Authenticator, these candidates must disclose this with the Registrar.

Where a conflict of interest is discovered, the Expert Panellist or External Authenticator will take no further part in the panel or evaluation process. Independence and expertise are assessed according to best practice by the Registrar and Managing Director. At all times, cognisance will be taken of previous business, professional and academic relationships, and experience.

## 10.1.5 Second Providers

At the present time OSS does not engage with second providers for any of its QQI programmes. Appropriate due diligence and approval by the Quality committee would be required before any second provider relationship would be considered.

## 10.1.6 Relationship with other Accreditation Bodies

OSS offers programmes accredited by other accreditation bodies in addition to QQI. Therefore, any proposal for a new programme partnership must be reviewed and approved by both the Quality Committee and Board of Directors. Due diligence activities in this area should include reports covering:

### Strategic fit:

- Proposed partner's Plan, Vision & Mission Statement
- Organizational structure and geographical locations
- Evidence of alignment with OSS's corporate mission and goals
- Ethical, sustainability, equality, and diversity principles
- Opportunities for enhancement of OSS's organizational knowledge and experience

### Academic powers & Quality Assurance:

- Organisation's awarding powers, both in collaboration with other training/education bodies
- QA methodology and manuals (e.g., academic integrity, dispute resolution)

### Financial:

- Accounting and taxation position
- Details of the financing arrangements of the organisation

### Legal:

- Power to enter the proposed collaborative partnership.
- Approaches to third party collaborations, intellectual property, data protection, equality, and diversity, etc.

### Risk:

- Protection of the OSS brand
- Managing potential reputational risks (OSS's association with QQI and NFQ)

# 11 SELF EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

## 11.1 Internal Review, Monitoring, and Self-Evaluation Policy

### PURPOSE

This policy outlines the processes in place to facilitate the ongoing monitoring and review of programmes and related services and the O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) Quality Assurance (QA) Framework.

### POLICY STATEMENT

OSS is committed to improving its training programmes, together with its associated services, through the regular evaluation of its core activities. This ensures that the Quality Assurance system and its related processes undergo formal review, with areas of improvement being identified and acted upon by the Quality Committee-

- Programmes and all related services and activities
- The OSS QA Framework

The availability and practical use of this framework provides valuable insights that are used to inform the continuous enhancement of OSS for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Through monitoring, review, self-evaluation, and action, OSS can ensure that effective quality and academic standards are identified, implemented, and maintained and that areas that require improvement are addressed. This process supports and develops stakeholder confidence in the academic qualifications offered at OSS. Monitoring and self-evaluation are based on a cycle of planning, implementation, review, and action.

OSS utilizes a Risk Register which identifies the exposure the Centre has to a range of risks and/or threats at any time. The Centre's governance structure is designed to facilitate the ongoing monitoring of the impacts and to decisions on associated management responses depending on the level of risk which applies at a given point in time.

### RESPONSIBILITY OF

This policy is the responsibility of the Registrar.

## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

### 11.1.1 Monitoring

Monitoring is an ongoing internal Centre process that provides insights into areas of service provision that are delivering quality and areas that require planning and action for improvement. Ongoing monitoring of programmes, essential to ensure academic quality and standards are maintained, is informed by ongoing review of learner and tutor feedback and other data gathered through review and monitoring processes.

Monitoring system design is also policy-driven, with the objective of meeting the fundamental policy goals of:

- Managing risks by ensuring financial, legal, and regulatory compliance
- Reducing costs by effective monitoring and audit
- Improving performance by setting and reviewing standards, benchmarks, and targets

Ongoing monitoring is documented and used to inform the development of a Centre Improvement Plan. The Centre Improvement Plan defines a schedule of actions to be undertaken following internal evaluation. The plan also identifies the responsible person(s) for actions and follow-up. The ongoing process may result in:

- Changes to existing quality assurance policy or related procedure
- Centre operational adjustments (including administrative, managerial, service provision)

### 11.1.2 Self-evaluation

Self-evaluation is a key factor that enables OSS to effectively operate to a high level within a rapidly changing landscape and dynamic external environment. Self-evaluation processes and insights also provide a robust method of embedding quality enhancement resulting in a greater impact on learners, and continuous quality service provision. Through self-evaluation, OSS further acquires information to inform the internal development of the Centre and programmes of learning.

Self-evaluation is informed by:

- Dialogue with Centre stakeholders
- Insights gathered through ongoing monitoring and review.
- The documented corrective actions reported.

### 11.1.3 Monitoring and self-evaluation criteria

Monitoring and self-evaluation are completed with consideration of:



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- Relevant, accurate and up-to-date data
- External factors which may impact OSS.
- Feedback and information by the relevant academic or operational unit

Outputs may include (but are not limited to):

- Determining the most appropriate action required to enhance the learning and information environment (for example, programme update, quality assurance update, corrective action)
- Validating those actions are accurate, comprehensive, and up to date.
- Managing information and knowledge to meet changing needs to ensure that they align with ever- changing requirements.
- Collating information for inclusion in the Centre's Improvement Plan

### **11.2 Programme Review and Revalidation Policy**

#### **PURPOSE**

Programme review and revalidation focuses on the quality of, or impact of, a programme's suitability in meeting the purpose that the selected programme was originally designed for. Programme review and revalidation processes assess programmes in terms of their continued relevance to meet the needs of learners, employers, the labour market, and wider society. Where programme review occurs, this process will assess the suitability of aspects including programmes assessment strategies and creation of a supportive education setting.

#### **POLICY STATEMENT**

This policy outlines O Dwyer Safety Services (OSS) policy and procedures for periodic programme review which normally occurs on a five-year, cyclical basis as part of the Centre's overall Programmatic Review and Revalidation procedures.

Programme review and revalidation is informed and supported by the regular review of programmes as part of the Centre's ongoing monitoring processes (for more information, see Section 3.3, Programme Monitoring and Review Policy).

Programme monitoring and review is a means by which OSS reviews the:

- Effectiveness of programmes in the context of meeting learner needs and the creation of an effective learning environment.
- Effectiveness of programmes in meeting the needs of employers, industry, the economy, and wider societal developments

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- Effectiveness of programme content, teaching and learning methods, and delivery methods
- Accuracy and effectiveness of assessment procedures and learner workload
- Suitability of programme resources available
- Relationships with external stakeholders that impact on the relevance of programmes

Programme review allows for extensive changes to occur in a programme. Where a programme review results in the creation of a new programme, changes must be consistent with the applicable award-standard(s) against which the programme was validated. A transition programme would be introduced by the Centre to assist learners who may wish to transfer from their current programme to the new programme (assuming relevant credits were attained).