First Polymer Training Skillnet

Quality Assurance Manual

Document Reference: FPTS-CM-001

Date: 28 May 2021

Version 10.

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PART 1

First Training Polymer Skillnet

INTRODUCTION TO FPTS

Facility

First Polymer Training Skillnet (FPTS) is a not-for-profit organisation established in 1999 under the Skillnets initiative. The Skillnet Network is run by Skillnet Ireland and is primarily concerned with in-employment training for a diverse range of industries, from polymer processing, to farming, to construction and many more besides. The Skillnets initiative is based on matched funding from industry, whereby a percentage of the training costs must come from employers/sponsors. The balance is government funded, through the National Training fund.

FPTS provides training to organisations involved in polymer processing. FPTS is based in Athlone Co. Westmeath. Our facility includes a training room and a fully equipped laboratory with state-of-the-art polymer processing equipment.

Skillnet Ireland has responsibility for all Skillnets in Ireland of which there are currently approximately 65, though the numbers fluctuate with time.

Skillnet Ireland issue operational guidelines known as the "Training Network Programme Guidelines", and each Skillnet is required to adhere strictly to these guidelines.

FPTS trains approximately 200 learners per annum in programmes leading to QQI awards at level 5 & 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Programmes

We offer QQI-accredited programmes in:

1.	Communications
2.	Essentials of Mould Design
3.	Hydraulic Equipment Maintenance
4.	Industrial Electrical Systems
5.	Injection Moulding Machine Setting
6.	Injection Moulding Process Control
7.	Injection Moulding Process Optimisation
8.	Lean Manufacturing Tools
9.	Plastic Extrusion Machine Setting

10.	Plastic Materials Selection
11.	Plastic Part Design
12.	Plastics Injection Moulding
13.	Plastics Materials and Processing
14.	Pneumatic Equipment Maintenance
15.	Product and Process Validation
16.	Programmable Logic Controllers
17.	Work Experience

We also provide several short-duration non-accredited programmes including:

1.	Additive Manufacturing Technologies
2.	Blow Moulding
3.	Cavity Pressure and Process Monitoring and Control
4.	Cleaning Validation
5.	Computerised Software Validation
6.	Design of Experiments (DOE)
7.	Equipment Validation
8.	Injection Moulding for Quality Engineers Online Delivery
9.	Injection Moulding Module 4
10.	Introduction to PLCs & SCADA HMIs

11.	Lean Immersion Workshop
12.	Medical Polymers and Processing Technology
13.	Process Analysis and Control using Minitab
14.	Project Management for Medical Device Companies
15.	Recycling of Polymers
16.	Robotics and Automation
17.	Single minute exchange of die (SMED)
18.	Six Sigma Yellow Belt - 2 Day Course
19.	Thermoforming
20.	Understanding Clinical Evaluations and Post Market Clinical Follow Up

Structure

Skillnet Ireland is a not-for-profit organisation that receives funding from the National Training Fund through the Department of Education and Skills.

The Skillnet Ireland guidelines specify that each network must have a Network Contracting Organisation (which is the legal entity for the Skillnet) to oversee the running of the network. In the case of FPTS, the Network Contracting Organisation (NCO) is Ibec. The NCO establishes the Steering Group, appoints a Network Manager at the Skillnet and designates a Network Promoter to support the work of the Network.

The Steering Group is a mandatory element of all Skillnets and represents the voice of industry. The FPTS Steering Group is a voluntary group comprising twelve members who oversee the programme offering to ensure that the views of the polymer processing industry and learners within the industry are considered at all times. The Academic Council oversees the pedagogy of the Skillnet ensuring the separation of academic and commercial decision making and the separation of programme development from programme approval.

In common with most Skillnets, FPTS has a small Network Management Team of four people led by the Centre Manager. On the delivery side, FPTS engage contract tutors, under framework agreements, who are practitioners as well as educators. All our tutors have been with us for many years and are highly experienced.

FPTS is the only provider of QQI-accredited polymer processing training in Ireland at FE level.

We have been recognised by the Irish Institute for Training and Development by way of Service Excellence Awards.

FPTS has a long history of engagement with QQI and has participated in Standards Development Groups for the development of national award standards at levels 5 & 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications in polymer processing and other awards.

FPTS Quality Statement

First Polymer Training Skillnet is committed to the provision of quality-assured training to enhance the competence and career opportunities of learners in the Plastics industry. Our staff recruitment, selection, and monitoring systems are designed to ensure consistently high standards of training provision. Our internal systems and independent oversight by industry professionals will ensure continuing alignment of our programmes with industry need and best practice.

Governance

Governance at FPTS is described in full in the "Governance at First Polymer Training Skillnet (Ref: FPTS-GOVN- 001)"

Organisational Chart

The Chart below shows the groups and individuals that comprise the FPTS Organisation.

First Polymer Training Organisation Chart

12 February 2021
Document Reference: FPT-ORG-001 (Rev 01.15).vsd

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Minister for Education and Skills (DES)
        |
CEO Skillnet Ireland.
        |
  ┌─────┴─────┐
Director at Network        Development Advisor
Contracting Organisation   Skillnet Ireland.
Ibec
  └─────┬─────┘
Catherine Collins
Centre Manager
FPTS
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Steering Group

- Kenny O'Brien — Steering Group Chair — Athlone Extrusions
- John Brennan — Spectrum Plastics Group
- Mark McAuley — Director at Network Contracting Organisation Ibec
- James O'Grady — Medtronic
- Pat Whyte — Irish Micro Mouldings Ltd
- Damien Fallon — MFP Plastics Ltd
- Shauna Ryan — Harmac Medical
- Sean Nolan — Tech Group Europe
- Justin Wallace — Trend Technologies Ltd
- Louis Goor — JL Goor Ltd
- Kevin Heffernan — Nypro Healthcare
- Paul Bryan — J L Goor Ltd.
- C. Collins — Centre Manager FPTS

Academic Council

- T.J Hughes — Enterprise Ireland — Chair
- Tutor Representative — FPTS
- David Mulligan — Head of Mechatronics — IT Sligo
- Learner Representative
- John Costello — Midlands Regional Skill Manager
- C. Collins — Centre Manager FPTS

Results Approval Panel

- Mark McAuley — Director at Network Contracting Organisation Ibec

Network Management Team

- Edel Garavan — Centre Administrator — FPTS
- Elisha Kelly — Network Executive — FPTS
- Alan Harrington — Technical Manager — FPTS

Tutor-Assessor-Developer Team

- Peter Cracknell — Tutor — FPTS
- Padraic Lunn — Tutor — FPTS
- Stephen O'Leary — Tutor — FPTS
- T.P. Lowry — Tutor — FPTS
- Des Foley — Tutor — FPTS
- Topic-Specific Instructor — Tutor — FPTS

External Authenticators Panel

- External Authenticator — FPTS
- External Authenticator — FPTS
- External Authenticator — FPTS
- External Authenticator — FPTS

PART 2

Policies and Procedures

1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY.

1.1 Revision Control

Policy	Governance and Management of Quality
Version	1.0
Effective Date	February 2021
Next Review Date	February 2026
Owner	Network Management Team

1.2 Policy

It is the policy of FPTS to provide effective governance structures for the responsible oversight of the programmes that we offer. This oversight extends to programme development, validation, delivery, results approval, and self-evaluation procedures that are aligned with mission and our strategy.

Our policy is to ensure that our quality assurance system is inclusive and intrinsic to the way we manage and deliver our programmes and reflects our strong commitment to our learners, their employers and to our own staff.

FPTS will take all reasonable measures to ensure the integrity of the training process to protect the national standard that our programmes are designed to reflect.

We will implement internal and external monitoring and evaluation systems and will use the findings of the reports from these systems to develop and implement plans for continual improvement and the avoidance of future risk.

FPTS continues to ensure availability of excellent programme resources through public and private funding under the Skillnets initiative. FPTS attains this goal by consistently meeting or surpassing key performance metrics set down by Skillnet Ireland and our membership.

1.3   Process (Diagram)
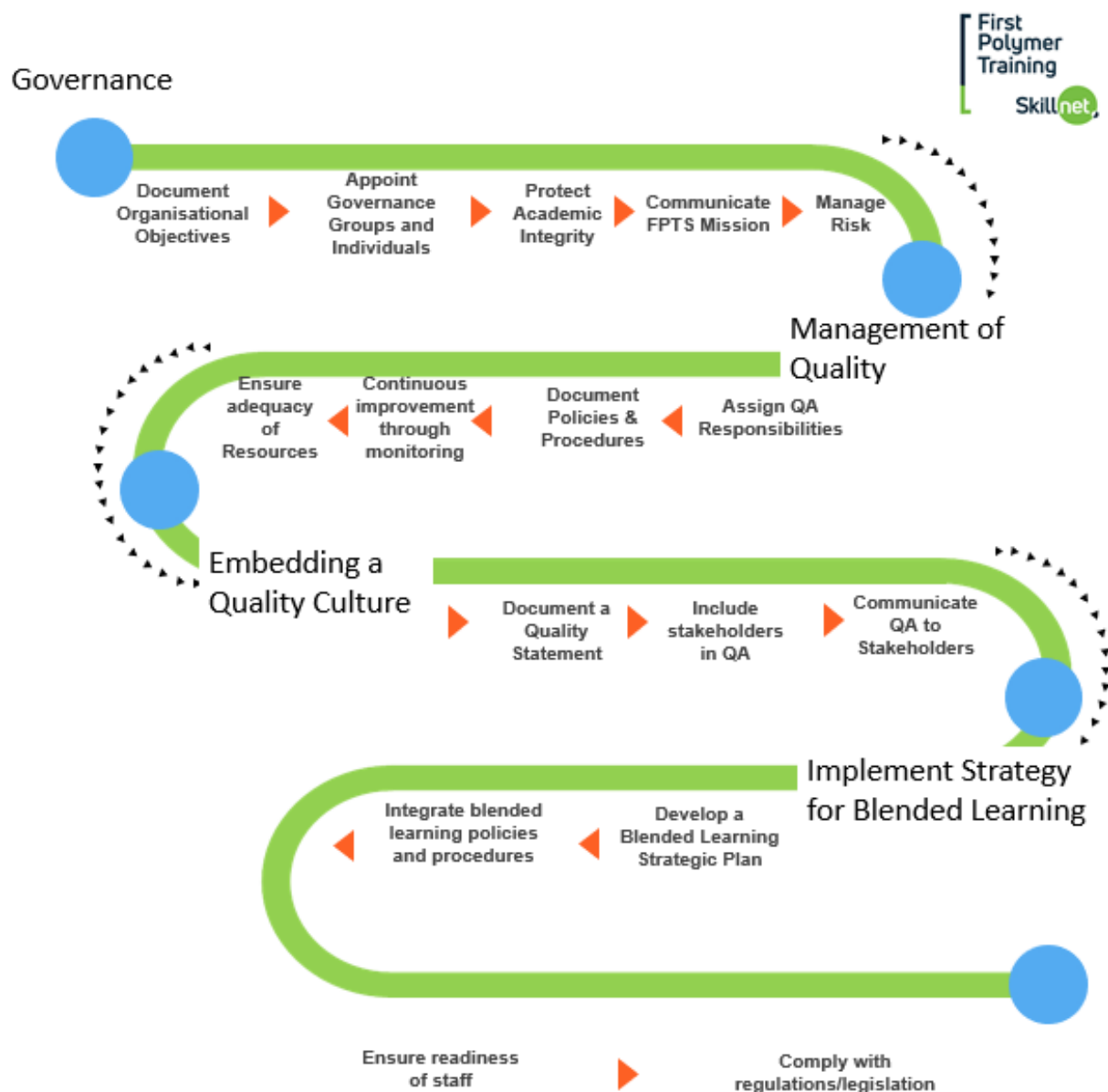
1.4 Procedure

The purpose of this procedure is to implement and maintain a governance system that quality assures all aspects of our training provision as a direct training provider and which provides for the separation of responsibilities between those who produce or develop material and those who approve it.

1.4.1 Governance.

1.4.1.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Establish FPTS's organisational objectives.
- Appoint internal and external groups and individuals to assist in the design, implementation and monitoring of the FPTS quality assurance system (e.g. Academic Council, Steering Group, External Evaluator, External Examiner, Tutors, QA Consultants etc.).
- Protect the integrity of the academic processes and standards.
- Communicate FPTS's mission to all relevant stakeholders.
- Manage operational risk and future sustainability.

1.4.1.2 Method

Organisational objectives

The FPTS mission statement and organisational objectives are set by the Centre Manager in collaboration with key stakeholders including Skillnet Ireland, Ibec, the Steering Group and the Academic Council, and are published on the "About Us" section of the FPTS website.

Governance groups and individuals, and academic integrity

The Academic Council an independent voluntary governance group which is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the Quality Assurance System. The Council is also responsible for ensuring the integrity of academic processes and standards.

The council has responsibility for the separation of academic and commercial decision making and for the separation of programme approval from programme development. These responsibilities are documented in the ToR for the Academic Council.

The Steering Group is the voice of industry and ensures that FPTS programmes are aligned with industry need and their ToR reflect this responsibility.

The Development Advisor (appointed by Skillnet Ireland) ensures compliance with the Training Network Programme Guidelines. These are mandatory Guidelines for continued government funding.

Additional external QA monitoring and support takes the form of External Authenticators, External Evaluators and QA SMEs.

Communication and risk management

The Centre Manager supported by the Network Management Team ensure that the FPTS mission and goals are communicated to relevant stakeholders. This is achieved through induction materials for learners and tutors as well as public information published on the FPTS website and information provided at events run by FPTS.

The Centre Manager is also responsible for the maintenance of the Risk Register for the purposes of mitigating risks to the achievement of organisational objectives. Several categories of risk are considered in the Risk Register including, financial, reputational, operational and governance. Risks are ranked in terms of their potential impact and their likelihood of happening, and action plans are considered to address each risk.

1.4.1.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Achievement of organisational objectives are kept under constant review and are published on the FPTS website.	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	The ToR for the Academic Council are reviewed by the Council itself and updated via the Network Management Team.	Annually	Academic Council	Academic Council
	The ToR for the Steering Group are reviewed by the Steering Group itself and updated via the Network Management Team.	Annually	Steering Group	Centre Manager
	External evaluations are performed by Skillnet Ireland, and report findings are incorporated into Programme Improvement Plans.	Annually	Development Advisor	Skillnet Ireland
	Risks are constantly monitored by the Centre Manager, and while minor issues are addressed immediately, longer-term issues are recorded for action in the Risk Register.	Annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager.
	QA Reports from External Authenticators	Per Programme	Ext. Authenticator	Centre Manager

1.4.1.4   Related documents and resources

- FPTS website
- Governance group ToR
- Minutes of governance group meetings
- Training Network Programme (TNP) Operational Guidelines.
- External reports (Auditor Reports, External Examiner Reports)

- Risk Register
- Annual Training Plans for FPTS.

1.4.2   Management of quality.

1.4.2.1   *Key Implementation Steps*

- Define the FPTS Quality Assurance system using policies and procedures that are aligned to our mission.
- Assign group and individual responsibility for maintenance of quality standards.
- Assure continuous improvement through internal monitoring and self-evaluation.
- Provide sufficient and appropriate resources to develop and maintain the quality assurance system.

1.4.2.2   *Method*

Policies and procedures aligned to mission

The FPTS mission statement is contained in the About Us section of the FPTS website.

Our policies and procedures have been developed to maintain alignment with this mission using the Training Network Programme Guidelines issued by Skillnet Ireland, the Quality Assurance Guidelines published by QQI and the experience that we have developed since 2000.

Assignment of responsibility

FPTS has assigned responsibilities for maintenance of quality standards to groups and individuals, specifically the Academic Council, the Steering Group, the Results Approval Panel, the Centre Manager and the tutors, all of whom have defined Terms of Reference. These responsibilities are also documented in "Governance at First Polymer Training Skillnet (Ref: FPTS-GOVN- 001)"

Compliance with QA responsibilities by individuals/groups is achieved with reference to their documented ToR.

Resourcing

The collaboration of the Academic Council, the Steering Group, the Network Management Team and the tutors, in addition to the direct supports provided by Skillnet Ireland and Ibec ensure that development and maintenance of the quality assurance system is adequately resourced. Any specific additional resources required for specific supports are documented in the Annual Training Plan.

1.4.2.3   *Monitoring*

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval

The Network Management Team is responsible for the content and accuracy of the public information provided through the FPTS website, including the expression of the Mission Statement. The website is constantly updated with programme information but information that changes less frequently is reviewed annually according to the Monitoring Schedule.	As needed & Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
Day-to-day monitoring is achieved through informal conversation with learners and with staff and other stakeholders (including employers). Formal monitoring is achieved by review of existing feedback loops including feedback forms, QA reports (Internal Verification, External Evaluation), and relevant publications (e.g. surveys and reports). These feedback loops also monitor resources which ultimately feeds into the Annual Training Plan.	As needed & Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

1.4.2.4   Related documents and resources.

- Centre QA Manual (and all associated documents: Org Charts, ToR, Competency Profiles etc.)
- Terms of Reference for groups and individuals.

  - FPTS-GOVN- Rev 03.00 (Governance groups/individuals)
  - FPTS-TOR-AC-001 (Academic Council)
  - FPTS-TOR-SG-001 (Steering Group)
  - FPTS-TOR-CM- 001 (Centre Manager)
  - FPTS-TOR-TUT- 001 (Tutors)

- Contracts of Employment (Framework Agreement)
- Feedback solicited from learners, tutors/assessors, employers
- Programme Improvement Plans
- External evaluator reports
- Industry surveys (Learning Needs Analysis)
- Annual Training Plans
- Financial reports

1.4.3   Embedding a quality culture

1.4.3.1   Key Implementation Steps

- Document a quality statement and ensure this statement is communicated to staff and learners.
- Include learners and other stakeholders in the QA process.
- Communicate quality assurance mechanisms to learners, staff and employers.

1.4.3.2   Method

Quality statement

The FPTS Quality Statement is contained in both the Learner and the Tutor Handbooks and appears in the About Us section of the FPTS website.

Learner and stakeholder involvement in QA

Learners and other stakeholders (governance groups, tutors, employers, Skillnet Ireland, Ibec) are involved in the QA process through learner and staff induction procedures, ToR, representation on governance groups, informal discussion, scheduled meetings, feedback forms, surveys, evaluations *inter alia.*

Communicating QA mechanisms

FPTS use a variety of methods to communicate our quality assurance. These methods include the Quality Assurance Manual (this document), the learner and tutor handbooks and other induction materials, the FPTS website, ToR for groups and individuals, as well as induction briefings, staff meetings *inter alia.*

1.4.3.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	The FPTS website is a key portal for communications with learners, staff, and employers. Appoint a Network Management Team member to have specific responsibility for ensure the maintenance of information on the Website.	As needed & Annually	Network Management Team (webmaster)	Centre Manager
	Keep staff and learner induction materials up to date.	As needed & Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review feedback mechanisms (forms, surveys etc.).	As needed & Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review the composition and ToR for governance groups.	As needed & Annually	Centre Manager	Relevant Governance Group (AC, Steering Group)

1.4.3.4   Related documents and resources.

- Quality Assurance Manual (this document)
- FPTS website
- Learner and Tutor induction materials.
- ToR for governance groups and individuals
- Steering Group minutes.
- Correspondence with individual employers.
- Employer & learner representation on Steering Group.
- Feedback forms and responses received.
- TNP Operating Guidelines.
- Inclusion of quality statement in profiles, Terms of Reference etc.
- Quality statement published in on FPTS website, in learner pack etc.
- Correspondence with Skillnet Ireland, Ibec etc.

1.4.4   Strategy and planning for blended learning

1.4.4.1   Key Implementation Steps

- Develop a Strategic Plan for the implementation of blended learning.
- Implement suitable policies, regulations and controls appropriate to the blended learning context.
- Implement appropriate processes for the appointment, induction, training and development of staff.
- Ensure compliance with applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

1.4.4.2   Method

Strategic Plan

FPTS has developed a Strategic Plan for the implementation of blended learning (Ref: FPTS-BLN-PLN – 001).

This document addresses the FPTS rationale for the implementation of blended learning as well as the operational implementation, the resourcing and the quality assurance of blended learning provision.

Policies, regulations, and controls for blended learning

Policies, regulations, and controls appropriate to blended learning are integrated into the relevant sections of procedures 2,3,4,5,7 and 11 of the Quality Assurance Manual (this document).

Staff appointment, induction, training, and development

Staff recruitment, development, and training are addressed in Procedure 4 "Staff Recruitment and Development" later in this document.

Legal and regulatory compliance

The primary legislation and regulations pertinent to FPTS include:

- GDPR
- Employment Law
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act.
- Education and Training Act
- Equal Status Act

GDPR guidance is provided to FPTS by Ibec and Skillnet Ireland and are detailed in their Privacy Statements which are published on the FPTS website.

FPTS applies the provisions of Employment Law in collaboration with Skillnet Ireland and Ibec.

FPTS has a dedicated Health and Safety (and Risk Assessment) officer on the Network Management Team whose role it is to ensure compliance with all relevant H&S legislation.

FPTS relies on QQI for guidance in relation to modifications to the Education and Training Act.

FPTS complies fully with the provisions of the Equal Status Act in relation to the nine grounds for discrimination.

1.4.4.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review learner and tutor feedback in relation to blended learning. Use this feedback to assess the efficacy of the Blended Learning Plan.	Per programme & Quarterly	Network Management Team	Academic Council
	Staff Recruitment and Development monitoring is described in Procedure 4, later in this document.			
	FPTS compliance with legislation and regulations is kept under constant review and as changes occur, these are advised to FPTS by external stakeholders such as QQI, Ibec, Skillnet Ireland and other government agencies. Changes are reflected in operational practice and updated in relevant documents.	As needed & Quarterly	Centre Manager	Academic Council and Steering Group

1.4.4.4   Related documents and resources
- Blended Learning Strategic Plan
- Learner & Tutor Feedback Forms

- FPTS Quality Assurance Manual (this document)
- Correspondence with Skillnet Ireland and Ibec in relation to GDPR, Equality, Health and Safety, Employment Law etc.
- Correspondence with QQI in relation to the Education and Training Act.

# 2 DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

2.1 Revision Control

Policy	Documented Approach to Quality Assurance
Version	1.0
Effective Date	February 2021
Next Review Date	February 2026
Owner	Network Management Team

2.2 Policy

It is the policy of FPTS to ensure that our quality system is comprehensive, fully documented, effective and suited to our context. We will ensure that all FPTS personnel are fully aware of the importance of our quality assurance system and of their responsibilities to implement and enhance that system. Our processes will be subject to constant internal and external monitoring and our policies and procedures will be systematically reviewed and revised to implement any identified areas for improvement.

FPTS will ensure that policies and procedures are informed by the QQI QA guidelines, statutory guidelines, learners, employers, FPTS governance groups and other stakeholders. Our policies and procedures will be made available to all interested parties to demonstrate our commitment to accountability and transparency and compliance with relevant legislation.

2.3 Process (Diagram)
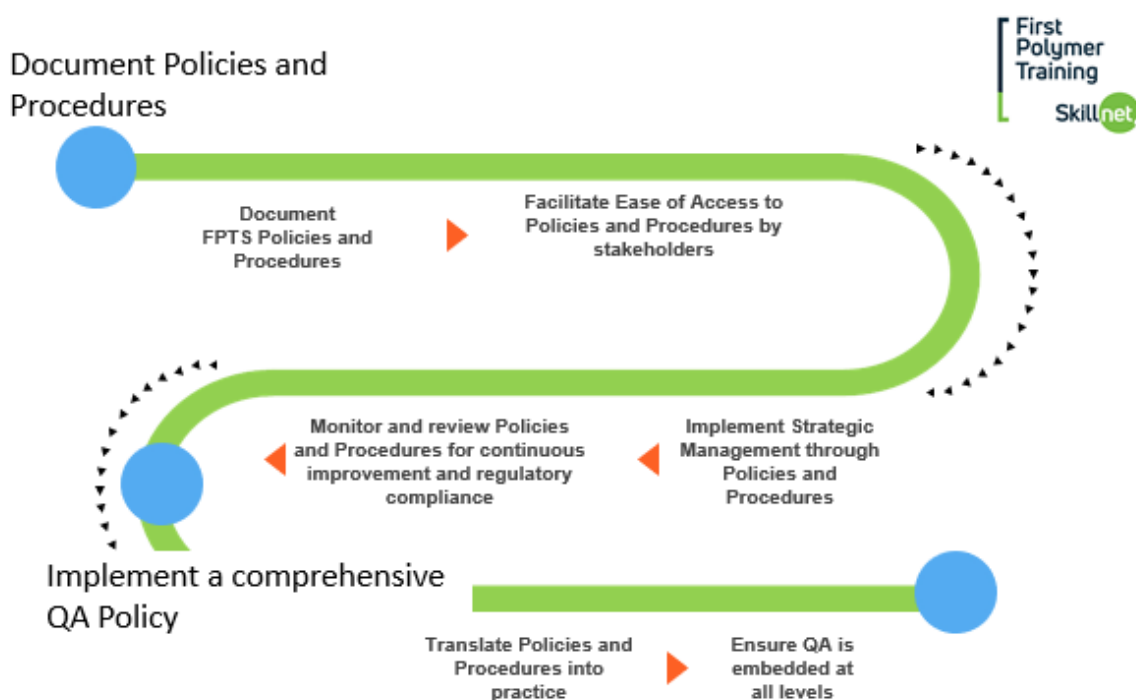
2.4 Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to document comprehensively, the quality assurance system in a transparent manner to facilitate access by all stakeholders to necessary information as required, in usable formats.

2.4.1 Document policies and procedures

2.4.1.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Document and maintain all policies and procedures for maximum visibility and ease of access by relevant stakeholders.
- Ensure the policies have formal standing within FPTS and form part of strategic management.
- Ensure policies and procedures are fit for purpose geared towards continuous improvement.
- Monitor through periodic and ad-hoc review, the compliance of policies and procedures with QQI Guidelines, applicable legislation (e.g., Equality Legislation), regulatory guidelines (e.g. GDPR) and guidelines of other relevant parties (e.g. DES, HSA etc.).

2.4.1.2 Method

Documented policies and procedures

The Quality Assurance Manual (this document) has been developed to closely align with the published QQI guidelines (Core Statutory, Sector Specific, Blended Learning), and to reflect current legislation. The structure is based on the 11 criteria of the QQI Core Statutory Guidelines. Each section follows a consistent format:

- policy statement
- procedure graphic
- procedure purpose description
- key implementation steps
- procedure method
- mechanism for monitoring
- related documents and resources.

Formal standing of the Quality Assurance Manual

The Quality Assurance Manual is the formal QA document for FPTS and is used by the Network Management Team to ensure current best practice for strategic management including governance, delivery, assessment, monitoring and self-evaluation.

The manual itself and associated documents have been completely redeveloped as part of the QQI provider reengagement process.

The manual is accessible to all stakeholders within FPTS and will be published on the FPTS website.

2.4.1.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Each policy and procedure in the Quality Assurance Manual (this document) has a review and update schedule to ensure they are kept up to date. These scheduled reviews take new legislation and guidelines into account to ensure continued compliance.	As needed & Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

2.4.1.4   Related documents and resources

- Centre QA Manual (this document)
- TNP Operating Guidelines.
- Supporting documents (e.g. Organisation charts, ToR, induction materials etc.)
- FPTS Website.
- Evaluator reports.
- Improvement Plans.
- Feedback forms/surveys (tutors/ assessors, learners, employers).
- QQI Guidelines / Correspondence / Updates
- Education, Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012 (Education and Training)
- Equal Status Act, 2000.
- GDPR correspondence from Ibec.
- Communications from the Department of Education and Skills, Dept. of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, etc.

2.4.2   Implement a comprehensive QA system.

2.4.2.1   Key Implementation Steps
- Ensure quality assurance is embedded at all levels of the organisations.
- Translate documented policies and procedures into practice.

2.4.2.2   Method

Embedding QA

Embedding quality assurance at FPTS is multi-faceted.

Governance groups and individuals are provided with Terms of Reference which govern their activities and responsibilities.

New FPTS staff are provided with induction training that makes them aware of our quality assurance system. Learner and Tutor handbooks are important tools to communicate our QA, and the FPTS website provides extensive programme and QA information to our stakeholders.

Putting procedures into practice

The practice of our policies and procedures is reflected in the conduct of our governance groups, our programme delivery and assessment, our information provision, our operational management, and our monitoring and self-evaluation.

As practices change and evolve these changes are updated in our policies and procedures through multiple review checkpoints described throughout this Quality Assurance Manual.

2.4.2.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Monitor feedback loops (learner and tutor feedback forms, QA reports, surveys etc.)	Per programme & Quarterly	Network Management Team	Academic Council
	Ensure Governance Groups and individuals are aware of their ToR/responsibilities.	Changes of personnel & Annually	Governance Groups	Governance Groups
	Check Learner and Tutor Handbooks and all other induction materials for accuracy and currency.	As needed & Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

2.4.2.4   Related documents and resources

- Quality Assurance Manual (this document)
- Terms of Reference for governance groups and individuals
- Induction materials
- Programme Improvement Plans
- Documented objectives/Key Performance Indicators
- Staff Contracts / Framework Agreement
- Surveys and Reports.

3 PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3.1 Revision Control

Policy	Programmes of Education and Training
Version	1.1
Effective Date	February 2021(1.0), May 2021 (1.1 Post Panel)
Next Review Date	February 2026
Owner	Network Management Team

3.2 Policy

It is the policy of FPTS to formally consult with internal and external stakeholders (management, staff, learners, employers, subject matter experts and regulatory/statutory bodies) to assist the programme development process.

Need identification, design, development, delivery, and review will all be conducted with a view to maintaining the relevance of our programmes to industry, alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications and with FPTS's mission, as well as regulatory compliance.

Our programmes will take account of learner capacity, learner induction and the suitability of the learning environment.

Learner admission processes will be clearly advised to intending participants and these processes will be fit for purpose.

Where transfer and progression or recognition of prior learning (RPL) opportunities exist, we will make learners fully aware of such opportunities.

Programme monitoring and review will take place continuously and the programmes will be adapted in line with findings. Programme updates will be advised to all relevant stakeholders.

3.3   Process (Diagram)

Programmes of Education and Training

Programme Development and Approval

Learner admission, progression and recognition

Programme monitoring and review
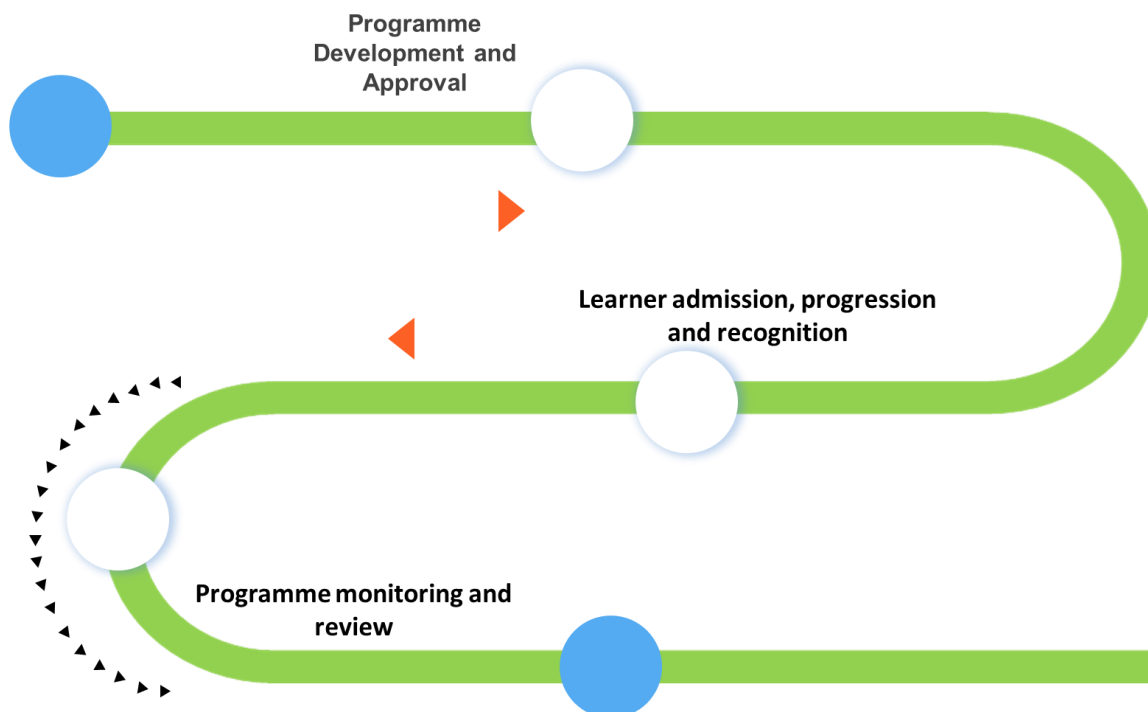
3.4   Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure programme consistency with our mission which is to provide training programmes suited to employment in the polymer processing industry.

3.4.1   Programme Development and Approval.

3.4.1.1   Key Implementation Steps

- Develop programme(s) which meet FPTS's stated organizational objectives and which have defined learning outcomes.
- Identify current and future needs of industry through internal and external consultation. (FPTS Steering Group represents both industry and learners).
- Ensure alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications.
- Document the Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) considerations.
- Design and review proposed programmes in the light of Government publications and guidelines and regulations produced by awarding and regulatory bodies.
- Ensure blended learning provision reflects current best practice.

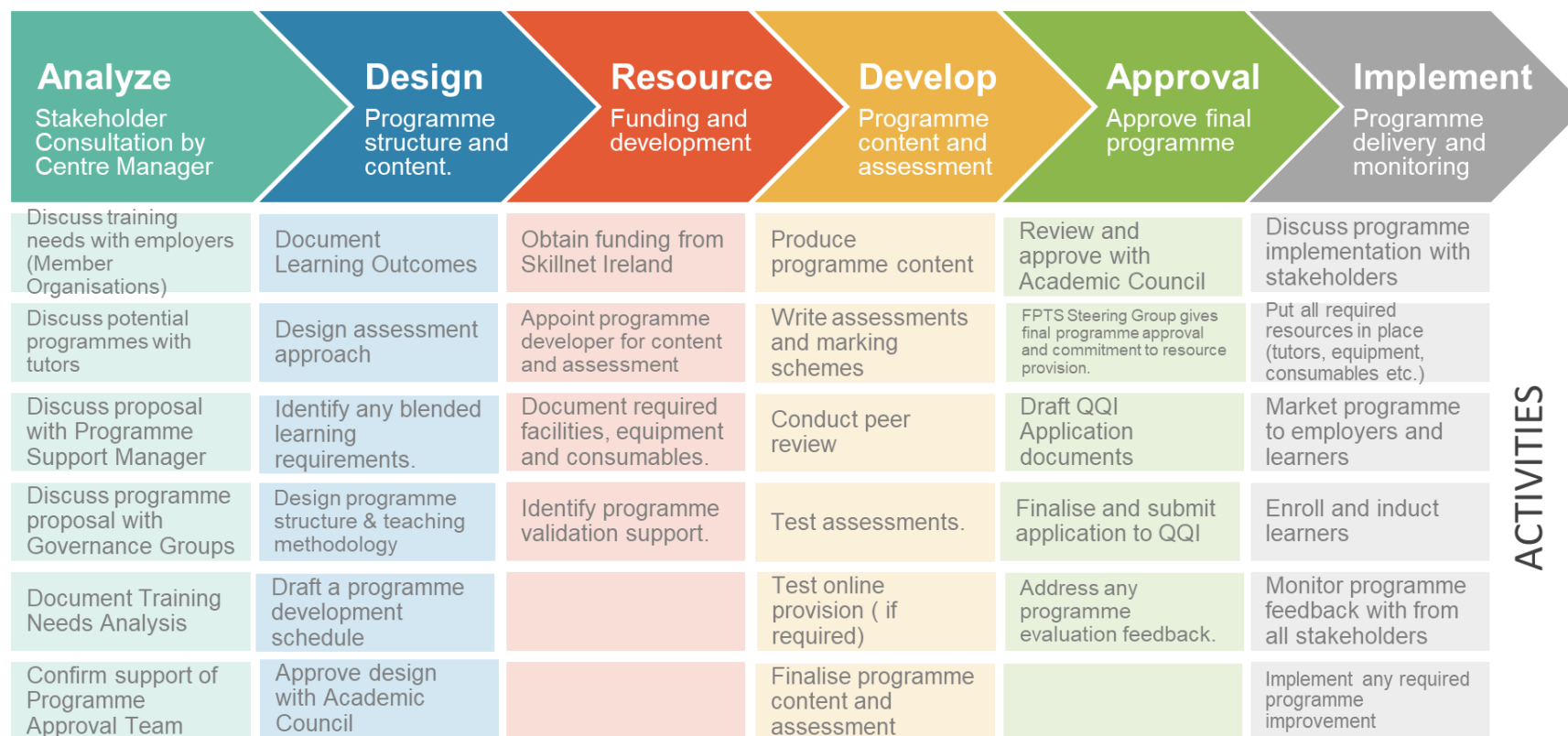- Develop any blended learning programmes taking account of sequencing between classroom and online learning and between delivery and assessment.
- Ensure compliance with Health and Safety legislation.
- Plan and deliver our programmes in a professional manner.
- Ensure peer-review of courseware and assessments.
- Ensure adequate financial resources are in place for programme development and update (both online and classroom-based).

3.4.1.2 Method

Programme development at FPTS happens in six phases (see graphic above): Analysis, Design, Resourcing, Development, Validation and Implementation.

Programme Development at FPTS

FPTS-PDPR-001 (Rev 01)

First
Polymer
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Analyze	Design	Resource	Develop	Approval	Implement
Stakeholder Consultation by Centre Manager	Programme structure and content.	Funding and development	Programme content and assessment	Approve final programme	Programme delivery and monitoring
Discuss training needs with employers (Member Organisations)	Document Learning Outcomes	Obtain funding from Skillnet Ireland	Produce programme content	Review and approve with Academic Council	Discuss programme implementation with stakeholders
Discuss potential programmes with tutors	Design assessment approach	Appoint programme developer for content and assessment	Write assessments and marking schemes	FPTS Steering Group gives final programme approval and commitment to resource provision.	Put all required resources in place (tutors, equipment, consumables etc.)
Discuss proposal with Programme Support Manager	Identify any blended learning requirements.	Document required facilities, equipment and consumables.	Conduct peer review	Draft QQI Application documents	Market programme to employers and learners
Discuss programme proposal with Governance Groups	Design programme structure & teaching methodology	Identify programme validation support.	Test assessments.	Finalise and submit application to QQI	Enroll and induct learners
Document Training Needs Analysis	Draft a programme development schedule		Test online provision (if required)	Address any programme evaluation feedback.	Monitor programme feedback with from all stakeholders
Confirm support of Programme Approval Team	Approve design with Academic Council		Finalise programme content and assessment		Implement any required programme improvement

ACTIVITIES

- ©Magnos Consulting -

- In the **Analysis Phase**, training need is discussed with relevant stakeholders including member organisations (industry), Governance Groups (the Academic Council, the Steering Group), tutors, Ibec *inter alia.* Programme proposals will be assessed for alignment with organisational objectives, national accreditation, and industry need. The outcome is a documented Training Needs Analysis.
- In the **Design Phase**, the overall programme design is documented including draft learning outcomes and assessments, delivery methodologies, scheduling, ATP etc. The outcome is a draft programme design for consideration by the Academic Council.
- The **Resourcing Phase** involves putting the necessary resources in place: appointing programme developers, ensuring adequate funding, planning for any required equipment or consumables etc. The outcome is a Resource Plan.
- The **Development Phase** involves developing the content and assessment including student handouts, online materials, sample assessments, marking schemes etc.
- In the **Approval Phase** the Academic Council reviews and approves the programme. The Steering Committee gives the final approval for the programme, reflecting a commitment to allocating all future resources required to validate and implement the programme. For QQI programmes, the Validation Phase (for QQI-certified programmes only) involves completing the QQI programme validation application process. This involves completing the required application form which demonstrates compliance with the award specification, paying the required application fee and addressing any feedback that QQI provide.
- The **Implementation Phase** involves marketing the programme, recruiting learners, delivering training, assessing feedback, internal verification, external authentication, results submission to QQI, and monitoring and evaluation.

Blended Learning

In recent years there has been a steady migration towards blended learning, a migration that has accelerated due to COVID. FPTS has been migrating much of our training, that normally would have been delivered in the classroom, to an online learning platform (Moodle). Moodle, in combination with add-ons such as BigBlueButton (video conferencing) and Erkund (plagiarism detection), enables tutors to deliver programmes interactively in real time, and to record the sessions for future access by the learners. Notices, webinars, demonstrations, links, assignments, and assessments are added to the learner workflow, and learners can view the materials and upload their work for review and marking by the Tutor. Chat facilities enable direct interaction with the tutor and with fellow learners. Blended learning cannot replace the practical experience of using production equipment, but it can help to minimise the required contact hours by providing practical demonstrations. The need to identify those elements that can be delivered online is an integral part of the development cycle stages described above.

Further information on our blended learning provision is contained in our Contingency Plan and our Blended Learning Strategic Plan.

3.4.1.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review Training Needs Analysis	Per programme	Programme Development Team	Academic Council in collaboration with SG
	Review Programme Design	Per programme	Programme Development Team	Academic Council in collaboration with SG
	Review Resource Plan	Per programme	Centre Manager	Academic Council in collaboration with SG
	Review programme delivery and assessment materials	Per programme	Programme Development Team	Academic Council in collaboration with SG
	Review QA documents (reports, feedback forms etc.)	Per programme	Centre Manager	Academic Council in collaboration with SG

3.4.1.4 Related documents and resources

- Training Needs Analysis
- Programme Design Document
- Resource Plan
- Programme delivery and assessment materials
- Feedback forms (learner & tutor, peer review)
- QA reports (IV, EA)
- Programme Improvement Plans
- Annual Training Plan.
- Blended Learning Strategic Plan
- Programme Validation documentation addressing module levels, titles, learning outcomes, assessment methods, sample assessment instruments, ATP descriptions, learning outcome

assessment mapping to award standards, delivery and assessment schedule, specific validation requirements etc.)
- Documented organizational objectives published on website (alignment with Scope of Provision)
- ToR for governance groups and individuals.
- Minutes of Governance group meetings
- Government Publications (e.g. Action Plan for Jobs, National Skills Bulletin, Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 etc.).

3.4.2   Learner admission, progression and recognition.

3.4.2.1   Key Implementation Steps
- Select learners in a transparent, fair and consistent manner and recognizing prior learning where appropriate in accordance with documented access requirements.
- Provide programme and provider information to intending learners. Advise learners of costs, durations, delivery methodology (classroom, blended learning) etc.
- Monitor Progression and Completion rates
- Recognise prior learning.

3.4.2.2   Method

Learner recruitment

Learners are recruited from our member companies and FPTS always complies with the provisions of the Equal Status Act for all proposed learners.

Full details regarding FPTS and our programmes, including access requirements, cost, schedules etc., are published on the FPTS website (https://www.firstpolymerskillnet.com/), and this ensures transparency.

The same information is available through our office contact number ((090) 647 1223) if a learner wishes to speak directly with our staff.

Learner induction

On enrolment, learners receive induction briefings from their tutors and are issued with a Learner Pack which includes a Learner Handbook (Ref: FPTS-LHB-001) which provides extensive information about FPTS, our programmes and our quality assurance.

Monitoring progress

Statistics on learner progression and completion rates are recorded on the SONRAI system (Skillnets Online Reporting and Activity Information). This information is kept up to date by the Network Management Team.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):

RPL applies to entry to a programme leading to an award, credit towards an award (or exemption from some programme requirements), or eligibility for a full award. (Ref: QQI RPL Webpage)

Although FPTS has not received any application for Recognition of Prior learning to date, this process describes our provision should such a request be made.

FPTS ensures all our learners are provided with a summary of arrangements available with respect to RPL for entry to, or exemption from, the requirements of our programmes. This guidance is provided in the Learner Handbook and on the FPTS website at www.firstpolymerskillnet.com

The RPL process for applicants with prior formal, non-formal, or experiential learning is as follows:

RPL for Access.

1. Recognition of Prior Learning for access to a programme leading to an award, is a formal process. It is initiated when a learner cannot provide evidence that they meet programme access requirements. Access requirements may, for example, state a prior level of knowledge in a specific discipline such as English Language proficiency. FPTS programmes require a minimum of Level 4 standard in numeracy and literacy. English language competence and numeracy proficiency may be evidenced by Junior or Leaving Certificate results, or in the case of English Language proficiency, evidence of the achievement of the CEFR B2+ standard will also be accepted. If there is reason to suspect that these minimum criteria are not met or can't be evidenced by the conventional means above, the learner may request that their own evidence be considered. Such evidence may be a letter of assurance from their employer that their level of numeracy and literacy are sufficient for successful participation in the programme. The learner may discuss this with the relevant programme tutor who will make a judgement. If the learner does not accept the judgement, the learner may appeal to the Centre Manager and/or the Academic Council. Their decision is final.

RPL for Credit or Exemption

1. A student must advise FPTS in writing of their intention to seek Recognition of Prior Learning. This may be done by e-mailing FPTS at info@ firstpolymer.com. The applicant should identify the programme, and the nature of the application (credit or exemption).
2. Evidence of prior learning is provided by the applicant during the application process. The Applicant must authorise FPTS to verify the authenticity of the evidence submitted. Evidence is likely to take the form of a Portfolio which may include certificates, awards, testimonials, employer references *inter alia.*
3. The evidence is evaluated by FPTS (typically by the Centre Manager in consultation with the programme tutor). Evaluation will be based on a comparison of learning outcomes for the areas where recognition is sought, and the description of prior learning offered by the learner. FPTS may verify the authenticity of any associated documentation.
4. A recommendation will be made with respect to the applicant's RPL request. Possible outcomes include: Credit Granted/Denied, Exemption Granted/Denied.
5. Unsuccessful applications for RPL exemptions can be formally appealed.

Note: FPTS does not offer RPL for full awards. Should such a request be made by a learner, FPTS will have to liaise directly with QQI for guidance.

RPL Appeals

Should a learner wish to appeal an RPL decision, they should formally request this in writing to info@firstpolymer.com. Their portfolio of evidence will be submitted to the FPTS Academic Council for adjudication. The decision of the Academic Council will be final and will be advised to the learner in writing. Learners may request an oral hearing, but this must be indicated before the Academic Council convenes to consider the appeal.

3.4.2.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review public information on the FPTS website	As needed and annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review programme performance against KPI's	Per programme and annually	Network Management Team	Academic Council
	Review RPL applications	As received	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review compliance with Skillnet Ireland Network Operating Guidelines in relation to programmes. The main Skillnet Ireland quality assurance checkpoint is the annual Compliance Visit which assesses the network's operational compliance with financial, performance and quality metrics defined in the Operating Guidelines. The outcome of the visit is a Compliance Report which rates individual characteristics of the Network operation in terms of risk (significant, important, minor) and recommendations on best practice. The Network Manager is then obliged to respond in writing to any required corrective action identified in the Compliance Report.	On conclusion of the compliance visit.	Centre Manager	Skillnet Ireland Development Advisor

3.4.2.4   Related documents and resources

- FPTS website
- Programme marketing materials (programme descriptors)

- Learner Handbook.
- Enrolment booking forms.
- QQI Core Statutory Guidelines (Section 3.2)
- SONRAI (Skillnets Activity Management System)
- Award information
- Annual Training Plans (incl. performance against KPI's)
- Annual Skillnet Ireland Compliance Report
- RPL application requests (if any)

3.4.3   Programme monitoring and review.

3.4.3.1   *Key Implementation Steps*
- Perform regular programme reviews to ensure continuing relevance and sufficiency of resources.
- Review learner workload by ensuring that there is sufficient time to complete assessment.
- Monitor performance of the programme(s) in relation to stated programme objectives.
- Monitor internal programme supports.
- Monitor training delivery facilities.
- Publish programme completion reports to relevant stakeholders.

3.4.3.2   *Method*

Programme reviews

Tutors will advise the Network Management Team if they detect any deficiency in programme resources.

Learner feedback forms and End of Training reports are monitored by the Network Management Team for any indicators of required resources or supports, or any indication that there is an issue with sufficiency of assessment time afforded to learners.

Monitoring performance against objectives

The Network Management Team perform Internal Verification and enter results onto the SONRAI system. The Results Approval Panel review results against programme objectives and address any anomalies or update the Programme Improvement Plans.

Report publication

Programme completion reports are presented to the governance groups by the Centre Manager.

3.4.3.3   *Monitoring*

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval

Review facilities and consumables	Ongoing	Tutors	Centre Manager
Review programme feedback forms	Per programme	Internal Verifier	Centre Manager
Review Programme Improvement Plans	Quarterly	Centre Manager	Academic Council
Review Annual Training Plans	Annually	Centre Manager	Academic Council

3.4.3.4   Related documents and resources

- FPTS Website (programme and resource descriptors)
- Documented Training Facility Specification (incl. Equipment and Materials Asset Register) & any identified requirements
- Learner feedback (Kirkpatrick) & Tutor feedback (End of Training Report)
- Governance Group meeting minutes & Reports. (Academic Council, Steering Group)
- Reports (Programme Review, Self-Evaluation, External Evaluation, External Authentication)
- Programme Improvement Plans
- Documented programme objectives / Programme descriptors
- SONRAI reporting system. Performance against objectives and key performance indicators (e.g. progression and completion rates, TNP criteria)
- QQI Infographics (statistical reports)
- Results submission documentation.

4 STAFF RECRUITMENT MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Revision Control

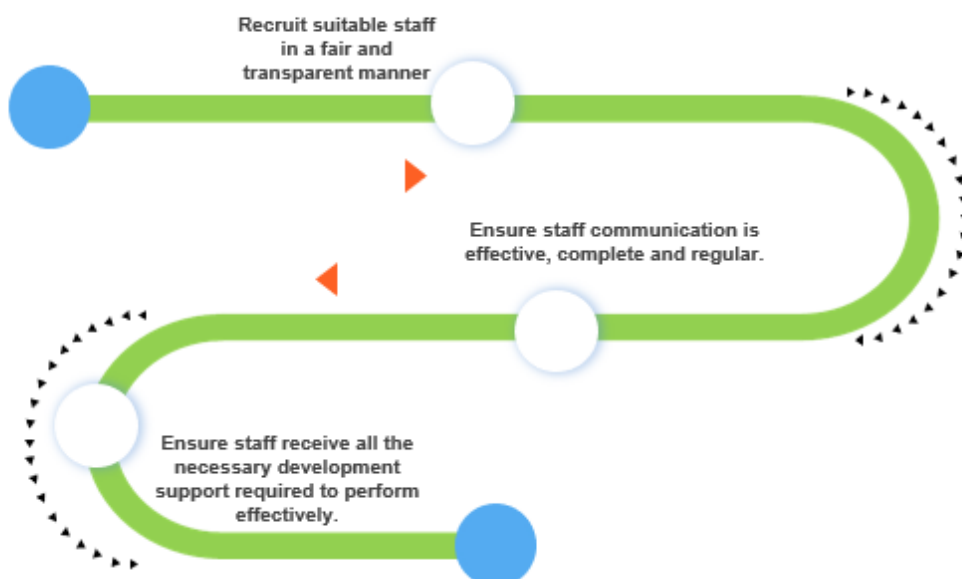| Policy	Staff Recruitment and Development
Version	1.0
Effective Date	February 2021
Next Review Date	February 2026
Owner	Network Management Team

4.2 Policy

It is the policy of FPTS to deliver all our services using appropriately qualified, experienced and competent staff. Management, support and tutoring staff at all levels, will continue to be selected, recruited and inducted into their roles using fair, transparent and ethical procedures. Roles, responsibilities and codes of conduct will be clearly set out in contracts of employment. The performance of staff in their role will be continuously monitored to ensure pedagogical and professional standards are maintained.

FPTS will maintain communications systems such that staff are able to provide and to receive feedback.

FPTS will provide a supportive environment to staff which will facilitate, where possible, continuous professional development.

4.3 Process (Diagram)

Staff Recruitment Management and Development

Recruit suitable staff in a fair and transparent manner

Ensure staff communication is effective, complete and regular.

Ensure staff receive all the necessary development support required to perform effectively.

4.4 Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that delivery and development staff are qualified, competent, empathetic to learners, and professional in the performance of their role. FPTS will recruit and engage suitable staff through documented, transparent, equitable and ethical selection processes, and will ensure that staff performance is managed, and staff development is supported.

4.4.1 Staff Recruitment

4.4.1.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Define initial recruitment needs
- Document and maintain role profiles and responsibilities, to include role responsibilities, codes of conduct, academic and pedagogical standards.
- Advertise appropriately
- Communicate effectively with candidates
- Conduct fair and transparent interviews
- Perform background checks where appropriate
- Issue Contracts of Employment / Framework Agreements stating Terms and Conditions including tenure, responsibilities, performance metrics, feedback mechanisms etc.
- Provide feedback to unsuccessful candidates.
- Solicit feedback on teaching staff from learners.
- Conduct periodic performance evaluations.
- Maintain records of staff.

4.4.1.2 Method

Recruitment planning

At FPTS an annual Training Plan is developed by the Centre Manager in which staffing resource requirements are identified. In addition, expert tutors are so essential to the functioning of our business that the need for contingency in relation to tutors has long been recognised. For many years now FPTS has had a stable coterie of expert tutors, so the required knowledge, skills, and attributes are well known. This information has been captured in a Tutor Profile and Tutor Terms of Reference which will aid future tutor recruitment.

Vacancies for tutors will be advertised through formal recruitment channels (e.g., recruitment companies and websites), but the more common route given the very specialist nature of the polymer processing sector is to advertise within the industry through our existing tutors and our member companies. FPTS also looks to the UK to supplement staffing requirements when necessary. Most tutors in the sector will be known to the polymer processing community and so background checks can be performed if necessary.

Interview notes are documented by FPTS and feedback to applicants will be provided upon request.

All FPTS tutors delivering QQI-Accredited training programmes are engaged by FPTS under a Framework Agreement. Framework Agreements are in place for a maximum of four years and are reviewed annually by

the governance entities at FPTS. The applications for participation in the Framework Agreements are published on the OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) to ensure that national and international candidates can apply. The Framework Agreement is akin to a Contract of Employment and defines the FPTS expectation of the tutors in terms of role and responsibilities, as well as payment mechanisms and other relevant details. The implementation of a Framework Agreement avoids the necessity to re-tender for tutors each year. The Framework Agreement (and any other contract-related documents) are stored on the tendering section of the FPTS fileserver, and the tendering process is managed by the Centre Manager.

Background checks

Background checks for qualifications, experience or expertise may be conducted where this is deemed necessary but most people working in the industry would be known to the FPTS community. Background checks for learner protection are not normally required since no learner with FPTS would be classified as a child or vulnerable adult and consequently no garda vetting is required.

Performance monitoring

The performance of Tutors is monitored continuously through the Learner Feedback forms and the other QA procedures such as IV, EA and unannounced spot-checks conducted by Skillnet Ireland which specifically assess the performance of tutors.

Staff records

Staff records including contact information, qualifications, Framework Agreements, delivery and assessment information etc., are held in a number of applications/locations including:

- **Traintracks.** This is the day-to-day course management system so it provides details of all courses run by each tutor for a rolling period of two years, in addition to staff details for the Network Management Team. Records predating the two-year window are anonymised, in compliance with GDPR requirements. (The nature of anonymisation is that learner details are removed if they have not attended training with FPTS over the past two years).
- **Network Server.** The Framework Agreements which also provide details of the Tutors (including descriptions of their qualifications and experience *inter alia*) are stored in the Tenders folder.
- **Disaster Recovery.** There is also a Disaster Recovery system at FPTS which provides emergency contact information for all personnel and key stakeholders at FPTS. This system has been developed in conjunction with Ibec.
- **SONRAI.** Staff details are also recorded in the SONRAI system, which is accessible by FPTS, Ibec and by Skillnet Ireland.

4.4.1.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review staffing needs	Ongoing and annually	Centre Manager	Academic Council

Review staff recruitment documents (Framework Agreements, Role Profiles)	Annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager
Review tutor performance reports (feedback forms, IV, EA, Skillnet Ireland, HSA)	Per programme & per visit	Centre Manager	Academic Council

4.4.1.4   Related documents and resources

- Annual Training Plan
- Competency Profiles for Tutors/Assessors (Ref: FPTS-TPRF-001)
- Recruitment notices (OJEU)
- Job Application Forms
- Terms of Reference (Ref: FPTS-TOR-TUT)
- Interview notes
- Framework Agreements for part-time contracts.
- Contracts of Employment
- Learner Feedback forms
- FPTS website
- Risk Register
- Staff records (SONRAI data, CVs, Qualifications, References etc.)

4.4.2   Staff Communication

4.4.2.1   Key Implementation Steps
- Inform staff about how they can give and receive feedback.
- Provide programme updates to staff.
- Ensure teaching staff are aware of their obligations regarding policies and procedures and the operation of the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment)

4.4.2.2   Method

Staff feedback

FPTS is a small training organisation in a single centre so most staff communication is informal and happens within the training centre environment. However, there are also formal mechanisms in place. All staff receive induction briefings when they commence employment with FPTs. These are supplemented with Staff Handbooks.

Non-teaching staff can provide feedback directly to the Centre Manager. Tutors may also provide direct feedback, but they are also required to complete Tutor Feedback forms (End of Training reports) at the conclusion of each programme.

Programme updates

Any changes to programme delivery or assessment will be advised to relevant staff during regular staff meetings.

Staff obligations – online learning

Teaching Staff are made aware of their obligations regarding policies through a combination of their Terms of Reference, Framework Agreement/Contract, Tutor Handbook and the Quality Assurance Manual (this document).

Specific training is provided to all teaching staff in relation to online learning including use of the Moodle LMS, plagiarism detection software, online communication (e.g. BigBlueButton webconferencing) etc.

4.4.2.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review tutor feedback forms	Per programme	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review tutor support documents (ToR, Handbook etc.)	Annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager
	Review instructional materials for tutors (LMS guides, online learning tool guides)	In the event of product change/update, and Annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager

4.4.2.4   Related documents and resources

- Induction briefing materials
- Tutor Handbook
- Tutor Feedback Forms
- Guidelines for using learning supports (Moodle Virtual Learning Environment, BigBlueButton et al.)
- Tutor Terms of Reference

4.4.3   Staff Development

4.4.3.1   Key Implementation Steps

- Identify CPD needs
- Provide or facilitate Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities.

- Provide instruction in the use of virtual learning environment (where necessary) to tutors and administration staff.
- Encourage and facilitate staff engagement with the community of practice.

4.4.3.2   Method

Continuous Professional Development

Polymer Processing is a very specialist area of expertise, and FPTS relies on tutors to identify any CPD that they require. The Tutor ToR reminds Tutors that they are obliged to take responsibility for their own CPD. Tutors are advised to let FPTS management know of any such requirements and FPTS will support this to the greatest extent possible by facilitating participation at CPD events, or by procuring CPD resources (e.g. subscriptions, online or hardcopy materials etc.) within FPTS's capacity to do so.

Any aspects of CPD not specific to the FPTS scope of provision, but more generally applicable (e.g. blended learning) is addressed by means of training in the relevant tools and techniques.

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

The virtual learning environment at FPTS comprises Moodle, BigBlueButton and Microsoft Teams. All FPTS staff receive direct product training in these tools according to their requirement. Ibec have provided training to the Network Management Team on Microsoft Teams, and Enovation have provided Moodle and BigBlueButton training for both the Network Management Team and the tutors.

Community of Practice

All FPTS tutors are also practitioners within the industry and are well known to our member organisations.

They have regular contact with each other and with employers in the industry.

4.4.3.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review tutor requests for CPD	Quarterly	Centre Manager	Centre Manager
	Review CPD training collateral (guides to the VLE systems)	Annually	Centre Manager	Academic Council

4.4.3.4   Related documents and resources

- CPD requests
- Tutor ToR
- CPD training collateral

5 TEACHING AND LEARNING

5.1 Revision Control

| Policy	Teaching and Learning
Version	1.1
Effective Date	February 2021(1.0), May 2021 (1.1 Post Panel)
Next Review Date	February 2026
Owner	Network Management Team

5.2 Policy

It is the policy of FPTS to constantly monitor the learning experience we provide, to safeguard and enhance the quality of that provision and to respect the diverse needs of our learners.

FPTS will constantly review programmes with staff to ensure that programme content, and delivery modes and methodologies are reflective of best industry practice, and best pedagogical practice for adult learning.

FPTS will ensure that Appeals and Complaints procedures are advised to learners and are simple to use and fit-for-purpose.

FPTS will ensure that the training facilities used to deliver our programmes will be reflective of the supervised or autonomous work settings in which our learners will be expected to perform.

5.3 Process (Diagram)
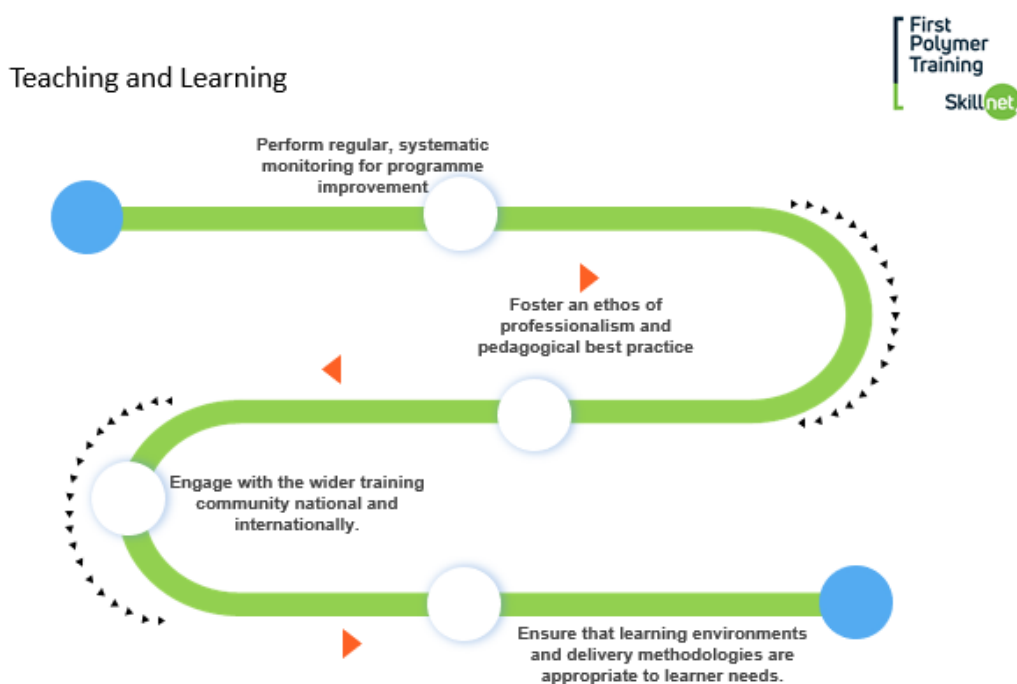
5.4 Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to monitor and improve the learning experience on an ongoing basis in terms of programme content, delivery methodology, learner-tutor engagement, learning environments and complaints and appeals.

5.4.1 Teaching and Learning

5.4.1.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Monitor programme delivery to ensure fitness for purpose and consistency with best practice.
- Conduct research to ensure continuing relevance of the programme(s)

5.4.1.2 Method

Programme monitoring

The primary mechanism for programme monitoring is the Learner Feedback form which is reviewed by several stakeholders including the tutor, the IV and the Centre Manager on a per-programme basis. Other sources of monitoring include the Skillnet Ireland unannounced visits where an observer sits in on a training event and reports back on programme quality.

Continuing relevance of programmes

The continuing relevance of FPTS programmes is assured by the Steering Group which is mainly comprised of member companies from the plastics industry. In collaboration with the Academic Council, the Steering Group assist in the review of existing programmes and the approval of new ones. In addition, the FPTS tutors are also practitioners who work within the industry and can be relied upon to keep FPTS informed about new and changing trends and practices. Programme improvements are captured in a Programme Improvement Plan and in Annual Training Plans.

5.4.1.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review programme reports (IV/EA QA reports, feedback forms, surveys, ad-hoc reports)	Per-programme and quarterly	Network Management Team	Academic Council
	Review Programme Improvement Plans and Annual Training Plans	Annually	Steering Group	Academic Council

5.4.1.4 Related documents and resources

- Learner Feedback forms

- Tutor Feedback forms
- Stakeholder Surveys (e.g. employers, tutors, learners)
- Programme Improvement Plans
- Annual Training Plan
- QA reports (IV, EA)
- Minutes of Steering Group and Academic Council meetings

5.4.2 Fostering an ethos that promotes learning

5.4.2.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Provide a variety of delivery modes.
- Promote a strong ethos of mutual respect between learners and delivery staff.
- Publish and publicise details of Complaints and Appeals procedures. Review and act upon any feedback received in relation to these procedures.

5.4.2.2 Method

Delivery modes

Training provision at FPTS involves a variety of delivery modes and methodologies including face-to-face learning, blended learning, demonstrations and practical work. This spectrum of delivery has proven to meet the needs of our learners and their employers for many years and Learner and Tutor Feedback forms are used to ensure satisfaction.

Ethos

FPTS tutors and their students have always enjoyed a mutually respectful relationship. The learners appreciate the knowledge, skill and experience of the tutors, and in turn the tutors are anxious to impart their knowledge and to assist the learners to retain or secure employment in the industry. The induction process and Tutor and Learner handbooks remind the respective groups to foster good relationships and show mutual respect.

Complaints and appeals

FPTS is committed to providing the highest possible standard of training delivery and assessment.

However, if a learner has a grievance, they are entitled and encouraged to seek a resolution, either informally or formally by way of complaint or appeal.

The Learners and Tutor Handbooks make learners aware of the Complaints and Appeals Procedures at FPTS. Information on how to make a Complaint and Appeal are also available through the Network Management Team and are published on the FPTS website.

Complaints. The QQI Assessments and Standards 2013 document defines a complaint as *"an expression of a concern that a particular assessment procedure is unfair or inconsistent or not fit for purpose"*, or *"the expression of a specific concern about the provision of a course/module, or a programme of study, or a related academic service".* However, a complaint may not necessarily relate to assessment but may relate to facilities, tutors, resources, information provision or some other aspect of the programme about which a learner may feel some grievance.

Appeals. The QQI Assessments and Standards 2013 document defines an appeal as "a request to a higher authority for the alteration of the decision or judgement of a lower one". It further states than an appeal is "a request for a review of a decision of an academic body charged with decisions on student progression, assessment and awards".

Re-check and Review Procedures

Rechecks. If the learner considers that a clerical error may have been made, for example, in the tallying or recording of marks, this should be advised in writing to the Tutor and/or the Network Management Team within two weeks of the notification of results. The Network Manager (or appropriate independent delegate) will conduct the recheck and a member of the Team will revert to the learner in writing with the outcome of the recheck.

There is no fee for a recheck.

Reviews. A review is re-consideration of the assessment decision, either by the original assessor or by other competent person(s). Learners are required to state the grounds for the requested review. The grounds for review will normally be that the learner suspects that the assessment was erroneous in some respect.

The student should request the review in writing to the Network Management Team within two weeks of the result notification, providing a justification for their request. The Academic Council will conduct the review and the Network Manager will revert to the learner and to the Tutor in writing with the outcome of the review.

There is no fee for a review.

Complaints resolution process

Most complaints can be resolved by bringing them to the attention of the Tutor or the Network Management Team. In the first instance, the learner should express their concern orally or in writing to one of these individuals/groups.

If the complaint is not resolved by discussion, then it will be necessary to file a formal complaint. A formal complaint should be made as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the complaint.

To lodge a formal complaint the complainant is required to document their complaint and submit this to FPTS. A Complaint Form is available through the Network Management Team at info@firstpolymer.com and the FPTS website.

On receipt of a written complaint, FPTS will:

- Acknowledge the complaint in writing within 10 working days.
- May contact the complainant directly to discuss the complaint.
- Investigate the complaint within 10 working days of acknowledging the complaint and advise of the outcome of the investigation and the proposal for resolution of the complaint.
- If the learner wishes to appeal the complaint decision, they should advise this in writing by reply to the Network Management Team, stating the grounds for the appeal. The complaint will be brought to the next meeting of the Academic Council for resolution.

- The decision of the Academic Council is final unless the issue is governed by specific national legislation. In this instance a suitably qualified independent arbiter will review the complaint and come to a final decision.

Appeals resolution process

Some appeals may be resolved bringing them to the attention of the Tutor or the Network Management Team. In the first instance, the learner should express their concern orally or in writing to one of these individuals/groups.

If the appeal is not resolved by discussion, then it will be necessary to file a formal appeal. A formal appeal should be made as soon as possible after learner notification of results.

To lodge a formal appeal the appellant is required to document their appeal and submit this to the Network Management Team at info@firstpolymer.com. An appeal form is available through the Network Management Team and the FPTS website.

The conduct of a formal appeal is as follows:

Step 1.

The learner needs to inform the Network Management Team in writing of their intention to appeal. The Appeal Form should be submitted as soon as possible after the learner has been made aware of the assessment result, but not later than 3 weeks after the original result notification.

Step 2.

The Network Management Team will write to the learner to acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 10 working days of receipt of the completed appeal form and outline the course of action to be taken. The Appeal will be assessed by the Centre Manager. The learner will have the opportunity to discuss their concerns with the Centre Manager. This review will be completed within 15 working days of acknowledgement of appeal.

Step 3.

One of the following decisions will be communicated to the learner by the Administrator/Centre Manager in writing within 10 working days of the decision having been made. Possible outcomes include:

1. Uphold the original assessment decision.
2. Modify or overturn the original decision.

In exceptional circumstances, the learner may be provided with an opportunity for reassessment.

Step 4.

If the learner does not accept the Centre Manager's Appeal decision, then they may refer the decision to the Academic Council. The Appeal will be considered by the Academic Council at their next scheduled meeting.

The decision of the Academic Council will be final.

The final decision will also be communicated to all other relevant parties by the Network Management Team.

5.4.2.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review feedback forms in relation to reaction to teaching and learning methodologies. These may indicate areas of concern which may not become complaints/appeals.	Per programme	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review Learner and Tutor Handbooks in relation to codes of conduct and information about Complaints and Appeals	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review any Complaints or Appeals received and the outcome(s) of same.	Annually	Centre Manager	Academic Council

5.4.2.4   Related documents and resources

- The FPTS website
- Complaints forms
- Appeals forms
- Learner and tutor handbooks

5.4.3   Engaging with National and International effective practice

5.4.3.1   Key Implementation Steps
- Ongoing engagement with National organisations, and review of government publications.
- Monitor the programme in relation to international best practice.

5.4.3.2   Method

National organisation engagement

FPTS engages with National Organisations through Skillnet Ireland, Ibec, and our Steering Group. One example of the Skillnet Ireland engagement is the Network Excellence Group which brings together Network Managers and external guest speakers in a forum for the exchange of ideas and practices in training. Through these groups and our member companies, FPTS is part of an extensive network that share a whole range of information including research and development information, legislative changes, quality assurance and current best practice in training. This network also includes Athlone IT, and IT Sligo. FPTS work closely with both organisations in the sharing of resources for the provision of training.

In addition, FPTS has been part of the Standards Development Group set up by QQI for the polymer awards and FPTS expects to participate in any future review of these awards and we will bring our extensive industry knowledge to the table. FPTS is the only further education training provider to offer QQI-accredited polymer processing training leading to QQI awards. For polymer processing and other non-polymer programmes (e.g. Industrial Electrical Systems, Hydraulic Equipment Maintenance etc.) we rely on the Steering Group, tutors, external authenticators and external evaluators, as a frame of reference for benchmarking against industry and national/international standards in programme development and delivery.

International best practice

FPTS member companies are a mixture of micro, SME and multinational organisations with worldwide production and distribution facilities. These companies are represented on the FPTS Steering Group and provide FPTS with advance notice of changes happening in the industry including changes to production systems and associated training.

5.4.3.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review national publications in relation to any changes in legislation, training strategy, QA etc.	When published	Centre Manager	Centre Manager
	Liaise with QQI in relation to any potential changes in programme validation criteria	As advised by QQI	Centre Manager	Centre Manager
	Review publications by international organisations involved in polymer processing training	When published	Centre Manager	Centre Manager
	Review FPTS programme reports written by external groups/individuals (Skillnet Ireland, External Evaluators, Ibec, HSA)	As received	Centre Manager	Academic Council

5.4.3.4   Related documents and resources
- DES and QQI publications

- Government Publications (e.g. Action Plan for Jobs, National Skills Bulletin, Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 inter alia).
- Publications by, and correspondence with, organisations in other jurisdictions offering similar programmes (e.g. European Plastics Converters [EUPC], British Plastics Federation [BPF])
- External programme review reports
- Minutes of Steering Group meetings.

5.4.4   Learning environments

5.4.4.1   Key implementation steps

- Ensure that learning environments (whether at FPTS or on employer premises) are fit for purpose, enabling learners to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
- Document requirements and facilities and ensure compliance

5.4.4.2   Method

Learning environments

If an onsite course is to be provided, FPTS, through the Network Management Team and the tutor, will discuss the facility, equipment and consumables requirement with the member company. Any deficiencies will need to be addressed prior to the commencement of the programme. Facility and consumable(s) requirements are agreed with the employer well in advance of the commencement of the programme.

FPTS maintains an equipment and consumables list for each programme that it runs. This information is contained in the Materials and Equipment Asset Register. The Traintracks Application also lists the equipment and consumables required for given programmes on the part of both FPTS and the learner. For example, learner requirements in terms of PPE and specific equipment are also specified.

Both the Tutor Handbook and the Tutor Terms of Reference remind the Tutor of their obligation to inform the Network Management Team of any equipment or consumables deficiencies that they notice either on in-house courses or onsite courses. These notifications may be made verbally or in writing to the Network Management team or the site coordinator (of the employer), depending on the urgency and nature of the deficiency.

5.4.4.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review programme resource lists	Annually	Tutor	Centre Manager

Review guidance provided to tutors in relation to notification of any resource needs.	Annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager

5.4.4.4 Related documents and resources

- Programme-specific equipment & consumables descriptors (Facility Specifications).
- Correspondence with employer (where onsite programme is proposed)
- Specific Validation Requirements (if any) specified in Award Specifications.
- Learner and Tutor feedback data.
- Programme Evaluation Reports.
- Tutor Handbook and ToR

6 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

6.1 Revision Control

Policy	Assessment of Learners
Version	1.0
Effective Date	February 2021
Next Review Date	February 2026
Owner	Network Management Team

6.2 Policy

It is the policy of FPTS to ensure and protect the integrity of the learner assessment process as a means of fairly, consistently and accurately measuring achievement by the learner of standards-based programme learning outcomes.

FPTS will ensure that learners are aware of their responsibilities in relation to demonstrating achievement of learning outcomes.

FPTS will provide timely feedback to learners to optimise the learner's opportunity for successful completion of the programme.
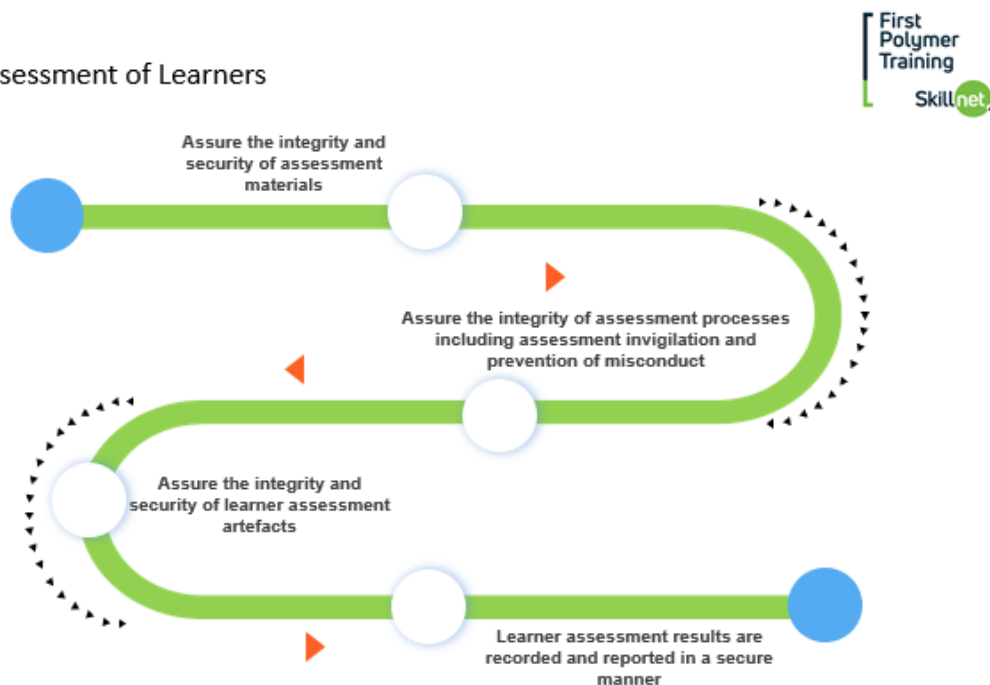
FPTS will provide a comprehensive assessment environment including access-controlled assessment instruments, appropriate assessment equipment and consumables, and invigilation. Assessment results and feedback forms will be analysed to identify any potential improvements.

We will also ensure that all assessment artefacts are appropriately stored, and assessment information is captured on our robust learner records management system for analysis and reporting purposes.

Online assessments will be controlled by suitable processes and procedures which recognise and address the particular requirements of such assessment environments.

6.3   Process (Diagram)

Assessment of Learners

- Assure the integrity and security of assessment materials
- Assure the integrity of assessment processes including assessment invigilation and prevention of misconduct
- Assure the integrity and security of learner assessment artefacts
- Learner assessment results are recorded and reported in a secure manner

6.4   Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all assessment of learner achievement is appropriate to the award, fair and consistent, and conducted professionally by qualified staff in accordance with documented assessment procedures.

6.4.1   Security and Integrity of Assessment Materials

6.4.1.1   Key Implementation Steps

- Ensure secure storage and access to assessment materials
- Ensure assessments are consistent with all validation criteria for the relevant award (assuming certified training).
- Document marking criteria and marking schemes.

6.4.1.2   Method

Assessment materials storage

Assessment-related materials and records are distributed as follows:

- SONRAI for learner records management and reporting
- Traintracks/Filemaker for course management, and

- Cloud servers (Moodle VLE) for training and assessment materials.

There are also physical storage systems in place at the Training Centre for hardcopy records and materials. All physical and online assessment systems include access controls in terms of physical keys and passwords. Only members of the Network Management Team have access to these systems.

These systems are in daily use and are monitored by way of ongoing interactions with Skillnet Ireland, Ibec, IT support providers (Avova), tutors etc.

Consistency with award criteria

All QQI-accredited training at FPTS is validated with QQI and this ensures the compliance of our programmes with the published Award Specifications for that award. Award title, programme title, NFQ level, learning outcomes, teaching methodologies, assessment techniques and weightings, and marking criteria and schemes all form part of the validation process. Records of validation applications and approvals are held by the Network Management Team.

Internal monitoring of the security and integrity of assessment processes is assured by factors such as feedback forms, internal verification, programme review etc. External monitoring is achieved by means of external evaluator and external authenticator reports.

6.4.1.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Ensure that passwords are accessible only to the current Network Management Team and that they are periodically changed (quarterly).	Annually or on change of personnel	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Ensure the testing of backup and recovery systems for key systems (SONRAI, Filemaker, Cloud servers)	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review internal and external evaluations	Per programme and annually	Centre Manager	Academic Council
	Conduct Programme Reviews to ensure continuing compliance with validation approval.	Annually	Centre Manager	Academic Council

6.4.1.4   Related documents and resources

- Award standards published by Awarding Body.
- Validation application document(s)

- QQI Validation Approval Report.
- Assessment instruments.
- Documented marking criteria and schemes.
- Feedback forms
- QA reports (internal and external)

6.4.2 Security and Integrity of Assessment processes

6.4.2.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Recruit and assign suitably qualified assessment staff.
- Develop, approve, and validate assessment plans, assessment instruments.
- Communicate marking schemes and criteria to relevant tutors/assessors.
- Document and communicate the invigilation process.
- Put measures in place to preserve the integrity of the results for the avoidance of academic misconduct, including prevention, detection, and corrective action to be taken
- Implement a robust Results Approval process including the review of QA Reports (Internal Verifier, External Authenticator) with special emphasis on authentication of any online assessment
- Solicit feedback for programme assessment improvement purposes.

6.4.2.2 Method

Vulnerabilities such as authentication of learner work, particularly assignments conducted offsite can be the most difficult to address but all assessments are invigilated and the possibility of deliberate tutor, staff or learner fraud is remote given the very insular nature of our learner community. Notwithstanding the level of trust that FPTS must have with their learners and staff, there are still many measures in place to mitigate any threat to assessment integrity including:

- Tutor Profiles and ToR to ensure their capacity to assess
- Assessment Plans
- Marking schemes
- Signed confirmations of authentic work.
- Invigilation procedures
- Anti-plagiarism software
- Feedback forms (tutor and learner)
- Results Approval Procedure

Recruitment.

FPTS has developed a documented Tutor Profile (maintained by the Network Management Team) to assist with the recruitment of staff involved in the design and conduct of assessments.

Assessment Plans.

The approval of assessment plans and instruments are an integral part of the programme development process described in procedure 3, "Programmes of Education and Training" (above).

For QQI-certified training, assessment plans are approved as part of the programme validation process.

Marking Schemes.

Marking schemes are developed and documented during programme development, and these schemes are used by the tutors to ensure fair and consistent assessment.

Signed confirmations

Learners are required to provide signed Confirmations of Authorship for all submitted assignments.

Assessment Invigilation

FPTS tutors are briefed on their responsibilities in relation to assessment invigilation, and these responsibilities are also documented in the Tutor Handbook as well as the Quality Assurance Manual (this document).

Invigilators will ensure:

- For classroom/laboratory-based assessments an attendance form is signed by all candidates
- For assessments completed outside the classroom/laboratory, a Confirmation of Authorship is signed by each candidate
- The classroom and/or laboratory has the necessary physical resources and assessment materials in place prior to the commencement of the assessment
- They and the candidates are in place in a timely fashion to ensure punctual commencement of the assessment.
- They advise the Network Management Team of any potential conflict of interest in their role as invigilator
- They provide clear instructions to the candidates regarding the conduct of the assessment
- Completion of the End of Training report to record any information pertinent to security or integrity of the assessment
- They diligently monitor candidates during the assessment and avoid engaging in any activity that might detract from their ability to properly observe the candidates (e.g. use mobile 'phone, browse the internet etc.)
- They do not represent a distraction to the candidates – this might include unnecessary noise (e.g. conversation likely to overheard, footware/jewellery likely to generate noise), or actions/activities that are likely to draw attention away from the assessment
- They are present in the assessment environment for the full duration of the assessment – if they need to leave the environment, they must arrange replacement invigilation
- Ensure that all learners behave in a manner that does not distract or impede on the performance of others – learners violating this obligation will be cautioned, reported, or removed from the assessment

- Ensure that in answering any candidate question, that no advantage will be gained by the questioner over other candidates
- Ensure that all candidates remain in the assessment environment for the duration of their assessment – toilet breaks are permitted – a second invigilator should accompany the candidate where possible

Academic Misconduct (including plagiarism)

The protection of the integrity of assessment is essential to good training quality assurance. Tutors play a critical role in implementing measures to prevent academic misconduct. This may include plagiarism, fabrication or falsification of data, or any other form of academic cheating (e.g. impersonation, collusion, illicit use of third-party services *inter alia*.)

In QQI's Green Paper on Assessment of Learners and Learning (P93), they cite Teddi Fishman's (Fishman, 2009) proposed definition of plagiarism as useful. Fishman states that:

"Plagiarism occurs when someone

> *1) Uses words, ideas, or work products*
> *2) Attributable to another identifiable person or source*
> *3) Without attributing the work to the source from which it was obtained*
> *4) In a situation in which there is a legitimate expectation of original authorship*
> *5) In order to obtain some benefit, credit, or gain which need not be monetary" (sic)*

To mitigate the risk of any form of academic conduct FPTS ensures that:

- Candidates are aware of what constitutes academic misconduct
- Robust invigilation procedures are in place
- Tutors exercise good judgement, and
- Technological aids are used where appropriate.

Specific actions to prevent academic misconduct at FPTS ensure:

- Induction briefings are given to all learners at which academic integrity and the FPTS measures to ensure this, are discussed.
- All learners are provided with a Learner Handbook which discusses academic integrity and the censure for deliberate cheating.
- Tutors are provided with instruction in the use of the anti-plagiarism tools – FPTS has purchased Urkund software licenses for this purpose.
- FPTS will consider online proctoring services/products should this become necessary (e.g. EduSynch).
- Assessment invigilation processes are in place.
- Tutors and the Centre Manager are advised through their ToR of their responsibility to protect academic integrity.

Where academic misconduct by a candidate is suspected, the following applies:

- The candidate may be required to participate in an oral (viva voce) defence of their assessment.
- The Tutor will decide whether an infringement has been detected and the level (minor or major). For minor infringements, the Tutor may caution the candidate or require them to resubmit a complete or partial assessment, alternatively, they may apply a penalty mark appropriate to the perceived level of infringement. In the case of major infringement, they will refer the matter to the Centre Manager for judgement. The Centre Manager may decide to allow a reassessment, endorse the proposed penalty mark, or remove the learner from the programme without recourse, and without certification for the programme.
- The Tutor (or Centre Manager) will provide the candidate with a written description of the infringement detected and the censure to be applied.
- If the candidate wishes to appeal the decision of the Centre Manager, the Academic Council will hear the appeal and make a judgement. The decision of the Academic Council is final.

Results Approval.

Tutors/assessors mark the assessment scripts/artefacts in accordance with the marking schemes, and the results are returned to the Network Management Team. The Internal Verifier checks the results and produces an Internal Verifier report for consideration by the External Authenticator who checks and moderates the results to comply with validation criteria and for comparison with national norms. The External Evaluator Report, the Internal Verifier Report and the learner and tutor feedback forms are reviewed by the Results Approval Panel (RAP) before submission to QQI for certification. The tutor feedback form is used to highlight any concerns with the authenticity of candidates work, and this is particularly important in online learning where authentication is less easy than in a conventional classroom environment. Attendance forms and Confirmations of Authorship are also checked by the RAP. Any anomalies are brought to the attention of the Centre Manager for resolution prior to submission to QQI. Findings of the RAP are documented are summarised and provided to the Centre Manager for management information purposes.

Programme improvement.

Programme improvement is addressed in more detail in other sections of the Quality Assurance Manual, however in the context of assessment, feedback forms and QA reports are central to identifying where improvements can be made.

6.4.2.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review role profiles for assessment staff	Annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager
	Review programme assessments including marking schemes communications with assessors	Annually	Centre Manager	Academic Council

Review the assessment invigilation process and the Tutor Handbook	Annually	Centre Manager	Academic Council
Review procedures for prevention, detection, and remedial action in relation to academic misconduct	Annually	Centre Manager	Academic Council
Review Programme Improvement Plans	At Academic Council meetings	Centre Manager	Academic Council

6.4.2.4   Related documents and resources

- Competency Profiles for assessment staff (tutors)
- Tutor/Assessor Handbook, ToR, Framework Agreements/Contracts
- Programme validation application documents (programme descriptor)
- QQI Award Specifications
- QA reports (Results approval, IV, EA, EE, Ibec)
- Learner Handbook
- Learner and tutor feedback forms.
- Programme Improvement Plans
- National Agency publications (e.g. QQI, DES etc.)
- Plagiarism detection software
- Signed Confirmations of Authorship
- Records Management Systems
- Public information published on website

6.4.3   Learner work (assessment techniques)

6.4.3.1   Key Implementation Steps

- Make learners aware of their obligation to demonstrate their achievement of programme learning outcomes.
- Ensure that assessment methodologies accommodate learners as far as practicable, including those learners covered by equality legislation (Reasonable Accommodation and Compassionate Consideration)
- Provide formative and summative assessment feedback to learners
- Review feedback from external QA personnel

6.4.3.2   Method

Learner obligations.

A Learner Handbook is issued to all learners during induction in which information about learner responsibilities and the conduct of assessment is described.

Reasonable Accommodation.

Reasonable accommodation refers to the provision of additional supports, facilities, resources or amendments to assessment tasks and activities to enable a learner with a disability or specific learning need to have a comparable opportunity to demonstrate attainment of learning outcomes as any other learner.

QQI advise that "Reasonable accommodations are concerned with adapting the assessment approach, not with diluting the standard of learning to be attained, interfering with or amending the intended learning outcomes. Assessments which involve reasonable accommodations should be consistent with those which do not".

In accordance with the Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2004, FPTS will provide reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of a learner who has a disability, or any other learners covered by equality legislation. FPTS can only provide these supports within the constraints of our ability to do so.

Any learner with a disability which has the potential to impact their learning or assessment experience is requested, during induction, to advise the FPTS Network Management Team and recommend the nature of any support that may be required. Requests for Reasonable Accommodation must be accompanied by documentary evidence from a medical or relevant professional.

Every effort will be made by the assessor to allow the learner to demonstrate the required level of knowledge, skill, and competence without significantly impacting on the standard or the validity of the assessment.

Examples of potential reasonable accommodations include: extended assessment time, a scribe, audio visual recording, computer with assistive technologies (e.g. large text, spoken text), dyslexia support (e.g. spelling waiver).

In circumstances where specific guidance is required, FPTS will consult with organisations such as AHEAD who work to create inclusive environments in education and employment for people with disabilities.

FPTS staff are currently undertaking training with AHEAD to better understand how reasonable accommodations can be provided.

Compassionate Consideration

Compassionate consideration relates to extenuating circumstances are situations or events which unexpectedly interfere with a learner's ability to complete or sit an element of assessment.

FPTS will allow learners to apply for compassionate consideration in relation to their assessment if they cannot complete a specific assessment due to extenuating circumstances.

Examples of extenuating circumstances may include:

- serious illness or bereavement of a close family member or close friend
- involvement in an accident

- domestic crisis
- severe effects of pregnancy or any incapacitating illness/condition of the learner

FPTS will make arrangements to allow the learner to complete the assessment at another time. To apply for compassionate consideration learners should contact the FPTS Network Management Team. Learners seeking compassionate consideration may be required to provide appropriate evidence, e.g. a note from a GP.

Feedback to learners.

Tutors provide formative feedback to learners during instructor-led training and during practical laboratory sessions. Formative feedback is also provided through quizzes and marked sample assignments. Summative feedback on formal assessments (assignments and lab work) is provided.

Review of external QA.

The FPTS Centre Manager uses feedback from External QA stakeholders to quality assure assessment of learner work. There are a number of reports provided by these personnel including the Internal Verifier Report, the External Authenticator Report, the External Evaluator Report, Results Approval Panel Report, ad-hoc reports by Skillnet Ireland supervisors *inter alia*.

6.4.3.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review the Learner Handbook	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review learner applications for reasonable accommodation or compassionate consideration	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review staff training in relation to reasonable accommodation	Annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager
	Review formative feedback mechanisms	Annually	Tutors	Centre Manager
	Review external QA Reports	Quarterly	Centre Manager	Academic Council

6.4.3.4 Related documents and resources

- Learner and Tutor Handbooks and other induction materials.
- Contact information for advocacy groups (AHEAD, Irish Deaf Society, language support, Irish Council for the Blind etc.), if required.
- Staff training records.
- Learner "Confirmation of Authorship" document to accompany assignments.
- Programme supports (personnel or infrastructure) e.g. scribes, wheelchair access, disability aids etc.
- Documented features of the IT systems (guides to using Moodle, BigBlueButton etc.).
- Management Information Systems.
- Physical storage systems.
- QA Reports.
- Application forms/correspondence relating to reasonable/compassionate accommodations.

6.4.4 Maintaining records of learner assessment

6.4.4.1 Key Implementation Steps
- Implement and monitor appropriate physical and electronic systems for the proper storage, and protection of assessment related instruments.
- Implement a robust system for the tracking of assessment materials submitted online.
- Keep assessment records up to date to ensure they are available to students and staff for progress monitoring
- Ensure compliance with Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation

6.4.4.2 Method

Assessment material repositories

Assessment-related materials and records are held on SONRAI (for records management and reporting), Filemaker/Traintracks (for course management), and Moodle (for programme content and assessments).

There are also physical storage systems in place for hardcopy records and materials. All physical and online assessment systems include access controls in terms of physical keys and passwords. Only the Network Management Team have access to these systems. These systems are in daily use and are monitored by way of ongoing interactions with Skillnet Ireland, Ibec, IT support providers (Avova), tutors etc.

Keeping records up to date

The Network Management Team in collaboration with the tutors/assessors are responsible for ensuring that learner records are kept up to date.

The Network Management Team in collaboration with subject matter experts is responsible for the initial setup of the IT systems.

At the end of each programme, tutors provide the Network Management Team with attendance sheets, completed feedback forms, Confirmations of Authorship, marked assessment scripts and products of

practical assessment et al, and the Network Management Team ensure these are recorded on the correct IT systems and physical items are stored appropriately.

Each learner has a unique Moodle sign-in set up by the Network Management Team. Assessment tracking is built into Moodle, and the status of assignments/assessments can be easily established by all stakeholders.

Data Protection and FoI.

Ibec, in its role as contracting organisation to Skillnet Ireland is responsible for the proper implementation of relevant legislation at FPTS, including GDPR and Freedom of Information. Ibec provide advice, guidance, and training in this regard. FPTS has a nominated Data Protection Officer within Ibec.

6.4.4.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review FPTS IT systems involved in the learner assessment lifecycle (Moodle, Filemaker, SONRAI, BigBlueButton)	Annually	Centre Manager	Academic Council
	Review physical facilities used to store learner assessment artefacts.	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review support arrangements with external IT support organisation.	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review arrangements with external agencies (e.g. Ibec) in relation to compliance with applicable legislation	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

6.4.4.4 Related documents and resources

- IT systems (Moodle, Filemaker, SONRAI, BigBlueButton)
- Physical facilities (filing cabinets, storage locations)
- Service agreement with external IT support company (Avova)
- Legislative guidance publications (e.g., Ibec, QQI inter alia)

7 SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

7.1 Revision Control

Policy	Supports for Learners
Version	1.0
Effective Date	February 2021
Next Review Date	February 2026
Owner	Network Management Team

7.2 Policy

It is the policy of FPTS to provide coherent and integrated supports for learners throughout the engagement lifecycle, such that all required resources are in place, and learners are fully informed about the range of services available to them.

FPTS will regularly review facilities (online and classroom-based), equipment and consumables to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose and consistent with award standards.

FPTS is committed to equality of opportunity and will provide supports learners with disabilities or special requirements, to the greatest extent possible within our capacity to provide such supports.

FPTS will provide comprehensive administration, guidance, and technical support services to learners and will routinely solicit and act on learner feedback received in relation to these services.

FPTS will take all reasonable measures to support the general wellbeing of all learners on our programmes.

7.3 Process (Diagram)
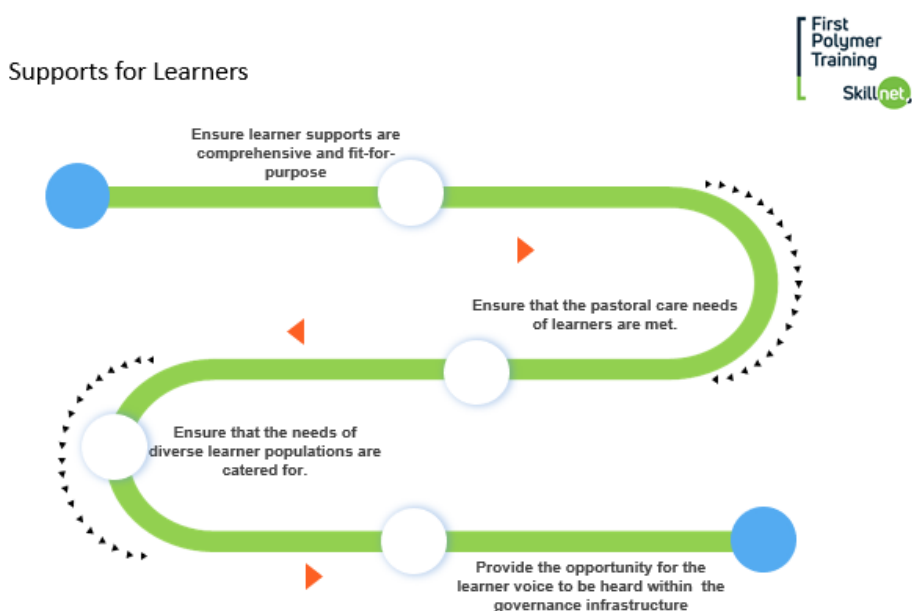
7.4 Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the adequacy of supports and resources available to learners is constantly monitored and required changes are made in a timely manner.

7.4.1 Integrating learning resources and supports

7.4.1.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Provide programme resources and supports that are fit-for-purpose and cater for diverse learner populations. These supports include but are not restricted to: learner supports (academic and non-academic), IT supports, reference materials, administration), blended learning supports, premises and equipment.
- Communicate the existence of supports to learners.
- Provide programme resources that are consistent with programme standards.

7.4.1.2 Method

Resource Provision

FPTS has a resource requirements List (Materials and Equipment Assets Register) for all programmes that we run, which is maintained by the Network Management Team with the support of the tutors. The list includes a description of required equipment and consumables.

IT systems (e.g. Moodle and Filemaker) are used to provide programme resources to learners (e.g. course content, links to supplemental material, assessment resources etc.), and BigBlueButton is used to facilitate the online presentation element of blended learning.

FPTS also has procedures in place for specific resources that may be required for learners with diverse needs. These are described under Reasonable Accommodations in procedure 6 (above).

Special needs are identified during initial learner registration. Any special needs identified will be advised to the Centre Manager who will discuss any accommodations that may be possible. Any special needs arising after registration can be discussed with the tutor or any member of the Network Management Team, during programme delivery.

The ground floor of training facility at FPTS is wheelchair accessible and this includes the laboratory facility and the training rooms, but the upper floor (office) is only accessible by stairs.

Where international learners are employed by organisations within the ROI, one potential issue that could arise is English Language (EL) competency. The minimum EL proficiency is specified in our joining instructions, and if these are not met, FPTS is not in a position to provide language support. Learners and employers are advised that this is the case.

Communicating supports to learners

Information regarding learner supports (website, facilities, equipment, tutors, programme information, procedures etc.) is accessible to learners through the FPTS website and by contacting the training centre by 'phone or e-mail. Learner supports are also documented in the learner induction pack. The Terms of Reference for the Centre Manager require that all supports are advised to learners.

7.4.1.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review programme-specific resource requirements lists	Annually	Tutor & Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review IT systems	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review Reasonable Accommodation provision and any associated requests.	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review Learner Induction Materials	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

7.4.1.4   Related documents and resources

- Programme resource requirements lists
- IT Systems
- Links with advocacy groups (e.g. AHEAD, IDS)
- Learner induction materials

7.4.2   Providing pastoral care

7.4.2.1   Key Implementation Steps

- Provide context-appropriate pastoral care supports to learners.

7.4.2.2   Method

Context-appropriate pastoral care

The requirement for pastoral care is limited in relation to programmes provided by FPTS since they are of short duration, and do not involve work placements. Nonetheless, during induction, learners are encouraged to alert the tutors or the centre staff to any issue that may be concerning them. If the learner's participation in the programme or assessments is compromised by such an issue, there are supports available described in Compassionate Considerations in procedure 6 (above).

The ToR for the Centre Manager and Tutors remind these role holders to be cognisant of the pastoral care needs of learners.

7.4.2.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review provisions for compassionate accommodations internally and with community of practice	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review Learner Induction Pack	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

7.4.2.4   Related documents and resources

- Learner Induction Pack
- Community of practice (i.e. other providers of similar programmes)
- FPTS website

7.4.3   Access to services related to programmes

7.4.3.1   Key Implementation Steps
- Ensure learners have appropriate access to programme services
- Ensure administrative staff are appropriately trained to provide learner support effectively.

7.4.3.2   Method

Learner access to programme services

Learners engage with FPTS via a number of access points including: the FPTS website, the Network Management Team, the training facility, the tutors, the IT systems etc. FPTS takes many steps to ensure that these access points are easy to use, fit for purpose and secure.

There are measures in place to keep the website up to date, described further in Procedure 8, "Public Information and Communication".

The Network Management Team is accessible by e-mail, 'phone, and the postal service.

Joining Instructions advise learners of the location and access routes to the training facility.

Learner induction ensures learners are aware of the contact details for their tutors and provide them with access to the IT systems that they will be using.

Staff Training

Staff are trained in the tools used at FPTS to support learners. Tutors receive instruction in the use of Moodle, BigBlueButton and Filemaker. The Network Management Team also receive instruction in the use of assessment and delivery tools as well as the Management Information Systems (e.g. SONRAI).

Staff are familiar with the induction materials provided to learners and will be able to provide the supports listed therein.

New staff are provided with Induction training supported by briefing materials, and, given the proximity of staff working environments at FPTS, new staff always have direct access to experienced members of the team.

7.4.3.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review learner access points (FPTS website, joining instructions, induction materials, programme descriptors etc.)	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review staff training records and materials (e.g. induction materials, Staff Handbook etc.)	Annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager

7.4.3.4   Related documents and resources

- User Guides for IT Systems (Moodle, BigBlueButton, Filemaker, SONRAI)
- FPTS Website
- Learner Joining Instructions
- Learner Induction Materials

- Staff Induction Materials
- Staff Training Records

7.4.4 Learner representation

7.4.4.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Understand and act upon the learner perception of the resources and supports provided, through surveys and mechanisms for direct learner representation.
- Provide information to learners about programme supports and career pathways.

7.4.4.2 Method

Learner perceptions of resources

Learner involvement in quality assurance is mainly achieved through the learner feedback forms. In addition, there are a number of informal methods for learners to comment on the FPTS QA processes. FPTS is a small training centre so the Centre Manager, centre staff and tutors are always on hand to chat with learners and discuss any concerns. Most FPTS learners come from our member companies and there is always the opportunity for regular dialogue between FPTS, the learners and their employers.

The Learner Feedback Forms are reviewed in the first instance by the tutors and thereafter by the Internal Verifier and the Centre Manager. The Verifier's Report is also made available to the External Authenticator and any External Evaluators. All QA reports are presented to the Academic Council for review.

Actions arising from feedback received, is addressed immediately where possible but if time/resource restrict the opportunity for immediate resolution, then required actions are recorded in the Programme Improvement Plans for subsequent action.

Where possible, there will be a learner representative on the Academic Council.

Programme supports and career pathways

The FPTS website will provide learners with initial information about our programme support and career pathways. During Learner Induction learners will have further opportunity to discuss this with tutors and the Network Management Team. The Learner Handbook also provides detailed information on access, transfer and progression.

7.4.4.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review feedback forms and QA reports	Per programme	Centre Manager	Academic Council

Review FPTS website programme information	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
Review Learner Induction materials	Annually	Network management Team	Centre Manager

7.4.4.4   Related documents and resources

- QA Reports
- FPTS Website
- Learner Induction Materials

8 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

8.1 Revision Control

Policy	Programmes of Education and Training
Version	1.0
Effective Date	February 2021
Next Review Date	February 2026
Owner	Network Management Team

8.2 Policy

It is the policy of FPTS to gather, store, analyse, use and disseminate data about our programmes and learners, in a manner that protects the interests of all stakeholders.
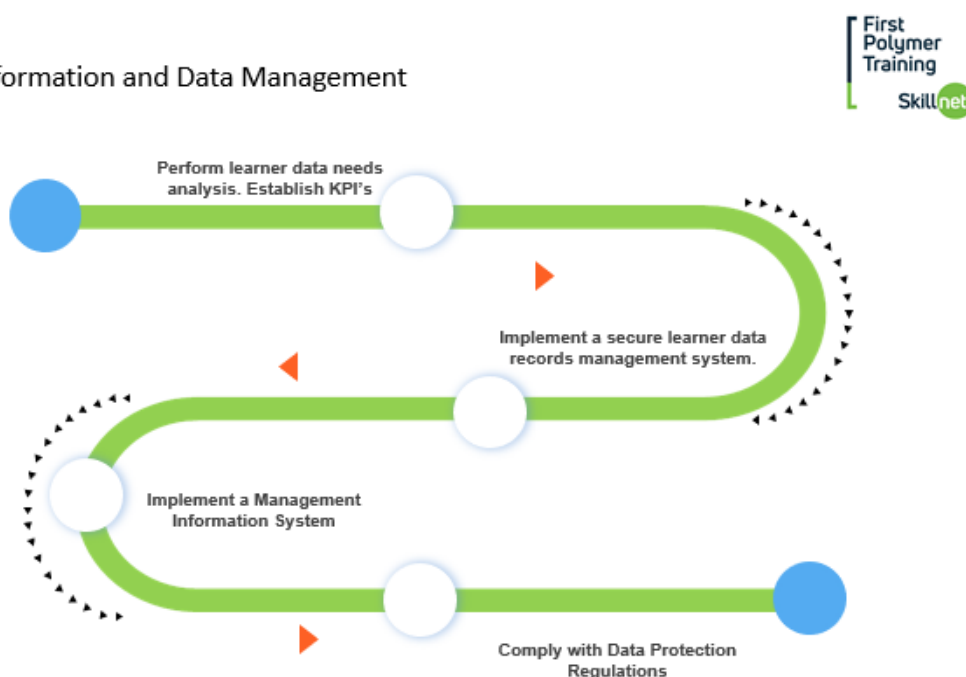
FPTS will comply with all statutory and regulatory obligations including those related to Freedom of Information and Data Protection.

FPTS maintains qualitative and quantitative systems to record and report learner information on a scheduled and ad-hoc basis. This data will provide statistically relevant details (e.g. certification rates etc.) about our programmes for certification purposes and the purposes of management, and staff and learner information provision.

FPTS information systems will be secure and protected from accidental or malicious loss or damage and will be suitable for current use and historical review (subject to applicable data retention periods).

8.3 Process (Diagram)

Information and Data Management

Perform learner data needs analysis. Establish KPI's

Implement a secure learner data records management system.

Implement a Management Information System

Comply with Data Protection Regulations

8.4 Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to implement and maintain a secure and robust management information system to gather, store, analyse and report on programme and learner data for the purposes of data provision and process improvement.

8.4.1 Learner data needs analysis. Establishing KPI's

8.4.1.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Decide the nature and extent of learner data to be captured for management purposes.
- Establish KPI's (Key Performance Indicators).

8.4.1.2 Method

Learner data captured

FPTS records several data points of learner information including:

- Personal information (names, age, gender, contact information)
- Employer details
- Payment information
- Enrolment information
- Training history with FPTS.

This data is captured using booking forms and the data is entered by members of the Network Management Team when the learner/employer is making the booking.

KPIs

KPI's help to measure the success of FPTS programmes. Specific KPI's are set by Skillnet Ireland for all Skillnet Networks. Skillnet Ireland KPI's include both activity-related and financial KPI's:

Activity KPI's

- Number of unique trainees
- Number of training days
- Number of member companies
- Non-formal events hosted by FPTS (for employers and learners)

Financial KPI's

- overall expenditure
- fund matching (i.e., employer contribution towards programme fee)

FPTS has a number of other KPI's which we monitor, including:

- minimum and maximum learner numbers per programme
- learner satisfaction rates from feedback forms
- certification rates and grade analysis

- enrolment rates
- completion rates

Programme completion data is reviewed by tutors, the Centre Manager, IV, EA, and the Academic Council.

8.4.1.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review programme completion information (learner numbers, completion rates, learner tutor feedback forms, grades)	Per programme	Internal verifier	Centre Manager
	Review QA reports	Quarterly	Centre Manager	Academic Council
	Review certification data	Per Programme	Network Management Team	Results Approval Panel

8.4.1.4   Related documents and resources

- Management Information Systems (SONRAI & Filemaker)
- QA Reports (IV, EA)
- Programme completion reports
- Feedback forms
- QQI Infographics

8.4.2   Learner Information Systems. Records Management

8.4.2.1   Key Implementation Steps

- Implement a secure learner records management system complete with access controls and systems for backup and recovery and which complies with GDPR legislation for online and paper-based records.
- Record all learner assessment records and results.
- Specify minimum retention periods for data taking into account the requirement for management information and compliance with regulatory and statutory bodies.

8.4.2.2   Method

Secure records management

FPTS use the SONRAI system to capture learner data records. Key data points include learner name, employer name and address, PPS information (only for accredited programmes), highest NFQ level achieved, age range, occupational category, e-mail address, and contact number. The Network Management Team solicit this information during the recruitment cycle by providing a form link to the learner. The learner completes the form, the data from which is uploaded to the SONRAI system. The form is immediately destroyed after upload.

All of the learner information requested is deemed necessary, and compliant with GDPR regulations as a data processor.

Access to SONRAI is password controlled and only members of the Network Management Team can access it. Skillnet Ireland administer the user accounts for the SONRAI system and are responsible for password control. Each FPTS user has an individual sign-on. FPTS advise Skillnet Ireland in the event of changes of personnel.

The SONRAI system is implemented and maintained by Skillnet Ireland and is provided as a service to all Skillnets. Skillnet Ireland are responsible for the implementation of backup and recovery measures for SONRAI.

Retention periods

The Skillnet Ireland guideline is to maintain a retention period for assessment-related materials and records at FPTS for 3 years, and in the event of cessation of activity by FPTS, these records can be accessed through the Network Promoter at Ibec, and/or the Development Advisor at Skillnet Ireland.

8.4.2.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review security of access to IT systems (accounts, passwords, access level).	Annually or when there are changes to the Network Management Team	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Review data capture processes, data reports generated and retained data.	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Ensure that Ibec and Skillnet Ireland representatives are familiar with the storage system at FPTS for learner information and artefacts.	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

8.4.2.4 Related documents and resources

- Management Information System (SONRAI)
- Network Promoter at Ibec
- Development Advisor at Skillnet Ireland

8.4.3 Management Information Systems. Information for further planning.

8.4.3.1 Key Implementation Steps
- Review management information on a periodic basis

8.4.3.2 Method

All Skillnet networks, funded by the Training Networks Programme since 2014, use SONRAÍ (the Skillnets Online Reporting and Activity Information System) to manage data, produce reports etc. The hosting platform is a dedicated Skillnet Ireland-owned server. The System serves as a tool for Skillnet Ireland staff to manage network data from their headquarters, and for Network Managers to manage their respective networks from remote locations.

FPTS also uses a Course Management System by Filemaker called Traintracks which records attendance certificates and student feedback forms [Kirkpatrick Level 1 (initial course evaluation) to Level 3 (application of learning)] etc.). It also facilitates personalised assessment instruments to be downloaded prior to programme assessment date.
Filemaker Traintracks is a local application running on a local server administered by the Network Management Team FPTS. FPTS is in the process of migrating to an Ibec-hosted system which will replace the current functionality provided by Filemaker/Traintracks.

SONRAI reports are typically either financial reports or activity reports for a specified time range. FPTS use these reports to monitor key financial and programme performance indicators.

Traintracks reports provide additional detail that is specific to FPTS learners and member companies.

8.4.3.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review SONRAI and Filemaker reports to ensure that they are collecting and reporting information which will allow FPTS analyse programme performance	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

8.4.3.4 Related documents and resources

- SONRAI
- Filemaker Traintracks
- MIS reports generated by and for Skillnet Ireland and Ibec
- QQI Infographics

8.4.4 Compliance with GDPR

8.4.4.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Ensure that the learner records system is compliant with Data Protection legislation and is capable of providing information that may be requested under the Freedom of Information Act.
- Inform learners of the measures in place to protect their personal data.
- Train Centre staff in DP and FoI obligations under legislation.

8.4.4.2 Method

Records management system compliance

Both Skillnet Ireland and Ibec provide subject matter expertise to FPTS in relation to GDPR and FPTS complies with this guidance.

Informing learners about GDPR

Details of the Privacy Statements for both Skillnet Ireland and Ibec (and which are implemented by FPTS) FPTS GDPR are posted in the Privacy Section of the FPTS website.

The Privacy Statements provide full details of the nature of the information that we store, the reason for storing it, the legal basis for storing it, and the duration for which it is held.

FPTS staff regularly attend Ibec information events including GDPR compliance, and there is a nominated Data Protection Officer in Ibec.

 The Learner Handbook advise learners about data protection measures in place at FPTS.

8.4.4.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review the Learner Handbook for Data Protection information	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

Review compliance with GDPR guidelines provided by Ibec and Skillnet Ireland as published on the FPTS website	Annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager
Review staff GDPR training records	Annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager

8.4.4.4   Related documents and resources

- Data Protection Commission "Responsibilities of Organisations under the General Data Protection Regulation".
- FPTS Website.
- Network Promoter.
- Ibec and Skillnet Ireland privacy statements.

9 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

9.1 Revision Control

Policy	Public Information and Communication
Version	1.0
Effective Date	February 2021
Next Review Date	February 2026
Owner	Network Management Team

9.2 Policy

It is the policy of FPTS to provide public access to information about our organisation, programmes, services, and our quality assurance.
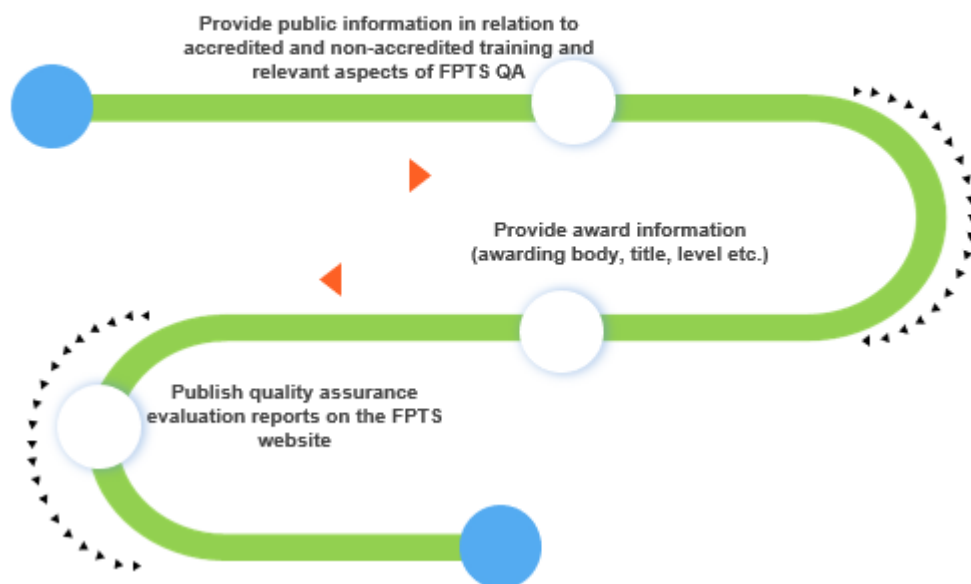
FPTS will ensure that all information that we publish will be clear, accurate, up-to-date and easy to access.

FPTS will provide full details about all our programmes (both accredited and non-accredited). These details include information about programme content and assessment. For accredited training these details will also include award information (e.g. title, awarding body, level etc.), information regarding Access, Transfer & Progression (ATP), and where applicable, provisions in respect of Protection for Learners.

FPTS will also publish the key findings of independent quality evaluations on the FPTS website.

9.3 Process (Diagram)

Public Information and Communication

Provide public information in relation to accredited and non-accredited training and relevant aspects of FPTS QA

Provide award information (awarding body, title, level etc.)

Publish quality assurance evaluation reports on the FPTS website

9.4   Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to comply with the provisions of the [Qualifications And Quality Assurance (Education And Training) Act 2012](#) in relation to information provided to enrolled learners [Section 67], the preparation of quality assurance procedures and publication of self-evaluation reports [Section 28] and the publication [Section 30] of draft quality assurance procedures "*in such form and manner (including on the internet) as the Authority [QQI] directs and shall provide a copy of the procedures as published to the Authority*"

9.4.1   Providing public information

9.4.1.1   Key Implementation Steps

- Ensure that there is a named "owner" with responsibility for the provision of information to the public in a manner which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and accessible.
- Publish any FPTS research activities as soon as practicable on the FPTS website and distribute in hardcopy to relevant audiences.
- Review all public information with relevant stakeholders prior to publication.

9.4.1.2   Method

Responsibility for public information

The Centre Manager is responsible for the provision of information to the public.

There are many events which trigger updates to the FPTS website: new programmes, modifications to existing programmes, new legislation, changes to programme schedules etc.

The Network Management Team use Wordpress to update information on the [FPTS website](#). The website contains information about:

- The FPTS Organisation and contact information.
- FPTS Training Programmes including descriptors and schedules.
- News items, reports and FAQ's.
- GDPR Privacy Statements.

All modifications to information on the FPTS website are reviewed prior to publication by the Centre Manager in collaboration with the appropriate subject matter experts, governance groups and other centre staff, as appropriate.

9.4.1.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval

Review all public information published on the website. Ensure that it is accurate, complete and up to date	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
Ensure that the online learning portal provides secure access to learners.	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

9.4.1.4   Related documents and resources

- FPTS Website
- Learning Management System (Moodle)
- ToR for Centre Manager

9.4.2   Providing learner information

9.4.2.1   Key Implementation Steps

- Provide all relevant programme information to learners and, in compliance with QQI Guidelines, inform learners within 14 days of becoming aware of any change to this information.

9.4.2.2   Method

Publication of programme information

The FPTS website is the main source for programme information for learners. The FPTS website contains all the mandatory information required for QQI-certified programmes. This information includes whether or not the programme leads to an award, name of awarding body, award title, award level, award type, Access Transfer and Progression arrangements, and Recognition of Prior Learning arrangements. The website also provides details of non-accredited training, contact information, programme schedules, Data Protection information *inter alia.*

FPTS has a designated member of the Network Management team who constantly updates content on the website.

Programme information is also included in the learner induction materials and this is kept up to date by the Network Management Team.

9.4.2.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval

Review all certified and non-certified training programme information published on the FPTS website and in learner induction materials.	As programme information changes.	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

9.4.2.4   Related documents and resources

9.4.3   Publishing quality assurance evaluation reports

9.4.3.1   Key Implementation Steps
- Publish key findings of Quality Assurance reports
- Publish Quality Assurance procedures

9.4.3.2   Method

Publication of findings

FPTS is subject to several quality assurance evaluations including:

- unannounced annual reviews by Skillnet Ireland
- QQI evaluations (including provider reengagement and programme validations)
- HSA reports
- periodic external evaluations

Key findings from quality assurance reports are published on the FPTS website.

Approved QA procedures are also published on the FPTS website.

9.4.3.3   Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Ensure key findings of QA reports are published on the FPTs website.	When published	Centre Manager	Academic Council

9.4.3.4   Related documents and resources

- FPTS website
- QA Reports (Skillnet Ireland annual compliance report, QQI validation, QQI reengagement, External Validation Reports, HSA Reports)
- Skillnet Ireland TNP Guidelines

- Government publications (e.g. Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act.)
- Published QQI Guidelines.

10 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

10.1 Revision Control

Policy	Other Parties Involved in Education and Training
Version	1.0
Effective Date	February 2021
Next Review Date	February 2026
Owner	Network Management Team

10.2 Policy

It is the policy of FPTS to provide all training programmes using a combination of our own internal staff and external professionals such as subject matter experts, examiners and evaluators/authenticators.

FPTS will liaise with other training providers and industry professionals to ensure current best practice in training management and delivery.

Where FPTS engages with external partners for the provision of training services, these relationships are governed by documented Memoranda of Understanding/Agreement.

FPTS do not currently use the services of second providers (for delivery training on FPTS' behalf), but should this change in the future FPTS will put appropriate measures in place to address required policy and procedures changes.

The only accredited training provided by FPTS is that associated with QQI awards.

10.3 Process (Diagram)

Other Parties Involved in Education and Training
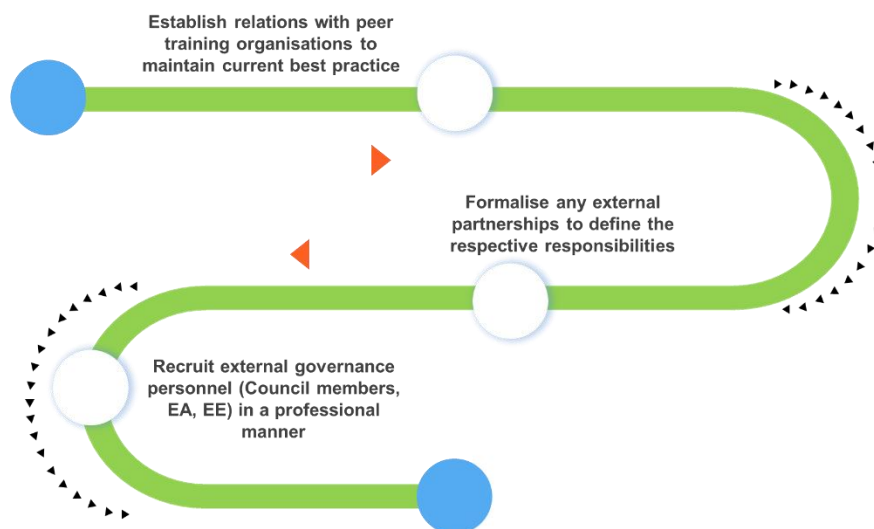
10.4 Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to define how we collaborate with reputable national and international awarding/accreditation/training bodies and organisations and with external independent experts, while ensuring that all aspects such relationships are subject to internal and external quality assurance.

10.4.1 Peer relationships with the broader education and training community.

10.4.1.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Demonstrate that FPTS's programmes are provided in the context of reputable national and international awarding bodies and organisations (e.g. QQI).

10.4.1.2 Method

National context

QQI.

FPTS has been providing programmes leading to QQI (formerly FETAC) awards for many years and has participated in the QQI-convened Standards Development Groups for the development of all the award specifications in the area of polymer processing. FPTS has maintained a strong relationship with QQI ever since and has participated in several QQI Expert Groups for the development of other award standards.

Skillnet Ireland

FPTS became a Skillnet in 1999 and been providing programmes leading to QQI-accreditation since 2000.

FPTS is one of 69 Skillnets currently supported by Skillnet Ireland.

Skillnet Ireland is a business support agency of the Government of Ireland whose mandate is to advance the competitiveness, productivity and innovation of Irish businesses through enterprise-led workforce development. Maintaining a highly skilled workforce is essential to Ireland's national competitiveness. Skillnet Ireland endeavours to ensure that Irish business has the skills it needs to thrive.

Skillnet Ireland support over 18,000 businesses nationwide and provide a wide range of learning experiences to over 70,000 trainees.

Each Skillnet operates to the same Skillnet Ireland Guidelines (the TNP Guidelines), and the Skillnet family represents a community of practice for all members. All Skillnet staff members regularly attend Skillnet Ireland events at which there is an opportunity to discuss current best practice in teaching and learning.

Ibec.

FPTS is also supported in providing training to industry by Ibec. Ibec is appointed as a Network Promoter by Skillnet Ireland. Ibec is also the Network Promoter for several other Skillnets including Irish Medtech with whom Skillnet Ireland has a particular resonance.

International Context

FPTS does not have direct links with international training providers or accreditation bodies for polymer processing programmes, however some FPTS member companies have European/Global operations who provide the international perspective through the Steering Group.

10.4.1.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Participate in QQI-organised events	When advised /requested	Network Management Team	Centre Manager
	Participate in Skillnet Ireland and Ibec-organised events	When advised	Centre Manager	Centre Manager

10.4.1.4 Related documents and resources

- QQI website, correspondence and publications
- Skillnet Ireland correspondence and publications
- Ibec Network Promoter

10.4.2 External partnerships.

10.4.2.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Partnerships with external organisations will be documented and agreed (e.g. IT Sligo).

10.4.2.2 Method

FPTS currently has one formal external partnership. We have a signed Memorandum of Understanding with IT Sligo for the provision of specified modules which form part of the BEng. in Polymer Processing, BEng (Hons) in Polymer Processing, and the Certificate in Polymer Technology offered at IT Sligo.

Under the Memorandum, theory modules are delivered through the IT Sligo Moodle platform by staff from both IT Sligo and FPTS. Practical sessions are developed jointly by both parties, and the labs themselves are conducted at FPTS.

The programmes are validated by IT Sligo under Delegated Authority from QQI.

The quality assurance responsibilities rest with the respective parties for the elements that they deliver.

10.4.2.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review the MoU for any required changes	Annually	Centre Manager	Academic Council

10.4.2.4 Related documents and resources

- Memorandum of Understanding with IT Sligo

10.4.3 Expert panellists, examiners and authenticators.

10.4.3.1 Key Implementation Steps
- Recruit external panellists, evaluators and authenticators in a professional, accountable, fair and transparent manner

10.4.3.2 Method

Panellists.

Terms of Reference are in place for Academic Council and Steering Group members. These documents define the composition, quorum and tenure of membership. They also require members to declare any conflicts of interest and these are assessed and recorded by the groups themselves.

Recruitment criteria for externals are group and role specific. Members of the Academic Council are chosen for their pedagogical expertise and for their ability to ensure the independence of academic decision making. Similarly, Steering Group members are chosen for their subject matter expertise and their ability to represent the needs of the polymer processing industry.

Participation in either group is by invitation of the group itself.

The conduct of all panellist recruitment activity is recorded in the minutes of the respective groups.

Evaluators.

Skillnet Ireland appoint independent evaluators to conduct annual reviews of the Skillnet network. Recruitment of contracted staff by Skillnet Ireland is subject to public procurement rules including fair and transparent processes.

Authenticators.

FPTS has been delivering QQI-accredited training programmes for many years and has authenticated results many times. We have also validated many programmes with QQI and the evaluator reports are filed by the Network Management Team. In recent years we have used the services of two highly experienced independent External Authenticators (Camillus Woolhead and Michael O' Rourke). Both Camillus and Michael were sourced from the QQI-published panel of external authenticators, but the availability of subject matter experts with authentication experience is limited.

10.4.3.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review ToR for governance groups	Annually	Centre Manager	Academic Council
	Review minutes of governance group meetings	Annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager
	Consult with other relevant training providers to supplement the external authenticator team.	Annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager

10.4.3.4 Related documents and resources

- Terms of Reference for governance groups and individuals
- Minutes of Governance Group meetings
- Public procurement guidelines
- Skillnet Ireland Procurement Guidelines

11 SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

11.1 Revision Control

Policy	Programmes of Education and Training
Version	1.0
Effective Date	February 2021
Next Review Date	February 2026
Owner	Network Management Team

11.2 Policy

It is the policy of FPTS to perform regular, planned, self-evaluations to improve the quality of our programmes continuously, and improve service provision to our learners.

FPTS will use defined key performance indicators to benchmark our performance consistently over time.
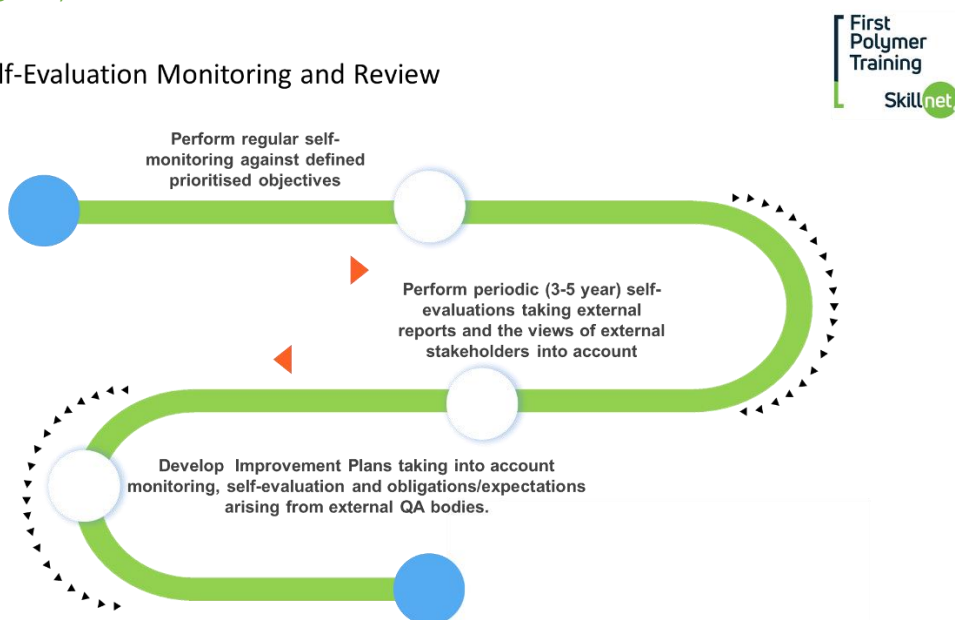
FPTS will ensure that internal and external evaluations are fully supported and adequately resourced by FPTS management.

FPTS will use input from all our stakeholders, our programme reviews, and subject matter experts, to develop and implement a priority-ranked improvement plan based on our self-evaluation report which will drive the enhancement of the learning experience for our learners and our staff.

FPTS's quality assurance system will remain aligned to the QA Guidelines published by QQI.

11.3 Process (Diagram)

Self-Evaluation Monitoring and Review

Perform regular self-monitoring against defined prioritised objectives

Perform periodic (3-5 year) self-evaluations taking external reports and the views of external stakeholders into account

Develop Improvement Plans taking into account monitoring, self-evaluation and obligations/expectations arising from external QA bodies.

11.4 Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to review, evaluate and report on our provision of training services culminating in the identification and maintenance of effective practice and the documentation and implementation of service improvement plans.

11.4.1 Performing internal reviews, self-evaluation and monitoring.

11.4.1.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Review internal and external QA reports and Quality Improvement Plans in preparation for external evaluation.

11.4.1.2 Method

Preparing for external evaluation

The suite of quality assurance reports at FPTS includes:

- Internal verification (per programme)
- External Authentication (per certification cycle)
- External evaluation (every 5 years)
- Skillnet Ireland Annual Compliance Report
- HSA Reports (ad-hoc)
- QQI Programme Validation (per validation submission)
- QQI Provider Reengagement (singular)

Quality Improvement Plans are developed throughout the feedback cycle and are based on inputs from learner and tutor feedback, survey responses from member organisations and external evaluations. Key improvements are discussed at governance group meetings (Academic Council and Steering Group). Minutes of these meetings are used to provide updates to the Quality Improvement Plans.

This suite of QA reports, our documented KPIs, our Annual Training Plans and our Programme Improvement Plans provide a solid basis on which to prepare for external evaluation.

11.4.1.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review internal and external QA reports.	When published and annually	Centre Manager	Centre Manager

Review outstanding actions of Quality Improvement Plans	Annually	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

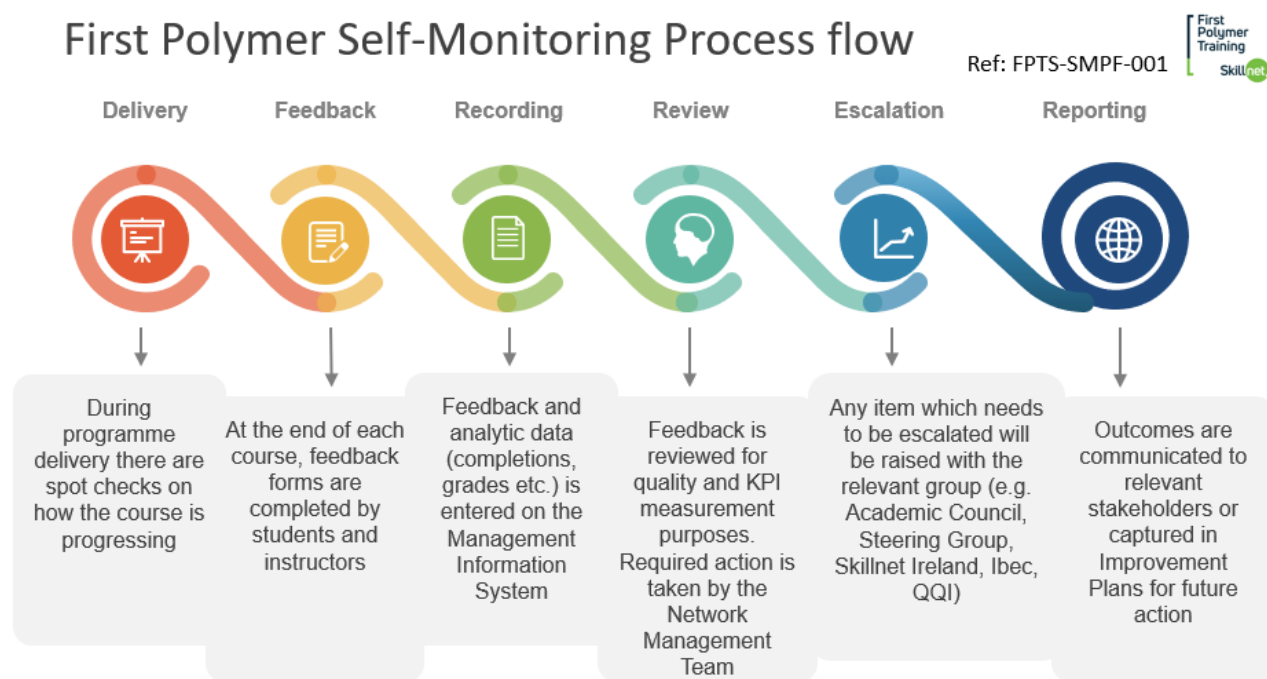### 11.4.1.4 Related documents and resources

- Internal and External QA reports

11.4.2 Internal Self-Monitoring.

11.4.2.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Implement a system of on-going self-monitoring which defines priority-based objectives and key performance indicators, analyses performance and acts on findings.

11.4.2.2 Method

The key priority for FPTS is learner satisfaction, followed by the achievement of documented KPIs including enrolments, completions, certification levels, grades achieved, scope of provision, employer satisfaction and compliance with Skillnet Ireland TNP Guidelines and any additional legislative or awarding body requirements.

The diagram above shows how this is achieved at FPTS.

11.4.2.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review feedback forms	Per course and quarterly	Network Management Team	Academic Council
	Review KPIs and performance against those KPI's	Quarterly and annually	Network Management Team	Academic Council

11.4.2.4 Related documents and resources

- Feedback Forms
- QA Reports
- SONRAI
- Skillnet Ireland TNP Guidelines

11.4.3 Self-evaluation, improvement, and enhancement.

11.4.3.1 Key Implementation Steps

- Implement a system of periodic self-evaluation. The Education, Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012 (Education and Training) sets the maximum period to 7 years, but FPTS aims to complete the evaluation every 5 years.

11.4.3.2 Method

The QQI provider re-engagement process commenced at FPTS in 2017 and since that time FPTS has attended QQI briefings, and read the QQI published guidelines: Core Statutory Guidelines, Topic Specific Guidelines, Sector Specific Guidelines, Guidelines for Blended Learning and other guidance on completing the QQI reengagement process.

Part of the reengagement process involves the production of a Self-Evaluation Report which uses the published QQI guidelines listed above to identify areas for improvement at FPTS.

FPTS has used the finding of our Self-Assessment (Gap Analysis) and resultant Self Evaluation Report to completely redevelop our quality assurance system.

In addition, FPTS has developed a pandemic contingency plan as required by QQI and has submitted same to QQI. This is published on the FPTS website and is periodically updated.

Approval by the QQI provider reengagement evaluation panel, will be taken as an endorsement of our quality assurance procedures and it is not envisaged that FPTS will undertake another full self-evaluation for another 5 years.

11.4.3.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Review the pandemic Contingency Plan for ongoing currency.	Quarterly	Centre Manager	Centre Manager
	Use the findings of the QQI Reengagement Panel to improve Quality assurance at FPTS	When published	Centre Manager	Centre Manager

11.4.3.4 Related documents and resources

- Self-Evaluation Assessment and Report
- QQI Reengagement Panel Report
- QQI published guidelines
- COVID Contingency Plan.

11.4.4 Provider-owned quality assurance engages with external quality assurance.

11.4.4.1 Key Implementation Steps
- Fulfil any quality assurance obligations required by statute or consequential on requirements of any national or international accreditation system (whether statutory or voluntary).

11.4.4.2 Method

Fulfilling statutory obligations

FPTS offer accredited and non-accredited training programmes. The only accredited training offered by FPTS is training leading to QQI awards. As described above, FPTS adheres to all relevant guidelines published by QQI in relation to statutory obligations under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

These are typically advised by QQI via e-mail, or by information events and are published on the QQI website. Any clarifications required may be obtained through the QQI QHelp portal which can be accessed by any member of the FPTS Network Management Team.

11.4.4.3 Monitoring

#	Review and Update activity	Review Interval	Owner	Approval
	Attend QQI briefing events and review QQI publications.	When published	Network Management Team	Centre Manager

11.4.4.4 Related documents and resources

- QQI website
- QQI events and publications
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.