



PCI College

Excellence & Innovation in Psychological Education

Established 1991

College Policies & Procedures

Quality Assurance Manual

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Section A: Introduction

PCI College (formerly Personal Counselling Institute) was founded in 1991 to provide training in counselling and psychotherapy for mature students. The College has experienced steady growth since its inception and now has an enrolment of several hundred students.

The College activities include:

1. Providing part-time third-level education programmes in the field of Counselling and Psychotherapy and related disciplines, at Certificate, Honours Bachelor Degree, Post-graduate Certificate, Advanced Diploma and Masters levels. Programmes are recognised by the relevant accreditation bodies.
2. Providing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes, offering part-time Certificate and Diploma courses in counselling, psychotherapy, and related areas.
3. Providing customised training in counselling and related fields for organisations and community groups wishing to avail of the expertise of the College.

PCI College is committed to Quality Assurance (QA). This QA Manual is a manifestation of that commitment. It outlines the College's policies and QA procedures for the range of activities in which the College is engaged. The College Board and the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee (TLA) have overall responsibility for ensuring that the policies and procedures outlined in this Manual are adhered to, as well as to their ongoing development and improvement.

Section B: Mission & Values of PCI College

Mission Statement

PCI College's Mission Statement provides direction and intention for the institution and an aspirational goal form which effective, consistent and sustained leadership can provide direction for the work of the institution.

“To make transformative contributions to individuals and society as the leading educational establishment in the field of mental health and wellbeing, contributing significantly towards excellence in contemporary academic knowledge and ethical practice within the helping professions in Ireland.”

Vision & Values Statement

The following values describe the foundation of PCI College:

In achieving its Mission, PCI College will be a successful and profitable business, continuously expanding opportunities for the benefit of students, staff and the community, and will

- become well established as a centre of excellence and innovation in Mental Health & Wellbeing and psychological education and training in Ireland
- be committed to, and renowned for the provision of high quality, inspiring, memorable, positive, professional and potentially life-changing learning experiences through participative, experiential programmes which value the prior lived experience of each learner
- become contributor and influencer within academic and professional sectors and be contemporary and responsive to the developing professional climate
- offer optimum experiences and opportunities in inclusive provision so that every student will feel warmly welcomed, cared for, respected and supported, with focus on the needs of the adult learner and mature student
- be a place where learning and development accepts and values openness, honesty, diversity, freedom of expression and the sharing of experience
- be an excellent employer, so that staff will be well supported, empowered, valued and respected, with clear and positive expectations of involvement, contribution, recognition and achievement.

The values underpinning the work of PCI College are explicit in the following key concepts:

1. **Excellence** - striving for the highest quality in all that we do.
2. **Accountability** - inviting scrutiny to maintain excellence in standards.
3. **Ethics** - operating with integrity, honesty, empathy and respect, and including:

- a. protection of, and respect for, freedom of belief
 - b. the free expression of ideas without fear or hindrance
4. **Nurture** - responsive support to enable individuals to maximise potential, including:
 - development of academic programmes that are relevant to the intellectual and vocational needs of individuals
 - provision of educational opportunities for all those who can take advantage of the College's programmes and positive consideration of those groups traditionally under-represented in higher education
 - commitment to the principle of life-long learning and the provision of opportunities for the personal development of all learners and staff
 5. **Responsibility** - to students, staff and the wider community, demonstrated in:
 - the development of a caring organisation that emphasises openness, trust and cooperation and
 - commitment to the promotion and development of personal and social responsibility.
 6. **Diversity** - valuing and actively welcoming difference, shown in:
 - recognition and encouragement of the diversity of cultures and traditions within the PCI College campus and in the broader community
 - commitment to equality of opportunity, regardless of age, colour, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or special needs
 7. **Equality** - embedding transparency and fairness in all college procedures
 8. **Collaboration** - prioritising consultative / collaborative work internally & externally
 9. **Aspiration** - seeking out innovation and opportunity to maximise potential

Section C: Overview of Policies & Procedures

Introduction

PCI College's education and training programmes are subjected to a rigorous monitoring and review processes. The College is committed to self-assessment and external review. The TLA and the College Board oversee the monitoring and review of this QA Manual and the associated QA procedures.

The College, through its QA policies and procedures, sets out to establish a coherent framework for the provision of a top-quality system of education and training. It also aims to ensure that high standards, once attained, are safeguarded. The areas in which the College has developed QA policies and procedures are summarised below. In later sections, detailed procedures are outlined to implement the College's QA policies on a College-wide basis.

Transparency

It is College policy to ensure that sufficient information is accessible to all relevant stakeholders. All relevant programme information e.g. syllabi, schedules, and assessment requirements is made available to learners in the Programme Handbook of the programme of study on which they are enrolled. In addition, the College is committed to being open about the respective rights and obligations of learners as set out in a Learners' Charter (See Appendix A)

Management of Quality Assurance

The College's QA Manual is the repository for procedures providing a systematic approach to QA. The systems put in place to manage quality involve all relevant stakeholders of the institution collaborating in compliance with the policies and procedures as outlined.

The systems established herein, lay out clear lines of authority, showing where responsibility for quality lies. Senior management personnel within the College have a responsibility to develop and maintain a quality culture. Management creates and fosters an environment conducive to participation, trust, teamwork, empowerment, and pride in performance. (See Section E)

Programmes

The College endeavours to offer a range of relevant programmes of approved content and standard as well as a systematic process for the monitoring, evaluation, and continuous enhancement of these programmes. This endeavour is predicated on building quality criteria into new programme development and delivery and continuously monitoring existing programmes within a five-yearly review cycle.

The involvement of external specialists in the design, monitoring, and review of programmes is considered critical. (See Sections F, G, and H)

Relationship with Middlesex University

In 2001 PCI College became a collaborative partner of Middlesex University.

Students on a Middlesex University collaborative programme study for a qualification that is designed, taught and assessed by PCI College but which is validated as a Middlesex University qualification. This collaboration is formalised in a Memorandum of Co-operation which sets out all of the programme's academic and administrative arrangements and which is held on record.

The Memorandum of Co-operation is the formal agreement between Middlesex University and PCI College on the delivery of the Programme. The Memorandum, among other things, sets out the responsibilities of both PCI College and Middlesex University.

In brief these include:

The appointment of a Link Tutor by both PCI College and Middlesex University for liaison purposes and attendance at Boards. The Middlesex University Link Tutor will usually visit PCI College during the year, either in person, or virtually, to attend Awards Boards and the Boards of Study (or equivalent) to which students are invited to discuss the running of the programme. Both Link Tutors are jointly responsible for ensuring the programme is delivered according to the arrangements agreed when it was approved.

Admissions, lecturing, assessment, student support, provision of transcripts, provision of library facilities, are all the responsibility of PCI College.

To ensure the high standards and quality of Middlesex University provision, all programmes are subject to the University's academic quality assurance procedures (which include those procedures related to programme approval, monitoring and review). A key feature of these processes is the input from external subject experts (External Assessors and External Examiners) who ensure that Middlesex University awards are comparable to those of other UK higher education institutions, and that the programme curriculum, teaching, assessment and resources are appropriate. The University works in partnership with a wide range of institutions globally. More information can be found on the University web pages: <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/>

Middlesex University, and its programmes, are subject to periodic audit or review by external quality agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). These audits and reviews place confidence in the quality and standards of provision as operated at Middlesex University. The most recent QAA audit of quality and standards of Middlesex awards was conducted in 2015. The outcomes were that the University meets expectations in all areas of the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards, the quality of student learning opportunities, the quality of the information about learning opportunities and the enhancement of student learning opportunities. QAA review and audit reports can be viewed at: www.qaa.ac.uk

Verifiable Data

The College will gather, store, analyse and present all necessary data to monitor critical quality indicators (e.g. entry requirements, continuous assessment results, completion rates, learner feedback, External Examiners' reports, Board of Assessment reports, Board of Studies reports and external periodic reviews). (See Monitoring Report, Section G)

Data gained from the above sources is examined in the most appropriate forum and appropriate action taken.

Learning Environment

The College endeavours to create an environment in which learners take responsibility for their own learning. To provide opportunities for learning, the programme modules are delivered in a way that involves the use of group work, reflective/reflexive practice, skills development, personal development, work placements, assignment writing, and the use of case examples to illustrate learning points.

Lifelong Learning

The College offers a comprehensive continuing education ecosystem aimed at developing and fostering lifelong learning and specialist training in the fields of counselling, psychotherapy, psychology, and related areas. The continuing education programmes encompass both formal tuition offered through the part-time education programmes that are provided to the public, as well as the development of customised training to professional bodies and community groups. The QA procedures for these programmes mirror, as far as possible, the systems in place for the Honours Degree Programme. The College continues to respond positively to requests for short term courses from local/regional/national groups, institutions and businesses both public and private.

Learner Assessment

Having in place fair and consistent assessment practices that satisfy external standards is a fundamental quality objective of PCI College. We are determined to have an assessment system which is fair, consistent, and effective in measuring the extent to which learners achieve stated learning outcomes. It is College policy to ensure that students are given sufficient information on assessment requirements. This information is contained in the Learners' Handbook.

PCI College promotes innovative coursework, promoting situated learning, and fostering transferable skills to ensure that assessable coursework prepares learners for professional practice. (See Section J)

The College has procedures in place regarding External Examiners and values those key stakeholders input, both in the learner assessment process and in improving the College's programmes (See Section M)

Learner Participation

The College strives to develop systematic methods for gathering learner feedback on its education programmes and support services. (See Section L)

Fair and transparent mechanisms for processing re-checks, reviews, complaints, and appeals are in place. (See Sections K and N)

Learner Support

The College is committed to providing a stimulating learning experience in a supportive environment. Accessible support services for all students are in place as well as individualised support for learners with specific needs. Each student in the College has access to a designated Core Tutor. (See Section O)

The College aims to assist learners who have a disability, specific physical, learning, psychological or sensory impairment or serious medical condition to successfully complete course requirements, while also ensuring that they experience equal opportunities relative to our other learners within the limits of reasonable accommodation. Learners must inform the College of any impairment they believe will affect their studies prior to beginning their studies. The College will address such concerns on a case by case basis ensuring fairness and equal opportunities are maintained.

The College's draft Disability Support Policy can be found in the Appendices.

Student Admissions

The College continues to attract a critical mass of suitably qualified learners to new and existing programmes. The target learner population includes those interested in working in the caring professions and/or professions related to psychology. The target learner population includes those already in the caring professions (e.g. counsellors, allied health care professionals, educators, social and community workers etc.), who wish to gain knowledge and expertise in counselling and related psychological motifs to apply enhanced skills in their existing occupations.

Other target groups are those who wish to change career, or recommence employment after some absence. The College aims to provide equal opportunities for all applicants and is conscious of its social inclusion obligations. Learners with a variety of physical and other impairments are welcomed, provided they can meet the demands of the selected programme of study and conform to the protocols and procedures outlined in our draft Disability Support Policy.

Candidates are selected via application and interview process, ensuring that entry requirements for both undergraduate and post-graduate are met.

Teaching Methods

PCI College is committed to delivering innovative teaching methods by recognising and promulgating best teaching practices. Academic support of the learner begins with the teaching process and is enhanced with a range of online training and educational supports e.g. videos, tools, templates and library resources. The College aims to provide the necessary resources for effective teaching to take place. Learners are exposed to an exciting, innovative, engaging and varied mix of learning modes (e.g., lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, skills-practice, self-paced online instruction videos etc.). Regular progress-feedback to learners together with timely and appropriate responses to completed coursework is a feature of programme delivery in the College.

Human Resources

It is College policy to employ qualified and committed staff sufficient to support its education mission. Every effort is made to recruit and retain the staff sufficient to ensure the delivery of a high-quality education service.

A key criterion for the employment of teaching staff is their ability to employ teaching methods appropriate to the requirements of programme delivery and learners' needs. Through its staff appraisal process and otherwise, the College is committed to appropriate staff induction, training and ongoing development (as set out in the Employee Handbook) and specifically, in relation to academic staff, to the training of staff to improve the quality of teaching provided by them. (See Section P).

Physical Resources

The College endeavours to ensure that its premises, equipment and facilities meet the needs of a third level institution. Learners, directly or through their Class Representatives, and members of staff make their wishes and concerns known to the TLA. (See Section R)

Section D: College Board

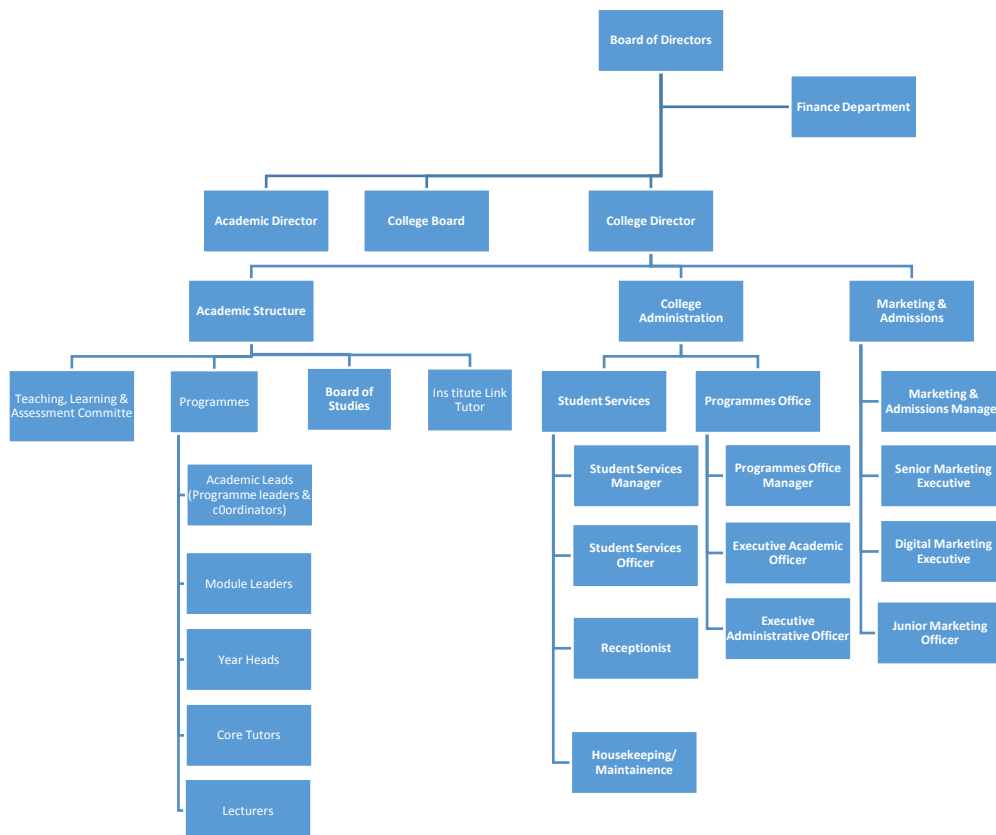
The College Board manages and controls the overall business affairs of the College. The College provides such courses of study as the College Board considers appropriate, aligned with the mission and vision of the institution. The College Board approves annual programmes and budgets, and determines the numbers of staff to be employed and the terms and conditions of employment relating to those retained/contracted staff. Membership of the College Board includes:

- Academic Director
- College Director
- Financial Director

The College Board is assisted in its deliberations as required by relevant administrative departments and by academic programme leaders.

PCI College Organisation Structure

The following organisation chart is a visual (functional delivery) representation of the college’s structure. This is not a line-management chart, but is reflective of the overall functional design of the institution.



Section E: College Management

The management team of PCI College plays a key role in the development and maintenance of a QA culture by ensuring the effective implementation of the procedures outlined in this Manual. By proactively fostering an ethos of QA, management endeavours to ensure that QA becomes an integral part of all College activities.

Senior management team

The senior management team consists of:

- Academic Director
- Financial Director
- College Director
- Marketing & Admissions Manager
- Academic Leads

The senior management team meets monthly. Procedures for the preparation, delivery, and matters arising from the meetings have been agreed and include; formal minute-taking; formal communication of decisions taken and actions proposed, and review of previous actions/decisions. Each Management Board meeting is provided with a progress report on actions from the previous meeting.

Academic Director

The Academic Director provides overall oversight and guidance on all matters concerning the College's academic programmes, including, *inter alia*, the ongoing quality of existing courses, the development and implementation of new programmes, academic standards and policies and the quality of teaching and learning.

Financial Director

The Financial Director is a member of the Board of Directors and College Board and is responsible for the preparation of annual statutory accounts, tax returns, and the provision of financial reports. The Financial Director is responsible for cash-flow, budget monitoring, maintenance, and development of financial control procedures and the management of the payroll system of the College.

College Director

The College Director has responsibility for directing the operation of the business of the college. This involves managing staff, projects and business programmes; leadership; QA; communications and all aspect of the day-to-day operation of the institution. As a member of the senior management team, he/she works closely with the Senior Managers and the academic team. The College Director provides leadership for the development, delivery and ongoing improvement of the Colleges' products and services. They are responsible for Human Resources matters, for the legal affairs of the College and for arranging the necessary insurances.

Marketing & Admissions Manager

The Marketing & Admissions Manager is responsible for the provision of information to potential students on courses, developing ideas for new courses, production of Course Brochures (as well as the annual Prospectus), advertising of College programmes, and establishing links with professional bodies and community groups.

Academic Leads

The College currently has several academic leads – Programme Leaders [B.Sc. (Hons.) in Counselling & Psychotherapy, Certificate in Counselling & Psychotherapy, Masters in Child and Adolescent Counselling and Psychotherapy, Advanced Diploma in Supervision] and Masters Programmes Academic Lead and Co-ordinator (interim). These positions include responsibility for the leadership, development and day-to-day academic management of programmes within their remit and for the setting and maintenance of academic standards within these programmes. A key aspect of the role is the development of new and complementary programmes.

Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee (TLA)

Formerly known as 'The Academic Council', the TLA has two main functions:

- To oversee the management and operation of existing academic and professional programmes and those which are in development.
- To protect, maintain, and develop the standards and quality of academic and professional courses provided by the College.

The membership of the TLA consists of:

- The Committee Chair (rotating)
- Academic Director (ex officio)
- College Director
- Programme Leaders
- PCI College Link Tutor
- Executive Academic Officer
- Ad-hoc stakeholders as required by the agenda

The TLA plays a pivotal role in developing and maintaining the College's QA procedures. The Chair of the TLA acts as the representative of the Committee at formal College meetings (e.g. Board of Studies and Board of Assessment). The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the Committee meets regularly (at least six times per year) and that the Committee fulfils its obligations regarding safeguarding the standards of the design, delivery and ongoing improvement of College programmes.

Additional members may be invited to participate in the TLA due to specific knowledge, skills or experience and are drawn from the employee base of PCI College.

A quorum of four members is required to run a TLA session.

1. Key Responsibilities

The TLA plays a pivotal role in developing and maintaining the College's quality assurance procedures.

2. TLA Chair

The Chair of the TLA acts as the representative of the Committee at formal College meetings e.g. Board of Studies and Board of Assessment. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the Committee meets regularly (at least three times per year) and that the Committee fulfils its obligations regarding safeguarding the standards of the design, delivery and assessment of College programmes.

3. Executive Academic Officer

The Executive Academic Officer of the TLA has the responsibility of ensuring that decisions made by the Committee are implemented. Individuals and/or sub-committees of the Committee may be directed from time to time to pursue projects or actions specified by the Committee. Such sub-committees are disbanded when their work is completed. The 'New Programmes Committee' is an example of a sub-committee that is formed for a specific task and then disbanded – See Section F 3.8.

4. TLA Procedures – High level

- 4.1. In advance of each sitting of the TLA, minutes from the prior meeting are circulated to all participants.
- 4.2. Meetings are scheduled for the entire year, in advance and confirmed at each meeting.
- 4.3. At the start of each meeting, the chair is appointed and summarises the work on that sessions' agenda. Any other business is requested from participants. Absent members are read into the record of the meeting.
- 4.4. Minutes of the prior meeting are formally reviewed and approved, or issues addressed and revisions written into the minutes of the current session.
- 4.5. Agenda items are worked through with resulting decisions, actions or rolled-over to the next meeting. All affected departments and stakeholders outside of the TLA are informed by action (owners of actions are noted in the minutes).
- 4.6. The meeting adjourns following conclusion of the order of business for the session.
- 4.7. The date of the next meeting is confirmed.

All decisions of the Committee are recorded in the Minutes of its meetings. Committee decisions are communicated to the relevant stakeholders.

Section F: New Programme Design & Validation

The procedures outlined below guide staff and external assessors involved in the College's system of approval and validation of new academic programmes. These procedures and guidelines also apply to any significant changes to existing programmes.

1. Purpose

The purpose of these procedures and guidelines is to ensure that any proposed programme:

- a) Is consistent with the College's Mission and Values Statement and contributes to achieving the College's aims and objectives
- b) Offers a valuable educational experience to learners
- c) Complies with Middlesex University standards and is comparable with the policies and procedures of equivalent Irish H.E. awarding bodies i.e. QQI.
- d) Where necessary, takes account of the criteria of the relevant accreditation bodies in the field of Counselling and Psychotherapy i.e. IACP.

2. Scope

This document refers to all stages in the development of new programme proposals, from initial stage through to approval by the College, where the College has the power to make its own awards, and validation by Middlesex University or other external validating bodies.

The process of design, approval and validation of new courses involves some or all the following:

- a) TLA
- b) Academic Lead/Link Tutor
- c) College Board
- d) Management Board
- e) Marketing
- f) A proposer, individual, or group
- g) A developer, individual, or group, that may or may not be the proposer
- h) Academic Committee of external Validating body (e.g. Middlesex University)
- i) Programme Leader
- j) Lecturer Team to deliver the course
- k) Panel from Validating Body (e.g. Middlesex University)
- l) Professional Accreditation Bodies (e.g., Irish Association for Counselling and psychotherapy (IACP), National Association for Pastoral Counselling and Psychotherapy, Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI))

3. Proposals for new programmes

- 3.1. Proposals for new programmes can originate with many sources. These include proposals for new courses, proposals for changing existing courses, and proposals for discontinuing existing courses.
- 3.2. Proposals are considered both on their own merit and within the framework of the overall vision and policy of the College.

- 3.3. The most frequent sources for proposals on course developments/new programmes are likely to be academic staff of the College, the Directors/Managers of the College, and requests from professional bodies and community groups.
 - 3.4. The College requires the proposer of a new programme to submit an outline of the programme for approval prior to the development of a full submission. The outline proposal should include evidence of the following:
 - Demand from certain professions and/or groups in society
 - Demand from prospective students
 - Admission criteria
 - Aims and learning outcomes at the programme level (general details)
 - Programme design – a broad outline of proposed modules, learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methodologies
 - Programme schedule - proposed contact hours and level of award
 - Resources – accommodation, staffing, administration
 - Where the programme fits in to the menu of courses already offered by the College
 - 3.5. The outline proposal is submitted from Marketing to the Academic Director or his/her delegate in the first instance. The Academic Director or his/her delegate will bring the proposal to Senior Management, the College Board, and finally the TLA for consideration.
 - 3.6. The College Board examines the outline proposal in terms of the College's plans, taking in to account current resources. The College Board compiles a short report which is forwarded, together with the outline proposal, to the TLA.
 - 3.7. The Management Board examines the outline of the proposed course in terms of its implications for the Student Services and for Professional Development. A short report is forwarded to the TLA.
 - 3.8. The TLA, having considered the outline of the proposed course and taking cognisance of the reports from the College Board and from the Management Board may reject the proposal, may seek further clarification from the proposer or proceed to establish sub-committees to advance the proposal through the next stages of the internal approval process. This sub-committee is known as the Steering Committee. It consists of a representative of the college management board), the Proposer of the new programme, the Link Tutor to the proposed validating or accrediting body, a representative from both Marketing and Programmes Office. An Academic Committee is appointed and made up of an Academic Lead, senior lecturers, subject experts and practitioners who will develop the academic modules. The members appointed will have experience/expertise in the subject matter of study outlined in the proposed new programme.
 - 3.9. The Steering Committee will keep track of progress and ensure that the proposed programme integrates into existing structures, or where appropriate, designate further resources.
4. Stages in the development of the proposal for validation
 - 4.1. **Internal Approval**

- 4.1.1. For programmes seeking external validation, the arrangements for the preparation of the submission for programme approval will be determined through a consultation process involving the Link Tutor, the Proposer, and relevant senior members of teaching staff who are members of the Academic Committee.
- 4.1.2. While the research, preparatory work, and drafting may be shared, one member of the committee normally assumes an Academic Lead and co-ordinating role.

4.2. Proposed Programme Content

- 4.2.1. The procedures and guidelines for the design and approval of new programmes must be rigorous and effective to develop coherent new programmes of study. Effective procedures and guidelines smooth the internal approval and external validation processes and bring about programmes that are amenable to effective monitoring and review.
- 4.2.2. The following points are to be addressed in the design of new programmes:
 - Compatibility with the PCI College's Mission and Values Statement
 - Impact on programmes currently offered by the College
 - The intended aims and learning outcomes of the programme
 - Whether the programme is consistent with the requirements of the relevant validating bodies
 - Demand for graduates of this programme, the opportunities that graduation offers learners, and the demand for the programme from a sufficient cohort of appropriately qualified learners
 - The level of the programme, the degree to which the programme challenges the learner, and where the programme sits within the College's framework as well as that of the National Framework of Qualifications
 - Mode of delivery of the programme and the time to complete the programme
 - The development of the curriculum as the learner's progress through the programme
 - Resources necessary and available to run the programmes – accommodation available and required, staff available and required, administrative staff available and required, equipment available and required, library and information technology resources available and required, staff development required for delivery of the proposed programme
 - An award title at a level in keeping with the intended learning outcomes and duration of the programme
 - Sufficient emphasis on promoting the intended learning outcomes; details showing how learners will demonstrate the achievement of these learning outcomes together with the means of assessing these outcomes
 - An appropriate balance regarding the breadth and depth of the curriculum and the academic and practical requirements of the programme
 - The personal development of the learner is central to PCI College programmes and balanced carefully with the intended academic outcomes of the programme

- The appropriateness of the total contact hours and the breakdown of these hours into lectures, practical, placements etc.
- The workload of the learner in terms of assessment requirements, reading, research, study, client work, supervision, personal therapy etc.
- The design process begins with specifying course Aims and Learning Outcomes.

4.3. Statement of Programme Aims

The course aims are normally general in nature and reflect the overall purpose of the course. The aims indicate the flavour and direction of the course. The formulation of the course aims is fundamental to the development of the more specific module aims. It is important that what is outlined in the course aims is carried forward into the module aims.

Because of the general nature of aims it can be difficult to confirm that the course and subject aims have been met. Aims on their own are not sufficient to convey to the lecturers or the learners what the intended learning is.

4.4. Definition of Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes for each module reflect the cognitive content and skills content to be attained. Learning outcomes are written in terms of what the learner will be able to do on completion of the module. It is important in writing learning outcomes that cognisance is taken not only of what a successful learner will be able to do but also care must be taken that this behaviour is measurable where possible. The verbs used in each learning outcome should be appropriate to the level of the module.

4.5. Programme Assessment Determinants

Learning outcomes drive the assessment procedures; assessment procedures are designed to assess the learning outcomes in as realistic a way as possible. Assessment criteria are developed that take into consideration the learning outcomes, course and module content, together with the level of the programme. The assessment of new programmes will be in line with the procedures and guidelines for the assessment of learners as outlined in Section J of this manual.

4.6. Progressing Programme Approval

The Academic and Steering Committees are charged with the task of progressing the approved outline proposal into a full programme and addressing the proposed programme under the following headings:

- Aims
- Learning Outcomes
- Syllabus
- Teaching/Learning Methodologies
- Assessment Methodologies
- Time Allocation
- Resources
- Curriculum Vitae of Staff

- Draft Course Schedule
- Level of Programme
- Balance of Academic and Practical
- Personal Development of the Learner
- Programme Title and award Title
- Compliance with Middlesex University Standards or QQI standards
- Access, Transfer and Progression

4.7. The Academic Director or his/her delegate provides timely updates on new programme proposals to meetings of the TLA meetings of the College Board.

4.8. When the Steering Committee and Academic Committee are satisfied that the new course proposal document meets the requirements of the College and any relevant validating bodies (e.g. Middlesex University) Academic Director or his/her delegate, presents the document to the relevant external validating body for approval.

4.9. External Validation

4.9.1. Once a programme has been approved by an external validating body, a Validation date is set, and a panel convened. This is chaired and organised by the validating body who liaises with the college via the Link Tutor.

4.9.2. The College Board considers any recommendations from the Validating Panel that have College wide implications and pass their suggestions back to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee considers all other recommendations from the validating body and passes their suggestions back to the TLA.

4.9.3. The Link Tutor/ Academic Lead liaises with the Chairperson of the Panel of Assessors, on behalf of the Steering Committee, to ensure that the issues raised by the Panel have been addressed.

4.9.4. The TLA monitors adherence to the conditions of course approval up to the completion of the new programme by the first cohort of learners.

5. Budgets

The Financial Director, in conjunction with the College Board and the Management Board, prepares budgets to cover the cost of running existing courses, introduction of new courses as well as any significant amendments to existing courses.

6. Prospectus

Preparation of the College Prospectus is a matter for the Marketing & Admissions Manager in consultation with the College Board and the Management Board of the College. Management ensures that the prospectus:

- Does not include a course which has not been properly and fully approved
- Gives an accurate description of each course on offer considering that it represents the offer part of a potential contract
- Contains entry conditions as determined by the College authorities

Section G: Ongoing Programme Monitoring

The procedures and guidelines outlined below are a guide to all staff and learners involved in the ongoing monitoring of programmes. This monitoring process relates to the programme and not to the progress of individual learners on these programmes.

1. Purpose

The purpose of these procedures and guidelines is:

- To ensure that processes exist for the gathering and consideration of information that can be used to improve the delivery of programmes
- To ensure that programmes remain current and continue to meet their stated aims
- To monitor the degree to which learners meet the intended learning outcomes of the programmes and the extent to which the assessment mechanisms are appropriate
- To contribute to the development of a quality culture in which all participants are aware of their respective roles and that actions are taken to address any observed weaknesses in the programmes
- To position the monitoring of programmes within a framework of systematic periodic reviews.

2. Scope

This document refers to the ongoing monitoring of programmes validated by the College and by any relevant validating bodies (e.g. Middlesex University)

3. Nature of monitoring

- 3.1 Monitoring programmes involves the ongoing examination of the delivery and assessment of programmes.
- 3.2 The experience gained from delivering the programmes is to be evaluated in the context of the programmes' aims.
- 3.3 This examination of the programmes is to focus on the delivery and assessment of modules and the needs of learners.
- 3.4 The Programme Leader has overall responsibility for the completion of the Annual Monitoring Report for each programme and for overseeing changes that are identified in advance of the proceeding programme instance. No significant changes may be made to a programme during an instance without the consent of the relevant validation and accreditation bodies.
- 3.5 The Programme Leader finalises the Annual Monitoring Report for the previous academic year in time for consideration by the TLA at its winter meeting.

4. Student Representatives

- 4.1 Each class cohort in each venue elects a Student Representative each year. His/her function is twofold – to bring issues of concern within their cohort to the attention of the

College, and to act as a conduit through which the College can communicate with that cohort. The Student Representative also contributes feedback from his/her class at the Board of Studies meeting held twice a year. (See Obtaining Learner Feedback - Section L)

- 4.2 The College responds attends to issues raised by Student Representatives at the Board of Studies meetings. These are typically responded to by the year head, programme leader etc., and those items which are not resolved will be documented and attended to in advance of the next Board of Studies. Important updates from this process are described in the Annual Monitoring Report where significant actions taken, and actions planned to be undertaken, are listed.

5. Survey of students

- 5.1 It is a College requirement that learners are given the opportunity to appraise each module anonymously. At the end of each module, students are invited to complete an End of Module Feedback Form. Completed forms are put into a sealed envelope by the Student Representative and returned to the College. The feedback forms are sent to the Year Head and the original is filed. At the end of the academic year, feedback is offered in summary form to the lecturer to recognise their positive comments and highlight any areas for improvement.
- 5.2 Core Tutors, in their student Progression Review Meetings (Note: there could be none, one or two meetings each year depending on the enrolled programme) gather information regarding the progress of students and their interactions with the lecturers and the course. Discussion of issues pertaining to the student's progression through the programme is a vital part of this process. Outcomes and tracking information collected at the meeting is communicated to the Year Head for that student and he/she, in turn, actions relevant feedback.
- 5.3 The appraisal of programmes by learners is a central part in the ongoing monitoring of programmes. The Annual Monitoring Report reflects the learners' appraisal of the programme. The Report details any revisions to be undertaken to overcome any opportunities for improvement to the programmes offered by the College.
- 5.4 Having examined the completed End of Module Feedback forms, the reports from Student Representatives and the Core Tutor Reports, the Programme Leader and the Year Heads consider what action to take to remedy any identified deficiencies.

Dissatisfaction with the delivery of a module, the year or the overall programme is shepherded to resolution by the Programme Leader.

Dissatisfaction with other departments will be brought to the attention of the TLA by the Programme Leader and the respective department head to be rectified.

Matters relating to the care of students themselves are referred to the Year Head and Core Tutor. In all cases a report of the actions taken to deal with the identified difficulties is recorded in the student record and/or progression tracking sheet.

6. External Examiners Report

- 6.1 An External Examiner is appointed by Middlesex University in consultation with PCI College.
 - 6.2 The External Examiner's report provides important information for consideration at TLA and by the College Board. (See Section M for a more detailed account of the procedures for the appointment of an External Examiner and the criteria for making such an appointment).
7. Lecturing staff feedback
- 7.1 At least once in each semester a meeting of all lecturing staff is held to review the various programmes being taught in that year and is designed to solicit feedback on delivery strengths and weaknesses, college management, college organisation and the resources and services in place to support delivery. Each programme is open to input/critique/improvement at these meetings.

The Programme Leader takes whatever steps are necessary to address changes identified at these meetings (usually via the TLA).
 - 7.2 Feedback given by lecturing staff is very important to the ongoing monitoring of programmes. The Annual Monitoring Report will reflect staff input appropriately.

Section H: New Programme Evaluation (PE)

The following procedures/guidelines support all stakeholders involved in Programme Evaluation (PE) to adequately assess and feedback new programmes at the end of the first cycle of a new programme or at the time of programme re-validation.

1. Purpose of PE

The purpose of these procedures and guidelines is to ensure that each Programme Evaluation:

- Improves the quality of the programmes
- Ensures programmes remain current and continue to offer a valuable educational experience to the learner
- Ensures that both the academic and external market needs of the learner are satisfied
- Is cognisant of the National Framework of Qualifications (Ireland & UK)
- Complies with all the requirements of the relevant external validating bodies
- Contributes to the development of a quality culture in which all stakeholders are aware of their respective roles and that actions are taken to address observed weaknesses in programmes

2. Regular PE

- 2.1 Each programme will be the subject of regular evaluation, once every five years or as required by the relevant validating body of that programme.
- 2.2 There are two distinct elements to Programme Evaluation (PE); an internal element and an external element. The internal element of a PE comprises a self-evaluation of the programme(s); a plan for the subsequent five years and a revised programme document. The external element of a PE entails external experts considering the evidence of the self-evaluation and conducting their own evaluation of the revised programme documents and plans.
- 2.3 In evaluating a programme the focus is on the effectiveness of the programme in meeting its stated aims, and on the success of the learners in achieving the intended learning outcomes. The accumulation of the data from the annual monitoring process, detailed in Section G, is fundamental to the self-evaluation. Feedback from learners is a pivotal component.
- 2.4 College procedures for the assessment of learners (See Section J) are important for both the self-evaluation stage and in the development of a revised programme document

3. Aims of a PE

- 3.1 To review the continuing validity of a programme's aims and the stated learning outcomes.
- 3.2 PE is undertaken in two stages – an internal phase and an external phase – to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and assessment in relation to the intended learning outcomes.

- 3.3 A PE reviews the development of a programme over the previous five-year cycle, with particular emphasis on evaluating whether or not the programme has met its educational objectives.
- 3.4 Through PE an updated programme document is developed, detailing revised aims and learning outcomes, revised course schedules revised syllabi and a revised assessment plan.
- 3.5 Proposed new courses will be evaluated separately in accordance with the College's internal procedures and guidelines for the design and validation of new programmes as outlined in Section F.

4. Objectives of a PE

The overall objectives of a PE are as follows;

- To analyse the effectiveness of each of the approved programmes.
- Review the development of programmes being provided, with due regard to the views of education interests, professional bodies, market demand etc.
- To evaluate the physical resources and facilities provided by the College for the delivery of programmes.
- Evaluate the College's flexibility in responding to market requirements and educational developments.
- To evaluate the formal links the College has established with professions, state and semi-state organisations, and the wider community to maintain the relevance of its courses and to professional and statutory standards.
- To evaluate the College's projections and plans for the coming five-year cycle.
- To detail how identified deficiencies in the programme will be addressed.
- To develop a revised programme document cognisant of the views of relevant stakeholders.

5. Content of a PE

The result of the internal evaluation of programmes is contained in a Report on the Internal Evaluation of Programmes (RIEP). It provides information under the following headings in respect of the programmes being reviewed.

- 5.1 Internal College Academic Processes: This section sets out the mechanisms whereby changes in proposed programmes are processed through the internal College's academic structure including Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee. The process by which the self-evaluation was conducted and the programme revisions arrived at must be detailed in the documentation.
- 5.2 Learner Throughput: Enrolment and assessment statistics for the previous three years will be provided per course by Student Services or the Programmes Office (as appropriate). These statistics describe student withdrawals, retention and assessment performance in appropriate detail.
- 5.3 Review of Course Design: A brief description of the development of each course, highlighting any changes implemented or proposed, is provided. In addition, this section

includes the course schedule in operation at the time of the previous review together with course schedules being proposed as part of the current PE.

- 5.4 Assessment: The procedures in place for the assessment of learners are documented. The assessment of learners is examined in terms of whether they:
- Are fair and consistent and comply with standards determined by the College and validating bodies.
 - Are in keeping with the National Framework of Qualifications
 - Are effective in measuring the learners' attainment of the intended learning outcomes
 - Contribute to the total learning experience, and
 - Encourage creativity and originality in demonstrating achievement of the intended learning outcomes
- 5.5 Transfers: PCI College facilitates, where possible, the transfer of learners from other colleges whose programmes are sufficiently like those offered by PCI College. This is determined via formal application by the prospective student and accompanying course comparison documentation.
- 5.6 Review of Facilities: A description of the most significant developments is provided. This indicates any facilities that have been phased out and any new facilities that have been installed in terms of physical space and equipment since the previous PE. Any projected enhancement of facilities over the succeeding five years is outlined.
- 5.7 Deployment and Development of Academic Staff: Details of staff appointments over the previous three years, of projections for the succeeding five years and of staff deployment within the College are provided. Curricula vitae of staff appointed since the previous review is provided in addition to any developments in existing staff curricula vitae.
- 5.8 Links with the Wider Community: The purpose of this section is to establish the extent to which the College is actively engaged in monitoring developments in the world of work and the wider community to maintain a high degree of relevance in its courses. The College also examines its programmes against the relevant offerings of other higher education institutions.
- 5.9 Course Delivery Methodologies: Information in relation to teaching strategies and methodologies as well as the use of technology is provided.
- 5.10 Development Plan: A plan for the College's programme for the succeeding five years is included.
- 5.11 Programme Document: The revised aims and general learning outcomes, revised course schedule, revised syllabi, and a revised assessment plan is presented for each programme.
- 5.12 Revised Programme Titles and Award Titles: Any revised award title is to be consistent with the named awards determined by the College, and by any relevant validating body (e.g. Middlesex University) The programme title should be clear, accurate, and succinct to accurately inform prospective learners and other stakeholders.

5.13 Access, Transfer and Progression: Revised programmes incorporate the procedures for access, transfer and progression. Consistent with College policy, and accepting validating body guidelines, several access and entry points are accommodated.

6. Report on the internal evaluation of programmes (RIEP)

6.1 In the second semester of the third year of a five-year cycle, the Programme Leader adds a TLA agenda item to schedule a rigorous programme evaluation phase. The process to achieve this evaluation is agreed and the responsible parties named as well as a timeframe for completion of the work. The evaluation process will include the following:

- A review of the Annual Monitoring Reports of the three previous years to identify areas of on-going concern
- A report from the Student Representatives of each class
- A report from Programme Leaders, with feedback from their lecturing teams
- A report from the Year Head, with feedback from the team of Core Tutors.
- A library report provided by the Executive Academic Officer
- A report from the Student Services Manager
- A Professional Development report provided by the Programme Leaders
- A report from the Supervision & Placement Co-ordinator

6.2 Each of the above reports will contain:

- Aspects of the work that have been successful
- Changes that have occurred that were either positive or negative
- Aspects that have not been successful and appropriate corrective actions
- Proposals for change/improvements in the next cycle

6.3 The TLA establishes an Evaluation Committee consisting of several members of the Committee and several senior lecturers, to review the reports listed above.

6.4 Having reviewed the reports listed above the members of the Evaluation Committee conduct meetings report authors to clarify, elucidate, and challenge the contents of the reports with their authors. The Evaluation Committee examines all aspects of College provision:

- Entry requirements
- Interview criteria
- Fees
- Orientation of learners
- Content of modules
- Delivery of modules
- Assessment of modules
- Accommodation
- Library
- Student Services
- Student Care
- Progression
- Placements
- Supervision

- Therapy
- Client work
- Requirements of any relevant validating bodies (e.g. Middlesex University)

- 6.5 The Evaluation Committee provides a report to the TLA on the progress being made.
- 6.6 The Evaluation Committee issues a draft of the Report on the Internal Evaluation of Programmes (RIEP) and presents it to the TLA and to the College Board in October of year five of the cycle.
- 6.7 The College Board examines the draft RIEP considering the implications of the report on resource planning for the next cycle. The Board compiles a response to the draft RIEP and the Programme Leader presents this response to the next meeting of the TLA.
- 6.8 The TLA considers the draft RIEP and the response of the College Board to the draft. When the TLA, the Evaluation Committee and the College Board are satisfied that the draft meets the College's requirements and the requirements of any relevant validating bodies ((e.g. Middlesex University)the report is then adopted by the TLA as the final Report on the Internal Evaluation of Programmes. The completion of a RIEP is the culmination of the self-evaluation process. The TLA completes the process by appointing an External Evaluator(s) to examine the RIEP.

7. The External Phase of Programme Evaluation

- 7.1 Programme Leaders facilitate visits by the External Evaluators' to the College as they consider the content of the RIEP. The External Evaluator examines the RIEP with respect to; College policies and procedures; validating body requirements and procedures in relation to access, transfer and progression.
- 7.2 The content for a PE, outlined in paragraph 5 above, states the criteria against which the External Evaluators measure the RIEP and conduct their own assessment.
- 7.3 The External Evaluators present an interim report to the Programme Leader. Recommendations are split into a) matters for consideration at course level and b) matters for consideration at College level.
- 7.4 The Programme Leader brings the report of the External Evaluator to the attention of the TLA and the College Board.
- 7.5 The TLA addresses the External Evaluators' recommendations on course issues.
- 7.6 The College Board considers any recommendations that have College-wide implications.
- 7.7 The Board's response to the interim report of the External Evaluator is brought to the attention of the TLA.
- 7.8 The Programme Leader, on behalf of the TLA and College Board, brings the responses of the College Board and the TLA to the attention of the External Evaluators for consideration.

- 7.9 If the External Evaluators need to meet again with College staff, the Programme Leader facilitates the required meeting(s).
- 7.10 The External Evaluators complete a final report. The TLA considers this final report and may request additional changes to the document.
- 7.11 Where the TLA recommends signature of the report, the Programme Leader completes a Certificate of Programme Validation, typically for another five-year cycle.
- 7.12 Certificates of Programme Validation are placed on the agenda of the College Board. The Programme Leader, following consultation with senior staff members flags any resource issues (resulting from programme revisions) to the attention of the College Board.
- 7.13 The TLA will consult and adjudicate on issues arising relating to conditions of approval to ensure adherence to requirements set by the validating body.

Section I: General Admission Guidelines

1. Introduction

The procedures and guidelines outlined below guide all staff, student representatives, external specialists and other stakeholders involved in the practices and principles of admission and enrolment onto College Programmes.

Potential candidates are selected via online application process and are then required to attend for interview. The interview panel consists of two core faculty and one administrative personnel.

Candidates are scored according to answers on prescribed questions. Where indicated, candidates must submit original certificates and/or transcripts for scrutiny by the interview panel. References are also sought.

2. International Students

PCI College accepts applications from EEA/EU nationals. The College cannot aid individuals from outside the EEA/EU to obtain student visas.

3. Assessment of Prior Learning

3.1. Applied Prior Certified Learning (APCL): The College offers upgrade options to students with the required applied prior certified learning (APCL). This gives students the opportunity to be exempt from completing modules on certain courses. It is the student's responsibility to make the initial request for APCL and to provide evidence of this prior certified learning within the timescale dictated by the College. The College assesses APCL on a case by case basis comparing the content covered, the academic level of this content and assessment difficulty. The College reserves the right to refuse APCL requests if the evidence provided by the student does not indicate an equivalent level of prior learning. The College may request a student completes catch-up pieces to satisfy the course requirements as a condition of APCL.

4. Overseas Qualifications

EEA/EU nationals with qualifications from other countries will be accepted as long as the qualification is equivalent to the Irish Leaving Certificate examination. This is applicable to courses which require the Leaving Certificate examination as a condition of entry. The student will still need to have sufficient visa and immigration cover as outlined above as an admission condition.

5. English Language

Students are required to complete all coursework and communicate with the College in English. Therefore, it is required that all students demonstrate oral and written competency with the English language. Students will not be given a dispensation for assignments or other course work due to poor language skills. The College assesses a student's suitability based on completion of an application form and attending an interview. All paperwork must be completed by the learner themselves and not a third-party or family member so that College staff can assess the student's language competency. If required the College may also request certified evidence of proficiency with the English language. An acceptable method of

certification is via a recognised English language test e.g. The Cambridge English Language Assessment.

6. Proficiency with Information Technology (IT)

All students are required to be confident users of IT equipment including computers and computer software with emphasis on the Microsoft Office product suite (or their equivalent on other operating systems). Written assignments in the APA Style require learners to understand formatting, indentation, pagination, managing header and footer content as well as the various nuances of styling text to comply with the requirements of this academic writing standard. No training is provided by the College in the use of word processing or other tools/platforms as a minimum proficiency is expected on entry to a programme. Extensive support however is provided (including tools and templates) for training adult learners in academic writing (including applying the APA Style).

In addition to face to face contact, all courses provided by the College utilise an online learning environment called the 'Student Portal'. All students (except for those enrolled on programmes where the Student Portal is not required e.g. The Foundation in Counselling Programme) are allocated a student email address.

Once allocated, the assigned College email addresses becomes the primary means of communicating important information to adult learners.

It is the student's responsibility to acquire the necessary confidence with IT prior to commencing a course with the College.

Proficiency with IT skills are explored during the interview process.

Section J: Assessment of Learners

The procedures outlined below guide all staff with responsibilities for learner assessment. The document is also relevant to all staff and external assessors involved in the assessment of adult learners enrolled on College Programmes.

1. Purpose

The purpose of these procedures and guidelines is to ensure that the College operates assessment methods that:

- Are fair and consistent and comply with standards determined by the College, any relevant validating and professional accreditation bodies
- Comply with the standards in respect of the National Framework of Qualifications
- Are effective in measuring the learner's attainment of the intended learning outcomes
- Provide feedback to the learner, enabling the learner to improve his/her performance
- Contribute positively to the total learning experience and to achieving the intended learning outcomes
- Encourage creativity and originality in demonstrating achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

2. Scope

This document refers to part-time courses offered by PCI College where the College has responsibility for curriculum development and delivery, and the assessment of learners.

3. Introduction

3.1. The impact of assessment on student learning cannot be over emphasised. It is well recognised that how students learn and what students learn is very significantly influenced by the assessment mechanisms employed.

3.2. The procedures and guidelines outlined here focus, for the most part, on developing and maintaining an assessment process. The relevant content of this process is reflected in the relevant Programme Handbook and ancillary documents.

4. The language of module submissions

4.1. It is important to distinguish between formative assignments and summative assessments.

Formative assignments are designed to have benefits for both learning and teaching but does not contribute to an overall mark. A formative assignment offers students an opportunity to receive feedback on their understanding and integration of module material. This assignment usually occurs at the midway point of module delivery. Summative assessments are required to provide a measureable and comparable indicator of a learner's knowledge and skills.

With a summative assessment, the learner's performance is measured against the prescribed learning outcomes.

- 4.2. Desirable characteristics of an assessment instrument are the power to discriminate, objectivity in scoring, validity and reliability.

Discriminate: It is important that assessment recognises the different levels of achievement of the learners. A test or assignment that is too easy will not reflect the greater achievement of the excellent learner relative to the less proficient learner.

Objectivity: An objective assessment instrument yields the same result, irrespective of who marks the work.

Validity: In assessment terms validity means the extent to which the assessment instrument measures what it is supposed to measure.

Reliability: Reliability in assessment means the degree to which the assessment instrument consistently measures what it is supposed to measure.

5. PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT AND LEARNER FEEDBACK

- 5.1. Assessment instruments are designed with learner feedback in mind. It should be evident to the learners why they obtained the mark they did. It should also be clear to the learner how his/her grade could be improved upon. The feedback identifies the learner's strengths and weaknesses without damaging his/her self-esteem. (See Essay Comment Sheet, Appendix C)
- 5.2. The learner is made aware of both how and when the assessment judgement will be made known.
- 5.3. It is a College requirement that, in designing new programmes and in the review of existing programmes, the rationale for the various assessment methods is examined and the provision of assessment feedback is adequately considered.

6. SCHEDULE OF ASSESSMENT

- 6.1. A schedule of assessment is an outline of the assessment requirements for the programme. The assessment schedule states the module title, the percentage of marks for the work, the date when the assessment will be handed out (usually early in the module) together with the date for handing in completed work – three weeks from module end date.
- 6.2. There is never more than one assessment due at any one time, unless a student is required to repeat a module or similar, however in Year 3, students will begin a new module with the assessment from the previous module due imminently.

7. ASSESSMENT AND ASSIGNMENT TECHNIQUES

The following assessment methods are used by the College to ascertain if the learner has achieved a satisfactory mastery of the learning objectives - written assignments, skills demonstrations, learner records/case studies, personal journals, presentations in class, art work, supervisor reports and group work.

8. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- 8.1. The following assessment methods are used by the College to ascertain if the learner has achieved the stated learning objectives - written assignments, skills demonstrations, learner records/case studies, presentations in class, and supervisor reports. In addition to these summative assessment techniques, the following techniques are also utilised to provide valuable insight for students on a formative level: personal journals/reflections, art work, group work etc.
- 8.2. Assessment criteria are to be closely aligned to the knowledge and skills that are the primary focus of a module. The assessment criteria must be aligned with the learning outcomes for the module being assessed.
- 8.3. The assessment criteria are to be clear to both learners and lecturers.
- 8.4. Assessment criteria are developed locally at course/module level, to take account of variations in subject content and the level of award.
- 8.5. Learners must retain a copy of submitted work.
- 8.6. Extensions of submission deadlines are not granted for any reason. If the completion and/or submission of a coursework is delayed for any reason learners must complete a Late Submission of Coursework Form (see Appendix D) and attach it to the late submission. In this form, they will state and describe the reasons for the lateness and where possible provide documented verification (e.g., a medical certificate). Note: the Mitigating Circumstances Form will not be processed in advance of a deadline nor will it be processed before the coursework has been submitted. It will be only processed once the late submission form and coursework have been received. This policy applies to all learners equally.

A formal mechanism for considering Late Submission of Coursework is in place and is described in the Mitigating Circumstances Procedure in Section T of this document. Responsibility for this process lies with the Executive Administrative Officer processing requests relating to a programme in consultation with the relevant Year Head and affected lecturer(s).

9. ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

- 9.1. Learners are expected to familiarise themselves with the following documents:
 - Regulations and procedures set out in this QA Manual
 - Programme Handbook for their programme of study
 - Rechecks, Reviews, and Appeals Procedures
 - Contents of the Academic Writing Knowledge Base
 - Roles & responsibilities of the Student Representative
- 9.2. Candidates must be familiar with relevant:
 - assessment schedule for their programme of study
 - type of assignment (formative/summative)
 - specific instructions to complete each assignment including due date

- penalties for work submitted late
 - procedures for submitting late work
 - grounds for mitigating circumstances
 - guidelines for referencing
 - guidelines for avoiding plagiarism
 - guidelines for writing in the APA Style
- 9.3. Where work is being submitted late, learners have the option to complete a Mitigating Circumstances form (See Appendix D) and if they are seeking mitigation of any penalties, they must provide supporting documentation (a full list of such grounds can be found in Appendix I).
- 9.4. When a Mitigating Circumstances form is received, it and any supporting documentation (e.g., medical certificate) will be considered by the Executive Administrative Officer. Where there are clear grounds for mitigation, the Executive Administrative Officer will arrange for the penalties to be waived. Where there are no clear grounds, the Executive Administrative Officer will reject the application and academic penalties will be applied.
- 9.5. Where late work is submitted after the designated deadline without a completed Mitigating Circumstances form or where the grounds have been deemed insufficient, learners will incur academic penalties on the assessment in question. Details of the academic penalties can be found in the Student Programme Handbook.

10. LEARNER RESPONSIBILITY

10.1. Learners are expected to:

- Ensure that they are correctly registered for assessments
 - Attend practical assessments
 - Complete all continuous assessment/assignment work as required
 - Immediately notify the relevant lecturer and the relevant Core Tutor of any absences from class
 - Comply with any College requirements for
 - o submitting late work, and
 - o avoiding plagiarism
 - o writing in the APA Style
 - o referencing
 - Retain a copy of submitted work
- 10.2. It is the responsibility of candidates to check the date, time and venue for each assessment as well as their college email regularly in case of emergency changes to scheduled programmes.

11. GENERAL REMARKS

- 11.1. Learners are expected to bring to the attention of the relevant lecturer, at the earliest possible opportunity, any ambiguity in the requirements of an assignment
- 11.2. Learners are expected to bring to the attention of the relevant lecturer, at the earliest possible opportunity, circumstances preventing them completing a prescribed assignment in the allotted time.

- 11.3. Where a physical, learning, psychological or sensory impairment, or, a serious medical condition may impair a student's ability to comply with the assessment standard, this information should be disclosed at interview to the programme so that the Disability Support Policy and Protocols can be followed. Late disclosure of an impairment affecting on-time, on-standard submission of work may seriously affect the student's grade.

12. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

- 12.1. Definitions are presented for plagiarism and cheating in the Assessment Regulations. The regulations also identify the procedures for dealing with incidents of alleged cheating. Procedures are in place for informing students about the College's regulations.
- 12.2. A policy on academic referencing, complying with the APA Style and effective citation is included in the learner's Academic Writing Guidelines. See Appendix.

13. Cheating:

- 13.1. The College defines the very serious academic offence of cheating as:

- a) Deliberate plagiarism which includes:
- i. Plagiarising published material.
 - ii. Plagiarising another student's work.
 - iii. Plagiarising work which was completed by the student as part of another assessment within the College or from an outside institution (self-plagiarism).
- b) Acting dishonestly in a way, whether before, during or after an assessment, to either obtain or offer to others, an unfair advantage in an assessment. This includes:
- i. Making false declarations to receive special dispensations for assessments.
 - ii. A student arranging for an assessment to be completed by another individual on their behalf.

- 13.2. Plagiarism: (See Appendix H for the Scale of Plagiarism Offences. This scale gives examples of low, moderate and high levels of plagiarism)

- 13.2.1. To assist adult learners to avoid Plagiarism, PCI College have implemented the industry standard PlagScan™ for all students with a PCI College assigned email address.

All summative assessment work must be submitted to PlagScan™ and achieve a maximum of an amber plagiarism level before submission through eSubmissions.

Students may submit work to PlagScan™ as many times as they wish until they are satisfied that they meet the prescribed standard for avoiding plagiarism.

- 13.2.2. PCI College will take serious action against any student who plagiarises whether through negligence, foolishness or deliberate intent. Taking unfair advantage of the work of other authors, learners or oneself through plagiarism is a serious offence.
- 13.2.3. Written material, ideas, theories, formulae, etc. must be acknowledged using quotation marks, references and bibliographies or reference lists. Essay writing in-class orientation and Academic Writing Guidelines, tools and templates are provided by the College in the Academic Writing Knowledge Base on the Student Portal. Learners are responsible for ensuring that they do not breach plagiarism guidelines.
- 13.2.4. Plagiarism – Low Seriousness: An examiner who suspects a case of plagiarism to be of low seriousness, will organise a face-to-face meeting with the student via email wherein the nature of the subject under discussion will be explicitly flagged. The appropriate Year Head and Programme Leader will be made aware of this action before it takes place. The purpose of the meeting will be to obtain an explanation from the student and provide advice about correct citation and how to avoid plagiarism in the future. The student may be required to resubmit the work without penalty. Where plagiarism is confirmed, an official record of the incident will be added to the student's record.
- 13.2.5. Plagiarism – Moderate Seriousness: An examiner who suspects a case of plagiarism to be of moderate seriousness, will refer the alleged instance for review by the relevant lecturer and year head (the student in question should be made aware by email that part of their work is under scrutiny for plagiarism). The Year Head will then organise a face-to-face meeting with the student in question via email wherein the nature of the subject under discussion will be explicitly flagged. Depending on how satisfactory the student's explanation is, the student may receive a verbal or written warning, will receive advice about correct citation and may be required to resubmit the work. A reduction of 4 will be applied to the resubmitted work. If a situation arises where deducting by 4 results in the student failing the assessment, the deduction should stop at grade 16. Where plagiarism is confirmed, an official record of the incident will be added to the student's record.
- 13.2.6. Plagiarism – High Seriousness: If the Year Head and Programme Leader deems a suspected case of plagiarism to be of high seriousness, they will refer the alleged instance to the TLA for resolution via the College's disciplinary procedures. This body or its nominee will organise a face-to-face meeting with the student in question via email wherein the nature of the subject under discussion will be explicitly flagged. Depending on how satisfactory the student's explanation is, the student may receive a verbal or written warning, will receive advice about correct citation and may be required to resubmit the work with academic penalty (resubmission, where the maximum grade awardable is 16- or equivalent).

In the most serious cases, where there is an unsatisfactory explanation from the student, the College level body may decide to exclude the student from the module, or even exclude the student from the programme.

Where plagiarism is confirmed, an official record of the incident will be added to the student's record.

14. ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

- 14.1. For all other alleged breaches of the College's Assessment Regulations, the relevant Programme Leader will establish an Assessments Regulations Committee.
- 14.2. The membership of the committee will be:
 - Programme Leader (or his/her nominee)
 - External Examiner (or his/her nominee)
 - A senior lecturer (not directly involved with the alleged breach of the Assessment Regulations.)
- 14.3. The committee will recommend a course of action. The candidate may seek a review (and appeal) of the decision of the committee through the College's procedures on rechecks, reviews, and appeals.
- 14.4. Where it is proven beyond a reasonable doubt that a learner has sought to gain an unfair advantage by cheating in a single assessment, the normal minimum penalty is that the result of that assessment is declared null and void. The Programme Leader will decide what action is to be taken regarding possible re-assessment. The College reserves the right to invoke disciplinary procedures should it deem this action necessary to protect the integrity of the programme.
- 14.5. Where it is proven beyond a reasonable doubt that a learner has sought to gain an unfair advantage by cheating in more than one assessment, the normal minimum penalty is that all assessments at that level will be declared null and void. The Programme Leader will decide when and if the candidate can be re-assessed. The College reserves the right to invoke disciplinary procedures should it deem the case sufficiently serious.

15. GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL ASSESSORS

- 15.1. All assessment is to be consistent with the syllabus and the stated learning outcomes.
- 15.2. The design of assessment is to be vigilant of the need to discriminate, have objectivity in scoring, validity and reliability.
- 15.3. The timing and weighting of assessments is to be in accordance with the approved course schedule and the assessment schedule.
- 15.4. Feedback to learners on their assessment performance is an integral part of the process.
- 15.5. Internal assessors are to take cognisance of all suggestions proposed by the External Examiner.
- 15.6. Internal assessors must notify the Programme Leader of any special assessment requirements or deviations from normal practice.

- 15.7. Learners are to be informed well in advance of an assessment of the structure of the assignment.
- 15.8. The front cover of the completed assignment must e.g. the module number and title, learner's name and student ID number etc. A template including the required fields has been provided in the Academic Writing Knowledgebase. A statement of academic integrity is included on the cover page which certifies that by submitting the work, the student's work is their own.
- 15.9. Learners' marks are to be submitted by the lecturer to the Programmes Office (Assignments) within the timescale allotted by email notifying the lecturer of the required return date of marks.
- 15.10. Internal assessors are aware that assessment materials are made available, as required, to External Examiners.
- 15.11. Internal assessors may be required to meet External Examiners prior to the Assessment Board meetings to discuss assessment issues.
- 15.12. Corrected assessment material is retained by the College for six months following the meeting of the relevant Board of Assessment. Material that is the subject of review/appeal is retained for one year following the completion of the review/appeal process.
- 15.13. Corrected scripts are given to the Programmes Office (Assignments) for safe storage. Scripts received in electronic format are archived in electronic format only.
- 15.14. Internal assessors are to carry out their role in respect of rechecks, reviews and appeals.

Section K: Rechecks, Reviews & Appeals

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Procedure

It is the policy of PCI College to endeavour, in so far as is practicable, to:

- a) Deal within the College with all reviews, appeals, and disputes in relation to assessment matters involving learners, and to do so in accordance with the principles of natural and constitutional justice.
- b) Provide arrangements in relation to reviews, appeals, and disputes in relation to assessment matters which ensure that they are dealt with fairly, transparently and in a timely way and which may involve, as necessary, wholly independent persons of appropriate knowledge and experience in the process.
- c) The following sub-section provides definitions for the terms results, rechecks, review, appeal and outcome.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1. Result:

The decision taken by a Board of Assessment in relation to a candidate's progression or eligibility for award or the outcome of any recheck, review or appeal.

2.2. Recheck:

The marks awarded for a module can be the subject of a recheck. A recheck is carried out to ensure that there have been no arithmetical or clerical errors and that all the marks to which the student is entitled have been included in the final total.

2.3. Review:

A student may request a re-consideration of a decision in relation to marks granted in the light of additional information provided by the candidate in relation to the assessment process.

2.4. Appeal:

Re-consideration by an Appeal Board of the outcome of a Review.

2.5. Outcome:

A decision in relation to a recheck, review or appeal.

2.6. Overview of Procedure

- a) It is a requirement of the College that any complaint or dispute arising in relation to any result, shall fall to be resolved as a matter of first recourse, via the procedures set out below.
- b) The following are the levels at which decisions are taken in relation to candidate's performance:
 1. Allocation of marks/ grades
 2. Adoption of provisional results
 3. Recheck
 4. Review

5. Appeal

6. Approved results

- c) A learner who is unhappy with his/her mark for an assessment is encouraged, in the first instance to discuss the matter with the relevant lecturer and the Year Head. If the learner is still unhappy he/she may seek a recheck/review of his/her marks.

3. STATUS OF RESULTS

- 3.1. A result that is the subject of recheck, review or appeal is provisional while any recheck/review/appeal is being processed.
- 3.2. A provisional result becomes an Approved Result when approved by the Board of Assessment
- 3.3. A provisional result may be changed arising from the completion of a recheck/review/appeal process.

4. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED TO REQUEST A RECHECK

- 4.1. A student wishing to have the marks awarded for a module re-examined should seek a recheck of the relevant module. A recheck is a re-examination of the marks awarded for a module to ensure that there have been no arithmetical or clerical errors and that all the marks to which the student is entitled have been included in the final total.
- 4.2. The College endeavours to complete a recheck within 15 working days where a request has been received by the Assignments Team of the Programme Office not later than fifteen working days after the results have been sent to the learner.
- 4.3. Rechecks are coordinated by the Assignments Team and carried out by a lecturer nominated by him/her.
- 4.4. Only a written request for a recheck, signed by the person concerned, is considered. The candidate may supply details that he/she believes will help expedite the recheck.
- 4.5. The Programme Leader informs the learner in writing of the outcome of a recheck.

5. REVIEW

5.1. Grounds for Review

The grounds for a review are as follows:

- (i) The assessment regulations of the College have not been properly implemented
- (ii) The regulations do not adequately cover the candidate's case

5.2. Procedures to Request a Review

- a) The College endeavours to complete all reviews within fifteen working days where review requests have been received, in writing, by the Programme Leader. Such requests must be lodged not later than fifteen working days after the assessment results have been sent to the learner.

- b) Only a written request for a review and signed by the person concerned is considered.
- c) A request for a review must state the grounds, in accordance with 5.1 above, upon which the review is sought.
- d) The candidate must supply evidence in support of his/her request.

5.3. Membership of Review Board

- The TLA
- One senior lecturer not already involved in the case

5.4. Modus Operandi of the Review Board

- a) The Review Board considers requests for a review received by the Programme Leader, and decides whether a review should be granted, considering the requirements of 5.1 above
- b) Where a review is granted, the Review Board considers the evidence presented to it and decides the outcome of the review
- c) In carrying out a review, the Review Board may consult with such persons, as it deems appropriate. The Review Board may require that a re-marking of a script be undertaken by a second internal assessor
- d) A majority vote of the Review Board is sufficient to carry a decision
- e) The Programme Leader informs the student, in writing, of the outcome of the review
- f) A candidate dissatisfied with the outcome of a review may appeal the decision of the Review Board in accordance with paragraph 6 below
- g) The Programme Leader notifies the candidate's lecturer of the outcome of the review

6. APPEAL

6.1. Grounds for Appeal:

A student may appeal the outcome of a Review because the Review Board did not properly address his/her case. The introduction of new material that could have been included in the submission for the attention of the Review Board is not permitted.

6.2. The Programme Leader may require that an appeal be conducted in respect of any Review.

6.3. Procedure to be followed to Request an Appeal

- a) A request for an appeal must be received by the Programme Leader not later than the date specified in the letter notifying the candidate of the decision of the review.
- b) Only a written request for an appeal and signed by the person concerned is considered.
- c) A request for an appeal must state the grounds in accordance with 6.1 above, upon which the appeal is sought.
- d) The candidate must supply evidence in support of his/her request.

6.4. Decision to Establish Appeal Board

The Programme Leader decides whether an Appeal Board should be established, considering the provisions of 6.1 above.

6.5. Membership of an Appeal Board:

- Chairperson: A person experienced in higher education procedures regarding assessment, who is external to the College, who has had no previous involvement with the matter under appeal and who is nominated by the Programme Leader to act as Chairperson of the Appeal Board.
- An experienced External Examiner who has had no previous involvement in the case.
- A member of staff of the College who has had no previous involvement in the case

6.6. Modus Operandi of Appeal Board

a) The Appeal Board:

- (i) Considers the report of the Review Board or Programme Leader.
- (ii) May ask the appellant to address it on the circumstances of the appeal.
- (iii) Seeks (through the Chairperson) such information or advice as it considers necessary and in such manner as it considers appropriate.
- (iv) Having considered the circumstances, decides the outcome of the appeal.

- b) The College reserves the right to engage the services of any appropriate professionals that it deems necessary.
- c) All decisions of an Appeals Board shall be by majority vote
- d) The appellant is informed in writing of the outcome by the Programme Leader.
- e) All decisions of the Appeal Board are final within the College.
- f) The Programme Leader notifies all relevant persons within the College of the outcome of the appeal.

Section L: Obtaining Learner Feedback

1. INTRODUCTION

PCI College is committed to involving learners in its QA efforts. It is necessary that systematic procedures for capturing learners' views are in place and that changes/improvements can be introduced quickly to benefit current and future learners. Learners through their participation in Boards of Studies have a direct role to play in monitoring and reviewing programmes of study. The learner representatives can express the views of their classes on all aspects of College activities - course information, assessment mechanisms, programme organisation and delivery, and associated services at the biannual Board of Studies Meetings.

2. BOARD OF STUDIES

The Board of Studies meets twice each year. It is chaired by the Academic Director or his/her nominee. All lecturers, Year Heads, Core Tutors, members of the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee, and Student Representatives are invited to attend. There is a designated place on the agenda of every Board of Studies meeting for a report from each class representative. This affords learners a forum to bring to the attention of the most senior College personnel matter of interest/concern. Issues raised by students at the Board of Studies meetings are considered at the appropriate level within the College (e.g., Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee, Management Board and action taken when / where necessary and where resources permit). The College investigates the various issues raised and provides a response to how the issues/requests were dealt with at the next Board of Studies meeting. If a request cannot be fulfilled an explanation is provided at the next Board of Studies.

3. LEARNER APPRAISAL OF MODULES

At the end of each module each student is given an End of Module Feedback Form (Appendix B). This questionnaire is designed to elicit the learners' views on:

- The organisation and content of the module
- Presentation of subject
- Effectiveness of communication
- And asked to give a general evaluation of the module and offer suggestions regarding changes/improvements.

A summary of the findings is contained in the Annual Monitoring Report and after due consideration by the TLA and College Board the suggestions/recommendations of learners are implemented, where possible.

Section M: External Examiner Procedures

1. NOMINATION

- 1.1 The TLA of the College approves the nomination to Middlesex University of persons to act as External Examiners to programmes offered by the College, where appropriate.

The TLA ensures that persons appointed as External Examiners are competent to fulfil this role.

Middlesex University approves such procedures as may be required, relating to the appointment, role and duties of External Examiners.

- 1.2 In general, the process of nominating External Examiners is carried out in consultation with the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee.

2. Approval

- 2.1. The TLA considers nominations for appointment as External Examiners received from the Committee itself or wider faculty

- 2.2. The TLA satisfies itself that, in general, persons nominated for appointment satisfy the criteria for appointment.

- 2.3. Middlesex University approves the appointment of such and as many persons as it deems necessary to act as External Examiners of the College for such periods as it decides – normally four years.

3. CRITERIA FOR APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

- a. An External Examiner's academic/professional qualifications should be in the area that is being examined. The level of his/her qualifications should be one step up on the programme being examined and he/she should have significant experience in that field
- b. An External Examiner should have appropriate standing, expertise and the experience necessary to maintain comparability of standards.

Standing, expertise and breadth of experience may be indicated by:

- (i) The present (or last, if retired) post and place of work
- (ii) The range and scope of experience across higher education/professions
- (iii) Current and recent active involvement in research/scholarly/professional activities in the field of study concerned.

- c. External Examiners should be impartial in judgement and should not have previous close involvement with the College, which might compromise objectivity.

Over the last five years, the proposed examiner should not have been:

- A member of staff, a student, or a near relative of a member of staff in relation to the Programme
 - Involved in the teaching or delivery of seminars or lectures in the College
 - Likely to be involved with student placements or training in the examiner's organisation.
- d. External Examiners are usually appointed from September to August, normally for 4 years, subject to annual review. An extension of appointment may be approved.

4. APPOINTMENT

- 4.1. Following approval of nominations by the TLA, the Link Tutor issues a nomination to the validating partner (e.g. Middlesex University). Should the nomination be successful, a contract is made between the External Examiner and the Validating/ Awarding body.
- 4.2. The term of office shall normally be for a period of 4 four academic years, subject to annual re-appointment.
- 4.3. Normally, the term of office commences on 1st October of the academic year in which the External Examiner is appointed.
- 4.4. Following appointment, the Programmes Office ensures that the External Examiner receives adequate documentation to enable him/her to understand the assessment system operated by the College.

Such documentation includes:

- QA policies and procedures
- College academic and administrative structures and procedures
- Programme/subject/module documentation
- Assessment procedures and schedules

5. ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. External Examiners attend the College at the time of determination of results and at such other times as may be determined by the College in consultation with the External Examiners for assessing the standard of the programme and/or the standard of student performance.
- 5.2. External Examiners determine, in their expert judgement, if the assessment procedures are fair and consistent and in accordance with the appropriate standard and circulate a report to Middlesex University and Programmes team before relevant Boards
- 5.3. External Examiners ensure that all significant elements of the programme(s) with which they are involved have been adequately assessed. It is not necessary that all elements are considered each year. The External Examiners pays attention to the award years of a programme.
- 5.4. External Examiners decide, in consultation with the Programmes Office:

- The marking schemes (s)he wishes to review prior to the assessment
- The marked scripts s/he wishes to consider
- The nature and content of other assessment material s/he wishes to consider

The Programmes Office ensures that such material is provided to the External Examiner in good time.

The Internal and External Examiners endeavour to arrive at a consensus on contentious issues.

- 5.5. The Programme Leader may request that assessment materials be examined, subject to a reasonable quantity of such material being examined.
- 5.6. Where an External Examiner wishes to carry out a viva-voce on candidates, s/he shall notify the College in good time to allow appropriate arrangements to be made.

6. BOARD OF ASSESSMENT

Some of the programmes taught by the College are validated by other institutions and this may influence the procedures associated with Boards, please consult the Student Programme Handbook for further details.

- 6.1. Meetings of the Board of Assessment are held for approving individual learner's results at such times as the College determines.
- 6.2. The External Examiners attend the College to review the proposed results for the programme concentrating on:
 - Reviewing module performance with Internal Examiners, including marked scripts, project work or continuous assessment material, as required.
 - Agreeing with the respective Internal Assessors(s) the proposed final marks/grades for consideration by the Board of Assessment.

The Programmes Office provides the External Examiner with suitable statistical information to assist in this process.

- 6.3. Where the External Examiner proposes adjustments to the results of a group of students he/she shall consult with the Programme Leader in advance of the meeting of the Board of Assessment. Efforts should be made to achieve consensus in relation to such proposed amendments.
- 6.4. The External Examiner attends the meeting of the Board of Assessment.
- 6.5. The External Examiner will comment on such matters relating to individual student performance, module performance, programme performance as s/he deems necessary. The Board of Assessment shall give due consideration to such comments.
- 6.6. The External Examiner may request to have her/his dissenting opinion on any matter recorded in the Minutes of the Board of Assessment Meeting.

- 6.7. The External Examiner signs the Attendance Sheet - such a signature indicates that the External Examiner participated in the Board of Assessment as a member of the Board.

7. REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

- 7.1. Prior to the Board of Assessment meeting, the External Examiner provides a report to Middlesex University, Link Tutor and Programme Leader, which read at the Boards of Assessment.
- 7.2. The External Examiner may refer in his/her written report to such matters as s/he deems appropriate, and may request that such matters be investigated by the College.
- 7.3. Subsequent to the Boards of Assessment, the Programme Leader provides a copy of the External Examiners' report to the members of the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee, and invites comments and details of any proposed action to be taken on foot of the External Examiners' report.
- 7.4. The Programme Leader shall forward a copy of these comments and details of proposed action to the External Examiner via Middlesex University to keep them informed of actions taken on foot of their recommendations.
- 7.5. On completion of his/her term of office, the External Examiner shall submit a general report to the Programme Leader on his/her opinion of the standards of the course/programme and learner performance.

Section N: Complaints

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Complaints Procedure outlined in this section applies to all learners in PCI College. This procedure does not cover academic appeals for which there is a separate procedure – See Section K.
- 1.2. No learner will be disadvantaged through availing of the complaints procedure. However, the College expects that in raising possible issues of complaint, learners themselves will have observed their own obligations and responsibilities.

Due to the seriousness with which the College handles complaints and impact on available resources to manage complaints, we expect that learners will not engage in frivolous or vexatious complaints.

- 1.3. The intention is that most problems will be dealt with locally, in a spirit of conciliation. Thus, the formal complaints procedure should be a last resort in the search for a solution
- 1.4. The procedure is intended to produce a speedy and efficient resolution. The aim is to prevent unnecessary delay, whilst ensuring a full and fair assessment of the circumstances of any individual complaint.
- 1.5. Complaints provide an important source of feedback on the performance of the College's services. As such, the College will monitor the registration of complaints and the progress made towards resolution.
- 1.6. All complaints should normally be made within 21 days of the alleged incident, matter or concern occurring.
- 1.7. The complaints procedure is based on the principle of Natural Justice. Consequently, anonymous complaints will not be accepted.

2. STAGE I

- 2.1. A learner who feels that s/he has been treated unfairly or inequitably has the right to make a complaint.
- 2.2. Firstly, the learner should address the issue with the subject of his/her complaint or with the Core Tutor. Where the Core Tutor is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should be forwarded to the Year Head.
- 2.3. Stage I is generally an oral process and a written record is not made. However, staff members involved are encouraged to share their experience of the process to the benefit of the College.
- 2.4. If the learner's complaint is not resolved at this level, then Stage II of the procedure, outlined below, should be followed.

3. STAGE II

- 3.1. The College appreciates that there may be occasions where Stage 1 is inappropriate and/or that a more formal approach is necessary.
- 3.2. The relevant Year Head explains to the student the operation of the remaining stages of the Learner Complaints Procedure.
- 3.3. At this point the learner should make his/her complaint in writing and forward it to his/her Year Head. The complaint should be specific and comprehensively documented. The complaint must detail the learner's name and contact details, any relevant documentation, and dates, locations and witnesses as appropriate. Any previous efforts to resolve the matter should also be given.

The Year Head advises the person who is the subject of the complaint and provides that person with a copy of the complaint.

The Year Head arranges to meet with the learner to discuss the complaint. The Core Tutor makes a written record of the meeting.

To establish the facts of the complaint, the Year Head holds a separate meeting with the person who is the subject of the complaint and may also interview any material witnesses. The Core Tutor makes a written record of the meeting(s).

The Year Head tries to mediate an agreement. Where mediation is not successful the Year Head notifies both parties in writing of the outcome of the complaint and his/ her efforts to resolve the matter.

4. STAGE III

- 4.1. If the complaint remains unresolved at Stage II, either party may write to the Programme Leader, outlining how the complaint resolution process has progressed in their view and requesting him/her to proceed to Stage III.
- 4.2. The Programme Leader receives all the evidence considered under Stage II, and a report from the Year Head involved in Stage II
- 4.3. The Programme Leader forwards the complaint and the accompanying information to the TLA for their consideration. They examine the material and may seek further information from the learner to clarify matters concerning the complaint. They may decide if, in their opinion, the evidence justifies it, to uphold (or not to do so) a complaint without proceeding further with the complaint process.
- 4.4. The Programme Leader and his/her nominees may interview separately, the student and the subject of his/her complaint and any appropriate witnesses. The complainant may be accompanied by a fellow student. The subject of the complaint, may also be accompanied by a colleague.
- 4.5. The Programme Leader and his/her nominees agree a written record of these meetings.
- 4.6. The College aims to complete this stage of the complaints procedure within 14 working days. The parties to the complaint will be informed if delays are expected.

- 4.7. The Programme Leader notifies both parties in writing of the decision reached concerning this stage of the procedure and the reasons for it, together with any recommended consequent action.
 - 4.8. The Programme Leader notifies the appropriate person(s) or committee without undue delay concerning changes recommended or required because of the complaint.
5. STAGE IV (Appeal)
- 5.1. Either party may appeal the outcome of Stage III within 14 days of receipt/knowledge of the decision. The relevant party must confirm the wish to appeal in writing to the Programme Leader.
 - 5.2. The Programme Leader establishes a Complaints Committee to examine the appeal.
 - 5.3. Typically, the Complaints Committee will have three members, chaired by a Programme Leader and include an experienced person from another College as well as a member of staff of the College. No member of the committee will have been previously associated with the complaint.
 - 5.4. The committee will receive the documentation so far generated by the complaint and will consider that documentation and hear evidence
 - 5.5. The hearing will enable the committee to consider the way in which the complaint has been handled at previous stages of the procedure and/or to reconsider the appropriateness of the result of the previous stage of the procedure. However, the hearing will not be conducted as an alternative to any part of the disciplinary procedures which apply to members of staff.
 - 5.6. The decision of the committee will be final as far as the College's Learner Complaints Procedures are concerned.
 - 5.7. The Programme Leader will inform both parties and the TLA, in writing, of the decision of the committee.

Section O: Student Care & Progression

It is the policy of PCI College to afford to each student it accepts on to its programmes the highest level of support consistent with adult education principles. Because of the nature of many of its programmes in counselling and psychotherapy, learners require an elaborate support structure to be in place and available to them when/if they encounter personal/professional difficulties as they progress through the various modules.

Each learner in the College is assigned a Core Tutor. Core Tutors are charged with the following responsibilities:

- (a) To be available to students who need to address questions arising from their participation in the programme;
- (b) To help students to select the pathway to education awards that is most appropriate to their needs when options are offered
- (c) To help students who are experiencing difficulties about aspects of the programme - inner conflict, dilemmas, or simply things that do not seem to them to make sense or meaning
- (d) To shepherd students through their programme from beginning to end
- (e) To advocate on behalf of students
- (f) To work with Year Heads to address issues, highlight progression concerns and resolve active issues on an ongoing basis in a timely manner
- (g) To monitor the learner's client work
- (h) To monitor the learner's participation in personal counselling
- (i) To ensure the learner keeps up to date with assignments
- (j) To mediate in disputes between students

STUDENT PROGRESSION

Student Progression is monitored closely by the College. Monitoring student progress is a collaborative process. Student progression is dependent on positive feedback from the student in question, Core Tutors, Lecturers, Year Heads, external stakeholders (e.g. Clinical Supervisor(s)) and the Client Work Team (if the programme includes a client work element).

Attendance and progress are monitored using the following methods:

- Lecturers give feedback to the Year Heads at the end of the delivery of each module, noting any learner who may be experiencing difficulties.
- Attendance is recorded by module lecturers and is monitored by the Year Head on a regular basis.
- Supervisors of students' client work make a written report of each student's progress - See Appendix G
- One-to-one formal feedback at the timetabled Progress Review Meetings (PRMs) during the academic year (based on the programme e.g. n/a for the Certificate Programme).
- Students submit sign-off of their first 25 hours of personal therapy in advance of client work plus a log detailing the full 50 hours (of personal therapy completed) on submission of their Diploma Documentation.
- The Programmes Office (Assignments) record each student's module marks
- Year Heads ensure that a student with an unsatisfactory level of attendance is advised in accordance with the policy of the College. Attendance guidelines are included in the

- Programme Handbook made available to learners at the beginning of each academic year.
- A report on the progress of students is presented to the Progression Board by the Year Head. This committee will then make recommendations to the Programme Leader to take whatever action is deemed appropriate in the case(s) of learners who fail to meet specified targets.

APPEALS FOR NON-ACADEMIC DECISIONS

Non-academic decisions refer to formal decisions made by a Year Head/Programme Leader which do not directly relate to the academic components of the Programme (for example, assessments) but which do directly impact the course of study undertaken by the Student. These can include decisions impacting readiness to see clients and progression on the course.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Appeals for Non-Academic Decisions Procedure applies to all learners in PCI College. This procedure does not cover academic appeals for which there is a separate procedure.
- 1.2. No learner will be disadvantaged through availing of the procedure. However, the College expects that in raising possible issues of appeal, learners themselves will have observed their own obligations and responsibilities.
- 1.3. Due to the seriousness with which the College handles appeals and impact on available resources to manage appeals, we expect that learners will not engage in frivolous or vexatious appeals.
- 1.4. The intention is that most problems will be dealt with locally, in a spirit of conciliation. Thus, the formal appeals procedure should be a last resort in the search for a solution.
- 1.5. The procedure is intended to produce a speedy and efficient resolution. The aim is to prevent unnecessary delay, whilst ensuring a full and fair assessment of the circumstances takes place.
- 1.6. An appeal should be made within 14 days of the non-academic decision being communicated in writing.

2. STAGE I

- 2.1. A learner who feels that a non-academic decision has been unfairly applied to their Programme of study has the right to appeal this decision.
- 2.2. Firstly, the learner should discuss the decision with their relevant Year Head to gain further feedback and clarity regarding the circumstances of the decision.
- 2.3. The Year Head may consult with and/or include the relevant Core Tutor in this stage of resolution where necessary.

- 2.4. Stage I is generally an oral process. A written record is made on the student's electronic file summarising the communication and clarification provided. Staff members involved are encouraged to share their experience of the process to the benefit of the College.
- 2.5. If the learner's appeal is not resolved at this level, then Stage II of the procedure, outlined below, should be followed.

3. STAGE II

- 3.1. The College appreciates that there may be occasions where Stage 1 is inappropriate and/or that a more formal approach is necessary.
- 3.2. At this point the learner should state his/her concerns regarding the decision in writing and forward it to his/her Programme Leader. The concerns should be specific and comprehensively documented. They must detail the following:
 - Learner's name and contact details
 - Any relevant documentation
 - Circumstances as to why the decision was applied in the first instance
 - How the decision has been unfairly applied considering the reasons and clarifications previously provided.
 - Previous efforts to resolve the matter
 - Evidence as to how these efforts were unsuitable
- 3.3. The Programme Leader receives the learner's report, the accompanying evidence and a report from the Year Head involved in Stage I.
- 3.4. The Programme Leader forwards the appeal and the accompanying information to the TLA Committee for their consideration. The TLA Committee must include at least one academic member of staff not directly related to the learner's programme of study. A special appointment to the TLA may be nominated to fulfil this requirement in this instance. The TLA examine the material and may seek further information from the learner to clarify matters concerning the decision. They may decide if, in their opinion, the evidence justifies it, to uphold (or not to do so) the decision without proceeding further with the appeals process.
- 3.5. The College aims to complete this stage of the appeals procedure within 21 working days. The learner will be informed if delays are expected.
- 3.6. The Programme Leader notifies the learner in writing of the decision reached by the TLA concerning this stage of the procedure and the reasons for it, together with any recommended consequent action.
- 3.7. The decision of the TLA will be final as far as the College's Appeals for Non-Academic Decisions Procedures are concerned.
- 3.8. Should a learner remain unhappy at this point and wish to complain about the TLA's handling of their case, they must refer to the separate Complaints Procedure.

EQUALITY OF LEARNING FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Disability is defined in the Disability Act 2005 as: “a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State because of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment”.

1. PCI College Premises and Venues

PCI College ensures that all its teaching premises are wheel-chair accessible.

2. Disability Officer

The function of Disability Officer is fulfilled by Student Services in close collaboration with the Year Head and Executive Academic Officer for that student so that students are tracked both administratively and academically for the duration of their studies.

The role of the Disability Officer and the procedures required are described in the PCI College Draft Disability Support Policy which can be found in the Appendix.

3. To contact the Disability Officer:

New applications considering enrolment on a PCI College Programme should contact Student Services by:

- Email: studentservices@pcicollege.ie
- Tel: +353-1-464-2268

Students presently enrolled on a PCI College Programme should contact their Year Head/Programme Leader.

Section P: Appointment of Academic Staff

1. Introduction

- 1.1. It is College policy to employ sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified staff to professionally deliver the programmes offered.
- 1.2. In the recruitment of staff the different strands of the programmes offered are considered – person centred counselling, cognitive/behavioural therapy, personal development, psychodynamic approaches in counselling, addiction studies, art therapy, sexuality, bereavement etc. Candidates are employed based on their appropriate level of knowledge, skills and teaching ability to suitably deliver the various modules of the programmes.

2. APPOINTMENT CRITERIA

- 2.1. While the criteria for appointment will vary depending on the vacancy that occurs, there are some basic criteria that apply to all teaching posts within the College:

- (a) A sufficient level of academic achievement to teach the module(s) involved
- (b) A sufficient level of teaching skills/experience to teach the specified modules to an adult population of students
- (c) Will integrate into to an existing staff where a high level of co-operation is demanded, given the modular nature of the programmes
- (d) Be open and responsive to learners whose programme involves a considerable concentration on their personal development
- (e) Be competent to assess learners on a continuous basis
- (f) Will give constructive feedback to learners, peers, external parties and management of the College
- (g) Be familiar with and guided by the codes of ethics of their relevant professional bodies and the bodies which accredit PCI College Programmes.

- 2.2. Several strategies are in place to fill vacancies as they arise:

- (a) The Programme Leader (or his/her nominee) carries out an audit to ascertain the expertise and workload of existing staff
- (b) Based on the results of this audit he may decide to offer new/different modules to some present members of the teaching staff whose workload and level of expertise allows such an arrangement
- (c) If the vacancy cannot be filled internally (following the position being advertised internally), applicants are sought from outside the College.
- (d) The Programme Leader, in consultation with relevant senior lecturers, draws up a Job Specification for the post, keeping in mind the general criteria listed above, and adding the specific requirements for the vacant position

- 2.3. One or more of the following steps are then initiated:

- (a) The curriculum vitae of people who have already expressed an interest in teaching in the College are examined to ascertain if they meet the criteria set out for the vacancy.

- (b) Advertisements are placed on the College's website and Facebook page
- (c) Advertisements are placed in the journals/magazines of counselling organisations
- (d) Advertisements are placed in appropriate online and print media

2.4. If the vacant position is to be filled by short-term contract i.e. of no more than one year, the Programme Leader, having interviewed those who he considered sufficiently qualified for the position, may recommend a candidate to the TLA for approval. Having gained the approval of the TLA, the Programme Leader may offer a short-term contract (not more than one year) to the successful applicant.

2.5. For contracts of more than one year:

An Interview Board is established, membership of which may vary in accordance with the seniority of the position being filled. Typically, an academic post would require a board consisting of the Programme Leader, a senior lecturer nominated by the Programme Leader, and a senior lecturer nominated by the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee.

The Programme Leader receives all applications for the position, sends copies of the CVs to the other members of the Interview Board and arranges a date for interviews to take place.

The Interview Board meets to short-list the candidates for interview.

Candidates may be required to attend two rounds of interviews before an offer of employment will be made.

Candidates are given at least one week's notice of date and place of interview. Candidates are required to complete a presentation as part of the interview process.

Candidates are allocated marks by each of the interviewers against each of the criteria for the position and a mark for overall performance at interview. A candidate who fails to get 50% in any one of the criteria deemed essential for a position would not be deemed suitable even where such a candidate had a greater gross score than other candidates.

The Interview Panel recommends to the TLA and to the College Board the name of the person to be offered the position advertised. Having gained the approval of the TLA and the College Board the successful candidate is offered a contract of employment.

2.6. Staff Appraisal and Development

PCI College is committed to the appointment, retention, and development of a team of high-calibre lecturers. To retain a dedicated, enthusiastic staff that can offer a professional service to all learners, the College has put in place the following procedures:

- (a) Lecturer's work under the direction of Year Heads who monitor feedback in relation to their work and consult with the Programme Leader as necessary.
- (b) Newly appointed lecturers are assigned a more experienced lecturer, the Module Leader or some other senior lecturer from within the team, whose role it is to pay attention to the induction and orientation of the new lecturer.

The Module Leader/Coordinator meets his/her team at the end of the academic year to review the delivery of that past academic programme; take on board learner feedback; and discuss what changes/improvements need to be made for the next academic year. Module Leaders/Coordinators, who may also be Year Heads, also guide their teams, particularly newly appointed members or lecturers teaching this module for the first time, regarding the assessment of learners. Staff are encouraged to bring to the attention of the module Leader/Coordinator any concerns they may have regarding the teaching and / or assessment of the module.

The College views the ongoing development of staff as a priority. All lecturers, both employed Faculty and contracted Lecturers receive free in-house CPD regularly throughout the year, utilising both internal and external presenters. Topics covered include Assignment Marking, Plagiarism, Professional Issues, Self-Care and Updates on Curriculum Topics.

All lecturers can also attend (at reduced cost) any CPD courses and workshops which are delivered by PCI College. Staff members may sometimes be supported, financially or otherwise, to complete longer courses provided by PCI College or other professionally relevant courses for which College support has been approved following consideration of a proposal from the lecturer.

Section Q: Ensuring Consistency of Programme Delivery

1. Introduction

PCI College currently delivers its programmes over several venues. Consequently, a lot of attention is given to ensuring equality and consistency of delivery across venues.

2. Functions being monitored for consistency/quality

2.1. Programme Team

The lecturing team (including both employed Faculty Lecturers and contracted lecturers) meets a minimum of 2 times in the academic year, as well as twice at the interim Boards and summer Boards, to ensure that academic standards are discussed and dealt with consistently across all venues. These meetings are used both for discussion of tutorial issues and for Continuing Professional Development in relevant areas. Overlap of teaching faculty across venues helps ensure comparability of delivery. Year Heads, who have cross-venue responsibilities, check in regularly with their lecturing teams, who also provide written feedback at the end of each module.

The College (where necessary) increase the number of part-time employed faculty staff specifically for each venue, so that every location may be served by two Regional Faculty Lecturers as well as contracted lecturers as required.

The strategy in relation to the use of a mix of lecturing staff is the same in all venues, namely to use at least the two Core Tutors (where possible), with an absolute minimum of two lecturers per year, but usually three or four to ensure students are exposed to a variety of styles and experiences.

2.2. Feedback processes

Feedback sheets are provided to all students at the end of each teaching block. These are completed anonymously (unless the student wishes to identify themselves) and collected by the class's Student Representative in a sealed envelope, which is forwarded to the College for the Year Head's attention unless the Year Head is the lecturer of the module and then the sheets would go to the Programme Leader.

Boards of Studies are held in Dublin, and student representatives from each class at each venue are invited to attend.

2.3. Resources

As the programme is delivered on a part-time basis, no significant differences exist (in terms of access to resources and supports provided) across venues except for library facilities which are localised to the Dublin West and Kilkenny campus.

Teaching resources at all venues include classrooms with audio visual equipment, projection facilities, white boards, flip charts, and access to basic comfort/refreshment facilities, with free Wi-Fi access in most venues. Students do not use IT on site except via Wi-Fi from their own devices, due to the part-time nature of the programme. All software based learning resources are provided via the PCI College student portal.

Students at all venues meet twice a year (depending on the enrolled programme) with their Core Tutors to monitor their progress.

The Student Services team schedule annual visits to all classes in all venues.

2.4. Procedures for Internal Moderation of Assessments

The consistency of standards, presentation and accuracy with which assessments are set is ensured through the moderation and scrutiny of essay questions at an internal meeting of senior faculty, comprising the relevant Year Head, the Programme Leader, one other senior faculty member, and the Executive Academic Officer.

This team will moderate the consistency of academic standards and presentation of the essay questions by determining whether:

- the essay questions assess the modules learning outcomes;
- they are clear and unambiguous;
- they are appropriate in difficulty;
- they are consistent with their weighting.

As part of this moderation procedure, the team will check for overlap between questions both within the module's assessment, between assessments for different modules, and between assessments and coursework.

The team prepares a report that includes suggested changes and the rationales behind those changes to any questions they feel have not met the appropriate standards. The Executive Academic Officer will forward suggestions and rationales to the lecturers in question. Once the lecturers have made those changes they will forward them back to the Executive Academic Officer who will verify if the changes have been made in accordance with the team's suggestions and where necessary consult by email with the Year Head and Programme Leader.

2.5. Procedures for Internal Moderation of Grades

The procedure to ensure consistency of the accuracy and standards with which essays are assessed begins with the Programmes Office checking that all answers attempted have been marked and that the marks have been calculated and transcribed onto **electronic eSubmissions folder** ~~marking sheets correctly~~.

To confirm the quality of marking, a second member of the academic staff will be assigned a portion of each module cohort's essay scripts to correct as a sample of that module's overall marking standards. A minimum of 15%, or a minimum of five (whichever is the larger) of all essay scripts or class tests that contribute towards the final award are **included in the moderation sample** ~~double marked~~. The moderation sample must contain all borderline first and fails (e.g., +/- 2.5 % from the cut-off), plus a representative sample of all classifications. Such sampling should ensure a full range of marks/degree classes is included in the sample. All dissertations are **double marked** ~~moderated~~.

Moderators will use their professional judgment to confirm the validity and equity of the marks for all students in the cohort, by weighing the sampled paper's marks against the

marks and comments of the lecturer and the marking schemes for that module. The aims of such internal moderation are principally:

- to provide a check that an assessment has been marked in line with the expressed aims and learning outcomes of the assessment;
- to provide assurance for students of fairness of marking and therefore the equality of treatment of each student;
- to assure consistency of assessment within a module;
- to provide a framework for the comparing of standards across modules within a subject area.

When the moderator reviews the marking he/she is asked if the grade band allocated is in agreement. In the case of disagreement, the moderator will consult with the original marker. If an agreement cannot be reached, then the script involved will be sent for third marking with the final mark closest to the third marker.

Section R: Evaluation of Student Services

It is College policy to provide a level of student service that will enable each learner to complete his/her programme of study in a supportive, caring environment. It is the Student Services Manager's responsibility to coordinate and lead the College's effort to provide an efficient, user-friendly service for all students.

The best way of evaluating the level of satisfaction with the services provided by the College is to provide several avenues for the learners to convey their opinions to the College authorities. The following options are in place to give students an opportunity to evaluate the services provided:

- (a) Each class has its own Student Representative. Student Representatives attend the Board of Studies held twice a year. This is an opportunity for students to provide feedback to the College about Student Services through the Student Representative. All issues raised are responded to by the College.
- (b) Students can provide feedback at the end of each module using the End of Module Feedback Form (Appendix B). These forms are anonymous (unless the student wants to include their contact details). Each completed form is read but Senior Management and any issues raised are dealt with promptly.
- (c) Student Services conduct annual visits to each year group (BSc Programme only) to provide information but also this visit is a chance for students to provide feedback on concerns. Any issues raised regarding Student Services are communicated to the Student Services Manager who will follow-up the issue to ensure it is resolved.
- (d) Individual learners may bring deficiencies in the service to the attention of his/her Core Tutor/Lecturer/Year Head who in turn will bring the matter to the attention of Student Services and if appropriate, Programme Leader and the TLA and then to the College Director
- (e) At the regular Management meetings, the efficiency of Student Services is assessed.
- (f) The College Board at their regular meetings review the delivery of Student Services in the College

Section S: Evaluation of Facilities

It is the policy of PCI College to provide the facilities necessary for the delivery of its programmes in an environment appropriate for learners at third level. To ensure that this policy is implemented one member of the College Board acts as Housekeeping/Facilities with specific responsibility for this area. Among his/her duties are the following:

- (a) To ensure classrooms are adequate in terms of space, heat, light, and seating
- (b) To ensure that off campus facilities hired by the College are of a standard that meets the learners' needs
- (c) To ensure, where possible, that students have access to canteen facilities
- (d) To ensure that sufficient cleaning staff are employed
- (e) To liaise with maintenance personnel to ensure that repairs are carried out expeditiously and safely
- (f) To monitor Health and Safety issues related to housekeeping/facilities in the College
- (g) All College stakeholders are encouraged to bring to the notice of the College authorities any concerns/recommendations regarding its facilities.
- (h) Students are to bring their concerns/suggestions to the attention of the office staff or lecturer, who in turn will notify Housekeeping via Reception
- (i) Lecturing Staff bring their concerns/suggestions directly to the Facilities Manager
- (j) Managers and administrative staff take their concerns/suggestions directly to the Facilities Manager
- (k) Maintenance personnel bring their suggestions/concerns directly to the attention of the Facilities Manager

When a matter of concern or suggestion is brought to the attention of the Facilities Manager, s/he considers the issue and prioritises what action (if any) is to be taken.

Many of the actions to be undertaken can be done by College maintenance personnel and/or by skilled trades people hired for those specific jobs. Some of the actions may involve considerable expense and need the approval of the Financial Director. Such approval is sought as soon as is practical to expedite the action required.

When an action is taken because of a concern expressed or a suggestion made by a student or member of staff, that person is informed of the action taken.

Section T: Mitigating Circumstances

The lives of students can be diverse and varied. Good intentions at the beginning of any programme can be derailed by several life factors which may arise during the student's programme (e.g. illness, bereavement, redundancy, etc.). These life circumstances can mean for many students that they are unable to submit an assignment to the College by the required deadline date. To recognise the real-life issues which affect these students, they can apply for mitigating circumstances to avoid academic penalties being applied to their grade.

The College strongly advises student's experiencing difficulties in their life impacting on their academic and clinical work to contact their Core Tutor.

Students must submit a Mitigating Circumstances Form to the College with any supporting documentation via email to assignments@pcicollege.ie Students should aim to submit this form as soon as possible after the deadline has passed but certainly within 7 days after the deadline date. Please note that any personal documentation submitted in support of the mitigating circumstance request is strictly confidential and access is limited to those who make the decision regarding the case. All cases are reviewed and ruled upon by the Executive Administrative Officer.

The everyday pressures of being a student are not considered grounds for mitigating circumstances (e.g. academic workload, employment) nor are events that could have been reasonably foreseen by the student (e.g. holidays, IT problems). Mitigating circumstance requests are only approved for circumstances beyond the control of the student. The College does not give pre-approval to a student before the form and supporting documentation has been received and reviewed.

The College strongly advises students to continue working on their assignment and submit it as soon as possible after the deadline date. This will ensure students do not accrue substantial academic penalties if their mitigating circumstances are rejected. As the College does not operate an Extension Policy, approval of the application for mitigating circumstances cannot be granted before submitting the assignment.

1. Mitigating Circumstances Form

The Mitigating Circumstances Form is available on the Student Portal at: <https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/Resources/Forms/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FResources%2FForms%2FAdministration%20Forms&FolderCTID=0x01200028F3779DD2810B4F821209BFB5FBB215&View=%7B01F7EE89%2D2253%2D47B1%2DBC01%2DB2A9D0A90848%7D> (Student Portal, Resources, Forms, Administration Forms). This should be completed in typed format and returned by email to esubmissions@pcicollege-edu.ie with the relevant supporting documentation.

2. Supporting Documentation

The supporting documentation submitted by the student must be current and not backdated. The documentation should cover the following points:

- A description of the circumstance.
- The length of time over which the student was affected by the circumstance.
- How the circumstance affected the student's ability to complete their assignments.

All the supporting documentation must be submitted together with the Mitigating Circumstances Form. If the College receives a form with no supporting documents, the circumstances can be rejected due to lack of evidence and the student will be notified accordingly. It is the student's responsibility to ensure all relevant documentation is submitted. The College will base the final decision on the information provided.

3. Notification of Approval/Rejection

Students will be notified by the College if their mitigating circumstances has not been approved within the feedback of their assignment. The decision of the College is final and has no grounds for appeal. All decisions will be communicated to students using their PCI College email account.

4. Rejected Mitigating Circumstances Forms

If the mitigating circumstances are not approved the assignment is categorised as 'late' and academic penalties (see below) will apply from the first day after the missed deadline to the date of submission.

5. Late Assignments

Assessment materials that are submitted past the deadline without valid mitigating circumstances will be subject to Academic Penalties.

6. Penalties (for late submission of assignments)

- 1 - 7 days late 5% deduction of the total marks available.
- 8 - 14 days late 10% deduction of the total marks available.
- 15 - 21 days late Mark capped at 40%.
- 22 + days late Progression Issue - managed by the relevant Year Head.

7. Submission Process

Assignments submitted after the original deadline date will not be accepted through eSubmissions on the Student Portal. Instead, these assignments are submitted by email in PDF/Microsoft Word format through the following email address assignments@pcicollege.ie. The student should give the file the same name as the student ID and full student name. The subject line on the email must include the module number and group (e.g. Module 1401 Kilkenny).

Appendix A: Learner's Charter

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The College is committed, through a partnership of students, staff, and management to ensuring that its affairs are conducted in a fair and equitable manner, thus creating an environment which is conducive to good working relations between all the stakeholders. This Learner's Charter, which sets out the rights and obligations of learners, has been prepared and will be implemented in that spirit.

1.2 The Charter includes:

- (a) The rights of learners
- (b) The College's Code of Conduct
- (c) Student Responsibility
- (d) Disciplinary procedures.

1.3 The Charter applies to all registered students of PCI College

2. RIGHTS OF LEARNERS

Learners have the following rights:

- (a) The right to expect from the College tuition of a professional standard on the course for which they are registered, and reasonable educational and support facilities consistent with the resources available to the College.
- (b) If attending a one year course or longer, the right to elect one Student Representative for each class group.
- (c) A right to one representative from each class (if attending a course of one year duration, or longer) to attend and speak at Board of Studies Meetings.
- (d) The right to be treated equally.
- (e) The right to fair and just procedures, including appropriate appeals procedures, in all matters involving breaches of the code of conduct.
- (f) The right to be treated as responsible adult members of a third-level institution, to be able to represent personal views in a reasonable manner and to be treated with normal standards of courtesy by all other members of the College.

3. CODE OF CONDUCT

3.1 The College recognises the respect due to third-level students as responsible adults. Accordingly, it expects that each student of the College behaves in a mature, reasonable and honest manner which protects the good name of the College, meets the requirements of his/her course of study, has due regard to the rights of others and does not adversely affect the conduct of the business of the College.

While self-discipline will be expected, and encouraged, failure to meet the standards expected may result in sanctions up to and including suspension and exclusion.

3.2 The following specific provisions shall apply

- (a) Only students who have paid the appropriate fees and are validly registered may be admitted to classes.
- (b) Students shall always obey the lawful instruction of College staff.
- (c) Students shall refrain from conduct liable to infringe the rights of others.
- (d) Students shall respect the property and persons of all members of the campus community.
- (e) Students must pay the appropriate College fees and charges prescribed for each year in advance of registration or must satisfy the College that the appropriate payments will be made within such a period as the College may allow. Fees are non-refundable.
- (f) Students must keep the Student Services Office informed of their current contact details
- (g) Students must comply with the academic discipline laid down for their course, including the requirements relating to attendance, participation and assessment as laid down by the College. The right to continue a course of study depends upon satisfactory enrolment, the maintenance of satisfactory attendance, participation, academic performance and satisfactory conduct.
- (h) Students must comply with the Assessment Regulations of the College. The TLA decides on the appropriateness of any academic sanctions against candidates on foot of recommendations from the Progression Committee and / the Programme Leader. All decisions are subject to the College's procedures on rechecks, reviews and appeals. Students may also have the disciplinary procedures (outlined below) initiated against them in respect of an alleged breach of the Assessment Regulations.
- (i) Students shall comply with all safety regulations that may be in force at the time, governing the buildings and outdoor areas.
- (j) The display of posters is subject to the approval of the Student Services Office. Posters and notices concerning student social activities may be displayed only on the appropriate notice boards.
- (k) Vehicles and bicycles may be parked only in designated places and are parked at owner's risk.
- (l) The College does not accept responsibility for any loss of personal property.

4. STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY AND CONDUCT

4.1. Application to a programme of study

Applicants are required to submit all the necessary documentation within the deadlines dictated by the College. Partially completed applications (completed application form & fee payment) will not be processed.

All applicants must make themselves available to attend interview on a date set by the College.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure their chosen programme of study meets the requirements for any further qualification (including professional accreditation) they may wish to pursue. The College can provide advice where appropriate and within the expertise of the College. Should the award achieved by the student at PCI College be deemed unsuitable by another Institution's admission regulations, the College bears no liability.

4.2. Contact Information

It is the responsibility of the student to provide accurate contact details on their application form and to inform the College if these details change.

4.3. Use of College Email Addresses

4.3.1. Students enrolled on programmes with an assigned PCI College email address are required to check their email frequently. Important communications are distributed via College email and not to personal email addresses.

4.3.2. Students should not use their PCI College email for personal, non-programme correspondence.

4.3.3. Students should check email during the period outside of lectures and classes (particularly over the summer months) as several important communications pertaining to start-up of the next academic year can be distributed during that time.

4.3.4. Issues with College email accounts should be directed to the Programmes Office for resolution.

4.4. College Regulations

It is the student's responsibility to familiarise themselves with the regulations of the College. The QA Manual contains general PCI College regulations. For courses validated by other institutions, some of the regulations governing the operation of these programmes will be from the validating institute's regulatory framework. The student's Programme Handbook clearer indicates where non-PCI College regulations apply.

4.5. Fees

Students are responsible for paying all fees for their programme of study. The College reserves the right to withdraw students from a programme of study if fees are not paid.

Students who are experiencing financial difficulty are required to inform the College immediately.

4.6. Student Card

Each student (except CPD courses, Certificate C&P courses) is issued a student card which is valid for the duration of their studies. Students are expected to carry their card on their person while on PCI College premises and venues being used by the College. Staff of the College may ask for a student to present their student card to confirm their identity.

At all times, the card remains the property of the College. If the card is lost, damaged or stolen it is the student's responsibility to inform the College.

4.7. Conduct

Students must adhere to the regulations, rules and procedures governing the operation of the College, its programmes and venues. Students must also follow the Values Statement outlined in Section A of this document and the Code of Conduct. Failure to comply with these elements may result in disciplinary action (see point 5 below) with the most severe cases resulting in forced withdrawal from the programme.

4.8. Materials and Venues

Students must return all material loaned to them by the College within the timescales dictated by the College. All materials should be returned in a good state of repair. The College reserves the right to withhold qualifications and transcripts until materials are returned or replaced if damaged.

Students must comply with copyright law when using any printed/electronic material used by PCI College for educational purposes.

Students of the College must leave all PCI College venues clean and tidy. Students are required to adhere to the rules relating to food and drink consumption.

4.9. Attendance

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. The attendance requirement for all programmes is 85%. Failure to meet this percentage may result in a student not receiving an award.

4.10. Assessment

Students are required to familiarise themselves with the requirements, submission procedures and deadlines for assessments on their programme of study. This information is available to students in their Programme Handbook, module narratives and from the lecturer.

Students with learning difficulties or a disability who wish to avail of assessment dispensations and/or study support must provide an assessment from an appropriate professional outlining the nature of the condition with a series of recommendation on how the College can support equality of learning and assessment for the student in

question. The College will endeavour to meet all the recommendations if it is viable for the College to do so.

4.11. Programme Deferral/Withdrawal/Re-Entry

Deferral is defined as a one year sabbatical from a programme of study. Students currently on deferral have the option to re-enter their programme of study if this is approved by the College and finally there is an option to withdraw permanently from a programme of study.

Students on a programme with a minimum duration of 1 year have the option to defer, withdraw or re-enter. A student attending a programme with a duration of less than a year has an option to withdraw.

It is the student's responsibility to inform the College if they wish to defer, withdraw or re-enter their programme of study. Students must inform the College in writing on or before the end of the academic year (July 31st). Students are required to complete a Deferral Form, Re-Entry Form or Withdrawal Form and return the completed form to Student Services by July 31st. These forms are available on the Student Portal at <https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/Resources/Forms/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FResources%2FForms%2FAdministration%20Forms&FolderCTID=0x01200028F3779DD2810B4F821209BFB5FBB215&View=%7B01F7EE89%2D2253%2D47B1%2DBC01%2DB2A9D0A90848%7D>

Students re-entering a programme after a period of deferral must inform the College by the end of the academic year and submit any outstanding assessments on or before July 31st before they will be considered for programme re-entry. Re-entry is assessed on a case by case basis and specific re-entry criteria may be required depending on the length of time a student is out of the programme and the undertaking of clinical course requirements relevant to their specific programme of study.

In some circumstances, the College may inform a student that they must go on mandatory deferral. This requirement is usually because of serious progression issues identified by the Core Tutor/Year Head/Programme Leader this can include concerns regarding fitness to practice. In this situation, it is the student's responsibility to complete the required form described above and to successfully fulfil any recommendations set out by the relevant Year Head/Core Tutor/Programme Leader before the student is deemed fit to continue with their programme of study.

5. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

The Charter assumes that students will comply with the requirements of the Code of Conduct on a voluntary basis through the exercise of mature self-discipline. Should it become necessary to invoke disciplinary procedures, and it is hoped that this will rarely occur, the following procedures will apply:

- (a) All allegations of breaches of the Charter will be dealt with in accordance with procedures approved by the College Board and which satisfy the requirements of Natural Justice.

- (b) No sanction or disciplinary action will be imposed on a student except in accordance with the Charter.
- (c) Allegations of breaches of the Charter may be made by any member of the College staff. While the accountability of students is in the main to the Programme Leader, students are also accountable and amenable to other College Officers for certain services and facilities. Where it becomes appropriate that disciplinary proceedings be invoked arising from a complaint by one student against another student, the formal procedure will be initiated by the relevant Core Tutor.
- (d) Where circumstances warrant it, the College authorities may suspend a student pending the completion of inquiries and without prejudice to the outcome of disciplinary procedures.
- (e) Nothing in these procedures shall prevent the College from referring matters to the Garda Síochána where it considers this to be appropriate.
- (f) Where a disciplinary action results in the imposition of a sanction against a student, that fact will be noted on the student's record and may be considered by the College authorities in responding to requests for character references if such is deemed relevant and appropriate.

College staff shall initiate formal disciplinary procedures in the event of serious breaches of the Code of Conduct. Allegations of breaches of the Charter will be dealt with through a staged process including informal, formal and appeal elements.

5.1. STAGE I - Informal

- 5.1.1. College Staff who have observed a student breach the Code of Conduct or are affected by a breach of the Code are entitled to raise the matter with the student concerned with a view to dealing with the issue informally.
- 5.1.2. Students shall always obey the lawful instructions of College staff.
- 5.1.3. Allegations of serious breaches of the Code of Conduct and for allegations of a less serious breach, where informal efforts have failed to resolve the issue satisfactorily, should proceed to Stage II.

5.2. STAGE II - Formal

- 5.2.1. The College appreciates that there may be occasions where Stage I is inappropriate and/or that a more formal approach is necessary.
- 5.2.2. At this point the staff member concerned should outline in writing the alleged breach of the Code of Conduct and forward the details to the Programme Leader. The information should be specific and comprehensively documented. The staff member must detail the student's name, class etc., dates, locations and witnesses as appropriate. Any previous efforts to resolve the matter should also be described.

- 5.2.3. The Programme Leader will acknowledge receipt of the documentation within five working days. It is the College's aim that all alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct, under Stage II, will be resolved within 21 days.
- 5.2.4. The Programme Leader will arrange to meet with the staff member to discuss the allegations. The Programme Leader will make a written record of the meeting.
- 5.2.5. To establish the facts of the complaint the Programme Leader will hold a separate meeting with the student concerned, and may also interview any material witnesses. The Programme Leader will make a written record of the meeting(s).
- 5.2.6. The Programme Leader will notify both parties in writing of the result of the complaint and the reasons for the decision. Where the result of the complaint includes consequent action or recommendations, the Programme Leader shall notify the appropriate person(s) or committee, internal or external.
- 5.2.7. The Programme Leader can, as appropriate, impose the following sanctions:
 - The imposition of a period of probation during which the student will be obliged to fulfil all academic requirements of his/her course
 - Withdrawal or restriction of certain rights
 - Suspension from the College for a period
 - A requirement to pay compensation for damage caused
 - Recommend to the TLA the permanent exclusion of the student(s) from the College.

Compliance with the sanctions will be monitored. Failure to comply will be referred to the Programme Leader.

5.3. STAGE III - Appeal

- 5.3.1. The Student may appeal the outcome of Stage II within 14 days of receipt/knowledge of the decision. The student should confirm his/her wish to appeal the outcome of Stage II in writing to the Programme Leader.
- 5.3.2. The Programme Leader will establish a Student Disciplinary Appeal Committee to examine the student's appeal.
- 5.3.3. Typically, the Student Disciplinary Appeal Committee will have three members, chaired by a senior member of staff, and include an experienced person from another College. No member of the committee will have been previously associated with the complaint.
- 5.3.4. The committee will receive the documentation so far generated by the disciplinary proceedings and will consider that documentation and hear other evidence.
- 5.3.5. The hearing will enable the committee to consider the way in which the disciplinary proceedings have been handled at any previous stage and/or to reconsider the appropriateness of the result of the previous stage of the process.

- 5.3.6. The decision of the Student Disciplinary Appeal Committee will be final as far as the College's student disciplinary procedures are concerned.
- 5.3.7. The Programme Leader will inform both parties, in writing, of the decision of the committee and the reasons for the decision. -

Appendix B: Forms and templates

At PCI College, we focus on ongoing continuous improvement of our programmes within the various validation cycles for each programme. Administrative, managerial and procedural documents are vital to the quality and consistency of the programmes and to ensure we have documented records of important aspects of programme delivery.

Over time, based on feedback and input from a variety of stakeholders, these forms/templates require updates. In the previous version of this manual, forms were duplicated here. However, this is an inefficient method of documentation since the frequency and type of updates required are likely out of pace (much faster) than the rate of changes needed to the QA Manual itself. Therefore, links to the current, live versions of the key documents and their locations on the PCI College Database (SharePoint) are included here instead.

This approach also helps orientate new staff members to quality processes and direct them to the locations of live documents for expediency.

End of Module Feedback Form (Student)

https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/Staff_Area/Module%20Management/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FStaff%5FArea%2FModule%20Management%2FAcademic%20Forms&FolderCTID=0x012000BCF2906467CD60489EF3FEFB2932E13F&View=%7BEDF15953%2D15AC%2D4977%2DB16C%2D7120EB103544%7D

End of Module Feedback Form (Lecturer)

https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/Staff_Area/Module%20Management/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FStaff%5FArea%2FModule%20Management%2FAcademic%20Forms&FolderCTID=0x012000BCF2906467CD60489EF3FEFB2932E13F&View=%7BEDF15953%2D15AC%2D4977%2DB16C%2D7120EB103544%7D

Mitigating Circumstances Form

<https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/Resources/Forms/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FResources%2FForms%2FAdministration%20Forms&FolderCTID=0x01200028F3779DD2810B4F821209BFB5FBB215&View=%7B01F7EE89%2D2253%2D47B1%2DBC01%2DB2A9D0A90848%7D>

Nomination Form for an External Examiner

https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/sites/faculty/Administration/Academic_Affairs/Accrediting_Partners/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fsites%2Ffaculty%2FAdministration%2FAcademic%5FAffairs%2FAccrediting%5FPartners%2FAccreditation%20Partners%2FMU%2FMU%2FExtern%2FE%20Nomination%202014&FolderCTID=0x012000420DA52BB36C9742B5E33E4F0640D68E&View=%7BFC4D7D8D%2D9788%2D43A4%2DA7E6%2D3CB6AA1E946E%7D

External Examiner Report

https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/sites/faculty/Administration/Academic_Affairs/Accrediting_Partners/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fsites%2Ffaculty%2FAdministration%2FAcademic%5FAffairs%2FAccrediting%5FPartners%2FAccreditation%20Partners%2FMU%2FMU%2FExtern%2FE

[external%20Examiner%20Reports&FolderCTID=0x012000420DA52BB36C9742B5E33E4F0640D68E&View=%7BFC4D7D8D%2D9788%2D43A4%2DA7E6%2D3CB6AA1E946E%7D#InplviewHashfc4d7d8d-9788-43a4-a7e6-3cb6aa1e946e=](https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/Forms/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FResources%2FForms%2FClient%20Work%20Forms%2FBSc%20and%20Diploma%20in%20Counselling%20and%20Psychotherapy&FolderCTID=0x012000420DA52BB36C9742B5E33E4F0640D68E&View=%7BFC4D7D8D%2D9788%2D43A4%2DA7E6%2D3CB6AA1E946E%7D#InplviewHashfc4d7d8d-9788-43a4-a7e6-3cb6aa1e946e=)

Supervisor's Report

B.Sc. Programme

<https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/Resources/Forms/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FResources%2FForms%2FClient%20Work%20Forms%2FBSc%20and%20Diploma%20in%20Counselling%20and%20Psychotherapy&FolderCTID=0x01200028F3779DD2810B4F821209BFB5FBB215&View=%7B01F7EE89%2D2253%2D47B1%2DBC01%2DB2A9D0A90848%7D>

M.Sc. Programme

<https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/Resources/Forms/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FResources%2FForms%2FClient%20Work%20Forms%2FMSc%20Child%20%26%20Adolescent%20Counselling%20and%20Psychotherapeutic%20Skills&FolderCTID=0x01200028F3779DD2810B4F821209BFB5FBB215&View=%7B01F7EE89%2D2253%2D47B1%2DBC01%2DB2A9D0A90848%7D>

Academic Writing Guidelines

<https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/Resources/SiteAssets/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FResources%2FSiteAssets%2FAcademic%20Writing%2F2%2E%20Guidelines%20%26%20Procedures&FolderCTID=0x012000C6D842EA8235B94F9EC7C2C6453C6C5F&View=%7BF5E658D5-4F32-4373-A8AE-D1A3203384DD%7D>

Disability Support Policy

https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/Staff_Area/Module%20Management/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FStaff%5FArea%2FModule%20Management%2FDisability%20Information&FolderCTID=0x012000BCF2906467CD60489EF3FEFB2932E13F&View=%7BEDF15953%2D15AC%2D4977%2DB16C%2D7120EB103544%7D

Scale of Plagiarism Offences

https://pcicollegestudents.sharepoint.com/Staff_Area/Module%20Management/Procedures/Plagiarism.pdf

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