Quality Assurance Manual

SETANTA COLLEGE

Section 11:
Transnational Programmes

SETANTA
College

11.1 Policy for Transnational Programmes

11.1.1 Definition

According to the *Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards* revised by QQI in 2012, 'transnational' education is the provision or partial provision of a programme of education in one country by a provider which is based in another country.

11.1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support the College's Strategic Plan (2019-22) (see Appendix 1) and its related strategies with respect to the operation of transnational programmes. It communicates Setanta College's policy on transnational programmes to Setanta College staff and current Learners, other awarding and accrediting bodies and to prospective applicants.

11.1.3 Scope

This policy governs the operations of all transnational programmes provided by Setanta College in locations outside the state as agreed with QQI.

11.1.4 QQI Policy for Transnational programmes

The QQI policy for the Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards (2012) states that transnational programmes should only be considered:

1. Within the framework of a clear, realistic, and periodically reviewed organisational strategy for doing so
2. Where arrangements for provision are financially sound and would not significantly diminish capacity to provide already established validated/accredited programmes
3. Where the learning environment can be sufficiently well-resourced (humanly and materially) to enable Learners to comfortably attain the intended learning outcomes which should be in compliance with QQI awards standards.

11.1.5 Setanta College Policy for Transnational programmes

It is the policy of Setanta College to deliver its programmes in a transnational context subject to the following criteria:

a. The policy will be pursued to the extent that it forms a part of the strategic planning priorities of Setanta College
b. The delivery of transnational programmes will be pursued on a phased basis and in line with the resources which are made available for such purposes
c. It will be a priority of Setanta College to ensure that those pursuing its courses in a transnational environment will have a learning experience which is equivalent in every respect to the experience of those pursuing the same programmes in Ireland

d. Targeted structures and systems will be put in place to pursue the delivery of transnational programmes in a manner which meets the requirements of QQI and gives a high-quality learning experience to its Learners

e. The monitoring and evaluation of programmes delivered in a transnational context will be carried out in as rigorous and focused a manner as that of programmes delivered in Ireland

11.1.6 Organisational Strategy

This section describes key objectives, resources and actions for international growth including:

- Strategic Objective
- Finance and Capacity
- Learning Environment Resources

i. Strategic Objective

The operation and delivery of transnational programmes is a clear strategic objective of the Setanta College strategy 2019 – 2022 which has been recently reviewed. That strategy states that:

> *Ireland's position as a key international gateway has never been more apparent. With the growth of global corporations locating in Ireland, the result of Brexit making Ireland the main English speaking link between Europe and the wider world, amongst other factors, Ireland has established itself as a leading international hub. This has extended to higher education in the country with nearly all IoTs and Universities prioritising internationalisation as a focus of their strategy while experiencing a growth in international activities and international Learner numbers. Similarly, a key component of the growth in global corporations headquartering in Ireland is the quality of and access to graduates. Ireland has long been regarded as 'the Land of Saints and Scholars', with the scholarship element now leading the charge. Within the sporting realm, Ireland has consistently achieved in performance with world leading athletes in soccer, rugby, boxing, golf, equestrian sport, swimming, and athletics. This has extended further to the support element of sport with the export of Irish coaching talent to Italy Rugby, USA Boxing, Kenyan Athletics, Premier League Soccer, etc. and the adoption of innovative Irish coaching technologies such as STATSports, Kitman Labs, and Orreco on a global and elite scale.*
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> *In reviewing what the vision of Setanta College aims to achieve, the need to operate internationally is obvious. To be a leading organisation within the field of human performance would require a presence in the leading markets in terms of human performance development. Within each subject specialisation there are different market rankings but the accepted locations include North America (USA and Canada specifically), Asia-Pacific (Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China), IMEA (India, UAE, Qatar, South Africa), and Europe (Ireland, UK, Western*

Europe, Russia). Strategically targeting a select few of these markets will go a long way to establishing momentum towards the college vision.

Setanta College has always aligned itself with world governing bodies including the organisers of rugby union and rugby sevens, World Rugby and the largest professional society for S&C, the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA). The borderless requirement for the enhancement of knowledge and development of quality graduates on a sport or industry specific basis also drives the need for a wider delivery reach. For example, the sport of rugby has 105 playing countries in its World Rugby Rankings, with the sport functioning in many more. There are over 7 million players globally to be developed and coached to fulfil their potential and achieve what they want from the game. To effectively deliver education and an impact within a single sport like rugby, hurling, soccer, golf, etc, there is a definite need to do so to the wider playing regions.

While the traditional Irish higher education market is significant in size, the main delivery model of Setanta College (blended learning) allows access to a smaller portion of the accessible market. This in itself justifies the focus on opening other markets to ensure growth and stability. However, the vision again ensures focus is on the global space in terms of establishing the college as a leader in the human performance field.

It is clear from this, therefore, that the internationalisation of its activities is a clear strategic objective of Setanta College, recognises its particular strengths and challenges and is clear as to the place such international programmes would play in its future. It is also clear that Setanta College already has many pre-existing international networks and relationships which will help it in the achievement of this objective.

It should be clearly noted, however, that the college intends to provide transnational programmes using its own resources. What is proposed are not collaborative programmes and will not involve joint awards.

ii. Finance and Capacity

It is anticipated that the programmes which are proposed for international delivery will enhance the financial strength of Setanta College rather than otherwise. There are two reasons for this.

a. The cost of delivery of most Setanta College programmes involve both online delivery and practical workshops. The development of the systems and content for online delivery is a significant part of the College's overall costs. However, once the systems and content have been delivered, the marginal cost of the delivery to additional Learners is low so the profit margin is higher. It is acknowledged that there will be additional cost in the delivery of the practical elements of the programmes in an international context. However, it is estimated that the cost of this delivery over and above that which might be incurred in an Irish context will be more than compensated for by the savings in the online delivery.

b. There is a major international market for the programmes delivered by Setanta College and, because of it existing networks, its name is better known in these markets than might be anticipated. Setanta College is, therefore, satisfied that it will have little difficulty recruiting viable cohorts of Learners to each of its programmes delivered in an international context.

Setanta College has also considered the impact on its capacity to deliver its existing programmes and any negative implications which might exist for such delivery. There are again, two reasons why the College is satisfied that its capacity will not be compromised.

- As noted above, the marginal demands on the resources which deliver the online elements of the programme will be small and will give rise to significant income from those elements of the programmes.
- The College does, however, recognise that there will be a need for additional resources both at the centre of the organisation and at the delivery sites for addressing the management of the programme delivery and this has been provided for in its future recruitment plans. See Figure 11.1 below showing new roles to be established once transnational provision is approved.

iii. **Learning Environment Resources**

Setanta College has also developed a template to assess course development and delivery resource requirements. This template includes an assessment of:
- The personnel hours devoted to delivery
- The personnel hours devoted to programme management including external examiners
- The personnel hours devoted to assessment and review
- Any specific programme costs such as facility rental, equipment provision and so on
- An assigned percentage, relative to the credits of the programme, of the technology costs of the College including the personnel costs involved
- An assigned percentage, relative to the credits of the programme, of the management costs of the College including HR, Finance, Marketing, Governance and General Management

This template is completed at the time of programme development and is reviewed each year to take account of any changes in any of the factors involved including rates of pay, costs of technology, other running costs and so on. This same template will be used to assess the costs of programmes being delivered transnationally. Costs are then allocated on a module basis so that the spread of costs across modules is identifiable.

The College's Learner records system is in a position to identify the fee income generated per module and per programme so it is possible on an annual basis to determine the costs of the delivery of a programme relative to its income. It is anticipated, of course, that income will exceed costs. Where such is not the case, remedial steps will be identified which may include

the reduction in costs, the increase in income or both.

Where a programme is loss-making after remedial efforts have been taken, the Finance Manager and the College Registrar will consider the situation and make a recommendation to Senior Management regarding the future of the programme. A loss-making programme, may not necessarily be discontinued, depending on its importance in the overall suite of programmes on offer and the level of loss being sustained.

In addition to using the template to monitor the financial viability of the programme the college also uses it to monitor the resources which are being provided for programme delivery on an ongoing basis. In particular account is taken of the numbers on any given module and additional teaching personnel are assigned to the module where numbers beyond those anticipated are registered. With regard to online teaching and learning resources these are reviewed by Tutors on an ongoing basis and amended as necessary to reflect developments in the field of study in question.

These resources are considered in a structured way at programmatic review and the annual programme review and changes made to ensure that resources are current in so far as that is possible. The College is well aware of the importance of ensuring a well-resourced learning environment and has put in place structures, policies and procedures to address these matters in a detailed way. With regard to the recognition within the Setanta College structures of the proposed transnational programmes, the following should be noted from Figure 11.1 below.
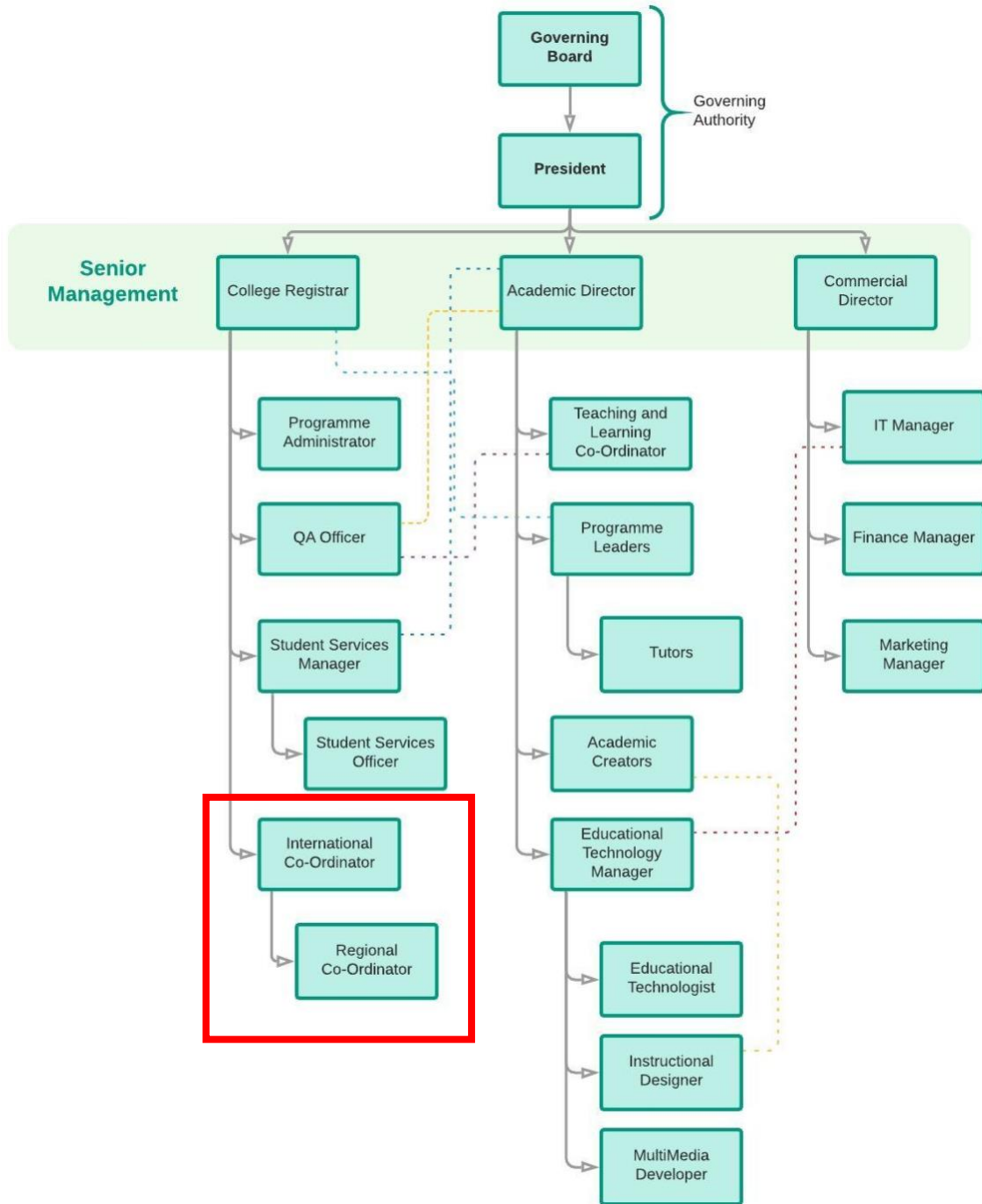
Figure 11.1 Organisational Structure within Setanta College highlighting dedicated roles specific to Transnational programme delivery.

International Co-Ordinator and Regional Co-Ordinator

The two positions which are outlined in red in the above organisational structure diagram, are specifically assigned to the delivery of transnational programmes. These are members of the Academic Affairs Committee. They include:

- An International Co-Ordinator who will ensure that all of the Quality Standards of the college are applied in an international learning context and
- Regional Co-Ordinator who will be based on the ground in the various learning jurisdictions and who will be responsible for ensuring compliance, quality and control in the regional learning environment.

In order to ensure that similar approaches are being taken in each region and that the quality of provision remains high, the following will be in place:

1. Regional Co-ordinators will be expected to have regular on-line calls with the International Co-ordinator and the International Learning Committee
2. Regional delivery staff will be required to complete the same Quality Assurance records as staff based in Ireland
3. Regional delivery staff will be expected either to come to Ireland for induction once a year or to attend an induction session in the region which will be delivered by college staff based in Ireland
4. The International Co-ordinator will visit each of the active regions at least once a year to meet with delivery staff and inspect facilities
5. Templates for the requirements for learning facilities and staff will be developed and provided to Regional Co-ordinators

11.1.7 Procedures for Transnational Programmes

The following procedures relate to Learner admission, progression and recognition in a transnational programme context.

Consistent with the general criteria and guidelines noted in Section 4 (4.1 Policy for Access, Transfer and Progression), international Learner entrants will be required to provide evidence that the candidate is an active coach with a relevant coaching qualification from a national sporting organisation. This qualification will be verified by the College's College Registrar's office before a candidate is accepted on a Setanta College programme.

- English language proficiency

In addition, the English language requirements as described in Section 4.1 of Policy for Access, Transfer and Progression, will be relevant. Demonstration of their level of English language proficiency will be assessed based on a composite score of 6 for the IELTS.

In the case of international Learners where English is not their first language they will be required to demonstrate a sufficient level of English Language proficiency. Setanta College require a composite score of 6 for the IELTS[9] (International English Language Testing System).

11.1.8 Protection of Enrolled Learners

Setanta College has Learner protection arrangements in place with respect to enrolled Learners on all QQI validated courses, ensuring Learners' education at Setanta College is protected, and in accordance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. The arrangements are with at least two other providers in respect of each QQI course whereby Learners will transfer to similar courses provided by the other providers or will continue their existing course transferred to one of the other providers in the instance of a trigger event.

This is facilitated through membership of the HECA PEL Scheme. The Qualifications & Quality Assurance (Education & Training) Act 2012 stipulates that a provider should put in place for the protection of enrolled Learners on programmes of three months duration or more where moneys have been paid by, or on behalf of the Learner, to the provider for a programme of education and training. This legal requirement is made of individual providers, and each provider is expected to have a PEL policy and set of procedures in place. In addition to this requirement, Setanta College strives to ensure that all its programmes are taught out and finished.

The purpose of the policy and procedure on PEL is to facilitate Setanta College reaching workable and tangible PEL solutions across all programmes, for its continuation to completion. Arrangements which facilitate Learners to complete their studies, is the preferred PEL option and approach for QQI and Setanta College, as this accommodation is in the best interests of the Learner. This policy and procedure will apply to enrolled transnational Learners as well as to Learners in Ireland and Setanta College will extend its coverage to any such programmes.

11.1.9 Staff recruitment in a Transnational programme context

In line with current standard recruitment procedures where the college requests expressions of interest from suitably qualified individuals, international staff will be recruited in a similar manner. Initially online - through expressions of interest and with subsequent initial interviews either online or face to face. This allows a short listing of candidates for a formal face to face interview. This may be held on site in Setanta College or externally as may be appropriate. International staff will be provided with the same induction process as domestic or home based staff.

11.1.10 Staff communication in a Transnational programme context

It is important from a Quality Assurance and engagement perspective to have equivalence of communication at home and abroad through clear but similar means of communication. There are a number of challenges relating to staff communication in an international context. Face to face meetings will clearly not be possible at least on a regular basis as would a home based face to face meeting.

To offset this and to ensure an equivalence where possible, the college will use the medium of any of a number of remote means for face to face communication. A key objective is to ensure that there is a sense of community between both home and international staff.

International staff will have at least one face to face meeting with a senior academic leader as directed by the International Co-ordinator during the academic year. This meeting can occur at either the international staff location or the college home environment. Similar standard electronic communication and updates as outlined above will be in place for the international staff member.

11.1.11 Staff Development in a Transnational programme context

In keeping with the policy of staff development for staff members based in Ireland, the College applies the same policy and approach to staff development who may be based at an international venue. The Academic Director oversees continuing professional development among staff and in conjunction with the International Co-ordinator facilitates face to face meetings with international based staff. All staff receive training in teaching through blended learning mediums.

In addition, specific training for staff to support programme or college developments are organised as needed. With respect to the annual CPD event for academic staff, international staff are requested to attend and are facilitated to do so. Also, the content of this event is informed by all academic staff based at home or in a transnational programme context. Within all annual staff reviews including staff who may be based in a transnational programme context on-going CPD is addressed. For ease of both staff based abroad and at home the annual staff review may be conducted at a time coinciding with the annual CPD meeting. The college supports the progression of formal education and academic qualification advancement for its internationally based academic staff based on resources available.

The model as described previously seeks to ensure that all staff have equal engagement with the college. In addition, through the annual CPD meeting which is a face to face engagement either remotely or directly, international staff will be involved. Other opportunities exist for international staff integration including the workshops and conferences hosted at the college base and through other events that are run by the college where all staff are encouraged to attend. Individual appraisals also allow a personal development progression and these are part of the CPD options as described above.

11.1.12 Online Element of Blended Learning in a Transnational programme context

Where Setanta College offers the online learning element of their programmes to Learners based outside of Ireland, the college ensures that due diligence and risk management arrangements are in place that are robust and fit-for-purpose. The College International Co-Ordinator works with the College's Regional Co-Ordinator and the relevant national agencies to establish that appropriate procedures are in place and these include:

Internal approval processes are in place as part of programme design to confirm that any relevant legal or regulatory requirements have been met. For example:

- Requirements for local accreditation or recognition by statutory or regulatory bodies, which may be at programme and/or institutional level
- Permission for foreign providers to operate within the local jurisdiction
- Cultural considerations that may inhibit group interactions, for example between different religious groupings or synchronous delivery of content where gender considerations are required
- Regulations that may prohibit or inhibit the charging of fees
- Other jurisdictional requirements that may influence the blend of learning permitted.

An internal process to consider and approve business models and associated risk management to ensure viability and sustainability of quality are in place as part of programme design of international programmes. Matters that are specific or heightened in the online and blended learning context include the following, which are included as part of the programme development and design process:

- Taxation
- Definitions of 'Learner or Learner' that may impact funding streams
- The location of servers
- Employment law that may inhibit the ability to employ local Tutors or use other support functions
- Recognition of qualifications gained through online learning

Appropriate legal advice will be sought by the Regional Co-Ordinator to ensure, for example, that:

- Learners' interests are safeguarded in accordance with the rules of the specific country involved
- The location of servers will meet the needs of stakeholders in each jurisdiction
- Provider's software or learning resources licences will be valid within each jurisdiction or other arrangements are put in place
- There is compliance with local financial regulations or taxation issues
- There is compliance with local employment law
- There is compliance with local law or expectations of consumer protection
- Intellectual property rights or copyright are not compromised

In addition, before offering blended learning options to Learners outside Ireland, Setanta College will have tested delivery systems to ensure that Learners outside Ireland will have equal access to support and to learning resources and that the platforms routinely used are available in the jurisdiction in question.

11.1.13 Assessment of Learners in a Transnational programme context

In general, the regulations regarding the assessment of Learners in a transnational programme context and those in Ireland will be the same and the same attainment will be expected of both. Setanta College is putting structures, systems and processes in place to address the learning experience of Learners in a transnational programme context and to ensure that it is on a par with that of Learners based in Ireland. These structures, systems and process will impact on assessment of Learners as well as on all other aspects of the learning experience. General steps and some specifically relating to assessment are set out below.

There are currently two categories of programme delivery to those who are not based in Ireland.

1. Delivery to those who do not live in Ireland but who avail of the on-line learning environment and who come to Ireland to participate in the necessary face-to-face learning processes. The risks associated with this category of Learner are relatively small as they will be experiencing the same learning and assessment processes as will those Learners who are based in Ireland. The principal additional challenges which need to be addressed relate to the recognition of the Irish qualification in their own country and ensuring that they have the linguistic and other capabilities to engage in the programme of study in an appropriate way.

2. Delivery to those who do not live in Ireland but who avail of the on-line learning environment and who participate in face-to-face learning environments in their own countries. The risks associated with this category of Learner include those relating to the category above but additional risks are related to the quality of the face-to-face learning environment in their own country; the quality of the Tutors delivering the face-to-face learning experience in their own country; ensuring the compliance with the laws of the third country with regard to matters such as employment law, health and safety legislation and similar.

In order to address these issues, Setanta College intends to take a number of steps including:

- The risks to the quality of learning experience of foreign Learners will be included on the Risk Register and suitable mitigation measures and responsible people identified
- A number of new positions will be established within the Academic Affairs Committee in Setanta College. These will include an International Co-Ordinator who will ensure that all of the Quality Standards of Setanta College are applied in an international learning context and Regional Co-Ordinators who will be based on the ground in the various learning jurisdictions and who will be responsible for ensuring compliance, quality and control in the regional learning environment.

In order to ensure that similar approaches are being taken in each region and that the quality of provision remains high:

1. Regional Co-Ordinators will be expected to have regular on-line calls with the International Co-Ordinator

2. Regional delivery staff will be required to complete the same Quality Assurance records as staff based in Ireland
3. Regional delivery staff will be expected either to come to Ireland for induction once a year or to attend an induction session in the region which will be delivered by Setanta staff based in Ireland
4. The international Co-Ordinator will visit each of the active regions at least once a year to meet with delivery staff and inspect facilities
5. Templates for the requirements for learning facilities and staff will be developed and provided to Regional Co-Ordinators
6. Templates for engagement with education, employment, health and safety and financial regulators in regional environments will be developed and provided to Regional Co-Ordinators
7. Where assessments are being carried out at remote locations, these assessments will be recorded and reviewed by programme leaders/topic specialists to ensure consistency of marking.

In addition, where necessary and appropriate, regional marking averages across all modules will be reviewed by programme leaders and lecturers and where patterns of inconsistency are identified these will be addressed.

In order to ensure that Learners have the capacity to participate in programmes –
- The level of spoken English as well as written English required by Learners will be regularly reviewed and entry requirements adjusted to take account of these reviews
- Equivalence of qualifications will be regularly reviewed by the International Co-Ordinator and Regional Co-Ordinators using internationally agreed criteria
- Evidence of capacity to participate may be required to be demonstrated through practical exercises or examinations

In order to ensure that the specific experience of international Learners is assessed feedback processes for international Learners will be tailored to ensure that their specific experiences are captured and that the specific experience of learning from an organisation which is not based locally is capable of being reviewed.

11.1.14 Learner Support for Learners studying in a Transnational programme context

In general, Learner support for Learners in a transnational programme context and those in Ireland will be the same and the same standards will be expected of both. Setanta College has put structures, systems and processes in place to address the learning experience of Learners in a transnational programme context and these structures, systems and processes ensure that any transnational programme is on a par with that of Learners based in Ireland.

Choosing the correct facility that the onsite face to face workshops take place in is critical to achieving the same level of support available to those Learners studying outside of Ireland. The Quality Assurance of this will be managed by the International Co-Ordinator and a venue assessment will take place prior to agreeing a venue.

Through a venue assessment, it will be established that the proposed location for delivery and access to the facilities and resources required for successful completion of the programme are, and remain to be, satisfactory in relation to the quality of the learning experience.

It is the responsibility of the International Co-Ordinator in accordance with the College's Quality Assurance procedures to ensure that teaching staff are appropriately qualified. In addition, it is important to deliver the required level of support to Learners who are studying in a transnational programme context and that the level of support facilitates the achievement of the learning outcomes for the award. Policies and procedures with respect to Supports for the Learner in particular within a Transnational context are described in full in Section 8: Support for Leaners, within this Quality Assurance Manual.

A Regional Co-Ordinator will be in attendance at each face-to-face workshop that takes place to ensure the smooth operation of the programme.

11.1.15 Managing Risk in a Transnational programme context

Because the College intends to deliver its programmes at locations outside of Ireland, it must consciously consider the nature of the risks which may apply in such circumstances. There are currently two categories of programme delivery to those who are not based in Ireland.

i.   Delivery to those who do not live in Ireland but who avail of the on-line learning environment and who come to Ireland to participate in the necessary face-to-face learning processes

The risks associated with this category of Learner are relatively small as they will be experiencing the same learning and assessment processes as will those Learners who are based in Ireland. The principal additional challenges which need to be addressed relate to the recognition of the Irish qualification in their own country and ensuring that they have the linguistic and other capabilities to engage in the programme of study in an appropriate way.

ii. Delivery to those who do not live in Ireland but who avail of the on-line learning environment and who participate in face-to-face learning environments in their own countries

The risks associated with this category of Learner include those relating to the category above, but additional risks are related to the quality of the face-to-face learning environment in their own country; the quality of the Tutors delivering the face-to-face learning experience in their own country; ensuring the compliance with the laws of the country with regard to matters such as employment law, health and safety legislation and similar.

In order to address these issues, the College intends to take a number of steps –
*   The risks to the quality of learning experience of foreign Learners will be included on the Risk Register and suitable mitigation measures and responsible people identified
*   The International Co-Ordinator and the Regional Co-Ordinator and members of the Academic Affairs Committee will oversee the programme.

In addition, specific consideration will be given to the following aspects of transnational delivery –

- Learner admission, progression and recognition
- Protection of Enrolled Learners
- Staff recruitment
- Staff communication
- Staff Development
- Online Element of Blended Learning
- Learner Support
- Assessment of Learners

11.1.16 Responsibility for Transnational Programmes

The College Registrar assisted by the Programme Administrator and the International Co-Ordinator are responsible for implementing this policy. There will be a number of other staff involved throughout including the Regional Co-Ordinator, Programme Leader(s), Module Tutors, Student Services Manager (and Student Services Officer).

11.1.16 Policy Control Sheet

Policy Area	Transnational Programme	
Policy Title	Policy for Transnational Programmes	
Approval Date	3/9/2019	
Effective Date	3/9/2019	
Review Date	1/9/2020	
Revision History	Revisions to reflect greater clarity in delivery of Transnational Learner Support	1/8/2020
Relevant Supporting Policies	- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. - Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI. - Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), 2015. - Policy for Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards (2012), QQI. - IHEQN Guidelines for the Approval, Monitoring and Review of Collaborative and Transnational Provision (2013)	
Monitoring Procedures	- Academic Affairs Committee - International Co-Ordinator report to Academic Council - Regional Co-Ordinator facility feasibility report	