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Quality Assurance Manual

SETANTA COLLEGE

Section 8: Support for Learners



SETANTA
College

8.1 Policy for Learner Complaints

8.1.1 Purpose

This policy has been created in recognition of a Learner's right to express a complaint in the event that she/he feels they have been mistreated or disadvantaged as a result of the College's provision of programmes or services or the behaviour or actions of members of College staff, faculty, or the Learner body.

8.1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all Learners and relates to all Setanta College services and programmes apart from academic appeals which is dealt with in the *Policy for Learner Recheck, Review and Appeals*.

8.1.3 Policy Statement

Setanta College is committed to delivering a high-quality educational experience for Learners in a stimulating and innovative learning environment. Where problems arise that may endanger the quality of the College's learning environment a procedure is available to ensure an effective response and appropriate redress. In responding to problems, the College is committed to an approach that emphasises positive support for improved standards of behaviour and performance rather than negative sanctions. In all instances principles of professionalism, fairness, equity and transparency shall be guaranteed.

When a Learner registers for a programme at Setanta College she/he is committing her/himself to attend classes whether in person or on-line, to completing assignments and other work as required, and behaving in a responsible and professional manner that complies with the College regulations and codes of conduct. In return, the College is committed to providing high quality teaching and academic support services and a professional learning environment that will allow Learners to achieve their goals.

8.1.4 Adequacy of Resources

The adequacy of the resources available to Learners is monitored on an ongoing basis. Learning resources are updated and expanded as necessary to reflect up-to-date approaches and Learner needs as identified through feedback on teaching and learning.

The following resources are in place:

- a) An integrated approach from the perspective of the Learner. The range of learning resources and Learner supports is as coherent and integrated as possible.
- b) Procedures in place to ensure that all resources are fit for purpose and accessible
- c) Learners are informed about the full range of services available to them
- d) Learners are surveyed annually for their overall impression of learning resources and Learner supports

- e) Learner perspectives about the sufficiency and quality of learning resources and Learner supports are listened to
- f) All learning resources and Learner supports are responsive to the needs of the programme, the programme review and other evaluation activities and deliberative or decision-making processes requiring feedback on Learner support
- g) Different Learner support/resource units benefit from networking with each other to ensure a coherent approach
- h) Resources and supports are promoted actively to ensure that Learners are aware of their existence
- i) Learner resources and supports are bench marked against standards
- j) The learning environment includes pastoral care supports provided by staff for Learners. This includes both pastoral and educational care, such as Tutors, mentors, and other advisors
- k) Learner support services are delivered through both academic and non-academic resources including: Administrative services, Technical and IT support services and teaching and Learning resources
- l) Services to Learner also include the provider's career opportunities support through employers, professional and training bodies and the growing industry network of the College
- m) Learner representation: There are mechanisms for Learners to make representations to the College about matters of general concern to the Learner body.
- n) Guidance: Necessary guidance services are provided to Learners on programmes as appropriate. Accurate and relevant information on the programme, which includes details on potential career pathways, is provided to Learners prior to enrolment on the programme.

8.1.5 College Stage Process for addressing Complaints

Setanta College operates a two-stage process for addressing complaints:

- I. An **informal complaint** procedure that encourages a prompt resolution of problems at the initial stage.
- II. A **formal stage** – completed over 2 stages if required - that deals with a complaint that cannot be resolved informally. The procedure below is adhered to when dealing with formal complaints. All complaints are treated promptly, fairly, impartially and in confidence. Setanta College ensures that no complaint made in good faith shall be used to disadvantage any person in the future. Transnational learners will be advised and assisted through these processes by the relevant Regional Co-Ordinator.

8.1.6 Informal Procedure for Learner Complaints

Problems are best resolved locally, at the point closest to where the issue has arisen. For this reason, every effort should be made to resolve a problem by communicating directly with the Learner or staff member involved and attempting to resolve the matter appropriately. Giving the opportunity to consider and reply to a concern often eases tension that may exist, may resolve the matter and removes a necessity to involve other persons.

Where speaking to the individual directly the Learner should approach the Programme leader, lecturer or Tutor informally (other than the staff member involved if the issue is with a member of the administrative staff) and bring to that individual's attention the concern. If the Learner is not satisfied with the conclusion of the discussion or with the outcome of any subsequent action, she/he may choose to initiate a formal Notification of Concern procedure as outlined below.

The Learner should only seek to invoke the formal route if informal recourse to a Lecturer, Tutor or Programme Leader has first been attempted and has not resolved the problem or, in the case of a non-academic staff member, if their line manager decides that the informal route is inappropriate.

8.1.7 Procedure for Formal Complaints – Stage 1

- a) The College appreciates that there may be occasions where informal solution is inappropriate and/or that a more formal approach is necessary.
- b) The relevant Tutor will explain to the Learner the operation of the remaining stages of the Learner Complaints Procedure.
- c) At this point the Learner should complete a complaint form, which can be obtained from the Student Services Manager. The completed complaint form should be forwarded to the Student Services Manager. The complaint should be specific and comprehensively documented. The complaint form 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 described.
- d) The Student Services Manager will identify an appropriate manager within the College to deal with the complaint consistent with this procedure – the nominated Manager – an individual who has management responsibilities within the College. In the case of a transnational learner who has made a formal complaint the student services manager will inform the International Co-Ordinator who is familiar with the relevant procedures and will deal with the complaint consistent with this procedure.
- e) The Student services manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days. It is the College aim that all complaints under Stage 1 will be resolved within 21 days.
- f) The Student Services Manager will advise the person who is the subject of the complaint and provide that person with a copy of the complaint.
- g) The nominated Manager will communicate with the Learner to discuss the complaint. The nominated Manager will make a written record of the meeting/communication. In the case of a transnational learner who has made a formal complaint the International Co-Ordinator will communicate with the Learner to discuss the complaint. The International Co-Ordinator will make a written record of the meeting/communication, where relevant a meeting will take place through online means.
- h) To establish the facts of the complaint the nominated Manager (in a transnational context this is the International Co-Ordinator) will hold a separate meeting with the person who is the subject of the complaint and may also interview any material witnesses. The nominated Manager will make a written record of the meeting(s)

- i) The nominated Manager 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 nominated Manager shall notify the appropriate person(s) or committee, internal or external to the college, without undue delay.

8.1.8 Appeal to Disciplinary Committee - Stage 2

- a) Either party may appeal the outcome of Stage 1 within 14 days of receipt of the notification of the nominated Manager's decision. The relevant party must confirm the wish to appeal in writing to the College Registrar.
- b) The College Registrar will refer the matter to the Disciplinary Committee to examine the appeal.
- c) Typically, the Disciplinary Committee will have four members, the College Registrar (Chair) and three other members as appointed by the College President (the members will include at least one experienced external academic). The Learner and their own representative may also attend. No member of the committee will have been previously associated with the complaint.
- d) The Disciplinary Committee will receive the documentation so far generated by the complaint and will consider that documentation and hear other evidence at a hearing in line with the above.
- e) The hearing will enable the committee to consider the way in which the complaint has been handled at any previous stage 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.
- f) The decision of the committee will be final as far as the College's Learner Complaints Procedures are concerned.
- g) The College Registrar will inform both parties, in writing, of the decision of the committee and the reasons for the decision.
- h) If the committee decides that certain actions have to be taken as a consequence of the complaint or appeal, the College Registrar will nominate an individual to monitor such actions.

8.1.9 Responsibility for this Policy

The College Registrar is responsible for the implementation of the Learner Complaints policy having delegated responsibility from the Governing Board. The initial stage (Stage 1) responsibility is managed by Student Services Manager who nominates an internal Manager (in a transnational context this will be the International Co-Ordinator) to conduct the Complaints procedure (Stage 1). Stage 2 is managed by the College Registrar with the Disciplinary Committee being the decision making unit. Note in the event of the College Registrar being the subject of a complaint a person nominated by the College President will assume responsibility for the implementation of the Learner Complaints policy.

8.1.10 Policy Control Sheet

Policy Area	Support for Learners	
Policy Title	Policy for Learner Complaints	
Approval Date	3/3/2019	
Effective Date	3/3/2019	
Revision History	Revisions to reflect greater clarity in management of Learner complaint in a transnational context	1/8/2020
Review Date	1/9/2020	
Relevant Supporting Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	
Monitoring Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learner feedback and surveys - Staff feedback and surveys - Learner Complaints Procedure Report (Nominated Manager report) - Disciplinary Committee report - Governing Board 	

8.2 Policy for Managing Learner Recheck, Review and Appeal

8.2.1 Definitions

Recheck: Recheck means the administrative operation of checking (again) the recording and combination of component scores for a module or stage (QQI Assessments and Standards, Revised 2013, 4.10.3).

Review: Review means the re-consideration of the assessment decision, either by the original assessor or by other competent persons or a committee. Learners are required to state the grounds for the requested review. The grounds for review will normally be that the Learner suspects that the assessment was erroneous in some respect (QQI Assessments and Standards, Revised 2013, 4.10.3).

Appeal: An appeal is where a Learner formally requests that the decision or judgement of a lower authority is referred to a higher authority (i.e., the Appeals and Review Committee) for reconsideration.

8.2.2 Purpose

This policy sets out the principles, circumstances, grounds and possible outcomes of an appeal by a Learner against a decision made by the College.

8.2.3 Scope

The policy applies to Learners wishing to appeal decisions made by the College. The policy also applies to all staff and faculty in the conduct of the appeals process.

8.2.4 Policy Statement

Setanta College understands that there are instances where Learners may wish to question the assessment grade and or feedback they receive on their assessment. Setanta College is committed to ensuring the assessment procedures are reliable, valid, accurate and fair and therefore implements appropriate procedures to facilitate Learners to seek a recheck, review or appeal of an assessment decision. The following principles inform the policy and procedures for Learner Recheck, Review and Appeal. These principles are informed by the following QQI guidelines and requirements:

- Assessment and Standards, QQI, Revised 2013
- Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, QQI, 2016
- Policy and Criteria for Marking Awards, QQI, 2017
- HET and Apprenticeship Programme Validation Manual, QQI, 2018
- Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training, QQI, 2017
- Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers Revised 2013 (Version 2 - revised 2018*)
- Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (QQI March 2018)

The Principles

- i. Valid grounds
Appeals will only be considered where there are valid grounds in line with this policy, as specified and evidenced by the Learner seeking the appeal.
- ii. Evidence
All appeals must be evidence based and hearsay and opinion are not considered as evidence.
- iii. Due process
All appeals are conducted with care, fairness and transparency following the prescribed process.
- iv. Independence
 - A review can be considered by the original decision-maker or their nominee
 - No person considering an appeal at an Appeals and Review Committee can have had any previous involvement in the case being considered
 - Any person asked to consider an appeal must declare any conflict of interest
 - An Appeals and Review Committee may be composed of experienced individual external to the day-to-day operation of the College, with relevant competence and independence to contribute to the decision(s) being made.
- v. Competence
 - As an appeal involves reconsideration or alteration of a judgement, people considering an appeal must be competent to consider the case at hand
 - The Chairperson will be a person with significant experience of appeal processes.
- vi. Fair Representation
Where a Learner wishes to be present at the Appeals and Review Committee meeting, they may seek to do so at the point of appeal where they explain the purpose of their presence. A decision shall be made by the Academic Director or the College Registrar as to whether there is merit and usefulness in the attendance. The Appeals and Review committee meeting will be held where appropriate through online means to allow representation of transnational learners.
- vii. Non-adversarial and Supportive
 - Procedures under this policy are not intended to be adversarial and the College recommends that the Learner seeks a sighting of their script, marking scheme and results through the programme Leader as a first stage before deciding on a review or the script. This is to ensure that the Learner has seen the process of the consideration of their results
 - Where a Learner does participate in an Appeals and Review Committee meeting, that they do not engage legal representation during proceedings
 - Where a Learner does seek to bring legal representation to any meeting, the Learner must notify the College in writing of their intent within five working days as the legal
 - Representatives of the College will also be required to attend

- A Learner may opt to be accompanied by a friend or family member in a supportive capacity. However, where this person is a member of the legal profession, they cannot act in that capacity.

viii. No right of further appeal

- After an appeals procedure has been executed through the Appeals and Review Committee in line with the relevant policies, there is no further right of appeal.
- A Learner cannot seek to use an appeals mechanism to revisit or reopen a matter which has already been decided upon in a previous appeals process.

ix. Timely and fair approach

All rechecks, reviews and appeals and disputes will be addressed in a fair, transparent and timely fashion.

x. Appeals outcome

The outcome of a recheck, review or appeal can result in an upgrade or a downgrade of the original marks received. This procedure provides an additional means for Learners to be confident in the assessment tools, process and outcomes as applied to their individual case.

8.2.5 Procedures for this Policy

Procedure to request a Recheck

- a) A Learner wishing to have the marks awarded for a particular module (or modules) re-considered should seek a recheck (or rechecks) of the relevant module(s). A recheck is a re-examination of the marks awarded for a module, or part of a module, to ensure that there have been no arithmetical or clerical errors and that all the marks to which the Learner is entitled have been included in the final total.
- b) The Learner must complete the recheck form and send it to the Module Tutor (or his/her nominee) no later than 10 working days after the examination results have been displayed on the College online notice boards. Requests received after that date will not be considered. The Learner should supply any details that he/she believes will help expedite the recheck.
- c) Requests for rechecks must be accompanied by the appropriate €20 fee which shall be set in respect of each module for which such a request is made. In the event of a recheck resulting in an amended mark the fee will be refunded.
- d) All rechecks will be completed within ten days of being received.
- e) The recheck will be conducted by the appropriate module Tutor.
- f) The Module Tutor will inform the Learner in writing or electronically of the outcome of the recheck.

Procedure to Request a Review – Stage 1

- a) A review is a request to reconsider the grade awarded to a Learner in an assessment including practical assessments for specific reasons.
- b) The grounds for a review are one or more of the following:
 - I. The examination regulations of the College have not been properly implemented

- II. Practical assessment regulations relating to the facility, equipment and the human subjects for demonstrations did not meet the required standard.
 - III. The regulations do not adequately cover the candidate's case
 - IV. Compassionate circumstances exist which may not have been considered by the Board of Examiners. Normally, such compassionate circumstances must be notified in writing to the programme Leader when they occur.
- c) The College will seek to complete all reviews within twenty-eight (28) days where review requests have been received by the Programme Leader (or his/her nominee) not later than 10 days after the examination results have been displayed on the College on-line notice board.
 - d) Only a written request for a review made on the Learner review form and signed by the person concerned will be considered.
 - e) A request for a review must state the grounds upon which the review is sought, and the candidate must supply evidence in support of his/her request.
 - f) Prior to any formal review the Learner will be invited by the Programme Leader to view their original assessment script including the video recording of the practical assessment where appropriate, the marking scheme and marks awarded. This viewing will be scheduled to coincide with either the next face to face workshop attended by the Learner, or an appointed Learner visit to the College. Where appropriate this viewing can be facilitated through online means for transnational learners.
 - g) The assessment sighting of all related work shall be managed by the Programme Leader and following this the Learner may decide to a) withdraw the review request or b) proceed with the request for a review conducted by the Academic Standards Committee.
 - h) Should the Learner request a formal review through the Academic Standards Committee, the processing of the review will be carried out having due regard to the schedule of meetings of the Academic Council and the annual conferring date.
 - i) A €20 fee for a review shall be set, which in the event of a successful review, will be refunded.
 - j) Following receipt of the review fee and written request from the Learner the Academic Standards Committee will formally convene.

Procedure to Request an Academic Standards Committee Review – Stage 2

- a) Where the Learner requests an Academic Standards review the Programme Leader shall contact the Academic Standards Committee in the event of a Learner wishing to pursue the review through the Academic Director.
- b) The Academic Standards Committee shall then consider the evidence presented to it and decide the outcome of the review.
- c) The following are members of the Academic Standards Committee:
 - Academic Director (Chair)
 - Programme Leader – not related to the Learner programme of study
 - International Co-Ordinator
 - Teaching and Learning Co-Ordinator

- Quality Assurance Officer
 - The Learner concerned may choose to address the Committee on the circumstances of the review. In the event of the Learner seeking this opportunity a person of his/her choice may accompany the Learner. Where appropriate the transnational learner may address the Committee through online means.
- d) In carrying out a review, the Academic Standards Committee may consult with such persons, as it deems appropriate. The Academic Standards Committee may require that a review of the marking of an assessment be undertaken by the internal and External Examiners, where feasible, or by one or more other appropriate internal examiner or other appropriate external examiner.
 - e) All decisions of the committee will be by majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson will have a casting vote.
 - f) The Learner will be informed by the Academic Director, in writing by registered post or electronically, of the outcome of the review.
 - g) A Learner dissatisfied with the outcome of a review may appeal the decision of the Academic Standards Committee.
 - h) The Academic Director shall notify the Learner's Tutor and the Programme Leader of the outcome of the review.
 - i) Where appropriate, as in if the Learner has accepted the decision of the Academic Standards Committee, the College Registrar shall notify QQI of the outcome of the review.

Procedure to Request an Appeal – Stage 3

- a) Grounds for Appeal: The Learner can appeal the outcome of the review for all assessment methods on the grounds that the review did not properly address his/her case. The introduction of new material that could have been included in the submission for the review shall not be a valid ground for appeal.
- b) A request for an appeal following the decision of the Academic Standards Committee decision must be received by the College Registrar not later than the date specified in the letter notifying the candidate of the decision of the Academic Standards Committee.
- c) Only a written request for an appeal made on the Learner appeal form and signed by the person concerned will be considered.
- d) A request for an appeal must state the grounds upon which the appeal is sought.
- e) The candidate must supply evidence in support of his/her request.
- f) The Appeals and Review Committee will be responsible for determining the outcome of the appeal.
- g) Membership of Appeals and Review Committee. The following will be selected as members of the Appeals and Review Committee:
 - The College Registrar (Chair)
 - Programme Leader from a different programme whence the appeal has originated
 - External Academic with experience of appeals
 - Chair of the Academic Council
 - The Learner concerned may choose to address the Committee on the circumstances of the appeal. In the event of the Learner seeking this opportunity a person of his/her

choice may accompany the Learner. Where appropriate the transnational learner may address the Committee through online means.

8.2.6 Procedures of the Appeals and Review Committee

The Appeals and Review Committee:

- a) Shall consider the report of the Academic Standards Committee and Programme Leader.
- b) Will seek (through the Chairperson) such information or advice as it considers necessary and in such manner as it considers appropriate.
- c) Shall, having considered the circumstances, decide the outcome of the appeal.
- d) May, through the College Registrar, seek the advice of such external professionals considered necessary to ensure a proper and fair procedure.
- e) Shall make their collective decision by majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson shall have a casting vote.
- f) Shall inform the appellant in writing, by registered post or electronically, of the outcome by the College Registrar. All decisions of the appeal board are final subject to any legal rights of the Learner. The College Registrar shall notify the Learner's Tutors and Programme Leader of the outcome of the appeal.

8.2.7 Responsibility for this Policy

The Academic Council is ultimately responsible for the reviews and appeal policy. The College Registrar is responsible for the implementation of the appeals policy and reports to the Academic Council. Certain officers of the College have formal decision-making powers related to their roles and responsibilities and include, but are not limited to the Programme Leader who is responsible for managing Stage 1 of the appeal process.

The Academic Director manages Stage 2 and the College Registrar manages Stage 3. The relevant Regional and International Co-Ordinator will advise at each of these stages in relation to any issues which may be particular to the learner from that region.

Certain formal committees of the College have formal deliberative, decision-making powers delegated to them by the Academic Council. The Reviews and Appeals Committee is the hearing and decision-making unit in the case of academic reviews and appeals. The International Co-Ordinator and the Regional Co-Ordinator will sit on the Reviews and Appeals Committee for reviews and appeals for learners undertaking transnational provision.

8.2.8 Policy Control Sheet

Policy Area	Support for Learners	
Policy Title	Policy for Managing Learner Recheck, Review and Appeal	
Approval Date	3/3/2019	
Effective Date	3/3/2019	
Revision History	Revisions to reflect greater clarity in management of Learner Recheck, Review and Appeal in a transnational context	1/8/2020
Review Date	1/9/2020	
Relevant Supporting Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment and Standards, QQI, Revised 2013 - Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, QQI, 2016 - Policy and Criteria for Marking Awards, QQI, 2017 - HET and Apprenticeship Programme Validation Manual, QQI, 2018 - Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training, QQI, 2017 - Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers Revised 2013 (Version 2 - revised 2018*) - Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (QQI March 2018) 	
Monitoring Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learner Feedback - External Examiner Report - Academic Standards Committee Report - Appeals and Review Committee Report - Academic Council Report 	

8.3 Policy for Managing Learner Withdrawals

8.3.1 Definition

Withdrawal - This is where a Learner ceases study on a programme before completion of the programme. There are two types of withdrawal:

- 1) College-initiated: The College may initiate withdrawal of a Learner for:
 - Non-engagement
 - Non-payment of fees
- 2) Learner-initiated: where a Learner requests to permanently cease being a registered Learner on a Setanta College programme.

8.3.2 Purpose

To provide a framework by which a registered Learner can withdraw from a programme and the College can withdraw a registered Learner from their programme.

8.3.3 Scope

This policy applies to all registered Learners and all staff and faculty who are involved in withdrawing a Learner from a programme of study. The policy applies to the following situations:

- 1) Where a Learner seeks to voluntarily withdraw from a programme.
- 2) Where the Academic Director, based on the criteria specified, recommends to the College Registrar that a Learner be withdrawn from a programme.

8.3.4 Policy Statement

Setanta College recognises that there are instances when a Learner chooses to withdraw from their programme of study or where they choose to transfer their studies to another institution. While the College recognises the rights of Learners to do this, establishing the cause of the Learner decision or the factors that influenced the decision is an important part of the feedback process and informs programme development and delivery, and Learner support and Learner management processes in Setanta College.

Setanta College has a duty of care to all Learners throughout their studies and in relation to a decision to withdraw or transfer.

8.3.5 Procedure for this Policy

Procedure for Processing a Learner-Initiated Withdrawal

The Learner notifies the College of an intention to withdraw in writing to the College Registrar.

The College Registrar, or nominee, acknowledges the Learner's notification in writing, noting the:

- Learner’s intention to withdraw
- Date by which the withdrawal will come into effect (this is normally five working days after notification to the College)
- Consequences of withdrawal in respect of rights and entitlements
- Learner’s entitlement to credit for any completed modules, pending a decision of the Examination Board.

The Learner is not required to disclose information of a sensitive nature, but any such information provided will be treated in confidence.

The College Registrar withdraws the Learner from their programme, revoking all access rights and entitlements to the programme and College services. The College Registrar notifies all relevant College departments of the Learner’s withdrawal.

8.3.6 Responsibility for this Policy

The withdrawal of a Learner from their programme is the responsibility of the College Registrar, on recommendation from the Academic Director.

8.3.7 Policy Control Sheet

Policy Area	Support for Learners
Policy Title	Policy for Managing Learner Withdrawals
Approval Date	3/3/2019
Effective Date	3/3/2019
Review Date	1/9/2020
Relevant Supporting Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 - Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI - Policy and Criteria for Making Awards, QQI, 2017
Monitoring Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic Council report - Student Services Manager monthly reports

8.4 Policy for Mitigation of Extenuating Circumstances

8.4.1 Definition

The definition of extenuating circumstances is the occurrence of unforeseen events which have:

- Prevented a Learner from attending a substantial number of classes
- Affected their ability to study or complete assessments
- Resulted in assessment deadlines being missed
- Adversely affected performance in any assessments undertaken

Such circumstances include serious illness, hospitalisation, accident, family bereavement or other serious personal or emotional circumstances. Extenuating circumstances do not cover events which are foreseen, e.g. sporting or cultural commitments. Assessment includes any tasks that contribute to the achievement of credits (summative assessments), including (but not limited to) projects, assignments, essays, or examinations.

8.4.2 Purpose

Learners are expected to meet the academic demands of their chosen programme. However, they may experience a range of serious and unanticipated difficulties, which adversely affect their ability to study, complete assessments, or attend their required classes and other learning activities. The purpose of this policy is to allow consideration of special circumstances in a fair and equitable manner across all Programmes in the College.

8.4.3 Scope

This policy applies to Learners undertaking Setanta College programmes, including those validated by QQI leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications.

8.4.4 Policy Statement

Learners are expected to advise the College of any circumstances that affect their programme of study. All Learners must be treated equitably and their right to privacy and confidentiality will be maintained at each step of the process. All information provided in relation to extenuating circumstances will be treated in strictest confidence and such information will be limited to the personnel directly involved in administering and evaluating the circumstances. The application should be dealt with as quickly and as locally as possible.

Applications for recognition of extenuating circumstances must be submitted as soon as the Learner becomes aware of the extenuating circumstances, as close as possible to the assessments affected and no later than ten working days after the date of examination or after the submission date of an assignment. Retrospective applications may be considered only in exceptional cases where there are valid reasons for non-submission within the usual timeframe of no later than ten working days after the examination date or after the assignment submission date.

Setanta College reserves the right to investigate the validity of applications. In cases where there is a suspicion that an application may have been submitted fraudulently, the issue may be referred to the College’s Disciplinary Committee.

The decision on the impact of the extenuating circumstances on the Learner’s performance is a matter of academic judgement on the part of the Academic Director. The decision taken by the Academic Director is final. A Learner may appeal the decision following Setanta College’s Policy for Learner Recheck, Review and Appeal.

8.4.5 Procedure for this Policy

Learners are required to make a formal statement of circumstances which have affected them, outline the impact of these circumstances and support this statement with appropriate written verification. This verification must comprise a statement from an appropriate professional or other recognised person verifying the circumstances described in the application and indicating their impact on the Learner’s ability to meet the demands of the programme.

The Extenuating Circumstances Form must be used to present this application and sent to the Student Services Manager or designated nominee. The Student Services Manager then notifies the Academic Director of the application. The Academic Director reviews the application and notifies the Learner of the decision within five working days.

Learners who wish to appeal the decision must do so within five working days of being notified of the decision. The policy and procedure for Learner Recheck, Review and Appeal is implemented at this stage.

8.4.6 Responsibility for this Policy

The Academic Director is responsible for implementing this policy with the support of the Student Services Manager.

8.4.7 Policy Control Sheet

Policy Area	Support for Leaners
Policy Title	Policy for Mitigation of Extenuating Circumstances
Approval Date	3/9/2019
Effective Date	3/9/2019
Review Date	1/9/2020
Relevant Supporting Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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.
Monitoring Procedures	- Academic Council report

8.5 Policy for Reasonable Accommodation (Learners with Disability)

8.5.1 Definition

The [Equal Status Acts \(2000-2015\)](#), places certain requirements on schools and educational institutions in relation to how they deliver their services.

- a) “A Reasonable Accommodation” is any action that helps to alleviate a substantial disadvantage due to an impairment or medical condition¹
- b) In the context of supporting Higher Education Learners, a reasonable accommodation is any provision made for a particular Learner to allow them to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes of a piece of learning without any disadvantage which may arise on the basis of their having a disability or long-term illness.

The legal definition of disability, which is outlined in the [Equal Status Acts \(2000-2015\)](#), defines disability as follows:

1. “The total or partial absence of a person’s bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person’s body
2. The presence in the body of organisms causing or likely to cause, chronic 2 disease or illness
3. The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person’s body
4. A condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction
5. A condition, illness or disease which affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.”

8.5.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the College treats Learners with disabilities fairly and equitably throughout their programme of study and assessments. This will allow the Learners to compete on an equal footing with their peers and to demonstrate their true knowledge and competency.

8.5.3 Scope

The policy applies to all Learners of Setanta College with a disability or a long-term illness, whether this is present at the commencement of the programme or arises during the programme.

¹ Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) (2018), ‘Reasonable Accommodations at Work’. Available at: <https://www.ahead.ie/employer-accommodations>

8.5.4 Policy Statement

Setanta College is committed to implementing a policy of equal opportunities for Learners with disabilities.

The College will ensure, through the availability of Learner support services, that no Learner is disadvantaged by reason of having a disability, within reason and budgetary limitations. The College welcomes applications from Learners with disabilities and will take every reasonable action, within budgetary limitations, to ensure that specific requirements are met and that all Learners are able to participate as fully as is practicable in the academic and social life of the College.

Learners whose written or practical assessment performance is significantly impacted by a disability may require extra time in a practical assessment setting and also time extension when it comes to written assessments.

The College will ensure that all facilities are accessible to all Learners insofar as is possible. This includes physical accessibility to and within the buildings, as well as access to information.

8.5.5 Principles of Reasonable Accommodation

i. Disclosure

- The College encourages Learners to disclose their disabilities during the application process or following admission to the College. This is done by notifying the College administration staff.
- College administration staff will notify the teaching staff of Learners that require reasonable accommodations.
- All Learners are encouraged to disclose their disabilities, as non-disclosure will severely limit ability to access appropriate procedures, accommodations and supports.

ii. Types of Reasonable Accommodations

- Time extensions for assessments
- Technological supports such as voice to text facilities
- Writing accommodations including spelling waiver
- Learning materials provided in accessible, modifiable electronic formats
- Alternative assessment formats, e.g. Viva Voce
- Extended individual tutorial support

iii. Learner Responsibility

- Students are responsible for applying for reasonable accommodation; the College cannot be expected to seek to offer reasonable accommodations.

8.5.6 Responsibility

Responsibility for ensuring equality of access for a Learner with disability throughout their programme of study and assessments lies with the Senior Management Team of the College. A number of administrative units and academic departments may be involved in coordinating reasonable accommodations. If a College employee refuses to provide a required reasonable support, proceedings can be brought against the College.

8.5.7 Policy Control Sheet

Policy Area	Support for Learners
Policy Title	Policy for Reasonable Accommodation (Disability)
Approval Date	3/9/2019
Effective Date	3/9/2019
Review Date	1/9/2020
Relevant Supporting Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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.- Equal Status Acts (2000-2015)
Monitoring Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Senior Management Team meeting- Report of Teaching and Learning Co-Ordinator- Academic Council

8.6 Policy for Temporary Deferral of Studies

8.6.1 Definition

Deferral - A deferral is a temporary suspension of studies granted to a registered Learner following consideration of a request by the Learner.

8.6.2 Purpose

For any number of reasons, it may be necessary for a Learner to temporarily defer their studies on a programme. This policy sets out the circumstances, principles, grounds, and criteria under which the College will allow or advise a Learner to temporarily defer their place on the programme.

8.6.3 Scope

This policy applies to Learners registered on QQI-validated programmes leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications.

8.6.4 Policy Statement

Setanta College recognises that there are instances when a Learner chose to defer their programme of study. The College recognises the rights of Learners to do this, establishing the cause of the Learner decision or the factors that influenced the decision is an important part of the feedback process and informs programme development and delivery, and Learner support and Learner management processes in Setanta College.

Setanta College has a duty of care to all Learners throughout their studies and in relation to a decision to withdraw or transfer. Where the College is concerned about a Learner's progress or circumstances, the College may advise the Learner of the option of deferral to defray the effect of any circumstances affecting their ability to complete the programme with their original cohort.

8.6.5 Procedure for this Policy

A Learner applies for deferral by completing and submitting the deferral form to the College Registrar. The College Registrar evaluates the application and accompanying evidence for validity and authenticity. Learners should not assume that their deferral is granted. They should continue with their studies and assessments as per their current programme schedule.

The College Registrar forwards the application to the Academic Director for evaluation and consideration of the following factors:

- The stage the Learner is at in the programme and the scheduled timetable
- The remaining requirements for completion of the programme
- The best academic interest of the Learner
- The academic achievements of the Learner to date

- The Learner’s circumstances and supporting evidence.

The Academic Director notifies the College Registrar of their recommendation and any associated implication for the Learner.

The Learner is notified in writing of the decision and associated implications, which may include:

- Any fee implications, including any increase in fees
- Requirements for progression on the programme at the point the Learner returns to studies
- The credit for completed modules that the Learner carries with them
- Implications for incomplete modules that the Learner will have to complete upon returning to studies
- An indicative return to studies date which is convenient for both the Learner and the College

The College Registrar updates the Learner record and notifies any relevant College departments. Learners who are granted a deferral and subsequently do not recommence their studies are not entitled to a refund of fees paid.

Where the deferral is not granted, the College Registrar notifies the Learner in writing. The Learner is advised that they are required to continue with their programme or they can opt to voluntarily withdraw. The Learner has a right to reapply for a deferral if their circumstances change or if more information becomes available.

8.6.6 Responsibility for this Policy

The College Registrar in consultation with the Academic Director, is responsible for deferring a Learner’s place on a programme.

8.6.7 Policy Control Sheet

Policy Area	Support for Leaners
Policy Title	Policy for Temporary Deferral of Studies
Approval Date	3/9/2019
Effective Date	3/9/2019
Review Date	1/9/2020
Relevant Supporting Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 - Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), QQI
Monitoring Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic Affairs Committee - Academic Council