



TITLE: POLICY ON POLICIES

Effective Date	13 June 2018	Version	03
Approved By	Management Board	Date Approved	13 June 2018
		Review Date	13 June 2021 <i>or as required</i>
Superseded or Obsolete Policy / Procedure(s)		Owner	
01 Policy on Policies (23 November 2016)		Quality Assurance Office	

1: Purpose of the Policy

The *Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines* (2016) benchmark as a national standard that ‘the quality assurance system is fully documented; there are robust, documented policies and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of provision.’¹ This policy addresses this national standard by creating a transparent and comprehensive quality system for policy initiation, development, approval, implementation and monitoring / review.

By using a consistent policy development system, it is possible to assemble policies that are:

- appropriately developed and regularly monitored / reviewed;
- accessible to staff and the public (as required) in usable formats;
- consistent with the Mission of Carlow College, St. Patrick’s;
- compliant with applicable laws and national / international benchmarks of best practice; and
- promote a culture of quality across the College community.

This policy also seeks to ensure that all policies are periodically reviewed to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose and remain effective.

¹ *Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines* (Dublin: Quality and Qualifications Ireland, 2016), p. 9. In addition to the above stated guidelines, this Policy used as national and international benchmarks the following policies: *Policy on the Formulation and Issuance of University Policies* (Dublin: Dublin City University, 2015); *Quality Manual* (Carlow: IT Carlow, 2015); *University Secretariat: Policy Framework* (Dublin: University College Dublin, 2016); *Policy on Policies* (Washington DC: America University, 2009); *Policy Framework* (Manchester: University of Salford, 2015).

2: Definitions

Approving Committee(s): the two Approving Committees at Carlow College, St. Patrick's are the Management Board and Academic Council. Policies considered college-wide will be approved by Management Board whereas all academic policies will be approved by Academic Council. In some cases, policies might be approved by both committees.

Associated Documentation: procedures / guidelines / codes of practice / handbooks / forms which provide specific instructions for carrying out defined tasks.

Policy: a statement of management philosophy and direction, established to provide guidance and assistance to the College community in the conduct of college affairs.

Procedure: a guideline or series of steps necessary to implement a policy. College procedures:

- should link to a corresponding college policy;
- should comply with best practice and relevant legal requirements;
- should illustrate the sequence of steps necessary to carry out defined tasks;
- should be reviewed and updated by the policy owner to ensure that the procedures are 'fit-for-purpose'.

Policy Initiator: the member of the College community that brings the policy draft, or policy idea, to the Quality Assurance Officer.

Policy Owner: the College personnel responsible for leading development and maintenance of a policy and associated documentation.

Stakeholder: members of the College community affected by the policy.

Sub-Group: key stakeholders tasked with developing and implementing the policy.

3: Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all members of the Carlow College, St. Patrick's community to whom a College policy can apply. College policies can apply to all, or some, members of the College community, including: Governing Body; faculty, including visiting faculty; staff members, including visiting staff members; students and outside agencies that fulfil a function for Carlow College, St. Patrick's. Each College policy should set forth, in the 'Scope of Policy' section, the intended party(ies) which are to comply with the provisions outlined in the policy.

4: Policy Statement

College policies and associated documents shall be:

- a) developed according to the process set out in this policy;
- b) presented in a standard and common format;
- c) formally approved by an appropriate committee;
- d) accessible to staff and the public (as required) in usable formats;
- e) compliant with applicable laws and national / international benchmarks of best practice;
- f) clearly marked as policies and separated from associated documentation such as procedures, guidelines and forms which provide specific instructions for carrying out defined tasks.

Policies and associated documentation approved prior to the effective date of this policy will be designated a review date and amended to comply with the standards outlined in this Policy.

4.1: Stages of Policy Development

The procedural framework for developing policies and associated documents will follow five key stages:

1. **Initiation Stage:** The Policy Initiator brings the proposed policy/policy idea to the Quality Assurance Officer. The Quality Assurance Officer's main role during the Initiation Stage is to: identify the Approving Committee(s) of the proposed policy, identify the policy owner and main stakeholders and create a Sub-Group numbering no more than five members to oversee development and implementation of the proposed policy. Being cognisant of workload allocation, before a member of staff is asked to serve on a Sub-Group, their Line Manager will be consulted.
2. **Development Stage:** The first task of the Sub-Group is to either draft a policy or explore all aspects of the proposed policy and consult with relevant stakeholders affected by the proposed policy. During the Development Stage, the Sub-Group will complete the *Policy Consultation and Communication Plan* (see Appendix B). Once the policy is drafted, the Sub-Group will submit the proposed policy to the Quality Assurance Officer who will then publish the proposed policy internally for comments on the Staff Portal for one week²; following the one-week timeframe, the Sub-Group will review and respond to all comments related to the proposed policy; the Sub-Group will document this correspondence on Section 3 of Appendix B. It is important to note that if a designated office (e.g. HR, Data Protection, Quality Assurance, Office of the Registrar etc.) within the College provides feedback through the Staff Portal, the feedback provided should be responded to directly; the policy cannot move to the Implementation/Preliminary Approval Stage unless this feedback is responded to.
3. **Implementation/Preliminary Approval Stage:** After reviewing comments related to the proposed policy, the Sub-Group will complete the *Policy Implementation Document* (see Appendix C) indicating the proposed timeline for implementing the proposed policy; the tasks to be implemented should denote those tasked with implementing or applying the policy and illustrated in the 'Roles and Responsibilities' section of the policy. The Sub-Group formally brings the proposed policy and associated documentation to the Quality Assurance Officer who will then bring them to the Approving Committee(s) and the Approving Committee(s) approves the policy for a probationary period; the probationary period is determined by the 'Implementation Task List' of the *Policy Implementation Document*.

Following Preliminary Approval, the Quality Assurance Officer will publish the policy internally and, during the probationary period, the Sub-Group will review the implementation of the policy and document the outcome. Once all implementation tasks are completed, the Sub-Group will send the *Policy Implementation Document* to the Quality Assurance Officer who will affix it to the policy. If during the Implementation Stage the policy requires further consideration, the policy will be sent back to the Approving Committee(s).

² For policies requiring learner feedback, they will be published on Moodle for one week and every registered learner will receive an email requesting feedback.

4. Approval Stage: Once a policy has reached permanent status, the Quality Assurance Officer will also determine whether the policy should be published externally on the College website.
5. Monitoring & Review Stage: The Policy Owner is responsible for monitoring the policy and ensuring that all associated documentation is updated as required. All policies at Carlow College, St. Patrick's will be reviewed every three years from the date of approval; unless changes are required owing to legal, statutory and / or organisation.

4.1: Policy Format

A standard format will be used to ensure that every policy and associated documentation are consistent in both form and style. Although not every policy will contain all format elements, all College policies will be written and maintained following the format outlined below (see Appendix A: *Template for College Policies*):

1. Document Control (Mandatory)
2. Purpose of Policy (Mandatory)
3. Definitions (Optional)
4. Scope of Policy (Mandatory)
5. Policy Statement (Mandatory)
6. Roles and Responsibilities (Mandatory)
7. Associated Documentation (Optional)
8. Referenced Policies (Optional)
9. Monitoring and Review (Mandatory)

4.2: Publication of Policies

To ensure that College policies and associated documentation are accessible, every policy and associated document will be available in a usable format on the Staff Portal located under the relevant office. Moreover, all policies and associated documentation related to the general student population will be available in a usable format on Moodle, accessible under the relevant academic office. Carlow College, St. Patrick's is committed to transparency and will endeavour to publicly post on its website all policies and associated documentation not deemed to be confidential or for staff use only.

5: Roles and Responsibilities

All individuals who are responsible for the drafting, updating, approval and distribution of College policies shall comply with this policy. The Quality Assurance Officer at Carlow College, St. Patrick's is the Policy Owner of this Policy and will, along with the Quality Assurance Team, oversee the monitoring and review of this Policy.

6: Associated Documentation

1. Template for College Policies
2. Policy Consultation and Communication Plan
3. Policy Implementation Document
4. Stages of Policy Development

7: Monitoring and Review

After the initial six-month probationary period, where the policy development process is tested, this Policy will be reviewed three years after the effective date.

Appendix A: Template for College Policies

All policies drafted at Carlow College, St. Patrick's should follow the template outlined below (italicised instructions should be discarded by the staff drafting the policy). Please note that all policies should be accessible and clearly understood by the intended audience. As such, please make sure that the written style of the policy is constructed in a manner that is free from jargon and utilises plain English. All policies should be written using the following conventions: Time New Roman (font style); 12 point (font size); single-spaced (line spacing); 0 point (paragraph spacing before); 8 point (paragraph spacing after); heading should be provided in bold; headings / paragraphs should be numbered sequentially.

Document Control (Mandatory)

All policy documents within the College should contain the official document control header, which will provide the following information (see template below):



TITLE:

Effective Date		Version	
Approved By		Date Approved	
		Review Date	
Superseded or Obsolete Policy / Procedure(s)	Owner		

Purpose of Policy (Mandatory)

This section should provide the rationale for the policy by detailing the lacunae or exigency necessitating the policy. Please make sure that you are referencing all relevant legal, regulatory or other requirements that the policy will attempt to meet. This section should also state how the policy supports the Mission of Carlow College, St. Patrick's.

Definitions (Optional)

As the intended audience of policies may not be familiar with technical terms and/or abbreviations, please provide key terms or phrases before the body of the policy.

Scope of Policy (Mandatory)

All policies should clearly state the intended parties which are to comply with the provisions outlined in the policies. Where the policies are not applicable college-wide, please specify the affected parties who must comply with the policy.

Policy Statement (Mandatory)

The policy statement should outline the underlining principles of the policy and should set direction to the entire College community. It is important that the policy statement is clear and concise so that the intended audience has no misunderstanding as to the merits of these principles. Moreover, policy statements should use a generic linguistic style that requires minimal revisions (e.g. use roles / functions rather than name(s) of individual(s)).

Roles and Responsibilities (Mandatory)

Clearly state the roles and responsibilities of every individual who are tasked with implementing and applying the policy (only list formal titles / positions rather than an individual's personal name).

Associated Documentation (Optional)

Many policies will have associated procedures / guidelines / codes of practice / handbooks / forms which will provide specific instructions for carrying out defined tasks. Please specify the names of those associated documents in this section and provide complete documentation as an appendix to the policy.

Referenced Policies (Optional)

Policies should not be drafted in isolation and will often reference existing college policies. Please provide a list of policies that should be read in conjunction with the proposed policy.

Monitoring and Review (Mandatory)

Please state the relevant Approving Committee(s) that will review the policy and the frequency of each review period. It is up to the policy owner to ensure that policies are reviewed at the designated time and marked with the appropriate version history.

Appendix B: Policy Consultation and Communication Plan



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Section 1: Policy Information	
Policy Name:	
Policy Owner:	
Approving Committee(s):	
Sub-Group Members:	

Section 2: Consultation Process

National Benchmarks *(provide name of institution/organisation and documents consulted)*

International Benchmarks *(provide name of institution/organisation and documents consulted)*

Legislative and / or Statutory Obligations

Section 3: Internal Communication Process

Date	Name of Office / Contact	Method of Communication	Feedback	Response

Appendix C: Policy Implementation Document

	<h1 style="margin: 0;">CARLOW COLLEGE</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">ST. PATRICK'S</h2>	<h3 style="margin: 0;">Policy Implementation Document</h3> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>[Name of Policy Title]</i></p>
Approving Committee:		
Date Approved:		

Implementation Task List			
Implementation Task	Task Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome

Sign-off on the Policy Implementation Document <i>(completed once the Implementation Task List is complete)</i>		Date
Policy Owner:		
Sub-Group Members:		

Appendix D: Stages of Policy Development

