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# Adaptations to Internal Quality Assurance in Irish HEIs in response to COVID-19

**Mairéad Boland (Presenter)**

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# Methodology

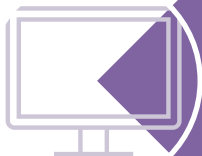
## Sources for Analysis



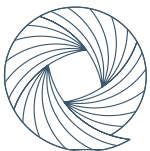
[The Impact of COVID-19 Modifications to Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Irish Further Education and Training and Higher Education: A QQI Evaluation 2020](#) [“QQI TLA Report”]



**QQI Quality Dialogue Meeting Notes**  
Conducted online in June/July 2020



**Survey of websites of Irish public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)**  
Conducted from March – end August 2020



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# Methodology

## Areas of Focus



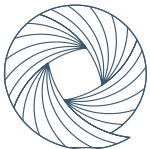
**Policies and Procedures (ESG 1.1)**



**Governance (ESG 1.1)**



**Information to Stakeholders (ESG 1.8)**



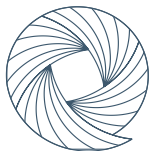
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# Policies & Procedures (ESG 1.1)

## Overview

- Core institutional QA policies and procedures largely considered sufficiently robust and flexible to accommodate the exceptional circumstances.
- In some cases, existing procedures supplemented or amended to reflect online methodologies and provide additional flexibility for students.
- Sectoral collaboration highly valued – particularly in the IoT sector.



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# Policies & Procedures (ESG 1.1)

## Changes to Core Policies & Procedures



### Progression

Additional flexibility on resits, carrying modules/credits, greater discretion on borderline cases and previous performance.



### Academic Integrity

Enhancement of P&Ps to reflect online/remote assessment (e.g. proctoring, students accessing external information sources)



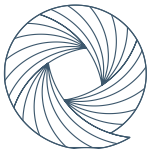
### Deferral/Extenuating Circumstances

Criteria extended to reflect COVID circumstances & procedures adapted to enable online submissions



### Online QA Processes

Amendment to existing processes to reflect online external examination, viva voces, exam boards (data protection), programme accreditation.



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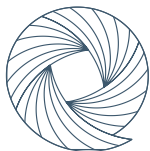
# Governance (ESG 1.1)

## Augmentation of Governance Structures

*“Typically, hierarchies of committees and working groups were involved in dealing with the coordinated management and implementation of change. Academic councils (or equivalent) were at the top of the hierarchy for the approval of modifications to programmes.”* QQI TLA Report

Groups involved in responding to and planning to mitigate the effects of Covid-19 included:

- **Contingency** planning groups (academic and professional services)
- **Operational** planning groups and sub-groups (‘return to campus’; placements; financial management)
- **Horizon-scanning** groups to consider long-term impacts



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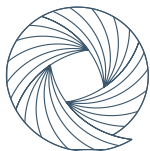


# Governance (ESG 1.1)

## Approaches to Academic Decision-Making

No single sectoral approach, but *similar* approaches evident:

- **Subsidiarity-based approach/Devolution of authority** by Academic Council to a sub-group to enable swift and agile decision-making
  - Time-limited ('sunset clause' with possibility of extension)
  - Existing or newly convened group
  - Representation on group
- **Retention** of existing governance decision-making structures where these were deemed sufficiently flexible to respond to the rapidly evolving public health situation

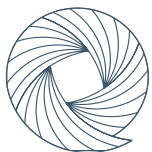
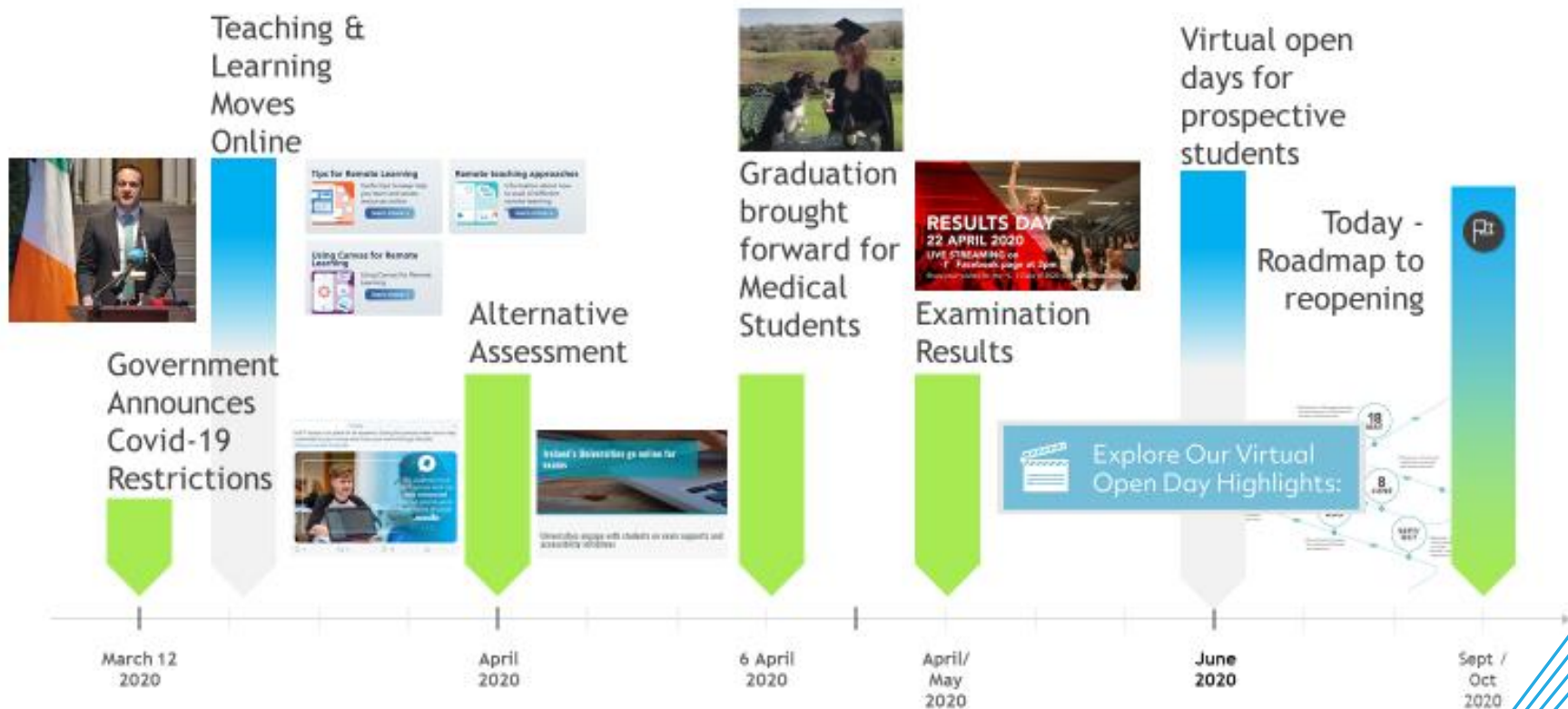


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# Information to Stakeholders (ESG 1.8)



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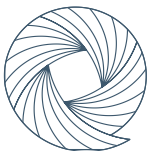
# Information to Stakeholders (ESG 1.8)

## Communication Channels with Students



## Key Messages & Areas of Focus

- Health & Campus Access Information
- Alternative arrangements for TLA
- Tools & supports for online TLA
- Urging students to stay connected to the institution
- Making students aware of all options available and sources of support (peer support highly valued by students)
- Targeted information to international students.

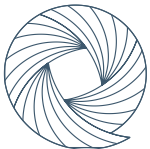


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# Conclusions

- The principles of **autonomy and subsidiarity** supported **agility** and enabled **tailored decision-making**.
- **Sectoral networks and collaboration** were instrumental in ensuring co-ordinated, coherent and effective responses.
- **Students and student representatives** provide important contributions at institution level and were seen to be an **invaluable means of communication with the wider student population**.
- “The **quality assurance infrastructure** established by institutions proved **crucial in the approaches to change management** which inspires confidence in the reasonableness of those changes.” [TLA Report]



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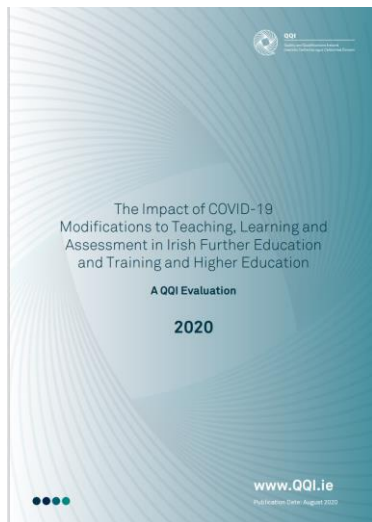
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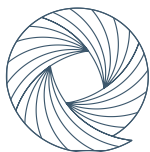
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<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/The%20Impact%20of%20COVID-19%20Modifications%20to%20Teaching%2c%20Learning%20and%20Assessment%20in%20Irish%20Further%20Education.pdf>



<https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/COVID-19---Updates-from-QQI.aspx>



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