

Retail Ireland Skillnet



Quality Assurance Manual

Acronyms

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSG	Consortium Steering Group
ETB	Education and Training Board
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
ATU	Atlantic Technological University
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
PAP	Programme Approval Panel
PB	Programme Board
PEL	Protection of Enrolled Learners
PIP	Programme Improvement Plan
PPSN	Personal Public Services Number
QA	Quality Assurance
QAS	Quality Assurance System
QBS	QQI Business System
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RAP	Results Approval Panel
RIS	Retail Ireland Skillnet
RISCSG	Retail Ireland Skillnet Consortium Steering Group
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SEP	Self-Evaluation Panel
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
TNA	Training Needs Analysis

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1. Introduction

This document outlines the Quality Assurance (QA) guidelines for Retail Ireland Skillnet (RIS), a provider of Further Education and Training for the Irish retail sector. The RIS QA System (QAS) applies to all activities associated with education and training and to all RIS staff, contractors, learners, and other stakeholders involved in education and training for or on behalf of RIS.

It addresses the following areas:

1. Governance and Management of Quality
2. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance
3. Programmes of Education and Training
4. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development
5. Teaching and Learning
6. Assessment of Learners
7. Support for Learners
8. Information and Data Management
9. Public Information and Communication
10. Other Parties involved in Education and Training
11. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

Scope

The Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures extends to anyone involved in the provision of training and education programmes developed and delivered by Retail Ireland Skillnet. The QA policies and procedures apply to all RIS staff, learners, tutors, governing bodies and external stakeholders including those involved in activities that are subcontracted or carried out by other parties.

RIS has delivered work-based training and education programmes since 2000 for the Irish retail sector. Their QA policies and procedures are designed to deliver quality retail programmes for those already in employment and are compliant to QQI requirements.

Responsibility for the QAS

The Quality Assurance Manager, Apprenticeship Programme Director and the Head of Centre are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the QAS and ensuring that staff, tutors, learners and stakeholders are aware of their role in implementing the QAS. However, Quality Assurance (QA) is

the responsibility of all RIS staff members and tutors. RIS monitors the effectiveness of the QA policies and procedures on an ongoing basis and undertakes an overall review of the suitability, effectiveness and continuing relevance of the system in line with the Annual Programme Review.

1.1 About Retail Ireland Skillnet

Retail Ireland Skillnet (RIS), is a provider of retail education and training programmes. RIS is a QQI/FETAC approved centre since 2003. All training and education programmes are designed, developed and delivered in consultation with a steering committee comprised of senior representatives from some of Ireland's leading retail organisations. Education and training representatives also sit on the steering committee providing external expertise. RIS is funded by member companies, SOLAS and the Training Networks Programme, an initiative of Skillnet Ireland, funded from the National Training Fund, through the Department of Education and Skills. This funding is administrated through Skillnet Ireland – the body responsible for the promotion and facilitation of training and upskilling in Ireland. RIS is an Irish Business and Employers Confederation (Ibec) managed Skillnet and governed by Ibec rules and regulations.

1.1.1 Vision

The RIS vision is to make retail a career of choice through the provision of innovative and transformational training and education programmes. RIS provides lifelong learning opportunities for employees within the retail sector and raises skills levels across the sector by promoting work-based training.

1.1.2 Mission

To design, develop, maintain and promote an enterprise-led approach to training for the retail sector which recognises the importance of quality, quality assurance, quality improvement and enhancement of all training and education programmes. RIS aims to respond timely to the ever-changing needs of its learners, employers and society.

1.1.3 Values

RIS supports Irish retail organisations create a learning culture within their companies which helps individuals continually expand their capacity to create results, expand their thinking and develop new organisational opportunities. RIS core values are:

- **Enterprise-Led** - RIS aims to design and deliver work-based education and training programmes that meet the ever-changing needs of the Irish retail sector.
- **Learner Centric** - RIS ensures the learner remains the primary focus of all its training and education activities. RIS aims to make training programmes geographically and demographically available to all retail employees providing an attainable career path within the retail sector.
- **Never Standing Still** – RIS aims to promote a creative and innovative culture amongst all stakeholders where new ideas are welcomed and explored. RIS is committed to be an education and training provider which promotes creativity and innovation as a way of responding to the needs of the retail industry.
- **Respect and Diversity** - RIS aims to promote a culture which actively supports equality of opportunity and access across all RIS staff, learners, retail organisations and other stakeholders promoting mutual respect, open communication and listening.

1.1.4 RIS Current Scope of Provision

RIS is involved in the design and delivery of a number of education and training programmes:

1. Level 5 Retail Practice Programme 5M2105
2. A number of uncertified programmes
3. Level 6 Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision

In addition to the programmes above, RIS also collaborate with Atlantic Technological University (ATU) in the design and coordination of level 7 and level 8 programmes including the part-time Degree in Retail Management Practice which is delivered to existing retail supervisors and managers. RIS's role in this collaboration involves the promotion of the programme to retail employees and employers, sourcing venues, recruiting tutors, sourcing guest speakers, contributing to the design and amendments of the programme and scheduling the timetable for the programme. The programmes delivered by ATU do not come under RIS QAS.

1.1.5 Level 5 Retail Practice Programme 5M2105

RIS offers a range of occupational qualifications at Level 5 designed for operational level employees working in the retail sector. This comprises of 9 minor modules:

1. Customer Service – 5N0972
2. Communications – 5N0690
3. Retail Selling – 5N1619

4. Retail Security – 5N1777
5. Retail Display – 5N1861
6. Safety and Health at Work – 5N1794
7. Warehousing – 5N2725
8. Personal Effectiveness – 5N1390
9. Work Experience – 5N1356

These modules are delivered using an approach that combines traditional classroom delivery with on-the job learning, independent learning and online learning. The classroom learning is delivered by highly qualified and experienced tutors (who have a minimum level 7 qualification and significant work experience relevant to the module they are delivering). During the classroom delivery, learners are provided with a module booklet designed specifically for the QQI modules by RIS subject matter experts.

Learning in the workplace is an important component of the delivery model adopted by RIS. Employers who engage with RIS for training are required to ensure a number of their supervisors complete a 1-day Workplace Mentor Development programme designed specifically for the Level 5 Retail Practice Programme (See Appendix 1 – Workplace Mentor Development Programme). This programme will help ensure the workplace mentors are briefed on the overall objectives of the programme and their role in supporting the learner. To further enhance the learning experience, RIS in conjunction with retailers have identified a number of workplace tasks for each of the level 5 modules. These workplace tasks are based on the learning outcomes for each of the modules and should be undertaken by the learner and supported by the workplace mentor. Through the completion of these tasks, the workplace mentor provides guidance and feedback to the learner. These tasks do not form part of the formal assessment but serve an important purpose in allowing the learner apply learning in the workplace.

RIS has also developed significant online learning resources which the learners can access through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Resources include videos, case studies, quizzes and interactive online tutorials.

For more information on the level 5 Retail Practice programme – click link below:

<https://retailirelandskillnet.com/retail-practice-occupational-training>

1.1.6 Unaccredited Programmes

In addition to the above, RIS also delivers short non-accredited.

For more information on the unaccredited programmes, click link below:

<https://retailirelandskillnet.com/all-training>

1.1.7 Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision

The Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision is a two-year Level 6 Apprenticeship programme (240 FET Credits) designed and developed in close collaboration with retailers. The programme adopts a form of delivery whereby on-the-job learning is complimented by learning acquired in the classroom, independent learning and mandatory directed online learning. This approach will underpin the Apprentice's theoretical understanding and practical application of core retail disciplines.

The Apprenticeship programme is aimed at existing retail employees, school leavers, career switchers and mature applicants wishing to pursue a career as a Retail Supervisor.

The Apprenticeship programme includes fifteen modules. Eleven of these modules are compulsory and the Apprentice must select two additional elective modules from a possible group of four.

The modules include:

1. Retail Professional Selling
2. Retail Customer Service
3. Retail IT
4. Legal Issues for Retail
5. Safety, Health and Welfare
6. Retail Supervision 1
7. Retail Pharmacy (**Elective ***)
8. Food Safety Operations and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) (**Elective ***)
9. Retail Merchandising (**Elective ***)
10. Retail Security and Loss Prevention (**Elective ***)
11. Retail Calculations and Decision Making
12. Omni Channel Marketing
13. Retail Supervision 2
14. Retail Consumer Behaviour
15. Retail Purchasing and Supply Chain

For more information on the Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision click link below:

<https://retailirelandskillnet.com/apprenticeship-in-retail-supervision>

2 Governance and Management of Quality

2.1 Governance

RIS has an effective governance system in place which maintains oversight on activities relating to the provision of training, education and related activities to ensure the quality of programmes and services. This governance system separates the responsibilities between those who design, develop and deliver RIS programmes and services from those who approve and promote them. This ensures that there is a separation between academic decision making and commercial considerations.

Academic decision makers are appropriately qualified to understand QA requirements and industry requirements. RIS governance and management of quality structures helps to ensure that the organisation operates responsibly, ethically, openly, trustworthily and effectively.

Figure 2.1 presents the Retail Ireland Skillnet Governance Structure.

Figure 2.2 presents the Retail Ireland Skillnet Organisational Structure

Figure 2.3 presents the process map for Retail Ireland Skillnet's Quality Assurance

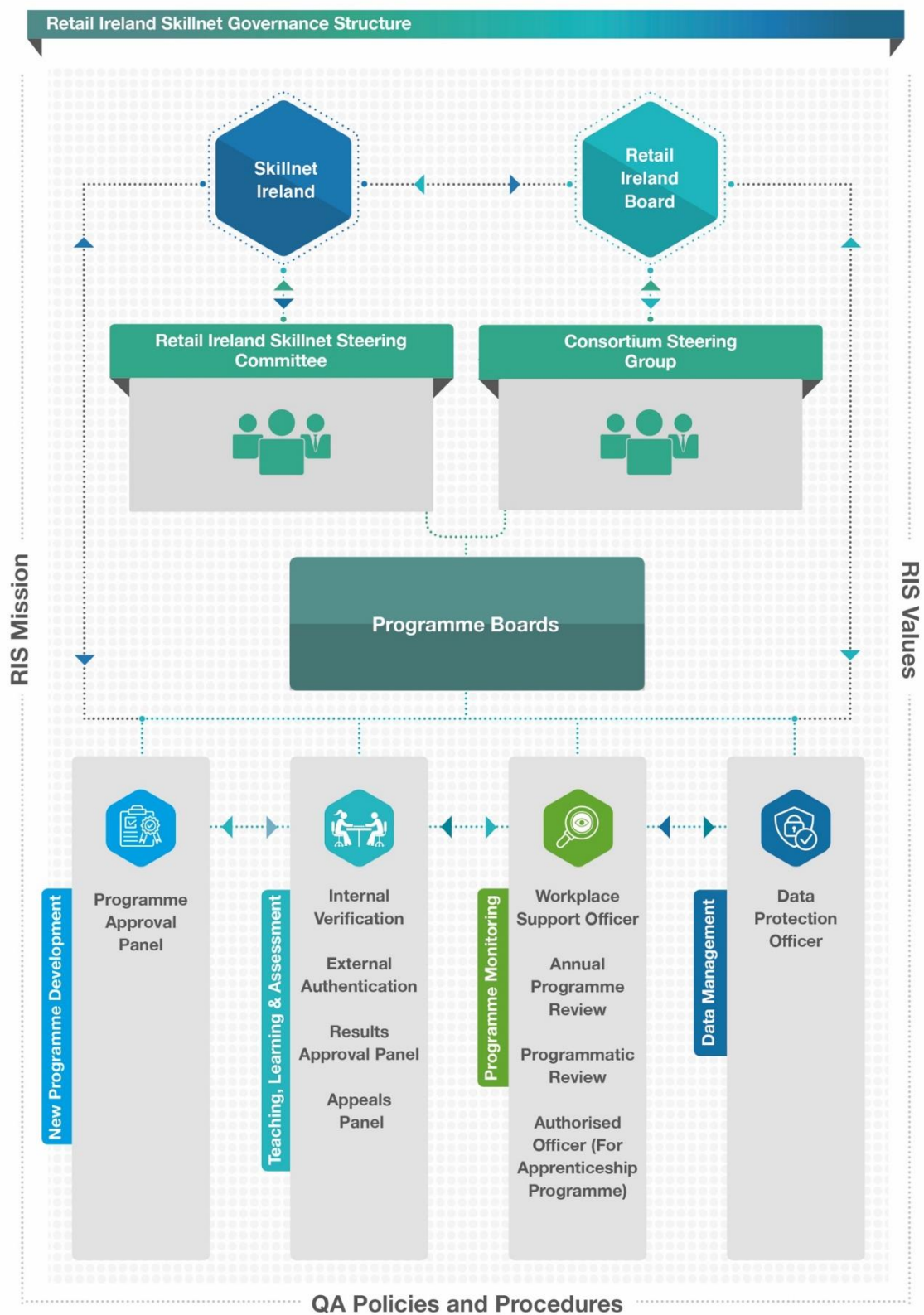


Figure 2.1 Retail Ireland Skillnet Governance Structure

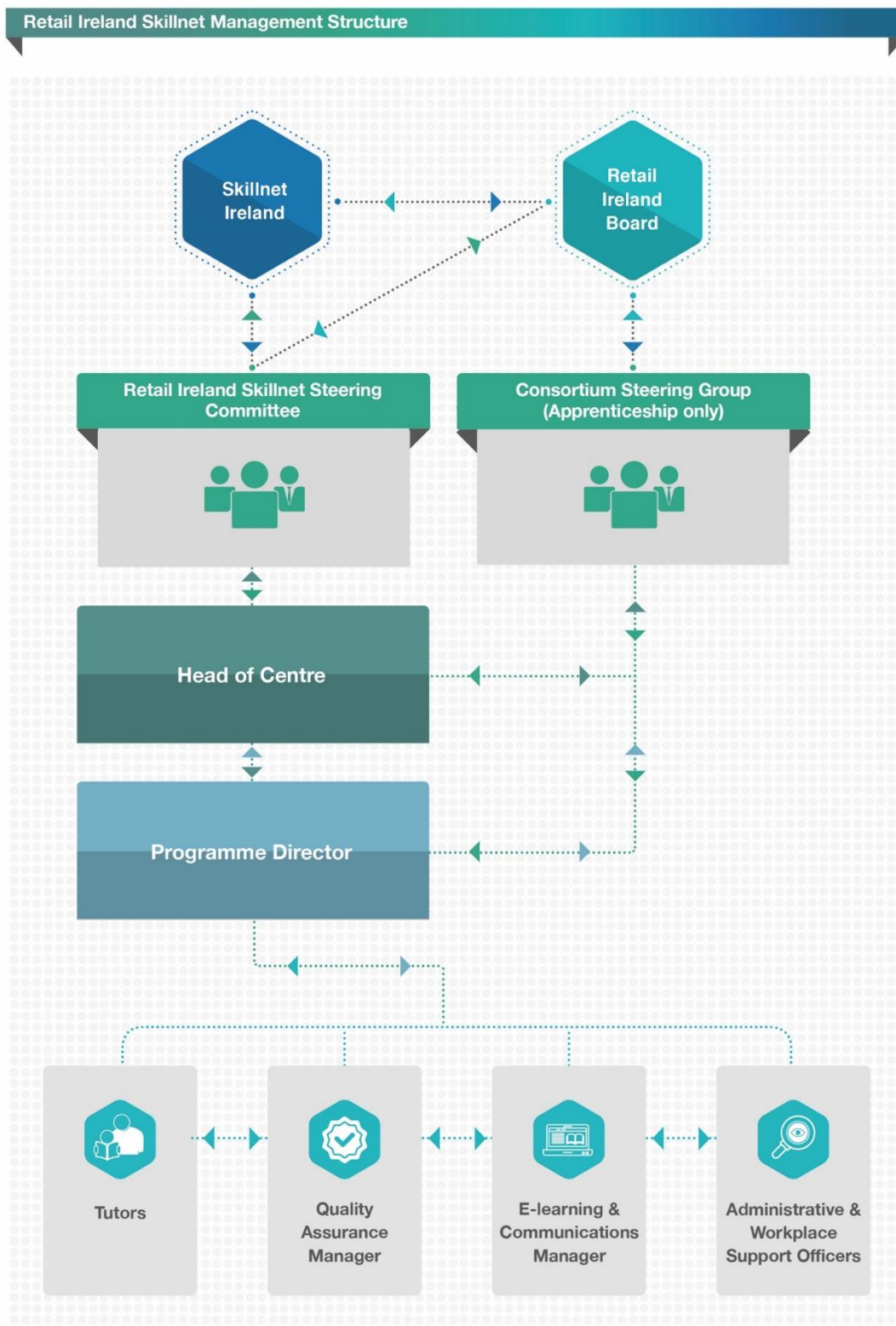


Figure 2.2 Retail Ireland Skillnet Organisational Structure

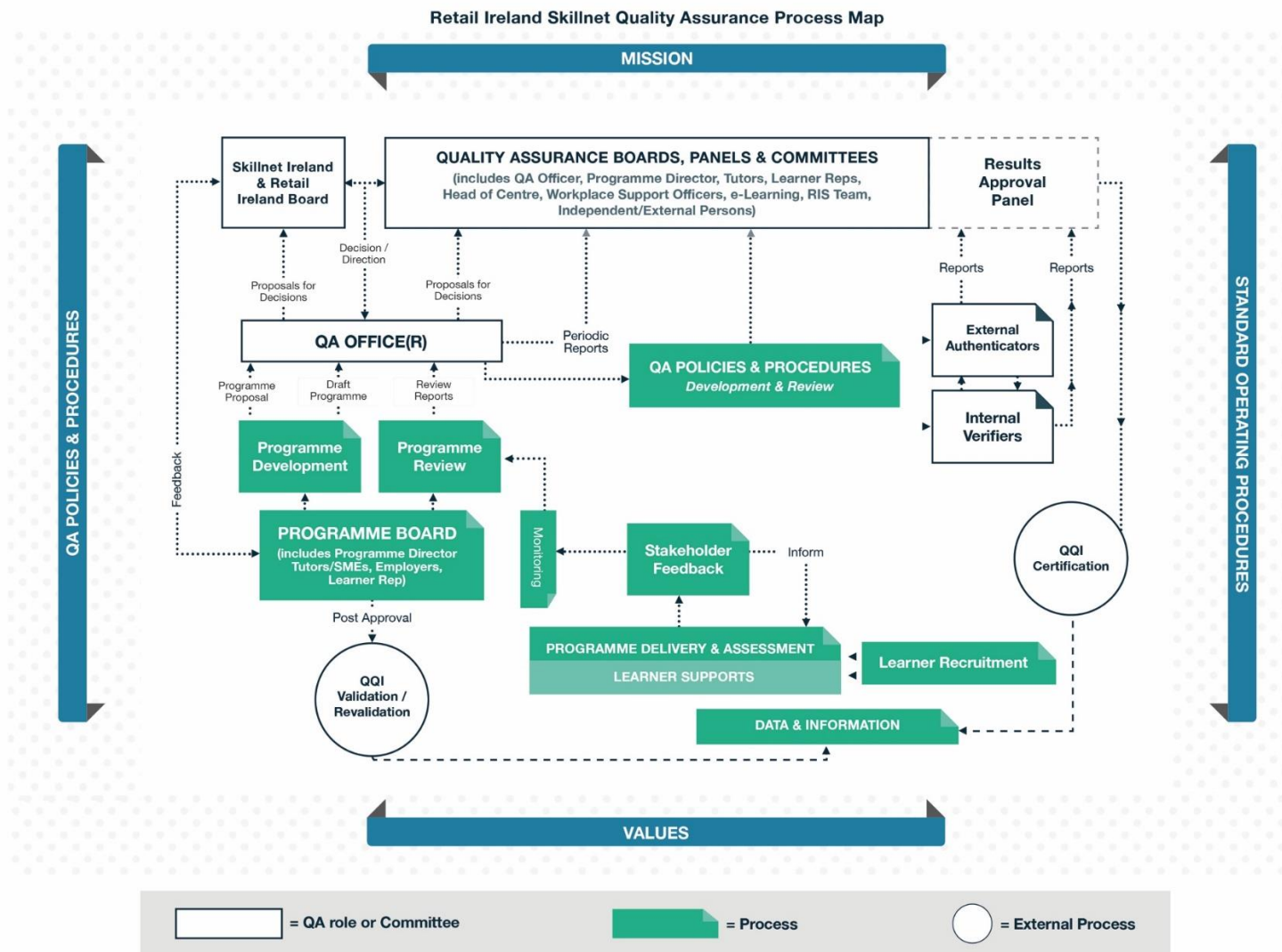


Figure 2.3 Process Map for Retail Ireland Skillnet's Quality Assurance

2.1.1 Skillnet Ireland

Skillnet Ireland is the Irish national agency dedicated to the promotion and facilitation of workforce learning in Ireland. Skillnet Ireland believes that maintaining a highly skilled workforce is essential to national competitiveness. Skillnet Ireland's mission is to facilitate increased participation in enterprise training and workforce learning in Ireland.

RIS is funded by Skillnet Ireland, through the National Training Fund, coordinated by the Department of Education and Skills. Funding received from Skillnet Ireland is matched by companies engaged in RIS training and education programmes. This model ensures that RIS is in a stable financial position and capable of fulfilling all their training and education commitments.

The governance of RIS is managed by Skillnets Training Networks Programme Networks Operating Guidelines (Appendix 2). Skillnet Ireland's role is to provide strategic guidance and to monitor the integrity of the network and all associated activities. RIS must comply with the rigorous Skillnet Ireland governance procedures, which include in-depth, independent internal and external compliance audits. Internal audits involve an independent auditor visiting RIS annually and reviewing all financial, training and management activity. External audits include telephone calls to both learners and employers and visits to training events to evaluate the training delivery and ensure that activities are aligned with the overall aims of the network and Skillnet Ireland. Feedback and recommendations from these audits form part of the RIS self-monitoring process and continuous improvement strategy. For the full list of Skillnet Ireland audits see Appendix 2 - Skillnets *Training Networks Programme Networks Operating Guidelines*.

As part of the Skillnet Ireland Operating Guidelines, RIS is governed by a dedicated Steering Committee which is comprised of representatives from retail companies and Retail Ireland representatives. This Steering Committee is the overall governance board providing strategic direction in keeping with RIS mission and protects the interests of learners and maintenance of RIS standards. The Retail Ireland Skillnet Consortium Steering Group (RISCSG) is committed to the active development of a quality culture within RIS which recognises the importance of quality, quality assurance, quality improvement and enhancement. See Appendix 3 - Terms of Reference Retail Ireland Skillnet Consortium Steering Group (RISCSG).

2.1.2 Retail Ireland

As part of Skillnet Ireland's corporate governance structure, each network is required to have a contracting organisation. Retail Ireland acts as the contracting organisation for RIS and ensures good corporate governances and plays an active role in overseeing the management of the network. Retail Ireland does not benefit financially from RIS in any way.

Retail Ireland is the leading public affairs, Government relations and trade representative body for the Irish retail industry, operating as a dedicated unit within Ibec. It is committed to enhancing the profile of the retail industry and promoting a positive business environment for Irish retail. Retail Ireland represents a broad mix of Irish retailers ranging from global multiples to indigenous Irish chains to smaller, independent and stand-alone operators. Members include department stores, pharmacy chains, DIY, home and electrical outlets, Irish and international fashion, footwear and luxury goods brands, major supermarket multiples, shopping centres, leading symbol groups and convenience stores, service stations, specialist outlet, and numerous local independent operators.

See Appendix 4 - Terms of Reference Retail Ireland Board. The Retail Ireland Board provides strategic direction and representation for the Irish retail sector. See Appendix 5 – Retail Ireland Constitution.

2.1.3 National Apprenticeship Office /SOLAS

The Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision follow the guidelines and policies established by the National Apprenticeship Office and SOLAS.

2.1.4 Committees, Boards and Panels Supporting Quality Assurance

RIS is committed to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, quality assurance, quality improvement and enhancement. The table below presents the various roles and responsibilities of the different committees, Boards and Panels involves in the governance and management of quality.

Table 2.1 Outlines the membership, roles and responsibilities of RIS Committees, Boards and Panels

Committees, Board and Panels	Members	Role	Responsibilities	Page Location
Retail Ireland Skillnet Consortium Steering Group (RISCSG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer Representatives from participating member companies • RIS Head of Centre • Retail Ireland Director • Apprenticeship Programme Director • Quality Assurance Manager • Programme Administrator • Communications & E-Learning Manager 	<p>The role of the RISCSG is to provide governance, strategic guidance and to monitor the activities and effectiveness of the management of RIS. As an employer-led committee it provides a link to the retail sector.</p> <p>A specific function of this body is to ensure that the apprenticeship programme conforms to, and evolves with, the requirements of the occupation. Its purpose is to ensure that the apprenticeship programme is enterprise-led and meets labour market needs. This requires that programme graduates fit the autonomous occupational role assigned to</p>	<p>Ensure that programmes and services are evaluated, monitored and reviewed and the resources are in place to do this to a high standard.</p>	<p>QA Appendices - Appendix 3</p>

		<p>them. The RISCSG acts as the ‘guardian’ of the occupation, performing the critical role, in conjunction with the statutory regulator, of coordinating employers involved in the programme. It brings together the employers, RIS and the other providers who are involved in the Apprenticeship programme.</p>		
<p>Programme Board (PB)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Assurance Manager • 2 Programme Tutors • Head of Centre • Apprenticeship Programme Director • 1 Learner Representative • Workplace Mentors • 3 Employer Representatives • Senior Programme Coordinator • Senior Tutor • Communications and E-learning Manager 	<p>The Programme Board (PB) is responsible for advising on the development of RIS programmes and ongoing oversight of the delivery and assessment of the programmes.</p>	<p>The Programme Boards are responsible for the ongoing monitoring and review of the programmes for its continued effectiveness considering the learner and changing societal needs. The Programme Board operates within the framework of RIS QA policies and procedures.</p>	<p>QA Appendices - Appendix 8</p>

Programme Approval Panel (PAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Assurance Advisor • Programme Administrator • Head of Centre • Quality Assurance Manager • Two Tutors with expertise in relative to the programme seeking approval. • Apprenticeship Programme Director • Two employers 	The PAPs role is to consider proposed new programmes taking into consideration the organisation's overall strategic direction and the financial, legal and organisational implications in the provision of new programmes	The PAP reviews, considers and approves programme proposals and recommends/rejects them for development.	QA Appendices - Appendix 8
Results Approval Panel (RAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Verifier/Quality Assurance Manager • Apprenticeship Programme Director or Head of Centre • External Authenticator(s) • Tutors as required 	The RAP formally review and approve results data and confirm that assessment results are fully quality assured and signed-off prior to submission to the awarding body for certification and issued to learners.	The RAP review assessment results/outcomes, internal verification reports and external authenticators' reports highlighting any issues identified making recommendations for corrective actions required.	QA Appendices - Appendix 8
Programmatic Review Panel (PRP)	The RISCSG appoints a Programmatic Review Panel (PRP) consisting of a minimum of 4 members and appoints a Programmatic Review Coordinator to carry out and complete a Programmatic Review Report (SER)	The programmatic Review panel conducts a review of a specific programme every 5 years.	All programme related information gathered in the annual programme reviews is assessed and reviewed. The PRP make recommendations in the form of a Programmatic Review report.	QA Appendices - Appendix 8

	and Quality Improvement Plan with the External Evaluator.			
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Table 2.1 Outlines the membership, roles and responsibilities of RIS Committees, Boards and Panels.

Refer to Appendix 3-8 for full Terms of Reference for the RIS Committees, Boards and Panels listed in the table.

2.1.5 Risk Management

The Retail Ireland Skillnet Consortium Steering Group (RISCSG) is responsible for ensuring that RIS has a system in place to identify, assess and manage risk. This system is designed to ensure that RIS does not engage in activities or partnerships that could potentially undermine the integrity of training programmes offered or the awards on the National Framework of Qualifications, to which they lead.

The consideration of risk to RIS extends to:

- Maintaining academic integrity
- The avoidance of academic or other fraud associated with the provision and related services
- Planning to ensure capacity to provide adequate services to the number and type of learner recruited
- Ensuring transparency at all levels.

RIS carries out a comprehensive risk assessment and maintains a Risk Register. The Head of Centre and Apprenticeship Programme Director monitor and evaluates risks on an ongoing basis and reports to the RISCSG. RIS identifies what are the most likely threats and risks, estimate the likelihood and consequences of the risks occurring, assess the magnitude of the risks for mitigation measures and develops mitigation measures which help to prevent and/or mitigate the impact of the risk.

The Risk Register names the risk/s, records the likelihood of occurrence, possible consequences (ranked low to high), possible mitigation strategies and assigns ownership of the risk to an individual within RIS. See Appendix 10 - Risk Register.

2.1.6 Protection for Enrolled Learners (PEL)

Part 6 of the Qualification and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 requires all training providers recognised by QQI who offer programmes of three months duration or more, leading to awards on the NFQ and where fees are paid by learners, or on their behalf to have arrangements in place to protect learners if the provider ceases to provide the programme concerned. RIS is not subject to provisions for learner protection under the 2012 Act, as they offer programmes on a module basis (less than 3 months duration). However, should any programmes terminate unexpectedly, RIS has arrangements in place. See Appendix 11 - Protection for Enrolled Learners.

2.1.7 Responsibility for PEL

The RISCSG is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place; that they are current, adequate and meet legal requirements. The Quality Assurance Manager manages the PEL arrangements on an ongoing basis and advises the RISCSG accordingly.

2.1.8 Insurance

RIS is covered by Ibec's Insurance Policy covering Public/Products Liability, Employers Liability and Professional Indemnity. Learners are safeguarded by their employer's insurance while they are 'on-the-job'.

2.2 Management of Quality Assurance

RIS staff are committed to developing and maintaining a governance structure that is effective, transparent, accessible, practical and viable. Quality Assurance is the responsibility of all staff within RIS including management, administration and tutors. There is a willingness amongst staff to continuously improve quality and acceptance amongst all staff that they have an essential part in achieving this. The RIS staff are committed to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, quality assurance, quality improvement and enhancement. The Governance and Organisational Structure is presented in Section 2.1. In addition, Appendix 7 provides a description of the Roles and Responsibilities of Retail Ireland Skillnet Staff.

The Head of Centre through consultation with RIS staff, learners, tutors, employers and other stakeholders ensures that policies and procedures are implemented, reviewed and updated to ensure RIS QAS is fit for purpose. There are clear decision-making procedures in place with the various Committees, Boards and Panels which supports the underpinning of the QAS, RIS sustainability and continuity as a training and education provider.

The Management of QA policies and procedures are implemented through the input of the various Committees, Boards, Panels and External Experts. See Appendix 8 for the Terms of reference for the Retail Practice Level 5 Programme Board, Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision Programme Board, Programme Approval Panel, External Authenticator, Results Approval Panel, and the Programmatic Review Panel.

2.3 Embedding a Quality Culture

RIS is committed to embedding a positive quality culture throughout all the programmes and services which is manifested by a collective commitment by all stakeholders to a shared vision and a desire for continuous improvement. Since its foundation in 2000, RIS core activities have been embedded in providing effective work-based training and education programmes for the retail sector. Pivotal to RIS's ability to offer transformational and innovative training and education programmes is the commitment and active collaboration from the whole RIS community who work in a coherent and cohesive way towards implementing the quality agenda which recognises the importance of quality, quality assurance, quality improvement and enhancement. Quality culture refers to the awareness of every stakeholder to have the mindset of quality and have the awareness that quality belongs to all of them. RIS aims to give all stakeholders the opportunity and self-confidence to contribute openly towards the continuous development of the QAS ensuring it remains fit for purpose and the quality culture remains pivotal to RIS.

RIS is committed to implementing equal opportunities in all its policies, practices and procedures, without discrimination on grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, race or membership of the traveller community. To this end, RIS ensures that the principles of equality are applied to recruitment, promotion, training and work experience and to all terms and conditions of employment, training and education, research and related services. Refer to latest version of the Ibec Employee Handbook.

2.3.1 Learner Engagement in Quality Culture

The Learner's voice plays a central role in RIS commitment to embedding a quality culture and shaping the direction of learning within the network. RIS is committed to ensuring RIS staff, tutors and employers understand learners' perspectives and their feedback is core to continuous quality improvement of all daily activities. Learners engaging in RIS programmes are typically in employment when undertaking RIS training programmes and RIS understands the challenges this can present. The teaching and learning strategy adapted by RIS recognises the challenges learners face when combining work and study. Learners are presented with a Learner Handbook upon commencing a programme as well as learning resources for the programme they are studying. At induction, learners are presented with the different policies and procedures and the various supports provided to them by RIS. RIS have learner representation on the Programmes Boards and further feedback is acquired in a number of means including telephone calls, completion of feedback forms and one-to-one meetings.

RIS views learner engagement as paramount in the planning, reviewing, reflecting, assessing and improving QA policies and procedures within the network. Additional supports are provided to the Apprentice by the Authorised Officer from the local ETB.

2.3.2 Staff Engagement in Quality Culture

RIS recognises that their non-academic and academic staff are fundamental in ensuring that RIS QA procedures and policies are engrained and form a part of the day-to-day activities of all staff members. As part of their commitment to embedding a quality culture, RIS ensures that all staff undertake an induction process where they are informed about RIS's mission, vision and values. In addition, all staff meet with the management team so they are aware of the collective organisational commitment to QA from the start of their employment.

RIS values feedback and consider staff feedback as imperative when considering immediate and long-term action plans. RIS is committed to the continuous development of all RIS staff through the provision of opportunities. RIS is committed to providing a learning and working environment where there is equality of opportunity for all staff and everyone is treated with respect and dignity, in accordance with current legislation and best practice guidelines. RIS takes pride in providing all staff with a work environment which is interpersonal, collaborative, respectful, transparent, honest, accountable, robust, consistent, aspirational and diverse, where the RIS QAS is engrained in everyday activities.

2.3.3 External Stakeholder Engagement in Quality Assurance

RIS is committed to ensuring a QA culture which recognises the importance of quality, quality assurance, quality improvement and enhancement through the continuous engagement with all relevant RIS boards, panels and committees. There are regular meetings scheduled throughout the year by each of the boards, panels and committees at which QA recommendations are discussed, reviewed and implemented thereafter by RIS.

3 Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

RIS is committed to providing a comprehensive and documented approach to quality assurance to ensure that policies and associated documents are both effective and fit-for-purpose as per the most recent QQI Policies, procedures and guidelines.

The RIS Quality Assurance System has fully documented and robust policies and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of provision. All RIS staff and contracted employees receive training on all QA policies and procedures at induction and on a continual basis. The policies are presented to learners during programme induction and are published on the RIS website <https://retailirelandskillnet.com/quality-assurance-policies-and-procedures> .

3.1.1 Documented Policies and procedures

All policies are regularly monitored and reviewed by the RISCOG to ensure they align with the RIS mission, strategy and other criteria. On an ongoing basis, RIS is committed to engaging in continuous internal evaluation activities with the purpose of reviewing the effectiveness of the current policies and procedures and their enhancement. RIS ensures that all stakeholders including learners, tutors, and employers contribute to the continual improvement of the RIS QAS through their on-going contributions.

The Quality Assurance Manager ensures RIS policies comply with changing national legislation and reflect best international practices. The Quality Assurance Manager, Apprenticeship Programme Director, Senior Programme Coordinator, Senior Tutor and the Head of Centre regularly attend workshops and seminars organised by bodies such as QQI and the Department of Education and Skills to ensure policies reflect national legislation and recommendations. As RIS is a small independent organisation offering only a limited number of programmes, the Quality Assurance Manager is in constant contact with all members of staff ensuring QA issues can be addressed in a timely manner.

3.1.2 A Comprehensive System

In accordance with RIS commitment to embed a quality culture in all activities, consultation is sought with relevant stakeholders before any new policies or procedures are developed. RIS recognises the

importance of acquiring input from the individuals/stakeholders who are most impacted by any new policies.

If a new policy or procedure is required to improve the QAS, the following process applies:

1. All stakeholders are encouraged to share their opinions and concerns
2. A sub-group will explore all aspects of the proposed improvement and subsequent impacts on existing and new policies and procedures
3. Following consultation with the RISCSG and any other relevant stakeholders, the proposed policy or procedure will be declined or approved
4. On an on-going basis policies and procedures are monitored closely by Head of Centre, Apprenticeship Programme Director and Quality Assurance Manager to ensure they adhere to best practice nationally and internationally.

4 Programmes of Education and Training

RIS is committed to developing and providing the highest possible standard of programmes and support services to learners, staff, tutors, employers and all other stakeholders. All programmes are developed in line with the requirements of the National Framework of Qualifications and associated policies and procedures on Access, Transfer and Progression. A strong alignment to work-based education which aligns with industry needs is pivotal to all RIS programmes. In line with the RIS vision, mission and values, all programmes are developed and delivered to create a learning environment which is learner-focused and that enables learners to achieve their desired goals.

A Programme Board is established by the RISCSG for each programme. The role of the Programme Board is to systematically monitor programme quality. The Programme Board formally meet at least twice a year and review current data on the programme's operation. The minutes are recorded and disseminated. Where necessary, relevant matters are referred to the RISCSG who have overall responsibility for the quality of programmes.

4.1 Programme Development and Approval

RIS is committed to providing a quality learning experience for its learners, and therefore the quality of its programmes is of fundamental importance. Rigorous processes for programme approval, validation, monitoring and review exist to ensure that programmes are relevant, informed by stakeholder engagement, of an appropriate standard, and that they continue in good standing over time. Appendix 14 presents the Programme Development and Approval Process.

Figure 4.1 below illustrates the RIS process for new programme development and approval.

4.1.1 Stages for New Programme Development and Approval

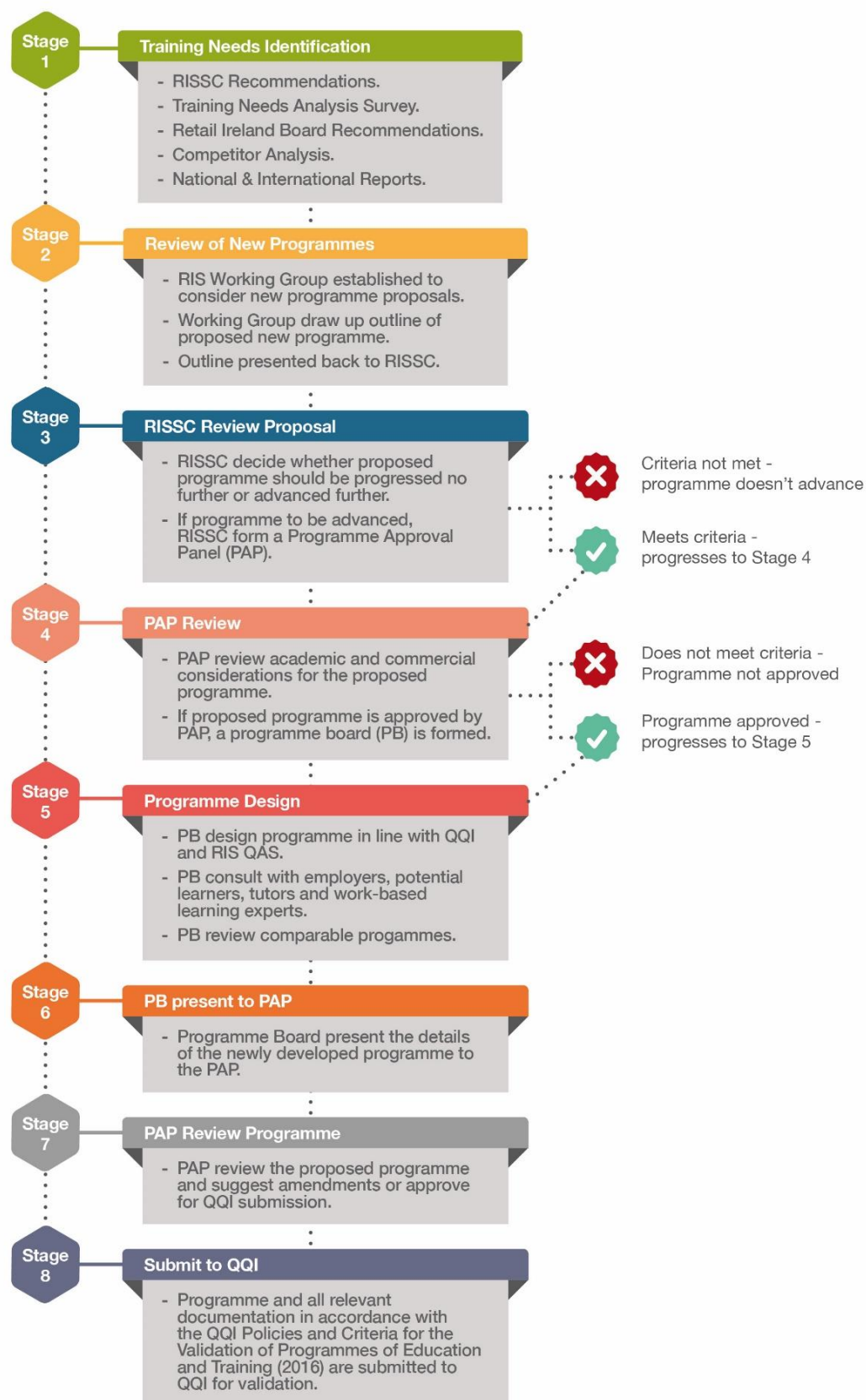


Figure 4.1 Process for new programme development and approval

4.2 Admission, Progression, and Recognition

RIS is committed to ensuring that all regulations pertaining to the learners' journey including admission, progression, recognition and certification of awards are pre-defined and communicated consistently across all channels. RIS policies and procedures for Admission, Progression and Recognition were established and are implemented in accordance with the relevant QQI Policies, procedures and Guidelines.

4.2.1 Learner Admission

RIS is committed to ensuring that the admissions procedures are informative, efficient, consistent and fit for purpose. In order to apply for a place on a RIS programme, applicants must be at least 18 years old and work in retail. During Learner admission RIS ensures that:

- Learners are fully briefed about RIS as an independent provider of education and training and RIS supports
- Learners / employers / mentors attend a programme information session

The admission procedure for the Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision programme differs from that of other programmes delivered by RIS. See Appendix 16 – Admission Procedure.

When learners do not fulfil the standard entry requirements, they can apply through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) route. See Appendix 17 – Retail Ireland Skillnet Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy.

4.2.2 Learner Progression

RIS is committed to implementing Section 56, Part 4 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. RIS provides details of progression options available to learners on RIS programmes in the Learner Handbook, at Learner induction and in programme brochures. The Head of Centre and Apprenticeship Programme Director are responsible for researching and updating options for Learner progression on all programmes. It is the policy of RIS to facilitate learners as much as possible to gain access to the programmes offered, transfer to other programmes/providers and progress to programmes leading to awards at higher levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). RIS allocate places on programmes based on objective criteria in a fair, transparent and consistent manner.

If a learner leaves the Level 5 Retail Practice programme, he/she will receive a certificate for modules successfully completed and can request a Record of Awards.

Apprentices may opt to transfer out of the Apprenticeship Programme for a number of reasons. When such a request is made, the Apprenticeship Programme Director (or a person appointed by the Apprenticeship Programme Director) will arrange a meeting with the Apprentice to discuss the circumstances and identify solutions to meet their needs. The Apprenticeship Programme Director will discuss with the Apprentice possible alternatives to transferring from the programme (e.g. taking a year out from the programme). However, in other situations this may involve identifying other possible programmes (delivered by RIS or other external training and education bodies) that would be suitable to the learner. If an Apprentice seeks to change employers during the Apprenticeship programme, he/she must contact the Apprenticeship Programme Director in advance of changing to discuss the implications. The Apprentice may continue with the programme providing the New Employer is an Approved Employer (Approved by the SOLAS Authorised Officer from the local ETB). The Apprentice must complete the Apprenticeship Change of Employer Form provided by local Authorised Officer. If an Apprentice leaves the programmes and transfers to another programme, he/she will not receive an exit award.

For Access, Transfer and Progression Arrangements for the Level 5 Retail Practice and the Apprenticeship in Retail Apprenticeship, see Appendix 9.

4.2.3 Learner Recognition

RIS has demonstrated its commitment to developing a career path in retail, and for maximising access and flexibility for learners. RIS views Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as an appropriate method for widening access to qualifications and supporting life-long learning within the retail sector. RPL is a system whereby learning acquired through prior certified programmes and/or through non-certified and experiential means (e.g. work experience) can be acknowledged as a basis for entry into programmes, and/or for gaining exemptions from parts of a programme. RIS has a proven track record in promoting RPL to retail employers and employees seeking to have learning achieved in the workplace recognised with an accredited qualification. RIS has attempted to meet the needs of the Applicant when developing tools to capture the learning acquired in the workplace but always maintaining robust procedures that comply with QQI requirements. Employers and learners are made aware of the RIS approach to RPL at company meetings, learner induction and

programme prospectus. See Appendix 17 – Retail Ireland Skillnet Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy.

4.3 Programme Monitoring and Review

On an on-going basis, all programmes are monitored by RIS Management including the Head of Centre, Apprenticeship Programme Director and Quality Assurance Manager. There are formal Programme Boards held at least twice per year, Annual Programme Reviews and Programmatic Review (held every 5 years). Feedback is sought from all stakeholders including learners, employers, tutors, support officers, workplace mentors, internal verifiers and external examiners (See Appendix 18 – Programme Monitoring and Review Procedures). This monitoring and review process ensure RIS programmes remain appropriate and relevant to the learner and industry requirements.

4.3.1 Learner Feedback

RIS regards learner evaluation and feedback as a key mechanism to monitor programmes and identify ways to improve the quality and effectiveness of programmes, activities and services. Learner feedback is obtained in the following ways, telephone, one-to-one meetings, programme boards, Skillnet Ireland, learner feedback forms, RIS Staff, learner data. Learner feedback forms are formally collected upon module completion. RIS encourage learners to contact them at any time with queries and feedback. See Appendix 18 - Programme Monitoring and Review Procedures.

Learner feedback on the Apprenticeship Programme is collected through an online survey tool. After the completion of each module, a survey is sent out to the apprentice's email. The apprentice completes the survey and submits it via the survey tool. This data is accessed and collated. RIS actively welcome and encouraged apprentices to contact them at any time with queries and feedback. See Appendix 18 - Programme Monitoring and Review Procedures.

4.3.2 Tutor Feedback

RIS views the collection and consideration of Tutor feedback as key to the continuous quality improvement of the programmes. Formal feedback is collected from tutors at the end of module delivery through the online survey tool. Tutors are encouraged to provide timely feedback at all times. See Appendix 18 - Programme Monitoring and Review Procedures.

4.3.3 Employer Feedback

As an enterprise-led training and education provider, RIS places significant importance on acquiring employer feedback as part of the design, delivery, assessment and evaluation of programmes. There are a number of mechanisms used by employers when providing feedback including direct feedback from individual employers (e.g. RIS contact employers during and after delivery of training), RISCOG, Programme Board, Retail Ireland Board, Annual Programme Reviews and Programmatic Review. See Appendix 18 - Programme Monitoring and Review Procedures.

4.3.4 Support Officer - On-the-Job Monitoring Form

Programmes are delivered both on-the-job and off-the-job and RIS monitors and reviews the delivery and quality of the programmes on a continuous basis across all delivery sites to ensure that the learning opportunities allow the Learner to achieve the objectives of the programme. RIS employs Support Officers who provide on-going support to both the Learner and the employer in relation to learning in the workplace.

See Appendix 7 - Roles and responsibilities for Apprentice Support Officer & Workplace Support Officer.

See Appendix 18 - Programme Monitoring and Review Procedures.

4.3.5 Programme Board

The Programme Boards meet at least twice per annum and are responsible for ensuring the programmes achieve the objectives set for it and respond to both the needs of the Learner and changing retail landscapes. See Appendix 8 - Terms of Reference for RIS Boards and Panels.

4.3.6 External Authenticator

The reports and feedback received from the External Authenticator are critical to RIS when ensuring that all programmes reach an acceptable threshold of quality and meet the standard that is certified by QQI under the NFQ. See Appendix 30 - Roles and Guidelines for the External Authenticator.

4.3.7 Annual Programme Review

The Annual Programme Review is a function of the Programme Board led by the Head of Centre or Senior Programme Coordinator and the Quality Assurance Manager. The RISCOG is responsible for ensuring that RIS review programmes annually and the Programme Board is responsible for

overseeing the review. The Programme Boards review all programmes on an annual basis to ensure that they achieve the objectives and respond to the needs of the learners, employers, industry, QQI and other stakeholders. RIS undertakes these reviews in order to continuously improve programmes and services. The main benefit of the Annual Programme Review is to ensure that the recommendations are captured and used to make improvements in future programme delivery. It is recommended that evaluation findings are used to facilitate reflective practice and process improvement within the centre. For the full Annual Review Process, see Appendix 18 - Programme Monitoring and Review Procedures.

4.3.8 Programmatic Review

The Programmatic Review (normally held every 5 years) provides further opportunities to evaluate programmes and identify improvements. RIS considers the views of learners, employers, tutors, independent evaluators and other stakeholders when completing the Programmatic Review. The Programmatic Review ensures RIS programmes remain relevant and address the objectives they initially set out to achieve. The Programmatic Monitoring and Review procedure:

- Reviews programme objectives, content and assessment
- Ensures programmes remain current and fit for purpose taking into consideration changes in the business and other environments
- Considers learner workload and learner progression and completion rates
- Identifies and maintains areas where RIS is doing well
- Identifies and addresses areas which need improvement
- Ensures RIS meet the needs and expectations of all stakeholders
- Ensures the most recent QQI and other policies, procedures and guidelines are being implemented
- Assesses the financial viability of programmes
- Measures the success of learners in reaching the intended learning outcomes
- Makes comparisons with similar programmes delivered nationally and internationally
- Reviews progression paths for learners.

4.3.9 Retail Ireland Skillnet Consortium Steering Group

The RISCSCG support ongoing monitoring and review support for all RIS programmes. The RISCSCG contains senior representatives from the retail sector and education and training. The RISCSCG is an employer-led initiative which ensures RIS programmes are economically relevant and meet the

needs of employers. See Appendix 3 - Terms of Reference Retail Ireland Skillnet Consortium Steering Group (RISCSG).

For full Programmatic Review process see Appendix 18 - Programme Monitoring and Review Procedures.

5 Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

RIS recognises that its employees are its biggest asset and since it is the staff who fundamentally differentiate RIS training programmes from others, it is committed to a policy of continuous staff development via training, research and consultancy activities. It is RIS policy to staff programmes and services with appropriately trained and competent people who have sufficient experience and expertise to fulfil their designated roles. RIS is committed to recruiting, selecting, managing, supporting and training all members of staff using fair and transparent procedures. RIS provides staff with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively and enhance the teaching and learning environment for learners.

The Head of Centre and Apprenticeship Programme Director liaises with Ibec in the management of human resources and employee relations including recruitment, induction, training and development, staff appraisal and communications, remuneration, staff welfare, personnel administration and industrial relations.

In advance of approving new positions and staff members, the RISC SG is consulted.

5.1 Staff Recruitment and Selection

The Head of Centre and Apprenticeship Programme Director have primary responsibility for recruitment in RIS. The recruitment of staff is governed by the relevant legislation. The Head of Centre and Apprenticeship Programme Director along with Ibec HR Department must ensure that RIS complies with current employment legislation, equality and other relevant legislation and provide support and advice on employment matters and legislation.

When a vacant position is identified, RIS draws up/updates a job description and person specification and Job Advert. Only candidates who satisfy the minimum criteria specified are considered for appointment. The Head of Centre and the Apprenticeship Programme Director screen applications and draw up a short list of qualified candidates. Those on the shortlist are invited to attend an interview. An appropriate interview panel is constituted which normally includes the Head of Centre, Apprenticeship Programme Director and a member of the RISC SG.

RIS employs staff directly or utilises the services of third-party individuals for a particular piece of work (e.g. tutors or subject matter experts are usually contracted in as their services are required).

Dependent on the nature of services supplied to RIS, an appropriate contract of employment or contract for services is put in place (See Appendix 21 – Contract for Services Templates). RIS refers to the Code of Practice for Determining Employment or Self-Employment Status of Individuals (<https://www.revenue.ie/ga/self-assessment-and-self-employment/documents/code-of-practice-on-employment-status.pdf>) for details relating to different types of contracts.

All appointments are subject to:

- The approval of the RISCSG
- The authenticity of academic qualifications and/or professional recognition
- Satisfactory references, at least one of which is a training reference for tutors.

The specific programme tutor requirements for each programme are set out in the programme specifications. Normally a Tutor is required to have:

- A Level 7 Qualification or higher along with a minimum of 12 months teaching experience (the vast majority of RIS tutors have a level 9 qualification or higher with significant experience delivering education in higher education institutes)
- Three years' relevant work experience
- Excellent communication and presentation skills
- Experience and familiarity of QA procedures.

For a full list of specific tutor requirements see Appendix 20 - Statement of Required Qualifications for tutors.

5.1.1 Induction

The Head of Centre or the Apprenticeship Programme Director along with support from Ibec, induct all new members of staff. Induction includes:

- Introduction to RIS including background, ethos, structures, values, mission, strategies and plans
- Roles and responsibilities
- Programme Induction
- The RIS Quality Assurance System - Policies and Procedures
- Ibec Personal Data Protection Policy
- Skillnet Ireland's Privacy Statement

- Ibec's Employee Data Protection Policy
- Academic and administration procedures and regulations (including equality and diversity policy)
- Staff development opportunities
- Staff Appraisal Procedures
- Overview of the VLE and other IT systems
- Overview of health and safety requirements
- Any other role-specific duties.

The Head of Centre provides an overview of the tutor's roles and responsibilities which includes:

- Roles and responsibilities, including pedagogical expectations, teaching, learning and assessment strategies
- The RIS Quality Assurance System - Policies and Procedures
- RIS staffing information
- Information about awarding bodies
- Learner support
- Tutor supports
- Programme assessment
- Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) training
- Programme-specific documents.

See Appendix 7 – Roles and Responsibilities of RIS Staff

RIS provides all tutors with a copy of the Tutor Handbook. The Tutor Handbook provides a comprehensive overview of RIS training procedures. Tutors are required to read the Tutor Handbook in advance of their induction. Tutor induction involves a meeting and discussion with the Head of Centre, Apprenticeship Programme Director, Senior Programme Coordinator and Quality Assurance Manager. At the end of the induction session, the Tutor is required to sign both confirmation that they have read the Tutor Handbook and a Contract for Services. See Appendix 21 - Contract for Services Templates.

5.1.2 Staff Appraisal

The RIS staff appraisal process is integral to the achievement of strategic objectives and continuous development of the network. The success of RIS training and education programmes, services and related activities depends on the abilities and performance of RIS staff, not just as individuals but also on the way in which they interact, work together, and support each other. Should difficulties or problems arise, RIS is committed to their resolution in an open, fair, frank, and timely manner. Procedures are designed to help and encourage everyone to achieve and maintain the required standards of conduct, attendance, and job performance. The procedures are applied in a fair and reasonable manner with due regard to the rights and responsibilities of the parties concerned. Staff appraisals are a mandatory requirement for all staff. They are scheduled annually by the Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director and when necessary, in association with Ibec HR Department. All staff members have agreed individual goals and objectives.

The staff appraisal process considers the following:

- Performance review and appraisal of goals and objectives
- The implementation of staff development plans
- Future planning focusing on future goals, objectives, and development plans in the context of evolving operational responsibilities and career development.
- Continuous quality improvement through the provision of meaningful feedback to staff on their strengths and on areas requiring improvement.

All contracted staff are subject to the same staff appraisal which is conducted by the Head of Centre or the Apprenticeship Programme Director.

The Head of Centre or Senior Programme Coordinator reviews tutors' performance. Academic feedback gathered across all programmes, both formally by paper-based questionnaires (from learners and employers), external evaluators and RAP meetings and informally through meetings, phone-calls and emails, collectively feed into the processes for continually monitoring tutor performance. The performance of tutors is monitored on an ongoing basis by the Head of Centre, Senior Programme Coordinator or Apprenticeship Programme Director and Quality Assurance Manager.

Contracted tutors and staff who are not performing to the expected or required standards are notified of shortcomings by the Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director who, in

general, deals with deficiencies on an informal basis through discussion, counselling and appropriate assistance. The purpose of this performance management process is to help the Tutor achieve the necessary improvements and prevent any recurrence. If, the contracted Tutor or staff member continues to fail to meet the required standards then their contract for services is terminated. See Appendix 46 - RIS Staff Disciplinary Procedure.

5.2 Communications

RIS aims to create an open, trusting and honest culture and strives to be transparent and straightforward with all stakeholders. RIS regards effective communication as essential to their success as a provider of high-quality training programmes. It is crucial that all staff are clear with regard to what is expected from them when communicating with learners, peers, industry and other stakeholders. RIS aims for high levels of staff engagement and low levels of staff turnover. This is particularly important given the RIS model of delivery which is heavily reliant on the quality of the tutors who are operating at off-site locations.

Communications with staff and feedback from staff is disseminated and collected both formally and informally. Formal communication is facilitated through:

- Programme Boards
- Results Approval Panel
- Self-Evaluation Panel
- Programme Approval Panel
- Retail Ireland Skillnet Consortium Steering Group
- RIS Monthly Team Meetings.

Meetings are recorded and the minutes are maintained by RIS.

5.2.1 Internal Communications

The Head of Centre and the Apprenticeship Programme Director are responsible for keeping staff members and tutors informed of meetings, programme related issues and events. RIS has a range of formal and informal methods for communicating with staff and contracted tutors – emails, phone, face to face and online meetings. RIS has a detailed Tutor Handbook which is reviewed and updated annually with the most recent version available to all tutors on the VLE.

The Head of Centre and Apprenticeship Programme Director are in regular contact with tutors about all aspects of RIS programmes and learner related issues. The Head of Centre, Senior Programme Coordinator, Senior Tutor and Apprenticeship Programme Director maintain high levels of personal contact (face-to-face, telephone and email) with the tutors at all stages of programme delivery. As a small organisation, RIS places great emphasis on frequent, open and direct communications amongst its employees.

Newly-recruited / relatively inexperienced tutors are provided with additional support during their initial delivery sessions. This is provided by the Head of Centre, Senior Programme Coordinator or Senior Tutor. RIS staff members and tutors have access to the most up-to-date version of the RIS Quality Assurance Manual. Staff and tutor's role in implementing the QAS is discussed at induction and the importance of being familiar with the sections of the manual which are most relevant to their work is emphasised. The Quality Assurance Manager communicates changes/updates to the RIS QAS by email throughout the year, if the updates are significant.

All programme-specific information and documentation is presented to tutors in advance of programme delivery. This includes the programme descriptor, Tutor Handbook, assessment plans, assessment briefs, and marking guidelines. This helps to ensure consistency and equivalence across all modules and tutors.

5.2.2 Informal Communications

As a small organisation, RIS places a high value on informal communication. RIS maintains a high level of personal contact (face-to-face, telephone and email) with the tutors at all stages of programme delivery and checks in regularly with tutors regarding learner progress and to discuss any areas of concern.

5.2.3 Staff Meetings

RIS holds monthly team meetings to continually review and assess all aspects of programme design and delivery. RIS goals, challenges and operating plans are also discussed. These meetings usually last about an hour and include a question-and-answer session. The meeting is usually chaired by the Head of Centre with a standard agenda and minutes recorded. Dates for these meetings are scheduled and communicated in advance.

5.2.4 Feedback Mechanisms

Successful communication is a two-way process and staff and tutors are encouraged to provide ongoing feedback informally usually through one-to-one meetings and more formally through feedback forms and questionnaires. RIS analyses feedback provided by staff and tutors and report back on changes and enhancements made as a result of this feedback and input. If it is not feasible or appropriate to implement a suggestion, it is explained why. RIS welcomes feedback from all stakeholders. If a change or enhancement is made, RIS make a point of acknowledging the contribution and reporting back to the relevant stakeholder.

5.2.5 Communications Media

RIS employs a wide range of digital and non-digital tools when communicating to stakeholders. If the communication involves the development of an interpersonal relationship it may require face-to-face communications in which case, RIS arranges a meeting.

5.2.6 Learners Communication with Tutors and Staff

RIS encourages learners to communicate with staff and tutors on an ongoing basis for the duration of their modules. This communication is usually by email, telephone or face-to-face meetings. Topics that learners may need to communicate about include:

- Absence or illness
- Impact of a disability or specific learning difficulty/requirement for reasonable accommodation
- Difficulties with assessment or programme content
- Information about timetables, admissions, certification etc...
- Appeals
- Extensions to submission dates
- Transfer and progression
- Personal issues
- Feedback.

RIS tutors welcome all communications from learners and aim to deal with every query promptly and efficiently. All tutors have a RIS email address which is given to learners at induction and learners know they can email queries to the tutors.

5.2.7 Use of Mobile Phones (includes all portable electronic devices)

RIS recognises that mobile phones and digital devices are an integral part of many peoples' culture and way of life and have considerable value. Staff, tutors and learners are required to use phones and devices responsibly at all times. Phones can disrupt effective teaching and learning, even when in silent mode. Tutors remind learners that mobile phones and other internet enabled devices must be turned off in the training room unless permitted. Tutors are also prohibited from using mobile phones during classroom delivery. RIS tutors do use a number of technology-enhanced tools when delivering courses and learners are permitted to use their mobile phones in these instances to contribute to discussions.

5.3 Training and Development

RIS is committed to the ongoing development of its staff. It follows the Ibec's Performance Management and Development Strategy for Appraisal Procedures.

The Head of Centre and the Apprenticeship Programme Director are responsible for staff and tutors training and development/Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Individual staff members and tutors are welcomed and encouraged to discuss their CPD needs with the Head of Centre or the Apprenticeship Programme Director at any time. Where appropriate, an individual may be encouraged to pursue individual CPD activities to fulfil a requirement identified by RIS Management. Support for staff training and development include the following:

- Direct financial support for undertaking once-off training events
- Partial funding for ongoing training
- Provision of mentoring, supervision and consultation
- Provision of study leave
- Provision of in-house seminars and workshops
- Funding or partial funding for attendance at conferences, workshops and seminars

RIS staff are encouraged and supported in attending workshops and conferences coordinated by bodies such as QQI, Skillnet Ireland, SOLAS, Ibec and Retail Ireland.

6 Teaching and Learning

The core objective of the RIS Teaching and Learning strategy is to deliver high-quality learner-focused training to learners working in the Irish retail sector. Learners experience a variety of teaching and learning strategies which are selectively chosen based on level, module content, and target audience. The training and learning delivered by RIS offers developmental opportunities for those working in the retail sector enabling them to avail of progression opportunities within their organisation and external work environment. RIS is committed to the continual self-monitoring and the improvement of quality across all programmes and activities. See Appendix 18 - Programme Monitoring and Review Procedures.

6.1 A Provider Ethos that Promotes Learning

RIS programmes are delivered using an approach to teaching and learning that combines classroom, workplace learning, e-learning and independent learning. RIS appreciates that learning occurs in many contexts and environments and this learning needs to be recognised as part of the overall learning experience. The variety of pedagogical methods utilised are evaluated and monitored and adjusted accordingly. During the delivery of the training, learners are advised on possible progression and transfer routes available to them.

All the tutors have a Level 7 qualification or higher in an area directly related to the module they deliver. The majority have a Level 9 qualification or higher along with significant retail work experience. Tutors are offered support in relation to professional development (e.g. financial and time support for completing education and training programmes, attending relevant workshops, seminars, study tours and research).

The learning in the workplace must be enhanced by off-the-job learning. The work-based strategies and techniques have been developed following consultation with employers in the design of programmes, delivery of programmes (guest speakers), assessments addressing opportunities and challenges in the workplace and continuously engaging with learners and employers regarding the actual delivery of the programmes. The profile of the learners that typically undertake RIS training also significantly contribute to the design and delivery of programmes.

6.1.1 RIS Teaching and Learning Pathways

A wide range of flexible teaching and learning approaches and techniques are used when delivering training. Some of these are documented in Table 6.1 below:

Teaching and Learning Approaches	Details
Blended Approach	RIS appreciates the importance of combining on-the-job, classroom, online and independent learning when delivering training. Learning in the classroom and workplace is enhanced by online learning resources that are available to learners. All components must work together in an efficient manner ensuring a functional system. The different modes of delivery used are integrated so that they support and complement each other in enabling learner achievement of the stated learning outcomes.
Collaborative Teaching and Learning	Collaboration among learners can have a very positive impact both on learner engagement and learner retention. Opportunities should be provided for learners to interact and collaborate with each other. Peer-to-peer learning is part of the teaching and learning strategy. For example, study groups can be established in class and encouraged to meet outside of class time where possible. This can be easily facilitated in RIS delivered programmes as learners often are employed in the same organisation. Employers are encouraged by RIS to facilitate this in the workplace by allocating dedicated time for collaborative learning.
Facilitative Learning	RIS tutors are encouraged to adopt a facilitator style when delivering training. This involves recognising the significant knowledge that already exists in the classroom and encouraging learners to share their existing knowledge and experiences. This is achieved by learners collaborating in case studies, role plays, debates and discussions. The Tutor's role must shift from one who delivers content to one who facilitates and guides learning. The classroom becomes a productive place where tutors interact with learners to help them construct knowledge. Studies have shown that a number of strategies including group work activities, enquiry/problem-based learning, flipped classrooms and learner-led discussions facilitate deep learning and reduce surface learning. Tutors are encouraged to use technology-enhanced tools to facilitate the sharing of ideas and discussions.

Technology-Enhanced Learning	<p>RIS has invested significant resources into developing their online learning tools and continue to invest in this area in the future. The online learning resources are used to enhance learning achieved in the classroom and workplace.</p> <p>RIS recognises that technology is playing an increasingly important role in training and education and it is their intention to provide RIS staff and tutors with the knowledge, skills and competencies to utilise these tools when designing and delivering training. This training will be provided on an ongoing basis starting in 2019.</p>
Inclusive Teaching	<p>RIS recognises that learners have diverse needs and respond differently to various teaching styles. Inclusive teaching means recognising, accommodating and meeting the learning needs of all learners. This is best achieved by moving away from reliance on any single teaching style and assessment instrument and providing a variety of methods of instruction and assessment. Teaching staff should be able to draw on a variety of methods of instruction which should be facilitated and supported by CPD.</p>
Industry-Aligned	<p>All RIS programmes are designed in collaboration with retail employers. Industry also play a significant role in the actual delivery of learning. The workplace is recognised as the main site for learning. The workplace tasks identified for each module helps align learning in the classroom with learning in the workplace. In addition, subject matter experts from industry provide 2-3-hour guest lectures for many of the modules delivered by RIS. The vast majority of assessments undertaken by learner's address opportunities or challenges faced by the learner's retail organisation.</p>
Personal Development	<p>RIS recognises that the personal development of learners is essential if they are to succeed in the workplace. Learners must not only acquire skills and knowledge but should also develop attributes, traits and competencies which enhance their performance.</p> <p>RIS programmes seek to address a combination of both the dedicated discipline skills associated with the learning outcomes but at the same time</p>

	review broader transferable skills relevant to working in retail and indeed other sectors.
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Table 6.1 Teaching and Learning Approaches

One of the major benefits of work-based learning programmes relates to the various means by which teaching, and learning can take place. RIS programmes incorporate these different approaches to teaching and learning. The different approaches adopted are presented in Figure 6.1 below.



Figure 6.1 - The different teaching and learning approaches adopted

1. **Learning by watching and listening:** Because learners on RIS programmes are typically in full-time employment, they learn from watching and listening in both the classroom and workplace. This is also enhanced by online learning.
2. **Learning by doing/practice** is mainly achieved in the workplace e.g. carrying out the workplace tasks and general duties. In the classroom, this can be achieved through role plays and presentations. Pedagogic approaches should include linkages with workplace experiential learning. A major benefit of work-based learning programmes is that the learners get the opportunity to test learning achieved in the classroom, in the workplace and then reflect on

this learning. RIS tutors are encouraged to make use of this when delivering training. This can be achieved by getting learners to undertake assessments linked directly to their own organisation and reflecting on that learning.

3. **Learning through conversation** involves the learners discussing topics with other learners and with colleagues in the workplace.
4. **Learning by being coached** is achieved from support provided by supervisors in the workplace and by the tutors (e.g. providing guidance in the workplace and feedback from assessments).
5. **Learning by helping others** is encouraged by learners sharing learning acquired from the programme with other employees in their workplace.
6. **Problem solving/reflection** occurs through completing assignments where the Learner is expected to address challenges and opportunities relevant to their own workplace.

Feedback is an extremely important aspect of the teaching and learning techniques and strategies adopted in RIS programmes. Feedback on the quality of training programmes is sought on an on-going basis from learners, tutors, Apprentice Support Officers and employers. See Appendix 18 - Programme Monitoring and Review Procedures.

6.2 Teaching and Learning Principles

RIS is committed to ensuring their programmes:

1. Are Learner centred
2. Consider the needs of the retail industry (the employer)
3. Comply with QQI guidelines and policies

6.2.1 Learner Centred

Learner Voice

RIS aims to provide learners with a high-quality learning experience to facilitate their personal and professional development. RIS aims to create an environment in which learners are able to take responsibility for their own learning, providing a supportive infrastructure and environment conducive to the provision of the highest standards in teaching and learning. RIS is committed to self-monitoring and continually improving the quality of teaching and learning and associated services. To ensure that the learners' journey is monitored on an on-going basis, feedback is sought from learners during and after module delivery. RIS respects and values the learners' voice as part of the on-going monitoring, evaluation and improvement of all programmes. The Annual Programme Review considers learner feedback. In addition, there is learner representation on the Programme

Boards, Annual Programme Review Panel and Programmatic Review Panel. Learner feedback provides recommendations in relation to how programmes can be improved from the learner's perspective.

Transversal Skills

The RIS Teaching and Learning strategy has been developed around the needs of the learner. The programmes have been designed in close collaboration with the retail industry to ensure the learners are equipped with the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies to improve performance in the workplace. The training delivered by RIS ensures the learner further develops his/her personal skills and competencies in areas such as decision making, confidence and communications. The assessments associated with the vast majority of modules delivered by RIS are concerned with addressing opportunities and challenges in the workplace thus enabling the learner to acquire a wide range of specialist transversal skills that can be applied within their job role.

Quality Delivery

RIS is committed to ensuring that every learner receives the best learning experience across all modules/programmes. RIS understands that the success of the learner is dependent on the quality of the tutors delivering the programme. RIS has a team of extremely well qualified, committed, highly motivated and competent tutors. The tutors chosen to deliver modules have been selected due to their subject matter experience and expertise and their ability to communicate and engage with the learners. Subject matter experts from industry support tutors in a guest lecturing role for selected modules. In the programme delivery, tutors adopt a facilitative approach to teaching and learning as the learner often already possesses significant knowledge, skills and competencies relevant to the module through their job role. The Tutor ensures that the knowledge that exists amongst the learners is shared and examples and illustrations presented by the learners are discussed. The practical skills acquired by the learner are continually enhanced by examining best practices from the sector. The approach to teaching and learning encourages mutual respect between the Learner and Tutor. The Quality Assurance Manager and the Apprenticeship Programme Director are responsible for ensuring that the conditions and resources are in place to ensure a quality training and learning environment. Tutors, with the support of other members of the team, are responsible for creating a positive, inclusive and safe learning environment.

Learner Induction

During learner induction, the Tutor introduces RIS, the awarding body and the programme aims, objectives, how the programme is delivered and assessed. The most important Learner supports/services are highlighted at Learner induction e.g. compassionate consideration for assessment, key dates, access to VLE, email and telephone support. Learners are also provided with the Learner Handbook which describes the various supports available, policies, procedures and regulations.

Supports Available to Learners

RIS is committed to ensuring learners with diverse needs and special requirements have access and can benefit from the programmes, insofar as is practicable. Supports are also available to learners with special requirements when completing assessments e.g. provision of a reader or extra time for exams or assignment completion. The learner is encouraged to forward RIS information relating to any special requirements and this information is passed on to the Tutor confidentially in advance of programme delivery where possible. RIS advises and offer referrals to support agencies e.g. National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and ETBs for learners who may have issues with numeracy, literacy or English language support. In other instances, RIS may inform learners (and occasionally employers) about initiatives such as The Skills for Work Programme funded by the Irish Government under the Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS.

Complaints and Appeals

RIS informs learners about the complaints and appeals procedures at induction and in the Learner Handbook. RIS has a documented complaint procedure in place to facilitate learners who wish to make a formal complaint with regard to any aspect of RIS modules/programmes and/or services. See Appendix 23 - Learner Complaints Procedure.

RIS Appeals Procedure ensures that learners can appeal aspects of the assessment process or results. See Appendix 25 - Retail Ireland Skillnet Assessment Appeals Process.

6.2.2 Consider the Needs of the Retail Industry (the employer)

Industry-led

All RIS programmes are developed and delivered in response to industry requirements. All programmes are designed, developed, delivered and constantly monitored in consultation with the RISCOG, the PB and Retail Ireland. Programmes designed and delivered by RIS are influenced by national and international skills reports. RIS also undertakes training needs analysis with retail companies on an annual basis which informs their training programmes. In addition, RIS undertake regular in-depth research studies to determine the current and future needs of the retail sector in relation to education, training and recruitment.

Representation

Senior representatives from some of Ireland's leading retail organisations are members of RIS committees, boards and panels. Employers are very much involved in all new programme development and making updates to existing RIS programmes. To contribute to the delivery of the programme and to give real-life examples, RIS employs subject matters experts from the retail industry to contribute by providing guest lectures. In addition, assessments are designed with the learner and employer in mind.

Work-Based Learning

The blend of classroom delivery and on-the-job delivery supports the learner in their capability for autonomous learning and the application of knowledge in the work environment. All the modules delivered by RIS have identified tasks which need to be completed in the workplace. These tasks help support the practical application of knowledge in the workplace. The employer is encouraged to support the learner with these tasks. RIS assessments are very much work-based requiring the learner to reflect on opportunities and challenges facing their organisation and sector and providing recommendations. These assessments often lead to improvements in the employer organisation. Feedback is sought from the employer in the early stages and at the end of module delivery. The workplace provides a genuine site for learning and the learner is exposed to real-life scenarios facing employers.

Experienced Tutors

Tutors delivering RIS modules are highly qualified and experienced in both training/education and the retail sector ensuring the examples and illustrations used reflect the current needs of the retail sector. To ensure that the content delivered in the classroom is reflective of the on-going changes in the retail sector, RIS organise National and International study tours for tutors.

6.2.3 Compliance with QQI Guidelines and Policies.

The teaching, learning and assessment strategies have been informed by the relevant QQI guidelines, policies and procedures.

RIS maintains an ongoing working relationship with QQI attending QQI events and workshops to ensure policies and procedures comply with best practice. Although RIS is a relatively small training organisation, it is very aware of the importance of academic integrity and takes every measure possible in ensuring QQI policies and procedures are followed and implemented. RIS is a QQI approved centre and has always maintained an excellent relationship with QQI since it commenced delivering accredited programmes in the early 2000s.

6.3 National and International Effective Practice

RIS ensures that the Teaching and Learning practices are kept up to date with changes in pedagogical developments, both nationally and internationally. RIS engages with national and international providers of education and training on a regular basis. Tutors, who are typically in full time employment with Irish colleges and universities are expected to share good practice. RIS has established Programme Boards which contribute to the further enhancement of RIS Teaching and Learning practices. See Appendix 8 - Terms of Reference for RIS Boards and Panels.

6.4 Learning Environments

6.4.1 Blended Learning

In work-based learning programmes, where learners are predominately in full-time employment and employers are sometimes challenged in relation to the time employees can be released for training, it is important to adopt a blended approach to teaching and learning. RIS's blended learning approach has been developed and is kept up to date in accordance with the most recent blended learning policies, procedures and guidelines from QQI. For the purpose of this document, blended learning is the integration of classroom learning with other modes such as workplace, face-to-face,

online and independent learning. RIS has effective practices in place for the delivery of programmes across all modes of delivery. For online delivery, RIS understands that the provision of training may pose challenges for some learners, whilst provide opportunity for others. However, RIS are committed to providing an equal learning opportunity for all learners. The RIS strategy for blended learning is to review, discuss and reflect on topics previously discussed in the classroom as opposed to introducing new learning online. RIS understands the distinctive demands that blended learning approach has from an organisational context, programme context including development and assessment and learner experience context.

6.4.1.1 Organisational Context

Strategy and planning for blended delivery

RIS is committed to continuously developing and optimising the online learning resources through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). RIS has put in place administration supports, financial supports and online learning expertise to ensure that blended delivery strategies are continually discussed, shared, implemented and reviewed. RIS is committed to ensuring there is an organisational-wide commitment to delivering effective online content and creating a standardised approach to delivery by all tutors.

RIS ensures that all tutors have the appropriate competencies required to deliver the RIS blended learning strategy across all modes of delivery. At the tutor induction and learner induction, a detailed and practical overview of RIS VLE strategy along with RIS supports and resources are explained in detail. In addition, RIS have eMentors in place to support both learners and tutors for the delivery of synchronous and asynchronous delivery. RIS is committed to ensuring that all tutors have CPD opportunities to keep up to date with teaching, learning and assessment strategies. RIS provide tutors with ongoing supports and opportunities to meet with instructional designers to ensure that all content is designed specifically for the mode of delivery. For example, content which is being delivered online, is designed specifically for online. RIS expect that all teaching, learning and assessment strategies are fit for purpose and take into consideration the learner profile across all touchpoints.

Infrastructure and resources

As RIS provides training and education programmes specifically for the retail sector, they are astutely aware of their learner profile. RIS understands that learners may have limited exposure to certain digital technologies and may lack confidence when using and conversing online. Learners may have a limited attention span when engaging with online learning. RIS understands that learners may have

limited accessibility to broadband regionally and may not have the physical resources required to engage in online learning. RIS is very aware of its commitment to each learner and is committed to putting the necessary supports in place to ensure that every learner has equal opportunity and experience. Supports include a detailed learner induction, tutorial videos, learner handbook, access to Microsoft applications tutorial videos, online library (EBSCO) and arrangements with employers to support with laptops, quiet space and headsets.

RIS has robust and consistent systems and processes to ensure the secure, reliable and scalable provision of online learning. RIS collaborate with external technological experts to ensure that all hardware and software systems maintain compatibility with the technology that learners are using. In the instance where a hardware or software failure occurs, the Communications and eLearning Manager is accountable for the swift resolution of the problem. RIS eMentors are available in advance of all online lectures to support both the learner and tutor should any issues arise whilst using the VLE. RIS has a service level agreement in place with the VLE provider for ongoing maintenance of servers and support with user interface and optimisation of plugins such as Turnitin and EBSCO. The VLE service level agreement is scalable and flexible depending on any new developments or optimisations required online.

The VLE is continually reviewed to ensure compliance with RIS QA procedures and policies.

6.4.1.2 Programme Context

RIS is committed to assuring quality in the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes and modules used in blended learning. All RIS online teaching, learning and assessment mechanisms are designed in collaboration with tutors, work-based learning experts and instructional designers. For online delivery, RIS tutors adopt a facilitative role with the aim of encouraging discussion, interaction and engagement with learners. RIS aims to provide learners accessing the VLE with a standardised view across all modules ensuring the same user experience across the programme. Learners with limited technological experience will find an ordered approach is used across the VLE. Each module is displayed using a consistent theme so the learner can easily access modules, topic specific resources, assessment information, additional reading, support materials, online library, virtual classroom and Turnitin.

Programme Outcomes

For blended learning programmes, the Programme Board in consultation with work-based experts and instructional designers consider the programme/module learning outcomes and decide on time allocated to face-to-face, classroom, online and independent learning. The overall focus of the Programme Board is to ensure that all modes of delivery are in line with RIS mission, vision and values, and that online provision remains:

1. Learner-centred
2. Enterprise-led as opposed to technology-led
3. Adopts effective and fit-for-purpose teaching, learning and assessment strategies that are in line with RIS QA policies and procedures
4. Quality technological partners are used in the provision of online resources.

All module tutors are provided with a suggested format for online delivery which includes a mix of synchronous and asynchronous learning, formative assessment and discussion. RIS encourages the use of formative assessments to reinforce and knowledge check with all learners receiving timely and constructive feedback.

Learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms

RIS continually monitor learning resources, materials and delivery mechanisms to ensure they are appropriate, remain fit-for-purpose and remain current with learner and RIS staff needs. All technologies are tested in advance across multiple devices and browsers to ensure compatibility and optimum user experience. RIS is committed to supporting tutors in the delivery of all types of online content i.e. podcasts, interviews with experts and presentations with audio, so as to ensure that it is of good quality and compatible with hardware and software. Peer-to-peer collaboration is encouraged amongst all RIS tutors with frequent workshops established to discuss pedagogical approaches. RIS are committed to providing tutors with ongoing CPD opportunities in instructional design, learner engagement techniques and data protection. RIS appreciates the value of creating and cultivating a knowledge culture where ideas and experiences are openly shared and discussed amongst tutors.

Tutors and Programme Improvement

All the RIS tutors have a Level 7 qualification or higher in an area directly related to the module they deliver. The majority have a Level 9 qualification or higher along with significant industry and tutoring experience including online delivery. RIS is committed to providing ongoing financial

support and opportunities for all RIS staff to keep pace with teaching, learning and assessment strategies. RIS has also financial provision for ongoing platform developments, development of support services and online resources.

To ensure a quality culture online and across all modes of delivery, RIS is committed to gathering, reviewing, benchmarking and actioning findings with the aim of continuously improving programmes and related services (see figure 12.1 for RIS self-evaluation, self-monitoring and review). Actions taken, feedback and recommendations pertaining to online delivery are reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director, Senior Tutor and the Communications and eLearning Manager, as part of the RIS monthly meetings and are reviewed as part of the Annual Programme Review.

6.4.1.3 Learner Experience Context

RIS is committed to supporting learners in achieving a positive experience when completing all programmes. In advance to enrolling on an RIS programmes, prospective learners are fully informed of what to expect whilst completing the programme. Prior to commencing the programme, learners are informed of the schedule for classroom, online, independent and workplace learning. Employers and learners have access to programme description documents which outline the nature of the content, requirements for accessing online learning and delivery models adopted. The learner is fully informed about the commitment, resources, schedule and expected level of engagement across all learning environments. As part of the learner screening process, employers also inform the learner of the commitments of enrolling on the online/blended learning programme.

Supports available to learners

- Learner Induction
- eMentors
- Resources – library, tutorial videos
- Learner Handbooks
- Ongoing RIS support – academic, administrative and technical
- Additional Support Workshops (e.g. IT, academic writing, English language, maths)
- Support with equipment
- Workplace Mentor
- Secure, reliable and user-friendly VLE
- Experienced tutors

- Support officers

As attendance for online is compulsory RIS is committed to dealing with any issues learners may have with online learning promptly. Appropriate interventions and mechanisms to identify learners who may be struggling with online remote learning are in place. Data from the VLE is regularly analysed to monitor learner progress. In addition, feedback from learners, tutors, workplace monitors and employers also contribute to the monitoring of learner progress.

The Annual Programme Review and Programmatic Review assess the suitability and relevance of learning material available on the VLE.

Equality of Opportunity

RIS is committed to ensuring learning and teaching activities and associated resources provide every learner with an equitable, fair and realistic opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes. RIS have arrangements in place to ensure learners with special requirements are catered for, with all reasonable efforts made to accommodate their needs.

For additional information on Blended Learning see Appendix 24 – Retail Ireland Skillnet Teaching and Learning Strategy.

6.4.2 Premises, Equipment, and Facilities

RIS uses external training venues in the delivery of programmes. Venues used are normally centres of education. Details of the facilities, equipment and premises required for programme delivery are identified at programme design stage and are detailed in the programme descriptors. RIS has long term rental arrangements with a number of academic institutions e.g. Griffith College Dublin and Galway Business School. RIS has full use of Ibec Training facilities in all their regional offices. On occasion, RIS may use either conference facilities in hotels or member company's premises.

Premises, equipment and facilities are only used if they meet the required standards, are suitable for the purpose and meets the learners' needs. RIS benchmarks the premises, equipment and facilities against the Facilities Checklist which reflect programme requirements and the needs of learners. See Appendix 26 - Premises, Equipment and Facilities Checklist.

As part of RIS commitment to ensuring the continued adequacy and effectiveness of the training facilities, the Quality Assurance Manager and/or the Apprenticeship Programme Director review premises, equipment and facilities on an on-going basis. In addition, feedback from staff, tutors and learners on the continued suitability of premises, equipment and facilities are continuously monitored. RIS reviews the effectiveness of equipment, training resources and facilities to ensure their continuing adequacy and effectiveness at the Programme Board meetings.

RIS tutors advise learners regarding facilities, housekeeping and safe access and exits including fire assembly points at induction.

7 Assessment of Learners

7.1 Assessment Framework

RIS recognises the assessment of learners as one of the most important elements in training and education. It is the policy of RIS to be fair and consistent in the assessment of learners. Assessments are appropriate to the learning outcomes and sensitive to the needs of the learners. The assessments associated with RIS programmes are carefully developed by experienced and competent tutors taking into consideration employer, learner and QQI requirements. RIS is informed by the policies, criteria and guidelines outlined in the most recent QQI documentation.

All programme assessments are closely linked with the module learning outcomes and programme content. A wide range of assessment methods are used including presentations, work-based portfolios, reports, practical illustrations, workplace tasks, reflective journals and exams. The majority of modules are assessed through a continuous assessment which is linked where possible to the workplace addressing an opportunity or challenge that will benefit the learner and employer, whilst addressing QQI standards in relation to assessments.

As part of the Apprenticeship Programme apprentices must record their workplace tasks in a logbook. These tasks are recorded and signed off by the Workplace Mentor, who supports them through the programme. The Apprentice Support Officers regularly review the Workplace Logbooks and give individuals feedback on their tasks. The Apprentice Support Officer records the progress of the individuals on the VLE. Although the workplace tasks do not form part of the assessment for each module, apprentices must complete all tasks in order to progress through the programme. Please refer to latest version of Apprentice Workplace Logbook.

Assessment practice includes secure record keeping, standardised practices, appeals, use of evaluation instruments and consistency across tutors and programmes thereby enabling candidates to achieve national standards. An overview of the RIS Assessment Process is provided below in **Figure 7.1.**

7.2 Assessment Process

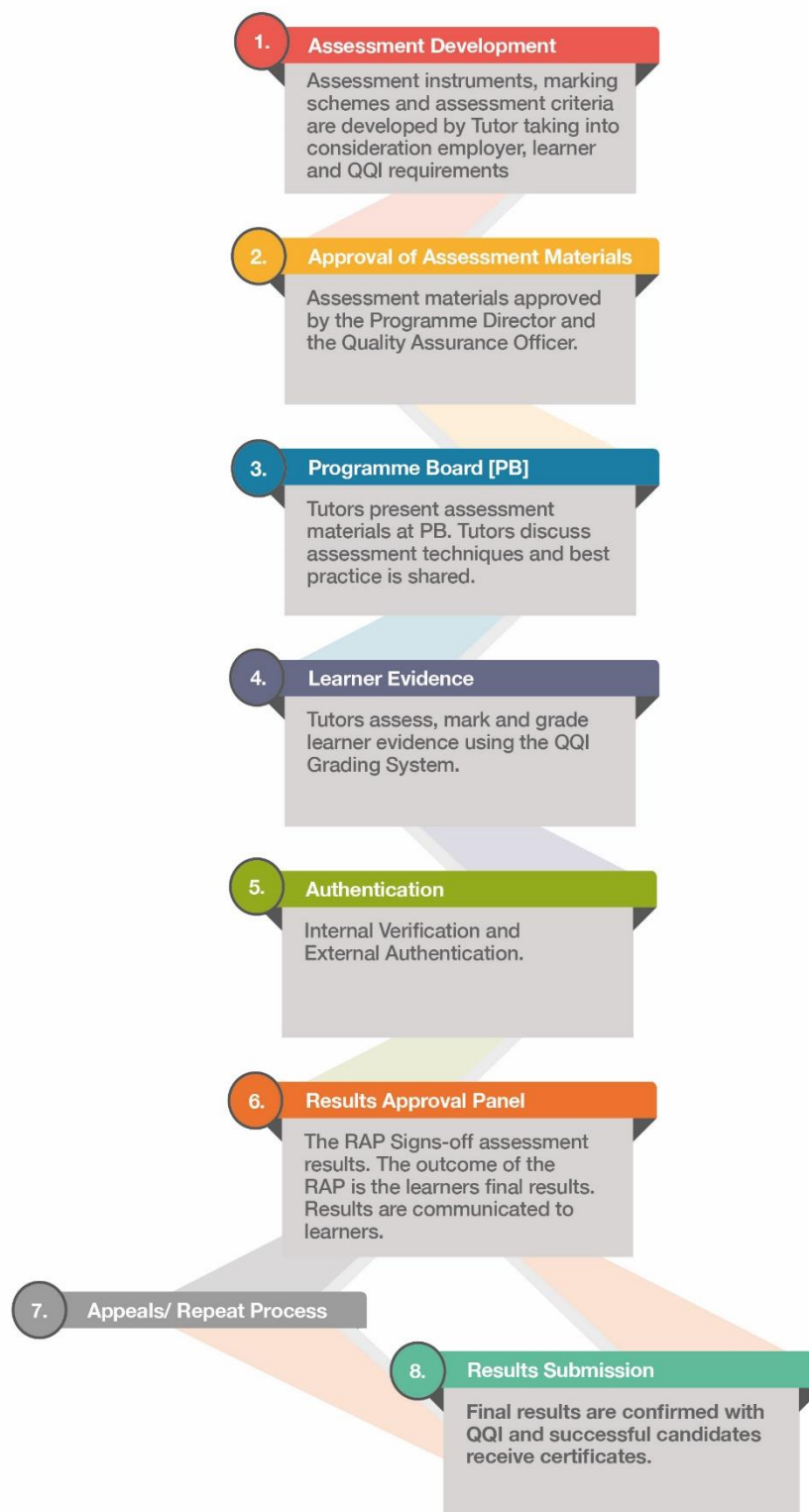


Figure 7.1 Assessment Process

7.2.1 Assessment Development

The Head of Centre or Senior Programme Coordinator works with the tutors in devising assessment instruments, marking schemes and assessment criteria. All new assessment instruments must be approved by the Apprenticeship Programme Director and Quality Assurance Manager before they can be used. All assessment methodologies are clearly linked to module and programme learning outcomes as documented in the validation documents. At the programme board meetings, the tutors present the assessment materials and processes used for their module. It is important that each of the tutors are familiar with the assessment techniques employed by other tutors and best practice is shared.

RIS is committed to ensuring that assessments are fair and consistent across all modules/programmes. RIS tutors adhere to all relevant QQI guidelines.

7.2.2 Information for Learners on Assessment

RIS ensures that learners have all the information they need to successfully participate in an assessment. The tutors and QA Manager are responsible for ensuring that the learners have access to any information they need relating to assessment. See Appendix 27 - Learner Information on Assessment.

7.2.3 The Tutor Role in Assessment of Learner

RIS Tutors receive training and guidance in best practice in assessment to ensure that the assessments are fair, consistent and reliable and in accordance with the most relevant *QQI* guidelines. Tutors are encouraged to share best practice at Programme Board meetings and other events.

See Appendix 28 - The Tutor Role in Assessment of Learner.

7.2.4 Internal Verification

The Tutor emails the provisional results to the Internal Verifier who confirms that assessment procedures have been applied consistently across all assessment activities and that assessment results are recorded accurately. See Appendix 29 - The Internal Verification Process.

7.2.5 External Authentication

The External Authenticator moderates assessment results by sampling learner evidence according to the RIS Sampling Strategy. See Appendix 32 - Retail Ireland Skillnet Sampling Strategy. RIS source a number of External Authenticators with the required experience and expertise for RIS programmes. See Appendix 30 - External Authentication Process.

7.2.6 Results Approval Panel

The Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director appoints a Results Approval Panel (RAP) to formally review and approve results data and to confirm that assessment results are fully quality assured and signed-off prior to submission to the awarding body for certification and issued to learners. See Appendix 31 - Results Approval Panel.

7.2.7 Request for Certification

Following the RAP, the Programme Administrator or Quality Assurance Manager declares all learners' final results to QQI via the QBS.

For the Apprenticeship Programme Final results are not entered on to QBS until apprentices have completed the full programme. RIS keep the record of module results and when all results are finalised the overall grade is agreed at the final RAP prior to certification and the overall grade is entered onto QBS for each successful learner. Apprentices are notified of their individual provisional module results throughout the programme.

The Programme Administrator or QA Manager confirm that RIS has implemented all elements of the authentication process and adhered to all agreed procedures. Certificates are then presented to learners at graduation ceremonies or posted via registered post.

7.2.8 Repeat Process

If a learner does not achieve the 50% pass standard they may repeat. Learners are permitted to repeat a maximum of three times only and the maximum mark attainable for a repeat piece of assessment is 50%. Opportunities to repeat an assessment activity are dependent on timetabling, the nature of the activity and the practical and/or operational issues involved. The learner contacts the Programme Administrator or Quality Assurance Manager directly to organise the repeat of assessment activity.

7.2.9 Appeals Process

If the learner is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request an appeal. Requests for an appeal must be made in writing within a period of seven days of receiving their results. The Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director in conjunction with the Quality Assurance Manager and one independent Tutor review the appeal application and make a final decision. Learners are advised that, as a result of an appeal, their grades may go up or down.

There is no fee associated with appeal requests. See Appendix 25 - Retail Ireland Skillnet Appeals Process.

7.3 Security of Assessment Related Processes and Materials

Assessments submitted by learners are encrypted and stored securely on the RIS secure network and are retained in-line with the RIS Data Retention Schedule. Records of all modules completed by learners, and grades awarded are maintained in-line with the RIS Data Retention Schedule.

Assessment materials are stored on the company's secure network, with access limited by password encryption. Tutors must email the marked and graded assessments to the Programme Administrator or Quality Assurance Manager who record the outcomes immediately. If marked and graded assessments are returned by hand, they must be signed in by the Internal Verifier. Materials pertaining to any learner assessments are retained until the completion of the appeals process timeframes and destroyed thereafter in compliance to Data Protection Procedures and RIS Data Retention Schedule.

Learners are required to submit assignments with a signed and dated Assessment Declaration Form confirming that all assessments submitted are their own work. See Appendix 27 - Learner Information on Assessment. For learners completing the Level 5 Retail Practice programme, assessments should be emailed to the Module Tutor and Programme Administrator. Learners on the Apprenticeship programme will submit their assessments via the VLE.

The Programme Administrator or Quality Assurance Manager keep a record of all assessments submitted on the secure network and this is included in the Internal Verifiers' folder for Internal Verification and External Authentication. This record acts as the receipt system for learner work. A Learners Results Database is maintained on the RIS secure network which has restricted access. All staff are required to sign confidentiality agreements upon commencement of employment. All assessment materials and practices related to learners are covered by this agreement. RIS has

procedures for dealing with incidents of suspected academic malpractice and we address this at Learner Induction and in the Learner Handbook. See Appendix 40 - RIS Data Retention Schedule.

7.4 Examinations Procedure

Examination papers, model answers, and marking schemes are retained by the Quality Assurance Manager in a secure manner throughout the process from development up to the time the examination is over.

Online Examination are retained in the same secure manner and are only uploaded onto the VLE on the morning of the exam.

See Appendix 33 - Examination Procedure.

7.5 Plagiarism and Other Types of Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism is a serious offence and consists of submitting work which includes parts from other sources which are not acknowledged. RIS promotes a culture which values and supports good academic conduct and has effective procedures in place to prevent, detect, combat, deter and deal with plagiarism. See Appendix 34 - Plagiarism and Other Types of Academic Misconduct.

7.6 Reasonable Accommodation

RIS is compliant with the **Equal Status Act 2000-2004**. A reasonable accommodation is any means of providing special treatment or facilities. In advance of commencing a programme, learners are encouraged to inform Retail Ireland Skillnet about any special educational or training needs or disabilities, so steps can be taken to ensure the learner does not face undue barriers in completing the module/programme. RIS communicates information on the types of learner supports available at induction and advises learners to contact RIS if they have any special requirements. The Quality Assurance Manager will contact the learner to discuss the learner's requirements in more detail and ensure reasonable accommodations can be offered. RIS may seek clarification from an appropriate health professional regarding any special requirements. This information is then passed on to the Head of Centre or Senior Programme Coordinator & relevant tutors. See Appendix 35 - Reasonable Accommodation.

7.7 Consistency of Marking

RIS has systems in place to ensure that there is consistency in marking and grading across programmes which are in line with National Standards. Marking and grading are addressed at Tutor Induction and in the Tutor Handbook. RIS has detailed marking schemes including assessment criteria in place for all programmes which shows clearly how the learner evidence is to be marked and graded. Tutors mark and grade learners on evidence given for each assessment criteria. Marking sheets clearly demonstrate marks been allocated for each criterion and for how the grade is to be awarded. Marking schemes are reviewed annually and updated as necessary.

Assessment briefs, examination papers, model answers and marking schemes are devised by the Tutor, signed-off by the Senior Programme Coordinator / Quality Assurance Manager and returned to the module Tutor in advance of delivery. The detailed marking schemes are based on the validated learning outcomes in the Award Specification. The Internal Verifier samples a selection of each tutor's marking and grading to ensure consistency across the board and observations are recorded in an Internal Verification Report. Any instances of inconsistent marking are communicated to the RAP by the Internal Verifier.

Thereafter, the Internal Verifier requests the External Authenticator to record any observations in relation to inconsistencies in marking on the External Authentication Report. If the External Authenticator has any concerns in this regard, they are discussed at the RAP meeting and a decision made with regards to corrective action. Any changes made to the Tutor's marking by the External Authenticator are examined and highlighted by the Internal Verifier at the RAP. Cross Moderation procedures are followed at the marking stage. See Appendix 36 - Cross Moderation Procedure. Marking and grading of learner evidence is an agenda item at the Programme Board meetings and all new (and existing tutors if requested) receive training on this from the Senior Programme Coordinator.

7.8 Feedback on Assessment

RIS provides learners with appropriate, specific, timely and constructive feedback on their assessments. It is the tutor's responsibility to provide information and feedback to learners. Typically, the Tutor provides the learner with written feedback after the results have been confirmed at the RAP. Any feedback provided before this is provisional. When giving feedback to learners, tutors are expected to use positive language, identify and note strengths, give objective, specific

feedback, with examples or direct references and specific recommendations for improvement and use assessment criteria and marking schemes to help them give objective feedback. The feedback provided to the learner should be constructive ensuring the learner continues to improve in relation to assessment submission.

When marking assessments, tutors are required to mark and grade learners for each assessment criteria and provide comments on assessment scripts, the Internal Verifier checks for evidence of feedback. Feedback is also received from the learners in relation to the assessment used when the programme evaluation is being carried out. In addition, there is learner representation at the Programme Board meetings and their views on the assessment used are sought.

8 Support for Learners

8.1 Support for Learners

RIS monitors the adequacy of the resources available to its learners on an on-going basis to ensure that they sufficiently reflect approaches to learning and learner needs as identified through the feed-forward and feed-back process employed. See Appendix 37- Supports for Learners.

For the Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision programme the SOLAS Authorised Officers will provide further support to apprentices by monitoring the on-the-job elements to ensure compliance with the statutory requirements of Apprenticeships.

8.2 An Integrated Approach from the Perspective of the Learner

To this end, the range of learning resources and learner supports are coherent and integrated. This means that RIS:

- Ensures its resources are fit for purpose and are accessible.
- Ensures that learners are made aware of the range of services available to them through an informative induction process.
- Seeks learner feedback as part of the continuous evaluation and improvement process.
- Makes sure that learner perspectives about the sufficiency and quality of resources are listened to and where appropriate, acted upon
- Is committed to identifying, resourcing, providing, allocating and maintaining the resources and supports that learners need to ensure successful participation in programmes.

8.3 Pastoral Care

An integral part of the RIS learning culture is to create a learning environment which includes pastoral care supports. All RIS staff contribute to the learner's pastoral care. RIS pastoral care focuses on the learner's personal, social and academic needs. RIS is aware of the challenges faced by learners when balancing academia, work and personal life and have adapted their programmes to reflect this.

8.4 Access to Services Related to Programmes

Academic and other support services are reviewed regularly to maintain adequacy and effectiveness. This includes:

- Learner support services – numeracy and literacy (RIS make referrals to other bodies including local ETBs)
- Administration services
- Premises, facilities and equipment
- Online learning resources
- Material (e.g. Handbooks, Programme Notes etc.)
- Social activities.
- Referral to counselling services.

Services are also regularly reviewed to ensure that the needs of an increasingly diverse learning population are evaluated and considered when planning resources and supports.

8.5 Learner Representation

There are mechanisms in place for learners to make representations to the Programme Board on issues relating to a programme or any other general concerns.

8.6 Guidance

Guidance is offered to learners on all programmes. This can be in the form of Career Guidance Counselling or Progression Route Guidance. RIS also refer learners to bodies such as the ETBs and AONTAS (The Irish National Association of Adult Education) who promote adult education and lifelong learning.

9 Information and Data Management

9.1 Introduction

RIS is committed to collecting, analysing and securing reliable information and data to support informed decision making. This helps identify areas of best practice, areas where RIS is operating effectively and areas which need attention and/or improving. Reporting structures and controls are in place, for the collection of data for both manual and digital records, for self-monitoring and planning purposes. All information and data management are in line with RIS mission which recognises the importance of quality, quality assurance, quality improvement and enhancement of all training and education programmes.

9.2 Learner Information Systems

RIS recognises the importance of keeping accurate, secure, and up-to-date learner records and are committed to ensuring that the information management system is robust, comprehensive and capable. RIS use a bespoke learner management system where learner information is recorded and stored securely. This system can be used to run reports providing valuable learner data on wide range of student key performance indicators. The system facilitates the effective collection, management, maintenance and security of learner records.

See Appendix 38 - Data Management - Certification Procedure.

9.3 Data Management

The Head of Centre has overall responsibility for learner records and authorises user rights of access and user rights to amend data. The Quality Assurance Manager who acts as the Data Protection Officer for RIS is competent in collecting and inputting data, maintaining the safety and security of records and sharing information with those authorised to receive it. The Quality Assurance Manager is responsible for ensuring learners are properly registered on systems and for the integrity and reliability of the data held on the systems.

All paper records are stored in secure filing cabinets within designated and locked offices. All electronic records are stored and filed appropriately on a shared secure drive with appropriate authorisation in place. All computerised files are held on industry standard servers located internally, with additional data located on a secure enterprise cloud platform. The Quality Assurance Manager

is responsible for creating back-ups of all network drives on a continuous basis using one-way sync between a desktop folder and the cloud to ensure that data can be recovered. Backup logs are checked on a weekly basis to ensure the correct data backup has occurred.

All staff records, including documentation pertaining to recruitment, job application, contracts, evaluation, discipline, and salary are managed and maintained by Ibec, HR Department. Financial data is managed and maintained by the Head of Centre and Ibec, Accounts Department.

Electronic copies of minutes of RISCOG, Programme Board, panels and committee meetings and External authentication and Programmatic Review Reports are filed securely, backed up and retained in accordance with the RIS Data Retention Schedule.

Attendance records are retained for the duration of the learner's studies and destroyed after 3 years in accordance with Skillnet Ireland's Trainee Privacy Statement and Data Retention Schedule. See Appendix 39 - Skillnet Ireland's Trainee Privacy Statement.

Learner assessment scripts are stored within a secured dedicated storage location until certification and after the appeals period has elapsed – they are then securely destroyed. See Appendix 40 - RIS Data Retention Schedule.

RIS arranges for the destruction of documents and records using a professional and accredited shredding company.

9.4 Information for further planning

The information from management information systems is used to assist with the generation of additional insights to develop RIS strategies.

9.5 Completion Rates

Completion and certification rates are collected and shared with internal and external quality reviewers as and when required.

9.6 Records Maintenance and Retention

RIS sets out clearly the length of time for which personal data is retained and the reasons why the information is being retained. In determining appropriate retention periods, RIS pays due regard to any statutory obligations imposed on them as a data controller. If the purpose for which RIS obtained the data has ceased and the personal information is no longer required, RIS deletes/disposes of the data in a secure manner. It may also be anonymised to remove any personal data. The Quality Assurance Manager ensures that files are removed regularly and securely, and that personal data is not retained any longer than is necessary. The Quality Assurance Manager reviews all records periodically in light of experience and any legal or other relevant indications. RIS staff members are responsible for the retention of files for the timeframes indicated in the Data Retention Schedule. See Appendix 40 - RIS Data Retention Schedule.

RIS records details of learners' academic performance and achievement on the database and maintain them in-line with the RIS Data Retention Schedule; this facilitates the certification of Learners' work through the accrediting bodies as well as facilitating access, transfer and progression for learners. The QA Manager records and maintains electronic copies of reports in-line with the RIS Data Retention Schedule, to facilitate the provision of transcripts and Statement of Results.

9.7 Data Protection and Freedom of Information

Ibec is the organisational promotor for RIS and therefore RIS must be compliant with Ibec's Data Protection Policy. See Appendix 41 - Ibec Data Protection Policies. Furthermore, RIS must adhere to Skillnet Ireland's Trainee Privacy Statement. See Appendix 39 - Skillnet Ireland's Trainee Privacy Statement. The Data Protection Policies in place detail how RIS manage, use, process and protect personal information in keeping with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The Data Protection Policies include details on:

- What personal information is collected
- How and why it is collected
- How personal data is used
- How data is stored and secured
- How users can control or access their personal data
- Third parties which data is shared with and why

RIS establish a data agreement with any third-party service providers they use and share learner information with. All service providers agree that RIS are the data controller. Please refer to Individual Service Providers T&C's including data protection agreements.

RIS is committed to the following:

- Obtaining information fairly and openly
- Using it only in ways compatible for the purpose in which it was given in the first place
- Securing it against any unauthorised access or loss
- Ensuring that it is kept accurate and up to date
- Retaining data for no longer than is necessary for the purpose in which it was given

All RIS staff are expected to abide by the data protection policy in the course of their role.

9.7.1 Data Pertaining to the Provision of Additional Supports

RIS is committed to supporting learners with identified special requirements and providing reasonable accommodation for assessment where possible. The Quality Assurance Manager maintains data pertaining to the provision of additional supports and the reason for provision on the system. This data is accessed by staff members on a strictly need-to-know basis. RIS informs learners, when applying for additional supports/reasonable accommodation, that members of staff and external experts (in particular the External Authenticator) may be given access to the details and the information they supply in support of their application.

9.7.2 Maintenance and Storage of Learner Files

RIS ensures learner files are retained in accordance with the RIS Data Retention Schedule. After the period of storage, RIS destroy the records in accordance with the RIS Data Retention Schedule - Appendix 40. RIS respects its commitment to learners, staff, tutors and other stakeholders with regards to the Freedom of Information through right of inquiry regarding personal information held by RIS pertaining to the individual. Under Data Protection Law, individuals have the right to know whether their personal data is being kept, why the data is being kept, where it came from, who it is shared with and the duration for which it is kept. They also have the right to request rectification, erasure or restriction on the use of the data and the right to lodge a complaint with the data protection commissioner. RIS procedures for this are clearly documented in Appendix 41 - Ibec Data Protection Policies.

9.7.3 Data Protection and Staff

The Head of Centre, Apprenticeship Programme Director, Quality Assurance Manager and Programme Administrators have access to personal data relating to the learners. Staff and tutors have also provided their own personal data as an employee/contractor, for example, their bank details, PPSN, their address etc.

RIS provides new staff members and tutors with the following documents as part of their induction pack:

- A copy of the Ibec Personal Data Protection policy
- A copy of Skillnet Ireland's Privacy Statement which informs the staff member about processes for handling personal data of learners, suppliers and other individuals. It outlines their responsibilities as an employee when handling this personal data
- Ibec's Employee Data Protection Policy which informs the staff member how RIS, as the employer, manages personal data relating to staff
- Ibec's Privacy Statement which details what personal information is collected from staff members, why it is collected, how it is used and how it is protected

All RIS staff are required to undertake regular data protection training. In addition to online training and dedicated staff training events, staff guidance is available on the Ibec intranet which is updated regularly. Legal advice is also available to staff via Ibec's Legal Advisor, and for employer relations issues, the Employment Law Unit.

During new staff member's induction, RIS highlights the importance of ensuring that personal data is stored in a locked and secure facility to ensure it is protected at all times. Staff members are required to let the Quality Assurance Manager know immediately if they suspect that any personal data might be lost or compromised so that the Quality Assurance Manager can implement the RIS Data Breach Procedure.

10 Public Information and Communication

RIS accepts they are responsible for providing information to learners, employers, the public and other stakeholders about:

- RIS as a provider of programmes leading to awards on the NFQ
- The programmes and associated services they deliver
- RIS quality assurance policies and procedures
- Findings from quality assurance evaluations

10.1 Public Information

RIS is committed to ensuring that this information is accurate, impartial and objective and that communications are clear and concise, and the documents produced are user-friendly and accessible. The RISCSG is responsible for ensuring the quality and the accuracy of the information published and that RIS acts in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The Communication and e-Learning Manager is responsible for communications and public information in relation to the organisation as a whole.

RIS makes the following documents publicly available:

- Quality assurance policies and procedures
- Programme brochures (contains info on accredited and non-accredited programmes)
- Website information on programmes and services (contains info on accredited and non-accredited programmes)
- Access, Transfer and Progression routes
- Validation Reports
- Programmatic Review Reports and Programme Improvement Plans
- Monitoring Reports (QQI)

For a full list of how information is communicated to the public please see Appendix 42 - Communication of Information.

10.2 Learner Information

RIS ensures that accurate, impartial, objective and accessible information is available to prospective applicants and learners. This enables them to plan their learning on the basis of a clear understanding of the level within the NFQ of awards available and associated entry arrangements, transfer and progression routes, as well as the content and learning outcomes, and learning and assessment methods used, for each programme. RIS makes clear in learner information materials what personal data is collected, for what purpose it is collected and with whom it is shared. RIS provides applicants/ potential learners with sufficient information to make an informed choice about participation on a programme.

The Quality Assurance Manager is responsible for the accuracy and honesty of all published information and for transparency. The Quality Assurance Manager, working with the Communication and e-Learning Manager reviews the published information; updates, edits and enhances it on a regular basis.

Information regarding the range of programmes is provided via the RIS website www.retailirelandskillnet.com.

Under the terms of section 67 Qualifications Act 2012, RIS provides prospective and current learners with information about each of the programmes, such as:

- Practical information including duration, location, assessment, time commitment, entry requirements, FET credits, delivery methods, Learner Application Form etc.
- Whether or not a programme leads to an award
- The name of the awarding body
- The title of the award; whether the award is recognised on the NFQ and if so, the award type and NFQ level
- Whether the programme is subject to procedures for access, transfer and progression and if so, what these are
- Details of the Protection of Enrolled Learner (PEL) arrangements in place, should PEL be a requirement
- Provisions for learners with special requirements
- Programme terms and conditions

The following items are provided to all learners, before or on commencement of a programme:

- A Learner Handbook
- A programme timetable/assessment plan outlining the weighting and timing of assessments
- Access to the VLE
- Practical demonstration on how to use the VLE
- Criteria for assessment
- Guidance notes for each assessment activity

10.2.1 Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision

RIS is cognisant of the distinct characteristics and requirements of a statutory Apprenticeship Programme and its responsibility as the Coordinating Provider, to promote the brand image of Apprenticeships as a mode of learning. A suite of programme specific information will be designed and developed for the Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision to meet the needs of programme stakeholders:

- Apprentice Handbook
- Tutor Handbook
- Workplace Mentor Handbook
- Employer and Workplace Mentors Roles and Responsibilities
- Apprentice Support Officer Roles and Responsibilities.

10.3 Publication of Quality Assurance Evaluation Reports

RIS makes internal and external quality audits reports available to learners, employers and other interested stakeholders on the RIS website. RIS QA policies and procedures are currently published on the VLE and RIS will share this version of the QA documents to the RIS website after the re-engagement process.

11 Other Parties involved in Education and Training

RIS views the establishment of collaborative provision arrangements as being important to their vision, mission and values to make programmes as widely available as possible and to open up progression routes for learners which may not otherwise be available to them. RIS also views collaborative provision as being a way of enhancing the value of programmes by involving additional subject matter experts in programme delivery.

As a provider with a Quality Assurance Agreement with QQI, RIS understands it is their responsibility to maintain the same high-quality standards for all programmes delivered in collaboration with other providers. RIS has the same responsibilities to all learners; whether delivered by RIS or in collaboration with another provider. It is RIS policy to monitor the achievement of programme objectives and learner satisfaction on programmes or parts of programmes delivered in collaboration with other providers. RIS has a written statement of agreed arrangements, a Memorandum of Understanding, detailing the areas of responsibility and accountability of all stakeholders (See Appendix 43). These are signed by both parties and are in place before RIS embarks on any collaborative provision of programmes with all agreements reviewed annually at a minimum. In the event of any party to the agreement failing to meet the responsibilities detailed, the agreed arrangements will immediately be rendered void.

11.1 Peer Relationships with the Broader Education and Training Community

RIS is committed to ensuring that any accreditations, collaborations arrangements and training partnerships are organised with reputable bodies and are subject to appropriate internal and external quality assurance procedures. RIS meets regularly with collaborating providers to ensure their continued suitability to maintain a learning environment which delivers the learning outcomes attained by learners. It is the responsibility of the RISC SG to approve any education and training collaborative arrangements and partnerships prior to commencement. The Head of Centre oversees all collaborative relationships.

See Appendix 45 - Collaborating Provider Employer - Approval Process for the Apprenticeship in Retail Supervision Programme.

11.1.1 Atlantic Technological University

Since 2010, RIS has been working closely with Atlantic Technological University (ATU) in the development and delivery of higher education programmes. This collaboration involves working with ATU to develop programmes that meet the needs of retail organisations. RIS representatives form part of the Programme Board for the Bachelor of Business in Retail Management Practice. RIS collaborates with ATU in designing the programmes, promoting the programmes to industry, identifying guest lecturers, scheduling the programmes, gathering feedback from participants and identifying suitable premises for the delivery of the programmes. As part of the RIS continuous improvement strategy, the Head of Centre engages with ATU to regularly update programmes. ATU operate under their own QAS for the delivery of these programmes. The programmes delivered by ATU do not come under RIS QAS. See Appendix 43 - Memorandum of Understanding Template between ATU and RIS.

11.2 External Partnerships and Second Providers

As part of the process of considering whether to work with a collaborating institution, RIS carries out due diligence to ensure that the collaborator is a reputable training and education provider. The purpose of this process is to ensure the partner has the requisite legal standing, financial, academic and quality assurance resources. Programmes delivered in collaboration with other education and training providers are clearly published on RIS website. Appendix 44 - External Partnerships and second Providers due diligence process.

11.3 Expert Panellists, Examiners and Authenticators

RIS applies to QQI for certification three times a year. Before the declaration of results with QQI, all assessments of learners are subject to review by external experts. The Head of Centre and Apprenticeship Programme Director along with the Quality Assurance Manager have explicit criteria and procedures for the recruitment and engagement of external, independent, national and international experts. This criteria and procedures extend to include how expert panel members are selected and recruited. In advance of re-engagement with the same External Authenticator RIS conducts due diligence to ensure they can still provide an independent and expert service. See Appendix 8 - Terms of Reference for RIS Boards and Panels and Appendix 30 - External Authentication Process. Programme Monitoring and Review is further explained in Appendix 18.

12 Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

RIS is committed to self-monitoring and self-evaluating all programmes of education and training and related services on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are of a high standard, meet the needs of learners, industry and the requirements of QQI. RIS self-monitoring, self-evaluating and review processes involve the collection and analysing of data, listening and observation, self-evaluation, reflection, reviewing and reporting on the quality and effectiveness of programmes, related services and the RIS QAS. RIS uses the data they collect and the information they obtain from it to enhance their practice in meeting the changing needs of the learners and the retail sector. RIS is responsible for the quality of the provision, the implementation and evaluation of their QAS and on-going enhancement. Self-evaluation, monitoring and review activities provide the opportunity for reflection and considered action leading to the enhancement of quality.

12.1 Provider-owned Internal Review, Self-evaluation and Monitoring

RIS is committed to their processes for self-evaluation, self-monitoring and review across all programmes and related services to ensure that they are of a high standard and that learners and employers can be confident that they are receiving quality training. RIS has established rigorous processes for the collection of feedback from learners, tutors, employers, Apprentice Support Officers and other stakeholders. RIS is committed to reviewing and addressing improvements where necessary. Results and findings from the on-going monitoring and evaluation activities feed into programme reviews and into the Programmatic Review (including external evaluation). See Appendix 18 - Programme Monitoring and Review Procedures.

12.2 Internal Self-monitoring

RIS reviews key-monitoring activity data and document issues, highlighting areas where improvements are required, or enhancements that can be implemented. RIS uses the self-monitoring activities to assist with benchmarking and progress against internal key performance indicators. All of RIS key self-monitoring activities are discussed and reviewed in detail at RIS Monthly Team Meetings, Programme Board Meetings, RISCOG Meetings and discussions with other stakeholders. The procedures that underpin RIS self-evaluation, self-monitoring and review are documented in Table 12.1 below.

Record	Detail	Responsibility	Frequency	Sent to	Actioned by
Learners Feedback – <i>Feedback forms, focus groups, online surveys, class reps, representation on various boards and panels</i> <i>(see Appendix 18)</i>	Learner feedback and suggestions for improvement are encouraged on an ongoing basis through the various channels. The Learner Feedback Form is completed by learners at the end of every module.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Tutors •Programme Administrator •QA Manager 	On-going	Programme Administrator / QA Manager	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director
Apprentice Support Officers Feedback - on-the-job monitoring forms <i>(see Appendix 18)</i>	Apprentice Support Officers are expected to record company visits in a consistent and transparent manner (using the On-the-Job Monitoring Form and make note of any areas of concern or good practice. The Programme Director and Quality Assurance Manager meet with the Apprentice Support Officer on a regular basis to discuss the company visits and this contributes to the Self-Evaluation Report.	Apprentice Support Officer	On-going	Programme Administrator	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director
Tutor Feedback <i>(see Appendix 18)</i>	RIS places substantial emphasis on the Tutor feedback and view it as essential as part of the on-going monitoring and review processes.	Programme Administrator / QA Manager	On-going	Programme Administrator / QA Manager	Head of Centre or Senior Programme Coordinator

Employer Feedback - <i>Feedback Form, Employer Performance Impact Form, Workplace Support visits, Representation on various boards and panels (see Appendix 18)</i>	As an enterprise-led training and education provider it is embedded in RIS culture of quality to acquire employer feedback as part of the design, delivery, assessment and evaluation of programmes.	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director	On-going	Programme Administrator / QA Manager	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director
Internal Verification Reports	The Internal Verifier confirms that assessment procedures have been applied consistently across all assessment activities and that assessment results are recorded accurately. Issues and commendations are recorded in the Internal verification report.	Quality Assurance Manager	Each Assessment Date	Results Approval Panel	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director
External Verification Reports	Assessments are externally authenticated as part of the assessment process. This provides independent confirmation that RIS has assessed the learners fairly and consistently, that the marking and grading is valid and reliable and meets the national standard for the award and that RIS is compliant with the requirements for the award. Issues and commendations are recorded in the External Verification Report.	Quality Assurance Manager	Each Assessment Date	Results Approval Panel	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director

Results Approval Panel Report	A Results Approval Panel (RAP) is appointed to formally review and approve results data and to confirm that assessment results are fully quality assured and signed-off prior to submission to QQI for certification and prior to issuing final results to learners.	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director	Each Assessment Date	RISCSG	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director
VLE Analytics	Data reviewed from learner engagement with the VLE. Considering learner progression, user experience, time spent on site, requests for resources, engagement with resources. Identifying any additional support or training requirements. On-going monitoring of RIS staff user experience.	Communications and E-learning Manager	On-going	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director	Communications and e-Learning Manager
Attendance Records	The tutors complete learner attendance records and emails a copy to the Programme Administrator at the end of each module. These records inform RIS about one aspect of learners' engagement. Poor attendance <i>may be</i> an indicator that there is a problem with a programme. The Programme Administrator reviews the attendance records on a monthly basis and raises any issues of concern with the Programme Director.	Tutors Apprentice Support Officers	On-going (at each module)	Programme Administrator	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director
Completion, Retention and Drop-out Statistics	Analysis completion, retention and drop-out rates of learners throughout programme modules, checking for patterns, stage of drop-outs or any areas for concern. Poor completion rates or	Programme Administrator	On-going (after each module)	Programme Administrator	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director

	drop-outs may signify problems within particular modules. Any concerns are highlighted to the Programme Director.				p Programme Director
Marks and Grades	Learners' marks and grades are analysed for patterns within particular modules and learners' grades over different modules. Any concerns are highlighted to the Programme Director.	Tutors	On-going (after each module)	Quality Assurance Manager or Programme Administrator	RAP Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director
Awards Conferred	Consideration given to the number of learners completing modules by organisations. This indicates learner progress and organisational progress towards attainment of the full award.	Programme Administrator	On-going (after each module)	Quality Assurance Manager or Programme Administrator	RAP Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director

Learner Progression and Transfer Data	Consideration is given to how learners are progressing from module to module and from programme to programme. Learner transfer data gives warrant to further research into the learning environment for the learner.	Programme Administrator	On-going (after each module)	Quality Assurance Manager or Programme Administrator	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director Quality Assurance Manager
Appeals	Appeals monitored by learner and tutor to ascertain if any additional supports are required by either party.	Programme Administrator	On-going (after each module)	Programme Administrator	Quality Assurance Manager
Complaints Log (see Appendix 23) and Risk Register (see Appendix 10)	Monitored on a monthly basis to ensure that any issues raised are resolved and closed off and to identify any recurring issues.	Quality Assurance Manager	Monthly	Programme Administrator	Quality Assurance Manager
Accident and Incident Investigation Reports	RIS learners and staff safety and well-being is of paramount concern. Any accident or incidents are documented and corrective actions are taken immediately	Quality Assurance Manager	Monthly	Programme Administrator	Quality Assurance Manager
Facilities Checklist (see Appendix 26)	Monitoring of premises, equipment and facilities are completed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they remain fit-for-purpose. Any variations or changes to the agreement are dealt with immediately.	Quality Assurance Manager	Monthly	Programme Administrator	Quality Assurance Manager

Skillnet QA visit Reports	Implementing findings from the Skillnet QA visit reports on an on-going basis to ensure all recommendations are implemented effectively.	Head of Centre	On-going	Head of Centre	RIS Team
QQI Monitoring Reports	Implementing findings from the QQI monitoring reports on an on-going basis to ensure all recommendations are implemented effectively and understood by all RIS staff.	Head of Centre	On-going	Head of Centre	RIS Team
Annual Programme Review Report	Continuously improve programmes and services, ensure programmes achieve the objectives and respond to the needs of the learners, employers, industry and other stakeholders. The main benefit of the Annual Review is to ensure that the recommendations are captured and used to make improvements in future programme delivery.	Programme Board	Annually	RISCSG	Head of Centre or Apprenticeship Programme Director

Table 12.1 Self-evaluation, self-monitoring and review procedure

12.2.1 Independent Evaluation

In accordance with the General Conditions of the Funding Agreement with Skillnets, RIS is required to co-operate with independent external evaluations of its performance commissioned by Skillnet Ireland and other key stakeholders e.g. Department of Education and Skills. This independent evaluation occurs annually and involves all key stakeholders and encompass all aspects of the network such as:

- Network functioning - RISCSCG functioning, decision-making and administration, data management and security and compliance with GDPR
- Network outcomes - training, numbers, networking, partnerships, financial management and control, sub-contractors and contracting

As part of the independent evaluation employers and learners are required to take part in a satisfaction survey at the end of each year. The results of the survey allow Skillnet Ireland to monitor and benchmark RIS progress and compliance.

For the Apprenticeship Programme, SOLAS requires regular reporting regarding the operational delivery, Apprentice and employer performance and financial arrangements.

12.3 Self-evaluation, improvement and enhancement

To continually develop a culture which focuses on the quality of the learner experience, RIS regularly engages in dialogue with learners, tutors, employers, RIS staff and other stakeholders. RIS is committed to ensuring that all on-going self-evaluation activities result in a detailed action plan which is regularly reviewed by the RISCSCG to ensure any actions have had the intended effect.

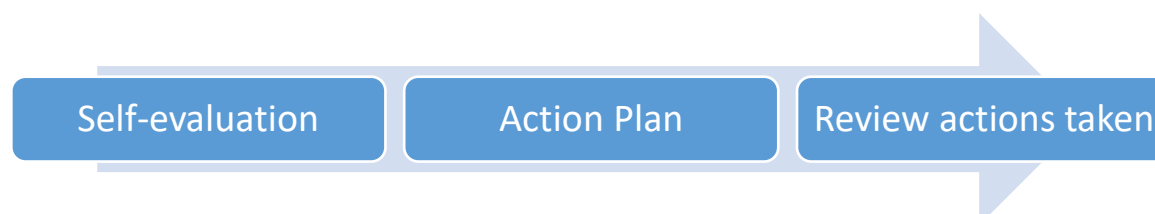


Figure 12.1 - Self-evaluation, improvement and enhancement process

Findings from the on-going self-evaluation activities form the development of the self-evaluation report which informs the Programmatic Review Process. Table 12.2 below presents the roles and responsibilities of the various positions within RIS in relation to self-evaluation, improvement and enhancement:

Position	Responsibility in relation to Self-Evaluation, Monitoring, and Review
RISCSG	Ensure that programmes and services are evaluated, monitored and reviewed and the resources are in place to do this to a high standard.
Head of Centre	Manage all processes and report to the RISCSG
Quality Assurance Manager	Implementation of the processes at an organisational level and action areas where improvements are required.
Senior Programme Coordinator	Ensures tutors are evaluated, monitored and reviewed.
Senior Tutor	Ensures programme syllabus / content and resources are reviewed and evaluated regularly.
Communication and e-Learning Manager	Monitor and implement developments to improve user experience in relation to the VLE.
Apprenticeship Programme Director	Implementation of the processes at an organisational level and action areas where improvements are required.
Programme Administrator	Provide administrative support to the Quality Assurance Manager, Head of Centre and Apprenticeship Programme Director.
Apprentice Support Officers	Monitor the quality of the workplace, workplace supports and facilities.

Table 12.2 - RIS Self-evaluation, improvement and enhancement process responsibilities

12.4 Provider-owned quality assurance engages with external quality assurance

Quality Assurance extends to all teaching and learning activities, research and related services conducted by RIS. QQI guidelines are core to guiding RIS on developing and delivering a QAS that enables a learner-centric culture, empowers tutors and continually enhances the education provisions. In addition, as a Skillnet Ireland network RIS is subject to rigorous quality assurance process both from Skillnet Ireland and Ibec.