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	Section 1 B – Governance and Management of Quality Quality Committee.	Version 2 – July 2019

1. Governance and Management of Quality – Introduction

New Links Training Solutions Ltd aims to carry out its duties in the management and supervision of its academic business to the highest standards of compliance. Good governance ensures that the academic decision making structures and the commercial decision making structures are clearly separated, with the latter serving the former.

Good governance practices ensure that there are both internal and external oversights in all the key areas of the business where decisions are made.

From May 2019 New Links Training Solutions has convened a ‘Quality Committee’ (formally referred to as a governance panel). The Quality Committee will provide expert opinions and subject-matter insight into matters that are brought forward by Senior Management.


2. Principles of Good Governance:

1. Always adhere to the rule of law.
2. Participation – representatives come from a cross-section of stakeholders.
3. Consensus-Oriented – decisions are made through consensus. Partnerships are based on trust relationships.
4. Accountability - governance panel is accountable for decisions made.
5. Transparency – record keeping and communications must be kept on file for the statutory minimum of five (5) years.
6. Responsive – follow through on actions in a timely and appropriate manner.
7. Effective & Efficient – Delivery and decision making is based on quality standards - no short cuts – with materials and skills being constantly upgraded and improved.
8. Equitable & Inclusive – follows and enforces standards as set out in Operations Manual, with the language and procedures used being accessible and capable of being understood by the typical learner.

3. Terms of Reference:

Good governance ensures that a framework of structures, policies, and processes are in place to deliver on agreed obligations with regards to Academic activities, decisions, and application of Quality Assurance procedures. Good governance ensures objective assessment of management and academic performance. The purpose of the Quality Committee is to conduct reviews of academic activities, contribute to and expand the professional knowledge base based on best practice guidelines and new developments within the Further Education sector. The duty of the Quality Committee is to ensure that transparent, fair and consistent procedures (in line with National Standards) are applied in all decisions relating to academic activities. The Quality Committee will review matters that may encompass (but are not limited to) the following:

- 3.1 Contribute to policy development and implementation with reference to teaching & learning, assessment of learners, recruitment, information & data management, self-evaluation, monitoring, and review.
- 3.2 Review core report documents: desk monitoring, self-evaluation, EA reports, etc to support an ongoing cycle of self-improvement.

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- 3.3 Provide subject matter expertise when required.
- 3.4 Advise on matters relating to the structure, function, and output from internal committees – programme management committee, programme review committee, quality panel and the results approval panel.
- 3.5 Review Quality Assurance Policies in line with company strategic planning and legislative developments.
- 3.6 Review and approve decisions relating to learner appeals and assessment violations.
- 3.7 Review and adjudicate escalated complaints.
- 3.8 Assist the management team with resolving matters that are deemed to be extraordinary circumstances.
- 3.9 Liaise with, and where necessary instruct Senior Management on necessary steps, including capital expenditure, in order to achieve what the Quality Committee considers are critically important academic goals.

4. Membership & Selection of the Quality Committee


The Quality Committee members will be selected on the basis of expertise under the terms and conditions as set out in the QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016) in compliance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (revised 18 November 2014).

4.1 Committee members will be as follows:

- **A Chairperson** – a person with suitable qualifications who is external to the business. **Qualifications:** a qualification of level 8 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications and at least 10 years’ experience in the field of adult education or relevant industry/sectoral experience.
- At least two independent further or higher education professionals – these members will have no other interest or function within the business (during their tenure as committee members). One of these committee members will act as chairperson. **Qualifications:** these panel members will have a qualification of level 8 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications and/or at least 10 years’ experience in the field of adult education.
- New Links Training Solutions Quality Manager.
- 1X Tutor representative who is also a course leader (relevant experience as outlined in section 10 of this manual).
- 1 X Learner representative who has experienced first-hand the services offered by New Links Training Solutions Ltd.
- 1X Secretary/notetaker who is employed by New Links Training Solutions.
- 1X Validation expert.

5. Authority:

The Quality Committee will operate under delegated authority from Senior Management. The Committee may investigate any matter falling within its terms of reference, seeking to review any QA resources and information it considers necessary. The Quality Committee is authorised to seek the information it requires from senior management or any other employee which to enable it to carry out the necessary duties. It is the responsibility of senior management to ensure that all information needed is made

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available in a timely manner. All information provided will be presented in a clear and well-organised format.

6. Terms of Office:

Elected committee members are required to serve a term of three years with the option of a second term of service for independent committee members.

7. Meetings, Sub-Committees, Quorum

7.1 Meetings will be scheduled bi-annually or as required for exceptional/unplanned circumstances.

7.2 An agenda will be prepared and distributed to members of the panel two weeks in advance of the panel meeting.

7.3 Reports and/or discussion documents will accompany the meeting minutes where applicable.

7.4 The Quality Committee will be familiar with and have access to NLTS policies and the operations manual in compliance with QQI guidelines as stated above.

7.5 Where a situation arises outside of the scheduled meeting a governance panel meeting may be convened as outlined in section 2 above. The meeting format, administration, and procedure in this instance will be the same as for the bi-annual meeting.

7.6 The quorum for meetings shall be 5 (five) which equates to 50% plus one – with the stipulation that at least one independent education member is present.

7.7 Subcommittee members may attend meetings by invitation for specific agenda items – subcommittees are outlined below.

7.8 The draft Minutes of the Quality Committee will be circulated by the secretary to the chairperson and once approved meeting minutes will be distributed to all committee members.


7.9 Committee members will be briefed on GDPR guidelines and guidance will be given on safe handling of meeting records.

7.10 Subgroups may be convened from time to time to assist with special projects and/or policy development. These subgroups may involve course leaders or external consultants with relevant expertise and experience.

8. Format:

The format of the agenda for each meeting will be as follows:

- Review and approval of minutes from the previous meeting and matters arising.
- Agenda for the meeting is agreed.
- Note of apologies for the meeting.
- Strategic and or policy issues arising.
- Items brought forward for formal approval.
- Any other business.

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9. Decisions/Recommendations:

- 9.1 The panel will review each agenda item individually and all discussion points and recommendations will be recorded in the meeting minutes by the committee secretary. Appropriate actions will be assigned and completed within an agreed timeframe.
- 9.2 In the event that a motion is put to the meeting, the chairperson will seek approval of the motion or note dissent. In the event of a split decision, the chairperson (or any other member of the committee) may suggest putting the motion to a vote. The result of the vote and subsequent decision will be recorded by the secretary in the meeting minutes – the minutes should indicate the number of votes in favor of the motion and the number who voted against the motion (including abstentions).
- 9.3 Voting will be decided by the majority with the stipulation that all majority decisions be made with the support/approval of at least one of the independent education committee members.
- 9.4 **Casting vote** – the chairperson has an additional vote in situations where there is an equal number of votes in favor of and opposed to the motion.
- 9.5 In relation to appeals or complaints, the panel will notify the Quality Manager of the recommended actions and subsequently, the appellant or complainant will be notified in writing (email and/or letter).
- 9.6 For assessment or appeals decisions the appellant may escalate their complaint to QQI if they are dissatisfied with the decision of the Quality Committee.


10. Fees:

The panel members will be reimbursed for their contribution at an hourly rate.

11. Sub Committees:

A number of sub-committees have been convened to ensure the separation of powers within the day to day operations of the business. The purpose of these panels is to ensure that academic decision making and commercial decision making are compliant with the standards as outlined in the QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016) in compliance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (revised 18 November 2014). Each panel will have specific functions and reporting structures as outlined in separate procedural documents in set out in Section 1 of the Operations Manual.

- 1C - Programme Management Panel
- 1D - Programme Review Committee
- 1E - Quality Panel
- 1F - Results Approval Panel
- 1I – Allocations Committee

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Please see section 1 G for a visual overview of the relationships between committees and subcommittees

12. Reporting: the secretary will compile the minutes of this meeting and seek approval from the chairperson. Once the minutes have been approved the secretary will distribute to all committee members. The Quality Manager will present summary updates to Senior Management and relevant committees.

13. Please use Form NLTS 110 Meeting template to record the minutes of this meeting – choose the appropriate template for this meeting type.

14. Review:

A review of this procedure will occur annually and/or in conjunction with centre self-evaluation.