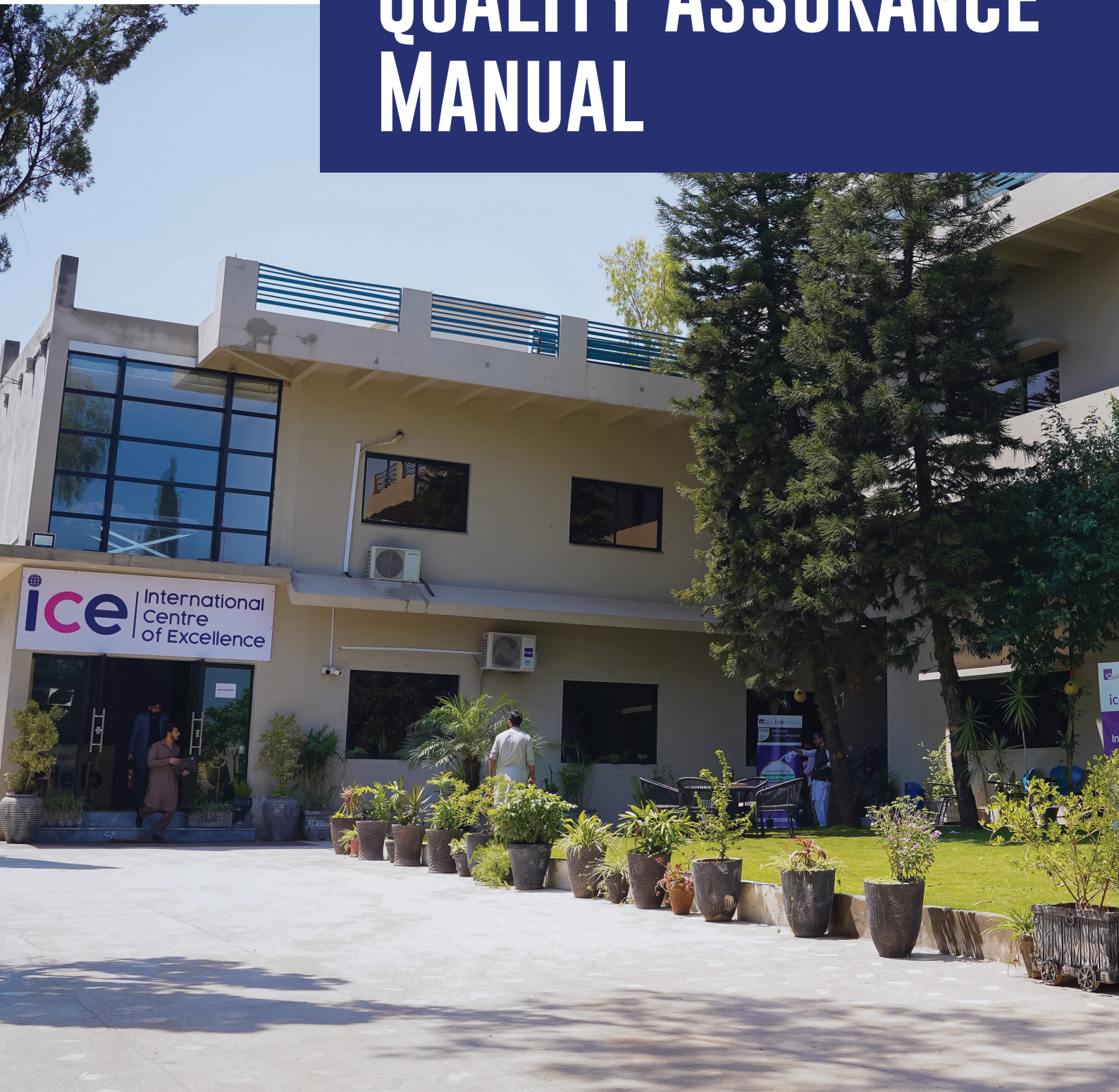


QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL



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1. Introduction

Quality Assurance is the planned and systematic review process of an institution or programme to determine whether acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced, or not. It is a tool created to enhance higher education by promoting excellence. For emerging nations like Pakistan to experience economic progress, it is essential to have a well-established national quality culture and an efficient, effective, and high-quality higher education system that is recognised internationally.

A sustainable quality assurance programme at ICE aims to enhance employment opportunities, improve the education and training of future employees, harness future leaders, facilitate an enabling learning environment, and enrich the academic and intellectual landscape. This is governed by both the ICE and the awarding body's standards (if applicable). In writing this handbook ICE aims to demonstrate its accountability to and alignment with relevant awarding bodies and regulatory organisations.

1.1 The Rationale for the Manual

This Manual defines a comprehensive set of policy instruments to conduct the processes to develop the procedures of quality assurance. The document is complete with guidelines, evidence and various quality assurance tools for the assistance of practitioners and key players in academic quality assurance.

The goals set out here refer to internationally practised academic standards and frameworks for the assessment and evaluation of academic quality assurance and its enhancement. The guidelines and processes defined in the Manual aim to improve the quality of teaching, learning and research. It aims to promote a culture where quality assurance is inherent.

2. ICE Quality Structure

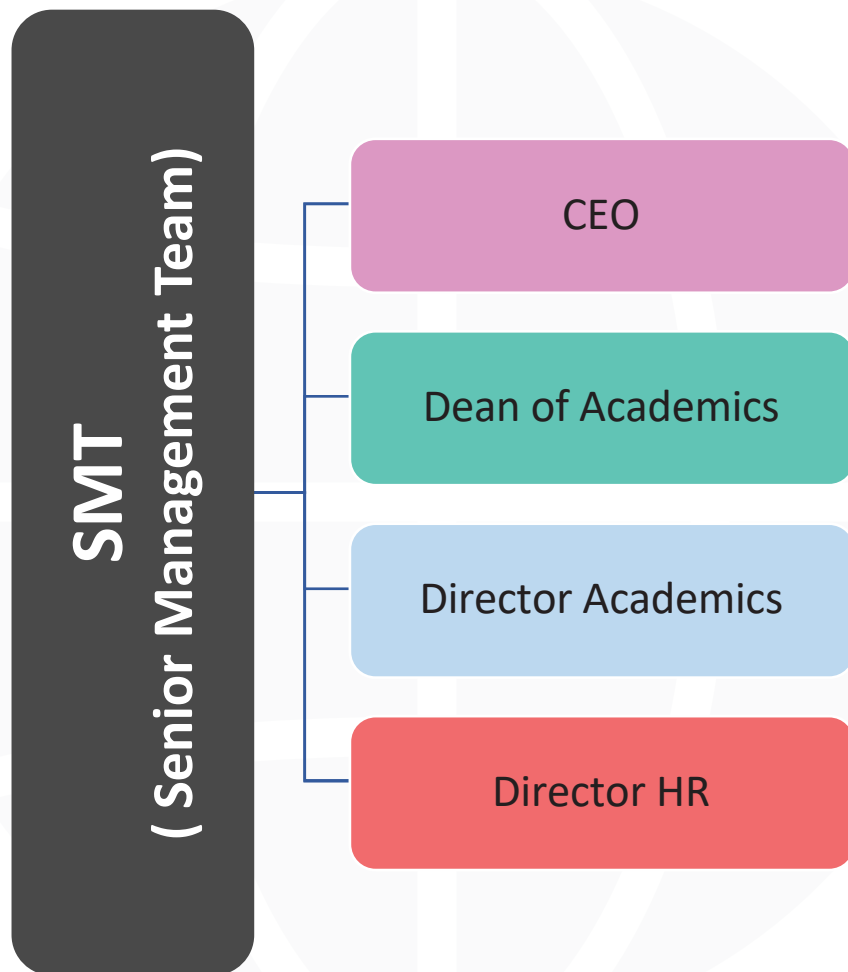
2.1. Nationwide Operations:

At the International Center of Excellence (ICE), we take pride in our commitment to providing high-quality education through a diverse range of international study programmes. With a steadfast dedication to excellence, we have established ourselves as a leading educational institute. Our institute operates nationwide, with current campuses located in Islamabad and Karachi. We firmly believe in the transformative power of education and strive to maintain the highest standards of quality in all aspects of our operations.

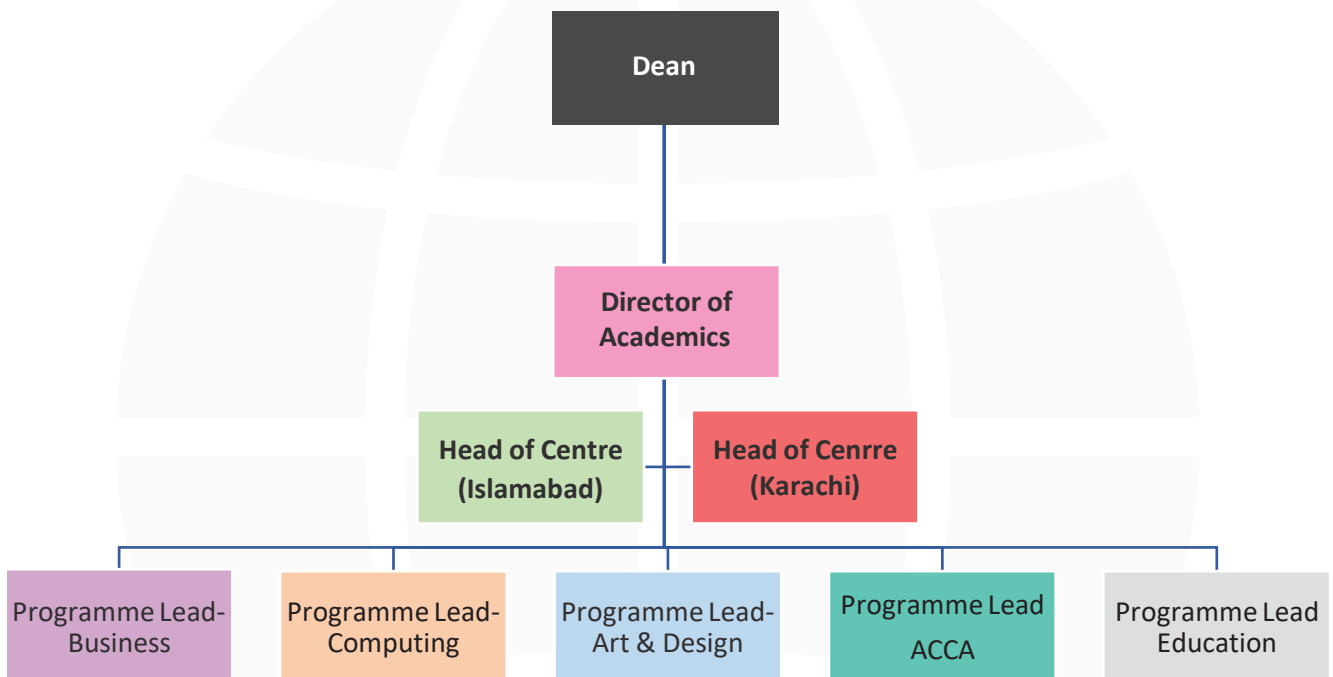
The ICE Quality Structure consists of the following:

1. Senior Management Team
2. Academic Board
3. Academic Committee

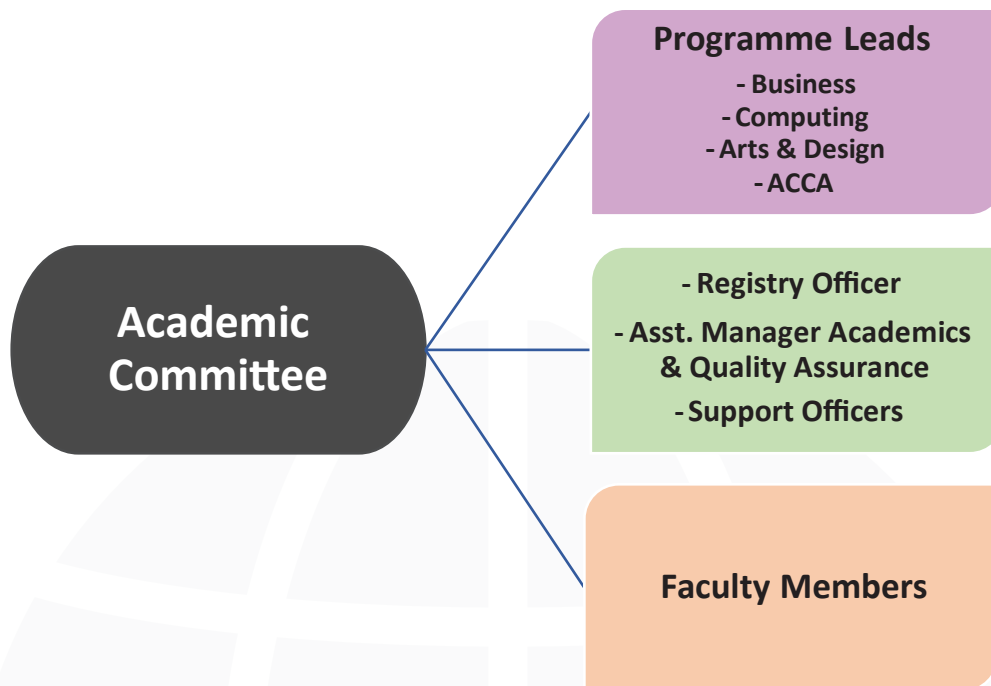
SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM



ACADEMIC BOARD



ACADEMIC COMMITTEE



2.2 Purpose of Quality Assurance Department:

The Quality Assurance Department is responsible for developing procedures for:

1. Improvement of existing programmes and approval of new programmes in consultation with the already existing body responsible for the task at the institute
2. Annual monitoring and evaluations (programme, faculty, students)
3. Departmental review
4. Student feedback
5. Employee feedback
6. Qualification review
7. Institutional Audit (i.e., different departments)

2.3 Responsibility of the Quality Assurance Department:

The responsibility for quality assurance at the point of delivery lies with the ICE Academic Board which holds regular meetings and conforms to the different awarding bodies' quality assurance mechanisms, such as:

- External examination/assessment boards
- Committee meetings
- Aligning with awarding body's quality handbooks, and adopting change in rules and regulations, as required
- Other rules/regulations defined by local or international regulatory bodies, as and when applicable.

The Academic Board at ICE consists of the following:

- Principal/Head of Centre
- Directors
- Programme leaders
- Student support team representative
- Student representative

The Academic Board devolves a great deal of the monitoring, review and enhancement process to its Academic Teams (AT) which consists of the following:

- Head of Studies
- Programme Leads
- Student support team
- Online/Face to Face tutors (as and when required)

The Academic Team (AT) meets regularly and performs the following major roles:

- Reviews routine feedback information from its academic processes (discussed later in the handbook) and reviews the processes.
- Considers, proactively, future directions in teaching and learning matters responding in particular to policy initiatives emerging from changes in the awarding body regulations
- Ensure individual student progress is monitored
- Manage student progression for each student
- Reports directly to the Academic Board and offers advice

For the main actors involved in the quality assurance processes please see the organisational charts of ICE appended to this document.

ICE implements its quality assurance for its teaching programme through the following measures:

- Regular meetings by the Academic Team (AT)
- Peer reviews of teaching
- Student/staff committee meetings
- Students' engagement with the tutors
- Annual programme reviews are to be coordinated with the awarding bodies
- Student feedback on each module
- Committee for validation standards (as per the awarding body) External assessors/Moderator reports
- Approval for new modules and programmes by ICE as per the awarding body's standards
- Comprehensive Annual programme review every year
- Annual Strategic Report

As ICE is a validated partner with various awarding bodies, all activities related to course development and amendments are implemented according to the awarding body's quality management/assurance processes.

3. Programme Documentation

To ensure transparency in its educational provision, ICE produces clearly and succinctly written documentation that details the information necessary for all users and potential users (including students, prospective employers and external viewers) to understand the operations of the courses.

The following documents are available:

- Programme specifications
- Module specifications/descriptors
- Student Handbook
- Teaching and learning policy
- Assessment policy

All current students have easy access to programme and course details, as well as the Student Handbook, Assessment Handbook and other relevant documents, provided via LMS during student induction. In particular, each course has its section, which is kept up to date by the student support team. These sections include:

- Course outline, which specifies all necessary audio lectures, tutorials/case studies and assessment information as it applies to the module - currently operating
- Lecture notes, further reading list and self-accessed activities with feedback
- Links to live lectures and recorded lectures
- Student/tutor forums
- Synchronous chat facility
- Interactive e-content

The LMS (Moodle) also has an Induction section with detailed information:

- How to use the platform for distance learning
- Student Handbook
- Video on how to use LMS
- Effective learning handbooks
- Online library as provided by ICE

The overall responsibility for ensuring the availability and quality of programme-wide documentation is held by the Directors and course-wide responsibility lies with the student support team.

4. Student Support

Student support services are accessible both in-person and online.

- **Face to Face students**

All of the programmes are delivered in person using Moodle and Microsoft Teams learning resources. By making sure that the class is engaged and that the learning is activity-based, special focus is placed on student engagement, alongside student motivation, supported with access to learning enhancement facilities.

- **Online students**

Similar programmes are delivered online, with the use of MS Teams and Moodle. Special emphasis is given to student engagement, student motivation and learning enhancement support - to help ensure the learning experience through distance learning is not isolating.

4.1. Student Motivation

- **Induction Course**

All students are introduced to the study areas during an introductory session known as an "induction course" at the beginning of the programme. Students are enrolled in this course automatically since they must move on to the programme's first academic course as part of this induction.

The learners are provided with the key information and resources they require to begin this course's learning process. The Student Handbook, for instance, is a succinct booklet that contains details on the course outline, helpful contacts, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, established support systems and signposts to study resources. A handful of the activities that take place during induction are listed below.

- Welcome on-campus/webinar introduction session to the ICE learning management system and its relevant programme
- Student Handbooks
- Campus Visit
- IT Requirements and guidance on the use of MS Teams and Moodle
- Orientation guidance: 'Where to start'?

The induction course has the following goals:

1. To increase the comfort level and feeling of belonging for students
2. To increase knowledge of the organisation and its procedures & policies
3. To share organisational values with newcomers
4. To familiarise students with the technology, the learning medium (customised e-learning), use of MS Teams and Moodle, and ICE's processes so that they can effectively engage with the online course material

5. To provide students with time management and organisational tools and techniques that will help them throughout the programme
6. To develop students' confidence in their abilities so that they can succeed. (To help to accommodate student anxiety, such as concern about being able to keep up with other students, or concerns about the level of study.)

4.2. Technical Support

Details on this are provided in the induction section (4.1) of the student handbook. Each student receives a welcome pack that includes the login information for the e-learning portal as well as the college email address that will be used for any future correspondence. Contact information is given for technical support and assistance too. Each unit has a dedicated tutor designated. Also, a student support contact is given to each student for the duration of the course.

5. Tutors' Responsibilities

On registration, students are emailed their programme and unit specifics (i.e., their timetable, tutor's name and classroom number, etc.). To facilitate student's academic advancement, the tutors assign tasks and activities related to their subjects and topics.

Support is primarily provided online using Microsoft Teams and Moodle (LMS). When necessary, tutors also provide support through other channels, such as email, phone calls and meetings. The tutorial process is considered to be a crucial component of student growth and assistance. It aims to be casual to create and promote two-way dialogue between peers or between students and tutors. As such it includes the following:

- The channelling and dissemination of information
- The facilitation of discussion between peers on the programme
- The giving and receiving of formative as well as summative assessment feedback
- Discussion regarding the candidate's personal development needs
- Counselling, where appropriate
- Workshops
- And Ensuring students attend the seminars and productive/informative events

6. Academic Support (F2F/Online)

The course tutors will provide academic advice and guidance, and answers to questions of an academic nature. For other queries, students are encouraged to contact the student support team. Students can make contact via:

1. Online forums
2. E-mail
3. Telephone
4. MS Teams

7. Help Desk/IT Support

The student receives an email account: a username and password for Moodle and Microsoft Team when they register with ICE. The help desk offers assistance if any issues are found with logging in or viewing emails. A service standard of 24 hours is the typical turnaround time. For IT support.

ICE uses contracted assistance to manage MS Teams and Moodle which is obligated to address any significant issues as soon as they arise.

8. Academic Processes (AP) for ICE

The following academic procedures, which are developed by the guidelines offered by several awarding bodies, maintain the quality of the ICE programme. The Academic Quality Monitoring Committee schedules a meeting every year to review performance over the previous year and makes plans for the upcoming one. Things that are discussed in the meeting are:

- Minutes of meetings from the past year's exam boards (quantitative data for student progression)
- Minutes from the Academic Committee meeting
- Minutes from the faculty meeting
- Annual Quality Report
- Annual tutor feedback report
- Annual student feedback report
- Any changes in the academic calendar
- Deciding the key dates for the next year
- New products/programmes for the next year
- Course content that is to be updated for the next year
- Any other thing of import

The list of documents required for the implementation of these processes is given below:

- Each awarding body's quality assurance handbook
- ICE Assessment Handbook
- Course content
- Academic Calendar/Semester Planners
- Programme structure/outline

This meeting is preceded by the annual faculty/tutors meeting, where all tutors are invited to attend, and this meeting is often held in conjunction with the annual Academic Board meeting.

8.1. Academic Resource Planning (AP-1)

The method is depicted as a flowchart in Figure AP-1 below. This procedure examines all potential resources for the programme's delivery and makes sure they comply with all applicable laws and rules, as well as with the programme's outline and the necessary requirements of relevant awarding bodies. The procedure examines all potential outcomes for that month and serves as the formal beginning point of each month.

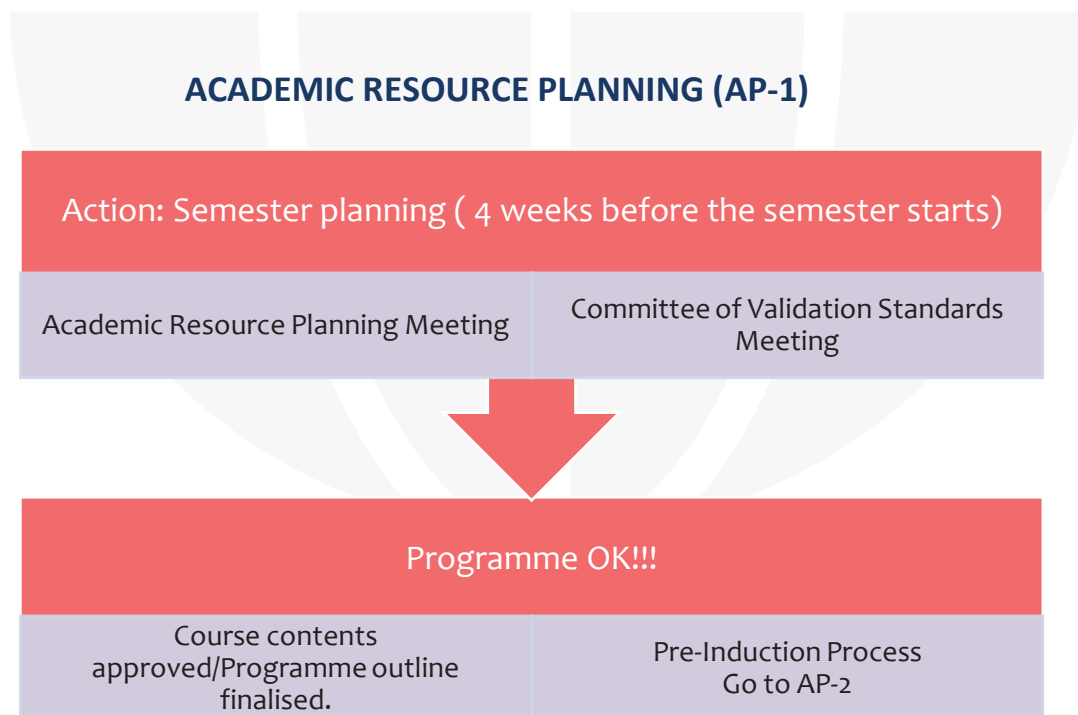
The Committee of Validation Standards (CVS) is part of this process where it looks at the content of the programme and ensures that it is in line with what has been agreed with an awarding body. The Committee on Validation Standards comprises of:

- Head of Centre
- Programme Leader(s)
- Programme Admin(s)

A monthly update report is part of this process and includes:

Quantitative data on students' progression and individual student progression reports are to be sent to the respective student.

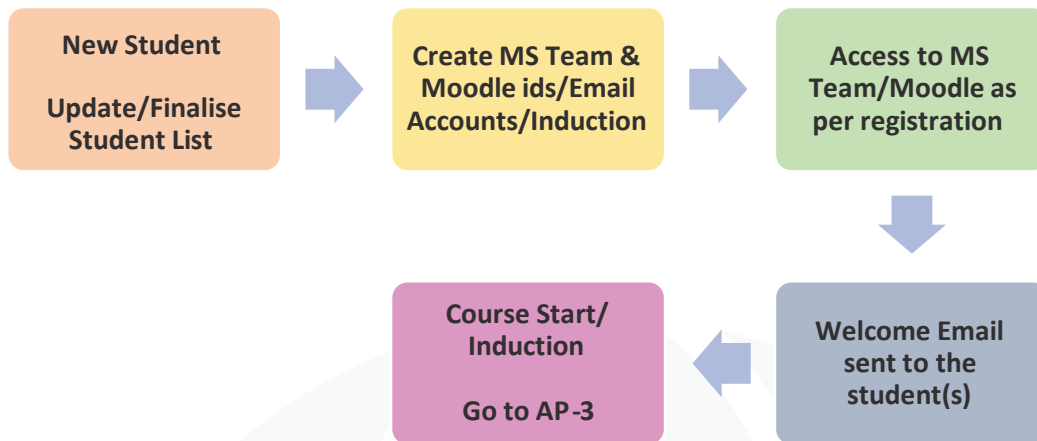
1. Any change in:
 - o Programme structure
 - o Organisation
2. Any other thing of import or relevance



8.2. Daily Processes – Pre-Induction (AP-2)

This process is shown in Figure AP-2 as a flowchart below. This process looks at the pre-induction preparation for the course/programme, the student experience and the character of the Faculty. As the students are enrolled daily, a weekly update report is created on Friday.

PRE-INDUCTION PROCESS (AP-2)



ACTION: "Semester- Week 1"

8.3. Induction (AP-3)

ICE programmes are offered online and on-campus; therefore, both are pervasive in terms of relevant time and space. The induction plan is provided on the website, whereas, after registration, complete support and help are provided to the student.

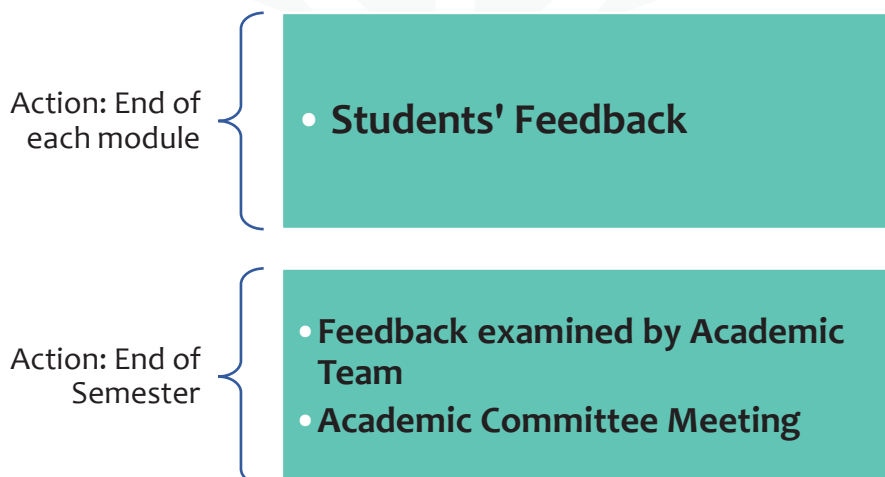
After induction, students are connected to their respective course tutors and their timetables are shared through email with further relevant details.

8.4. Programme Quality Monitoring – Pedagogy (AP- 4)

There are elaborate processes to monitor quality assurance and to look at quality benchmarks. These processes include the following:

1. AP-4 (a) - Student feedback:

The student feedback is taken at the end of each course. The record is maintained for the appropriate actions, which are taken under the guidance of the Principal/Head of the Centre and the Students' support team.

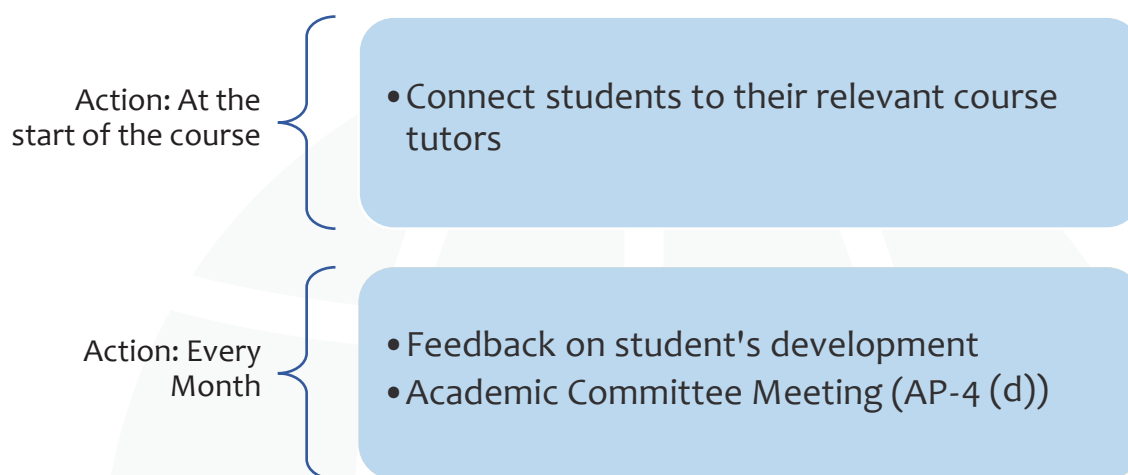


2. AP-4 (b) – Peer review:

Faculty members are subject to peer review at least once a year; it is mandatory for the new faculty members in their first cycle of teaching, and feedback is provided to the Academic Committee

3. AP 4 (c) – Tutors for each course:

Each course has a qualified experienced Course Tutor who is scheduled to give monthly feedback to each student as per the stated guidelines/format.



4. AP-4 (d) - Academic Committee meeting (part of AP-1):

This meeting is held on the first Monday of each month in conjunction with an academic resource planning meeting (AP -1). Feedback is taken from a range of sources and this enables the planning and implementation of constructive student progression. The meeting is supervised by the Head of the Centre, along with the following members:

- Programme Leaders
- Tutors
- Student support team

5. Pedagogy:

While there may be variations at the course level based on awarding bodies and face-to-face components, this section addresses course design at the top level.

Each course page has the following section:

i. Course header: It includes the following:

- a. Communication cockpit: to include all synchronous and asynchronous elements of communications
- b. Course outline and course handbooks
- c. Further reading lists
- d. Student progression tools

- e. Resource and library links
- f. Academic timetable/important dates
- g. Other important information
- h. Course-level announcements

ii. Assessments:

This section includes all information related to the assessment for that module.

iii. Each Session/Topic

- a. Session plan
- b. Reading material with self-assessed activities
- c. Group activities
- d. Interactive content
- e. Links to live lectures as and when they happen
- f. Link to the lecture repository
- g. Any other resource or activity

iv. Student feedback for the course.

v. Review of Course Content: (Process to be defined)

- a. Academic Quality
- b. Instruction design
- c. Changes to curriculum

8.5. Assessment Approval (AP-5)

ICE believes that assessment is an integral part of effective learning processes and has established the following principles for the design and management of assessment practice. Each module/unit or course element has an assessment strategy which is aligned with the intended learning outcomes and learning activities.

All stated learning outcomes for a module/unit/course element are summatively assessed. Assessments enable students to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes of the module(s)/units/course elements and that the overall aims and learning outcomes of their course or programme of studies have achieved the standard required for the award.

Each course includes a variety of assessment types and an appropriate balance of assessment for summative and formative purposes.

Information about assessments; including the details of assignments, their due dates for submission, schedules for assessments, assessment or grading criteria, plus assessment regulations and arrangements for publication of results, whether these are course specific or not, are published in the Student Handbook, course handbooks, or module outlines. Thus, this is provided at the start of the academic year or semester (or other defined teaching period) in which the course commences.

- Assessment tasks and assessment items are reliable, valid and authentic
- The scheduling and methodology of assessment are manageable for the students
- Constructive and timely relevant feedback is an integral part of the assessment process
- Assessment processes and regulations are transparent, consistent, and equitable across courses
- Assessment processes and outcomes are monitored and evaluated through the annual monitoring process

Implementing and Evaluating Internal Assessment and Quality Assurance Systems

Quality Assurance Mechanisms at ICE:

1. Ensures that internal assurance is conducted by internal procedures that satisfy the awarding organization's standards
2. Prepares a sampling plan for internal assurance, which includes observation of assessments and portfolio sampling, and covers both formative and summative assessments
3. Ensures that the sample covers all units, assessors and candidates according to internal policy
4. Ensures that all internal assurance operations are documented
5. Monitors progress and contributes to improving the quality of assessment and assurance through the “Annual Quality Improvement Plan” for the programme
6. Ensures that equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practices are upheld in the assessment process

Academic Team

The Academic Team’s support for the assessors from ICE will:

1. Ensure that all new assessors receive an appropriate induction session
2. Help assessors interpret and apply the learning outcomes correctly and consistently
3. Ensure that assessors have opportunities to update and develop their vocational and assessor competence
4. Hold regular meetings with assessors and lead standardisation activities as required
5. Be responsible for ensuring that all assessors are aware of the awarding body (e.g. ABE, Pearson, LRN CMI, NCUK) codes of practice, assessment strategies, national standards, awarding organisation guidance and appeals procedures

Monitoring the Quality of Assessors' Performance

ICE monitors the assessors to:

1. Ensure that all assessors meet occupational competence requirements and are either qualified
2. Ensure that all assessors are aware of the agreed documentation and utilise it well; they also accurately and swiftly record decisions and securely retain information
3. Develop a sampling plan to cover an appropriate range of candidates, units and assessment types; where applicable or required
4. Sample assessments - both formatively and summatively
5. Observe assessment practice, sample assessment decisions and provide prompt and constructive feedback to the assessors
6. Interview learners regularly to ensure that they understand the requirements of their qualification
7. Ensure that all learners are aware of the appeals procedure and have a copy for reference

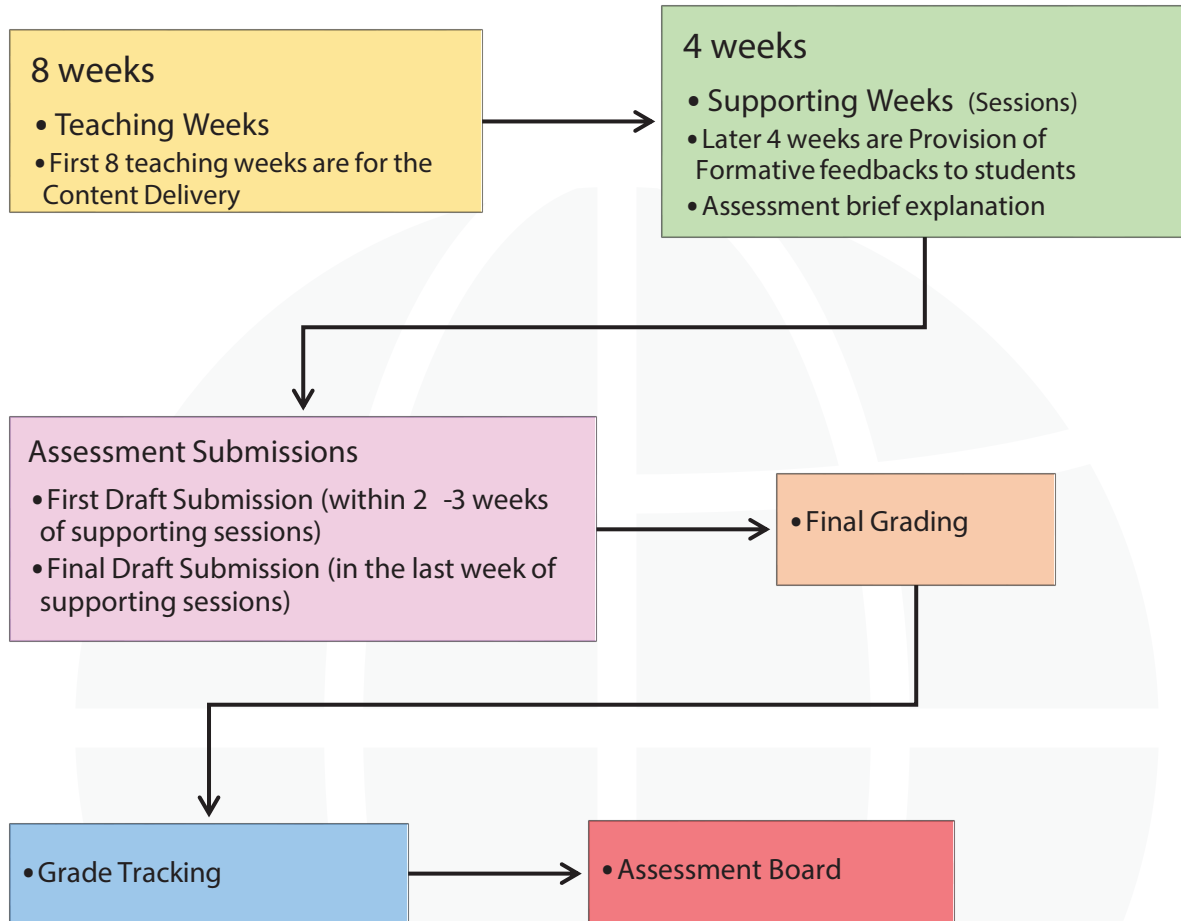
Meeting External Quality Assurance Requirements

ICE is responsible for:

1. Preparing for external visits by awarding body, and making sure that all needed information is completed precisely, provided by the deadline, and that assessors, candidates, and portfolios are available
2. Following up on any quality assurance points that the awarding body has raised externally
3. Ensuring that the team receives professional updates, following external visits and also revisions of standards
4. Overseeing compliance requirements including counter-signing, registrations and certification claims
5. Communicating effectively with the awarding organisation where necessary

8.6. Internal Assessment

The process is explained in the flow chart below:



8.7. External Assessment

The quality handbook is used as guidance for both the internal and external assessment boards. These processes are in place for the academic courses when they start. Whereas, external assessment is done by the external awarding body.

8.8. Graduation/Award (AP-8)

This is managed as per the policy of the awarding body. Students' data is to be managed by the ICE Registry Office.

8.9. Annual Strategic Report (ASR) (AP-9)

Annual monitoring is a process of critical self-reflection and review that allows ICE to reflect on the effectiveness of a scheme of study(s) in achieving its stated aims and the success of students on that scheme in attaining the intended learning outcomes of the previous academic year and for the action point planning for the following academic year. Quality processes contribute to the ASR, allowing ICE to reflect on the character of the programmes and to be able to inform its validating partners. ICE follows an ASR template developed in-house:

- How different programmes of study have operated and been delivered over the previous years;

- How the scheme of study/programme continue to remain valid academically and achieve the aims as set out for each programme

- To identify and disseminate good practice across the scheme of study as a whole;

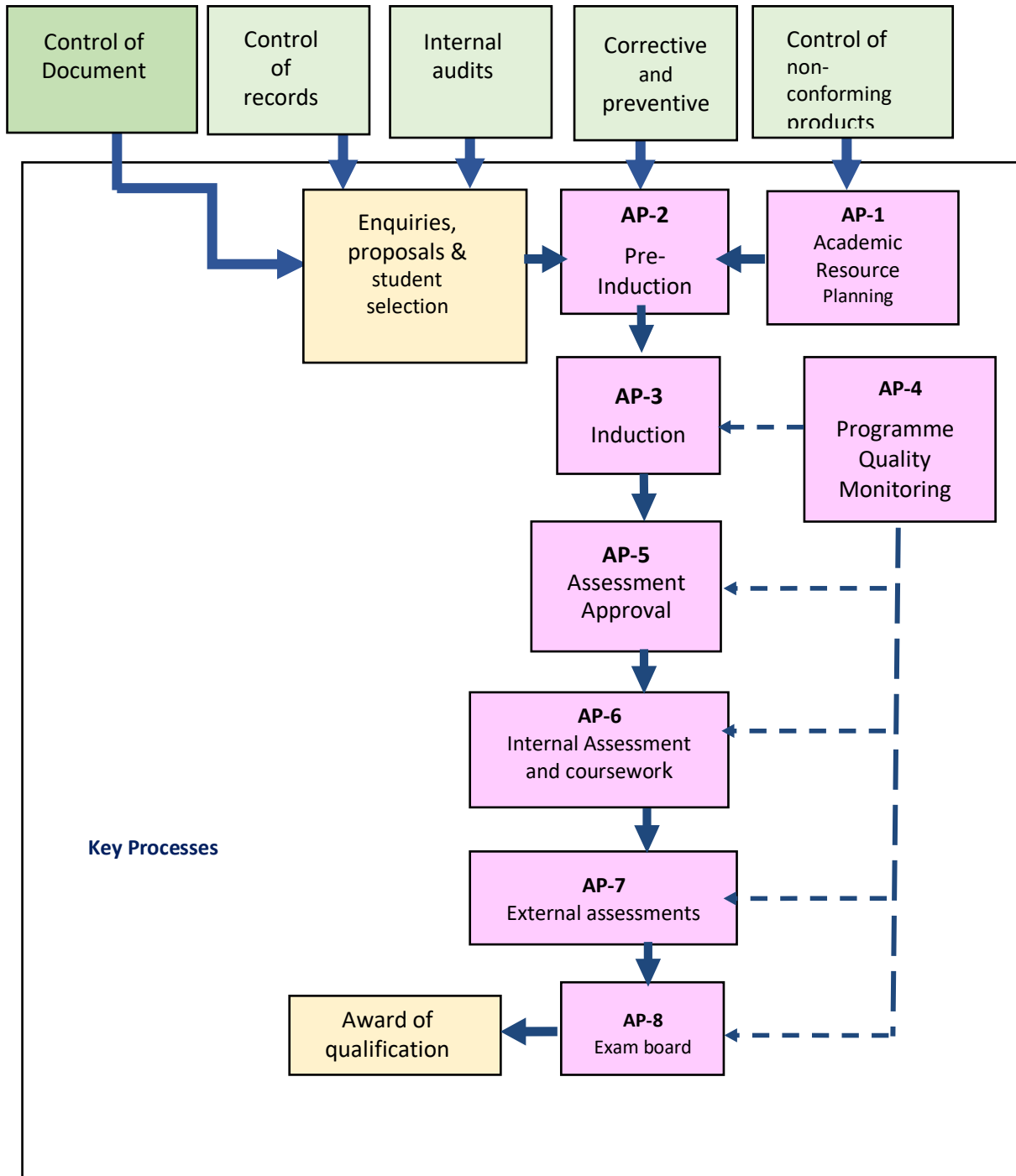
- To identify and comment upon any changes that have been made to the scheme or to identify any changes that are intended to be made in the forthcoming academic session

- Any new changes to enhance the student experience

Appendix A

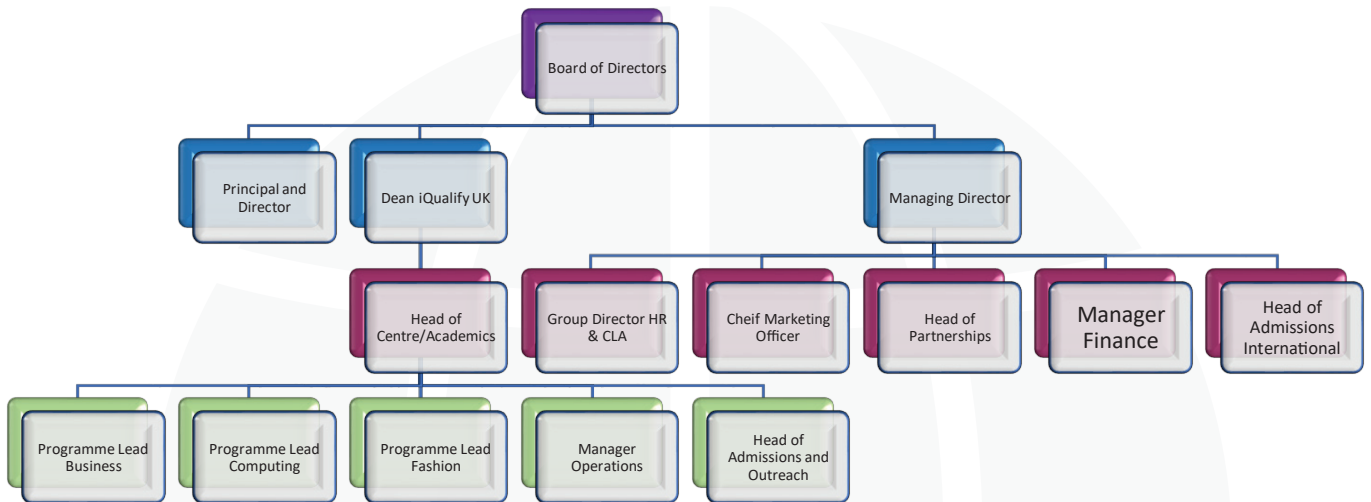
Overview of Key Processes

Supporting Activities




Organogram

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