



S1 C7 Externality Policy and Procedure



Ownership:	Managing Director	
Author:	Managing Director	
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1. PURPOSE AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The acceptable threshold of quality in externality practice covers the following principles:

- Ability to provide oversight – to ensure that policies, procedures and processes are fit for purpose, complied with and the frame-work for provider self-evaluation and self-regulation are transparent.
- Ensure Governance structures and operational responsibilities are *consensus-oriented*.
- Ensure Governance structures and operational responsibilities are responsive, efficient, equitable and inclusive.
- Report accuracy, scope changes and determine key milestones, performance indicators and support Forus Training as an organisation risk management through the provision of independent advice.

2. DEFINITIONS

Independent FE&T (Further Education and Training) Advisor is the person who lends externality to the Governance of Forus Training. This person gives independent authoritative specialist contributions to the sitting and conduct of the Quality Assurance and Academic Governance Council QAAGC P1 S4.



The Independent Non-FE&T (Further Education and Training) Advisor is the person who sits on the Academic Council, as an 'External Educational Background Representative', thus further enhancing the externality principle and confirming the separation between the commercial and academic sides of the organisation.



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External Authenticator is the person who provides externality to the assessment processes of Forus Training and independent authoritative confirmation of fair and consistent assessment of learners.

External Evaluator is the person who is appointed, as an independent of Forus Training programme delivery, to externally verify the quality of the evaluation of programmes. The External Evaluator is available to the self-evaluation, on an agreed consultative basis throughout the process; typically upon commencement of the self-evaluation, upon production of the first draft (for recommendation purposes) and finally, upon completion of the report.

3. SCOPE

Forus Training applies the Terms of Reference relevant to the specific area of work/committee to which externality is required to ensure accurate criteria is used when selecting the independent persons. The independent persons must each demonstrate an effective capacity to challenge issues, report to the Company Directors and work within the QA policies, procedures and processes as approved and implemented.

The position of an external advisor to the governance of Forus Training is overseen by each committee's quorum of 4, 1 of which must be the external advisory and 3 of whom must be from within the organisation. This is essential to protect both the externality dimension and to ensure validity in committee proceedings, decision-making and voting.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Forus Training is committed to demonstrating visibility & transparency within its further education and training structures. Forus Training offers inclusion of learner and stakeholder voices in decision-making and works to the externality principle as outlined in the procedures and practices section.

Externality supports the separation of academic decision-making from the commercial side of Forus Training. External expertise is involved on a number of our committees. Our Quality Assurance and Academic Governance Committee have two independent members. One is an independent educational professional who cannot perform any other duties for Forus Training while sitting on the academic committee. The other is an independent person who has no material interests in Forus Training other than the role on the committee. A key benefit of having these independent external members is their ability to bring different and diverse perspectives as well as to augment the committee's knowledge and expertise with their own background and experience. Externality is a theme across all planning and evaluation activities.

An Independent Further Education and Training Advisor is chair of our Quality Assurance and Academic Governance Council. An additional independent person, who has no further education and



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training subject matter expertise, acts as chair of our Commercial Governance Council. We also have subject matter expertise on our Programme Development and Review Committee. Where externality is employed on academic related committees, the person is wholly external and independent, with appropriate senior experience in further education and training, as appropriate. This policy of externality means that the interaction between the commercial aspects and the academic aspects of Forus Training is separate and that there is no undue influence from commercial interests in academic decision making. Learner representation and trainer representation is also employed in the Quality Assurance and Academic Governance Council.

Forus Training review the requirements on external independence and expertise upon the

appointment of an external expert/advisory role as each position is subject to change as the organisation grows and evolves. The details and affiliations of Forus Training external experts/advisors, including panellists, evaluators and authenticators are collated and monitored by the provider.

See also: [P9 S6 C8 Learner Representation Policy](#)

5. PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

Forus Training is committed to demonstrating visibility & transparency within its Further Education and Training structures. Forus Training offers inclusion of Learner and Stakeholder voices in decision-making and works to the Externality Principle as follows:

1. Externality is offered by persons who are completely independent of the provider.
2. Only external persons who are qualified to make relevant comparisons and offer over-sight are accepted. E.g.
 - External Authentication Procedures (see relevant policy),
 - Independent Further Education and Training Advisor as chair of our Quality Assurance and Academic Governance Council,
 - Independent External Expert(s) on Programme Reviews, Programme Validation/Re-Validation, Self-Evaluation Reviews and/or sub-groups as and when necessary,
 - Independent External Advisors **without** further education and training expertise as Chair of the Commercial Governance Committee.
3. Externality for Governance purposes is cyclical at 5 yearly with reviews if necessary.
4. Forus Training applies the Terms of Reference (ToR) relevant to the specific area of work/committee to which Externality is required to ensure accurate criteria is used when selecting the independent person. The independent person must demonstrate an effective capacity to challenge issues, report to the Director and work within the QA policies, procedures and processes as approved and implemented.



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5. The acceptable threshold of quality in externality practice covers the following principles:
- Ability to provide oversight – to ensure that policies, procedures and processes are fit for purpose, complied with and the frame-work for provider self-evaluation and self-regulation are transparent,
 - Ensure Governance structures and operational responsibilities are consensus-oriented,
 - Ensure Governance structures and operational responsibilities are responsive, efficient, equitable and inclusive,
 - Report accuracy, scope changes and determine key milestones, performance indicators and support the provider with risk management through the provision of independent advice.

[Guideline 5.3 National and international effective practice](#)

[Guideline 10.1 Peer relationships with the broader education and training community](#)

[Guideline 11.4 Provider-owned quality assurance engages with external quality assurance](#)

5.3 National and International Effective Practice

Forus training coordinate, seek validation and facilitate FET programmes in line with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) via QQI. Through its quality assurance systems, reflective of QQI core criteria and the inclusion and active roles of externality, Forus Training is able to keep abreast of both local, regional, national and international effective practice in teaching, learning and assessment.

Forus Training ensure updates on effective practices as developed and disseminated by the Further Education Support Service (FESS), IQAVET, as the Irish national reference point and EQAVET as the European Quality Assurance point in Vocational Education and Training are critiqued and implemented as and where appropriate. In addition, Forus Training is a member of the Further Education Network (FEN). Collectively, these external resources assist Forus Training in forming a policy and framework perspective all programmes offered ensuring the inclusion of new approaches, emerging curriculums and changes industry based practice thus, enhancing the status of the Forus Training.

Forus Training's application of the **externality principle** embedded throughout its quality assurance systems gives way to active and appropriate use of external persons to ensure national and international comparisons are made and availed of, without prejudice.



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In terms of programme reviews and applications for QQI programme validation, **external expert advisors** are an integral part of the process and may, from time to time include national/international subject matter experts. Forus Training feel that such an external perspective is important to:

- Ensure an impartial judgement on the development, standard and projected sustainability of a programme and on its acceptability for the award in question, when compared with similar programmes elsewhere in Ireland and/or internationally,
- Ensure independence of programme delivery and capable of comparing the quality of the programme(s) with that of similar programmes elsewhere,
- Benchmark the developing programme against organisations/institutions offering similar programmes.
- Undertake external reviews of Forus Training's QA processes to ensure that the relevant national and international best practice elements are reflected in the recommendations for programme development and future programme improvement.

EXTERNAL EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS, ADVISORS, EVALUATORS AND AUTHENTICATORS

There are two main criteria for panel members and external examination selection;

Competence: Panellists must possess adequate levels of experience and be sufficiently knowledgeable to provide worthwhile advice and opinion on any evaluation. There are different metrics for competence such as;

- Reputation
- Expertise
- Knowledge
- Research Completed

Impartiality: It is vital that all panellists operate independently and without any outside influence from Forus or any other external sources. To avoid any conflict of interest, panellists are asked to sign a 'No Conflict of Interest' form.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

LEGISLATION / STANDARDS



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1. Qualifications & Quality Assurance (Education & Training) Act 2012
2. Further Education & Training Act 2013
3. QQI Insights: Quality in Irish Further Education & Training – September 2019

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the role of the Company Directors with the vote of the Quality Assurance and Academic Governance Council (QAAGC) to recruit and appoint independent external persons who are independent of Forus Training.

8. COMMUNICATION PLAN

Roles and responsibilities are outlined in induction training and in the terms of reference of the committees involved.

9. ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED IF THE POLICY IS NOT IMPLEMENTED

The WIN policy / non-conformance procedure is followed when this policy is not adhered to. Lack of adherence to this policy may have implications for Forus Training's status as an organisation whose policies and procedures are approved by QQI in order for Forus Training to offer validated programmes.

10. CONTACT INFORMATION

Lisa O Connell
Managing Director
lisa@forustraining.ie



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Amendment History			
Amendment summary sheet			
Revision	Date	Amendment summary	Training Requirements
002	16/12/2020	Initial release	Read and Review
	01/06/2022	<p>[1] Trainer Representative is a member of the General Appeal Sub-Committee (Non-Grade Related) on the basis of issue presented, ensuring objectivity and subject matter expertise.</p> <p>[2] Trainer Representative is a member of the Complaints Sub-Committee on the basis of issue presented, ensuring objectivity and subject matter expertise.</p> <p>[3] QA Officer acts as the link between the P1 S5 PDAC and the P1 S4 QAAGC</p> <p>[4] Managing Director / Head of Centre is an observer in the process of the following committees (no casting vote) Quality Assurance & Academic Governance Council, all Development and Review Committees - removal</p>	