

7.8 Learner Retention

According to QQI (2017b) non-progression of learners through stages of programmes as planned is a concern that is arising across the higher education sector in Ireland. There is no single solution to non-progression, as shown by the QQI (2017b) report. Various institutions have different approaches with a variety of benefits and drawbacks. ICD's approach is outlined as follows.

Analysis of Progression and Retention Data and Retention Clinics/Meetings:

Analysis of retention and progression data is carried out on an ongoing basis by the college Registrar. Interventions result when a learner's progress through programme stages is not occurring as planned. While it is expected that some learners may have to repeat assessments or modules for a variety of reasons, ICD takes a proactive view with regard to the issue of retention. The Registrar plans meetings (Retention Clinics) with students who fail a high number of modules in any stage in order to identify if ICD can offer the learner any extra supports or reasonable accommodations to benefit their learning and progression.

Carrying a Module to Enable Progression:

If a student fails a module, they may qualify for carrying that module into the next stage. QQI (2013b section 4.4.3) describes this as "progression with credit deficit." ICD, following QQI (2013b section 4.4.2), allows "learners...on a case-by-case basis and under exceptional circumstances, to carry a failed module while progressing to the next stage, provided the module is not a prerequisite for any module in this stage and provided this is consistent with the requirements of the relevant programme assessment strategy...Learners are required to pass a carried module in the stage into which it is carried. As a general guideline, the normal maximum missing credit should be 16% of the credit for the stage, e.g. 10 credits per 60-credit stage."

Attendance Monitoring:

ICD takes attendance at all lectures using an attendance record sheet that lecturers distribute, students sign, and the administrative office processes and records on, at least, a weekly basis. If a specific learner misses any more than five lectures, a member of staff may invite that student for a meeting to discuss the issue and to review whether ICD can offer the student any assistance. This follows evidence that finds “attendance does matter for academic achievement...What really seems to matter is excessive absenteeism” (e.g. “five or more misses...is associated strongly with poor academic performance”) (Durdan & Ellis 1995 p. 345).

REFERENCES

Durden, G. C., & Ellis, L. V. (1995) The effects of attendance on student learning in principles of economics. *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings*, 85(May), pp. 242-346.

QQI (2013b) *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013*. Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Dublin.

Available from:

https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Assessment_and_Standards%20Revised%202013.pdf

QQI (2017b) *Quality within Higher Education 2017: A Summary Report*. Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Dublin. Available from:

<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Quality%20within%20Higher%20Education%202017%20Summary%20report.pdf>