Aspire Training

Quality Assurance Manual

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Contents

PART 1
Aspire Training

INTRODUCTION TO ASPIRE TRAINING

Organisational Profile

Aspire Training was initially established as Midland School of Childcare Ltd. in 1996. In 2005 The Midland School of Childcare Ltd. delivered programmes leading to QQI awards for the first time. In 2018 the name was changed to Aspire Training.

Aspire Training is based in Mullingar Co. Westmeath.

Our Programmes

We offer programmes leading to two major awards accredited by QQI.
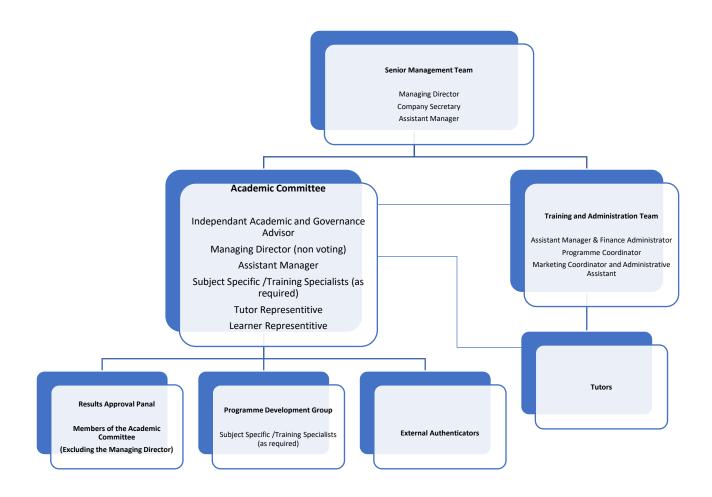
1. Level 5 Early Childhood Care and Education
2. Level 6 Early Childhood Care and Education

We also provide many modules which are component awards of the two major awards above.

6N1975 Disability Awareness

6N4329 Supervisory Management

6N4448 Statutory Workplace Policies and Procedures

5N0758 Care Support

5N1794 Safety and Health at Work

5N3769 Palliative Care Support

5N1763 Approaches to Early Childhood Education

6N1942 Child Development

6N1944 Early Childhood Curriculum

6N1945 Childhood Social Legal and Health Studies

6N1946 Work Experience

6N1950 Communications

6N1973 Supervision in Early Childhood Care

6N2023 Child Psychology

5N0690 Communications

5N1356 Work Experience

5N1370 Social Studies

5N1763 Approaches to Early Childhood Education

5N1764 Child Development

5N1765 Child Health and Well Being

5N1770 Early Care and Education Practice

5N1773 Early Childhood Education and Play

Organisational Chart

Senior Management Team

Managing Director
Company Secretary
Assistant Manager

Academic Committee

Independant Academic and Governance Advisor
Managing Director (non voting)
Assistant Manager
Subject Specific /Training Specialists (as required)
Tutor Representitive
Learner Representitive

Training and Administration Team

Assistant Manager & Finance Administrator
Programme Coordinator
Marketing Coordinator and Administrative Assistant

Results Approval Panal

Members of the Academic Committee

(Excluding the Managing Director)

Programme Development Group

Subject Specific /Training Specialists (as required)

External Authenticators

Tutors

PART 2
Policies and Procedures

1   GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY.

1.1   Policy

It is the policy of Aspire Training to implement a system of governance that oversees the quality of our training service. This system is intended to supervise the quality of our training activities particularly in relation to the development and validation of our programmes, the certification of learners, and the improvement of our service over time.

The governance system will be implemented by governance groups and individuals whose roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and documented.

We have designed our system in a way which reflects the aspirations of our organisation, our scale, the involvement of our staff, the need to protect academic integrity, the consideration internal and external evaluations, and the mitigation of risk.

We seek to capture our policies and procedures in documented form to allow us to continuously develop our quality assurance system and to communicate effectively with all relevant stakeholders to promote our culture of quality.

1.2   Procedure

1.2.1   Governance

Organisational objectives

Aspire Training provides Healthcare and Childcare training to learners seeking to secure or retain employment as special needs assistants, creche staff, staff working in early childhood settings, providers of care in nursing homes and assisted living environments *et.al.*

Our primary organisational objective is to assist our learners to develop initial skills or to upskill in a manner which meets their needs in the most effective way possible. We aim to provide a comprehensive range of programmes, using a team of highly skilled and experienced tutors, in training facilities that that are comfortable and fit-for-purpose. We also aim to provide a very personal service which begins with our first contact at registration, continues through the lifecycle of the learner's engagement with us, including post-delivery support.

We also recognise that our service must be provided in a manner which respects the financial imperatives that must be met to secure our viability into the future.

Governance groups and individuals, and academic integrity

To ensure the quality of our service we have internal teams including the Senior Management Team, the Academic Committee, Results Approval Panel and Programme Development Group, along with our Training Administration Team, the Tutors as well as external quality assurance in the form of External Authenticators, and an Independent Academic & Governance Advisor.

The Senior Management team comprise the directorate and a member on senior management. The Senior Management Team is the main governance entity at Aspire Training and is responsible for, along with support from the Academic Committee, resourcing and implementing the quality assurance system

including the development of the Training Manual (this document), the tutor and learner handbooks, feedback forms *et. al.*

Our tutors ensure that assessment is conducted fairly and consistently using documented marking schemes and marking criteria and they are responsible for monitoring any potential academic misconduct. They use the Tutor Feedback forms to formally document any instance that they may encounter.
The External Authenticator assists us to review the efficacy of assessment procedures within the context of national provision. The External Authenticator produces an Authentication Report to note areas of good practice and areas for development.

The Independent Academic & Governance Advisor provides an informed, independent perspective on training quality assurance at Aspire Training and assists the Academic Committee with a variety of processes including programme approval, continuous separation of academic and commercial decision making, and programme review and improvement.

Communication and risk management

Aspire Training have put in place a risk management system to support the operational governance of Aspire Training. Risk management provides a methodology for identifying, assessing, and mitigation potential risks. It also provides a methodology for ensuring risks are assessed and managed correctly.

The Academic Committee is responsible for the communication of all quality assurance information to all relevant stakeholders. This includes induction training for all new staff, induction briefings for learners, publication of programme information and quality assurance on the Aspire website *et. al.*
The Senior Management Team also considers risk. Risk can be financial, environmental, legislative, operational, quality-related, or HR-related.

Academic risks are considered by the Academic Committee which includes Aspire Training's Independent Governance and Academic Advisor.

Some risks can be addressed internally while others may require the assistance of external subject matter experts such as accountants, solicitors, GDPR Consultants *et. al.*, and Aspire Training will engage these experts on an as-needed basis.

In order to monitor risk, Aspire Training retains a risk register, which is a working document, operated by the Managing Director in conjunction with the Senior Management Team and Academic Committee, with appropriate risk mitigation measure put in place.

1.2.2   Management of quality.

Policies and procedures aligned to mission

Our mission is to provide a comprehensive range of Childcare, Healthcare, Special Needs Assisting and Disability Awareness programmes which will fulfil the requirements of our learners and their employers. Our aim is to ensure that we provide our programmes in a manner which is demonstrably quality -driven through: employing empathetic and efficient administration staff, engaging competent tutors, securing high-quality training venues, developing good standards-based courseware, and constantly monitoring our training and delivery with a view to continuous improvement.

The QQI Core Statutory Guidelines have provided us with the structure which underpins the expression of our mission in terms of policies and procedures which enable us to monitor ourselves against a comprehensive suite of quality criteria.

Assignment of responsibility

Each of our governance groups has Terms of Reference and these are described in a document titled "Governance at Aspire Training".

Resourcing

The main resources that we need to run our business are personnel (management, administration, training delivery), and facilities (rental, equipment and consumables).

Aspire has a senior management team, an academic committee, a results panel and programme development group, a training and administration team, and panel of tutors. We also use external subject matter experts as required, including external QA, IT support, and legal/legislative and financial consultants.

We use rented facilities to deliver our training to maximise our flexibility and control our costs.
At our Senior Management Team meetings, we constantly monitor our income and expenditure and the quality of our delivery to ensure continuing financial viability and learner satisfaction into the future. Action items are dealt with directly by the management team or delegated and communicated to relevant Teams or Committees for implementation.

The financial viability of a given programme is based on a cost/benefit analysis.

Cost drivers include:

- opportunity costs such as programme development and validation costs, marketing costs etc.
- fixed overhead costs including our office and our administration staff.
- variable costs associated with delivery and assessment (e.g. tutors, facilities, materials etc.).

These costs need to be set against the likely/potential profit. The factors affecting profit include the fee income, the likelihood of referred and repeat business, economies of scale etc.

We consult with our Financial Advisor in all such decisions to ensure viability and assess risk.

1.2.3   Embedding a quality culture

Quality statement

We are committed to the quality of our service because our future business depends on our past performance. We have developed a quality statement to encapsulate our quality focus, and this is published on our website and is included in our tutor and learner handbooks.

Learner and stakeholder involvement in QA

Quality begins with the very first contact by the learner and this is typically our website. We ensure that our website is kept up-to-date and contains all of the relevant programme and provider information required by the learner to make an informed decision.

Our Administration & Training Team are knowledgeable about our service and will be able to advise our learners about all aspects of our provision.

Our Tutors and learners can provide quality assurance feedback informally or through the feedback forms that they complete at the end of each programme.

There are documented procedures in place should any learner wish to make a complaint or appeal.

There are opportunities for external involvement in the form of External Authenticators and External Evaluators.

All of our training and education services are provided with the context of applicable legislative and regulatory stakeholders.

Communicating QA mechanisms

Our primary mechanism for communicating our QA is through our website, and through our staff and learner inductions which include staff and learner handbooks.

1.3   Monitoring

#	Monitoring activity	Timing	Owner
1.	Review organisational objectives and alignment of policies and procedures. Review Quality Statement.	Annually	Academic Committee
2.	Review Terms of Reference for governance groups and in particular the performance of the Independent Governance and Academic Advisor in the performance of their role	Annually	Senior Management Team
3.	Review and update learner and tutor handbooks	Annually	Academic Committee
4.	Review data (feedback, reports *et. al.*) that may indicate current of potential resource deficiencies	Quarterly	Academic Committee
5.	Ensure that the information published on the Aspire website is complete, accurate, and up-to-date.	Quarterly	Marketing Coordinator & Administration Assistant

2   DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

2.1   Policy

Aspire Training recognises the importance of quality and continuous improvement to our service provision. We will ensure that all Aspire staff are fully aware of the importance of our quality assurance system and of their responsibilities to implement and participate in the enhancement of that system. Our processes will be subject to constant internal and external monitoring and our policies and procedures will be systematically reviewed and revised to implement any identified areas for improvement.
Aspire Training will ensure that policies and procedures are informed by the QQI QA guidelines, legislative compliance, our tutors, learners, the needs of the healthcare and childcare sector, and other stakeholders. Our policies and procedures will be made available to all interested parties to demonstrate our commitment to accountability and transparency and compliance with relevant legislation.

2.2   Procedure

This procedure describes how we document and implement our QA system.

2.2.1   Document policies and procedures

Documented policies and procedures
Our Training Quality Assurance Manual (this document) has been developed to closely align with the published QQI guidelines, and to reflect current legislation. The structure is based on the 11 criteria of the QQI Core Statutory Guidelines. Each section of our manual follows a consistent format:

- policy statement (what we set out to achieve)
- procedure method (how we implement our policy)
- mechanism for monitoring (how we monitor the success of our implementation)

Amendments to the manual may be occasioned by changes in legislation, changes in guidance from statutory bodies, programme monitoring and review *et. al.*
It is the responsibility of the Managing Director to ensure that the Training Manual is kept up to date.

Formal standing of our Training Quality Assurance Manual
Our Training Quality Assurance Manual is the formal QA document for Aspire Training and is used by the Senior Management Team to ensure current best practice for strategic management including governance, delivery, assessment, monitoring and self-evaluation.
The manual itself and associated documents have been completely redeveloped as part of the QQI provider reengagement process.
The Senior Management Team will ensure that the manual is accessible to all stakeholders within Aspire Training and will be published on the Aspire Training website.

Fit for purpose and geared towards programme improvement
Programme improvement is predicated on measurement against past performance, and the Aspire Training Senior Management Team is responsible for ensuring that our quality system is documented in a way which will efficiently capture only the data that we need to make informed decisions. This manual sets out what

we consider are our key performance indicators, how our management team analyse results and make improvements.

Compliance monitoring

Aspire Training recognises that we need to be able to evidence compliance with applicable legislation and guidelines from statutory and accreditation bodies. Applicable legislation and regulations include:

- Equality
- Health and Safety
- GDPR
- Education and Training Act
- QQI accreditation regulations

Aspire Training's Managing Director is the point of contact for legal, regulatory and accreditation matters. This role involves attending information events, engaging external subject matter experts, organising compliance training, communicating internally, maintaining and monitoring compliance records, and advising the other members of the Senior Management Team of any potential or actual non-compliance. Aspire Training relies on government announcements and publications to make us aware of changes in legislation, and we use external consultancy for GDPR compliance. We rely on QQI to keep us informed about changes to QQI regulations and applicable changes to the Education and Training Act.

2.2.2   Implement a comprehensive QA system

Embedding quality assurance

We ensure that our quality assurance is embedded in our organisation by means of a comprehensive suite of instruments including manuals, forms, reports, handbooks and our website, all of which facilitate the participation of our stakeholders in our quality system.

Academic and corporate quality assurance.

Our quality assurance documentation addresses procedures relating to academic matters including programme development, delivery, assessment, and monitoring, but also procedures relating to corporate matters such as fiscal management, information management, staffing, resourcing *et. al.*

2.3   Monitoring

#	Monitoring activity	Timing	Owner
1.	Review the Training Quality Assurance Manual to ensure continuing accuracy, completeness, and relevance.	Annually	Academic Committee
2.	Review forms and reports to ensure that appropriate learner data is being collected and that reports are being generated, analysed, and actioned.	Annually	Academic Committee
3.	Review induction materials to ensure proper communication of the Aspire Training QA system to relevant stakeholders.	Annually	Academic Committee
4.	Review Terms of Reference for key governance entities to ensure that responsibilities are properly defined.	Annually	Senior Management Team

3 PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3.1 Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that programmes are developed consistently and in accordance with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) requirements. It also ensures that programmes are developed with appropriate regard to the resources required to deliver them when validated by QQI.

All programmes will be developed with a view to their validation by QQI. The steps in the approval process are designed to reinforce the separation of functions between the Senior Management Team and the Academic Committee, while also demonstrating the required interaction between them. Programmes will be developed to ensure that successful learners will achieve the standard expected at the designated level. All programmes developed by Aspire Training, in line with this policy, will be placed on the NFQ. Programmes will be designed to ensure that the National Policy on Access Transfer and Progression is adhered to and that there are articulation and progression routes within Aspire Training or, alternatively, that arrangements can be made for such routes with named educational institutions and programmes. Programme development is informed by consultation with stakeholders such as sectoral interest groups, prospective employers, national policy makers and learners. Programmes will be developed by members of the Academic Committee, and led by an appointed external subject matter specialist where appropriate. Aspire Training is committed to implementing a structured process for development of learner-centred programmes, whose programme learning outcomes are consistent with applicable award specifications. All QQI-certified programmes will be developed in line with the National Framework of Qualifications, guidance from certification bodies and relevant legislation, and will be subject to internal review and approval.

Programmes leading to Common Award System awards will be developed in accordance with QQI's CAS Compound Programme Descriptor Template and associated Guidelines. Programmes will be delivered and supported by appropriately qualified staff. All programmes as validated by QQI, will be reviewed at least every 5 years and re-validation sought if appropriate. Management of the programme development process is the responsibility of the Academic Committee.

Aspire Training will ensure that the views of learners, tutors and the sector will be incorporated into the design of our programmes.

All programmes will be designed with opportunities for learner transfer and progression in mind.
All programme guidance materials will inform learner's expectations of the workload and time input required to successfully complete the programme.

3.2 Procedure

This procedure describes our approach to new programme development, how we address learner admission, progression, and recognition and how we monitor our programmes.

3.2.1   Programme Development and Approval.

Programme proposals may emerge from a range of sources within Aspire Training, including stakeholders. Proposed programmes will be developed over three stages:
1. Initial Programme Feasibility
2. Development to Stage of Pre-external Review
3. Development to Completion and Submission to QQI.
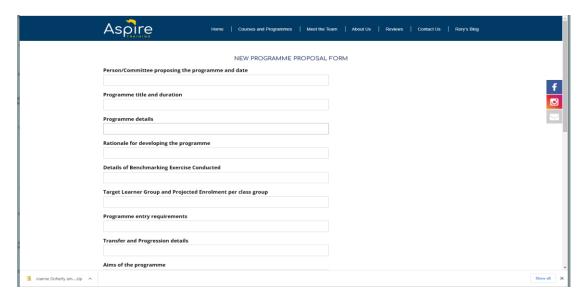
Initial Programme Feasibility

This stage of development is carried out by the programme proposer(s). It examines the feasibility of the programme, paying particular attention to its strategic fit and the education and training rationale for the proposed programme. This stage also checks that the proposed programme is viable, both academically and financially. In this phase, outline programme learning outcomes are developed, and a benchmarking process undertaken. This information is captured in a New Programme Proposal Form. The completed template is submitted to the Senior Management Team together with an indicative timetable for development. The Senior Management Team will consider the proposal and decide either:

- approve it to be sent to the Academic Council or
- refer it back to the proposer seeking further information/amendments or
- decline to approve it.

New Programme Proposal Forms are available on the Aspire Training website here:
https://www.aspiretraining.ie/external-subject-specialist-report-on-the-new-proposed-programme/
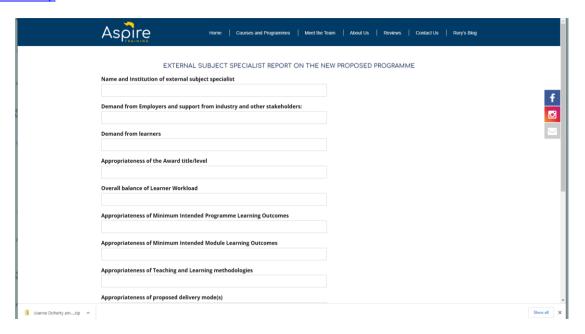
Development to Stage of Pre-external Review

Following approval from the Academic Committee, a Programme Development Group is established. During this phase, the PDG will further develop the proposal in line with the appropriate QQI template and guidelines, referred to above. It will include refined programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs), curriculum structure with module learning outcomes (MIMLOs) and teaching and learning and assessment strategy. The Programme Development Team should consider the viability of all modes of study and of delivery at this point. The programme at this stage should also have indicative costs associated with delivering the programme, in terms of equipment, materials and human resources. The draft programme document is sent to the Senior Management Team for outline funding approval. Following funding approval, the draft programme document and associated template is forwarded to the Academic Committee for consideration.

Development to Completion and Submission to QQI

If the Academic Committee approves the proposal at this point, it will commission a report from an external independent subject matter expert. This person will examine the proposal draft programme document and complete a report in accordance with the External Subject Specialist Report Form. The completed report will be sent to the Programme Development Group for its consideration and appropriate amendments to the programme shall be made by that group, in accordance with the recommendation in the report. A document showing how the Senior Management Team's recommendations have been addressed should also be prepared and together with the Senior Management Team's report, included as an appendix to the programme document. The Programme Development Group will also refine the indicative costs estimated in the earlier stage of development.

The External Subject Specialist Report Form is available on the Aspire Training Website here: https://www.aspiretraining.ie/external-subject-specialist-report-on-the-new-proposed-programme/

The following documentation will be forwarded to the Academic Committee for consideration and approval:

 • Final revised programme document, including the report from the Senior Management Team and the response of the Programme Development Group to this
• The final cost estimates

Following approval by the Academic Committee, the complete proposal, including all documentation, together with that body's recommendation that it be forwarded to QQI seeking validation, will be sent to the Senior Management Team for decision.

Having reviewed the proposal, the Senior Management Team will decide whether to send the proposal to QQI seeking validation. If this decision is positive, all required documentation will be sent to QQ.

Response to QQI Validation Report and Conditions/Recommendations

Following receipt of the QQI Validation Report, it will be referred to the Programme Development Group for action, who will amend the Programme to comply with any conditions and will consider any recommendations in the Report. Following this, the amended programme document will be forwarded to the Academic Committee l for consideration. Following its review, the Academic Committee may forward the revised document to QQI and make a recommendation to Senior Management Team whether to commence the programme.

The decision to develop new programmes is also a responsibility of the Senior Management Team under their terms of reference. New programme development may be initiated by learner or tutor feedback, by new regulations, by external competitive forces, or simply by the desire to expand the scope of our provision.

3.2.2   Learner admission, progression and recognition.

Learner admission
Programme access/entry requirements will be identified during the new programme development process. Access/entry requirements will be clearly stated on the Aspire Training website and promotional material. An applicant cannot be considered a learner until they have completed all stages in the registration process including meeting all the programme access/entry requirements.

Programme entry
Entry to the initial stage of a programme is gained through:

• Meeting the minimum educational entry requirements,

 • Assessment of recognition of prior learning (RPL) which is specific to each QQI programme

• Minimum Age

 • Learners are required to be able to understand and convey the concepts contained in the programme content.

Criteria for Admission Previous Qualifications

To access programmes leading to a particular award, the learner should have reached the standards of knowledge, skill and competence associated with the preceding level of the National Framework of Qualifications, i.e., in order to access a Level 6 programme, the learner must have achieved a Level 5 qualification. This may have been achieved through a formal qualification or through relevant life and work experience. Applicants must also have a strong interest in their chosen area of study. It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure they are fully briefed about their chosen course of study. Applicants will take responsibility for ensuring that they have completed all documentation required for enrolment and paid the necessary fees if applicable.

This may include, but is not limited to:

- Completed registration form
- Photocopy of personal identification
- Photocopy of any previous qualifications

Applicants will take responsibility for ensuring that they are fully registered on the programme of study. An applicant cannot be considered a learner until they have completed all stages in the registration process. Applicants will also take responsibility for the accuracy of information supplied. Submitting false or misleading information or documentation can lead to cancellation of admission or removal from a programme.

Minimum English Language Requirements

All programmes provided by Aspire Training are currently delivered in English. We recommend that the standard of English required by learners on all programmes is such that they can both understand and convey the concepts contained in the programme content. Where a learner's first language is not English, some additional supports may be offered to the learner as outlined under learner accommodations.

Minimum age requirements

Aspire Training have a minimum age requirement of 17 years

Learner progression

The programmes we offer are associated with Healthcare and Childcare. We offer a range of minor awards associated with major awards in these areas. There are many providers nationally who deliver similar programmes to ours and each of those represents an opportunity for progression to a higher or major award. There are so many providers and so many possible permutations for progression, that we treat requests for progression assistance on a case-by-case basis.

Aspire Training facilitates contact between learners and officers of the Adult Guidance Services function in the ETBs who will assist them with aspects of their academic and/or career progression on a one-to-one basis.

3.2.3   Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of prior learning may be requested by a learner for the purposes of access to a programme, advanced entry to a programme, or grant of a full award.

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a method of assessment which may allow learners to gain formal recognition (certification) for knowledge, skills and competence that they already have, howsoever acquired.

RPL requires the learner to demonstrate or prove their learning through interview and/or through compiling a portfolio.

RPL may allow the learner:

1. To gain entry to a programme: that is, a learner may gain a place on a programme, without having the certificate required for entry onto that programme (where such an entry requirement exists).
2. To gain exemptions within a programme: for example, a learner may be granted exemptions from elements of programme requirements on the basis of learning that they already have achieved.
3. To attain an award: that is, a learner may be awarded a major or minor award on the basis of previously acquired learning for which they do not have a formal certificate.

Please note, that due to the part-time nature of our programmes, Aspire Training does not facilitate options 2 and 3.
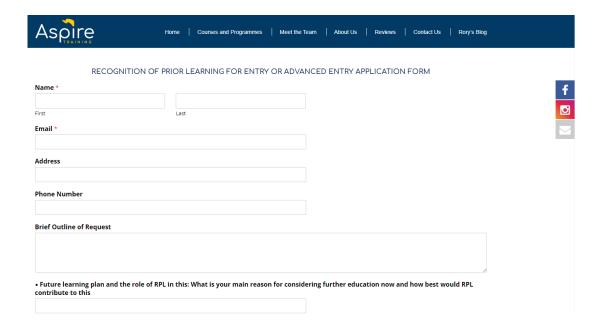
RPL for Entry

Where a learner does meet the relevant entry requirements onto any of our QQI Level 5 or 6 programmes, consideration will given to those with previous experience of working in the relevant vocational sector (3 years minimum) and/or previous certified learning within the relevant vocational sector. Learners seeking an exemption based on recognition of prior learning will to supply the following information:

1. Completed Aspire Training RPL Application Form to include details of previous certified Learning / Experience.

2. Relevant certificates (specifically linked to an awarding body) to include transcript of academic results – awards which have been issued from foreign countries will need to be transcribed onto the Irish Framework of Qualifications before applications can be considered.

3.   Programme details relating to the previous certified learning – it is essential to establish that learners have already covered the learning objectives set down in the QQI module descriptors.

4.   Employers References.

The application will be reviewed by the Academic Committee who will formally respond within 14 days of receiving an RPL Application.

The Recognition of Prior Learning Application Form is available on the Aspire Training Website here: https://www.aspiretraining.ie/recognition-of-prior-learning-for-entry-or-advanced-entry-application-form/

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING FOR ENTRY OR ADVANCED ENTRY APPLICATION FORM

Name *

First   Last

Email *

Address

Phone Number

Brief Outline of Request

• **Future learning plan and the role of RPL in this: What is your main reason for considering further education now and how best would RPL contribute to this**

3.2.4   Programme monitoring and review.

Aspire Training monitors the learner and tutor experience of our programmes with a view to ongoing programme improvement. All programme delivery is subject to learner and tutor review through the feedback forms, and the data from these forms is collated and documented in the Internal Verifier report for consideration by the Senior Management Team and external quality assurance personnel including external authenticators and evaluators.

We use this feedback, as well as statistics on completions, and grades to ensure that all key indicators of our training provision meet or exceed the high standard that we commit to, and that we expect of ourselves.

These indicators include a website that provides accurate, comprehensive and timely information, an administration team that supports our learners through the lifecycle of their engagement with us, and a programme delivery service that has excellent tutors at its heart and is provided in a training environment that meets the personal and pedagogical needs of our learners.

The pattern of programme data, collected and analysed over time, supports periodic review of our programmes to ensure continuing relevance and enhancement.

3.3 Monitoring

#	Monitoring activity	Timing	Owner
1.	Review programme development documentation to verify that the development steps have been applied fully and consistently, and lessons learned have been captured.	On completion of the programme validation process.	Academic Committee
2.	Review learner admission data published on the website for completeness and accuracy.	Annually	Assistant Manager
3.	Liaise with QQI in relation to current best practice in relation to Recognition of Prior Learning	Annually, or on receipt of a specific RPL request	Assistant Manager
4.	Review instruments involved in the data capture that supports ongoing monitoring (e.g. feedback forms, reports, certification data *et. al.*)	Annually.	Assistant Manager

4   STAFF RECRUITMENT MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

4.1   Policy

It is the policy of Aspire Training to deliver all our services using appropriately qualified, experienced and competent staff. We will ensure that all support and tutoring staff, will continue to be recruited and inducted into their roles using fair, transparent and ethical procedures. Roles, responsibilities and codes of conduct will be clearly set out in contracts of employment. The performance of staff in their role will be continuously monitored to ensure pedagogical and professional standards are maintained.
Aspire Training will facilitate, encourage and act on staff feedback and will maintain communications systems such that staff are able to receive feedback in a timely and appropriate manner.
Aspire Training will provide a supportive environment to staff which will assist our staff to maintain high standards of continuous professional development.
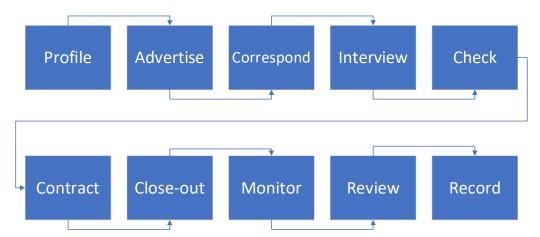
4.2   Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that our delivery staffs are appropriately qualified, knowledgeable in their subject, competent in their ability as educators, empathetic to learners, and professional in the performance of their role.
This procedure also addresses how Aspire Training communicates with our staff, monitors their performance and supports their development.

4.2.1   Staff Recruitment

Staffing requirements are discussed at Senior Management Team meetings and all recruitment follows a defined process the stages of which are:

Profile	Advertise	Correspond	Interview	Check

Contract	Close-out	Monitor	Review	Record

Staff recruitment is performed in a systematic manner at Aspire Training.
The approach that we take is to:

1. Profile. Define and document our recruitment needs in terms of role profiles and responsibilities, to include role responsibilities, codes of conduct, professional and academic standards.
2. Advertise. Advertise appropriately
3. Correspond. Communicate effectively with candidates
4. Interview. Conduct fair and transparent interviews
5. Check. Perform reference checks where appropriate
6. Contract. Issue Contracts of Employment stating Terms and Conditions including tenure, role and responsibilities *et. al.*
7. Close-out. Provide feedback to unsuccessful candidates.
8. Monitor. Solicit feedback on teaching staff from learners.
9. Review. Conduct periodic performance reviews.
10. Record. Maintain records of staff.

4.2.2   Tutor Profile

Tutor profiles will vary form programme to programme, but in general selection criteria will be based on the following qualifications, skills and attributes:

Experience:

Minimum of 3 years working in the field of learning for which they are applying.

Qualifications:

Relevant third level qualification, or minimum of two levels higher than modules being taught on the National Framework of Qualifications.
Relevant CDP
Experience delivering subject matter training/teaching and/or 5 years relevant experience in subject matter area in Industry.

Skills & Qualities

Patience, Positivity, Empathy, Confidentiality, Technical knowledge, Active listening, Communication, Leadership, Problem-solving, Time management

Essential

• Knowledge of the specific field of learning/vocational area being applied for
• Knowledge and understanding of the Common Awards System
• Knowledge and experience of Awards, Assessment, and Standards
• Ability to communicate with Learners and Senior Management
• Administrative and Report Writing Skills
• Excellent Information Technology Skills. (Familiarity with Microsoft Office 365 an advantage)

Desirable

• Experience of employment in the specific field of learning being applied for
• Knowledge of Quality Assurance System

4.2.3   Staff Availability

Aspire Training has a panel of approximately 6-8 contract staff. We have Contracts for Service in place with each tutor. The Contracts state the mutual responsibilities of each party, and tutors are specifically required to make us aware at the earliest opportunity of any issue that has the potential to impact their availability.

The size of our panel enables us to make contingency arrangements in the event of tutor unavailability, and we also have a full-time tutor onsite, which gives us some additional backup flexibility.

4.2.4   Staff Communication

The purpose of staff communication at Aspire Training is to ensure that staff have the opportunity to give and receive feedback, and to receive updates about programmes.
Aspire Training is not a large organisation so communication between management, administration and delivery staff is largely informal which makes communication very immediate and flexible.
Formal correspondence with staff is implemented through staff induction, e-mail and meeting agendas/minutes, while delivery staff have the further mechanism of Tutor Feedback forms.
All staff have access to the Training Quality Assurance Manual at all times.
Other documents involved in staff communication include employment contracts, and staff handbooks.

4.2.5   Staff Development

Aspire Training is fully committed to staff development, and we actively encourage our staff to alert the management team to any continuous professional development opportunity that would assist them in the performance of their role. Such opportunities may involve

- financial supports.
- flexible working hours
- time off for attendance at relevant professional events (e.g. QQI, Local Enterprise Office, ECI *et.al.*)
- subscriptions to relevant publications
- technology training in teaching or assessment tools, learning management systems *et. al.*
- study/exam leave *et. al.*

We also monitor the performance of our staff through learner feedback forms and external QA reports, and any indication that staff development is required will be addressed through the programme monitoring and review process.

4.2.6 Continuous Professional Development

Aspire Training is committed to the support and promotion of staff and tutor development and training. Aspire Training is committed to creating an environment that encourages staff and tutor development. It is recognised that the development of a broad range of skills and interests brings both individual and organisational benefits.
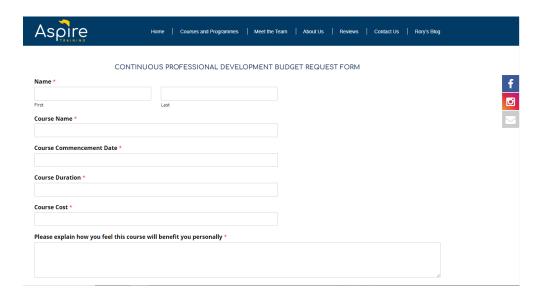
Staff and tutor development comprises of training and learning initiatives aimed at developing an individual's qualifications, knowledge and skills base for the performance of duties and for their personal growth and development. These initiatives may include pursuit of higher qualifications, research activities, participation at conferences and seminars, membership of professional bodies, external networking, internal networking, succession planning, sabbaticals, industrial placement, skills dissemination, formal learning exchanges, training courses and other mechanisms which facilitate continuous professional development.

Staff and tutor development activities should contribute to the achievement of Aspire Training's strategic goals and objectives. All staff members are encouraged to participate and engage with staff and career development activities and should take responsibility for their own learning, to develop personal goals and to record and reflect on their own development. Some staff development activities are mandatory as a consequence of employment agreements. The managing director recognises the value of staff development and the benefits it brings to the individual and to Aspire Training. The managing director supports staff members in achieving their training and development objectives through the allocation of time, facilities and other resources, as appropriate. Staff development is most effective when the individual member of staff takes responsibility for his/her own development. However, all staff should be given appropriate support and encouragement and allocated reasonable time and resources for this purpose.

All office based staff at Aspire Training can avail of a CPD budged, which is outlined within staff contracts.

All staff and tutors receive a quarterly CPD newsletter, with upcoming training opportunities which are sector relevant.

Staff and tutors are also encouraged to seek further appropriate CPD opportunities, and a budget can be applied for via the online CPD Budget Request Form here: https://www.aspiretraining.ie/continuous-professional-development-budget-request-form/

4.3 Monitoring

#	Monitoring activity	Timing	Owner
1.	Review the staff recruitment process to ensure that all recruitment steps were followed and that any lessons learned have been captured for process improvement.	When a new staff member has been recruited.	Managing Director
2.	Review feedback forms to ensure they ask the right questions and are being completed as intended by delivery staff	Annually	Assistant Manager
3.	Ensure staff are consulted about the effectiveness of staff feedback mechanisms	Annually	Assistant Manager
4.	Review all records or provision of staff development supports since the last review period.	Annually	Managing Director

5   TEACHING AND LEARNING

5.1   Policy

Aspire Training's Teaching and Learning policy is to ensure that our learner experience is constantly monitored and enhanced by means of critical reflection leading to continual improvement.
We ensure that all staff possess the required level of experience and qualifications to successfully deliver our programmes in their relevant discipline.
We will inform our learners about our feedback mechanisms and our procedures for complaints and appeals procedures.
We will ensure that our programme content reflects updates or advancements across our training areas and will remain in line with current best practice.
We endeavour to actively participate and engage with sectoral national and international communities to further enhance our understanding of learning and development and adapt our delivery and assessment methodologies accordingly.
We commit to providing learning environments that support flexible learning pathways for learners with diverse needs and promotes an ethos of mutual respect in the learner-tutor relationship.
We will use follow a structured and documented approach when reviewing the appropriateness of training premises and the equipment and facilities required.

5.2   Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that the learning experience is monitored on an ongoing basis and that any required improvements are made in relation to programme content, assessment, delivery methodology, learner-tutor engagement, learning environments and complaints and appeals.

5.2.1   Teaching and Learning

Aspire Training monitors training delivery to ensure that standards are maintained at a consistently high level, and that programmes remain relevant to their intended audience.
Data from feedback forms is collated by the Internal Verifier and considered by the Senior Management Team on a per programme basis. The Internal Verifiers report is also provided to the External Authenticator and their report in turn also reviewed and actioned by the Senior Management Team.
We ensure that our programmes remain relevant by:

- Reviewing learner feedback
- Discussing trends with tutors
- Monitoring enrolment levels
- Liaising with employers
- Reviewing sectoral publications

5.2.2   Fostering an ethos that promotes learning

It is important that all of our staff engage fully with our quality assurance system. The performance of all staff members in their respective management, administration and delivery roles, reflects on our organisation as a whole. We ensure that our staff are informed about our quality assurance system from the moment they join. We employ them based on a common understanding of their role which is discussed at interview, we provide induction training when they commence employment with us, and we supply them with a staff induction pack to ensure that they know how to access relevant information.
The learner is central to our success, and we encourage our staff to adopt practices that will reflect their commitment to good pedagogical standards, which will provide confidence to the learner that the

information they are receiving is current and appropriate, and that respect and accommodate diverse learning styles.

To these ends we provide ongoing feedback and supports to our staff, we monitor learner sentiment, and have documented procedures dealing with complaints and appeals should the learner perceive that we are not meeting their expectations.

Our Complaints and Appeals procedures are published on our website and in our Learner Handbook.

5.2.3   Engaging with National and International effective practice

Aspire Training staff participate in information events organised by QQI, ECI (Early Childhood Ireland), the Local Enterprise Office, and Aontas *inter alia.*

- Aspire Training has attended QQI briefings in relation to provider quality assurance (including reengagement and the launch of the QQI statement of strategy), programme validation and blended learning.
- Aspire Training is affiliated to Early Childhood Ireland (ECI is an early childhood advocacy group with over 3,800 members whose work includes quality enhancement, communications and publications, advocacy, training, support & information for a sector that employs over 25,000 people). The ECI communicate regularly with members and provide a weekly e-zine (Early Times Weekly) which is circulated to all relevant permanent and contract staff at Aspire Training.
- Our Local Enterprise Office in Westmeath run information events for local businesses, and while these businesses may be disparate in nature, the purpose of the networking events is to enable attendees to share best practice in their managing their respective enterprises.

- Caroline McEntee is a former member of Aontas (advocacy for quality adult education in Ireland) and the CEN (Community Education Network). In this role Caroline has travelled to Lisbon to learn about other adult education projects through visits, job shadowing, and participating in training courses. Caroline participated in a specific training course concerning the value of non-formal learning.

We gain a perspective on national training provision and comparable providers in our sector through our contract tutors who also work with other training providers. Similarly, we can benchmark our provision through our external authenticators and evaluators, and QQI infographics.

In general, we do not compare our programme provision with international providers because providers in other jurisdictions will be using accreditation bodies other than QQI and there is limited value in such comparisons for us. In addition, our learners are predominantly Irish and would not be seeking comparative information.

However, pedagogy and the role of the training provider are universal, and we are vigilant in our observation of new delivery and assessment methods, new collaborative technology, virtual learning systems, and business support systems for data capture and reporting. To this end we regularly engage with enabling technologies from international companies who have products/services pertinent to our business (e.g. Google, Microsoft, Urkund (anti-plagiarism software), Zoom, Moodle et. al.)

5.2.4   Learning environments

Aspire Training provide both in-house and onsite training. There is a checklist of equipment and consumables for each programme that we run. The Training & Administration Team is responsible for ensuring that all items on the checklist are in place prior to the commencement of the programme.

Where onsite training is involved, the Centre Manager or the Assistant Manager will discuss the facilities checklist with the employer during delivery planning.

Aspire Training monitors the suitability of facilities through inspections by members of the Training & Administration Team and by reviewing feedback forms completed by learners and tutors.

The tutors are advised in the terms of reference that they are required to advise the management/administration team, at the earliest opportunity, of any deficiencies that they or the learners have observed/reported.

5.3   Monitoring

#	Monitoring activity	Timing	Owner
1.	Revisit QA reports that have been developed over time to establish that the mechanisms for service/programme improvement are being observed.	Annually	Managing Director
2.	Review any Complaints or Appeals received over time, to identify any systemic or recurring issues.	Annually	Academic Committee
3.	Review engagement with national and international stakeholders in the provision of adult education in general and healthcare and childcare specifically.	Annually	Managing Director
4.	Review accumulated feedback on training environments.	Annually	Academic Committee

6 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

6.1 Policy

Aspire Training's Assessment of Learners policy is to develop, validate, conduct and monitor assessments which will meet the occupational training needs of our learners.

We will protect the integrity of the assessment process as a means of fairly, consistently, and accurately measuring learner achievement of our standards-based programmes.

Aspire Training will ensure that learners and tutors are aware of their respective responsibilities in relation to demonstration of achievement of learning outcomes.

Aspire Training will provide formative assessment and feedback to learners during the programme to enhance the learner's opportunity for successful completion of the programme.

Aspire Training will provide an invigilated assessment environment for classroom-based assessments, ensuring that all required assessment equipment and consumables are in place in a timely manner. Submitted assignments will be monitored for authenticity of work.

We will ensure that all assessment inputs and outputs are securely stored, and assessment information is properly captured for subsequent analysis and reporting purposes.

Assessment results and feedback forms will be analysed to identify any potential improvements.

6.2 Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that learner assessment materials are securely stored, and that assessment itself is fair and consistent and is conducted professionally by qualified staff in a manner that protects the integrity of the assessment process.

6.2.1 Assessment Process

1. Assessment
- Aspire Training develops and implements assessment policies, processes and procedures
- The Academic Committee devises assessment instruments, marking schemes and assessment criteria
- The tutors assess learner evidence
- The Internal Verifier records outcomes

2. Authentication
- The Internal Verifier verifies that all assessment procedures have been applied and monitors the outcome of the assessment process.
- The Assistant Manager assigns an External Authenticator based on broad award/field of learning expertise
- The External Authenticator moderate's assessment results by sampling learner evidence according to the Aspire Training sampling strategy (Appendix 1)

3. Results Approval
- The Panel approves and sign-off assessment results
- The Assistant Manager makes results available to learners

4. Request for Certification
   - The Assistant Manager submits learner results to QQI via the QBS/the awarding body

5. Appeals Process
   - Aspire Training allow 10 days for learners to lodge an appeal of the assessment process or result
   - The Academic Committee processes appeals

6.2.2   Extension Requests

All assessment extensions must be applied via Aspire Training's Extension Request Form, which is available to the learner at induction via the Learner Handbook.

Learners are issued with assessment submission deadlines by their tutors. Extension requests must be made before this deadline has passed.

Extensions will be reviewed by members of the Academic Committee, and a learner will be informed of the outcome within two working days of submitting an extension request.

Where a learner does not submit their assessments by the extended deadline, the Academic Committee may decide that the learner will be required to repeat the module.

Extensions will only be granted in extenuating circumstances.

Extenuating Circumstances

Extenuating circumstances are serious unforeseen circumstances beyond a learners control which prevented the learner from meeting the requirements of a programme which might include:

• Missing an examination or test

• Failing to submit all or any part of any continuous assessments by the due date

Extenuating circumstances may include:

• Involvement in an accident

• Victim of crime

• An acute illness or serious on-going medical condition

• Ongoing life-threatening illness of a close family member or partner

• Bereavement of a close family member or partner
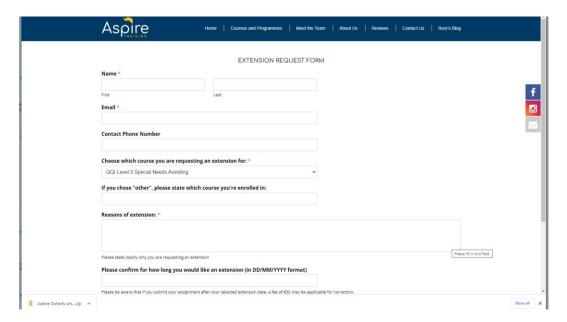
• Acute or on-going serious personal/emotional circumstances

• Domestic upheaval at the time of the assessment (e.g. fire, burglary, eviction)

The following are examples of what may not normally be considered grounds for extenuating circumstances and any applications citing any of the following are unlikely to be considered :

- Typical symptoms associated with exam stress (e.g. anxiety, sleeping disturbances etc)

- Minor illnesses such as a common cold

- Relationship difficulties

- Financial difficulties

- Holidays during the Course duration

- Accommodation issues

- Misreading the examination timetable

- Paid employment or voluntary work

- IT and/or computer failure

- English is not your first language

- Multiple assessments in a short time

- Failure to plan study schedule

- Sporting commitments

- Debs/weddings/social events

- Election/campaigning commitments

Extension Request Form

The Extension Request Form is available on the Aspire Training Website here:
https://www.aspiretraining.ie/extension-request-form/

6.2.3   Assessment Appeals

Learners are entitled to appeal the outcome of any assessment process or assessment result. It is QQI's directive that appeals should be considered by the provider in two contexts.

Firstly, by the provider (Local Appeals Process) and secondly, to QQI (National Appeals Process). Where a Learner feels disadvantaged by the local Appeals Process, they may appeal the provider's process directly with QQI but not the outcome of the assessment decision itself.

These procedures are subject to internal review and modification by the Academic Committee. Learners who wish to appeal a provisional or final assessment score/process may do so in accordance with each of the following Phases and their associated Stages.

Stage 1: A review of the provisional module score by the module tutor

If any learner wishes to proceed with Stage 1, which involves a recheck of all assessment evidence (provisional results only) by the relevant module tutor, they can do so by submitting their request in via the Aspire Training website Appeals Application Form, no later than 10 days after the original provisional score has been communicated to them.

After this 10-day period has lapsed – Stage 1 of the appeals request can no longer be considered. The written request must clearly outline the reasons for the appeal with reference to where any learner feels that marks have been lost or where it is felt that a submission of work has been marked unfairly.

Please note that any 'recheck requests' will not be considered unless the reason for the recheck is clearly justified. All applications will be reviewed firstly by the Assistant Manager and where necessary by the Academic Committee. Learners will be notified of the outcome of their request in writing by the Aspire Training within four weeks.

Stage 2: A review of the assessment evidence during the external authentication process

Pending the outcome of Stage 1, all assessment evidence may also undergo a recheck of the learner evidence, assessment scores and associated marking documentation by the appointed External Authenticator (EA) during the external review process.

During this process, the learner's assessment evidence will be reviewed outside of the Aspire Training sampling method (Appendix 1) for the review of learner scripts. Feedback will be sought from the nominated EA as to determine an independent evaluation regarding the assessment outcome in line with the evidence presented. The Assistant Manager will communicate final scores and feedback pending the outcome of Stage 2 to the learner. It is important to recognise that assessment scores may increase or decrease during this process which will be considered for review by the Results Approval Panel prior to submitting final results to QQI.

If any learner wishes to proceed with Stage 2 which involves a recheck of all assessment evidence (provisional results only) by the externally appointed subject matter expert, they can do so by submitting

their request via the Aspire Training Website, no later than 10 days after the outcome of Stage 1 has been communicated to them. After this 10-day period has lapsed, Stage 2 of the appeals request can no longer be considered.

The written request must clearly outline the reasons for the request with reference to where any learner feels that marks have been lost or where it is felt that a submission of work has been marked unfairly. Please note that any 'recheck requests' will not be considered unless the reason for the recheck is clearly justified. All applications will be reviewed firstly by the Assistant Manager and where necessary by the Academic Committee. Learners will be notified of the outcome of their request in writing by the college within 4 weeks.

Stage 3

From here, and if it is deemed necessary, learners will be invited to proceed with Stage 3 of the process which involves a re-check of all learner evidence, marking documentation and additional feedback emerging from Stages 1 and 2 of the appeals process by an additional independently appointed subject matter expert.

The Assistant Manger will inform learners (by email) of this process. Each learner will have 10 days to submit their request for an appeal under the terms of Stage 3 and any requests received outside of this time will not be considered. Additional fees are applicable for this stage of the appeals process and as with all previous stages; all requests must be submitted in writing via the Aspire Training online appeals form clearly outlining the reasons leading to this Stage 3.

The independently appointed subject matter expert will compile a report of their findings and the outcome will be communicated in writing to the learner within 4 weeks.

During all Stages (1-3) it is essential that learners present a clear argument justifying the reason(s) surrounding the nature of their request, otherwise applications cannot be considered.

Phase 2 – QQI Appeals Procedures (National Appeals Process):

The QQI Appeals Procedure is a formal process that involves two stages. Following the submission of the Learner's Appeals Submission Form including a €10.00 QQI Appeals Fee the appeal will be made to QQI by Aspire Training on behalf of the Learner.

Appeals may be made to QQI within 6 months from receipt of notification to provider and within 1 year of receipt of certification.
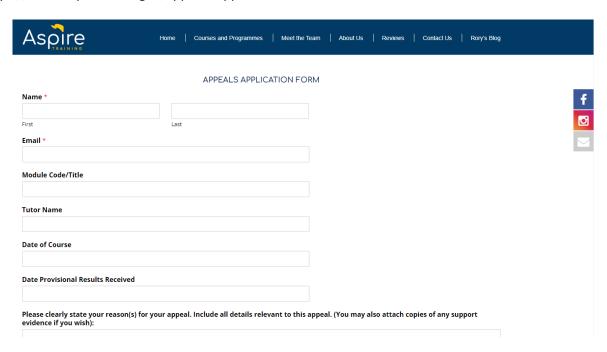
Stage 1: Internal QQI Review – At this stage QQI may require further evidence from a Learner in relation to the appeal.

Stage 2: Appeals Review Panel – Appointed to determine that the Learner has been treated fairly and that due process has been followed by the provider. The Panel may request to meet the Learner, who may be accompanied if required.

The outcome of the National Appeals Process will not alter a Learners grade however recommendations may be made to the provider for amendments to assessment processes.

Assessment Appeals Application Form

The Aspire Training Appeals Application Form can be accessed on the website here: https://www.aspiretraining.ie/appeals-application-form/

6.2.4   Assessment Security

Aspire Training maintains three main categories of assessment documentation. These include assessment materials, learner work, and learner data.

Assessment Materials
We maintain a repository of assessment materials including
- Programme validation application
- Award specifications
- Independent Validation Reports
- Exams (e.g. written examination papers, multiple-choice questions)
- Assignment briefs
- Marking schemes and marking criteria

Learner Work
- Learner exam scripts
- Completed assignments
- Project work
- Recordings
- Declarations of Authentic Work

Learner Data
- learner's name
- contact details
- title of the QQI award / programme
- any specific learner requirements
- name of the tutor/assessor
- dates and details of learner feedback
- dates and results of assessment activities i.e. recorded grade
- date award received
- outcome of Results Approval Process
- Records of any complaints or appeals

All assessment related materials such as assessment materials are stored on a server and on a cloud service (Google Sheets) which is password controlled and accessible only to the Centre Manager and the Training & Administration Team.

Backup and recovery systems are in place to ensure data integrity. We have an in-house IT Specialist and we also use the services of an external IT company ITHOS to assist with the implementation and maintenance of our IT Systems.

Aspire Training has some physical storage which includes locked filing cabinets in a locked storage room to which only the Training & Administration Team has access. The majority of our documentation is stored online, but we do maintain some hardcopy items such as staff records, some financial records, signed attendance records, signed declarations of authenticity of work, results sheets *et. al.*

Our data retention policy states that all assessment related materials and records will be maintained at least until any appeal deadline has passed, results have been submitted to QQI and certificates have been issued.

We only store the information that is essential for the proper operation of our business and we ensure that the collection, storage, and management of that data is GDPR compliant.

6.2.5   Assessment Integrity

The maintenance of academic standards is essential for Aspire Training and for nationally accredited training.
We have several processes and safeguards in place to protect academic integrity and these take into consideration the QQI guidance provided in the Assessment and Standards Guidelines (revised 2013). Our measures include:

1. Our subject matter experts develop assessments which are consistent with award specifications, and these are peer reviewed, internally approved by the Senior Management Team, and subsequently validated through the QQI Independent Validation process. This process provides us with a high degree of confidence in the credibility/validity of our assessments.
2. We recruit delivery staff with experience of developing, administering and marking assessments. This forms part of our Staff Recruitment, Management and Development procedure.
3. We have supervision processes in place to ensure the proper conduct of assessments by tutors.
4. We advise tutors through our induction processes and our handbooks, that they are required to be vigilant in the detection and reporting of potential breaches of proper assessment conduct.
5. We advise learners through the induction process and the Learner Handbook of their responsibilities towards assessment and what constitutes academic misconduct such as plagiarism, personation, concealed notes, use of mobile phones *et. al.*, and the censure to be applied where any of these forms of cheating are detected.
6. We require Declarations of Authentic Work to be signed where assessments are completed outside of an invigilated environment.
7. We use the ETBI/FESS "Quality Assuring Learner Assessment" guidelines to inform our corrective action procedures which may involve verbal warnings, or negation of results for specific assignments or whole modules. In cases of severe, or repeat misconduct, the learner may be removed from the programme.
8. The work of the Internal Verifier and External Authenticator act as a further check on the integrity of the assessment process to ensure that assessments are reflective of the conditions of validation, consistent with national standards, that marking schemes and marking criteria are properly applied, and that any evidence of suspected misconduct is advised to Aspire management.
9. The Results Approval Process provides a final opportunity for review of assessment data prior to submission to QQI for certification.
10. We monitor assessment results, learner feedback and tutor feedback to constantly keep our assessment instruments and processes as well as our learner supports, under review.

6.2.6   Formative and summative assessments and assessment approval

Formative Assessments
Our tutors conduct in-class assessments in the form of quizzes and sample questions/assignments to enable learners to self-assess their progress relative to the other participants in the class. This also provides the opportunity for the tutor to detect any situation where they may need to provide one-to-one assistance to a given learner, or to revisit a particular topic for the class as a whole.

Summative Assessments
Summative assessments are assessments whose marks count towards the learner's final grade. Elements of summative assessments may take place during programme delivery (continuous assessment), and/or may take place at the end of the programme.

Learners may query the results of summative assessments to better understand their strengths and potential areas for improvement, and this may inform any resits that may happen as a consequence of a failed assessment.

Our tutors are always available to discuss formative and summative assessment outcomes with learners on a person-to-person basis.

Assessment Instrument Approval

Assessment instruments are normally created during the programme development lifecycle and validated with QQI.

If there is a need to change an assessment instrument, this is achieved in the context of compliance with the award specification.

The tutor is the most likely person to propose any such changes to existing instruments and where this happens, the proposed new assessments will be considered by the Senior Management Team as part of the programme review process.

6.2.7   Assessment of Workplace Learning

Learners are required to complete a work placement as part of their QQI Level 5 and 6 Childcare and Healthcare programmes.

Workplace selection

It is the responsibility of each learner to source their own work placement, in a recognised facility associated with the programme that they are undertaking. Work placement must be completed in the Republic of Ireland. A list of appropriate work placement places are provided to learners upon registration. Learners are also advised that they can contact the Training and Administration Team with any work placement related queries.

Aspire Training provides learners with a free Garda Vetting Service, if required.

Learner information

Learners are issued with a Work Placement Pack for each programme/module. This pack contains the following

1. Centre and Tutor contact details.
2. A letter outlining the purpose of the work placement, including the learners and the work place supervisors role (this will differ from programme to programme).
3. A workplace supervisor's contact details and work placement confirmation form.
4. A timesheet, to be signed by both the supervisor and learner
5. And for certain modules, a supervisor feedback form

Monitoring

Learners involved in workplace learning and assessment do so under the supervision of a workplace supervisor. The supervisor is provided with a supervision pack which includes information about the work placement, evaluations and guidelines on assessment (where appropriate), contact exchange information etc.

Feedback forms completed by the learner and by the supervisor are used to monitor the learner experience.

Supervision of assessment

If there is any element of assessment to be conducted during work placement, the supervisor will be provided with further information, including a guide on marking the particular assessment. In this case we ask that the supervisor be qualified to a level which is two levels above that which the learner is studying. If this is not possible, Aspire Training may arrange an alternate assessment, in the form of a simulation, or may visit the learner on site to conduct the assessment.

Once the learner has secured work placement, a member of the training and administration team will contact the listed workplace supervisor to open communication and discuss any questions they may have.

Duration of Work Placement.

For those learners undertaking a full major award, a minimum 150 hours of work placement are required. Learners who are undertaking component/minor awards are required to complete a minimum of 20 hours of work placement per module.

6.3   Monitoring

#	Monitoring activity	Timing	Owner
1.	Review storage systems for hardcopy and softcopy data in terms of secure access, protection from intentional or accidental damage, and backup and recovery	Annually	Academic Committee
2.	Review GDPR compliance for all learner data held.	Annually	Senior Management Team
3.	Review any programme assessment changes that have the potential to impact the basis for validation	Annually	Academic Committee
4.	Review all programme assessment feedback to detect any trends or systemic issues that may be present	Annually	Academic Committee
5.	Review learner and tutor handbooks to ensure accurate and comprehensive information regarding assessment	Annually	Assistant Manager
6.	Review summative assessments to ensure that they are continuing to provide appropriate self-assessment by learners.	Annually	Academic Committee

7   SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

7.1   Policy

It is the policy of Aspire Training to provide comprehensive and integrated supports for learners throughout their engagement with us, ensuring that all required resources are in place, and that they are fully informed about the range of services available to them.

Aspire Training will regularly review facilities, equipment, and consumables to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose and consistent with requirements of the award standards.

Aspire Training is committed to equality of opportunity and will provide supports to learners with disabilities or special requirements, insofar as our capacity to do so permits.

Aspire Training will provide comprehensive administration, guidance, and technical support services to learners and will routinely solicit and act on learner feedback received in relation to these services.

Aspire Training will take all reasonable measures to support the general wellbeing of all learners on our programmes.

7.2   Procedures

This procedure ensures that learner supports are in in place, and that they are subject to ongoing monitoring and improvement where necessary.

7.2.1   Learner Supports

The Academic Committee is responsible for coordination of learner supports and for monitoring their effectiveness. These supports include:

- o   Our website, which is the primary source of programme information
- o   Support during registration or delivery to identify and address diverse needs that a learner may have such as the need for wheelchair access, a scribe, additional assessment time, a reader, assistive technologies, audio visual recording of assessments *et.al.*
- o   Administrative support throughout their time with us to answer any queries they may have about the programme, ATP, Data Protection, Freedom of Information, Reasonable Accommodations, Compassionate Considerations, Complaints and Appeals
- o   Access to the tutors for one-to-one instruction where needed
- o   All Aspire training facilities are controlled by Facilities Checklists which ensure that the facility is fit-for-purpose, and that required equipment is present and functioning correctly, that health and safety measure are in place, and that instructional materials reflect good (re)production standards.
- o   E-mail access to tutors during and after the programme.
- o   A Learner Handbook that provides information about Aspire Training, our programmes, our quality assurance, and contact information for all queries they may have.

7.2.2   Providing pastoral care

Our approach to pastoral care is to value and develop each learner with the context of the programme in which they are participating.

We are conscious that the core of our training service is training delivery and assessment, however we are sensitive to the broader context of our learners.

There are many factors which have the potential to impact successful learner participation in our programmes. Any learner may have recently experienced a traumatic or tragic event, may have a specific learning difficulty, may exhibit specific behavioural responses in group learning situations, may be in poor health, or be experiencing difficulties with relationships or have financial concerns.

Our programmes are short duration, so our opportunity for providing pastoral care is somewhat limited, but we will provide an empathetic listening ear and we will endeavour to provide whatever supports we can, such as offering some flexibility in attendance hours, providing one-to-one training within or outside class time, offer extensions to assessment submission deadlines, offer opportunities for assessment resits, defer training to another time *et. al.*

The tutor is normally the first point of contact should a learner be in need of pastoral care, but the Training & Administration Team and Senior Management Team are also on hand to help.

Learners are advised through the handbook to make our staff aware should any of these circumstances arise.

7.2.3   Learner representation

The learner voice is captured formally through our feedback forms which ask questions about the facility, the courseware, the tutor, the administration and the availability and adequacy of learner supports. The learner view is also captured informally through discussions with the Tutors, the Training & Administration Team, and the Managing Director.

If a learner wishes to make a grade appeal, then they can use the documented Complaints & Appeals processes that are in place for this purpose.

Given the short duration of our programmes, it is not practical to have learners participate in formal governance structures within our organisation, however our Independent Academic and Governance Advisor is responsible, through their Terms of Reference, with being an advocate on behalf of the learner, to uphold the learner's best interests, and ensure that learner feedback is acted on where appropriate.

7.2.4   Learner guidance

Our website and our learner induction materials are the primary sources for learner guidance and any aspect of these can be discussed with our staff. However, there may be specific guidance required in relation to progression. Given the nature of our training and the fact that many of our programmes lead to awards that are components of more than one major award, there may be opportunities for progression internally or with other providers. The possibilities are numerous and complex, but our staff are trained to advise learners about further training within our organisation or with other providers.

7.2.5   Protection for Enrolled Learners

Protection for Enrolled learners (PEL) is a protection mechanism for learners should a training provider cease trading. It is a requirement for all programmes leading to QQI awards which are delivered over a period exceeding three months duration.

The principle is that learner fees are not lost if the provider ceases trading.

The two possible implementations of Protection for Enrolled Learners are alternate provision, where learners will be transferred to an alternate provider to complete their training, or an insurance policy which will reimburse the learner the most recent monies paid to the provider.

Aspire Training has insurance arrangements in place to cover this contingency and learners receive information on PEL arrangements as part of their course induction, via the Learner Handbook.

7.2.6   Reasonable Accommodation

It is the responsibility of the learner to inform Aspire Training in sufficient time in order for a Reasonable Accommodation request to be processed, reviewed and for any necessary steps to be put in place. The process for assessing and implementing Reasonable Accommodations for assessment of learners with special requirements requires the learner to:

 • Inform Aspire Training of any special requirement as soon as enrolment has taken place.

• Notify their tutor or administration staff of their need for special requirement(s).

• Complete a special requirements form and return this to Aspire Training with a letter from their doctor or medical professional to confirm their needs in relation to special accommodation(s).

Learners are informed of this within the Learner Handbook issued by Aspire Training at the start of a programme. The completed form and the medical evidence will be reviewed by the Academic Committee and the learner will be notified of the outcome.
Examples of potential reasonable accommodations include:

• extended assessment time
   o The amount of additional time will be agreed in advance with all relevant stakeholders (i.e., learner, tutor and the Academic Committee)

• a scribe
   o The Assistant Manager will organise a scribe to assist the learner
   o Assessment will take place in an environment which respects the needs of all learners (this may involve a separate assessment room)

• audio visual recording
   o The Assistant Manager will arrange for all the required equipment to be in place in time for the assessment
   o A test session may be arranged with the learner to ensure that all equipment is function correctly.
   o The tutor/assessor will conduct the assessment ensuring proper invigilation for all participants.

 • computer with assistive technologies (e.g., large text, spoken text)
   o The Assistant Manager will ensure that the required assistive technology is in place and functioning correctly prior to the assessment.
   o A test run may be conducted with the learner.
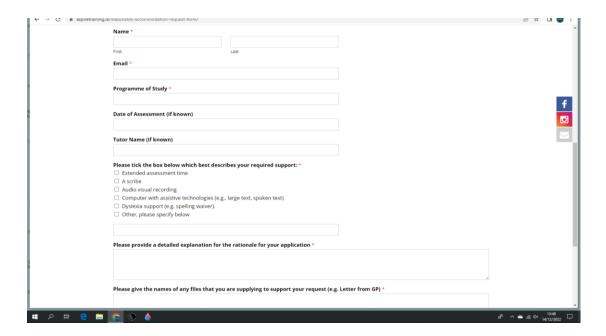
• dyslexia support (e.g., spelling waiver).
   o The learner, the tutor/assessor, and the External Authenticator will be advised that a spelling waiver is in place and no marks will be deducted for any spelling error.

Reasonable Accommodation Application Form

Learners can make requests for reasonable accommodations via the application for on the Aspire Training website here: https://www.aspiretraining.ie/reasonable-accommodation-request-form/
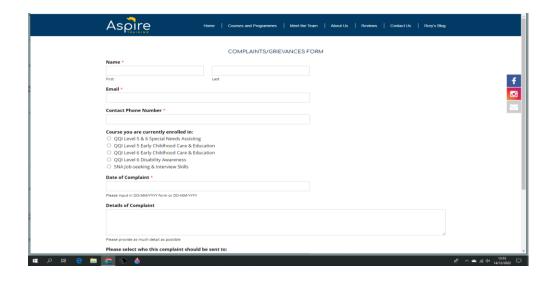
7.2.7   Complaints

Aspire Training is committed to ensuring that any complaints or grievances will be treated fairly, impartially, effectively and in a timely manner. All complaints must be received via the complaints form on our website, located in the 'Contact Us' section, and be directed towards the Manager, or the Assistant Manager.

On receipt of a complaint, the Manager or Assistant Manager will contact the complainant and acknowledge receipt of the complaint. The complainant will be informed that an investigation into the nature of the complaint will be carried out, and that the complainant will be informed of the outcome of the investigation within 14 days. The complainant will be contacted on completion of the investigation and informed of the results, and any corrective action that may be taken.

The Aspire Training Complaints Form can be accessed here: https://www.aspiretraining.ie/complaints-grievances-form/

7.3   Monitoring

#	Monitoring activity	Timing	Owner
1.	Review our website for completeness and accuracy of learner support information.	Annually	Marketing Coordinator & Administration Assistant
2.	Review learner induction materials for accuracy and completeness of support information	Annually	Assistant Manager
3.	Review the efficacy of the facilities checklist.	Annually	Assistant Manager
4.	Review training for Tutors and Administration staff to ensure they are sufficiently knowledgeable regarding our supports to appropriately advise our learners	Annually	Managing Director
5.	Ensure that the Independent Governance and Academic Advisor is advised of their role as learner advocate and that they are empowered to exercise that responsibility.	On appointment and annually thereafter	Managing Director

8 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

8.1 Policy

Aspire Training will fully comply with the Data Protection and data management principles set out in the relevant legislation. This policy applies to all personal data collected, processed and stored by us pertaining to our staff, learners and clients in the provision of our service.

We will record statistical information such as grades achieved, learner satisfaction, learner progression, attrition/non-completion rates, certification rates *et. al.*, with a view to benchmarking and reviewing against our key performance indicators (KPI's) and comparable providers.

We recognise the importance of collecting, processing and having timely information about our operations to help inform our decision-making and to allow us to review and improve the service that we provide. Aspire Training information systems will be securely maintained and protected from accidental or malicious loss or damage and will be suitable for current use and historical review (subject to applicable data retention periods).

8.2 Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to implement and maintain a secure and robust management information system to gather, store, analyse and report on programme and learner data for the purposes of data provision and process improvement.

8.2.1 Information Systems: Learner and Management information systems.

Aspire Training has implemented a learner records management system to capture all relevant learner data and provide reports and statistics. Data captured includes: personal contact information, enrolment statistics, completion rates, grades, learner satisfaction statistics *et. al.*).

The data is used for reports to internal and external stakeholders (management, awarding bodies, external QA personnel, and regulatory bodies *et. al.*), and for measurement against our organisational KPI's.

The Training & Administration Team collate and record learner data using inputs from the recruitment cycle, from tutor records, and from QA reports.

8.2.2 Information for further planning.

Management information is reviewed by the Senior Management Team at their programme review meetings. This is a mix of financial, quality assurance, operational (logistical), and risk management information. Outcomes from these reviews inform the development of future business plans

8.2.3 Completion rates.

Aspire Training records learner data that allows us to analyse current activity and trends. We report on total learners, number of learners by programme, total completions, number of completions by programme, grade statistics, reasons for non-completions et al. We use spreadsheets to capture, sort, filter and graph data points for inclusion in reports considered by the Senior Management Team.

Non-completions can arise for a variety of different reasons, such as the personal circumstances of the learner, work pressures, change of job, change of habitation location *et. al.*

Our concern is not to address all possible reasons for non-completion, but to address any non-completion which might result from a deficiency in our service, such as any issue relating to our facilities, our content, our delivery methodology, our supports, or our staff.

We will consult with the tutor and we will endeavour to contact the learner to try to establish the reason why they dropped out and if there was some way in which that could have been avoided.

8.2.4   Records Maintenance

Our records maintenance processes have been informed by the QQI "Quality Assuring Assessment - Guidelines for Providers 2013."

Sections 3.2.5. - 3.2.6 of these guidelines address security of assessment related processes and material, and the availability of learner records.

All learner records at Aspire Training are stored on a cloud-based file server which is password controlled and accessible only to the Aspire Training & Administration Team. Backup and recovery system are in place to ensure data integrity.

8.2.5   GDPR and Data Retention

GDPR requires that consumer data be kept private in terms of how it is disposed of, produced and managed.

GDPR guidance is that "personal data may only be kept in a form that permits identification of the individual for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which it was processed".

All assessment materials at Aspire Training are retained until at least the appeals period has expired.

We respect both staff and learner privacy and their rights to control their personal data. We will be clear about what data we collect and why we collect it. This explains the personal information we collect, why we collect it, how we will use it and how we protect it.

We collect personal data to provide advice, training and certification on Further Education and Training Services.

Aspire Training is a Controller of the personal data that learners (the data subject) provide us. We can collect the following types of personal data from learners:

Personal Data:

- First Name
- Learner Last Name
- Date of Birth
- PPSN
- Phone Number
- Address
- All previous addresses
- Email Address
- Proof of Identity
- Proof of Address
- Medical Card ID (if applicable)
- Job Title
- Professional Experience

- Educational Qualifications
- Person's Interests (Course)
- Qualifications
- Video recordings where applicable as evidence of skills

Sensitive Personal Data, with your consent, regarding Training Needs Analysis or Reasonable Accommodation Requests

- Psychological assessments
- Special Education Needs' files
- Garda vetting details

Payment details:

- Credit / Debit Card details
- Bank details in the case of Direct Debits / Refunds

Protection of personal data remains a priority. We will only share personal information where the law allows, and we always aim to share the minimum data necessary to achieve the purpose required.

1. Why We Collect Personal Data

We use the personal data learners share with us to process your interest requests and to provide you with training advice and for business administration, educational services through teaching, research and associated academic and administrative activities, for example, recruitment of learners, provision of programmes of study, examinations, engaging with accrediting bodies and Government agencies such as Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and the Department of Education & Skills.

We rely on the following legal bases to process personal data:

- Contract – When learners engage and voluntarily provide personal data to enquire about or purchase our products or services.
- Legitimate Interest – To respond to queries and the general administration of our business
- Consent – To process special category data.
- Legal Obligation

2. Sharing & Disclosure

We strive to keep personal data safe and only share it when necessary. We recognise that learners have a right to know that the information they share with Aspire Training is maintained confidentially.

We do not rent or sell personal data to anyone.

However in certain limited circumstances, obtaining consent may be impractical, not possible, or undesirable. Examples could include:

- Where the disclosure is required by law.

- Where the disclosure is required to prevent, detect, or investigate offences.
- Where the disclosure is required urgently to prevent injury, or other damage to the health of a person, or otherwise to protect the vital interests of the learner.

3.   What We Do With Personal Data

We process your personal data onsite in Aspire Training.

We have agreements in place with various providers to protect personal data. We use e-mail services to conduct evaluations, circulate our upcoming courses and to follow up on enquiries learners have made. We use a cloud based service to host online classes.

Your data is also processed through QQI – Quality Qualifications Ireland to submit your results for certification.

We have agreements in place with multiple providers to protect personal data.

4.   How Long We Keep Personal Data

Aspire Training needs to maintain some records relating to learners after they complete in order to provide services to them as a previous learner of Aspire Training and for the reasons set out below:

- Verifying your award
- Providing transcripts of your marks
- Opportunities for further study
- Academic references
- Careers support
- Revenue Commissioners
- QQI
- Where we are under a duty to disclose personal information in order to comply with any legal obligation (for example to government bodies and law enforcement agencies).
- Personal information may also be processed if it is necessary in the defence of a legal claim. We will not delete personal information if relevant to an investigation or a dispute. It will continue to be stored until those issues are fully resolved.

5.   Keeping Personal Data Secure

We use appropriate technical, organisational, and administrative security measures to protect all personal data we hold in our records and keep it secure.

We are committed to ensuring that your personal data is secure with us and with the data processors who act on our behalf. We are continuously taking technical and organisational steps to better protect your information. Data Protection training is mandatory for all staff.

We take appropriate measures under the laws that apply, to ensure your data is safe.
- IT
  - o   Emails & other Electronic Data is stored in secure cloud system

- o   AntiVirus Software is used on all IT Systems
- o   Encryption is enabled on all systems holding Personal Data
- o   A Firewall assists against Network Intrusion
- o   WiFi is secure

- Document Storage
  - o   Documents are stored in a locked Office in Individual covered Files
  - o   Data is managed safely and not left in areas where non relevant employees can access
  - o   Any data which might be viewed as in any way sensitive is stored in locked cabinets in the office

- Data Disposal
  - o   Although Aspire Training does not hold sensitive data, we engage with a GDPR Compliant Professional Shredding Company and safety/securely dispose of the Personal Data we hold to ensure compliance – see section on Data disposal

- Calls relating to Personal Data
  - o   If a learner contacts us about their information, we may need to ask them to identify themselves and furnish proof of identity – this is to help protect your information.

6.   How Long We Keep Personal Data

We have policy based and regulatory obligations that mean we must keep learner data while they are an active learner and for certain periods of time after they complete a programme. Those periods depend on the nature of the work we have done for you.

- General Data Retention Policy (Clients)
  - o   We retain general training data for a period of 5 years

- General Data Retention Policy (Contractors/Trainers/Vendors)
  - o   We retain personal data of the above for the duration of working relationship (+12 months)

- Accreditation Requirements
  - o   QQI – 6 Years

- Legal Obligations
  - o   Revenue – 6 Years

7.   End of Life Policy

Once the period of stated storage is complete, or based on a Request to delete personal data (presuming we have no legal or statutory obligation to retain it) – it is our policy to have personal data securely disposed of – through annually scheduled contracts with our professional shredding company.
This service will dispose of personal data such as has been collected on Attendance Logs, Forms, Feedback, Examinations and more.

Data will be securely deleted from the following media:
• Paper Based Files
• CRM & Database Systems
• Electronic Storage – including Hard Disks, External Hard Drives, Memory Sticks & Email
• Back-up Data will be deleted also in relation to these files

8.   Learner Rights

Learner rights relating to personal data include:

- to be informed (via the Learner Handbook and other communications) – please contact the Training and Administration Team with any questions or concerns regarding data protection
- to request access to Personal Data held by Aspire Training, and to have any incorrect Personal Data rectified
- where appropriate, to the restriction of processing concerning the learner or to object to processing
- to have Personal Data erased, where appropriate
- to data portability regarding certain automated Personal Data
- to restrict the use of the data we hold and the right to object to Aspire Training using their data

9.   Learner Responsibilities

Updating their details: The GDPR requires that personal data is accurate. Aspire Training is to be informed if personal data changes, such as a change of address or telephone number. If we do not have the correct contact details we may be unable to provide learners with important information they require, for example, an exam date or deadline and this could result in serious consequences, or a certificate could be posted to the wrong address.

8.3   Monitoring

#	Monitoring activity	Timing	Owner
1.	Review the effectiveness and security of current data recording systems	Annually	Academic Committee
2.	Conduct test recoveries of data to ensure that recovery systems are fit-for-purpose.	Annually	Assistant Manager
3.	Review who has access to what data and consider the justification for that access	Annually	Managing Director
4.	Review management reports to ensure that they properly support effective decision making at Aspire Training	Annually	Academic Committee
5.	Review data gathered in relation to any non-completions and verify that any corrective actions have been taken	Annually	Managing Director
6.	Review Aspire Training's ability to demonstrate compliance with GDPR requirements	Annually	Academic Committee
7.	Review Aspire Training's ability to address any requests that may be received under Freedom of Information legislation.	Annually	Academic Committee

9 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

9.1 Policy

Aspire Training's Public Information and Communication policy is to ensure that all information that we communicate to the public, is controlled and managed, and is presented in a clear and accessible way. Public information will include details of our organisation, our programmes, our services and our quality assurance.

We will ensure that our programme information is accurate and comprehensive and includes details of the award that the programme leads to (if accredited), the name of the awarding body, the level on the NFQ and information relating to access, transfer and progression, complaints and appeals procedures, and available supports.

Key findings from external evaluations will be published on our company's website in a timely manner.

9.2 Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to comply with the provisions of the [Qualifications And Quality Assurance (Education And Training) Act 2012](#) in relation to information provided to enrolled learners [Section 67], the preparation of quality assurance procedures and publication of self-evaluation reports [Section 28] and the publication [Section 30] of draft quality assurance procedures.

9.2.1 Providing public information

Aspire Training makes information available to the public through our website. The Managing Director is ultimately responsible for the accuracy, currency and completeness of all publicly accessible information. All modifications to information on the website are reviewed prior to publication by the Managing Director in consultation with the broader Senior Management Team, subject matter experts, and other centre staff, as appropriate.

The Training & Administration Team use web content tools (i.e. Wordpress) to make updates under instruction.

Updates to published information may be necessitated by the introduction of new programmes, modifications to existing programmes, new legislation, changes to programme schedules *et. al.*

Typical information published on the website includes

- A description of Aspire Training and contact information
- Aspire programmes including descriptors and schedules (https://www.aspiretraining.ie/courses-and-programmes/)

- Learner reviews (https://www.aspiretraining.ie/testimonials/)
- Blog (news items) (https://www.aspiretraining.ie/blog-sna/)
- FAQ's. (https://www.aspiretraining.ie/faqs-courses/)
- Our GDPR privacy statement (https://www.aspiretraining.ie/privacy-policy/)

9.2.2 Providing learner information

QQI guidelines required that specific programme information be provided to learners. This information includes whether or not the programme leads to an award, the name of the awarding body, the award title, the award level, the award type, Access Transfer and Progression arrangements, and Recognition of Prior Learning arrangements.

This information is also discussed with learners at induction and is documented in the Learner Handbook.

9.2.3   Publishing quality assurance evaluation reports

Aspire Training perform periodic self-evaluations, and key findings and associated improvement plans from these any other quality evaluations are published on our website.

9.3   Monitoring

#	Monitoring activity	Timing	Owner
1.	Review the Aspire Training website to ensure accuracy and completeness	Annually	Managing Director
2.	Ensure that programme information includes all of the information required under the QQI guidelines.	Annually	Managing Director
3.	Ensure that QA reports and improvement plans are published.	Annually	Managing Director

10   OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

10.1 Policy

Aspire Training's policy on Other Parties involved in Education and Training, is to ensure that we foster and maintain good relationships with other parties involved in education and training including, other providers, awarding bodies, subject matter experts, evaluators, and authenticators.
We will ensure that any collaborations or agreements that we may enter into with other providers to fully document the respective responsibilities of each party in a manner which protects the interests of the learners and the reputation of our respective organisations.
We commit to having procedures that include clear criteria for the recruitment of external independent experts. The selection process will be advised to the applicants and will include measures to avoid any potential conflict of interest that may arise during recruitment or may emerge over time.

10.2 Procedures

The purpose of this procedure is to define how we collaborate with reputable national and international awarding or accreditation bodies and organisations and external independent experts, while ensuring that all aspects such relationships are subject to internal and external quality assurance.

10.2.1 Peer relationships with the broader education and training community.

Aspire Training has relationships with QQI (accreditation body), other providers, and sectoral advocacy groups (e.g. Early Childhood Ireland).
Aspire Training has a long-standing relationship with QQI and we are grateful for the advice and guidance that they provide.
We are also in regular contact with other training providers in the healthcare and childcare sector, and we liaise with both Early Childhood Ireland and the County Childhood Committees.
Early Childhood Ireland is the leading advocate for children in Early Learning and Care, and School Age Childcare in Ireland. They engage in partnerships and collaborations with national and international organisations to enhance the competence of those working in the childcare sector through professional training, and research and development activities.

10.2.2 External partnerships.

Currently Aspire Training has no external partnerships but we may in the future, engage with other training providers either as first or second provider. As first provider Aspire Training will be the owner of the validated programme and will be fully responsible for the quality assurance of the programme. As second provider Aspire Training may deliver a programme validated by a partner provider.
Whether as first or second provider, Aspire Training will ensure that the respective responsibilities of each partner will be clearly defined in a signed Memorandum of Agreement. Compliance with the respective responsibilities of the parties to any such agreement will be constantly monitored by the Senior Management Team.

10.2.3 Expert panellists, authenticators and evaluators.

Aspire Training will require independent external expertise in areas such as governance, external authentication, external evaluation, legislative compliance, and quality assurance *et. al.*

Governance support

We recognise that the Senior Management Team of Aspire Training is small and the involvement of the Independent Academic and Governance Advisor in our Academic Committee provides an important support in representing the interests of the learner, in objectively monitoring our performance, and in ensuring the implementation of change.

The selection of this important member of our governance team is based on several important criteria such as their qualifications, employment history, their knowledge of quality assurance in the adult education sector, their professional integrity, and their capacity for independent thought.

Authenticators.

Authenticators play an important role in assuring the integrity of the certification process, by reviewing marked learner scripts and by ensuring that assessment processes have been correctly performed in accordance with the provisions of validation. They also have an important role in moderating learner results to reflect consistency with national norms.

QQI recommend that providers engage alternate authenticators every few years.

Historically external authenticators were drawn from a panel of authenticators maintained by QQI but this service is no longer provided by QQI.

Instead, a collaboration between FESS and the ETBI has seen the development of a Register of Authenticators being created. The information provided to prospective authenticators wishing to be included in the register represent a useful set of selection criteria for any provider seeking to engage an authenticator. These criteria include:

Experience

Minimum of 3 years working in the relevant field of learning

Qualifications

Relevant third level qualification or minimum Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Other Relevant Experience

Experience of delivering subject matter training/teaching and/or 5 years relevant experience in subject matter area in Industry.

Essential

- Knowledge of the specific field of learning/vocational area being applied for
- Knowledge and understanding of the Common Awards System
- Knowledge and experience of Awards, Assessment and Standards
- Ability to communicate with Tutors, Learners, Administrators and Senior Management
- Administrative and Report Writing Skills
- Excellent Information Technology Skills. (Familiarity with Microsoft Office 365 an advantage)

Desirable

- Experience of employment in the specific field of learning being applied for
- Knowledge of Quality Assurance Systems

To ensure the impartiality of results, External Authenticators will act in the role for no longer than three years

Aspire Training will use these criteria and the role responsibilities specified in the FESS/ETBI Authenticator Directory document to recruit suitable candidates.

Evaluators

Training providers offering programmes leading to QQI accredited programmes, are obliged to self-evaluate periodically, typically every five years.

This involves a full review of programmes and services over the five-year period. The completion of this self-evaluation is normally achieved with the assistance of an external evaluator who has the necessary pedagogical and quality assurance skills and experience to analyse our performance and draw meaningful conclusions which they include in their report.

Similar to the External Authenticator, they will be selected on the basis of a role profile and a track record in quality assurance metrics and strategies for service improvement.

10.3 Monitoring

#	Monitoring activity	Timing	Owner
1.	Review correspondence with peer organisations in the training community and assess opportunities for further or more meaningful engagement.	Annually	Academic Committee
2.	Review opportunities for collaboration with other training providers either as first or second providers.	Annually	Academic Committee
3.	Review Role Profiles for expert panellists, authenticators and evaluators.	Annually	Academic Committee

11 SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

11.1 Policy

Aspire Training is committed to the process of self-evaluation and review with a specific focus on the rigorous analysis of strengths and weaknesses, particularly in the context of teaching and learning and the impact findings have on the identification of priorities and strategies for improvement. Self-evaluation is an integral culture within the organisation and all staff and tutors are committed to it and fully involved.

Aspire Training solicits and considers the views and feedback from all stakeholders and outcomes of the process to inform self-evaluation in programme development, programme review and revision, programme arrangements and where necessary and permissible, subject matter curricula. In addition to the self-evaluation process, Aspire Training is committed to the external monitoring carried out by QQI.

In addition to self-evaluation, this monitoring addresses the following areas:

● Programme quality and attainment of awards standards,
● Follow-up on internal and/or external quality procedures, e.g. Re-validation,
● Institutional Review,
● Registered QQI provider status.

11.2 Procedures

Aspire Training nurtures the self-evaluation process through coherent and collaborative leadership and management. Staff, tutors, learners and stakeholders, at all levels, are invited to cooperate through mutual respect and trust. Everyone is encouraged to be honest in expressing their reflections, experiences and thoughts.

The publication of evaluation and review results is done in a three-step process as follows:

Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review Procedure

Step 1: Collecting online evaluation data:

Each of the online evaluations are completed by the intended respondents and returned to the Training and Administration Team via web to email. The evaluations are sent to the relevant stakeholders by the Marketing Coordinator and Administrative Assistant mid module, as well as on the completion completion of a module, programme or course.

Step 2: Review of evaluation results:

Immediately following the return of the evaluations, the results are consolidated and recorded on a cloud based database for review by the Marketing Coordinator and Administration Assistant. Where results remain positive (75% or above Highly Agree) across all areas of the evaluation, no action will be needed. If a discrepancy is identified through the evaluation process, the Academic Committee will convene in order to give recommendations for improvement.

Step 3: The Quality Assurance Report

Upon completion of each academic year a Quality Assurance Compliance report is produced.

This report will be made publicly available through the Aspire Trainings website and contains information under the following headings:

● Programme Overview
● Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures
● Learner retention and assessment results
● Results of the QA evaluation procedures
● Report on recommendations implemented
● Recommendations to be implemented

11.2.1 Internal review, self-evaluation and monitoring

Aspire Training performs regular internal and external review activities and the consolidation of the outcomes of these activities are available for periodic in-depth external evaluations.
Internal review activities generate a sequence of quality assurance documents including:

- Learner and Tutor feedback forms
- Internal verification reports
- External Authentication Reports
- Results Approval Reports.

Internal verification reports are provided to the External Authenticator to assist them with their work. And this feeds into the Results Approval process.
These documents are analysed by the Senior Management Team on a per-programme basis, and all programme improvements identified during the analysis are documented and actioned through the Managing Director.
Over time, the sum of these documents provides a long-term perspective on our performance and provides a basis for measurement by external reviewers of the efficacy of our quality assurance system.

11.2.2 Internal Self-Monitoring.

The quality assurance documents listed above, contain information which we use to assess achievement of our Key Performance Metrics (KPI's) for each programme. These include:

- Learner satisfaction
- Learner grades
- Number of programmes delivered
- Enrollments
- Non-completions
- Repeat and referred business
- Complaints
- Appeals
- Cost of provision
- Profit

While each of these metrics is important, there is a priority order that guides our performance improvement. A high level of learner satisfaction is our top priority followed closely by the effective

resolution of any complaints (and the elimination of the cause of potential future complaints.) Our enrolment statistics are the next most important metric, because no matter how good our service, if we don't have learners we can't remain in business.

It is a key responsibility of the Senior Management Team, as defined in their terms of reference, to be vigilant that performance against KPI's is monitored at every meeting and that any required actions are assigned and communicated to the appropriate owner and monitored for completion.

11.2.3 Self-evaluation, improvement and enhancement.

Details of the QQI provider re-engagement process were announced around 2017, and since that time Aspire Training has attended QQI briefings and read the QQI published guidelines: Core Statutory Guidelines, Sector Specific Guidelines (for private providers), and Topic Specific Guidelines (e.g. Blended Learning), as well as other guidance on completing the QQI reengagement process.

Part of the reengagement process involves performing a Self-Assessment/Evaluation (Gap Analysis) which uses the published QQI guidelines listed above to identify areas of good practice and areas for improvement.

Aspire Training has used this Self-Evaluation to develop an action plan and make significant changes to quality assurance documentation, to our governance model, and to many of our procedures.

Approval by the QQI provider reengagement evaluation panel, will represent an in-depth external review of our quality assurance procedures. Aspire Training will undertake another full self-evaluation in approximately 5 years, and we will use the documentation generated through the re-engagement application process as a baseline against which to measure our performance at that time.

11.2.4 Provider-owned quality assurance engages with external quality assurance.

As described above, Aspire Training has used all applicable QQI guidelines to inform our quality assurance system.

QQI is the only accreditation body that we work with.

These are typically advised by QQI via e-mail, or by information events and are published on the QQI website. Any clarifications required may be obtained through the QQI QHelp portal which can be accessed by any member of the Management and Administration teams.

The Managing Director is the contact person for QQI and acts as the internal coordinator for dissemination of QQI guidance.

11.3 Monitoring

#	Monitoring activity	Timing	Owner
1.	Ensure that the process for implementation of changes resulting from monitoring activities is working efficiently.	Annually	Senior Management Team
2.	Review the continuing appropriateness and priority of KPI's associated with self-monitoring and review.	Annually	Academic Committee
3.	Review action plans for future improvements	Annually	Senior Management Team

4.	Maintain links with QQI to remain up to date with our quality assurance obligations under the Education and Training Act 2012.	Ongoing	Managing Director

12 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Sampling Method

QQI External Authentication

Assessment Period: – Sampling Method

Total number of QQI folders to be submitted:

Level 5 Folders:

Level 6 folders:

The sample: (25% of -- is --) – -- Folders will be sampled as per the table below.

Where there are 3 folders, the selection will be from each grade, i.e. Pass, Merit, and Distinction.

Where there are less than 3 folders, the selection will be from one or two grades where the mark is borderline or very high.

Where there are more than 3 folders, the selection will be from each grade + folders that have been awarded a mark that is borderline or very high.

Where there is 1 folder, that folder will be submitted for External Authentication.

Module Title				
No. of Portfolios Submitted				
25% of Folders for E.A.				

Midland School of Childcare Ltd T/A Aspire Training

Bellview Buildings, Petitswood, Dublin Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath N91 V2W7
Email: info@aspiretraining.ie Phone: 044-93 41551

DATE: _Todays date_

RE: _Learners full name_

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to confirm that **learner's full name** is currently attending QQI _insert course name,_ here at Aspire Training.

QQI require learners to engage in a minimum of 20 hours work experience, per module, to assist in gaining practical experience, knowledge and skills.

We would appreciate if you would support **learners first name**, as a volunteer, in activities and observations aligned to **insert individual module details and guidelines if applicable e.g. DES SNA Guidelines or Child Development Observation Guidelines**

Enclosed please find a work experience attendance sheet, which must be signed by both the learner and supervisor.

In order to monitor our learners while on work experience, confirm their placement, and answer any questions you may have, a member of our staff will contact you. Attached you will find a Work Experience Monitoring Record sheet. Please complete this with your details and return it to (learner name) to return to Aspire Training.

In the meantime if you have any queries, please do not hesitate in giving me a call on 044 93 41551.

Kind regards,
Caroline McEntee   or   Sue Monaghan
Managing Director   Assistant Manager

Midland School of Childcare Ltd T/A Aspire Training. Company Registration No: 6412425I
Directors: Johnathan Acton, Caroline McEntee

Work Experience Attendance Record

Module Title & Code: _____

Please note Learners must complete this form during work placement.
A minimum of 20 hours are required.

Learners Name _____

Workplace Name _____

Workplace Address _____

Date	Time In	Time Out	Learner Signature	Supervisor Signature	Comments

Learner Signature _____

Date _____

(If your number of attendances, exceeds the number of rows on this sheet, please use a second sheet)

Work Experience Monitoring Record

Module Title & Code: _____

Learners Name   _____

Workplace Name   _____

Workplace Contact Name   _____

Workplace Contact Number   _____

Suitable Day/Time for Contact   _____

Agreed Start Date:	
Agreed Finish Date:	
Days & Times:	
Comments/Feedback	

Office Use Only:

Signature: _____

Date: _____