SECTION 5: TEACHING & LEARNING

5.1 Background to Teaching & Learning Ethos

The teaching ethos at Fusion Training and Development is underpinned by a focus on learner development. The learning that occurs during programmes of study must meet changing needs within the framework of programme learning outcomes.

Lifelong learning incorporates the sum of all learning activities undertaken during a person's life. Through the ethos of lifelong learning, individuals are encouraged to assume responsibility for the continuous review and development of their knowledge and skills to meet the challenges posed within an ever-evolving society.

Fusion Training and Development promote a lifelong learning ethos supported by flexible learning, clear information, support, and advice. The learning ethos at the company reflects the participation and needs of all stakeholders. The learning opportunities available at Fusion Training and Development lead to qualifications that are widely recognised and achievable in manageable steps.

Lifelong learning is particularly concerned with improving access to learning opportunities and encouraging people to take responsibility for their learning journeys. Fusion Training and Development recognise the importance of providing a supportive teaching and learning environment to the business's target learning audiences.

The current learner profile at Fusion Training and Development represents adult learners who are typically engaged in their working careers in the community and voluntary sector and who are committing to continuous professional and personal improvement with a wide range of work and life

experiences which can be used to enrich the overall teaching and learning process. Programmes of study are aimed at supporting individuals seeking personal, social, and developmental skills to enable them to progress in their learning. Fusion Training and Development's teaching and learning approaches are informed by the:

- Design and development of programmes based on evidenced need
- High quality of programme delivery informed by continuous review and feedback
- Continued focus on supportive and transparent learning experiences
- Development of teaching and training practices that adopt best practice
- Promotion of learner access, completion, progression, and achievement

The programmes of study at Fusion Training and Development are relevant to wider society and the teaching ethos is rooted in relevant theory, society, subject-specific practices, and work life. In addition, the teaching and learning practices are designed to be relevant to practice, ensuring the learners are prepared for their current or future workplace. Fusion Training and Development focus on using appropriate teaching methods.

The teaching approach is an integrative, learner-centred, facilitative one, and is most appropriate to the type of programmes delivered. The development of group cohesion is a crucial factor in the development of a safe, dynamic, participative learning environment. Fusion Training and Development see a clear connection between the cohesion of the group, the sense of belonging people feel, and the extent to which people engage and learn (Yalom, 2005[1]).

Fusion Training and Development deploys the core principles of group facilitation, influenced by the works of several theorists and practitioners[2]
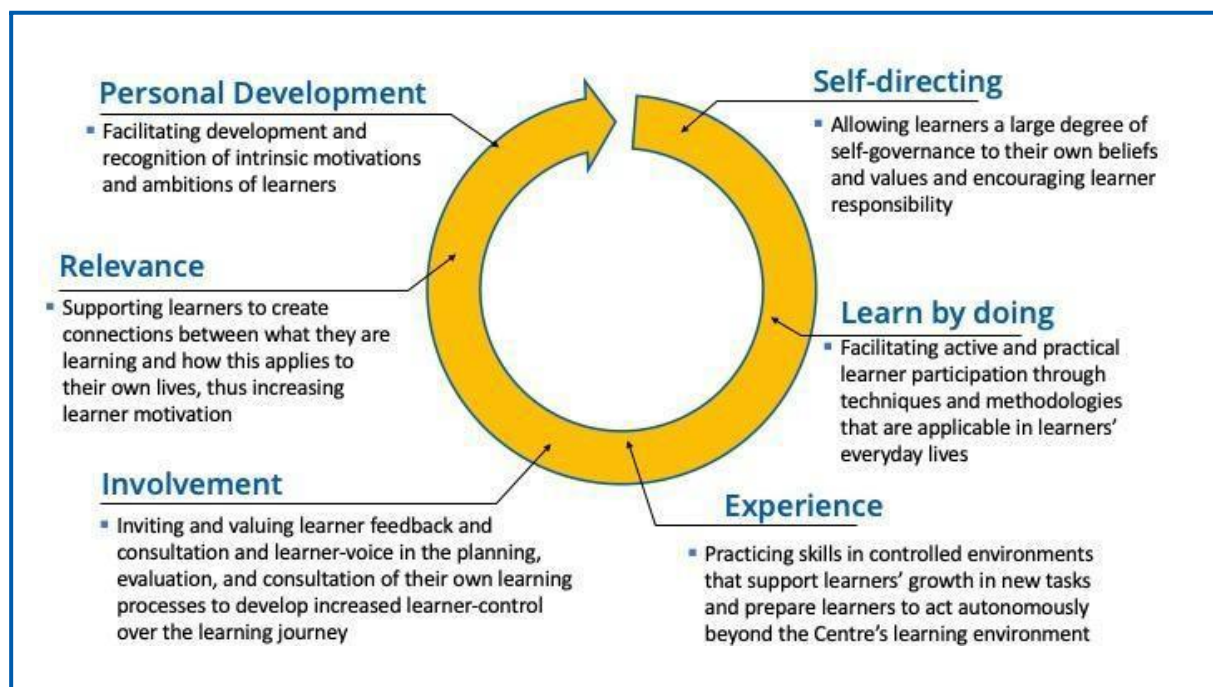
Fusion Training and Development adopts a methodological approach to the planning and delivery of programmes and programme assessment and the development of teaching and learning resources. This includes the evaluation of teaching facilities and a close alignment between teaching, learning, and assessment approaches, work contexts, and workplace challenges. Teaching, learning, and assessment strategies are submitted at the programme approval submission stage.

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[1] The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy, 5th ed referenced at https://psycnet.apa.org
[2] These include Ringer, 2002; Rogers, 1961; Mezirow; Popper, 1963; Glasser, 1998; O Leary, 1982; Corey, 2000; Yalom, 2005; McLeod, 1997

The design and development of programmes and teaching practices within the organisation are guided by principles as outlined by Malcolm Knowles (1980)[3] to facilitate the learning experience and enable staff and learners to become effective lifelong learners.

Teaching and learning practices are guided by the core principles of adult learning. The figure below outlines the principles that Fusion Training and Development apply across teaching and learning practices.

Personal Development
- Facilitating development and recognition of intrinsic motivations and ambitions of learners

Self-directing
- Allowing learners a large degree of self-governance to their own beliefs and values and encouraging learner responsibility

Relevance
- Supporting learners to create connections between what they are learning and how this applies to their own lives, thus increasing learner motivation

Learn by doing
- Facilitating active and practical learner participation through techniques and methodologies that are applicable in learners' everyday lives

Involvement
- Inviting and valuing learner feedback and consultation and learner-voice in the planning, evaluation, and consultation of their own learning processes to develop increased learner-control over the learning journey

Experience
- Practicing skills in controlled environments that support learners' growth in new tasks and prepare learners to act autonomously beyond the Centre's learning environment

Principles for Teaching & Learning Practices

Evidence-based Approach

Fusion Training and Development develops, validates and offers its programmes "so that an enrolled learner who completes that programme will acquire, and where appropriate, be able to demonstrate, the necessary knowledge, skill or competence to justify an award of QQI being offered in respect of that programme". This ability to demonstrate skill and/or competence may be shown through observation, classroom discussions, learner feedback, and the completion of practical and/or academic assignments which are developed, assessed, monitored and reviewed in line with QQI guidelines (or similar for non-accredited programmes). Emphasis is placed on

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[3] Knowles. M.S. (1988) The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy. Cambridge Book Company

harvesting information using a variety of methods – as Nagle states "there is no view from nowhere"[4]

The company is committed to participants' evaluation of their experience in programmes. Evaluation can either be formative or summative, depending on the programme. By analysing returned evaluation forms, Fusion Training and Development can address challenges, develop content and continue to be committed to achieving quality learning outcomes. The Managing Director collates the information and generates a report which is then shared with the Academic Council (and the Finance Council). Minor adaptations can be decided upon by the Academic Council while more substantial changes will need to be ratified by QQI if the programme is QQI-validated.

National & International Effective Practice

The lifelong learning concept reflects the need for continuous upskilling to meet workforce needs and ensure individuals have the necessary resources/tools to manage their futures. This concept is reflected across policy strategies concerned with objectives ranging from an individual's sense of social and personal development.

Fusion Training and Development are linked to the broader education and training community and employers across programme subject areas, particularly those in the community and voluntary sector. Programme development is informed by current practices relevant to the labour force and wider professional networks. Ongoing monitoring and review of statistics to identify trends and assist with benchmarking assist the business in comparing award outcomes and other programme data with other local, national, and international providers.

Meeting Diverse Needs & Dealing with Challenges

Fusion Training and Development aims to facilitate diverse learner needs to the best of its ability and seeks to accommodate and respond proactively and positively to diversity.

In the first instance, the company aims to meet diverse needs by creating conditions in groups that facilitate the simple voicing of learner needs. If a staff member becomes aware of a learner's need,

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[4] Thomas Nagle, The View from Nowhere cited at https: books.google.com

then the company can respond to it and meet that need where possible or facilitate the learner to fulfil the need themselves or with the support of their group.

Fusion Training and Development aim to offer understanding, authenticity, empathy and without judgement. It believes it can work successfully with most potential participants provided they demonstrate some capacity to operate or function in a group.

Training programmes require an ability to focus and concentrate, engage in discussion, process, reflect and convey. Not all potential participants possess these capacities – though they may acquire them via other routes we can recommend.

5.2 Teaching & Learning Policy

5.2.1 Purpose

This policy outlines Fusion Training and Development's approach to teaching and learning to meet the needs and expectations of all stakeholders within an environment that values experiential learning, critical reflection and personal and professional development for learners and staff.

5.2.2 Policy

Fusion Training and Development operates under a clear governance structure with transparent interrelated processes as described in Section 2. Arrangements are in place to ensure informed and objective oversight of all matters and the ongoing analysis of information gathered through internal and external monitoring and evaluation. Roles and responsibilities regarding governance are logically defined and supported; *structures are in place to ensure that academic matters are separate from any commercial considerations for the business*. *The Finance Council takes care of commercial matters. The Academic Council takes care of academic matters. See Section 2 for further detail on this.*

The teaching and learning experience at Fusion Training and Development is monitored, evaluated and progressed as part of the business's commitment to continuous improvement of practice. This is overseen by the Academic Council which guides the Managing Director as needed.

This is facilitated through a process including (but not limited to):
- Learner involvement and programme practices
- Insights gathered through learner and tutor feedback

- Analysis of attendance and course completion rates

- Analysis of assessment results

- Insights gathered through peer relationships, relevant publications, and industry insights

- Staff upskilling and professional development practices

- Programme review and evaluation

Fusion Training and Development's monitoring processes inform practices across the relevant academic areas. It identifies distinct responsibilities as follows:

Registry functions which cover the following:
- Quality assurance

- Admissions oversight

- Assessment management

- Ethics oversight

- QQI

Management academic functions which cover the following:
- Programme management

- Scheduling

- Trainer/facilitator Management

- Customer Service

- QA Adherence

Fusion Training and Development is committed to ensuring that all its programmes are:
- Developed in line with all QQI policies and guidelines for Validation of Programmes If requiring QQI validation)

- Delivered to the highest standard in a professional, safe and consistent manner.

- Strongly focused on providing formative learning opportunities

- Reviewed on an ongoing basis

Feedback from learners, facilitators, staff and other stakeholders is given priority to ensure Fusion Training and Development continues to identify opportunities for improving the quality of its output.

5.3 Programme Design & Development

Design

In the case of QQI-accredited programmes, the specific design of each certified programme is determined by a knowledge and understanding of QQI requirements and familiarity with the relevant QQI Module Descriptor and Assessment Conditions and consideration of an identified training/learning need. Questions that Fusion Training and Development take account of at the design stage include:

1. Is there a market opportunity for the proposed training?
2. Will the learning outcomes be achieved and satisfy the prospective learner?
3. What are the implications in terms of time, staffing, resources, consultancy etc.?
4. Does the proposed programme lend itself to Fusion's delivery style?
5. What supports and reasonable accommodations need to be established to facilitate learners to participate in and complete the programme?
6. Can the programme content be assessed in a way that demonstrates the acquisition of the desired learning outcomes?
7. Are there opportunities for formative learning on the part of learners?
8. What is the timeframe for delivery and total time commitment (on the part of the facilitators, administrators and learners)? How many self-directed learning hours are needed? Does the time commitment meet certification requirements?
9. What workload is required to develop materials required by QQI for validation e.g. programme descriptor, assessment briefs and marking sheets?
10. What arrangements must be put in place so that the proposed programme is rigorously tested and examined internally and externally before submission to QQI for validation?
11. Has Fusion Training and Development the capacity to engage in the validation process?
12. What resources need to be used to promote the course and what are the registration requirements and deadlines etc.?
13. Have the review and evaluation measures been developed to assess the effectiveness of the training (including seeking the views of participants and trainer; reviewing assessment results and gauging improvements in terms of levels of skill, knowledge and competence that result?

Development

QQI-certified programmes are developed by the Programme Development Team, with external support as needed, under the direction of the Academic Council. This alliance is responsible not only for the development of new programmes but also for their monitoring, review, and their improvement/amendment. They are tasked with:

- Producing stimulating, engaging content and material
- Ensuring and maintaining the level of quality of said material
- Ensuring that the processes involved in developing and maintaining programmes are documented, efficient, clear and communicated to all relevant parties
- Develop clear and attractive information material to entice learners
- Upholding the quality element of programme development, with the benefits to participants always being prioritised
- Ensure that any programmes, and any subsequent amendments, are aligned with and of the standards required for the relevant QQI awards

5.4 Online Learning

Given the nature of courses offered to participants, Fusion Training and Development delivers all its courses on a face-to-face basis and does not intend to become involved in online learning. In the event of the occurrence or recurrence of events similar to COVID-19, where in-person training is not possible, there is sufficient in-house knowledge and experience in adapting to use online platforms such as Zoom and Moodle and Google though our preference is always to be facilitating groups in an in-person context.

5.5 Programme Assessment

Certified programme-specific assessments and content are based on QQI-determined standards for knowledge, skill, and competence. These are assessed through the attainment of learning outcomes. When applying standards that ensure award outcomes and other programme data compared with other national and international providers, Fusion Training and Development applies the:

- Grid Level of Indicators for the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)
- Standards as indicated in the award specification
- Validated programme specifications (for the award being delivered)
- QQI grading criteria

All learning outcomes are developed within the following guidelines:
- Precise, clear statements indicating what learners are expected to know and understand at the end of a learning process/sequence
- Focus on the learner and learning processes

5.5 Programme Monitoring & Review Policy

5.5.1 Purpose

This policy describes Fusion Training and Development's framework for programme enhancement and adaption based on findings of monitoring processes and annual review activity.

5.5.2 Policy Statement

Validated programmes at Fusion Training and Development do not remain static entities following their validation and approval from QQI. All validated programmes will be subject to annual monitoring and review. Using insights gathered and analysed from monitoring and review processes, Fusion Training and Development will, where necessary, identify possible enhancements and adaptations to programmes based on the findings of its annual monitoring and review processes.

Ongoing monitoring of programmes, essential to ensure academic quality and standards are maintained, is informed by an ongoing review of learner and tutor feedback and other data gathered through review and monitoring processes.

5.5.3 Responsibility

The Academic Council guides the Managing Director in the application of this policy.

5.5.4 Processes & Procedures

Guided by the QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, programme monitoring, and review enables Fusion Training and Development to evaluate programmes to:

- Ensure that programmes remain appropriate, and create a supportive and effective learning environment
- Ensure that programmes achieve the objectives set and respond to the needs of learners and the changing needs of society
- Review the learner workload
- Review learner progression and completion rates and where issues exist and decide on what action may be required.
- Review the effectiveness of procedures for the assessment of learners
- Inform updates of programme content, delivery modes, teaching and learning methods, learning supports and resources, and information provided to learners
- Update third party, industry, or other stakeholders relevant to the programme(s)
- Review programme-specific QA arrangements

While the outcomes of programme review and monitoring may result in the decision to make necessary enhancements and adaptations to programmes, Fusion Training and Development will

adhere to limits of what can be changed. Limits to programme amendments will be in direct relation to the scope of the company's QA procedures (as approved by QQI).

Examples of changes which may be applied to validated programmes include (but are not limited to):

- Minor changes to programme content – without altering the module or programme learning outcomes and programme schedule as outlined in the programme's Certificate of Validation documentation
- Changes to assessment methods based on feedback indicating current assessment methods were not meeting the objectives of the initial approved submission– without altering the QQI-approved programme schedule, learning outcomes, and assessment strategy

Where changes to programme content are determined as necessary, this is undertaken by the Managing Director with guidance from the Academic Council, who approves the final programme content.

The procedure for amending programmes is:

- Deliver the programme several times, eliciting evaluation from participants and facilitators
- Monitor practical and written assignments to gauge the impact of the programme and to ascertain that planned learning outcomes have been achieved
- Collate a picture of the strengths and 'growing edges of the programme: present it to the Academic Council
- The Academic Council considers the report: suggestions for amendment/improvement are prepared
- Minor changes are promptly made. More substantial ones are submitted to QQI (see *Extensive Programme Changes* below)
- More substantial amendments will be included in the five-yearly re-validation process

Extensive Programme Changes
Where programme amendments are extensive to the point that they may require consideration for the development of a new programme, any potential new programme will be subject to Fusion Training and Development programme development and approval processes in adherence with established QQI validation policies and criteria.

Examples of 'extensive changes' are guided by those outlined in the QQI Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training document. This specifically refers to changes that:

- Undermine anything essential to support the original validation decisions
- Eliminate any core intended programme learning outcomes
- Change the prerequisite learning requirements for a given programme

What constitutes an 'extensive change' to programmes will be informed by an independent expert or subject matter expert (SME).

Information Gathering

i. Quantitative Data

As part of its monitoring responsibility, Fusion Training and Development gathers and analyses quantitative data at several points including the enquiry stage, programme delivery stages and programme completion. Management reviews sales compared to enquires; numbers and profiles of participants, retention rates and numbers for submission for QQI certification.

Due regard is always paid to Data Protection legislation. Both paper and digital versions are reviewed to assess company performance and academic achievement. These are either kept in a secure locked cabinet or a password-protected drive. Fusion Training and Development are considering migrating to a fully digitised database shortly.

The statistics are reviewed regularly and presented to both the Academic Council and the Finance Council with some commentary to facilitate analysis.

ii. Qualitative Data

Fusion Training and Development collect qualitative information as a way of monitoring and reviewing its performance as a training provider. It seeks this from a broad range of sources, ranging from the formal to the informal.

Each programme is evaluated by participants either during or at the end of the programme delivery. Evaluation forms include questions that seek to capture both qualitative and quantitative information. With scaling questions, the respondent is given an even number scale to elicit a positive or negative reaction. A key source of qualitative information is the learning journals from two of the QQI courses we offer (QQI6 Train the Trainer and QQI6 Conflict Management). These demonstrate a level of engagement of learners, what has been understood, found interesting, tedious, or useful. The journals are conducted over a longer period than evaluation forms and provide a deeper insight into the learner's experience, understanding and learning. Other sources of feedback include conversations or email exchanges with learners, and from third parties, such as those who refer learners to a programme.

The Managing Director collates all information gathered and shares it in first instance with the Academic Council. It is also shared with the Finance Council as it concerns the ongoing viability of the organisation. The feedback offers the company the opportunity to assess and, when necessary, make changes to its offerings.

Benchmarking

Finally, Fusion Training and Development is committed to benchmarking its programmes with those offered by other providers so that it can continue to maintain high standards and be relevant to prospective learners.

5.6 Teaching Staff

All programmes at Fusion Training and Development are delivered by qualified, subject matter experts in their area of delivery.

Fusion Training and Development are committed to the personal, professional, and pedagogical development of staff as resources allow. Professional development opportunities are guided by requests from facilitators as well as the business's suggested training incentives. Mandatory training is provided, and the company also remains abreast of relevant developments to inform proactive training decisions (including developments in new areas of technologies and the use of different training methodologies).

Trainers/facilitators involved in delivering QQI programmes are provided with access to module descriptors for each programme of study at Fusion Training and Development. Module descriptors provide all the essential programme-specific information (including assessment instruments and delivery materials developed by relevant QQI guidelines). Any alterations to module descriptor documentation or contents must be approved by the Managing Director. The use of a standardised brief ensures consistency of provision (including where new facilitators join Fusion Training and Development).

Staff are facilitated to attend relevant QQI-specific training and information days. These events ensure staff are aware of current QQI policies, practices, and criteria. Fusion Training and Development provide support to all academic staff through the provision of a Tutor Handbook which provides them with information most relevant to their role.