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Related legislation, policies, procedures, guidelines and local protocols	<p>This policy has been designed with due regard to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), Quality and Qualifications Ireland - Sector Specific Independent/Private Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (2016), Quality and Qualifications Ireland - Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 - European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), et. al (2015), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) - Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended and Fully Online Programmes (2023), Quality and Qualifications Ireland
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1. INTRODUCTION

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework that guides the development of flexible learning environments that can accommodate individual learning differences. This policy outlines SQT's commitment to implementing UDL principles which is driven by its dedication to fostering an inclusive learning environment that accommodates the diverse needs of all learners.

UDL implementation is incorporated in SQT's 5 Year Strategic Plan (2024 to 2029) and is given a specific priority within the Teaching and Learning Strategy (2022 – 2026), these specific actions are set out in Section 6 below.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Promote an inclusive learning environment.
- Ensure all courses and materials are accessible to all learners.
- Provide guidelines for the implementation of UDL principles in course design and delivery.
- Foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in teaching practices.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Programme Directors, Tutors, and other staff involved in the design, delivery, and evaluation of training programmes.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

The successful implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) requires the collaboration and commitment of various stakeholders within SQT. The following outlines the key responsibilities:

- **Programme Directors and Tutors:** Responsible for ensuring that UDL principles are incorporated into all course material. Required to participate in professional development activities to stay updated on UDL principles and to apply these principles in their teaching practices. They should continuously seek ways to make learning materials and assessments more accessible.
- **Teaching & Learning (T&L) Committee:** Oversees the development and implementation of the UDL Action Plan and ensures alignment with the 5-Year Strategic Plan. The committee is also responsible for reviewing progress and updating the UDL policy as needed.

- **Multimedia Content Developer (MCD):** Provides assistance to learners and tutors to ensure that learning environments, both physical and virtual, meet accessibility standards. They also support tutors in applying UDL principles effectively.
- **Learners:** Encouraged to provide feedback on accessibility and inclusivity in their learning experiences, contributing to the continuous improvement of teaching practices.

5. PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework designed to improve and optimise teaching and learning for all individuals by addressing the diversity of learners. UDL promotes flexibility in the ways information is presented, how learners engage with material, and how they demonstrate their learning, allowing for a more inclusive learning environment. The three core principles of UDL are:

- **Multiple Means of Engagement:** To tap into learners' interests, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation. Examples include offering choices in learning activities.
- **Multiple Means of Representation:** To give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge. Examples include offering content in different formats (text, audio, video), providing summaries and visual aids, and using assistive technologies.
- **Multiple Means of Action:** To provide learners with alternatives for demonstrating what they know. Examples include allowing different methods for learners to express their understanding (e.g., essays, presentations, projects) and offering tools to assist in planning and organisation.

By embedding these principles into the design of learning activities and assessments, educators can better accommodate a wide range of learning preferences, abilities, and needs, fostering an equitable learning environment for all students (CAST, 2018)¹.

The UDL framework is based on neuroscience research and has been widely adopted to create more inclusive and accessible educational settings (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014)². It emphasises proactive curriculum design rather than retrofitting accommodations, ensuring that the learning environment meets the needs of all learners from the outset.

¹ CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines, Version 2.2. Retrieved from <https://udlguidelines.cast.org>

² Meyer, A., Rose, D. H., & Gordon, D. (2014). *Universal Design for Learning: Theory and Practice*. Wakefield, MA: CAST Press.

6. SQT'S UDL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

To effectively implement UDL it has been incorporated as a specific pillar within SQT's Teaching and Learning Strategy. Specific focus areas are as follows:

1. **Professional Development of Tutors**
 - **Encouragement of UDL Certification:** Encourage all tutors to participate in and complete the UDL AHEAD Digital Badge programme in addition to other relevant programmes.
 - **Ongoing UDL Awareness:** Ensure continuous awareness and understanding of UDL concepts and principles among tutors.
2. **Needs Analysis**
 - **Accessibility and Inclusivity Evaluation:** Regularly evaluate the current state of accessibility and inclusivity within existing programs, focusing on materials and teaching practices.
 - **Stakeholder Feedback:** Collect and analyse feedback from learners, instructors, and stakeholders to understand their experiences and challenges.
3. **Integrate UDL Principles within Training Materials**
 - **Curriculum and Material Review:** Review and revise all curriculum and instructional materials to ensure alignment with UDL principles.
 - **Technology Utilisation:** Utilise technology and digital tools to enhance accessibility and provide customisable learning experiences.
4. **Apply Teaching Principles within Teaching Practices**
 - **Diverse Teaching Methods:** Encourage the use of a variety of teaching methods, instructional strategies, and assessment approaches to meet the diverse needs of all learners.
 - **Collaboration and Peer Learning:** Promote collaboration and peer learning among Tutors to share best practices and lessons learned.
5. **Ensure Accessibility of Learning Environments**
 - **Digital Platform Accessibility:** Continuously evaluate and improve the accessibility of digital platforms and technologies used for training delivery.
6. **Monitor Progress and Continuous Improvement**
 - **Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:** Establish mechanisms for ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and feedback to assess the effectiveness of UDL implementation.
 - **Regular Programme Reviews:** Regularly review and update training programmes based on learner feedback, emerging best practices, and advancements in accessibility technologies.
7. **Promote a Culture of Inclusivity and Equity**
 - **Foster Inclusivity and Equity:** Foster a culture that values diversity, inclusivity, and equity among all stakeholders.

7. COMMUNICATION

SQT is committed to maintaining clear and consistent communication regarding the implementation and progress of UDL principles across all programmes. Information on UDL-related initiatives, professional development opportunities, and available resources are disseminated to Tutors and staff via email and the Tutor Portal. Additionally, learners are informed of the inclusive practices adopted promoting transparency and encouraging engagement with the UDL framework.

8. POLICY MONITORING

Responsibility	Frequency	Methods
Director of Quality and Academic Affairs – Document Update	Per QA audit schedule	Review of documentation as set out in QAP2-1: Ongoing Review and Update of QA Documents.
Teaching & Learning Committee	Each meeting	Review of UDL Action Plan: The T&L Committee will regularly review progress of the UDL Action Plan.
Programme Board	Each meeting	Feedback Collection: Regular feedback from learners, tutors, and stakeholders will be collected through surveys and focus groups to evaluate the inclusivity of learning environments and instructional materials. Review of Progress: Programme Directors and Tutors will report progress detailing the implementation of UDL principles and challenges encountered.

9. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version No	Approval Date	Description of Revision	Originator	Approved By
1.0	Nov 24	New Document	Teaching and Learning Committee	Academic Council