CSL **Quality Assurance** Pilot Process for Professional Learning in **School Leadership**

Lárionad Ceannaireachta Scoile

CSL

Centre for School Leadership

Handbook for Providers

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An Introduction

The Centre for School Leadership (CSL) was established on a partnership basis between the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN), the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) and the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in September 2015. It is the shared objective that the Centre will become a centre of excellence for school leadership. CSL's responsibility extends across the continuum of leadership development commencing with pre-appointment training through to induction of newly appointed principals to continuous professional development throughout the leader's career. The Centre also advises the DES on policy in this area.

The first two years for CSL have seen the Centre make significant progress in mentoring for newly appointed principals, coaching for established school leaders, developing a new aspiring leaders' programme and a quality assurance process for leadership programmes.

Vision, Mission and Values

The vision, mission and value statements have been developed by the team following consultation with stakeholder groups and practitioners.

Vision: Our vision is a community of school leaders who feel supported and valued as professionals and who have access to high quality professional learning.

Mission: To bring our vision into reality, CSL will ensure the provision of high quality professional development opportunities for aspiring and serving school leaders, thus improving the learning outcomes for school communities.

Values: The Centre for School Leadership's work will be guided and informed by the values of trust, respect, collaboration, integrity, professionalism, empathy and openness.

The Need for Quality Assurance

Internationally, the continuing development of school leadership has become a cornerstone of many national policies (OECD 2005, Schleicher2012) and of systems level change programmes (Fullan 2016) .

A quality assurance process also reflects CSL's strong commitment to the following functions and roles as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding between the partners (2015):

- To support the design, development and delivery of quality continuous professional development (CPD) for leaders utilising innovative approaches with a proven record of success
- To foster a culture of engagement with CPD among school leaders
- To ensure cohesion and consistency across programmes
- To ensure adherence with the DES Quality Framework for Schools (Leadership and Management) and the Teaching Council's CPD Framework (Cosán) when available and if appropriate
- To devise a quality assurance framework for professional development leadership provision

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[1] Schleicher, A. (2012), Ed., Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century: Lessons from around the World, OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264xxxxxx-en

[2] Fullan. M (2016) "Great to Excellent-Launching the Next Stage of Ontarios's Education Agenda"

Quality Assurance – Aims, Principles and Elements

Aims

The aim of the Quality Assurance Process is to provide those involved in programme design and delivery with objective and evidence based information that will allow them and those funding the programme to make decisions about it with a view to improvement.
 More specifically the framework aims to:

- Provide assurance from CSL that the programme/course is relevant, well -constructed and of high quality
- Ensure adherence with The Quality Framework for Schools (Leadership and Management)
- Ensure that participation in professional learning impacts on practice in schools
- Build an understanding of and foster engagement with professional learning amongst the profession
- Reduce duplication in the system
- Ensure good use of public money

Ultimately, this process aims to improve leadership practices so as to ensure quality outcomes for students.

Principles

- There will be mutual respect and trust between CSL and the providers of leadership programmes/courses
- There will be partnership and collaboration through the participation of the partners in the review process
- The process will be informed by evidence as a means of ensuring high quality leadership programmes/courses
- There will be consistency and fairness throughout the QA process
- Confidentiality will be maintained in relation to all information obtained during the QA process
- There will be clear communication of outcomes to the providers

Elements

There are four elements to the Quality Assurance Process:
- The Approval Process
- The Monitoring Process
- The Evaluating Process
- The Reviewing Process

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CSL Framework for Approval

This framework sets out the standards by which the leadership programmes and other activities will be evaluated in order to meet the approval of CSL. This framework, along with the Quality Framework for Schools (Leadership and Management) published in "Looking at our School 2016" will underpin the approval and evaluation of all leadership programmes that are funded by the Department of Education and Skills for aspiring, newly appointed and established school leaders. A process will determine the suitability of any programme/ activity for inclusion in CSL's approved list of activities.

Objectives	Objectives must be stated in terms of what the programme/ activity aims to achieve for participants. They should indicate the knowledge, skills and enhanced leadership capacities that participants are expected to achieve from the programme/ activity.
Content and Design of Programme	The content of the programme/activity should be informed by and consistent with the domains and standards for leadership and management set out in "Looking at Our School 2016" . It should meet the current leadership needs in the system and should address current national priorities. The design and structure of the programme should ensure that it achieves its objectives. Where appropriate, it should include mentoring/coaching for school leaders.
Delivery and Approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment	The mode of delivery and approaches to teaching and learning should ensure the fullest possible participation by all those who register for the programme/activity. Those who input to the programme/activity should be appropriately qualified, have recent school leadership experience (except in the case of professional coaches) and should have the most recent research knowledge of the topic they deliver. They should also have in-depth knowledge of the domains and standards for school leadership. A variety of assessment methodologies should be used in the programme/activity.
Outcomes	The programme/activity will enhance participants' knowledge and understanding of the role of the school leader in the Irish education context. Participants will have improved their capacity to lead learning and teaching, to manage the school organisation, to lead school development and to develop leadership capacity in their own setting.
Impacts	The programme/activity should lead to improved leadership in schools. There should be visible signs of changes in practice leading to improvement in the school settings of the participants. Ultimately, this should include improved outcomes for students.

[3] Looking at Our School 2016, Published by Department of Education and Skills. https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Post-Primary-schools.pdf & https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Primary-Schools.pdf

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The Approval Process

This section describes the four stages of the Approval Process.

Stage One - Completion of the Application Form

Note: Providers are asked to complete an application form which is broken down into five sections. A separate application form must be completed for each programme/activity presented.

Section A - Full Contact, Organisation and Programme Details
(Basic contact details are required here and a description of the programme)

Section B - CSL Framework for Approval. There are five subsections.

1.   Objectives of the Programme
2.   Content and Design of the Programme

Note: Providers should make themselves familiar with the Action Plan for Education (2016-2019). Priorities identified in this plan include:

→ Tackling disadvantage
→ Improving literacy and numeracy skills
→ Promoting well-being
→ Improving teacher professional learning opportunities
→ Technology assisted learning
→ Strengthening school leadership and management
→ Inclusion

3.   Delivery and Approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment
4.   Outcomes of the Programme
5.   Impact of the Programme

In this section, please indicate the participants' reactions to the programme, what they have learned from the programme and the impact on their practice.

If providing a new programme, describe the intended impact of any new professional learning opportunities being proposed.

Section C: Evaluation of the Programme

Description of the mechanisms for internal and/or external evaluation of the programme. This section requires a description of exisiting quality assurance process and learning from it. New providers should indicate their intended evaluation process.

Section D: CSL reserves the right to seek additional information from the provider. This will be determined by the nature and length of the programme/activity. CSL will specify if additional information is required.

Section E: Additional information from the provider (optional)

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[4] "Action Plan for Education 2016-2019", Department of Education and Skills, Strategy Statement (2016)

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Completed applications and all accompanying documentation (module descriptors, delivery team details, promotional materials, sample course handouts and samples of evaluation materials) should be submitted to CSL, using the contact details provided by the submission deadline which has been agreed. The form and any accompanying documentation should be submitted in electronic format. All applications will be reviewed internally by the CSL administrator to ensure that sufficient information has been provided, prior to the application progressing to the next stage. If sufficient information has not been provided, CSL will provide feedback to the provider outlining the additional information required. The provider may re-submit a further application. When it has been confirmed that the documentation has been submitted in line with the CSL's requirements, hard copies of the documentation may be requested.

A copy of the application form is to be found in Appendix 1. A request for additional information on the qualifications and expertise of the delivery team and programme director(s) is to be found in Appendix 2.

To submit an approval application, please request an electronic version of the form from The CSL Administrator, Clare Education Centre, Kilrush Road, Ennis, Co. Clare. Email: office@cslireland.ie.

Stage Two – The Process

The application will be reviewed to confirm that sufficient information has been provided, and once agreed, the application will go forward to a CSL Approval Panel. Typically, this will be a three person panel and an external panel member, with knowledge and expertise of professional learning and evaluation. Panel members will assess each submission. Organisations and individuals bringing courses/programmes to the panel may be asked to attend in person to give them an opportunity to present on the detail of their submission. Following the presentation, there will be an opportunity for professional dialogue structured around the application and the presentation.

Stage Three – Decision on Application

Following the meeting of the panel, a decision will be made. The normal timescale for the communication of the panel decision will be one week. The decision of the panel will be communicated in writing to the provider. The panel decision will be one of the following:

- CSL approves the programme
- CSL approves the programme provisionally subject to condition(s)
- CSL does not approve the programme

Within this stage they are 3 sub sections:

Approval

For a programme to be approved, the panel must be fully satisfied with the quality of the professional learning opportunity and its coherence with national priorities, the nature and style of learning, and adherence to the standards for leadership and management.

Programme Provisionally Approved with Condition(s)

The panel may provisionally approve the programme subject to condition(s). In these circumstances, the provider would not immediately be able to use the CSL approval to market the programme/activity until the condition(s) has/have been satisfactorily met. A report will be issued to the provider with a list of actions required and a time frame within which each of the actions have to be completed. There would also be an opportunity for CSL support at this stage to assist the provider meet the condition/s required. Written confirmation that the provider has addressed the actions will be necessary before full approval is awarded.

Programme Not Approved

If a programme/activity does not meet the criteria set out, then approval will not be granted. CSL will provide written feedback to the provider outlining the reasons for any such decision. Following this feedback, the provider will be eligible to re-apply for approval once more. It is recommended that if a provider is unsure whether or not their programme/activity will meet the criteria, they should seek clarification from CSL.

Stage Four – The Appeals Process

The provider may appeal the decision of the CSL panel not to approve a specific programme where they believe that the Approval Panel did not follow its established policies and/or procedures and/or made a substantive error, such as a factual error, mistake, or misinterpretation in the written report to the provider. Dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for an appeal.

The provider should submit in writing the grounds for appeal, providing documentary evidence where relevant. The appeal must be submitted to the Director of the Centre for School Leadership within 10 working days of receipt of the decision not to approve the programme.

The appeal will be adjudicated upon by an Appeals Panel. No person who was involved in the Approval Panel will be a member of the Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel will include:

- One member of the CSL Team
- An external panel member with knowledge and expertise of professional learning and evaluation

The Appeals Panel will seek clarification from the Approval Panel. Furthermore, they may request to meet with the provider and discuss with them their reasons for appealing. In light of the materials presented, the Appeals Panel will undertake a review of the original recommendation and present its findings to the Director of CSL. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final. The provider will be informed of the outcome by CSL.

Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing Processes

The Monitoring Process

This section describes the CSL monitoring, evaluation and review processes. CSL will initiate the Approval Process and will then work with the successful providers to ensure that the quality of their programmes will be to the highest standard. These processes may be modified and reviewed during the course of the pilot.

The purpose of the monitoring process is to ensure that quality services are provided to participants. There are a number of ways in which CSL may monitor the programme/activity.

1.   Annual Report from the Provider

Providers will be asked to provide an annual report containing:

- Agreed evaluation data (see evaluation process below)
- Samples of course work/handouts/presentations
- A report on the learning and how it will impact on the programme/activity going forward (i.e. any changes that will be made to the programme)

The due date for the annual report will be agreed with the provider.

2.   On-Site Monitoring

The provider should submit times and dates for all activities relating to the programme to CSL. This should include participant activities and all professional learning activities for those who present the programme. CSL may visit the programme/activity in the first year. Following this, providers may expect annual visits unless it is specified that more frequent visits are necessary. CSL will provide a short report on these visits.

The Evaluation Process

It is expected that both the provider and CSL will be involved in an evaluation process.

1.   Self-Evaluation by the Provider

As part of the application process the provider asked to indicate how the programme is to be evaluated by them. Examples of this might be:

- Attendance statistics
- Retention statistics
- Destination statistics
- Internal evaluations
- Participant evaluations
- External evaluation

CSL will agree the nature of the evaluation data required with the individual provider upon approval of the programme. CSL will seek oversight of this evaluation data on an annual basis as part of the annual report referred to above. Please note that if the programme/activity is less than one year in duration, then CSL will request such data to be provided at agreed interim periods.

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2.   Evaluation by CSL

On an annual basis, CSL may choose all or some of the evaluation methods below to externally evaluate the programme/activity which it has approved:

A. Delivery Team Interviews/Questionnaires

CSL may choose to conduct structured focus group interviews with the team presenting the programme/activity. CSL may also opt to provide them with on-line questionnaires.

The purpose of this is to determine if the team are familiar with the objectives and content of the programme they are responsible for facilitating, if they have issues they would like to bring to the attention of CSL, or if they have suggestions for improving the programme/activity.

B. Participant Interviews and Questionnaires

CSL may choose to conduct structured focus group interviews with the participants on the programme/activity. CSL may also opt to provide the participants with on-line questionnaires.

The purpose of this is to determine if:

- They see an improvement in their leadership skills
- They perceive that they are learning from the programme
- They have issues they would like to bring to the attention of CSL
- They have suggestions for improving the programme/activity

C. Case Studies

From time to time, CSL may choose a specific case study which they may wish to evaluate. CSL will develop a short **Annual Evaluation Report** based on the above evaluations.

Feedback to the Provider

On an annual basis, CSL will review the following documentation:

- Annual Report from the Provider
- On –Site Monitoring Report
- CSL Annual Evaluation Report

CSL may choose to meet with the provider and provide feedback based on the above reports. Alternatively, they may provide written feedback to the provider with recommendations for the coming year. The provider will be given the opportunity to discuss the feedback and adjustments may be made following consultation between the provider and CSL. It should be noted that CSL reserves the right to withdraw approval in situations where there is evidence of significant dissatisfaction with the provision.

The Reviewing Process

Approval will be awarded for three years, subject to submission of the Annual Report providing information and evidence on the evaluation data required. After three years it is expected that a new application for approval will be made. The approval process may recommence six months before the termination of those three years.

Appendix 1

CSL On-Line Application Form

In completing the form, providers should seek to be as concise as possible. To that end, they should avoid duplication. Where similar information is relevant under a number of headings, it should be included only once and cross-referenced as appropriate.

Section A: Contact, Organisational and Programme Details

1. Contact Details:

Programme/Activity Director(s): _____

Name of Organisation: _____

Role in Organisation: _____

Address: _____

E Mail Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Please fill out the form in Appendix 2 for the Programme Director(s).

Outline information on the organisation (No more than 300 words)

> **Enter information here**

2. Programme Details

Please provide detailed information on your programme/activity.

- ✓ Title of the programme/activity

- ✓ Duration of programme/activity

- ✓ Please specify the target audience:
  Teacher Leaders
  Middle Leaders
  Aspiring Leaders
  Newly Appointed Leaders
  Established Leaders
  System Leaders

- ✓ A brief description of the history of the programme (if applicable)

- ✓ Proposed participant numbers

- ✓ Where applicable, please indicate if the programme/activity is included in the QQI Framework or if there are plans to include it in the framework

- ✓ Please indicate how this programme is advertised and promoted among the target audience

- ✓ Please indicate if the provider has the capacity to deliver the programme through the medium of Irish

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> **Enter information here**

Section B: CSL Framework for Approval

This section refers to the CSL Framework for professional learning in school leadership. The questions are directed at each of the five areas in the framework.

1.   Objectives of the Programme

Objectives should indicate the knowledge, skills and enhanced leadership capacities that participants are expected to achieve from the programme /activity.

✓ What are the objectives of the programme?

> **Enter information here**

2. Content and Design of the Programme

2.1 In filling in this section, please indicate the following:

✓ How is the programme designed and structured to ensure it achieves its objectives?

✓ Core components of programme/activity. e.g. themes, topics
(Note: Descriptors for each module of the programme and some sample course handouts should accompany this application)

✓ Please indicate the areas of study which are mandatory for all participants and those which are optional

✓ Please indicate where applicable, if participants will have opportunities to avail of coaching/mentoring

✓ Please indicate how the use of ICT is embedded in the design of the programme

> **Enter information here**

2.2   Quality Framework for Schools

How does the programme/activity align to the Quality Framework for Schools (Leadership and Management)?

Please take each standard in the framework and map the programme to these standards:
- ✓ Leading Teaching and Learning
- ✓ Managing the Organisation
- ✓ Leading School Development
- ✓ Developing Leadership Capacity

Enter information here

2.3   Meeting National Priorities

In this section, please explain where and how the programme/activity addresses specific aspects of key areas of national priorities within the context of professional learning and leadership. Examples of these priorities are outlined in the handbook.

How will this programme/activity meet national priorities? (where applicable)

Enter information here

3. Delivery and Approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment

3.1 Delivery

In filling in this section, please indicate the following:

- ✓ What are the modes of delivery for this programme and where will this programme be delivered?
- ✓ Please include here any online forms of learning and provision for independent study
- ✓ Please indicate how the knowledge and skills of the delivery team are maintained and developed.
- ✓ Partner input (where relevant)
- ✓ Experience and expertise of provider delivery team (*Please fill in form 1 in Appendix 2 for each member of the delivery team and attach it to the application*)

Enter information here

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3.2 Approaches to Learning and Teaching

In this section you are asked to show how the programme/activity will provide opportunities for the participants to achieve the following:

- ✓ To engage in reflective practice
- ✓ To engage in professional learning communities
- ✓ To develop their own ideas, to challenge assumptions and to deepen their understanding of practice
- ✓ To demonstrate and reflect on effective leadership practices in their schools

Enter information here

3.3 Approaches to Assessment

Please describe the modes of assessment used in the programme and the frequency of these assessments.

Enter information here

4. Please Indicate the Programme Outcomes

Enter information here

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5.   Impact of the Programme

This section asks you to provide information which gives evidence about the impact of the programme/activity you are currently running. An explanation of the evidence required is outlined in the accompanying information issued along with this application form. It would be helpful to identify how participant feedback has informed or enhanced the learning opportunity. If providing a new programme, describe the intended impact of any new professional learning opportunities being proposed.

✔ Evidence of impact from evaluations

Enter information here

Section C: Evaluation of Programme

For programmes which are currently running, providers are asked to describe their evaluation process.

What are the mechanisms for internal or external evaluation of the programme? (Including internal evaluation, evaluation by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills, evaluation by participants, former participants' self-evaluation reviews, destination studies, etc.)

Copies of the three most recent evaluations from participants and from the delivery team should accompany this form.

For new programmes/activities: Providers are asked to describe their intended evaluation process

Enter information here

Section D: Additional Information required by CSL

(Refer to accompanying request for additional information, where applicable)

Enter information here

Section E: Additional Information from the Provider (optional)

Enter information here

Declaration

Statement to be signed by the Programme Director(s)

Please complete the following declaration and sign it in the appropriate place below.

I confirm that all the information given on this form is correct and accurate.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Checklist for Provider

✓ Application Form- Appendix 1
✓ Promotional Materials
✓ Module Descriptors
✓ Sample Course Handouts
✓ Samples of Recent Evaluations
✓ Additional Information sought by CSL (where requested)
✓ Appendix 2 – Form 1 (Delivery Team and Programme Director(s))

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Appendix 2 – Form 1

In respect of each member of the delivery team and the programme director(s), please fill in the following details and attach to the application.

1.   Name and title

2.   Qualifications (including awarding body, date awarded, details of any relevant programmes which are on-going)

3.   Experience (including details of current role and duration in all former roles)

4.   Leadership experience outside of the school setting

5.   List the title, nature and date of professional learning activities completed in the past two academic years

6.   Research undertaken and/or published (if applicable)

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