



Waterford Institute *of* Technology
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE

Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and Procedures 2011-12

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1. Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This document sets out the quality assurance and enhancement policies and procedures governing WIT programmes and modules including:
- i. Programme development and validation;
 - ii. Annual programme management and quality monitoring;
 - iii. Periodic (5 – yearly) quality assurance and enhancement review.
- 1.1.2 The document places academic quality assurance and enhancement policies and procedures in the context of the broader institutional quality culture and relates these procedures to national and European policy and legislation. It also establishes the lines of responsibility associated with academic quality, including articulating the roles and responsibilities of Academic Council, Departments, School Boards and Programme Boards.
- 1.1.3 The document is made available throughout the Institute community and to all stakeholders and the general public through the Institute website.
- 1.1.4 All templates and forms referenced in this document are available through the Academic Council intranet or alternatively from the Quality Office.
- 1.1.5 The purpose of quality management at WIT is to:
- create the institutional policy framework required to:
 - assure appropriate and consistent standards of education and student learning experience;
 - progressively enhance the standards of education and student learning experience through critical reflection;
 - establish procedures to ensure the implementation and monitoring of these policies.
- 1.1.6 Informed by national and international policy and guidelines, the quality culture at WIT is based on the following principles¹:
- a. **We aim to assure the quality of the entire student experience:**
Quality assurance procedures are required in all areas of operations including teaching and learning, research and administrative, support and management. While quality assurance of academic programmes is critical to meeting the needs of our students, all areas of the Institute's operations, directly or indirectly, affect the quality of the learner experience and therefore all areas have a role in quality improvement.
 - b. **All members of staff are responsible for quality:**
All members of staff are responsible for quality and everybody has a contribution to make. In order for this approach to be successful all staff need to be involved in identifying and implementing quality improvements.
 - c. **We aim to improve quality whenever possible:**
Quality review, planning and implementation take place within the context of strategic objectives and available resources. Quality enhancement plans derived from the quality review process inform future planning, staff development activities and resource allocation.
 - d. **We are committed to the principle of external peer involvement in assuring quality:**

¹ The statement of principles is informed by University College Cork quality policy:
<http://www.ucc.ie/en/qpu/guidelines/qatucc/>

Assuring quality involves constant re-examination of our own approach against those of our peers, including international peers. In this way we can assure ourselves that we are maintaining appropriate standards and also demonstrate accountability to external bodies for the use of public funds.

- e. **We take into account the views of our students, staff and external stakeholders:** Students, staff and external stakeholders make a fundamental contribution to the assurance and assessment of quality within the Institute. We are therefore committed to seeking their views and using the feedback that we gain to improve the quality of the student experience.

f. **We use an evidence-based approach in quality management:**

We are committed to an evidence-based system of quality management where qualitative and quantitative information is systematically used as a basis for identifying quality improvement opportunities and appropriate national and international benchmarks are used in evaluating achievements.

g. **Quality is an instrument of organizational improvement:**

Quality management assures standards of provision and facilitates the identification and implementation of positive change and improvement across all units through a process of reflective self-assessment and planning.

h. **We are committed to the principle of openness, transparency and accountability in quality management:**

All peer review reports and enhancement plans arising from periodic reviews of quality are publicly available. The School Review process described in this document is consistent with and embeds the above principles and is an important element in the Institute's overall quality strategy.

1.2 Academic Council Responsibility for Quality

- 1.2.1 The Academic Council's paramount responsibility for managing the academic quality of the Institute is enshrined in Irish law as:

*planning, co-ordination, development and overseeing of the educational work of the Institute and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the programmes and activities of the college.*²

- 1.2.2 The functions of Academic Council in quality management include:

- i. maintain the standards of the Institute's awards and promote quality in all aspects of the Institute's business;
- ii. annual monitoring of performance in relation to strategic plan priorities (including School plans) and review at the end of the planning and implementation period;
- iii. ensure that external examiners' reports are received and formally considered and that appropriate action is taken in relation to comments and suggestions contained in those reports;
- iv. encourage innovation in programme development and design, approve the design of new programmes of study, develop programmes of study in the light of regional and national need and demand, and make recommendations to the Governing Body for the establishment of appropriate structures to implement such programmes, and to monitor their implementation;
- v. ensure that programmes of study are designed and operated in accordance with the Institute's regulations and ensure that when a programme is approved any conditions of

² Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992, www.irishstatutebook.ie/1992/en/act/pub/0016/index.html

- approval are implemented and any recommendations arising from the evaluation process fully considered and acted upon;
- vi. make recommendations to the Governing Body on the selection, admission, retention and exclusion of students;
 - vii. be responsible, subject to the approval of the Governing Body, for making the academic regulations of the college;
 - viii. propose to the Governing Body, subject to the requirements of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council where appropriate, the form of regulations to be made by the Governing Body for the conduct of examinations and for the evaluation of academic progress;
 - ix. make recommendations to the Governing Body for the award of scholarships, prizes or other awards;
 - x. make general arrangements for tutorial or other academic counselling;
- 1.2.3 The Registrar has overall responsibility for co-ordinating these processes and reporting to the Academic Council and Institute on progress and implementation.

1.3 Functions of the Committees of Academic Council

- 1.3.1 To facilitate the Academic Council in discharging its general responsibilities a number of committees. The functions of the committees regarding quality assurance are set out below and full details on the operation of the Committees is set out in the Academic Council Terms of Reference, Code of Practice, Composition and Regulations document³.
- 1.3.2 The following are the terms of reference and the membership details of the committees. Where there is unavoidable overlap between the work of committees, it is the responsibility of the Chairpersons to liaise with each other and to ensure positions are clear before the outcome is reported to Academic Council.
- 1.3.3 The President shall be an *ex officio* member of each committee listed below. The committee will nominate a Convenor from among the membership. As indicated above, the committee may invite other persons from the Institute or otherwise to attend as required, either as full members or in an advisory capacity.
- 1.3.4 In addition, each committee will be a standing committee and may be convened to deal with any urgent matters arising within its remit between Academic Council meetings.
- 1.3.5 **Academic Quality Committee:** the functions of the Academic Quality Committee are:
- a. To develop, subject to Academic Council approval, the Institute's quality framework and the instruments for quality audit, enhancement and assurance;
 - b. To facilitate the creation of a quality culture throughout the Institute and to identify practicable actions to develop and enhance the institute's quality environment;
 - c. To advise and to make recommendations to Academic Council on matters relating to the selection, admission, retention and progress of students and in addition to establish regulations for the administration, supervision, monitoring and review of research postgraduate students and programmes;
 - d. To advise and to make recommendations to the Academic Council on matters relating to examination and assessment arrangements and regulations, including matters relating to external examiners and examination appeals;

³ www.wit.ie/Policies/

- e. Approve external examiners for research degrees and receive reports from such examiners, and make recommendations to Council based on these reports;
- f. To advise and make recommendations to Academic Council on matters relating to scholarships, awards and prizes;
- g. To acquire and generate knowledge of best practice regarding academic quality in higher education internationally and to disseminate this across the Institute;
- h. Ensure research degrees undertaken follow national quality assurance practices;
- i. Receive, review and make recommendations to Council on annual reports from Schools on the conduct of research degrees and be responsible for validating School plans with regard to research degrees;
- j. Approve new research supervisors and maintain the Institute's register of supervisors;
- k. Approve the academic registration of research postgraduates;
- l. Ensure that all research undertaken in WIT complies with the Research Ethics code of the Institute;
- m. To maintain awareness of the requirements of the Institute's regulatory environment;
- n. To monitor, on behalf of Academic Council, the quality and standards of current programmes and modules and generally to monitor the implementation of the agreed regulations.

1.3.6 **Academic Planning Committee:** the Academic Planning Committee's remit involves developing academic policy and strategy and the systems that support the implementation of that policy and strategy.

1.3.7 The functions of the Academic Planning Committee are:

- a. Contribute to the formulation of the Institute's strategic plan specifically with regard to academic planning;
- b. Promote consultation and discussion about academic strategy and related matters among members of the Institute and its stakeholders;
- c. Evaluate School plans in the light of the Institute's strategy and to make recommendations to Council relating to those plans;
- d. Advise and make recommendations to Council on new programmes, pathways and other academic developments and formulate policy with regard to the development of academic programmes, including research degrees, across the Institute;
- e. Advise and make recommendations to Academic Council on the determination of the system and regulations governing the design, evaluation and monitoring of academic modules and programmes;
- f. Advise and make recommendations to Academic Council on the design, development and maintenance of the Institute's module system and the use of credits, including the approval of negotiated and exit awards.

1.3.8 **Learning and Teaching Committee:** the Learning and Teaching Committee is concerned with all aspects of teaching and learning activity in the Institute.

1.3.9 The functions of the Support Committee for Learning and Teaching are:

- a. To advise and make recommendations to Academic Council on all matters relating to teaching and learning within the Institute;
- b. To advise and make recommendations to Academic Council on matters relating to research-related teaching and learning within the Institute;

- c. To advise and make recommendations to Academic Council on matters relating to staff and student support services and to monitor the effectiveness of these services in enhancing the teaching and learning environment;
- d. To support the career advancement of students and programme placement of students in industry;
- e. To be responsible for training in relation to research degrees for both students and supervisors;
- f. To acquire and generate knowledge of best practice regarding teaching and learning in higher education throughout the world and to disseminate this knowledge throughout the Institute;
- g. To encourage and support scholarship on teaching and learning throughout the Institute;
- h. To develop standards of programme placement for students in industry and to support the career advancement of students;
- i. To advise and make recommendations to Academic Council regarding the provision of learning opportunities by the Institute's Library;
- j. To advise and make recommendations to Academic Council on the co-ordination of the Industrial liaison function.

1.3.10 **Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee:** The remit of the Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee involves developing the Institute's research strategy, supporting research and innovative and entrepreneurial activity across the Institute, and fostering an environment in which research, innovation and entrepreneurship can flourish.

1.3.11 The functions of the Research, innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee are:

- a. Advise and make recommendations to Academic Council on matters relating to research, innovation and entrepreneurship;
- b. Review the Institute's research strategy and intellectual property policies and to monitor their implementation;
- c. Create and maintain within the Institute an environment conducive to research, scholarship, creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and consultancy activities;
- d. Support the Institute in addressing regional development needs;
- e. Support and enhance a vibrant research community in the Institute wherein researchers communicate regarding their work and maximise potential for collaborations.

1.4 Programme Boards and School Boards

1.4.1 The Programme and School Boards below are also working Committees of Academic Council each with distinct and fundamental responsibilities to Council for aspects of academic quality assurance and enhancement, as set out below.

2. Programme Validation

2.1 Programme Development

- 2.1.1 While new programme proposals normally arise as part of the implementation phase of a School's strategic planning process, such proposals may also emerge as a response to changing circumstances or emerging needs.
- 2.1.2 No constraints will be put on the sources from which new programme proposals can originate - the concept for a new programme may come from a variety of sources, internal or external such as academic staff, department, school or Institute management, commercial or industrial partners etc.
- 2.1.3 In order to develop a new programme a Programme Development Team will be established by the Head of Department. This team will consist of members of academic staff competent to work in the area under investigation.
- 2.1.4 The team should be mindful of the benefits of seeking the input of other staff, within or without the Department, who may be able to advise or assist in the process.
- 2.1.5 If required, individuals from within or without the Institute whose expertise would be of benefit in advancing the planning and development of the proposed programme can also be assigned to the team.
- 2.1.6 A Team Leader will be designated at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.1.7 The Programme Development Team's role at this stage is to investigate the proposed area of programme development and, if appropriate, to devise a new programme proposal which can be put to Academic Council for initial evaluation (Programme Validation Stage 1 – CE1).
- 2.1.8 The Programme Development Team will work in close consultation with the Head of Department and School.
- 2.1.9 The Head of School shall forward the completed CE1 document to the Office of the Registrar.
- 2.1.10 It shall be the responsibility of the Department and the School to satisfy itself that the proposed new programme is compatible with the School's strategic planning and/or that it responds to a changing circumstance or an emerging need as set out above which it is appropriate for the school to address.
- 2.1.11 The Programme Validation procedure comprises of two stages:-
 Stage 1: Preliminary programme proposal evaluation (CE1)
 Stage 2: Full programme proposal evaluation (CE2)

This chapter explains the procedures and states the aims of each of the stages.

2.2 Programme Validation - Preliminary Proposal (CE1)

- 2.2.1 The preliminary programme proposal is intended to establish:
- i. the need for the proposed programme;
 - ii. its resourcing requirements.
- 2.2.2 It will be made on the standard Form CE1—template available from the Academic Council Intranet or the Quality Office—and will contain information about the following:

- i. The identified need or gap in the market which the programme would address;
- ii. The rationale for the programme;
- iii. Any other similar programmes in the state;
- iv. If this programme differs from (iii) above in terms of approach, content, teaching or delivery methods; potential for transfer and/or progression; or accessibility to non-standard learners;
- v. Structure of the programme – to include proposed subject areas;
- vi. How the graduates would contribute to the economic, cultural or industrial field;
- vii. The potential number of students who would be recruited in initial and subsequent years;
- viii. Initial and potential links with professional bodies etc. and their view of the proposed programme development;
- ix. Potential or promised support from industry/business or state or private agency;
- x. Projected resource requirements;
- xi. European dimension;
- xii. Environmental dimension;
- xiii. Proposed start date.

2.2.3 Steps to be followed:

- i. The preliminary programme proposal including Form CEI to be lodged with the Office of the Registrar by the Head of School;
- ii. The Office of the Registrar:
 - a. sets up a Preliminary Validation Panel consisting of the Registrar or his/her nominee, the Head of another School or Department, an elected member of Academic Council and two external appointees with expertise in the relevant discipline area
 - b. informs Academic Council of these actions.
- iii. The Preliminary Validation Panel is supplied by the Office of the Registrar with the CE1 proposal and any other relevant documentation;
- iv. The Group considers the materials put before it, meets with the Programme Development Team and prepares a report of its findings which it submits to Academic Council. Academic Council having considered the report, will issue a recommendation;
- v. In the event of a positive recommendation the Registrar shall advise the Programme Development Team of the successful outcome of the process;
- vi. Should Academic Council make a conditional recommendation the Office of the Registrar shall forward the report to the Programme Development Team, for their consideration;
- vii. In line with the recommendations of the Preliminary Evaluation Group and Academic Council the Programme Development Team will either amend the document and undergo re-evaluation and/or satisfy the Academic Quality Committee on behalf of Academic Council that they have considered the report and clarify how they intend to act upon it;
- viii. In the event that Academic Council, or the Preliminary Review Group, are of the view that it would be inappropriate to advance the proposal even in a significantly modified form, a recommendation to this effect will issue. In such cases the rationale for such a recommendation will be set out and communicated to the proposing School;
- ix. The Academic Quality Committee must indicate its satisfaction that the requirements for approval at CE1 stage have been satisfied before a CE2 submission of the proposal can be considered;
- x. The Office of the Registrar informs the Head of School of the decision of Academic Council.

2.3 Programme Validation – Full Programme Proposal (CE2)

2.3.1 Steps to be followed for programmes for which WIT validation is sought:

- i. The Stage 2 programme proposal (CE2) is lodged by Head of School with the Office of the Registrar who arranges the evaluation of that document by the Programme Validation Panel;
- ii. The Programme Validation Panel prepares its report;
- iii. The report is forwarded to the Programme Development Team;
- iv. Following consultation with the Programme Development Team the School submits an agreed response and the finalised version of the programme documentation;
- v. The Academic Quality Committee considers the Programme Validation Panel report, the School's response and the finalised programme documentation in light of WIT academic quality policy and regulations and national academic quality legislation and frameworks. The Academic Quality Committee also considers whether the Programme Validation Panel report recommendations have been addressed by the Programme Development Team in the finalised programme documentation. Following its consideration of the application under these criteria the Academic Quality Committee makes a recommendation to Academic Council;
- vi. Academic Council considers the submission and makes its recommendations to the School and Institute;
- vii. In the event of a positive recommendation the Office of the Registrar will inform the School and the Programme Development team and arrange, through the appropriate channels, in accordance with the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 for the newly approved programme to be listed among the approved programmes validated by the Institute;
- viii. In the case of any other outcome the Head of School will consult with the Head of Department and the Programme Development Team to consider whether or not to represent a modified document.

2.3.2 **CE2 Document:** The primary focus of the full programme proposal will be on the overall quality of the programme and the standards to be attained. The document will be known as the CE2 proposal and should be laid out under the following headings:

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Section 1: | Introduction to the Institute
Introduction to the School and Department
Rationale for programme |
| Section 2: | Description of the programme
Aims and learning objectives
Title of the proposed programme of study
Admission criteria
Proposed Programme Schedules
Curriculum
Subject syllabi
Teaching approaches
Assessment schedule
Progression opportunities and transfer pathways
Programme administration and quality assurance
Programme regulations |

- Section 3: Resource requirements
 Staff development arrangements
 CV's of staff
 Copy of CE1 document, CE1 panel's assessment and the Programme
 Development Team's response to same.

The template for the CE2 is available from the AC Intranet or the Quality Office.

2.3.3 Composition of the Programme Validation Panel

- a. Chairperson - a senior educationalist/professional/business person/industrialist;
- b. The Registrar;
- c. Members - the chairperson of the CE1 panel which reviewed the programme and four members with expertise in the area of the proposal.

Members will normally be selected from the following panels:

- a. the third-level education sector;
- b. the industry/services or professional sectors.

Additional specialists may be added to the panel at the discretion of the Institute.

2.3.4 **Preparation for the New Programme Validation event:** The Chairperson of the Programme Validation Panel is supplied with a set of general briefing notes on the role and functions of the Validation Panel together with other relevant documentation by the Office of the Registrar. The Head of Department, Head of School and the Programme Development Team Leader are notified by the Office of the Registrar as to the composition of the Programme Validation Panel. In the case of HETAC validated programmes, HETAC will also be informed.

2.3.5 The arrangements for the Programme Validation are made by the Office of the Registrar, in consultation with the Head of School.

2.3.6 The Programme Validation Panel chairperson is responsible for clarifying the aims of the validation event to the members of the Panel. The Programme Validation Panel chairperson ensures that the review is conducted in a constructive and helpful manner and that an objective outcome is achieved.

2.3.7 The Head of School will:

- i. ensure that copies of the final programme document are distributed to the members of the Programme Development Team and other staff members involved with the programme, in adequate time prior to the programme review;
- ii. ensure that members of the Programme Development Team has copies of all briefing documents which have been sent to the Programme Validation Panel;
- iii. organise meetings of the Programme Development Team and other teaching staff who may be associated with the programme, to discuss the documentation and to prepare to present the programme and the programme document to the Programme Validation Panel;
- iv. invite members of the Programme Development Team and other teaching staff and others who may be associated with the programme, to participate in and contribute to the Programme Validation.

2.3.8 **Key Issues Addressed by the Programme Validation Panel:** The principal function of the Programme Validation Panel is to evaluate the proposed programme. The following key questions will be addressed:

- i. What is the market demand and need for the programme?
- ii. Are the aims and objectives and learning outcomes of the programme well-founded and clearly formulated?
- iii. Do the curricula and teaching schemes give realizable substance to these goals?
- iv. Do the assessments and examinations adequately test the students' learning?
- v. Will the graduates of the programme possess knowledge, skills and competencies appropriate to the award?
- vi. Are the arrangements for access, transfer and progression in accordance with Institute and NQAI requirements?
- vii. Are the programme learning outcomes at the appropriate level as set out by the NQAI requirements?
- viii. Do the individual set of modules 'add up' to a coherent programme?
- ix. Is there parity between off campus/on-campus delivery?
- x. Will the accumulation of the module learning outcomes result in the attainment of the programme learning outcomes?
- xi. Is there a clear and appropriate assessment strategy set out?
- xii. Do the curricula and teaching schemes in each module descriptor give realisable substance to the module's aims, objectives and learning outcomes?
- xiii. Are the assessment methods and criteria aligned to the learning outcomes in each module?

2.3.9 The Programme Validation Panel may divide into sub-groups in order to facilitate its work. The discussions at the meetings of the Panel are strictly confidential.

2.3.10 The Programme Validation Panel Report

- i. A written report of the findings of the Programme Validation Panel will be prepared by the Office of the Registrar in consultation with the chairperson of the Panel. When endorsed by each member of the Panel the report will be presented to the Programme Development Team through the relevant School;
- ii. At the end of the evaluation process, the Chairperson of the Evaluation Board will normally make an oral presentation of the Board's findings and conclusions to the Head of Department, Head of School and Programme Development Team. This presentation will be indicative of the contents of the written report and may include a recommendation for approval or rejection of the proposed programme, suggestions for modifying the programme and may outline special conditions for approval;
- iii. Following consultation with the Programme development team the School submits an agreed response and the finalised version of the programme documentation that takes account of the panel conditions and recommendations;
- iv. The Academic Quality Committee (AQC) considers the Programme Validation Panel report, the School's response and the finalised programme documentation in light of WIT academic quality policy and regulations and national academic quality legislation and frameworks. The AQC also considers whether the Programme Validation Panel report recommendations have been addressed by the Programme Development Team in the finalised programme documentation. Following its consideration of the application under these criteria the AQC decides whether to recommend that the application be approved by Academic Council;
- v. On foot of a positive recommendation from the Programme Validation Panel regarding the programme proposal and of the Academic Quality Committee regarding the validity

of process and final programme documentation submitted Council will validate the new programme;

- vi. Arrangements will be made by Council for the issuing of a Certificate of Validation;
- vii. The programme document becomes the Official Programme Document on issue of this Certificate of Validation. The Official Programme Document is lodged with the Office of the Registrar.

2.3.11 **Certificate of Validation:** Following ratification of a new programme, a Certificate of Validation will be signed and dated by the President and will be submitted to the Office of the Registrar within two weeks from the ratification date.

2.3.12 The Certificate of Validation may specify conditions of approval. Validation will normally be for a period of five years or up to the period of the next Academic Review for the School. A copy of the Certificate of Validation should be forwarded to the relevant Head of School.

2.4 Alterations to an Existing Approved WIT Programme (Form CE3)

2.4.1 Programme Boards will, from time to time, decide to update or rewrite programmes. Reasons for doing so may include keeping the content up to date⁴ and improving other aspects of delivery, assessment of students and evaluation of the programme.

2.4.2 In the first instance, the programme board will agree a proposal to change its programme and will document the proposed changes and the evidence for them. The following documentation will be needed:

- i. Copies of those parts of the approved course document that will be affected by the changes;
- ii. Copies of the same parts mentioned at i) above, modified as proposed;
- iii. A summary of the proposed changes and the reasons for them (market research, comparability studies, etc);
- iv. A suggested timetable for the implementation of the changes.

2.4.3 The School Board will evaluate the proposal. It may, should it wish to do so, appoint a subgroup to carry out the evaluation. If the proposal is agreed, the Head of School will lodge a copy of the proposal (modified as required by the school committee) with the Office of the Registrar.

2.4.4 The Registrar and school management will appoint an evaluation group consisting of the following members:

- i. The Registrar or his/her nominee,
- ii. A member of Academic Council (chairperson of the evaluation group),
- iii. Two members of the School proposing the change (non-voting)
- iv. An academic from another third level institute who is a specialist in the area under consideration,
- v. A practising member of a profession related to the programme of study,
- vi. The school administrator, who will act as secretary.

2.4.5 At its next meeting⁵, the Registrar will notify academic council of the proposal and the constitution of the evaluation group.

⁴ We recommend that at course design stage consideration be given to 'future proofing' syllabuses as much as possible. For example, if students are to learn a programming language that may change with industry standards, the content should specify 'Programming in a modular language to be agreed with the extern examiner' rather than 'Programming in Pascal'.

⁵ Subject to meeting Council's requirements for the notification of business.

- 2.4.6 The evaluation group will examine the proposal and may, if it deems it to be necessary, require a meeting with the Programme Board to discuss it. The evaluation group will make its recommendations to the Registrar who will forward them to the School, which will be given the opportunity to respond to the group's findings. The response, if any, will be attached as an appendix to the group's report.
- 2.4.7 The Registrar will table the report at the next Academic Council meeting. Academic Council shall recommend acceptance or otherwise of the evaluation group's decision to the Governing Body for ratification.
- 2.4.8 The Registrar will notify the school management of the outcome of the evaluation within five working days of the academic council's meeting.
- 2.4.9 If an external body such as HETAC validates the course under consideration, the Office of the Registrar will forward the proposal approved by Academic Council to that body for evaluation under its procedures.
- 2.4.10 When a proposal meets all of the requirements of Academic Council and, if necessary, other bodies, the school will prepare a revised programme document according to the requirements of the final evaluating group. The document will be marked with a version number and the date at which it becomes operational (these should appear at the foot of every page⁶ and will submit it to the Office of the Registrar.
- 2.4.11 The School office will recall all old versions of the course document held within the school (this must include all electronic copies of the course document on individual computers and shared sites such as the school's web site) and will issue the revised programme document. It will preserve a copy of the earlier version for its archives.
- 2.4.12 The Office of the Registrar will recall all old versions of the course document not held within the school (this must include all electronic copies of the course document on individual computers and shared sites such as the institute's web site) and will issue the revised course document. It will preserve a copy of the earlier version for its archives.
- 2.4.13 Changes to programme schedules must be processed at the very latest in the academic year *before* the changes will take effect.
- 2.4.14 All modules submitted in the course of an application to change an approved programme must demonstrate full compliance with the Institute's MAP regulations.

2.5 Minor Edits to an Existing Programme Schedule

- 2.5.1 The Approved Programme Schedule—held on the Banner system and maintained by the Office of the Registrar—is the legal foundation and record of the all WIT programmes under the Institute's delegated authority to make awards as regulated by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council.
- 2.5.2 As such the Approved Programme Schedule establishes a set of obligations towards students as well as towards funding and regulatory agencies. Furthermore, the Approved Programme Schedule—as the record of the programme on which a student is registered—is also the basis on which student rights and responsibilities are conferred. The Approved Programme Schedule must, therefore, be at all times accurately recorded and maintained and accurately communicated to all relevant parties (particularly students and prospective students) involved with the

⁶ This proposal should be considered for all stages of course documents

programme—for example via the Programme Handbook. The responsibility for maintaining the programme schedule lies with the Office of the Registrar.

- 2.5.3 Valid changes to programmes can only be realised through amendments to the Approved Programme Schedule. The mechanism for validating proposed changes to programmes is normally the programmatic review phase of the periodic School Review. In some cases, in periods between reviews, an alternative mechanism may be used. This is the CE3 process. The CE3 process is described in full above.
- 2.5.4 In some limited instances minor changes to approved programme may be validated by the Academic Quality Committee without going through a full CE3 process. Changes are minor if they do not affect fundamental characteristics of the programme such as the title, the aims & objectives, the level and/or require multiple changes to the programme documentation. Examples of changes that may be permitted include adjustment to minor re-phrasing of the indicative content, module sequencing or operational changes.
- 2.5.5 This process is facilitated by a Programme Board documenting the proposed changes to be made and submitting them in writing [e-mail] to the Academic Quality Committee via the Office of the Registrar.
- 2.5.6 The next available meeting of the Academic Quality Committee will consider the proposed changes and if it decides them to be sufficiently minor as not to warrant a CE3 process the Office of the Registrar will update the Approved Programme Schedule and notify the Programme Board.
- 2.5.7 If the Academic Quality Committee considers the changes to be significant enough to warrant a CE3 the Office of the Registrar will notify the Programme Board of this.
- 2.5.8 Changes to programme schedules must be processed at the very latest in the academic year *before* the changes will take effect.
- 2.5.9 All modules submitted in the course of an application to change an approved programme must demonstrate full compliance with the Institute's MAP regulations.

2.6 Validation of Programmes Composed Entirely of Existing Modules

- 2.6.1 In some cases, programme proposals may be advanced that draw exclusively from the Institute's existing module catalogue. Such programmes are required to advance through both CE1 and CE2 stages. The CE1 is required to review the rationale and resourcing of the new proposed programme as above.
- 2.6.2 The CE2 is required to consider the academic coherence of the proposed programme in terms of programme learning outcomes and programme assessment strategy as above
- 2.6.3 However it is understood that the documents in both cases may be considerably shorter and that the respective processes will not comment on the make-up of existing modules.

2.7 Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards

- 2.7.1 WIT has delegated authority to make Minor, Special Purpose or Supplemental Awards.
- 2.7.2 A minor award is an award that recognises the achievement of a range of learning outcomes associated with one or more major awards (that is, a named award on the National Framework of Qualifications such as a Bachelors degree, Higher Certificate or other major type). Credit is associated with this achievement. This credit may be utilised in accessing a major award or in gaining exemptions from some elements in a major award.

- 2.7.3 Supplemental awards are award-types for learning that is additional to a previous award, such as refresher courses or continuing professional development or training. Such awards are not at a higher level than that of the initial award. A special purpose award is normally made for specific, relatively narrow purposes. The award may recognise the achievements of some learning outcomes associated with a major award but acknowledges by way of special certification the achievements of a particular set of those outcomes (and in this specificity thus can be distinguished from a minor award). In other words, there is a stand-alone quality to the special purpose award that distinguishes it from a major award. (Indeed, it need not be linked to a major award at all.)
- 2.7.4 The process for approving a Minor, Special Purpose or Supplemental Award is largely the same as the CE2 process described above, with some changes.
- i. The submission document must contain details of any major awards to which the minor, special purpose or supplemental award is linked.
 - ii. The evaluation board should be comprised of the following:
 - a. Chairperson: a senior educationalist, or professional, or business person, or industrialist
 - b. The Registrar of WIT or his/her nominee
 - c. An elected member of Academic Council
 - d. Two external members with expertise in the area of the proposal. Members will normally be selected from the third-level education sector and the industry or professional sector most closely related to the proposal.
 - e. Additional specialists may be added to the panel at the discretion of the Institute.
 - iii. Following receipt of the report of the evaluation group, the Registrar will inform Executive Board of the resources to be allocated to the programme and will forward a copy to the Executive. In addition to the approval of Academic Council, Executive Board approval will be required before the programme can commence.

2.8 Collaboration Programmes, including Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards (Form CE4)

- 2.8.1 All collaborative programme activity is subject to the academic quality assurance policies set out by the Academic Council, as well as by Higher Education and Training Awards Council, and in the case of Joint Awards dependant on a Joint Awarding Agreement being established between HETAC and the other awarding parties.
- 2.8.2 Where the collaborative activity involves collaborative programme provision, quality assurance procedures include the submission of an agreement, fully describing the proposed provision to the Institute's Academic Council.
- 2.8.3 The procedures and processes of collaborative programme delivery, evaluation and external examining and moderation are integrated with the normal WIT quality assurance procedures, themselves agreed with HETAC. WIT in turn accepts similar requirements from its partners where appropriate.
- 2.8.4 The typical necessary stages leading to the validation of a collaborative programme are:
- i. Preliminary Research on Prospective Partners
 - ii. Memorandum of Understanding
 - iii. Joint Awarding Agreement, in the case of Joint Awards
 - iv. Consortium Agreement

- v. Programme Validation (by WIT and in the case of transnational collaborations in addition by HETAC)
 - vi. Application for Delegated Authority to HETAC (in the case of transnational awards only)
- 2.8.5 WIT requires all collaborative activity that involves programme delivery to be subject to periodic monitoring and review. Consortium Agreements will specify the duration for which the agreement is active and options regarding the termination of the agreement for all parties concerned.
- 2.8.6 The Institute's full detailed policy provisions in this area are set out in the separate Quality Assurance of Collaborative Programmes, including Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards⁷ document

⁷ Available at <http://www.wit.ie/policies/>

3. Programme Management

3.1 Academic Management

- 3.1.1 The responsibility for ensuring the quality management of the academic processes in accordance with Institute policy lies with the departments, schools and programme boards of the Institute. Individual members of staff are required to co-operate with these quality management procedures within the academic structures.
- 3.1.2 The school is the over-riding unit within which departments function. It has the responsibility for the co-ordination of academic and other procedures, the quantification of staff and other resource requirements, timetabling, course development and change within a broad academic review framework.
- 3.1.3 The department is the operational academic unit responsible for delivering the day to day teaching programmes of the Institute, and for ensuring the quality of the delivery of these programmes. Academic and support staff are assigned to a department and are responsible, in the first instance to the Head of Department for the proper carrying out of individual duties.

3.2 Programme Board

- 3.2.1 A Programme Board is established for each approved programme offered by the Institute. The Programme Board monitors the design and delivery of the programme, the academic performance of learners, and the programme's overall academic standards. The Board shall nominate suitably qualified experts to act as external examiners. It shall assess the programme's development on an annual basis through the analysis of such indicators as learner feedback, external examiner and professional body feedback, retention and attrition rates, and examination results.
- 3.2.2 It may be decided within a School/Department that it is desirable for a single programme board to take responsibility for a set of programmes that reside within one discipline area. This might apply in the case of an ab-initio programme for which there exists an add-on course leading to a higher award.
- 3.2.3 The Programme Board, as a Committee of Academic Council, bears primary responsibility for assuring and enhancing the academic quality of the programme(s) under its remit and for reporting annually to Academic Council on its progress in this regard.
- 3.2.4 The Programme Board is also a committee of the School within which it operates and as such will carry out its duties in accordance with the academic arrangements and strategic planning of the School/Department and in close collaboration with the academic management of the School/Department.
- 3.2.5 Duties of Programme Boards:
- i. maintaining the accreditation of the programme;
 - ii. reflecting on the teaching and learning strategies utilised in the programme and planning the ways in which these strategies will enhance the quality of the student learning experience;
 - iii. reviewing syllabi, ensuring co-ordination in the delivery of the programme, and reviewing arrangements for teaching, learning, assessment, examination and evaluation;
 - iv. carrying out an analysis each year and ensuring that the design of the programme is appropriate for the needs of students, graduates and employers;

- v. reporting to Academic Council, using the Annual Programme Board Template agreed by Academic Council, on including the Board's consideration of and response to the ongoing operation and development of the programme;
- vi. agreeing the criteria by which students will be assessed;
- vii. planning a timetable of assessments at the beginning of the academic year to ensure that there is a reasonable balance of work imposed upon the students taking the programme;
- viii. monitoring the results achieved by students and taking or recommending appropriate remedial action when required;
- ix. assessing the resourcing requirements for the course and making recommendations to the Institute authorities regarding the meeting of these requirements;
- x. monitoring and reviewing examination papers prior to their delivery to the External Examiners;
- xi. preparing a list of texts and equipment that students will be required to purchase and use;
- xii. preparing and maintaining a programme handbook for students;
- xiii. validation of examination results through its participation in the examination board.

3.2.6 The Programme Board Membership is:

- i. All academic staff assigned to teach on the course (whether by full time or part time mode) shall be members of the Programme Board;
- ii. A representative number of students of the course shall also be members of the Programme board. Student membership shall be arranged in accordance with agreed Academic Council procedures;
- iii. An academic staff member of the board will be assigned the duty of Programme Leader by the Head of Department;
- iv. The Programme Board may co-opt persons from outside the Institute whose involvement with the course would be beneficial due to their particular expertise or field of activity;
- v. The Head of Department shall be an ex-officio member of the Programme Board.

3.2.7 Each member of the board should declare possible conflict of interests. These might include, but are not confined to:

- i. Personal relationships with students on the course or their immediate family. (e.g. family relationship, close friendship).
- ii. Financial relationships (e.g. pecuniary interest in a company owned by a student or by a member of a student's immediate family).
- iii. If a member of a Programme board is unsure whether or not a conflict on interests exists, the member should discuss the matter with the person to whom they report.

3.2.8 The following operational guidelines should be observed:

- i. The Agenda for all meetings is to be agreed in advance by Programme Leader and Head of Department.
- ii. Meetings should be called in a timely fashion and documentation circulated in advance.
- iii. There should be a systematic and formal decision-making procedure within programme boards, with indications of what actions are to be taken and who is responsible for them, as appropriate.
- iv. Student representatives may attend all meetings of the programme board but should absent themselves when details of individual student performance or other personal details on individual students are to be discussed. No examination results should be

discussed in the presence of learner representatives. Normally items such as these are reserved as the final item on the programme board meeting agenda.

- v. Minutes of all meetings are to be kept in School/Department archives and circulated as soon as practicable after each meeting to both the Head of School and Head of Department.

3.3 School Boards

3.3.1 School Boards are responsible for the development of the academic strategy of individual academic Schools within WIT as well as monitoring at School level the implementation of the Institute's quality assurance procedures. The School Board will have authority over certain aspects of the programme development processes, module approval processes, student admission processes and other matters as agreed with Academic Council.

3.3.2 The functions of School Boards are:

- a. Be responsible for the development of the academic strategy of the School;
- b. Guarantee the effective use of modules and of the Institute's modular system in the design and delivery of programmes;
- c. Promote excellence in the development and operation of all programmes, taught and research, within the School;
- d. Make recommendations to the Academic Council regarding the structure and content of existing and new programmes and any special regulations or policies relating to such programmes within the School;
- e. Maintain appropriate oversight, on behalf of the Academic Council, of the work of the Programme Boards within the School and, where necessary, audit the procedures and decisions of these programme boards, and in so doing, within the parameters set by Council,
 - i. guide the Programme Boards in the overall design, development and delivery of programmes;
 - ii. adjudicate on student applications for leave of absence from and transfer between programmes;
 - iii. approve the progression and/or transfer of students;
 - iv. approve and assure the quality of the supervisory arrangements for graduate research students within the School;
 - v. review and approve students' requests for accreditation of prior learning as guided and advised by Council.
- a. Make recommendations to the Academic Council regarding exclusion of students from programmes;
- b. Monitor student retention, progression and completion rates within the School and generate the necessary corrective actions;
- c. Develop and maintain appropriate links between undergraduate and graduate programmes;
- d. Approve the appointment of internal examiners, in the case of research projects, and recommend the appointment of external examiners to the Academic Council.

3.3.3 The membership of the School Board is:

- i. Head of School (Chair)
- ii. All Heads of Department
- iii. 4 academic staff (drawn from course leaders and research supervisors)
- iv. The School Administrator

- v. 1 student
- vi. 1 elected member of Academic Council from another School

3.4 School-Student liaison

Each class within a course shall elect two representatives who will meet with the Head of Department and Head of School and all relevant support staff for consultations about student views relating to course content, delivery, assessment and development and to identify areas of concern to the class groups.

4. Annual Monitoring⁸

4.1.1 All staff, students and examiners involved with a programme contribute to, and share aspects of responsibility for, the ongoing monitoring of the academic quality of the programme planned, delivered and assessed. These various roles include:

- i. External Examiners through their monitoring and reporting, participation in Examination Boards and engagement with staff;
- ii. Teaching staff and students through participation in the programme itself, participation in Programme Boards, School Boards and consequent reports to Academic Council; staff-student liaison etc.
- iii. Department, School and central administrative managers and officers through managing the implementation and development of quality policies and procedures;
- iv. Academic Council and its Committees through consideration of academic quality issues arising from the annual monitoring and consequent institute quality policy development and policy implementation development and other actions.

The specific annual quality monitoring responsibilities of each area are set out below.

4.2 External Examiners

4.2.1 The reports of the External Examiners are fundamental to assuring and enhancing academic quality and standards. Under the WIT Quality Manual: Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes all External Examiners are required to submit a standardised report setting out their professional qualitative judgement on the appropriateness of the curriculum and of the assessment carried out, the standard of student work, the fairness and consistency of assessment practice and any feedback or recommendations on issues that they consider that the Programme Board, the school or Department or the Institute needs to address.

4.2.2 It is understood that External Examiners' reports should act as an input into all quality assurance procedures at module, programme and academic unit level and that action should be taken and reported on where recommendations are issued. The School shall routinely report on External Examiner reports and the School's responses to those reports through the reports of its School Board to the Academic Council. In the first instance, External Examiner reports and actions taken as a consequence of recommendations should be summarized in Annual Programme Board reports submitted to the School Board from each programme in the School. School Boards will normally consider reports from each examiner in the first instance before offering an overview of all reports to Academic Council. As circumstances dictate, the School Board or, in some cases, the Programme Board directly may report more than once annually to Council and may be required to do so at the behest of the Registrar.

4.3 Programme Boards

4.3.1 In order to facilitate Academic Council in fulfilling its legal responsibility to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of all programmes all Programme Boards are required to submit an Annual Programme Board Report on the operation and development of the programme in the previous academic year.

⁸ Sections of this chapter are informed by the Dublin Institute of Technology Handbook for Academic Quality Enhancement 2011: http://www.dit.ie/media/documents/academicregistrar/AQEH_june10_collated.pdf

- 4.3.2 The standardised format report will include the Boards consideration of issues arising during the year, and measures taken in response, including particular consideration of:
- i. Progress on issues raised in previous reports and in the School Review;
 - ii. Actions taken in response to issues raised by the external examiner;
 - iii. Actions taken in response to feedback from students;
 - iv. Actions taken in response to issues raised by professional bodies;
 - v. Student performance and progression;
 - vi. Plans for the ongoing development of the programme.

4.4 School Boards

- 4.4.1 School Boards are responsible for monitoring and reporting to academic Council on the consistent implementation of the quality assurance procedures across all programmes within the School including:
- i. The operation of the external examination process including appointment of externs, review and consideration of recommendations made in External Examiner Reports,
 - ii. The operation of the Annual Programme Board Report process including, completion of reports as well as review of issues arising, and advice to Council on resultant actions taken where appropriate.
 - iii. Update to Academic Council on progress on the School Review recommendations.

4.5 Academic Council

- 4.5.1 Academic Council considers the reports from the Schools in fulfilling its legal responsibilities for planning, co-ordinating and developing the educational work, and protecting, maintaining and developing the academic standards of the programmes and activities of the college.
- 4.5.2 The reports generated through the cycle inform Council's consideration and oversight of academic quality strategy, policy and procedures and, of the consistent and effective operation of its quality assurance and enhancement policies across the Institute.
- 4.5.3 Academic Council is responsible for the ensuring the consistent and effective operation of the annual cycle set out above.

4.6 Sequence of Events

- 4.6.1 In semester I of the year following the year under review the external examiner reports are circulated to the Programme Boards by the Office of the Registrar via the School Offices.
- 4.6.2 Each Programme Board submits its Annual Programme Board Report before end Semester 1. The Report will include the Board's reflections on issues raised by the External Examiners and any new measures taken as a result.
- 4.6.3 The School Board meets to consider the annual reports from all programmes under its remit and reports to Academic Council. The report will include the School's update to Council on progress with regard to the recommendations made by the School Peer Review Group report.
- 4.6.4 In advance of the final meeting of Semester II Academic Council considers the annual monitoring reports from each School.

5. Examinations and Assessment

- 5.1.1 Within the academic process it is necessary to have effective instruments designed for verifying student learning, knowledge and skill. These instruments need also to relate to predetermined learning outcomes and to correspond to clearly defined stages of achievement in the accreditation and awards process. The concept of the examination is one which embraces the range of such instruments of evaluation and assessment currently utilised including - written and practical examinations, practical and project examinations, oral and aural examinations, continuous assessments, examination of supervised professional practice and work placement, and examination of written reports and dissertations. These are the methods which lecturers and examiners use to measure the performance of students in achieving the objectives of a programme. Therefore they constitute a core element in the academic quality assurance procedures of the institution.
- 5.1.2 Waterford Institute of Technology is required by its mission as an institute of higher learning to make provision for the examination and assessment of learners. This examining role of the Institute is underwritten by section 23(e) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999.
- 5.1.3 All examinations and assessments are administered within a framework of formal written regulations and procedures that are clear and transparent in their implementation.
- 5.1.4 The examinations and assessment procedures of the Institute are regulated in accordance with the WIT Quality Manual: Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes document of Academic Council and under standards laid down for individual programmes in the approved programme documentation.
- 5.1.5 It is the policy of the Institute that the assessment of student performance should, normally, be an ongoing process, achieving an appropriate balance between continuous assessment and final examination.
- 5.1.6 The assessment of each student's academic performance and suitability for an award will normally be based on a combination of continuous assessment and a final examination

5.2 Institutional commitment to quality assessment

- 5.2.1 The Institute is committed to providing a system of assessment and examination which is compatible with the Institute's policy of delivering programmes and learning opportunities of verifiable quality to the public.
- 5.2.2 To this end the Institute strives to ensure that all aspects of the assessment / examination arrangements and procedures of the Institute are subject to regular review by Academic Council.
- 5.2.3 New and innovative approaches to assessment are evaluated and embraced as the variety of programmes and modes of delivery and the heterogeneous nature of the learning community make new and challenging demands on the Institute's expertise.
- 5.2.4 Furthermore the Institute is committed to the provision of staff development opportunities which enable those staff who have assessment responsibilities to further enhance, at regular intervals, the knowledge base which underpins their decision making and their practice in the field of academic assessment.

5.3 Internal Examiners

- 5.3.1 The Internal Examiners are normally members of the Institute's academic staff. The assignment of responsibility for the teaching and examination of a particular subject is normally carried out by the Head of the Department within which the programme resides.
- 5.3.2 The role and duties of the Internal Examiner are set out in the Institute's Academic Regulations document.

5.4 External Examiners

- 5.4.1 External Examiners are appointed by Academic Council on the recommendation of the Registrar, who seeks nominations of potential External Examiners from the relevant Head of School.
- 5.4.2 Academic Council, through the Academic Quality Committee and the Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee shall ensure that all External Examiners nominated for appointment satisfy the criteria as set out below.
- 5.4.3 Nominations are forwarded by the agreed date and on the appropriate form to the Office of the Registrar by the Head of School following consultation with the Heads of Department within the School.
- 5.4.4 Departments will normally be required to make a number of nominations greater than the number of vacancies arising.
- 5.4.5 **Nomination criteria:** Persons nominated for appointment must satisfy the following criteria:
- i. Nominees to serve as External Examiners should be suitably qualified academic experts in the relevant disciplines with current or recent experience in third level teaching, research, or in relevant commercial, industrial or professional fields;
 - ii. External Examiners will normally be drawn from the Irish or overseas higher education sector. The Institute will be mindful of the significance of the European dimension of Higher Education in the appointment of teams of External Examiners;
 - iii. When appointing External Examiner/s to a programme or set of programmes the Institute will be mindful of the ability of the examiner/s to deal with the full range of subject areas covered on the programme;
 - iv. The Institute will consider all appointments of External Examiners in the context of the ongoing development of academic disciplines within the Institute and of the Institute's strategic development;
 - v. Persons who have held an academic post at Waterford Institute of Technology within the three previous years will not be eligible for appointment as External Examiners of the Institute.
- 5.4.6 **Quality Assurance Role of External Examiners:** External Examiners play a vital role in assisting the Institute in assuring academic standards and the integrity of its programmes and modules and in assisting the Institute in developing its learning, teaching and assessment strategies and practices. The HETAC Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining states that public confidence in the quality of an institution's awards "rests on its belief that graduates have been objectively judged to have reached the standard that is certified by their qualification (award) in the context of the National Framework of Qualifications. The clear implication is that external examining is particularly concerned with actual programme learning outcomes, their compliance with national standards and, by extension, anything that affects those outcomes.
- 5.4.7 The role of the External Examiner is:

- i. to monitor the academic standards achieved within individual modules and programmes and to assure, where appropriate, their comparability to Irish and international standards;
- ii. if appropriate, to monitor the academic standards achieved within subject groups and to assure their comparability to Irish and international standards;
- iii. to ensure that the examination and assessment process is fair and that the results as determined are equitable.

5.4.8 The WIT Quality Manual: Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes sets out the duties of External Examiners with regard to:

- i. Approval of Examination Papers and other Materials;
- ii. Oral, Practical or Performance Examinations, and Presentations;
- iii. Assessment;
- iv. Appeals;
- v. Attendance at Examination meetings / Visiting the Institute;
- vi. Reporting.

5.5 Examination and Assessment Process

5.5.1 The assessment of academic performance will be in accordance with the regulations governing assessment in the WIT Quality Manual: Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes document and will comply with any particular conditions set out in individual Approved Programme Schedules.

6. Periodic Quality Review of Academic Units

- 6.1.1 Periodic Review process is one of the means by which the Academic Council is assured of the quality of the programmes of study at the Institute and the overall learning environment for those programmes of study (including the research environment), as well as of the enhancement of academic activity.
- 6.1.2 The Academic Council agrees the process by which the Review is to be carried out and receives the reports from the peer review element in the process and the enhancement plans produced. The reports are published by the Academic Council through the Registry and the implementation of any of the recommendations in those reports is monitored by the Academic Council.
- 6.1.3 In all cases the academic work of the whole School shall be reviewed in full at least every five years.
- 6.1.4 The review typically happens at School Level, but may also be carried out within a department or a discipline at a given time rather than in a whole School. The School shall however in all such cases retain its co-ordinating function. Department or discipline based review forms part of this overall process.
- 6.1.5 The periodic review includes a Programmatic Review. Proposals to update programmes or syllabi, to discontinue programmes or components thereof or to replace programmes should be presented as part of this review process.
- 6.1.6 No new programmes may be approved through the review process, though it is expected that as part of the strategic review of the School new opportunities for programme development can be identified and described. Structural changes and other major amendments to programmes should be clearly signalled as part of the self-assessment report. The PRG will comment on and validate such changes.

6.2 The Aims of the Periodic Review

- 6.2.1 The purpose of the review is to enable Schools to:
- i. Recognize and respond to strengths and weaknesses within the School, and identify important strategic and other challenges and opportunities for the School;
 - ii. Review, describe and respond to developments within the academic disciplines of the School and within the professions and industries associated with those disciplines;
 - iii. Identify enhancements to the quality of all its activities into the future in line with institutional objectives and planning the implementation of these enhancements;
 - iv. Identify future directions, needs and practices;
 - v. Review the operation and effectiveness of current quality assurance procedures, including statutory review requirements under delegated authority.

6.3 Stages in the Periodic Review

- 6.3.1 The review process is based on the following stages:
- i. A reflective self-assessment process conducted by a Quality Review Committee within the School leading to the production of a self-assessment report (SAR);
 - ii. Review of the School's SAR, including site visit, by a Peer Review Group (PRG) that includes external experts;
 - iii. Preparation of a peer review group report that is made public;

- iv. Agreement of a quality enhancement plan for implementation of the recommendation that emerge from the School's SAR and the Peer Review Group's recommendations.

The following sections reflect on each of these stages in turn.

6.4 Quality Review Committee

6.4.1 Typically the members of the Quality Review Committee will include:

- i. Chair – typically a senior member of staff;
- ii. Head of unit;
- iii. Representative of staff at each grade, and of the disciplines and programmes within the unit;
- iv. Representatives of all support services and staff within the unit including administration and technical support;
- v. Representatives of students within the unit.

6.4.2 For a large unit it may be necessary to have a number of subcommittees dealing with the co-ordination of the preparation of the SAR at the level of each section, and a unit quality review committee consisting of the chair/representative of each of the section committees.

6.5 Self-Assessment

6.5.1 Self-Assessment is a process by which the School reflects on its objectives (including measuring the alignment between these objectives and the Institute's strategic priorities), critically analyses the activities it engages in to achieve these objectives, and produces a self-assessment report (or SAR).

6.5.2 The SAR provides the peer review group with essential information to prepare both the review visit and the final review report. The purpose of the self self-assessment report is for the School to provide a comprehensive self-critical analysis of all the activities of the School. Specifically, the SAR will:

- i. Demonstrate to the panel that the School is capable of presenting an accurate, reflective, analytical and comprehensive self assessment of the quality of all its activities and of how it intends to enhance quality in the following period;
- ii. Present a succinct but comprehensive statement of the School's strategic objectives;
- iii. Measure the relationship between those strategic objectives and the Institute's larger strategic priorities;
- iv. Describe the School's quality systems and processes and assess their effectiveness;
- v. Help the School to identify and analyse its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, thus allowing it to suggest appropriate remedies where necessary; in particular to identify those weaknesses, if any, in procedural, organisational and other matters, which are under the control of the School and which can be remedied by action;
- vi. Identify shortfalls in resources and provide an externally-validated basis on which a plan for addressing these shortfalls can be constructed;
- vii. Provide a framework within which the School can continue to work in the future towards quality improvement.

6.5.3 The SAR is prepared by a Quality Review Committee within the School and is presented in three Volumes:

- Volume 1: School Overall Strategic Review
- Volume 2 : Review of Modules
- Volume 3 : Review of Programmes

6.5.4 Volume I of SAR should be evaluative and reflective in nature and should present the overall analysis of findings of the detailed modular and programmatic reviews that make up volumes 2 and 3.

6.5.5 Self-Assessment Report Format:

Volume 1: Overall Strategic Review

1. Table of Contents
2. Brief Methodology, to include detail on:
 - a. Number of meetings of the Quality Review Committee
 - b. Number of meetings with facilitators
 - c. Allocation of tasks
 - d. Summary of communication with unit staff not on the co-ordinating committee
3. Introduction to the Unit
 - a. Mission Statement
 - b. Aims and Objectives
 - c. Organisational Management Structure
 - d. Organisation of academic activity
4. Review of Student Recruitment, Progression and Achievement
5. Review of Classroom, Laboratory, Workshop, Studio and other Facilities
6. Review of Development and Deployment of School Staff
7. Review of School's Links with Industry, Business, Professional Bodies and the Wider Community
8. Review of Teaching and Learning within the School
9. Review of Research within the School, including research student experience and the link between research and teaching and learning
10. Summary Review of Modules (based on Part 2 below)
11. Summary Review of Programmes (based on part 3 below)
12. Overall Analysis and Benchmarking
13. Recommendations for Improvement
14. Appendices
 - a. Individual Profiles of Staff
 - b. List of Relevant Scholarly and Research Activity
 - c. Capital and Training Expenditure
 - d. Relevant Peer Review Reports
 - e. Other appendices as appropriate

Volume 2: Review of Modules

The Review of Modules should include:

- a. Comments on module design, content, assessment etc
- b. Proposed changes to modules
- c. Definitive set of module descriptors

Volume 3: Review of Programmes

For each programme of study, the following details are required:

- a. Programme Details
 - i. Title
 - ii. Level
 - iii. Programme Board Membership
- b. Review of Annual Programme Reports
 - i. Review of Student, External, Peer Feedback

- ii. Review of Annual Action Plans
- c. Review of Summary Reports
 - i. Recruitment statistics
 - ii. Pass rates and trends
 - iii. Attrition rates and trends
- d. Review of Programme Aims, Objectives, Learning Outcomes
- e. Review of Programme Design
 - i. Review of Broad Principles of Programme Design
 - ii. Review of Module Pathways within Programme
- f. Review of Programme Delivery Methodology
- g. Review of Programme-Specific Arrangements for Student Support
- h. Review of Programme-Specific Space Allocation
- i. Progression, Employment, Transfer of Graduates
- j. Proposed Changes
 - i. To Programme Design
 - ii. To Regulations Governing Programme
- k. Proposed Programme Schedule

6.5.6 The SAR should be evaluative and reflective in its nature, referring to other sources such as strategic plans, office quality manuals etc. for descriptive information. The preparation of the SAR acts as a stimulus and provides opportunities for reflection and consultation, enabling departments to plan and manage strategically, and to align their development plans with those of the whole Institute.

6.6 Peer Review

6.6.1 Soon after the completion of the SAR the School is visited by a Peer Review Group (PRG). The group by necessity includes external experts who are capable of making national and international comparisons with respect to the activities of the School.

6.6.2 The objectives of the peer review group are to:

- i. Clarify and verify details in the SAR;
- ii. Verify how well the aims and objectives of the School are fulfilled, having regard to the available resources;
- iii. Confirm the School's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats as outlined in the SAR;
- iv. Discuss any perceived strengths and weaknesses not identified in the self-assessment report;
- v. Consider the quality assurance arrangements within the School and their implementation in the period under review and discuss as appropriate changes to those arrangements;
- vi. Make recommendations for improvement in the School under review.

The functions of the PRG are to:

- i. Study the SAR;
- ii. Visit the School for an appropriate time to meet staff, students, senior Institute officers, graduates, employers and others within the School, including representatives of external stakeholders;
- iii. Clarify and verify details in the SAR, and consider other relevant documentation;
- iv. Review the activities of the School in the light of the SAR ;

- v. Prepare a draft report and present the main findings in an exit presentation to the staff of the School;
 - vi. Write the PRG Report.
- 6.6.3 The PRG Report presents conclusions on the quality of the School's activities and recommendations for improvement based on consideration of the SAR and the outcomes of the site visit. The Registrar will be the secretary to the PRG and will be responsible for ensuring that the Review Report is prepared and forwarded to the Academic Council together with draft Programme Schedules. The report and all relevant appendices are also made available to HETAC as part of its five-yearly review of the Institute.
- 6.6.4 The membership of the PRG will be as follows:
- i. Chairperson (an eminent educationalist/professional/business person/industrialist);
 - ii. Secretary (Registrar of WIT);
 - iii. Appropriate number (minimum 2, with a recommendation that there are no more than 4 in total) representatives of academic specialists in the areas under review;
 - iv. Representative from relevant industry/services/professional bodies;
 - v. Student representative from the Students' Union of another higher education institution.
- 6.6.5 Additional specialists may be added to the PRG. Efforts should be made to ensure gender equity where possible in the composition of the PRG. It is desirable to include an academic from an institution of higher education in another country.

6.7 Peer Review Group Report

- 6.7.1 The Report should provide a comprehensive review of the present state of the unit under review. A first draft of the Report of the Peer Review Group should be prepared during the site visit, according to the means agreed by the members of the Peer Review Group. This should be done on the final day of the site visit. All members of the Peer Review Group should be involved in the writing and revision of the Report. The final draft should be completed within *one calendar month* of the site visit.
- 6.7.2 The Review Group comment will focus in particular upon:
- i. Commendations on good practice;
 - ii. Affirmation or not of proposed school intention;
 - iii. Issues identified for future action;
 - iv. Specific recommendations for school and institute levels.
- 6.7.3 In keeping with the formative nature of the process review groups express their recommendations in a positive manner that encourages quality improvement. Such an approach is in keeping with the spirit of an exercise in which an ethos of partnership and trust ensures that real enhancement can result.

6.8 Scheduling of Quality Reviews

- 6.8.1 It shall be the responsibility of the Office of the Registrar, acting on behalf of Academic Council, to schedule all quality reviews within the Institute within an appropriate timeframe.
- 6.8.2 Academic Reviews of Schools or their component Departments or sections will be scheduled in consultation with the academic management of the School. The School in respect of which the review is to take place will carry out a self assessment and prepare a report which will be submitted to the Office of the Registrar of the Institute. The Office of the Registrar will make arrangements for the PRG group to receive this report and any additional materials relevant to

the process, at least one month in advance of their site visit. The PRG will meet at the Institute with Institute and School management, staff and a representative number of students of the School to consider the issues arising in the documents. The PRG will issue no later than one month of the site visit and following an opportunity for the School to view a draft version and check for factual accuracy.

- 6.8.3 While it shall be the responsibility of the Office of the Registrar to make arrangements for the implementation of the Academic Review process, including the appointment of the Academic Review Group, in accordance with the arrangements set out in this document, the School shall, at all stages, be closely consulted.

6.9 Follow-Up Action: Quality Enhancement Plan

- 6.9.1 The School will receive the final Peer Review Report within one month of the site visit and will be required to produce a response in the form of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) based on the findings of self-assessment report and the recommendations of the peer review group. The QEP will include specific achievable actions, timelines and, where feasible, measurable outcomes. Where relevant the unit must ensure that financial resources are available to support the improvement plan. This plan is used as a basis for actions and also for the follow-up review subsequently carried out by the quality office. The plan will also include actions to be taken by the Institute, where appropriate and agreed.
- 6.9.2 Where further clarification of any items contained within the report is requested by the School authorities this should be facilitated by the Office of the Registrar in conjunction with the Chairperson of the PRG and the Head of School. Both the final PRG Report and the School QEP will be presented to Academic Council. The Academic Council will have the responsibility for ensuring that the recommendations of the report and the School's action plan are implemented.

Appendix 1: Summary of Changes to this Document from Previous Version

Standardisation of Terminology Used Throughout

Course	->	Programme
Course Evaluation	->	Programme Validation
Registrar's Office / Registry	->	Office of the Registrar
Director	->	President

Chapter 1

Removal of / substantial edit to a number of introductory paragraphs (1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5) to give clearer overview of quality cycles, responsibilities & functions.

- 1.1.6 Principles brought from Chapter 5 periodic review of previous edition
- 1.3 Just the functions of Committees listed – full detail in Constitution.

Chapter 2

- 2.2.3 xi. Academic Quality Committee to rather than Preliminary Evaluation Group to indicate that requirements for approval at CE1 stage have been satisfied.
- 2.3.1 / 2.3.10 Introduction of a School Response to panel report at CE2 stage in advance of the programme evaluation being considered by Academic Quality Committee.
- 2.3.8 Update to issues to be addressed by Programme Validation Panel to include National framework of Qualifications, Learning Outcomes etc.
- 2.3.10 Finalised programme documentation to be submitted before programme be validated & consequently delete previous 2.3.13 re Head of School compliance with conditions report within six months.
- 2.4 CE3 process – had appeared as an appendix in previous version.
- 2.5 Introduction of a paragraph on approval of v. small changes by AQC without a CE3.
- 2.6 Introduction of section on Validation of Programmes Composed Entirely of Existing Modules.
- 2.6 Introduction of section on Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards.

Chapter 3

- 3.2.1 / 3.2.3 / 3.2.5ii, v restatement of annual monitoring role of Programme Board.
- 3.2.8 Operational guidelines for Programme boards.

Chapter 4

New chapter on Annual Monitoring cycle.

Chapter 5

- 5.4.6 – 5.4.8 Restatement of section on the quality assurance and enhancement role of external examiners taken from the Academic regulations.

Chapter 6

Re-format and tidy up based on clearer and more polished version of guidelines developed for Schools leading into the School reviews. No policy changes.

Appendices

Appendices from previous version containing policy provisions (CE3 procedure, Guidelines for International Collaboration) integrated into Chapter 2 above.

Appendices from previous version containing templates now replaced by electronic templates published through the Academic Council Intranet and Document Repository.