



Waterford Institute of Technology
 INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE

Course Quality Assurance Procedures 2009

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Who Needs to Know About this Document:	General Public, HETAC, WIT - Governing Body, Academic Council, Executive Board, Heads of School, Heads of Dept., All Staff, Student Union, Students.
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1. Ensuring Academic Excellence

1.1 Introduction

Under the Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 the Academic Council is appointed by the Governing Body to assist it in the planning, co-ordination, development and overseeing of the educational work of the Institute and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the courses and activities of the college.

The Academic Council, as part of its mission, will ensure the academic quality of the courses delivered by the Institute. By ensuring that these courses provide the most advanced, comprehensive and rewarding education possible, our students are prepared for lifetimes of learning and careers as leaders, practitioners, or researchers.

The Academic Council sees the setting, promoting and maintaining of the highest possible academic standards across the Institute as an essential element of its role and as a fulfilment of its mission. It has thus adopted the principles, practices and procedures set out in this handbook for the validation, approval, monitoring, review and academic quality assurance of all courses within the Institute.

1.2 Ensuring Course Excellence

Academic excellence is a complex process involving all members and levels of the Institute's staff. A key element is the continuing review of processes and procedures to ensure that the aims and objectives of academic programmes are achieved on a consistent basis. The underlying aim is to achieve the highest standards for all courses offered by the Institute. These courses must bear comparison to the best available both nationally and internationally and this document sets out processes and procedures to ensure that best practice and highest standards are the norm for all of the Institute's course programmes.

1.3 Philosophy for Quality Assurance

The Institute's determination to deliver fully on the contract that exists between it and its student body is the main thrust in the development and implementation of academic quality assurance procedures. It is recognised that this can only be achieved through the awareness, consent and cooperation of all members of the Institute acting in partnership towards a common goal. It also requires the support and encouragement of external bodies such as government, state, semi-state agencies, business and the wider community.

Quality assurance can only be achieved by ensuring that individual staff members, each working as a member of a team, have a role and duty in setting the highest academic quality standards. To this end, the Academic Council has developed the processes and procedures involved in implementing course quality assurance in the Institute and these are kept under continuing review.

This manual is a working document and is reviewed and updated periodically in the light of experience in implementing its procedures and feedback received from staff, students and outside interests. All members of the Institute are invited to recommend

improvements in the manual arising from their experience. They can do so by informing their Head of Department or Head of School or by writing to the Registrar.

It is expected that this manual will be read in conjunction with other documents including the Examinations and Awards Document of the Academic Council, which is also reviewed and updated periodically.

1.4 Course Quality Assurance and Control

In ensuring the quality of the Institute's courses the Council adheres to two basic concepts:

- i. Quality Assurance - achieved through critical appraisal of all proposed courses using "new course validation" milestones and subsequently through a process of School based periodic academic reviews.
- ii. Quality Control - a course based activity, achieved through an annual cycle of internal critical appraisal of the operation and success of courses in meeting their aims and objectives.

Ensuring the quality of the Institute's academic programmes involves the active participation of the Academic Council, Schools, Departments and Course Boards.

1.5 Outline of Course Quality Assurance Procedures

The Institute has a carefully structured process for course design, validation and course monitoring. The stages involved in this process are:

- i. Course Design - this includes course planning, internal approval and validation procedures. This process includes preliminary and full review stages and external Validating Authority review as appropriate. These procedures are set out in Chapter 2;
- ii. Course Board Review - this includes a review of the course content, course delivery, student performance, student success/failure statistics and External Examiners' comments. This review is carried out on an annual basis, in term one and the findings of this review form part of the annual report to the School Committee and Academic Council as outlined in Chapter 3;
- iii. Course Review - this includes a detailed internal evaluation of the course, including update and amendment of syllabi, delivery methods, staff development, External Examiners' comments and career paths for course graduates. The course review is normally carried out under the Academic Review process, normally on a five year cycle as outlined in Chapter 5.

1.6 Role of the Academic Council with regard to Course Quality Assurance

The Academic Council, since its establishment in 1994 has engaged on a process of developing appropriate procedures for academic quality assurance within the broad definition contained in the Act. The underlying principal of these procedures is one of continuous review with the intention of improving existing practices in relation to the development and delivery of courses and of encouraging uniformity of good practice and high academic standards across the Institute.

The general responsibilities of the Academic Council in this regard may be summarised as follows:

- i. establishing and maintaining procedures for the assessment and validation of courses and awards within the framework for delegated authority as set out in The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999;
- ii. ensuring that courses are designed and operated in accordance with the Institute's
- iii. approved regulations;
- iv. maintaining the standards and quality of the awards;
- v. maintaining the highest standards of delivery;
- vi. establishing and maintaining procedures for the regular monitoring of courses;
- vii. ensuring that when a course has been approved, any conditions of approval are implemented, and that any recommendations arising from the validation/review processes are fully considered and acted upon;
- viii. ensuring that External Examiners' reports are received and formally considered and that appropriate action is taken in relation to comments and suggestions contained in such reports;
- ix. ensuring that the documentation for each course is maintained as specified.

The Registrar has overall responsibility for co-ordinating these processes and reporting to the Academic Council and Institute on progress and implementation.

1.7 Committees of Academic Council

To facilitate the Academic Council in discharging its general responsibilities a number of committees have been established with clearly defined terms of reference, as follows:

1.7.1 Admissions and Awards Committee

1.7.1.1 The terms of reference of the Admissions and Awards Committee are as follows:

- a) To advise Academic Council on matters relating to selection, admission, retention and exclusion of students;
- b) To advise the Academic Council on matters relating to examination and assessment arrangements and regulations including External Examiners and examination appeals;
- c) To advise Academic Council on matters relating to student progress;
- d) To advise Academic Council on matters relating to scholarships, awards and prizes;
- e) To advise on the development of the code of conduct for the Institute;
- f) To consider and report on matter referred to it by Academic Council or by the Registrar;
- g) The Committee will be a standing committee and may be convened to deal with any urgent matters arising under (a) to (d) above between Academic Council meetings.

1.7.1.2 Membership of the Committee shall be as follows:

The Registrar or his/her nominee who shall be Chairperson to the committee.

- a) One Head of School as nominated by Academic Council;
- b) One Head of Department who is a member of Academic Council;

- c) Three academics who are not eligible under (b) or (c) above and who are members of Academic Council;
- d) One student representative who is a member of Academic Council;
- e) The examinations secretary.

The Director shall be an ex-officio member. The Committee will nominate a Convenor from among the membership. The Student Counsellor, Head of CHART, Careers Officer and Freedom of Information Officer shall attend as required to advise the Committee as shall any other Officer of the Institute who may be so invited.

1.7.1.3 Meetings:

The committee will normally meet once following each meeting of Academic Council but not less than three times per academic year. More frequent of meetings may be required at times depending on the Committee's workload. The committee shall agree any such arrangements. A schedule of meetings shall be agreed at the first meeting of the committee within the academic year and shall not normally be subject to change thereafter.

1.7.1.4 Sub-groups:

The Committee may establish sub-groups to advise on specific matters or to carry out specific tasks.

1.7.1.5 Co-option of members:

The Committee may co-opt other members of staff with particular expertise to serve on the Committee or any of its sub-groups for defined periods of time. Outside experts may also be co-opted in a similar manner. Co-opted members shall have full voting rights.

1.7.2 Academic Quality and Planning Committee

1.7.2.1 Terms of Reference of the Academic Quality and Planning Committee are as follows:

- a) to advise Academic Council on matters relating to the design, development;
- b) appraisal and implementation of courses;
- c) to advise the Academic Council on matters relating to quality assurance;
- d) to advise Academic Council on matters relating to academic standards;
- e) to provide a framework for the periodic review of the totality of the Institute's academic programmes;
- f) to consider proposals for the discontinuation of courses or programmes of study;
- g) the committee will be a standing committee and may be convened to deal with any urgent matters arising under (a) to (c) above between Academic Council meetings.

1.7.2.2 Membership of the Committee shall be as follows:

- a) the Registrar or his/her nominee who will be Chairperson of the committee.
- b) one Head of School;
- c) one Head of Department who is a member of Academic Council;
- d) three academics who are not eligible under (b) and (c) above and who are members of Academic Council;
- e) one member of Administration/Support staff who is a member of Academic Council;
- f) the Director shall be an ex-officio member.

The committee will nominate a Convenor from among the membership.

1.7.2.3 Meetings:

The Committee will normally meet once following each meeting of Academic Council but not less than three times per academic year. More frequent meetings may be required at times depending on the committee's workload. Any such arrangements are to be agreed by the Committee. A schedule of meetings shall be agreed at the first meeting of the committee within the academic year and shall not normally be subject to change thereafter. Any member absent from three consecutive meetings, except where agreed leave applies, will be required to resign from the committee.

1.7.2.4 Sub-groups:

The committee may establish sub-groups to advise on specific matters or to carry out specific tasks.

1.7.2.5 Co-option of members:

The committee may co-opt other members of staff with particular expertise to serve on the committee or any of its sub-groups for defined periods of time. Outside experts may also be co-opted in a similar manner. Co-opted members shall have full voting rights.

1.7.3 Support Committee for Learning, Teaching and Research

1.7.3.1 Terms of reference of the Support Committee are as follows:

- a) to advise Academic council on matters relating to tutorial and academic counselling arrangements;
- b) to advise the Academic Council on matters relating to staff and student support services as follows:
 - i. Library
 - ii. Computing
 - iii. Educational technology
 - iv. Laboratories
 - v. Career guidance
 - vi. Industrial liaison
 - vii. Student placement
 - viii. Learning support
- c) the Committee will be a standing committee and may be convened to deal with any urgent matters arising under (a) and (b) above between Academic Council meetings.

1.7.3.2 Membership of the Committee shall be as follows:

- a) The Registrar or his/her nominee;
- b) One Head of School as nominated by Council;
- c) Four academics who are not eligible under (b) above and who are members of Academic Council;
- d) One member of Support/Administration staff who is a member of Academic Council;
- e) Three Student representatives one of who shall be a member of Academic Council, one of whom shall represent the student body of the College Street and

- smaller campuses and one of whom shall represent the students of the Department of Adult and Continuing Education;
- f) The Institute Librarian;
 - g) The Computer services manager.

The Director shall be an ex-officio member. The Committee shall appoint a Convenor from among the membership. The Student Counsellor, Head of CHART, Careers Officer and Freedom of Information Officer shall attend as required to advise the Committee as shall any other Officer of the Institute who may be so invited.

1.7.3.3 Meetings:

The committee will normally meet once following each meeting of Academic Council but not less than three times per academic year. More frequent meetings may be required at times depending on the Committee's workload. Any such arrangements to be agreed by committee. A schedule of meetings shall be agreed at the first meeting of the Committee within the academic year and shall not normally be subject to change thereafter. Any member absent from three consecutive meetings, except where agreed leave applies, will be required to resign from the Committee.

1.7.3.4 Sub-groups:

The Committee may establish sub-groups to advise on specific matters or to carry out specific tasks.

1.7.3.5 Co-option of members:

The Committee may co-opt other members of staff with particular expertise to serve on the Committee or any of its sub-groups for defined periods of time. Outside experts may also be co-opted in a similar manner. Co-opted members shall have full voting rights.

1.7.4 Research and Development Committee

1.7.4.1 Terms of Reference of the Research and Development Committee are as follows:

- a) to maintain within the institute an environment conducive to research and consultancy activity;
- b) to develop a staff development programme for the Institute;
- c) to facilitate the institute in addressing regional development needs;
- d) to advise on the co-ordination of the industrial liaison function;
- e) to support career/course placement of students in industry;
- f) to encourage, promote and assist in the development of higher degrees in the Institute;
- g) to establish regulations for internal supervision of higher degree students.

1.7.4.2 Membership of the committee shall be as follows:

- a) the Registrar or his/her nominee;
- b) one Head of School;
- c) three academics who are not eligible under (b) above and who are members of Academic Council;
- d) the Head of Development;
- e) two postgraduate students of the Institute who shall be co-opted.

The Director shall be an ex officio member. The committee shall appoint a convenor from among the membership.

1.7.4.3 Meetings:

The Committee will normally meet once following each meeting of Academic Council but not less than three times per academic year. More frequent meetings may be required at times depending on the Committee's workload. The Committee shall agree any such arrangements.

1.7.4.4 Sub-groups:

The Committee may establish sub-groups to advise on specific matters or to carry out specific tasks.

1.7.4.5 Co-option of members:

The Committee may co-opt other members of staff with particular expertise to serve on the Committee or any of its sub-groups for defined periods of time. The Committee should have at least four active researchers among its membership. Outside experts may also be co-opted in a similar manner. Co-opted members shall have full voting rights.

1.7.4.6 Meetings:

A schedule of meetings shall be agreed at the first meeting of the Committee within the academic year and shall not normally be subject to change thereafter. Any member absent from three consecutive meetings, except where agreed leave applies, will be required to resign from the Committee.

1.7.5 Standing Committee of Academic Council

1.7.5.1 Terms of Reference of the Standing Committee are as follows:

- a) to provide, a continuing forum for the execution of council business between meetings or in the absence of such meetings;
- b) to progress or complete work items assigned to the committee by a full meeting of Academic Council.

1.7.5.2 Membership of Standing Committee:

- a) the Director of the Institute;
- b) the Registrar of the Institute;
- c) one Head of School;
- d) one Head of Department, who is a member of Academic Council;
- e) three members of Academic Council not eligible under (c) or (d) above;
- f) one student representative who is a member of Academic Council.

Any member who expects to be unavailable to carry out Standing Committee duties for longer than three months should seek leave of absence or resign from the committee and be replaced by a co-opted or elected member at the discretion of the Director.

The Director will be the Chairperson of Standing Committee. The Registrar will be Secretary to the Standing Committee. The Committee will nominate a convenor who will chair the meeting in the event of the Director being unavailable.

1.7.5.3 Meetings:

The Standing Committee shall meet as often as required. The committee may be convened by the Director at his/her discretion to consider matters requiring immediate attention should the convening of Academic Council be impracticable. All meetings shall be minuted and the minutes shall be submitted to the next full meeting of Academic Council.

1.8 Course Boards

The Course Board is at the heart of the school's academic quality assurance system. Course Boards ensure the quality delivery of the academic programme and ensure that students are well-informed, that their progress is monitored, that a reasonable balance of work is offered to the student and that assessments are appropriate and fair. It ensures the relevance and quality of the curriculum by a process of periodic review.

1.8.1.1 Course Board Terms of Reference:

- i. The Course Board meets at least once per term and reviews all matters relating to the provision and conduct of the course;
- ii. The Course Board involves the Course Leader, lecturing staff, Head of Department, student members and co-opted members;
- iii. It monitors student performance at each meeting and advises on suitable corrective measures where required;
- iv. The Course Board encourages staff to reflect on their teaching practises and on the quality of the student learning experience;
- v. It ensures that the aims and objectives of the course are clearly defined, and examines progress towards these;
- vi. It reviews detailed syllabi, ensures co-ordination across teaching programmes, and reviews arrangements for teaching, learning, assessment, examination and evaluation;
- vii. A report is presented annually to the Academic Council;
- viii. It ensures that lecturing staff are kept informed of any College or other developments relevant to syllabuses and examinations;
- ix. The Course Board meets to proof-read and mutually review examination papers.
- x. The Course Board attends at Examination Board meetings.

Chapter 3 gives full details of Course Board procedures.

1.9 Other Committees

The Academic Council shall constitute other committees from time to time as its sees fit.

2. New Course Development and Validation

2.1 New Course Development

While new course 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.

No constraints will be put on the sources from which new course proposals can originate - the concept for a new course may come from a variety of sources, internal or external such as academic staff, department, school or Institute management, commercial or industrial partners etc.

In order to develop a new course a Course 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.

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.

If required, individuals from within or without the Institute whose expertise would be of benefit in advancing the planning and development of the proposed course can also be assigned to the team.

A Team Leader will be designated at the earliest opportunity.

The Course Development Team's role at this stage is to investigate the proposed area of course development and, if appropriate, to devise a new course proposal which can be put to Academic Council for initial evaluation (Course Evaluation Stage 1 – CE1).

The Course Development Team will work in close consultation with the Head of Department and School.

The Head of School shall forward the completed CE1 document to the Registrar.

It shall be the responsibility of the Department and the School to satisfy itself that the proposed new course 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.

2.2 Evaluation of New Course Proposals

The course evaluation procedure comprises of two stages:-

- Stage 1: Preliminary course proposal evaluation (CE1)
- Stage 2 : Full course proposal evaluation (CE2)

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

2.2.1 Stage 1 - Preliminary Course Evaluation (CE1)

The preliminary course proposal is intended to establish:

- a) the need for the proposed course;
- b) its resourcing requirements.

2.2.1.1 It will be made on the standard form CE1 (see appendix 1) and will contain information about the following:

- i. The identified need or gap in the market which the course would address;
- ii. The rationale for the course;
- iii. Any other similar courses in the state;
- iv. If this course 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 course – 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 course 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.

2.2.1.2 Steps to be followed:

- i. The preliminary course proposal including Form CE1 to be lodged with the Registrar by the Head of School;
- ii. The Registrar:
 - a) sets up a Preliminary Evaluation Group 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 Evaluation Group is supplied by the Registrar with the CE1 proposal and any other relevant documentation;
- iv. The Group considers the materials put before it, meets with the Course 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 Head of School of the successful outcome of the process;
- vi. Should Academic Council make a conditional recommendation the Registrar shall forward the report via the Head of School, to the Course Development Team, for their consideration;

- vii. In line with the recommendations of the Preliminary Evaluation Group and Academic Council the Course Development Team will either amend the document and undergo re-evaluation and/or satisfy the Preliminary Evaluation Group 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 Preliminary Evaluation Group 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 Registrar informs the Head of School of the decision of Academic Council.

2.2.2 Stage 2 - Full Course Proposal

2.2.2.1 Steps to be followed for courses for which WIT validation is sought:

- i. The Stage 2 course proposal(CE2) is lodged by Head of School with the Registrar who arranges the evaluation of that document by the New Course Evaluation Board (NCEB);
- ii. The New Course Evaluation Board prepares its report for the Academic Council;
- iii. The Academic Council evaluates the report and makes its recommendations to the School and Institute;
- iv. In the event of a positive recommendation the Registrar will arrange, through the appropriate channels, in accordance with the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 for the newly approved course to be listed among the approved courses validated by the Institute;
- v. In the case of any other outcome the Head of School will consult with the Head of Department and the Course Development Team to consider whether or not to re- present a modified document.

2.2.2.2 CE2 Document:

The primary focus of the full course proposal will be on the overall quality of the course 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 course |
| Section 2 | Description of the course
Aims and learning objectives
Title of the proposed programme of study
Admission criteria
Proposed Course Schedules
Curriculum
Subject syllabi
Teaching approaches
Assessment schedule
Progression opportunities and transfer pathways |

Course administration and quality assurance
Course regulations

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

2.2.2.3 Composition of the New Course Evaluation Board

- a) Chairperson - a senior educationalist/professional/business person/industrialist;
- b) The Registrar of WIT;
- 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.

2.2.3 Preparation for the New Course Evaluation

The Chairperson of the New Course Evaluation Board is supplied with a set of general briefing notes on the role and functions of the Evaluation Board together with other relevant documentation by the Registrar. The Head of Department, Head of School and the Course Development Team Leader are notified by the Registrar as to the composition of the New Course Evaluation Board. In the case of HETAC validated courses, HETAC will also be informed.

The arrangements for the course evaluation are made by the Registrar, in consultation with the Head of School.

The New Course Evaluation Board chairperson is responsible for clarifying the aims of the validation event to the members of the Board. The New Course Evaluation Board chairperson ensures that the review is conducted in a constructive and helpful manner and that an objective outcome is achieved.

2.2.3.1 The Head of School will:

- i. ensure that copies of the course document are distributed to the members of the Course Development Team and other staff members involved with the course, in adequate time prior to the course review;
- ii. ensure that members of the Course Development Team has copies of all briefing documents which have been sent to the New Course Evaluation Board;
- iii. organise meetings of the Course Development Team and other teaching staff who may be associated with the course, to discuss the documentation and to prepare to present the course and the course document to the New Course Evaluation Board;

- iv. invite members of the Course Development Team and other teaching staff and others who may be associated with the course, to participate in and contribute to the Course Evaluation.

2.2.4 Key Issues Addressed by the New Course Evaluation Board

The principal function of the Course Review Board is to evaluate the proposed course. The following key questions will be addressed:

- i. What is the market demand and need for the course?
- ii. Are the aims and objectives of the course 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 course possess knowledge, skills and competencies appropriate to the award?

The New Course Evaluation Board may divide into sub-groups in order to facilitate its work. The discussions at the meetings of the Board are strictly confidential.

2.2.5 The New Course Evaluation Board's Report

- i. A written report of the findings of the New Course Evaluation Board will be prepared by the Registrar in consultation with the chairperson of the Board. When endorsed by each member of the Board the report will be presented to Academic Council. 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 Course Development Team Leader. This presentation will be indicative of the contents of the written report and may include a recommendation for approval or rejection of the proposed course, suggestions for modifying the course and may outline special conditions for approval;
- ii. On the recommendation of the new Course Evaluation Board, Academic Council will ratify the new course;
- iii. Arrangements will be made by Council for the issuing of a Certificate of Validation;
- iv. The course document becomes the Official Course Document on issue of this Certificate of Validation. The Official Course Document is lodged with the Registrar.

2.2.6 Certificate of Validation

Following ratification of a new course, a Certificate of Validation will be signed and dated by the Director and will be submitted to the Registrar's Office within two weeks from the ratification date. 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.

The Head of School should submit to Academic Council a report in compliance with any required conditions of approval that may have been specified in the Certificate of Validation, together with official Course Document, within six months of the date of issue of the Certificate of Validation.

2.3 Changes to an Approved Course

All changes to the approved course must be made in accordance with the procedures set out by academic Council for such modifications.

3. Course Management

3.1 Academic Management

The responsibility for ensuring the quality management of the academic processes in accordance with Institute policy lies with the departments, schools and course boards of the Institute. Individual members of staff are required to co-operate with these quality management procedures within the academic structures.

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.

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 Course Management

3.2.1 School Committee

Within a school of the Institute, the Heads of Department and the Head of School acting with the course leaders of the courses offered in that school, shall constitute a School Committee. The School Committee shall act to ensure (inter alia) consistency of standards within a school.

3.2.2 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.

3.2.3 Course Boards

3.2.3.1 Appointment of Course Board

A Course Board shall be constituted for each approved course being offered within the Institute.

It may be decided within a School/Department that it is desirable for a single course board to take responsibility for a set of courses which reside within one discipline area. This might apply in the case of an ab-initio course for which there exists an add-on course leading to a higher award.

3.2.3.2 Course Board membership

- i. The Head of Department shall be an ex-officio member of the course board;
- ii. All academic staff assigned to teach on the course (whether by full time or part time mode) shall be members of the course board;

- iii. A representative number of students of the course shall also be members of the Course Board. Student membership shall be arranged in accordance with agreed Academic Council procedures;
- iv. An academic staff member of the board will be assigned the duty of Course Leader by the Head of Department;
- v. The Course 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.

3.2.3.3 Declaration of interests

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).

If a member of a Course Board is unsure whether or not a conflict on interests exists, the member should discuss the matter with the person to whom they report.

3.2.3.4 Role of the Course Board

The Course Board is a Sub-Committee of Academic Council and as such is required to carry out, within its area of responsibility, the duties of quality control and assurance as set down by Academic Council and to report to Academic Council on its activities in the manner agreed by Council.

The Course 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.

3.2.3.5 Duties of Course Boards

- i. maintaining the accreditation of the course;
- ii. carrying out a SWOT analysis each year and ensuring that the design of the course is appropriate for the needs of students, graduates and employers;
- iii. agreeing the criteria by which students will be assessed;
- iv. 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 course;
- v. monitoring the results achieved by students and taking or recommending appropriate remedial action when required;
- vi. assessing the resourcing requirements for the course and making recommendations to the Institute authorities regarding the meeting of these requirements;
- vii. monitoring and reviewing examination papers prior to their delivery to the External Examiners;
- viii. preparing a list of texts and equipment that students will be required to purchase and use;
- ix. preparing and maintaining a course handbook for students;

- x. validation of examination results through its participation in the examination board.

3.2.3.6 Frequency of Meetings

Course Boards should meet once per term at least and more frequently if necessary to carry out their work.

Specific Tasks assigned for term meetings of Course Boards:

- Term 1: Review of External Examiners' comments.
Agreeing schedule of assessments.
Review of Summer/Autumn examination results.
Assessment of resource requirements.
Feedback from previous Annual Course Board Report
- Term 2: Student progress and feedback.
Review of Term 1 progress.
Monitoring and Review of examination papers.
- Term 3: SWOT analysis.
Preparation of Annual Course Board Report
Planning for next academic year.
Recommendation for review and amendment, if any, of course schedule.

Other items of work relevant to the duties of the board will also form part of the agenda for Course Board meetings. The Agenda for all meetings is to be agreed in advance by Course Leader and Head of Department.

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.

4. Examinations and Assessment

4.1 Introduction

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 course. Therefore they constitute a core element in the academic quality assurance procedures of the institution.

4.2 Examinations and Assessments

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.

All examinations and assessments are administered within a framework of formal written regulations and procedures that are clear and transparent in their implementation.

The examinations and assessment procedures of the Institute are regulated in accordance with the Examinations and Awards document of Academic Council and under standards laid down for individual courses in the approved course documentation.

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.

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

4.3 Institutional commitment to quality assessment

The Institute is committed to providing a system of assessment and examination which is compatible with the Institute's policy of delivering courses and learning opportunities of verifiable quality to the public.

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.

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.

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.

4.4 Internal Examiners

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 course resides.

The role and duties of the Internal Examiner are set out in the Institute's Examinations and Awards document.

4.5 External Examiners

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.

Academic Council shall ensure that all External Examiners nominated for appointment satisfy the criteria as set out in 4.5.1 below.

Nominations are forwarded by the agreed date and on the appropriate form to the Registrar by the Head of School following consultation with the Heads of Department within the School.

Departments will normally be required to make a number of nominations greater than the number of vacancies arising.

4.5.1 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 course or set of courses the Institute will be mindful of the ability of the examiner/s to deal with the full range of subject areas covered on the course;
- 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.

4.5.2 Role and Duties of External Examiners

The role and Duties of the External Examiner are set out in the Institute's Examinations and Awards document.

4.6 Examination and Assessment Process

The assessment of academic performance will be in accordance with the regulations governing assessment in the Institute's Examinations and Awards document and will comply with any particular conditions set out in individual Approved Course Schedules.

5. Periodic Quality Review of Academic Units

5.1 Quality at WIT

The Institute's Strategic Plan declares that "It is a critical part of the Institute's thinking that the best practice in determining and monitoring quality provision and quality improvement is an essential component of effective future provision both in teaching and research" (Strategic Plan 2007-10, p.13). A Quality Framework has been agreed to ensure that quality is at the centre of the Institute's activity and this Framework indicates that quality at WIT is a process of continuous improvement in the quality of services and experiences provided to learners, clients and other stakeholders, and of the underlying management systems and processes that support the delivery of services.

Informed by national and international policy and guidelines, the quality culture at WIT is based on the following principles:

- i. We aim to assure the quality of the entire student experience;
- ii. All members of staff are responsible for quality;
- iii. We aim to improve quality whenever possible;
- iv. We are committed to the principle of external peer involvement in assuring quality;
- v. We take into account the views of our students;
- vi. We use an evidence-based approach in quality management.

In the light of the above, a quality review at WIT - broadly speaking - involves engagement in a process of self assessment, the submission of a self-assessment report to external peer review, and the development of a set of clear actions based on the dialogue with that review group.

All activity within the Institute is subject to regular quality review. Normally reviews are organised on a unit basis. In the case of review of academic activity the basis unit is normally the School.

The review of a School will also have the goal of satisfying the statutory obligations the Institute has, through its Academic Council and Governing Body, to HETAC. The cycle of academic review to commence in 2008 at WIT will inform the Institutional Review by HETAC scheduled for 2010.

5.2 Process of Quality Review of Academic Units

5.2.1 Self-Assessment

The Quality Review of an Academic Unit is a self-study process whereby the School conducts a critical evaluation of its strategy, its modules and its programmes and produces a Self Assessment Report (SAR)¹. This review may be carried out within a Department or a discipline at a given time rather than in a whole School. The School

¹ The self – assessment process outlined here is substantively drawn from the Irish University Quality Board's "Framework for Quality in the Irish Universities" - <http://www.iuqb.ie> - and the European University Association's quality culture documentation - <http://www.eua.be>

shall however in all such cases retain its co-ordinating function. In all cases the academic work of the whole School shall be reviewed in full at least every five years. Department or discipline based review forms part of this overall process. The Review comprises a review of the academic and other operations of a School in WIT over the last five years together with a review of academic modules and programmes managed by the School over the last five years. Thus an Academic Review incorporates both a School Review and 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.

The Review is driven by a self-assessment process. Self-Assessment is a process by which a unit reflects on its objectives and critically analyses the activities it engages in to achieve these objectives. It provides an evaluation of the unit's performance of its functions, its services and its administration. These reviews provide information that can be used by the Institute to:

- i. Enable departments to identify future directions, needs and practices;
- ii. Help departments to recognise and respond to strengths and weaknesses, and to identify important directions in the discipline or profession;
- iii. Assist academic and administration/support units in assessing their relationships with, and contributions to, other academic programmes and administration/support areas within the Institution;
- iv. Provide a common framework for discussion with Institutions administration;
- v. Help inform the strategic plans of Units and the Institute.

In line with the primary objective of quality improvement, the process shall be open and supportive rather than judgmental and unduly negative.

The key questions the unit will consider in the process of the Self-Assessment are:

- i. What are we currently doing?
- ii. Why are we doing it?
- iii. How effective is our approach? How do we know?
- iv. What lessons have we learned?
- v. What will we do differently in the future as a result?

A Quality Review Committee is established within the unit to conduct a Self-Assessment.

The purpose of the Self-Assessment is to:

- i. Present detailed information about the Unit, and the collective perception of staff and students of their role not only in the Institute but, where appropriate, in the international community and in the social, cultural and economic development of Ireland;
- ii. Present a succinct but comprehensive statement of the unit's strategic objectives;
- iii. Show the quality systems and processes which are already in place and permits an assessment of their effectiveness;
- iv. Provide a comprehensive self-critical analysis of the activities of the unit;
- v. Help the unit to identify and analyse its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and allows it to suggest appropriate remedies where necessary;
- vi. Identify those weaknesses, if any, in procedural, organisational and other matters, which are under the control of the unit and which can be remedied by action;
- vii. Identify shortfalls in resources and provides an externally validated case for increased resource allocation;
- viii. Provide a framework within which the unit can continue to work in the future towards quality improvement.

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. 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.

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.

Self-Assessment is considered to be the core component of the Institute's quality framework, with emphasis placed on the value to the unit of this analytical and self-critical process. 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. The main emphasis in all of the Self-Assessment processes is on qualitative analysis. Quantitative data are also provided to support the assessment, providing a statistical overview of the size and level of activities of the unit under review.

The SAR provides the peer review group with essential information to prepare both the review visit and the final review report. The preparation of the SAR follows essentially the same process for all departments within WIT. However, the content of reports will

vary with the nature of the department. In the case of the review of an academic unit, the report will by necessity contain a review of all programmes within the School.

5.3 Peer Review

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

Typically, the functions of the PRG are to:

- i. Study the Self-Assessment Report;
- ii. Visit the unit for an appropriate time to meet staff, students, senior Institute officers, graduates, employers and representatives of all categories of users of the services of the unit, as appropriate including representatives of external stakeholders;
- iii. Clarify and verify details in the SAR , and consider other relevant documentation;
- iv. Review the activities of the unit 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 unit;
- vi. Write the PRG Report.

The PRG Report is a crucial element in ensuring the impact of the quality review process. This report presents conclusions on the quality of the unit's activities and recommendations for improvement based on consideration of the Self-Assessment documentation 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 Approved Programme Schedules for ratification. The report and all relevant appendices are also made available to HETAC as part of its five-yearly review of the Institute.

The membership of the PRG will be as follows:

- i. Chairperson (an eminent educationalist/professional/business person/industrialist);
- ii. Secretary (Registrar of WIT);
- iii. Head of School from another third level institution;
- iv. Appropriate number (minimum 2) representatives of academic specialists in the areas under review;
- v. Two members from industry/services/professional bodies sector
- vi. Student representative from the Student Union of another higher education institution;
- vii. Member of Academic Council from a School other than that under review.

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.

5.4 Scheduling of Quality Reviews

It shall be the responsibility of the Registrar, acting on behalf of Academic Council, to schedule all quality reviews within the Institute within an appropriate timeframe.

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 Registrar of the Institute. 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.

While it shall be the responsibility 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.

5.5 Follow-Up Action: Quality Enhancement Plan

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.

Where further clarification of any items contained within the report is requested by the School authorities this should be facilitated by 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.

5.6 Self-Assessment Report Format

The following format closely mirrors the format for all quality reviews within the Institute, a format agreed as part of the Institute's agreed quality framework. The format differs, however, in recognition of the different emphasis required for an academic review and the requirements of the Institute's Academic Council.

No new programmes may be approved through this process. Structural changes and other major amendments to programmes should be clearly signalled as part of this report. New modules may be approved by the PRG in certain circumstances.

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. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1: New Course Evaluation Form – CE1

NEW COURSE EVALUATION - FORM CE 1

Course Title:

Department:

School:

Course Development Team:

Team Leader:

Other Team Members:

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(If members of team are from outside the Institute, give name of organisation/body to which they belong)

1. Aims and Objectives: Describe briefly the purpose of the course

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2. Need for the course: Where does the demand for this course come from e.g. industry/commerce etc.? Have any market surveys been carried out?

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3. Market: Who is this course aimed at?
(e.g. school leavers, graduates of Diploma/Certificate courses, mature students).

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.....
.....

4. Resources required: List any specialised facilities required such as language laboratories, sports facilities, workshops, laboratories.

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List any new equipment required:

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.....

Lecturing staff required for this course - hours per week:

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.....

Administrative and technical staff requirements - approx. hours per week:

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.....

5. How course ties in with existing or other proposed courses: Is this course a follow-on to an existing or proposed Certificate, Diploma or Degree course in this Institute?

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.....

Are there any areas of shared teaching with existing or proposed courses?

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6. Outline of subjects: List the subject titles for each year of the course.....

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.....
.....

Signed: _____
Team Leader

Head of School

Head of Department

This form, when completed is to be lodged with the Registrar by the Head of School.

For Office Use:

Received by Registrar's Office: _____

Date of Acceptance by Course Evaluation Committee: _____

6.2 Appendix 2: Course Evaluation 3 (CE3) Procedures - Alterations to an Existing Course.

Introduction

From time to time, course boards will update or rewrite their programmes of study. They may do this for any of a number of reasons, including keeping the content up to date² and improving other aspects of delivery, assessment of students and evaluation of the programme. Some changes will be more significant than others.³

Academic council needs a robust procedure to evaluate proposed changes and, when changes are agreed, council will also need:

- a. To agree a timetable for the introduction of the changes,
- b. A method of introducing the new version of the course,
- c. A way of ensuring that earlier versions of course documents are removed from circulation while preserving an archive of all earlier versions of a programme of study.

Methodology

- 1) In the first instance, the course board will agree a proposal to change its programme and will document the proposed changes and the evidence for them.
- 2) The following documentation will be needed:
 - a) Copies of those parts of the approved course document that will be affected by the changes,
 - b) Copies of the same parts mentioned at a) above, modified as proposed,
 - c) A summary of the proposed changes and the reasons for them (market research, comparability studies, etc),
 - d) A suggested timetable for the implementation of the changes.
- 3) The School Committee will evaluate the proposal. It may, should it wish to do so, appoint a subgroup to carry out the evaluation.
- 4) 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 Registrar's office.
- 5) The Registrar and school management will appoint an evaluation group consisting of the following members:
 - a) The Registrar or his/her nominee,
 - b) A member of Academic Council (chairperson of the evaluation group),
 - c) Two members of the school proposing the change (non-voting)
 - d) An academic from another third level institute who is a specialist in the area under consideration,
 - e) A practising member of a profession related to the programme of study,
 - f) The school administrator, who will act as secretary.
- 6) At its next meeting⁴, the registrar will notify academic council of the proposal and the constitution of the evaluation group.

² 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'.

³ We propose that no distinction be made between 'major' and 'minor' academic changes until we have established and reviewed a sufficient body of case history. We append a list of possible reasons for change, some of which may be deemed administrative. Whatever the evaluation process is for administrative changes, the requirement remains to update documents when changes are approved.

⁴ Subject to meeting Council's requirements for the notification of business.

- 7) The evaluation group will examine the proposal and may, if it deems it to be necessary, require a meeting with the course board to discuss it.
- 8) The evaluation group will make its recommendations to the Institute's 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.
- 9) The Registrar will table the report at the next Academic Council meeting.
- 10) Academic Council shall recommend acceptance or otherwise of the evaluation group's decision to the Governing Body for ratification.
- 11) The Registrar will notify the school management of the outcome of the evaluation within five working days of the academic council's meeting.
- 12) If an external body such as HETAC validates the course under consideration, the registrar's office will forward the proposal approved by academic council to that body for evaluation under its procedures.
- 13) When a proposal meets all of the requirements of academic council and, if necessary, other bodies, the school will prepare a revised course 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 page)⁵ and will send it to the Registrar's office.
- 14) 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 course document⁶. It will preserve a copy of the earlier version for its archives.
- 15) The Registrar's office 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.
- 16) These procedures should be reviewed after one year of operation.

⁵ This proposal should be considered for all stages of course documents

⁶ We should maintain an official list of the current versions of all documents so that any member of staff can check the status of their documents.

6.3 Appendix 3: Guidelines for International Collaboration in Course Provision

Policy Statement

WIT is committed to the development of academic links with overseas Universities and Institutes in order to play its part on the world stage of higher education. WIT awards are offered under the authority delegated to it by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. WIT awards are compliant with ECTS, the European Credit Transfer Scheme.

International course provision is subject to the approval of WIT Academic Council. WIT expects that partner universities and institutes should share its mission and values and be willing to be subjected to the procedures required by Academic Council. WIT in turn accepts this requirement from any partner university wishing to offer its awards at WIT.

Where the partner university or institute is subject to the authority of a government department or agency, WIT requires evidence that this department or agency has no objection to the proposed link.

WIT must ensure that the academic standards and resources available for any course offered overseas must meet its normal criteria. The procedures and processes of course delivery, evaluation and external examining and moderation are integrated with the normal WIT quality assurance procedures.

WT must give careful consideration to the impact of international collaboration on its own academic provision and strategic plan. Such arrangements will only be entered into where there are clear educational advantages for both partners.

Definitions relating to Academic Collaboration

Validation: This is the process whereby WIT assesses a course of study offered at another institution as appropriate to lead or contribute to a qualification of WIT under the authority delegated to it by NQAI.

Recognition: This is the process by which WIT satisfies itself that an institution proposing to offer a WIT course leading to a WIT award, according to Appendix 1 of this document.

Franchise: This is an arrangement where the whole or part of a programme are delivered and assessed in a place other than the WIT campus.

Summary of the procedure

- Step 1 Initial discussions and visit leading to the signing of a general memorandum of understanding.
- Step 2 Preparation of a detailed proposal (CE4) to Academic Council. Panel review of the CE4.
- Step 3 Preparation of a legally binding Activity Agreement

Step 1 : Initial Discussions and General Memorandum of Understanding

Initial enquiries regarding collaboration may be directed to a range of WIT staff. The staff member must advise his / her Head of School, the Head of Development and the Registrar of this approach. It is important that these senior managers of WIT be involved in on-going negotiations.

Preliminary and exploratory discussions will consider such matters as the background to the institution, its current educational provision and the nature of the relationship being sought. A visit to the proposed partner by the WIT negotiators or their nominees is required. The criteria listed in Appendix 1 *Recognition of Educational Institutions* will be applied and a report will be submitted to Executive Board.

When it is established by Executive Board that the proposed partner is a suitable one for WIT, a general Memorandum of Understanding is agreed and signed. A copy of a standard Memorandum of Understanding is given in Appendix 2.

The memorandum of understanding covers the following modes of collaboration.

- Entry with advanced standing or articulation arrangements at undergraduate and postgraduate levels,
- curriculum development projects,
- on-line delivery pilot programmes,
- joint conferences,
- staff and student exchange programmes,
- provision of specialised programmes to promote international understanding and language skills
- joint research and development programmes.

This memorandum will be held in the Development Office and a copy in Registry.

Following the signing of the general Memorandum of Understanding between the partners, Schools of WIT may prepare a detailed academic proposal. .

Step 2: Academic Proposal to Academic Council CE4

Schools of WIT who wish to enter into activity agreements involving the provision of courses off campus with partners who have signed a Memorandum of Understanding should make a submission to Academic Council for approval.

This document (CE4) should include the following information:-

1. Reason for the proposal
2. Course to be offered – title, components and schedule
3. Student applications, selection and admission
4. Resources to be provided for the course
5. Teaching, learning and assessment strategies
6. Course management arrangements, including student support and quality assurance
7. Course regulations
8. Award

Guidelines for preparing this CE4 are given in Appendix 3.

The Registrar will set up a review panel to evaluate the proposal and advise Academic Council. This panel will consider the capacity of the partner to deliver the course and to support the students to the standards normally required by WIT. It will give particular scrutiny to staff resources, physical resources, course management arrangements, examination and assessment procedures and quality assurance matters.

Step 3: Preparation of an Activity Agreement

When the academic approval is granted by Academic Council, a formal agreement between the partners, referred to as an **Activity Agreement**, will be drafted by the Head of development at WIT and, when agreed by both parties, will be signed by the Director of WIT and the Head of the partner institution.

Basically it contains:-

1. The academic proposal agreed and approved at Stage 1
2. The inter-institutional arrangements for monitoring the programme. Clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the partners for all aspects of the course.

3. Where a consultant or facilitator has been employed by either partner, his / her continuing role after the start of the programme will be considered and remuneration agreed.
4. Financial arrangements between the partners. This should include
 - a) details of the revenue streams (student fees, external grants etc.),
 - b) a budget for the course provision and franchising (this will normally include, *inter alia*, tuition costs, resources, student support, travel and subsistence for visiting staff, managers and examiners, examination fees, consultancy fees, franchising fees and other overheads).
 - c) tax and audit arrangements
5. A guarantee by the partners of co-operation in on going monitoring and quality assurance arrangements.
6. Date of commencement and duration of the agreement.
7. Arrangements in the event of a violation of the agreement or other dispute; this should include clarity about applicable law.
8. Arrangements for termination or renewal of the agreement.

This Activity Agreement is a legally binding document and should be reviewed by each partners legal experts before being signed off by Head of each partner organisation.

APPENDIX 1: Guidelines for the Recognition of WIT Academic Partner Institutions

1. Before WIT signs a Memorandum of Understanding with another academic institution, its Executive Board must be satisfied that
 - a) the institution has been established on a permanent basis and its buildings, equipment and financial position are satisfactory
 - b) the academic standards of the institution and the facilities to be made available for any WIT courses it might offer are satisfactory.
2. The course of study offered by a recognised institution shall satisfy the following conditions:-
 - a) It shall be conducted by teachers acceptable to WIT
 - b) The organisation of the course, the syllabuses, the teaching and assessment methods shall be approved by WIT and shall be subject to periodic review.
 - c) All fees for the course will be agreed each year by the partners and will be paid to the overseas partner.
 - d) WIT charges to the partner for its services will be agreed on an annual basis and will be paid by the partner according to an agreed schedule.
 - e) Insofar as possible, all course regulations will be agreed in advance of the commencement of the course. Where issues arise, they will be addressed on a partnership basis and both partners will act in the best interest of students.
3. The main language of tuition and assessment for WIT courses will be English. The percentage of the course which may be delivered in another language will not exceed 30% for Level 6 and 20% for Levels 7, 8 and 9. It is the duty of the partner institution to ensure that students have a satisfactory level of English for admission to the course and that English support is provided during the course.
4. It is strongly advocated by WIT that each student should spend at least one month in WIT at some stage during the course. This may take the form of a semester or year abroad, a Summer School or a supervised project. In addition to this, a work placement in Ireland may be appropriate for some courses.
5. The recognised partner institution will establish a course board for the course, in accordance with WIT procedures. The board membership should encompass those teaching on and managing the course in the partner institution. At least two meetings per year should include representation from WIT; one of these may be the examination board. This course board will have the power to comment upon and make recommendations relating to the course and to the progress of individual students. It will report to the Academic Council, or its equivalent body, in each partner organisation.
6. The assessment and examination process will be aligned with the normal arrangements for the course in WIT. Nominations for external examiners will be agreed by the partners. A member of WIT who is involved in the course delivery or management in WIT will attend the examination board.

7. A degree from WIT or from the partner institution will be awarded to candidates who have successfully completed all the course requirements.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN

AND

**WATERFORD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
(REPUBLIC OF IRELAND)**

A Memorandum of Understanding made in xxx on xxx, between xxx, founded in xxx as an independent institution approved by xxx (hereinafter called xxx) and Waterford Institute of Technology, established in Waterford, Ireland by statute in 1970 under the RTC Act and re-designated in 1992 under the Irish Institutes of Technology Act. (hereinafter called WIT).

It is hereby agreed between the parties as follows:-

1. xxx and WIT have agreed to collaborate with each other to form a strategic and beneficial relationship to establish educational programmes which shall include
 - advanced standing or articulation arrangements for both undergraduate and postgraduate levels,
 - curriculum development projects,
 - on-line delivery pilot programmes
 - joint conferences
 - staff and student exchange programmes,
 - provision of specialised programmes to promote international understanding and language skills
 - technological exchange programmes,
 - joint research and development programmes.

2. Both parties shall enter into separate and detailed **Activity Agreements** which shall specify the terms and conditions of this collaboration.
3. Both parties hereby agree the proposed Activity Agreements shall contain the following provisions:-
 - a. the financial and legal obligations of the parties hereto;
 - b. the terms and conditions of the Agreement shall include but not limited to the details of its duration, the notice necessary for termination, the number of students and their scheduling, and the commencement, administration and monitoring of the courses involved;
 - c. the duties and responsibilities of the parties to the Agreement,
 - d. that the Agreement is subject to the express approval of the xxx Government, xxx Board of Directors and WIT Academic Council and that should such approval not be granted or be refused within a period to be pronounced in the Agreement, the proposed Agreement in respect of which such approval is not granted or refused will be of no further effect.
4. The parties hereto shall appoint representatives to carry out studies of academic, financial and administrative feasibility of entering into Activity Agreements contemplated herein and the parties further provide that each party will be liable for their own costs and expenses during the feasibility study process.
5. The parties shall in good faith continue the feasibility studies contemplated under this Memorandum of Understanding which shall be valid for a period of three (3) calendar years commencing from the date hereof, and the parties may, by mutual agreement between them, extend the feasibility studies for any period beyond stipulated period which they consider appropriate.
6. Either party may give three (3) months notice in writing to the other, of their desire to terminate this Memorandum of Understanding. At the end of the three (3) months period calculated from the date of the said notice, this Memorandum of Understanding shall be terminated.
7. This Memorandum of Understanding shall be construed as a statement of intent and is not binding on either party.
8. Nothing in the Memorandum of Understanding shall prejudice the right of xxx from establishing similar collaborative arrangement with Universities other than WIT and not prevent WIT from entering into similar relationship with other institutions other than xxx.

In witness whereof the parties hereto have agreed to enter in this Memorandum of Understanding on the date first above written.

SIGNED BY: -

SIGNED BY:-

For :

For: Waterford Institute of Technology

Date:

Date:

IN THE PRESENCE OF: -

IN THE PRESENCE OF:-

WITNESS:

WITNESS:

NAME:

NAME:

Date:

Date:

APPENDIX 3: Guidelines for the Preparation of a Proposal for the Collaborative Delivery of a WIT course off-campus: CE4.

This document should be prepared jointly and agreed by senior academics at WIT and the partner institution. It should be submitted to WIT academic council for validation. Some guidelines are provided below for the completion of each section.

1. Reason for the proposal

- a) State the benefits to WIT
- b) State the benefits to the overseas partner
- c) State the benefits to the students
- d) Show evidence of demand for the course
- e) Does this proposal require the approval of any other educational or government body? If so, provide evidence of this approval or state the process and timescale for obtaining it.
- f) Aims and objectives of the programme

2. Course to be offered – title, components and schedule

- a) The WIT CE2 document will be provided to the partner institution. It must be made aware that the intellectual property and copyright for this document resides in WIT and that it must not be copied or used for any purpose other than the proposed collaboration.
- b) The course may be adopted precisely as per the CE2 or it may be adapted to suit the needs of the partner organisation and the students. This may also be required because of the need for additional English support. All proposed modifications must be documented and explained. Credit may be given for any additional English which is included.
- c) Particular attention must be given to the management of research projects, dissertations or work placements.
- d) State clearly where and when and by whom each semester of the course will be delivered.
- e) The amended approved course schedule must be included as part of the submission.
- f) A course plan must be provided giving the key dates and milestones.

3. Student applications, selection and admission

- a) Admission criteria must be agreed by the partners and should be in accordance with the normal criteria for the course at WIT. In the case of overseas students, this must include the level of English required. Undergraduate programmes normally require IELTS 5.5 or equivalent.
- b) Explain how the course will be promoted. Normally this is done by both partners and any advertising should state clearly that it is a joint initiative by the named partners.
- c) Explain how and by whom students applications and selection will be handled. This is normally undertaken by the partner institution.
- d) Agree the numbers to be admitted.
- e) Agree the commencement date.
- f) Students must be registered jointly by both WIT and the partner institution.
- g) It should be clearly stated what entitlements the students have from each partner institution e.g. student cards, access to facilities and services, grants. Normally, when they are physically present in WIT, they have the same entitlements and responsibilities as WIT students and when they are attending the partner institution they have the same entitlements and responsibilities as other students there.

4. Resources to be provided for the course

- a) Human resources.
 - a. English versions of the CV's for all the teachers on the course should be provided as part of the submission CE4. The teachers qualifications must be in accordance with those of teaching staff in WIT.
 - b. Describe the levels of technical, administrative and student support services available for students on the course.
- b) Physical resources. Describe the supports available in terms of
 - a. Classrooms and laboratories

- b. Computing facilities
- c. Library facilities
- d. Other equipment

5. Teaching, learning and assessment strategies

- a) Course delivery modes – lectures, seminars, practicals, self-directed study etc.
- b) Class contact hours.
- c) Student induction and preparation for the course
- d) Exchange of class materials between WIT and the partner institution.
- e) Visiting lecturers (both to and from WIT)
- f) Teacher development programmes – new learning styles
- g) Mentoring
- h) Use of on-line learning and teleconferencing.
- i) Learning support for students with difficulties
- j) Extent of alignment between partners with regard to continuous assessment and examinations. For example will the students at the partner institution sit the same examinations as those in WIT or will this be the examining and assessment role be delegated. If so, to what extent will WIT monitor the process.

6. Course management arrangements, including student support and quality assurance

- a) Course Board – membership and terms of reference, schedule of meetings
- b) Name and responsibilities of the Course Director in partner institution.
- c) Name and responsibilities of the Liaison person in WIT (this may be the WIT Course leader).
- d) Student consultation and representation
- e) Examination Board and External Examiners
- f) Arrangements for an annual review of the co-operation.
- g) All other quality assurance arrangements and reviews should be specified and may contain elements from the normal procedures of each partner, provided they are harmonised.

7. Course regulations

- a) A common set of course regulations should be drawn up, agreed and presented to all students on commencement of the course. These should encompass:-
 - a. Level of attendance required
 - b. Clarification about which institution's code of conduct (covering for example plagiarism) will apply to the student. Agree that any breaches of the code leading to penalties will be communicated to the partner.
 - c. Assessment requirements – mandatory elements, pass marks, grading.

8. Award

- a) The precise title and level (pass or honours) of the award must be agreed.
- b) Students do not normally receive awards from both institutions. If a student may receive an award from either institution, the basis on which this is decided should be specified.
- c) For WIT awards, the wording on the parchment will include reference to the study in the partner institution.

Ten copies of this document should be sent to:-

*The Registrar,
Waterford Institute of Technology,
Cork Road,
Waterford.*

It should be submitted at least 8 months before the expected commencement of the course.

