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| **Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Leitir Ceannainn**
Letterkenny Institute of Technology

Section 5

Procedures and Guidelines for Regular Periodic Evaluation of Programmes

Procedures and Guidelines for Regular Periodic Evaluation of Programmes

The procedures and guidelines outlined below will guide all staff, learner representatives and external specialists involved in Periodic Programme Evaluation (PPE).

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of these procedures and guidelines is to make sure that each periodic programme evaluation -
- improves the quality of the programmes
 - ensures programmes remain current and continue to offer a valuable educational experience to the learner
 - ensures that both academic and labour market needs of the learner are satisfied
 - takes cognisance of the National Framework of Qualifications and implements the procedures of the NQAI in relation to access, transfer and progression
 - complies with all the requirements of the approved external validating body
 - contributes to the development of a quality culture in which all participants are aware of their respective roles and that actions are taken to address observed weaknesses in programmes

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 The document refers to all stages in the periodic evaluation of programmes validated by the Institute under authority delegated by HETAC, consistent with section 29 of the Qualifications Act; and the periodic evaluation of other programmes where the Institute has responsibility for curriculum development and the assessment of learners.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Each programme will be the subject of regular evaluation, at least once every five years, or as the approved validating body directs.
- 3.2 A PPE may be carried out on an individual programme, or a group of related programmes. There may be a combined PPE for all programmes in a Department or School.
- 3.3 There are two distinct elements to a PPE, an internal element and an external element. The internal element of a PPE comprises a self-evaluation of the programme(s), a plan for the subsequent five years and a revised programme document. The external element of a PPE entails a group of external experts considering the evidence of the self-evaluation and conducting their own evaluation of the revised programme document and plan. The details of both the internal and external phases of the PPE are contained in paragraphs 6 and 7 respectively.
- 3.4 In monitoring a programme the focus is on the effectiveness of the programme in meeting its stated aims and also on the success of the learner in reaching the intended learning outcomes. The accumulation of the data from the annual monitoring processes fundamental to the self-evaluation. Feedback from learners is a pivotal component.
- 3.5 The Institute's procedures for the assessment of learners is important for both the self-evaluation stage and also in the development of the revised programme document

- 3.6 The feedback from employers is obtained to support the ongoing monitoring of programmes and their regular periodic evaluation.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF PPE

4.1 Aims

- PPE is a review of the continuing validity of a programme's aims and the associated learning outcomes.
- PPE is undertaken in two stages – an internal phase and an external phase – to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and assessment in relation to the intended learning outcomes.
- PPE is mainly an evaluation of quality and flexibility of response to changing needs.
- PPE centres on a review of the development of courses over the previous five years, with particular regard to the achievement and improvement of educational quality.
- Through PPE a revised programme document is developed detailing revised aims and learning outcomes, revised course schedules, revised syllabi and a revised assessment plan.
- The PPE is concerned with the School/Department's future plans and in this context proposed new programmes must be examined in the self-evaluation and external expert report. Proposed new courses will be evaluated separately in accordance with the Institute's procedures and guidelines for the design and validation of new programmes and the validating body's processes.

4.2 Objectives

The HETAC Monitoring Policy 2010 details that the specific objectives of a programmatic review are to:

- *Analyse the effectiveness and efficiency of each validated programme, including detail of learner numbers, retention rates and success rates*
- *Review the development of the programmes in the context of the requirements of employers, industry, professional bodies, the Irish economy and international developments*
- *Evaluate the response of the provider/school/department to market requirements and educational developments*
- *Evaluate the feedback mechanisms for learners and the processes for acting on this feedback*
- *Evaluate the physical facilities and resources provided for the provision of the programme(s)*
- *Evaluate the formal links which have been established with industry, business and the wider community in order to maintain the relevance of its programmes*
- *Review any research activities in the field of learning under review*
- *Evaluate projections for the following five years in the programme(s)/field of learning under review*

5. BENEFITS ARISING FROM PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW

HETAC Monitoring Policy 2010 that the PPE self-evaluation by a provider should:

- *Provide opportunities for reflection on the operation of programme boards and meetings*
- *Provide opportunities for consultation with learners, employers, staff and external stakeholders*
- *Contribute to the strategic plan of the provider and strategic management*
- *Provide information on strengths and weaknesses, in respect of all aspects of programme provision*
- *Identify the future direction for the programmes/fields of learning and/or the profession under review*
- *Identify future challenges*
- *Identify and eliminate inefficiencies and overlaps between programmes*
- *Include a review of external examiner reports and actions taken on same*

- *Provide for an analysis of recruitment statistics, attrition rates, pass rates etc.*
- *Include the review of all programmes and benchmarking these against best practice*
- *Identify and address resource issues, both physical and human*
- *Incorporate a review the operation and effectiveness of current quality assurance procedures.*

6. CONSISTENCY WITH HETAC VALIDATION POLICY AND CRITERIA

The process for the conducting the PPE should be consistent with HETAC validation policy and validation criteria and include a review of:

- Minimum intended programme learning outcomes and their compliance with the relevant standard(s) as determined by HETAC
- Module learning outcomes
- Programme and module assessment strategies
- The operation of access, transfer and progression
- Teaching and learning strategies employed
- Relevant research activities
- Links with relevant industry and/or professional bodies
- Profile and qualifications of teaching staff
- Level and appropriateness of resources available
- Benchmarking against other similar programmes.

7. KEY QUESTIONS FOR A PERIODIC PROGRAMME EVALUATION

The key questions to be asked during a PPE include:

- What are we doing?
- Why are we doing it?
- How are we doing it?
- Is our approach effective?
- How do we know?
- What changes do we need to make?

Self-evaluation should focus on qualitative analysis, with quantitative analysis/ statistical evidence underpinning conclusions reached.

8. SUBJECT MATTER FOR A PERIODIC PROGRAMME EVALUATION (PPE)

The HETAC Monitoring Policy outlines that the SER should contain wide ranging information on the unit/programme(s) being evaluated, including:

- *A statement of its strategic objectives*
- *A review and critical analysis of the quality systems and processes which are in place to enable the achievement of its objectives*
- *The views of teaching staff, past and current learners, administrative staff servicing the programme, views of other staff that have any association with the programme or those involved with/on the programme*
- *An analysis of its strengths and weaknesses*
- *The identification of potential opportunities and threats, together with the possible actions to be taken*

- *The identification of resources required for the delivery of its programmes*
- *An analysis of the operation of the programmes to date, including access, performance of learners, retention and related appeals mechanisms etc.*
- *A review of reports from programme boards and student feedback forms*
- *A review of employment / advancement opportunities for learners*
- *A review of the teaching and learning strategy of the provider in the relevant field*
- *An analysis of all research activity within the unit and future plans in that regard*
- *A review of its links with industry, professions, the business community and wider community*
- *Detail of programme changes proposed and the rationale for the same*
- *A review of all modules included in the programme(s) under review*
- *A review of the assessment strategies for each programme*
- *Draft programme schedules, incorporating the proposed changes.*

The review of the assessment strategies for each programme should ensure validity, reliability, consistency and fairness of the assessment methods employed.

The enrolment/entry policy for each programme should be monitored and reviewed to ensure their appropriateness.

All aspects of resourcing and services required/provided for should be considered. This should include centres of delivery other than the main campus.

The SER should be considered by the Academic Council which has responsibility for the implementation of all recommendations arising from the review.

The SER should be published, together with the peer review report, provider response and implementation plan.

9. STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (SER)

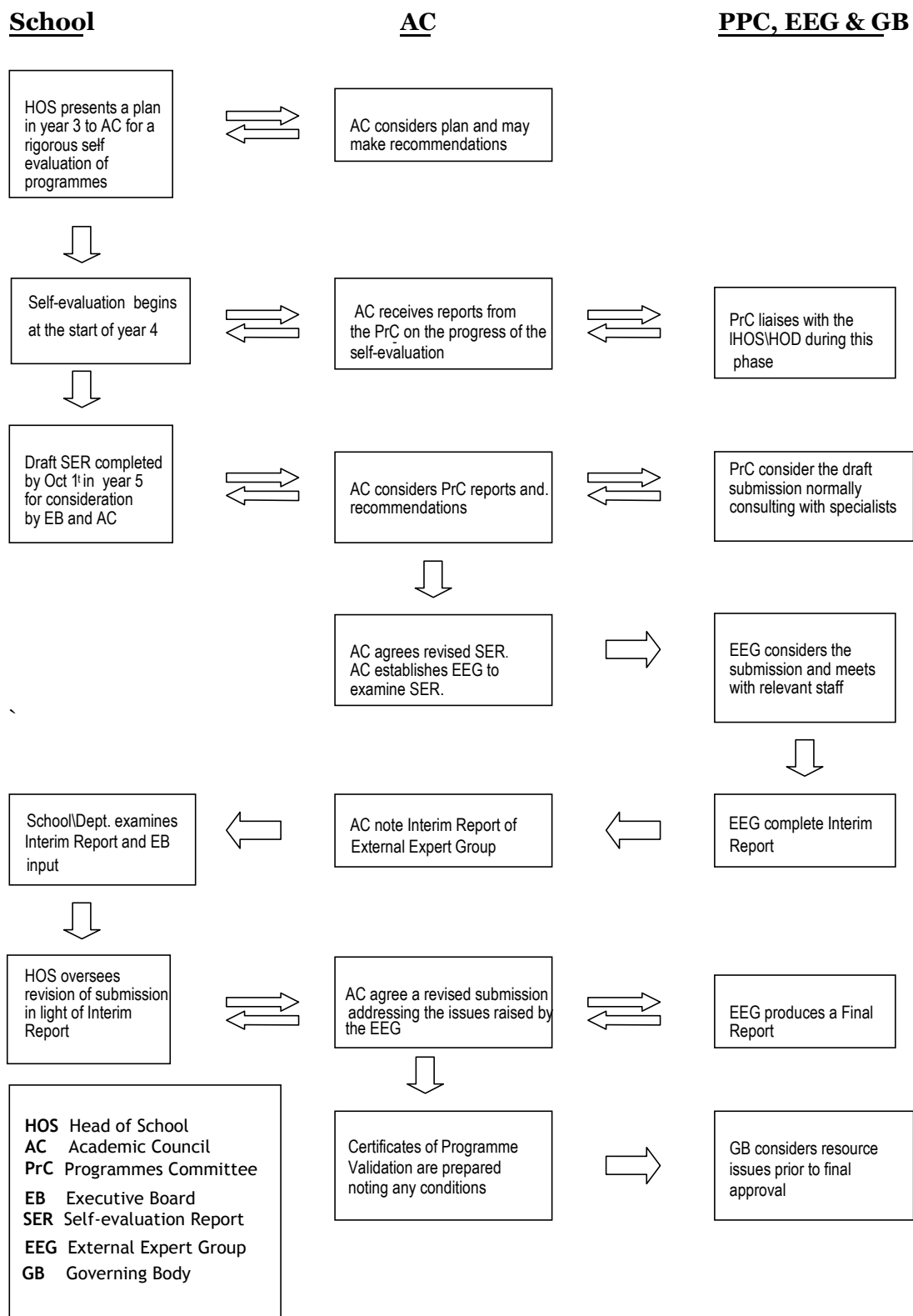
- 9.1 The Head of School/Department will present a plan in year 4 (of the five year cycle) to the Academic Council, for conducting a rigorous and fundamental self-evaluation. [For programmes that are the subject of more frequent reviews this process will begin earlier.] This plan will outline the process to be followed in conducting this review and also identify when specific elements of the work will be completed.
- 9.2 The Academic Council will consider this plan and may make recommendations. The process from presenting the plan for the self-evaluation to the continued validation of the programmes is outlined in the flow-chart below.
- 9.3 The self-evaluation must begin prior to the commencement of year 5 (of the five year cycle). The Academic Council may ask the Programmes Committee to liaise with the Head of School/Department during this phase. The Programmes Committee will report on the progress of the self-evaluation to the Academic Council until the PPE is successful completed. This procedure identifies the Programmes Committee, however, the Academic Council may charge another committee with overseeing the completion of the PPE process.

- 9.4 The final agreed programme document will be retained in the particular School/Department, the Registrar's Office, the Library, and made available on the Institute's intranet.
- 9.5 The compilation of an SER must be the culmination of the self-evaluation. A draft SER must be prepared in accordance with best international practice and the relevant Institute and HETAC procedures and guidelines.
- 9.6 The draft SER must be submitted to the Registrar, for consideration by the Executive Board and the Academic Council, no later than November of year 5 (of the five year cycle).
- 9.7 The Executive Board will examine the draft SER in terms of the Institute's strategic planning and the Institute's resource planning. The Executive Board will compile a report on the matter and the Registrar will place the SER and the Executive Board report on the agenda of the next Academic Council meeting.
- 9.8 The Academic Council may consider the draft SER in full session but will normally refer the submission to a committee. This procedure identifies the Programmes Committee, however, the Academic Council may charge another committee with overseeing the completion of the PPE process.
- 9.9 The draft SER referred to the Programmes Committee will be examined against: the criteria outlined in paragraph 5; Institute guidelines; the findings of previous review panels; international best practice; HETAC requirements; and the policies of the NQAI on access, transfer and progression. The Programmes Committee, with the approval of the Director, may consult with specialist(s) in the field(s) concerned. The Programmes Committee, and where appropriate the specialist(s), will normally hold at least one meeting with representatives from the School/Department concerned. This stage of the process may be iterative with the Programmes Committee making recommendations to the School/Department, and the School/Department resubmitting amended drafts to the committee.
- 9.10 When the committee is satisfied that the amended draft SER satisfies the Institute's requirements and the requirements of HETAC, the committee will ask the Academic Council, with the approval of the Director, to put together an External Expert Group (EEG) to examine the SER further. The composition of the EEG is outlined in Appendix 1.

10. THE EXTERNAL PHASE OF PPE

- 10.1 The Academic Council, through the Registrar, will facilitate the External Expert Group's consideration of the SER prior to meeting the Institute's staff. The External Expert Group will examine the SER in terms of Institute procedures, HETAC requirements and also the procedures of the NQAI in relation to access, transfer and progression.
- 10.2 The subject matter for a PPE, outlined in paragraph 5, provides useful criteria against which the Expert Group can measure the SER and carry out their own investigations.

Figure 1 Periodic Programme Evaluation



- 10.3 The External Expert Group may present a short report at the end of their visit to the relevant Head of School, Registrar, and Director (or their nominees). The secretary to the Expert Group, in conjunction with the Chairman, will compile an agreed interim report for the group and will forward it to the President, Registrar, and the relevant Head of School.
- 10.4 The Registrar will bring the interim report of the Expert Group to the notice of the Academic Council. Where the External Expert Group requires significant amendments to the submission the Institute's procedures commencing at 6.8 will apply.
- 10.5 The Head of School in conjunction with the relevant course board(s) will address the Expert Group's recommendations on School issues. The Executive Board will consider any recommendations from the group that have Institute-wide implications. The Institute's responses to the interim report of the External Expert Group will be brought to the attention of the Academic Council.
- 10.6 The Registrar will liaise with the Chair of the Expert Group, on behalf of the Academic Council, to ensure the issues raised by the group have been addressed. The Academic Council, through the Registrar, will forward the amendments and the Institute's responses to the Chair of the External Expert Group for consideration by the group.
- 10.7 In cases where the External Expert Group needs to meet as a group, or meet again with Institute staff, the Registrar will facilitate the required meeting(s).
- 10.8 The Secretary to the External Expert Group, in conjunction with the Chairman, will complete an agreed final report for the Expert Group. The Academic Council will consider this final report and may request additional changes to the submission document.
- 10.9 Where the Academic Council recommends approval, the Director will complete Certificates of Programme Validation, typically for another five year period, for each programme including any special conditions approved by the Academic Council.

General conditions of approval apply to all programmes and are included Certificates of Programme Validation, taking the following form:

- No significant changes may be made to the validated programme without the prior approval of the Academic Council.
- The School should notify the Academic Council of staff changes that relate to the programme, as they occur.
- The entry requirements to the programme shall be those approved by the Academic Council and be in line with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland's procedures for access, transfer and progression.
- Examinations leading to the award will be externally monitored by Extern Examiners appointed by the Academic Council and consistent with the policy for fair and consistent assessment as determined by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council.

- The School should submit to the Academic Council, within six months of the date of issue of this Certificate and from time to time as may be required, a progress report on its compliance with any conditions attaching to the programme validation.
 - The Institute will ensure that appropriate human and physical resources are available for the provision of the programme.
- 10.10 The Certificates of Programme Validation will be placed on the agenda of the Governing Body. The Director, following consultation with senior management will bring any resource issues that result from the programme revisions to the attention of the Governing Body.
- 10.11 At this stage the Registrar will notify HETAC in writing of the completion of the PPE and request, where required, a revision of the Order in Council that specifies the programmes for which the Institute has obtained delegated authority. This notification will include the relevant programme schedules, the report of the External Expert Group and the new Certificates of Programme Validation.
- 10.12 The Registrar will maintain a file on each Periodic Programme Evaluation. When funding approval, if necessary, has been obtained from the HEA, the Registrar, in conjunction with the appropriate Head of School/Department, will prepare a submission for final Governing Body approval to implement the revised programmes. This submission will certify that all necessary approvals have been received and will identify resource requirements and how it is proposed to meet them within available resources.
- 10.13 The Academic Council will review adherence to conditions of approval until the first cohort of learners has completed the amended programmes.

Appendix 5.1**COMPOSITION OF EXTERNAL EXPERT GROUP**
(PERIODIC PROGRAMME EVALUATION)**1. Chairperson**

A senior academic familiar with HETAC periodic programme evaluation from either the HETAC sector or University sector.

or

A senior individual from industry/services/professions, familiar with HETAC periodic programme evaluation.

2. Typical Membership

Seven members as follows

- (i) Head of School from another Institute of Technology.
- (ii) Registrar from another Institute of Technology.
- (iii) Senior academic from the University sector.
- (iv) One from industry/services or professions sector.
- (v) One from the social partners.
- (vi) One from the Institute's alumni.
- (vii) One learner representative who shall not be a registered student of the Institute.

Note 1: A senior academic from the Institute will act as Secretary to the External Expert Group.

Note 2: Additional specialists may be added to the group at the discretion of the Academic Council.

Note 3: Efforts should be made to ensure gender equity in the composition of the External Expert Group.

Appendix 5.2**PRO-FORMA SELF-EVALUATION REPORT**
(PERIODIC PROGRAMME EVALUATION)**Part A General Detail**

1. Table of Contents
2. Executive Summary
3. Methodology
 - Methodology underpinning the review, including details on:
 - the groups (including their composition) with responsibility for the review
 - a schedule of meetings which form part of the review
 - a schedule identifying tasks and those responsible for them
 - a timetable for the review
4. Background Information
 - Background information on the School/Department/Unit under review, including, the mission statement, the organisational/management structure, the organisation of the education and training activity
5. Access, Transfer and Progression
 - Review of Access, Transfer and Progression
6. Learner Profile
 - Analysis of learner profile and target learner groups
7. Resources
 - Review of resources – human and physical
8. Business, Industrial and Professional Bodies
 - Review of links with business, industry, professional bodies and other stakeholders as appropriate
9. Research and Consultancy
 - Review of research activity within the scope of the programmatic review
10. Teaching and Learning
 - Review of teaching and learning
11. Outcome of Programme(s) Review
 - Summary of the outcome of the review of programmes (based on detail provided in Part 2).
12. Outcome of Module review
 - Summary of the outcome of the review of modules (based on detail provided in Part 3).
13. Recommendations for Improvement.
14. Appendices:
 - staff curricula vitae
 - relevant reports
 - other as appropriate.

Part B Review of Programmes

For each programme included in the review the following detail is required:

1. General programme details, to include:
 - Award title
 - Programme title
 - Level of award
 - Credit number

- Standard which provides the framework for the programme .
2. Membership of programme board and programme board reports
 3. Review of the following reports - programme board reports, external examiner reports, learner surveys, other stakeholder reports, statistics relating to demand for the programmes
 4. Review of entry standards, performance by learners on the programme, attrition rates etc.
 5. Review of programme aims, objectives and learning outcomes
 6. Review of programme design, to include embedded awards
 7. Review of arrangements for access, transfer and progression, to include progression for graduates
 8. Review of programme assessment strategy
 9. Review of teaching and learning strategies
 10. Proposed changes to programme design (detail in Part C), including proposed Programme Schedules

Part C Review of Modules

For each module the following information should be provided:

- Proposed changes to modules
- Minimum intended learning outcomes
- Module assessment strategies
- Module descriptor.

Appendix 5.3

LETTERKENNY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

PERIODIC PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Report of the External Expert Group

PART 1 **GENERAL INFORMATION**

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT:

DATE OF VISITATION:

MEMBERS OF EXTERNAL EXPERT GROUP (EEG):

SECRETARY TO EEG:

INSTITUTE STAFF:

PART 2 FINDINGS OF THE EXTERNAL EXPERT GROUP

The External Expert Group is satisfied that the self-study and revised programmes adequately addresses the following criteria:

(1) Academic Processes

A fundamental review of the programmatic area is clearly set out in the self-study document.

The self-study demonstrates how the Institute's Quality Assurance procedures have been properly applied in the development of the self-study and in revising the programmes taking cognisance of the relevant HETAC standards, and that satisfactory procedures exist for the ongoing monitoring of these programmes.

(2) Student Throughput

Enrolment and examination statistics are adequately addressed and details are presented of appropriate special initiatives in relation to admissions e.g. broadening access, mature student, facilitating gender equality.

(3) Review of Course Design

A sufficient description of the revision of each programme, highlighting any changes implemented or proposed, has been provided. In addition, the course schedules in operation at the time of the previous review together with course schedules proposed as part of the current PPE are presented.

(4) Assessment

Procedures in place for the assessment of learners are documented. The methods for assessment of learners (i) are fair and consistent and comply with standards determined by HETAC, (ii) are in keeping with the National Framework of Qualifications, (iii) are effective in measuring the students' attainment of the intended learning outcomes, (iv) contribute to the total learning experience, and (v) encourage creativity and originality in demonstrating achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

(5) Employment and Further Studies of Awardees

Employment gained and further studies undertaken by awardees is appropriately detailed and analysed in comparative tabular format.

(6) National and International Transfers

Evidence of commitment to co-operation with inter-institutional linkages, both national and transnational, is set out, including the structures in place to facilitate these arrangements.

(7) Review of Laboratory, Workshop, Studio and Other Facilities

The necessary facilities available in terms of accommodation, equipment, and library and information technology resources are satisfactory to support the revised programmes.

(8) Deployment and Development of Academic Staff

The staffing levels are appropriate and the levels of qualifications and competence of the staff is sufficient to deliver the programme.

(9) Links with Industry, Business and the Wider Community

Evidence is presented that the School/Department actively engages with the world of work and the wider community in order to maintain a high degree of relevance in its programmes and in its research activity. The procedures and processes used to establish and maintain these links are described.

In particular the means by which School/Department elicits from industry, educational interests, public bodies and professional bodies how well the programmes meet their demands is included. The School/Department also examines its programmes against the relevant offerings of other higher education institutions.

(10) Research

The self-study documents postgraduate research carried out by learners in the previous five years together with School/Departments plans for the next five years.

Research conducted by staff since the previous review is also detailed together with plans for the next five years.

(11) Course Delivery Methodologies

Evidence is provided of innovation in relation to teaching, such as the use of new types of educational technology, teaching strategies and methodologies.

(12) Adult and Continuing Education

Information is presented in relation to adult education provision which has evolved in the Institute over the previous five years in response to the perceived needs of industry and the local community.

(13) Academic Regulations

The self-study sets out the form of regulations made by the Governing Body on the advice of the Academic Council.

(14) Development Plan

A coherent plan for the School/Department for the succeeding five years is included.

(15) Programme Documents

Revised programmes are fully justified in terms of their approach to teaching and learning, alignment with the relevant HETAC standard, programme content, and assessment methods.

HETAC Standards: HETAC determines, for each named award, the specific standard of knowledge, skill and competence that must be acquired by the learner before that award can be made. The learning outcomes of the programme are stated in such a way that the compliance with the appropriate HETAC standard is demonstrated.

Revised Programme Titles and Award Titles: Any revised award titles are consistent with the named awards determined by HETAC. The programme titles are clear, accurate, succinct, and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders.

Access, Transfer and Progression: Revised programmes incorporate the procedures for access, transfer and progression that have been established by the NQAI. Consistent with the policy of HETAC, awards accommodate a variety of access and entry requirements.

PART 3 **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS**

For the attention of the Academic Council:

The External Expert Group advises the Academic Council that the Institute and the School/Department should take cognisance of following recommendations:

The External Expert Group advises the Academic Council that approval of the programmes subject to general conditions of approval together with the following additional conditions: