

Draft [28 May 2008]

Charter of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown May 2008

The Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (the Institute) undertakes third-level education, training and research for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State with particular reference to the local community. This Charter identifies the distinctive contribution made by the Institute to Irish tertiary education and training, and in particular, the contribution of the Institute to supporting the needs of the region of greater Blanchardstown.

Blanchardstown

Blanchardstown is a growing outer suburb of Dublin, Ireland. The area is located 10km north-west of Dublin city. It is administered by Fingal County Council. The population of Blanchardstown, and its immediate environs, is approximately 100,000 people. However, if the greater catchment area of Lucan, Cabra, Finglas, Swords and South Meath is included, the population is similar to that of a medium-sized city. The suburb of Blanchardstown is the location of substantial amounts of residential accommodation, major retail activity and large industrial parks. It is also the location for the National Aquatic Centre. The Institute is located in a business and technology park, in close proximity to local residences, retail and industrial activities.

Institute governance and management

The Institute was established in accordance with the Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006. The Regional Technical Colleges (Amendment) Act 1999 specifically applies to the Institute.

The Governing Body of the Institute is established in accordance with the Institutes of Technology Acts 1992 to 2006, and manages and controls the affairs and all of the property of the Institute and performs the functions conferred on the Institute by the relevant Acts. The Governing Body appoints the Director [President] of the Institute. The Director [President] controls and directs the activities of the Institute and controls and directs the staff of the Institute in the implementation of such activities, and is responsible for the efficient and proper management of the Institute.

In accordance with Section 21(C)(1) of the Institutes of Technology Act 2006, the Institute has prepared a strategic development plan that sets out the aims of the Governing Body for the operation and development of the Institute and its strategy for achieving those aims and for carrying out the functions prescribed under the Act. This plan is reviewed and revised every five years. The current published strategic plan is available at www.itb.ie.

The Institute has an Academic Council, appointed by the Governing Body. The function of the Academic Council is to assist 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 the activities of the Institute.

The Institute, in performing its functions, has the right and responsibility to preserve and promote the traditional principles of academic freedom in the conduct of its internal and external affairs.

The Institute is a research body and accordingly makes provision for the discovery, advancement and dissemination of knowledge and learning.

The Institute has the power to confer academic awards by virtue of the authority delegated to it from the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) under Section 29 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999.

The Institute pursues its mission within a framework of equality of opportunity and social justice, underpinned by a commitment to the concept of lifelong learning in the furtherance of the social, economic and cultural development of the region and of the State.

Details of current governance and management personnel and structures are available at www.itb.ie.

Mission vision and values

The Institute's mission is to serve its students and the community by meeting the skills and educational needs in the economy and increasing the level of participation in third-level education and training in Dublin North-West and its environs. This will be accomplished by achieving consistently high standards of relevance and quality in teaching, research, development and consultancy, and by offering a welcoming and supportive environment to students from all educational and social backgrounds, and to adults wishing to increase or update their level of technical skills.

The shared vision statement of the Institute is as follows:

"We believe in the capacity of people to develop their potential through education and training. We will provide this education and training in a way that is innovative, responsive and holistic. We will be at the forefront of developments in third-level education, industry and organisational effectiveness. We seek a diverse community of students and staff and we will provide the support needed for each person's full participation."

The shared values statement of the Institute is as follows:

"We acknowledge the diversity of people involved in our work. We respect the different role played by each person. We listen with patience and understanding. We work to build genuine relationships founded on acceptance and trust. We aim to enjoy our work and derive fulfillment from it. We value positive attitudes throughout our workplace. We strive for excellence in the provision of internal and external services, courses and programmes. We will celebrate our achievements."

Approach to education

The Institute provides flexible third-level academic programmes designed to meet the personal goals and aspirations of our students, combined with regional and National needs, with particular emphasis on:

- Specialist higher education for industries and service-providers in the region,
- Upgrading of specialist, personal and leadership skills,
- Continuing education and the needs of mature students,
- In-service courses, retraining and updating of skills,
- Special needs arising from educational disadvantage or disability.

The learning strategy of the Institute is aimed at guiding students towards the levels of knowledge and skills acquisition for an evolving working life. Inherent in this approach is the essential attitudinal development for increasing motivation and for promoting self-management, critical analysis, decision-making, problem solving, leadership and entrepreneurship.

The research vision of the Institute is to undertake research and investigation to support learning in a range of academic disciplines relevant to undergraduate education. The Institute encourages individual and cross-functional team involvement in research activities, and is focussed on the use of the research agenda to support personal, intellectual and professional development of staff and students.

The Institute is developing research and consultancy programmes to further its educational and community development objectives. It is establishing strategic alliances with other educational institutions. The Institute is committed to developing collaborative relations with other tertiary education providers.

In line with its commitment to community service, the Institute is developing close links with schools and other educational institutions, community and development organisations and industrial and commercial interests. These links will encourage students to progress from second to third level and will help students to make a successful transition from the Institute to other educational institutions or to employment.

Arrangements for consultation and co-operation

The Institute is committed to effective consultation within the Institute and with the broader community. Consultations will take place at a minimum of every 5 years as part of institutional, quality assurance and programmatic review processes. Consultation will take place as required in the case of other activities. Consultations will normally be by written communication and selected focus group participation. Where possible, four weeks notice will be given of consultation submission dates.

Within the Institute

The Institute is committed to consultation and co-operation with staff, students and their representatives in all matters where it is reasonable to expect this to occur. The aim of the consultation is to enable the Institute, its staff and its students to share views on developments, proposed changes or situations that might arise and on the options being considered. Principles include:

- To provide fair and transparent processes for consultation and co-operation within the Institute,
- To allow for open communication and discussion between parties in the processes of consultation and co-operation.
- To support informed decision-making in the Institute.

While recognising the wealth of mechanisms available to support consultation, the process of consultation will normally include:

- A determination of which groups or individuals should be consulted in particular cases,
- Meetings (taken to include e-meetings) between the parties to consider matters,
- Provision of appropriate information by the Institute to enable those being consulted to develop an informed response,
- Provide for confidential consultation where appropriate or necessary that recognises the responsibilities of those so consulted,
- An agreed timeframe for these matters to take place.

The Institute will give serious consideration to what is provided by way of submissions or recommendations. Notwithstanding this, the final decision relating to any change shall be the responsibility of the Institute.

With the community (including commercial and industrial interests) in the region served

The Institute strives to achieve the widest stakeholder engagement process possible. Its procedures are ongoing and will be frequently reviewed and developed. The Institute views its engagement with stakeholders as an integral part of its overall strategic planning. The Institute is committed to consulting with its external stakeholders to ensure:

- The continuing relevance of its academic programmes and research activities to National and regional needs,
- The relevance of its provision for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State, with particular reference to the region and the local community served by the Institute.

Consultation with external stakeholders regarding the performance of the Institute's functions may include:

- Such agricultural, commercial, technological, scientific, industrial, educational, social and cultural groups in the region served by the Institute, or Nationally, as might have views on particular issues or developments in the programmes, research or other activities of the Institute,
- Relevant stakeholders will be consulted at the design stage of new programmes, and will be involved in programme validation processes.

The Institute will make a determination of which groups or individuals should be consulted in particular cases. Relevant stakeholders will be consulted at an early stage.

A variety of consultation methods will be employed to include, panels of business people, community leaders, entrepreneurs, industrialists and other professionals so as to check opinions regularly in a flexible and rapid manner.

Invitations to participate in consultation processes will include:

- Sufficient time for consultation to reach its objectives,
- Provision of feedback after consultation,
- Review of the effectiveness of the consultation procedures.

Criteria for determining the level of demand for particular programmes of education and training

Section 5 (1) of the Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 states that *"The principal function of a college shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, be to provide vocational and technical education and training for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State with particular reference to the region served by the college...."*

In discharging this function the Institute is cognisant of, and informed by, the following criteria:

- Forecasted skills needs and job opportunities,
- Demographic changes,
- Regional and National economic, social and cultural developments,
- Learner and employer demand,
- Creating progression opportunities,
- Changes within our community,
- Changes in technology and pedagogy,
- Developing regional or National policy.

New programme development may be stimulated by response to any of the criteria listed above.

In developing new programmes the Institute will consult widely and as appropriate with employers, National and regional agencies, industrial development agencies, sectoral groupings, and community groups. It will make use of needs analysis and market research surveys.

The Institute will ensure that each new programme it develops is consistent with the strategic development plan of the Institute, is developed at an appropriate level in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) through meeting the standards determined by HETAC for particular awards, and has a clear progression route that will facilitate lifelong learning.

The Institute, in its programme development strategy, will be mindful of access for disadvantaged groups, developing alternative pathways to awards, adaptation of programmes to changing circumstances and providing continuing professional development opportunities.

Institute's programme for life-long learning

The Institute is committed to lifelong learning and second-chance education and has developed an active adult and continuing education programme. The learning strategy is aimed at guiding students towards the levels of knowledge and skills acquisition for an evolving working life. Inherent in this approach is the essential attitudinal development for increasing motivation and for promoting self-management, critical analysis, decision-making, problem solving, leadership and entrepreneurship.

Institute's policy in relation to adult and continuing education

It is the policy of the Institute to support life-long learning and in achieving this, to:

- Facilitate a high-quality learning experience for a diverse range of learners that will support lifelong learning and provide graduates with the knowledge and skills that they will require,
- Create an environment in which learners can take responsibility for their own learning, and provide opportunities for active learning,
- Encourage teaching and learning activities in keeping with the mission, vision and values of the Institute,
- Value, support and recognise excellence in all staff, and in particular in teaching by academic staff,
- Facilitate learning by providing the academic support infrastructure and environment conducive to the provision of the highest standards in teaching and learning,
- Collaborate with other National bodies such as Teagasc and FÁS in the provision of specialist academic programmes,
- Encourage application of a diversity of teaching practices and methodologies to meet the needs of a wide range of students with a variety of abilities and competencies,
- Provide a fair effective, transparent and consistent assessment of learners, as required to support the mission of the Institute,
- Encourage transparency for academic processes and standards through publication of academic policies, programme learning outcomes and output of programme review processes,
- Encourage learner involvement in relevant Institute committees, feedback, review exercises and appeal procedures,
- Encourage staff involvement in information exchange, review exercises, feedback and communication with other staff and learners,
- Facilitate evaluation of prior experiential learning as part of the admissions process,
- Support access, transfer and progression opportunities for learners, to facilitate educational opportunity.

Institute policy in relation to adult and continuing education is included in the Institute's teaching and learning policy, and is available at www.itb.ie.

Institute's teaching and research facilities

The Institute is committed to introducing students to the latest technologies and providing a learning environment where the use of up-to-date and innovative techniques and equipment is the norm. To this end, lecture theatres and laboratories are state-of-the-art, and the Institute aims to retain this leading edge as the Institute develops further. Details of the Institute's teaching and research facilities are available at www.itb.ie

Institute's full-time, part-time, evening and distance learning courses

The Institute is providing education and training that is relevant and responsive to local and National economic and social needs. It is designing and delivering a range of high-quality courses for full-time and part-time students. The courses aim to produce graduates who can meet the human resource requirements of the knowledge economy. The Institute's courses are designed in such a way that they are made available to a wide range of students in a flexible way. Flexibility in the provision of courses includes co-operative education, work experience, modularisation and credit accumulation. The Institute provides a broad range of academic programmes in business, computing, engineering, horticulture, humanities, social care, and languages. The Institute (in partnership with FÁS) offers components of the National Craft Certificate programme in specific apprentice trades. Details of the Institute's teaching full-time, part-time, evening and distance learning courses are available at www.itb.ie

Awards made by the Institute

Using powers delegated to the Institute by HETAC, awards are conferred at Higher Certificate (NFQ¹ level 6), Ordinary Bachelor Degree (NFQ level 7), Honours Bachelor Degree and Higher Diploma (NFQ level 8) and Masters and Post-Graduate Diploma (NFQ level 9) level. In addition, PhD programmes (NFQ level 10) may be taken in the Institute with awards being conferred by HETAC. The flexible nature of awards provided by the Institute means that students can select from a wide variety of courses and build to the qualification that best suits their needs. Details of the awards made by the Institute are available at www.itb.ie

Commitment to quality assurance of programmes

The Institute, consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, accepts that it has primary responsibility for the quality of its provision and its assurance and that this provides the basis for accountability of the academic system within the National qualifications framework. In framing quality assurance procedures, the Institute is mindful of the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area, as applied to higher education institutions, and of HETAC's guidelines and criteria for quality assurance procedures.

The Institute is committed to a culture that recognises the central importance of quality and quality assurance in its work and to the continuous enhancement of procedures to assure the quality of its provision. The Institute has agreed its quality assurance procedures with HETAC as required under section 28 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999. These procedures include:

- Evaluation on a quinquennial basis, or as otherwise determined from time to time by the Council, of the programme of education and training concerned, including evaluation by persons who are competent to make national and international comparisons in that respect,
- Evaluation by learners of that programme,
- Evaluation of services related to that programme.

Where a programme of education and training is organised or procured, in whole or in part, by another provider (the first mentioned provider) and is provided, in whole or in part, by the Institute (the second mentioned provider) a memorandum of understanding will be completed agreeing

¹ National Framework of Qualifications

quality assurance procedures and this shall be submitted by the first mentioned provider to the relevant awarding body established under the Act.

Where a programme of higher education and training is organised or procured, in whole or in part, by the Institute and is provided, in whole or in part, by any other provider, the Institute will consult with such other provider before making a request under subsection (1) for delegation of authority to make awards in respect of that programme.

The Institute will, in designing programmes and in making awards, comply with the standards determined by HETAC. In assessing learners for the purpose of complying with standards, the Institute will establish procedures for the assessment of learners, which are fair and consistent and for the purpose of compliance with standards determined by HETAC. The Institute will strive to improve its assessment techniques and will endeavour to provide its staff with the widest inventory of assessment strategies from which to select relevant assessment instruments.

The Institute has developed a comprehensive approach to quality assurance of its academic programmes and other services. The Institute is committed to implementation of quality assurance processes that are consistent with International best practice, and in this regard, have developed processes that involve external experts as well as students, staff and other key stakeholders. Details of Institute quality assurance policies, procedures and reports are available at www.itb.ie

Implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression

The Institute is committed to implementing procedures for access, transfer and progression determined by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland under section 8(2) (d) of the Act of 1999 as part of the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications.

The Authority² has currently defined procedures under four themes:

- Credit accumulation and transfer and the recognition of prior learning,
- Transfer and progression routes,
- Entry arrangements,
- Information provision.

The Institute has, since its establishment, attempted to provide equality of access to its programmes for all learners. To this end, the Institute has devised agreed National policies to deal with:

- Applications from school leavers following the traditional leaving certificate, and the leaving certificate vocational programme,
- Applications from learners with Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) level 5 awards,
- Applications from mature learners,
- Applications from learners with a disability,
- International applicants (through the common agreed IOTCEF³ process),
- Progression routes from NFQ level 6 to level 7 and level 7 to level 8.

In addition, the Institute, mindful of its regional role and its specialist facilities has devised special entry procedures for particular groups. These include:

- Applications from learners from socio-economically disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds,
- General studies certificate course (NFQ level 5) graduates.

² National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

³ Institutes of Technology central evaluation forum

HETAC has the role of working with the Institute in ensuring that these procedures are implemented. The Institute will continue to implement the procedures on access, transfer and progression for learners and will do this within the framework of determinations made by the Authority from time to time.

Promotion and use of the Irish language and promotion of the distinctive cultures of Ireland

The Institute, in pursuance of its mission, gives due regard to the preservation, promotion and use of the Irish language and to the development of the National culture. At the same time, it is developing an international dimension through language teaching and participation in International exchange programmes. With regard to promotion of the Irish language in particular, the Institute has promoted a policy of bi-lingual signage, and inclusion of both Irish and English text on official Institute invitations, and relevant parts of Institute publications such as the website, prospectus, student handbook and annual reports.

Consultation process carried out in preparation of this charter

An initial draft of this charter was developed by Institute Management between autumn 2007 and January 2008. This draft was put to the Governing Body of the Institute in February 2008 as a working draft with a proposal to undertake an extensive consultation exercise.

In framing this Charter, the Institute consulted with the Authority and the Council as required in section 31(4)(a) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999.

The following bodies were specifically consulted in preparing this Charter, either via electronic communication or through organisation of focus-group feedback sessions.

- National Qualifications Authority of Ireland,
- Higher Education and Training Awards Council,
- Academic Council of the Institute,
- Staff of the Institute,
- Institute partnership committee,
- Institute Students' Union,
- Selected representative external stakeholders.

//end