


Design and validation of new academic programmes		
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Revision History

Revision	Date	Revision Description	Originator
01	21 September 03	Amalgamation of OP156, OP157, OP158, Op159, B1, B2; Updating for transfer from NCEA to HETAC	Registrar
02	30 December 2003	Incorporation of material from HETAC "Policy, procedures and criteria for the validation of taught programmes" 2003 document	Registrar
03	22 March 2005	Reference to FETAC in policy section	Registrar
04	18 October 2005	Update to accommodate changes to be implemented under delegated authority status; change of name from design and development of new academic courses to that listed above; comments of AC 18 October 2005	Registrar
05	01 August 2008	Title change of Director to President	Registrar
06	13 March 2013	Redesign	QA Officer

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline key policies and responsibilities relating to the design and validation of education programmes leading to a major award so as to ensure that the academic programme:

- Is compatible with the mission and strategic objectives of the Institute for this core activity.
- Meets learning and support needs of the learners.
- Meets expectations of accrediting agency, quality assurance agency, funding body, learner and society in terms of relevance and academic quality.
- Meets standards for the relevant named award as determined by QQI (formerly HETAC).
- Is consistent with QQI (formerly HETAC) policy on taught and research programme accreditation policy, criteria and processes.

2. Scope

This document refers to programmes leading to a major award developed for educational (as distinct from training) purposes of one year duration or longer. For procedures relevant to programmes leading to a minor, special purpose or supplementary award of less than 60 ECTS credits please refer to policy document 3AC05.

This document, 2MP01, is relevant to all staff involved in academic programme design and validation. ITB's current academic programme catalogue (4RCD11) is published on the Institute's document management system (DMS) and outlines key information on all the Institute's validated programmes. For additions or amendments to previously validated programmes, please refer to the programmatic review process, specifically policy relating to the monitoring and evaluation of academic programmes contained in policy document 2MP31.

Definitions

QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI – the body with awarding and quality assurance responsibilities previously governed by HETAC)
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
ACCS	Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects
Validation	A process by which the Institute shall satisfy itself that a learner may attain knowledge, skill or competence for the purpose of an award made by the Institute on behalf of an awarding body or by an awarding body.
TMG	Senior management group of the Institute, including the President, Registrar, Secretary/Financial Controller, Head of School of Informatics and Engineering and Head of School of Business and Humanities
DMS	Institute document management system, where the current version of relevant documents are available to stakeholders
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
IOT	Institute of Technology
Order in Council	Bi-annual return to QQI (formerly HETAC) listing all ITB validated programmes

3. Reference

3AC05	Procedure for validation of new minor/special purpose awards
4FMP01	New programme proposal
QQI (HETAC)	General programme validation manual 2010
QQI (HETAC)	Awards Standards for the Development of Programmes on the National Framework of Qualifications
QQI (HETAC)	Taught and Research Programme Accreditation Policy, Criteria and Processes
4RCD02	Approved course schedule
Banner	Student record database system
4RMP02	New programme proposal and module design guidelines
3CD05	Course board policy and procedures
Coursebuilder	Software application providing a central repository for all programme and module details
4RCD11	Academic programme catalogue
2MP31	Institute Review Policy

4. Policy

- It is Institute policy to develop high quality, relevant academic programmes that meet the needs of learners and stakeholders.
- Academic programmes will be developed following agreed procedures for the design validation and accreditation of new academic programmes, subjects and modules.
- Agreed policy will be consistent and up to date with QQI (formerly HETAC) policies and relevant publications from other accrediting bodies.
- It is Institute policy to pay an honorarium and travel expenses to validation panel members external to the Institute at agreed sectoral rates.
- It is Institute policy to publish reports of programme validation activities in the public domain.
- It is Institute policy that Coursebuilder be used in programme design and the output of same be used in the generation of programme, both validation and review, submission documents.
- In programme design it is Institute policy to clearly delineate learning outcomes at both programme and module level such that Coursebuilder can be used to map modules and their learning outcomes to the programme learning outcomes to reinforce the NFQ level of the award as proposed.
- In programme design it is also Institute policy that an assessment strategy be included in the submission document both at programme and constituent module level to be accompanied by a matrix of the assessment schedule as proposed per semester.

5. New programme proposal

A new academic programme may be proposed by an individual, members of a school or a cross-school interdisciplinary group.

The proposal should be initiated at least one academic year before the planned first intake of learners and is required to have regard to:

- The strategic plan of the Institute
- The requirements of qualifications, awarding bodies and funding bodies.
- Resource implications
- Input from senior management of the Institute (TMG)

The programme proposal is to be prepared using 4FMP01 and submitted for consideration to Academic Council.

The following criteria will be used by Academic Council in evaluating the proposal:

- Does the proposed course accord with the mission statement and academic plan of the Institute?
- Does the proposal make a reasonable outline case that there is an identified need for this course?
- Is the proposal likely to meet the identified need in terms of title, content and level?
- Is there a capacity for the delivery of the new course, or is this capacity capable of being developed within reasonable resource and timescale parameters?
- What is the expected impact of the new course on the host School(s) and the Institute?

6. New academic programme design

- A programme design team will be established by the relevant Head of School for all programme proposals approved by Academic Council.
- The recommended composition of a programme design team is:
 - Head(s) of Department.
 - Co-ordinator(s) of the initial new programme proposal.
 - Academic staff (typically 5 or 6) representing the key subject areas of the course concerned with representation from subject areas to be included.
- Based on information provided within the new programme proposal form 4FMP01 approved by Academic Council the Quality Assurance Officer will configure Coursebuilder as follows:
 - A draft of the programme will be created to include an initial proposed semesterised schedule with module titles and any other relevant information at this time.
 - Programme contributors will be identified in conjunction with the relevant Head of Department and assigned permissions to populate programme level information as appropriate.
 - Module contributors will be identified in conjunction with the relevant Head of Department and assigned permissions to populate module level information as appropriate.
- The Head of Department will work with the programme and module contributors to populate Coursebuilder such that necessary information can be extracted for inclusion in the submission document namely:
 - Programme and module learning outcome delivery
 - Syllabi information – book of modules
- A validation panel date will be agreed between the Head of Department, Head of School and the Registrar.
- The Head of Department will work in conjunction with the programme design team to produce a submission document using template 4RMP02 and submit a soft copy of same to the Quality Assurance Officer a minimum of 5 weeks prior to the agreed validation date.
- It is imperative that the proposal be subjected to independent peer review before completion of the submission document prior to it being submitted to the Quality Assurance Officer. Such review processes will be established and managed by the relevant Head of School.

- 9 bound hard copies of the agreed final version of the new programme submission document are to be submitted to the Quality Assurance Officer a minimum of 4 weeks prior to the agreed validation panel date.

7. New programme validation

- The Registrar will be responsible for the composition of the new programme validation panel.
- Recommended composition of the validation panel is as follows:
 - Chairperson: Registrar of another Institute of Technology
 - At least two members from the higher education sector (preferably at Head of Department/Professor grade from the IOT and University sector)
 - At least one senior business/industry subject matter expert.
 - Additional members may be proposed to ensure adequate specialist expertise.
 - The Registrar and/or Quality Assurance Officer will act as Secretary to the validation panel.
 - Composition of the validation panel should, where possible, take cognisance of:
 - Gender balance
 - International perspective
 - Learner perspective.
- The panel will receive the submission documentation a minimum of 4 weeks in advance of the panel date and carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the proposal.
- In evaluating the proposed programme, the following criteria will be considered by the validation panel and reported upon:
 - Educational Objectives and their assessment:
 - Programme learning outcomes
 - Award Standards
 - Transferable skills
 - Other educational objectives as appropriate such as entry to regulated professions
 - Rationale for the programme:
 - Consistency with Institute's Mission and Strategy
 - Comparison with similar programmes offered by other IOT's
 - Graduate employment potential and learner demand

- Profile of target learners
 - Consultation with employers and relevant research
 - Protection of learners
- Access criteria:
 - Minimum entry requirements
 - Access processes
 - Recognition of prior learning
- Programme organisation:
 - Teaching and learning strategies
 - Work experience/placements
 - Dissertations and/or projects
 - Programme assessment strategy
- Institute QA procedures and findings:
 - Programme pre-validation process
 - Programme management
 - Learner participation
 - Stakeholder feedback
- The validation panel will be mindful of the legal obligation on the Academic Council of the Institute to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the programmes and the activities of the Institute.
- In conducting its business and in particular in its meetings with the programme design team and Institute management, the validation panel will show objectivity, impartiality and professionalism. Their approach shall be courteous and non-adversarial, while carrying out a thorough review of the proposal to identify its inherent strengths and weaknesses. The Chairperson of the validation panel will preside at the meeting, and will act as a facilitator of the process.
- The validation report will be drafted by the Quality Assurance Officer based on discussions between the validation panel and the programme design team at the panel meeting and sent for review/comment to the validation panel.
- The validation panel is recommended to use the following broad categories in its report,
 - **Approved;** An excellent submission not requiring modification.
 - **Approved with conditions/recommendations:** A very good submission requiring minor modification (subject re-balancing, changes in some syllabus content and learning outcomes, additional information required). The modification is to be carried out by the programme design team and

documented within the response to the validation report submitted to Academic Council.

- **Retained:** A good proposal but requiring some significant modification and additions (e.g. absent or insufficient treatment of a required subject matter). These modifications/additions to be approved by the Chairperson of the validation panel in consultation with the other panel members before submission to the Registrar for onward transmission.
- **Returned;** A deficient proposal that needs to be reconsidered in detail by the planning board, rewritten and resubmitted. Such proposals will require a reconvened meeting of the proposers and the same validation panel if the programme is to be considered further.
- The Institute recognises that given the nature of its mission and the need to respond flexibly to the needs of the economy, of students and of the community, it may be necessary to establish courses within a relatively short timeframe. It is recognised that in such instances an accelerated process may be necessary. In these cases, the approval process may operate with appropriate levels of delegated responsibility and through parallel rather than sequential processes.
- Upon receipt of all feedback a final version of the validation report will be sent to the Chairperson and Institute Registrar for signature.
- The validation report will be published in the public domain within the QA section of the Institute's website.
- A copy of the validation report will be sent to the Head of the relevant Department with a request to respond to each of the conditions and/or recommendations contained in the report.
- The following documents will be submitted to Academic Council for consideration:
 - Validation report
 - Response to the validation report from the Head of Department and programme design team
 - Proposed course schedule for the award and any embedded awards contained therein.
- The programme design team has the right to appeal the decision of the validation panel to the Academic Council.
- Following consideration and if satisfied with the validation report and related response the Academic Council may make a recommendation to the President of the Institute to sign a Certificate of Approval for the programme(s). Such decisions shall be recorded in the permanent record of Academic Council meetings, and will be endorsed by Governing Body when considering minutes of Academic Council meetings.

- The QA Officer will:
 - Publish the approved course schedule for the new awards on the Institute’s document management system.
 - Configure Banner, the Institute’s student records system, for registration purposes etc.
- The Head of Department will:
 - Arrange for any programme/module descriptors on Coursebuilder to be updated as appropriate and approve said updates such that all programme and module descriptors are available on <http://courses.itb.ie>
 - Arrange for any necessary amendments to be made to the submission document post validation and return a soft copy of same to the Quality Assurance Officer.
- The Order in Council return to QQI (formerly HETAC) and the academic programme catalogue (4RCD11) will be updated by the Quality Assurance Officer to include the validated programme(s).
- The programme design team shall be dissolved once a programme has completed the validation process and a course board shall be appointed to oversee the implementation of the programme following Institute policy “Course board policy and procedure” (3CD05).

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