

**Institute of Technology Blanchardstown****Programmatic review of the  
School of Business and Humanities****Peer-review group report**

Final: 26 July 2006

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## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The School of Business and Humanities, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown undertook a review of its programmes and activities during the academic year 2005-2006. Staff of the School produced a self-evaluation report. An external peer-review panel was established by the Registrar. This panel met on 6th April 2006 to consider the self-evaluation report and to meet with staff of the School. This report identifies the findings of this peer-review panel.
- 1.2. The overall recommendation of the panel was that all recommendations made in the self-evaluation report be accepted. Some specific recommendations have been made in this report to qualify the scope of this overall recommendation.
- 1.3. The panel were impressed by the depth of the self-analysis that was undertaken by the School and would like to commend the management and staff of the School for the quality of the documentation and the level of engagement during the visit.

## 2. Preamble

- 2.1. The School of Business and Humanities, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown undertook a review of its programmes and activities during the academic year 2005-2006. The process followed was that described in Institute policy 2MP15 "Monitoring and evaluation of academic programmes (see appendix). Staff of the School produced a self-evaluation report of activities as described in 2MP15.
- 2.2. An external peer-review panel was established by the Registrar following the procedures outlined in 2MP15. This panel met on 6th April 2006 to consider the self-evaluation report and to meet with staff of the School.
- 2.3. The peer-review group produced a report of their findings (this report) and this will be reported to the Academic Council of the institute and HETAC as per agreed quality assurance policy 2MP15.

## 3. Courses under consideration

- 3.1. The following courses were considered for re-validation:

Code	Title	NFQ level
BN003	Higher certificate in business	6
BN004	Bachelor of business in information technology and a language	7
BN303	Bachelor of business (add-on)	7
BN010	Bachelor of business in information technology	7
BN011 BN906	Bachelor of arts in applied social studies in social care Bachelor of arts in applied social studies in social care (work-based)	7
BN403	Bachelor of business (Honours) (add-on)	8
BN404	Bachelor of arts (Honours) in business with a language (add-on)	8
BN405	Bachelor of business (Honours) in information technology (add-on)	8
BN408	Bachelor of arts (Honours) in business with information systems (add-on)	8
BN410	Bachelor of arts (Honours) in horticultural business	8

	management (add-on)	
BN510	Master of arts in language education (French)	9
BN511	Master of arts in language education (German)	9
BN902	Foundation certificate	5

- 3.2. It was noted that the self-evaluation report included proposals relating to the development of new programmes as combinations of individual programmes previously approved as sequential programmes in a specific ladder of learning. The programmes referenced were a Bachelor of Business (BN014), a Bachelor of Business (Honours) (BN101), a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in business with a language (BN102) and a Bachelor of business (Honours) in information technology. While the academic content of these programmes are in effect being considered as part of the programmatic review process as the constituent awards are under evaluation, the issue of new course development with new awards being conferred is technically outside the scope of programmatic review. Thus, these courses should be considered by the panel outside the programmatic review process.
- 3.3. It was noted that all programmes included in the review are currently accredited by HETAC, with the exception of the Foundation Certificate, which is accredited by FETAC.
- 3.4. It was noted that the reference to a new Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in applied social studies in social care (BN107) referenced in volume 1 was not included in the detailed submission in volume 3 and will be dealt with outside the programmatic review process.

#### 4. Membership of the peer-review panel

- 4.1. The following were members of the peer-review panel:

Dr Tom Rigney	Head of School, Cork Institute of Technology, Rossa Avenue, Bishopstown, Cork (Chair)
Professor Kathy Monks	Business School, Dublin City University, Dublin 9
Mr Michael Corcoran	Registration & Inspection Services, H.S.E., First Floor, Park House, Phibsboro, Dublin 7
Ms Nicola Horgan	Director of the European Orientation Programme, IBEC Confederation House, 84/86 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2
Ms Carol Pemberton	General Manager, H.R. Ireland Retail, Irish Life, Location 67, Irish Life Centre, Dublin 1
Mr Lawrence Elwood	Department of Business Studies, Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, Galway
Mr Ian McKenna	Head of Function, HETAC, 26-27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2
Dr Oliver Murphy	Registrar, IT Tralee, Clash, Co Kerry
Mr Barry Coffey	President of ITB Students' Union, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown Road North, Dublin 15
Dr Diarmuid O'Callaghan	Registrar Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, Blanchardstown Road North, Dublin 15 (Secretary)

## 5. Institutional staff and students consulted

5.1. The following management staff represented the Institute:

Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan	Registrar
Mr Des Moore	Head of School of Business and Humanities
Dr Celesta McCann James	Head of Department of Humanities
Mr. Pat O'Connor	Head of Department of Business

5.2. The following academic staff represented the Institute:

Aiden Carthy	Gerry Clarke	Siobhan Quinlan Clarke
Tom Donohue	Miriam Dunne	Pamela Kelly
Deirdre McGrath	Lavina McLean	Mary O'Reilly
Angela Rankin	Nathalie Cazeux	Karen Feery
Ruth Harris	Maria Keneally	Mary Ann Kenny
Gael LeRoux	John McCarthy	Bríd NiChonail
Marina Piqueur		
Val Andrews	Gary Bernie	Liam Bolger
Fionnuala Darby	Emer Fay	Martin Fitzgerald
Fiona Malone	Francis McDonnell	Tom McGrath
Colm McGuinness	Linda McWeeney	Dave Murphy
Eoin O'Kennedy	Tara Rooney	Terence Sheridan
Vera Toal	Brian Watters	Francis McGeough

5.3. The following students were consulted:

Niall Dunne (BN403)	Eileen Glennon (BN403)	Kate O'Brien (BN011)
Keere Foley (BN303)	Elizabeth Cullen (BN004)	Deirdre Gillane (BN004)
Alison Kidd (BN004)	Brendan Curtis (BN011)	Emma Thunder (BN003)
Aishling Burke (BN003)		

## 6. Timetable of programmatic review

6.1. The following timetable was followed:

Previous day 8pm (5th April 2006)	Pre-panel meeting Castleknock Golf & Country Club, Porterstown, Castleknock
April 6th 2006	
9.00am-10am	Private meeting of panel
10am-10.15am	Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director</li> <li>• Registrar</li> <li>• Head of School</li> </ul>
10.15am-11.15am	Strategic objectives of School: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of School</li> <li>• Head of Department of Business</li> <li>• Head of Department of Humanities</li> <li>• Senior lecturers</li> </ul>
11.15am-11.30am	Coffee
11.30am-1pm	Details of academic courses:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All academic staff (A57)</li> </ul>
1pm-2pm	LUNCH IN THE INSTITUTE
2pm-2.30pm	Meeting with students (A57)
2.30pm-3pm	Tour of facilities
3pm-4pm	Private meeting of panel
4pm	Exit meeting

## 7. Documentation supplied

7.1. The panel considered the following documentation:

- Volume 1 Institute overview;
- Volume 2 School and department overview;
- Volume 3 Programme overview;
- Supplementary errata list;
- Mapping of programmes against NFQ level indicators and HETAC awards standards;
- Individual programme syllabi;

## 8. Panel session 1: Pre-meeting

- 8.1. It was noted that the programmatic review process is part of a suite of quality assurance processes agreed with HETAC. This exercise takes place every 5 years and follows the process documented in Institute policy 2MP15 "Monitoring and evaluation of academic programmes". The main process involves self-study with recommendations of amendments to existing approved course schedules with associated justification.
- 8.2. As per agreed procedure, the Registrar acted as secretary to the group.
- 8.3. It was noted that the Academic Council has responsibility for ensuring that the recommendations of this panel report are implemented.
- 8.4. It was noted that the purpose of programmatic review is to:
- Facilitate a reflective self-evaluation within the school which allows critical analysis and evaluation of all activities, both current and proposed, with consideration of this self-study by a panel of peers drawn from education and industry;
  - Facilitate a review of all academic courses provided by the School indicating how they have been updated in the light of changing environmental conditions and recent knowledge.
  - Issue recommendations for the re-accrediting of academic programmes for the next 5 years;
- 8.5. The roles and responsibilities of the panel as listed in Institute policy document 2MP17 "Roles and responsibilities of external experts on validation and review panels" were noted (see appendix).

## 9. Panel session 2: Context

- 9.1. The Registrar welcomed the panel on behalf of the Director. The Registrar noted that the Institute is committed to delivery on the spirit of the agreed quality assurance procedures. Programmatic review is considered an essential component of these quality assurance procedures. The Registrar thanked the panel for their commitment to the Institute by taking the time

to consider the documentation and to participate in the review. The Registrar noted that the staff of the Institute consider such engagements as extremely constructive and beneficial for the Institute.

- 9.2. The Registrar pointed out that the Institute was established in 1999, and all academic programmes being considered at this programmatic review were originally validated between 1999 and 2005. Thus, this is the first programmatic review conducted in the Institute.
- 9.3. The Head of School of Business and Humanities welcomed the panel and briefly described the structure of the programmatic review from within the School.

### **10. Panel session 3: Strategic objectives of the school**

- 10.1. An overview of the growth of undergraduate programmes was presented. It was noted that intake was limited by capacity to teach. There is a strong focus on undergraduate programmes. Planned developments include some taught Masters programmes. The School indicated that they are conscious of the need to generate income from fees. They consider the customer as the student and aspire to match the needs of the student and industry.
- 10.2. It was suggested that the QA3 review forms have contributed to the development of school strategy.
- 10.3. There is a level of tension between undergraduate teaching requirements and Masters teaching needs. Thus, there is an opportunity cost to School. The target for the institute is to grow by 150 students FTE per year. Masters programme have a role to play in this.
- 10.4. There appears to be a relatively low proportion of staff with postgraduate degrees. This issue is heightened by the recruitment policy of the Department of Education and Science that posts are filled at assistant lecturer level. This staffing structure also presents a tension in the context of presentation of Masters programmes. Many staff are currently engaged in studies to NFQ level 10. Indeed, staff are encouraged to embark on postgraduate programmes.
- 10.5. The strategy for the business department was described. A full suite of courses has been validated. Having gone through programmatic review, the business department are looking to develop a Bachelor of Business in International Business, while industry surveys show a demand for international business. There is a tension between industry demand and student demand for languages. There is a need to demonstrate a premium for language qualifications.
- 10.6. The plans for the school to attract non-standard applicants were described. Language qualifications for secondary school teachers were identified. A strategy to identify niche areas and relationships with specific industries was articulated. On-line education opportunities were identified, as was continuing professional development.
- 10.7. Accreditation of prior learning was discussed, including the methodology used. Examples were cited relating to the work-based social care course. This course is for mature students, is offered in an accelerated mode to students who have expertise, but not the opportunity to link theory to practice.
- 10.8. Retention issues were considered. Social care retention is considered high, probably due to the vocational nature of the course. Such students recognise the career they want from an early stage. Structure for student

support is visible with an open door policy. Other student supports mentioned included the BUA centre.

- 10.9. The humanities department strategy was considered. The primary goal is to maintain high standard academically and rigorous support. Courses must be relevant to learner, community and to sector. The department will develop further courses that are relevant and identified as necessary. Masters taught programme in languages are important. Also staff are interested in supporting research MA programmes.
- 10.10. The possibility of over-assessment of undergraduate work was considered. Standards are considered to be high. Some students may feel they are over-assessed. There may be some scope for the integration of assessments.
- 10.11. A practitioner programme to campus, or outreach centre have not yet been considered. On line e-learning is being considered, as is video conferencing and blended learning approaches.
- 10.12. A bridging course is planned to up-skill some work-based students to reach a satisfactory entry standard. There are currently strong links with FETAC colleges.
- 10.13. The importance of feedback, and response to feedback from various stakeholders was considered. In this exercise, a number of stakeholders were identified. Information collected was used in the proposals to modify programmes. Examples include adjustment of workload to ensure it is proportionate. Operation of course boards is considered critical for feedback, with reliance on course coordinator and feedback of student representatives. The Institute operates an open door policy. Students recognise the open and close relationship.
- 10.14. Linking retention to quality was considered. There is a relatively high attrition rate in some courses. Exit interviews are conducted where possible. There is an exit process but not all students formally withdraw. There is not a formal follow up procedures. Retention is particularly important in the department of business. It may be necessary to direct resources specifically to this issue.
- 10.15. The risks for department of humanities were considered. Risks of low student numbers in languages and increased numbers in social care. To balance such demands with staff availability is a challenge. Currently competencies for transfer and application to social care student programme are being considered. Language lecturers are competent in communication, and other non-linguistic skills, and may be able to apply to some fourth year modules such as diversity and communicative competence. Where English is not the first language of a student, language lecturers may play an important role. A third specialist area in the department may be to service professionals in industry, for example in the context of communication and group dynamics.
- 10.16. Strategy for humanities department includes research for social care industry. Currently there are projects within the undergraduate course to encourage research.
- 10.17. Benchmarks against other providers were considered. This was not done as part of this exercise. Student numbers are such that this would not be a meaningful exercise yet. Annual returns to the Department of Education and Science do act as benchmark. Examples may include in the case of mathematics, engaging with peers, or in social care, setting standards independent of competitor.

- 10.18. A vision for research was considered. The concept of other institutes being considered as competitors or collaborators was considered. Possibility of conducting research on a sectoral basis as the primary data for course development was considered. There is also potential for collaboration on research. Examples include publishing the first Irish textbook in social care, linking practitioner input and National input. Research is not considered a priority within the school when there is a high demand for programmes.
- 10.19. The value of an alumni association was considered. It was noted that to date, the Institute has relatively few alumni, but efforts are made each year to track graduates.
- 10.20. The defining characteristics of ITB were considered. The Institute open door policy was referenced. Knowledge of students as individuals was referenced. Flexibility and core academic and non academic competencies were mentioned.
- 10.21. The level of rotation of teaching duties was considered. It was not possible to have unregulated rotation but to encourage synergies.
- 10.22. A policy to assist students to migrate from one academic area to another was considered. This is being addressed currently within the modular and ladder system of course delivery.

#### **11. Panel session 4: Details of academic courses**

- 11.1. The panel complimented staff on clarity, presentation and readability of the documentation provided.
- 11.2. Learning outcomes at programme level were considered. The re-validation exercise considered the NFQ standards and documentation of programme mapping to the framework standards was submitted. All module syllabi have learning outcomes and the programme learning outcomes were addressed in the re-validation exercise.
- 11.3. The relationship between social care courses and professional qualification was considered. Linkage offered with prior experiential learning. If the emphasis is too far to research, practice can suffer. Placement was considered. Placement is considered an integral part of undergraduate degree. There was consultation with practitioners in designing placement module. Placement is offered in blocks, with students prepared for placement before being sent on placement. There are three visits during placement, between the student, academic and work practitioner. The meetings are measured, marked and reflected upon. The institute is committed to providing the necessary resources for this part of the learning experience. Students are assessed by practitioner and a portfolio is presented.
- 11.4. A placement coordinator would play an active role in placing students in appropriate settings. Such a person is likely to instruct in the pre-placement module. An academic appointment to this post would ensure pre-placement and post placement reflection occurs.
- 11.5. APEL in the context of social care was considered, and how individuals may be exempted for certain modules. Work based students may be considered for entry to second year on condition that theoretical reinforcement of material missing from first year is achieved.
- 11.6. The use of tutorials was considered. A case was made that attendance does not affect failure rates in some modules, and CA marks are more reliable. Retention is a key issue. Reasons for not attending were discussed.

- 11.7. Feedback on QA3 forms was considered. Feedback on CA may be less effective than desirable. There may be a perception of a delay in providing feedback on CA. However, students need to ask for feedback. It is policy to give CA feedback to students. They will know marks before examinations.
- 11.8. Potential over-assessment was considered. Semesterised programme can lead to over-assessment. Assessment workload is considered to ensure evenness across modules. Co-assessment is used in social care. Also assessment diary is used across all programmes. The course coordinator monitors assessment of student. Some courses have reduced number of examinations. The counter-argument that a student needs to be able to deal with pressure was also presented.
- 11.9. Issue of plagiarism in assessments was considered. Procedures are already in place including the running of a random sample through checker, and if a problem emerges, the assessments are referred to a course coordinator. Use of appropriate web-based tools to detect plagiarism is under evaluation.
- 11.10. The issue of assessments covering specific learning outcomes was considered. The suggestion that once a learning outcome is assessed, no further assessment should be conducted was considered. It was noted that in some courses such as social care, specific outcomes used for CA. are not assessed in the final examination.
- 11.11. The degree that schools can influence core competencies of students coming into programmes was considered. Links with national schools were discussed. There are no comprehensive initiatives in numeracy and literacy skills.
- 11.12. The debate in the department of Business relating to progression and having to pass total assessment or all sub-components separately was considered. The review panel agreed to make a recommendation on this issue (see below) although it was an issue that needs consideration outside the programmatic review process.
- 11.13. The issue of retention, particularly in first term was considered. Social care programmes provide a one week of an induction programme. The inclusion of time management and writing skills in module on own in semester 1 was considered. Points are dropping and this trend will likely continue. Support for specific subjects such as mathematics and economics are considered important. Module switching and BUA centre learning style assessment are being used to facilitate students.
- 11.14. Retention and research of subjects was considered. Students are encouraged to do more research on career prospects. Possibility to strengthen school visits considered.
- 11.15. Common first year modules were considered. This is built into revised proposals for this programmatic review. Teams were commended for this approach. The common first year should facilitate movement to specialisation or to revert from specialisation onto a general programme.
- 11.16. Issue of raising awareness in schools near the Institute was considered. Examples of current initiatives were cited.
- 11.17. The way in which retention initiatives are introduced was considered. Current systems don't appear to provide statistics to decide why students are leaving. There may be need to ensure student is motivated.
- 11.18. The issue of linking students with industry in the early part of the course was considered. The aim is to convince student that the course has a

future and there is recognition of the value of graduates. A suggestion of formalising links with industry to help on student motivation was made.

- 11.19. It was noted that the formal documentation provided to the panel was very good. There appears to be a formal procedure for recording feedback from students. However, other stakeholder feedback is scarce in document. It was suggested that a person is designated to liaise with stakeholders, possibly including reporting back at biannual meetings.
- 11.20. The issue of languages being named in the title of academic programmes was considered. While at 4<sup>th</sup> year, there is merit in this proposal, the implications for CAO students are substantial. As this is predominantly a management issue, the review panel decided not to make a determination this issue.
- 11.21. It was noted that some programmes were very restrictive on choice in electives.

## **12. Panel session 5: Meeting with students**

- 12.1. In general, students were happy with facilities and service provided by the Institute. They liked studying in the Institute and learned a lot.
- 12.2. With regard to progression through FETAC course compared to direct entry through CAO, they considered FETAC programmes support the transition. FETAC course provide a good grounding.
- 12.3. There is a sense of identity with ITB, and students are proud of this identity. There is a good selection of clubs and societies.
- 12.4. There appears to be a lack of group study areas, with no one area marked as group study area.
- 12.5. The current progression regulations relating to requiring a GPA of 2.00 to progress from a higher certificate to an add-on ordinary degree and an add-on ordinary degree to honours degree were noted.
- 12.6. With regard to careers service, some additional supports would be welcome including, for example, curriculum vitae preparation.
- 12.7. No difficulties were identified with formal structures such as student representation on course boards.
- 12.8. Some concern expressed about use of negative marking with multiple choice examinations. In general, students think concerns are listened to and issues changed in response to concerns where possible.
- 12.9. The number of examinations was considered. It was generally felt that there were not too many examinations.
- 12.10. Timing can be a problem, with projects due at the same time. Project completion can also result in students missing lectures in other modules. Concern was expressed about the way groups are formed and where a specific student is forced on a group, if they do not do their share, then the entire group is compromised.
- 12.11. There was a suggestion that the library could open earlier (adjust timing rather than more hours). Printing facilities are causing some concern. There appear to be enough journals on line.
- 12.12. There is a range of clubs and societies in the Institute. Engagement is not taken into account by courses. When representing the Institute on teams, there can be difficulty rescheduling assignments.
- 12.13. There was general consensus to recommend the Institute to others.

- 12.14. Course board participation is considered effective, with feedback given. Boards are very accommodating.
- 12.15. Concern was expressed about international placement in second year of courses. This is particularly a problem for Spanish courses. Also problem where students are not starting at start of semester in host country, resulting in poor integration. It was suggested that international placements should be in third year rather than second year of the course.
- 12.16. It was suggested that a grind service should be offered to students. The students should pay for this service but could obtain one-to-one assistance if required. It was noted that a different lecturer or tutor would have to provide such grinds.

### **13. Panel session 6: Tour of facilities**

- 13.1. Given the age of the facilities and the lack of requirement for additional resources included in the review process, the tour was deferred.

### **14. Panel findings and recommendations:**

- 14.1. The management and staff of the Institute are to be complimented on the following:
- Identity of staff with students;
  - Enthusiastic and constructive commitment and participation in this review by both students and staff;
  - Quality of the documentation provided to the review group, including a comprehensive self study with strong SWOT analysis;
  - Support by staff of institutional development and openness to take on different duties;
  - Evidence of a strong commitment to operations of the departments;
  - Level of achievements to date including implementation of a strategic plan for the school and departments;
  - Clarity of vision, where for example in the relative scale and importance of research at the current time;
  - Developing a common first year option; this should empower students and facilitate informed transfer at a later stage.
- 14.2. The following specific recommendations are made:
- School management
- A formal industrial liaison advisory board or equivalent should be established. This should be dominated by external influences and its role should be to assist in seeking feedback from stakeholders and in maintaining contacts with outside bodies;
  - Benchmarking against other similar organisations should be included in future versions of programmatic review documentation;
- Programme design
- Include NFQ mapping of programme learning outcomes in an appendix to each programme;
  - Provide evidence that specific programme learning outcomes are consistent with HETAC standards for named awards;
  - The issue relating to inclusion of a specific language in a programme title should be referred to Institute management for resolution;
  - The proposal to provide an exit award for students who have completed 30 credits on the Master of Arts in language education

(French) or the Master of Arts in language education (German) is supported in principle. The titles of the exit awards as graduate diploma in language education (French) and graduate diploma in language education (German) appear appropriate. However, as this would become a new academic programme, this proposal should be referred to the relevant programme review process for consideration and adoption.

- Individual suggested changes to programmes and syllabi as proposed are accepted unless in conflict with specific recommendations listed in this section of the report;
- Where changes to module sequence results in a difficulty for existing students (for example where a module is moved to a subsequent year, such that current students will already have taken the module) specific short-term solutions are to be proposed to the Registrar.

#### Access transfer and progression

- Retention issue should be managed proactively. It is perhaps more important as an issue for the Institute given the strong mission to promote “non-standard” access and the additional responsibilities to ensure that students have a positive experience of higher education. Increased success in this area will also embed the Institute within the community. Retention requires a multifunctional strategy based on an institutional policy. Resources should be specifically directed to retention analysis and rectification. Consideration should be given to the introduction of a module on survival as a student, including introduction to third level education and learning to learn, as a specific retention initiative;
- Refine marketing procedures to attract applications from non standard applicants, consistent with the mission of the institute;
- Offer supports for people without English as their first language;
- Continue development of the alumni association.

#### Programme delivery

- Consider providing electives where there are only mandatory modules in award years (particularly final year);
- Consider an open elective module for accommodation of personal interests and possibly extra curricular activities;
- Consider change in location of international exchange component of programme as currently applies to second year on Spanish programmes in particular;
- Provide mechanism for group selection for group work to achieve appropriate mix of students and consider frequent remixing of group members. Include team building in first semester. Consider self allocation of some marks to team projects by students;
- A formal exit mechanism for students leaving before the end of their course should be established. Clear responsibilities for follow up procedures for people who drop out in order to re-establish contact should be articulated.

#### Examinations

- Provide timely feedback on CA assessments, with all marks released at least 2 weeks before final examinations;
- Consider providing less emphasis on terminal examination as the main assessment vehicle;
- Consider workload associated with scheduling of projects;

- Extend the use of plagiarism checking process, including web-based scrutiny;
- Overall result of a module should be based on the combination of marks from continuous assessment and final exam assessment. Separate requirements to pass specific sub-components should be avoided.

#### Student supports

- Orientate careers service to motivate student and contribute to improvement in retention rates;
- Consideration should be given to establishment of a mentoring system particularly for first years;
- Provide placement coordinator where appropriate;
- Provide recognised group study area;
- Consider the extension of library opening hours, with the possibility of earlier opening;
- Consider offering cost-recovery grind service for specific modules (particularly in first year).

14.3. The following courses are recommended for re-validation for a five year period until the next programmatic review:

Code	Title	NFQ level
BN003	Higher certificate in business	6
BN004	Bachelor of business in information technology and a language	7
BN303	Bachelor of business (add-on)	7
BN010	Bachelor of business in information technology	7
BN011 BN906	Bachelor of arts in applied social studies in social care Bachelor of arts in applied social studies in social care (work-based)	7
BN403	Bachelor of business (Honours) (add-on)	8
BN404	Bachelor of arts (Honours) in business with a language (add-on)	8
BN405	Bachelor of business (Honours) in information technology (add-on)	8
BN408	Bachelor of arts (Honours) in business with information systems (add-on)	8
BN410	Bachelor of arts (Honours) in horticultural business management (add-on)	8
BN510	Master of arts in language education (French)	9
BN511	Master of arts in language education (German)	9
BN902	Foundation certificate	5

## 15. Follow-up actions

15.1. The following actions were noted and remain to be completed:

September 2006	Forward panel report to HETAC
September 2006	Forward panel report to Academic Council
September 2006	Forward panel report on Foundation Cert to FETAC
September 2006	Publish report on website
June-September 2006	Incorporate agreed changes into publications
November 2006	Follow up report of actions to Academic Council

Signed on behalf of peer-review group

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr Tom Rigney (Chairman)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan (Secretary)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 16. Appendix: Relevant institute policies

### 16.1. Extract from 2MP15 Monitoring and evaluation of academic programmes:

#### 1. Procedure

- It is Institute policy to review the academic content of each programme at least once every five years. However, programmatic reviews may be initiated at any time at the request of HETAC, the Director or the Academic Council of the Institute.
- Procedures for programmatic review will follow current National and International best practice.
- Where feasible, periodic programme evaluation will be carried out on a group of related programmes at the same time. Versions of a course offered in full-time, part-time, ACCS and work-based training modes will be evaluated at the same time.
- Periodic programmatic review will include three phases, an internal self evaluation phase leading to a self-evaluation report, an external evaluation phase leading to a final programmatic review report and a period of change implementation leading to a final follow-up report to Academic Council.

#### 2. Self-evaluation

- The internal evaluation phase will commence with a critical self-evaluation of the academic programme, or suite of programmes. The emphasis should be on reflection, analysis and improvement.
- The primary objective of self-evaluation is to answer four key questions:
  1. What are you trying to do? This refers to the mission, aims and objectives, their appropriateness, and how the section positions itself locally, nationally and internationally.
  2. How are you trying to do it? This addresses process, procedure and practice in place and requires an analysis of their effectiveness.
  3. How do you know it works? This looks at feedback systems in place in particular for quality monitoring and quality management.
  4. How do you change in order to improve? This examines issues of strategic planning and quality improvement as well as capacity and willingness to change.
- Self-evaluation will include a phase of self-investigation involving:
  - All academic staff involved in the programmes
  - Learner representatives
  - Graduates of the programme
  - Support service providers
  - Employers of graduates
  - Other stakeholders
- The Head of School of the area under review will initiate and manage the self-evaluation process on behalf of the Academic Council.
- Membership of the internal group tasked with drafting the self-evaluation report will be determined by the Head of School. Typical composition would include:
  - Head of Department or senior academic
  - Representative academic staff members

- Executive assistant
  - Technical staff representative
  - Academic staff member active in research
  - Postgraduate student
- Internal self-evaluation report will include:
  - Executive summary
    - o Overview of programmatic review process
    - o Critical changes proposed to academic programmes
    - o Justification for changes
  - Detailed information about the Department, and the perceptions of staff and students of their role
  - Statement of the strategic objectives of the Department
  - Identification of quality systems and processes that are currently in place and an assessment of their effectiveness
  - A self-critical analysis of the activities of the Department which includes:
    - o Review of course delivery and assessment of learning
    - o Evaluation of extent of meeting the learners needs
    - o Evaluate demand projections for following five years
    - o Evaluate physical facilities available for the course
    - o Evaluation of services related to the programme
    - o Evaluation of links established with industry, business and the wider community in order to maintain relevance of the course
    - o Evaluation of research activities in the area under investigation
  - An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and suggested appropriate remedies where necessary
  - Identification of weaknesses in procedural organisation and other actions that are under the control of the Department which can be remedied by action
  - Identification of shortfall in resources
  - A framework within which the unit can continue to work in the future towards strategic and academic changes and quality improvement
- The self evaluation will address the time period since the last programmatic review or since the programme was established
- The self-evaluation process will include evaluation of relevant course board annual reports that were generated in the previous years (4RCD01)
- The self-evaluation process will culminate in a self-evaluation report, which will set out the findings of the self-evaluation, including an evaluation of the programme
- The format of the self-evaluation report will follow the format of an agreed template indicated below
- The final self-evaluation report will be submitted by the Head of School to the Registrar by agreed dates.

### **3. External evaluation**

- An external evaluation of the programme will follow self-evaluation. This will be arranged by the Registrar.
- External evaluation will be conducted by a peer review group from outside the Institute and may include:
  - Stakeholder representative
  - Competent person to make National and International comparisons in relation to the programme

- Academic peers
- Social partners
- Professional associations
- Learners and alumni of the Institute
- The secretary to the external review panel will be responsible for drafting the external evaluation report. The Secretary will be agreed between the Head of School, Registrar and Chairperson of the external review group.
- The chairperson of the group will be agreed between the Institute and HETAC
- Typical composition of the external evaluation group will be (taking gender balance into account):
  - Head of School from another Institute of Technology
  - Two academics from other Institutes of higher education (preferably one from overseas)
  - One person from other stakeholders listed above
  - Specialist (if required)
  - Registrar of Institute (secretary)
  - Representative from HETAC (by invitation)
- The composition of the external evaluation group will be determined by the Director in consultation with the Registrar and Head of School.
- External evaluation will be conducted in accordance with current international best practice
- The external expert group will:
  - Review the self-evaluation report
  - Conduct investigation of the programme
- The external evaluation should be conducted in the spirit of co-operation, consultation and advice between the expert group and internal staff
- The roles and responsibilities of external experts are documented (2MP17)

#### **4. Final evaluation report**

- External evaluation will culminate in a final evaluation report setting out the findings of the review groups.
- The final report will be drafted as a combined report of the external and internal review groups by both groups in partnership.
- Institute management will comment on the draft report before final publication
- A copy of the final evaluation report will be forwarded to HETAC and published on the Institute website

#### **5. Continuing improvement through follow-up actions and reporting**

- The final evaluation report will be considered by Institute Management.
- The Institute will where possible implement any recommendations arising from the internal self-assessment report or the external evaluation report along an agreed timetable.
- A final follow-up report will be submitted by the Head of School to Academic Council indicating changes made and evidence of quality improvements.

16.2. Extract from 2MP17 Roles and responsibilities of external experts on validation and review panels:

- The functions of peer-review groups are to:
  - Study the self-evaluation report
  - Visit the unit (typically over one day) and meet staff, students and other stakeholders
  - Clarify and verify details in the self-assessment report and consider other relevant documentation
  - Review activities of the unit in the light of the self-assessment report
  - Consider if recommendations in the Self-study report are consistent with, and are supported by, the Self-study findings
  - Participate in drafting final evaluation or programmatic review report listing recommendations for improvement.

//end