

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW 2005 - 2010



SELF EVALUATION REPORT

August 2010

Foreword

For 40 years, the Institute of Technology Carlow has been delivering quality academic programmes. From its establishment in 1970 as a Regional Technical College, the Institute has engaged in a trajectory of development on a variety of levels. While retaining its core mission of delivering quality educational programmes to an increasingly varied community of learners, as an organization it has grown to become a higher education institution delivering taught and research programmes on a national and international basis, with collaborative partnerships across Ireland, Europe, and Asia.

Its learner population is diverse and multicultural, and it's academic and support staff highly qualified, with many academic staff having appropriate research experience in their discipline area, and industrial, commercial and professional expertise. In 2010, our learner population is close to 5000, and increasing as demand for higher education grows. With graduate numbers exceeding 25,000, the Institute has reached a level of maturity which is reflected in our approach to this Institutional Review.

In tandem with a major internal consultative process as part of the Institute's strategic planning process, and a number of discipline specific strategic and programmatic reviews, an Institutional Review Team was formed together with Working Groups. This Self Evaluation Report in addition to meeting the prescribed statutory review functions of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, and the requirements of the HETAC Institutional Review Policy, is evaluative, analytical, evidence based and reflective, with recommendations covering the wide spectrum of Institute educational and support activities.

The Institute welcomes the Peer Review Process that is initiated with this Report, and perceives this engagement as an important contribution to its future development.

In closing I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who have been involved, and who contributed to the numerous planning and review processes that the Institute has engaged in over the past five years. These reviews have provided a stimulating and productive platform for the development of the Institute.

Dr Ruaidhrí Neavyn

President

August 2010

Ráiteas Misin

Tá Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Cheatharlach tugtha go hiomlán do fhoirfeacht in oideachasard leibhéil, trí cláir a chur ar fáil dírithe ar cháilíochtaí le haitheantas idirnáisiúnta. Tá sé beartaithe ag an Institiúid go mbeadh chuile sheans ag a scoláirí agus ag a baill i gcoiteann bláthnú go hiomlán i dtimpeallacht ghairmiúil le lán tacaíocht.

Tá dlúthcheangal ag an Institiúid le gníomhaíochtaí taighdíochta agus fiontraíochta agus le forbairt oideachais, chultúra agus eacnamaíochta Laighin Theas agus an phobail i gcoiteann.

Mission Statement

The Institute of Technology Carlow is dedicated to excellence in higher education through the provision of programmes leading to internationally recognised awards. The Institute is committed to ensuring that its learners and other members are afforded the opportunity to develop to their full potential in a professional and supportive environment.

The Institute is committed to research and to enterprise related activities, and to enhancing the educational, cultural and sustainable economic development of South Leinster and the wider community.

Notes:

1. Appendices to this Self Evaluation Report (SER)

These have been placed in a supplementary document to the SER.

2. Institutional Review Library

The Institutional Review Reference Library (IRRL) is under compilation. Where available, both a hardcopy and softcopy of documentation will be in the IRRL. Where the IRRL is referred to in the SER (e.g., as an historical document) this is available to HETAC and Institutional Review Panel Members on request. The document(s) requested will be provided in an electronic form if available.

3. The terms 'student' and 'learner' are used interchangeably throughout the document.

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Chapter 1

Introduction, Review Process, and Profile of Institution

1.1 Introduction

Purpose of Institutional Review:

Under the terms of the *Qualifications Act (1999)*, HETAC are required to review the effectiveness of the agreed quality assurance procedures at the Institute of Technology Carlow. The six prescribed objectives for the Institutional Review process are:

1. To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made;
2. To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution;
3. To assess the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the Institution.
4. To confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression;
5. To evaluate the operation and management of delegated authority where it has been granted;
6. To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution.

These objectives are included in the Terms of Reference (*see Appendix 1*) agreed with HETAC for this review and are set within the context of IT Carlow and its trajectory of development.

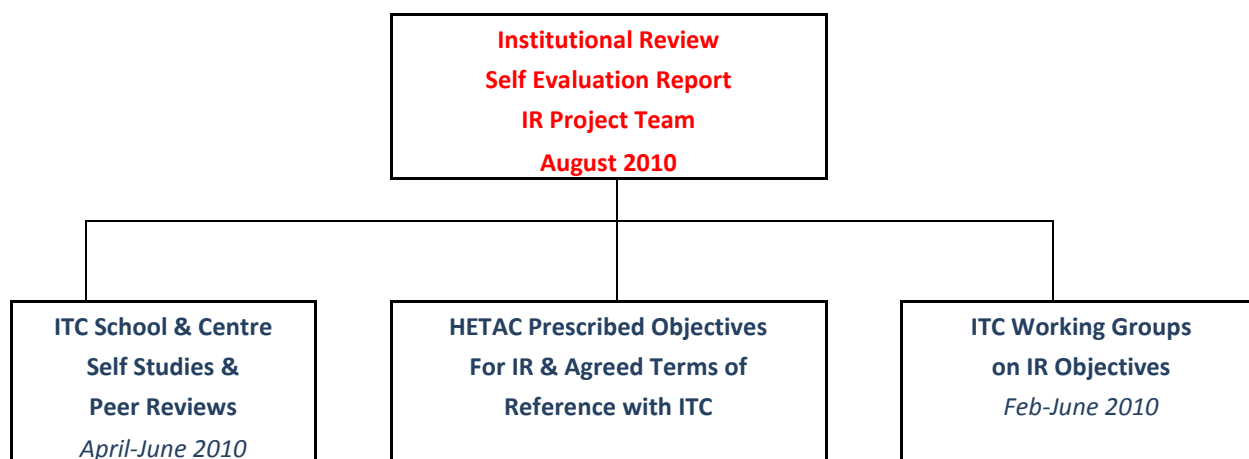
1.2 Review Process

Figure 1A outlines the major contributing streams to the Self Evaluation process.

Figure 1b outlines the School and Centre self-studies and peer reviews.

Figure 1C outlines the Institute working groups on the specific objectives agreed with HETAC

1A Overview of Self Evaluation Report Process



1B ITC School & Centre Self Studies & Peer Reviews, April–June 2010

Wexford Campus Programmatic Review 19th & 20th April 2010	School of Engineering Programmatic Review 10th & 11th May 2010	School of Science Programmatic Review 11th & 12th May 2010	School of Business & Humanities Strategic Review 4th June 2010	Centre for Lifelong Learning Strategic Review 4th June 2010
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1C ITC Working Groups on IR Objectives, February –June 2010

ITC Working Group A On IR Objectives 1 & 2 1. Public Confidence in Quality of Education and Training & Standards of Awards Made 2. Strategic Planning & Governance	ITC Working Group On IR Objective 3 3. Quality Assurance & Improvement with special consideration: <i>Arrangements/procedures in place for the following arrangements which fall under transnational provision, collaborative provision and also include off-campus/out-centre provision.</i>	ITC Working Group On IR Objectives 4 & 5 4. Implementation of NFQ & procedures for Access, Transfer & Progression 5. Operation & Management of DA with special consideration: <i>The IR Panel is requested to consider the Institute's validation policy and procedures, and in particular procedures for the validation of Minor, Special Purpose & Supplemental Awards.</i>	ITC Working Group On IR Objective 6 6. Recommendations for the Enhancement of the Education & Training provided by ITC
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The memberships of the Institutional Review Working Groups are listed in *Appendix 2*.

1.3 Institute Profile

Background to the institution

Founded in 1970, the Institute of Technology Carlow (ITC) is located in the centre of Ireland's South Leinster region (containing the counties of Carlow, Wicklow, Wexford, Kildare, Laois and Kilkenny), and on the periphery of the Mid East and South East Regions of Ireland. ITC considers its location point of midway between Dublin (84 kilometres) and Waterford (80 kilometres) as a strategic advantage and a key feature of its dual role in servicing students and enterprises from both the South East and the Mid East -Greater Dublin area.

Serving a catchment area of 700,000 persons containing approximately 15% of the State's workforce (*An Economic Profile of Carlow, 2009, DKM Economic Consultants*), the ITC aims to contribute to regional and

national economic, social and cultural development, informed and enriched by the Institutes growing international activities and profile.

The Institute provides a broad range of programmes from trade apprenticeship programmes (on behalf of FAS, the National Training and development authority), to higher education and training programmes including research and enterprise development opportunities, through its main campus in Carlow and other off-campus locations in Wexford and Wicklow:

- Main Campus, Kilkenny Road, Carlow - programmes provided in Business, Humanities, Engineering and Science.
- Wexford Campus (approx. 75 kilometres from Carlow) - full-time and part-time programmes provided in Business, Social Studies, Early Childhood studies, Art, Visual Communications and Design, Architectural Technology and Economics. Approximately 870 learners are registered at the Wexford Campus of which 80% are mature learners.
- Wicklow Campus (approx. 117 kilometres from Carlow) – Enterprise Support Centre with 180 part-time learners registered on a mixture of higher education and continuing professional development programmes as part of the enterprise support programme in association with Wicklow Co Council.

ITC has a diverse portfolio of over 74 taught programmes up to and including Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ); a research portfolio to Doctoral level (Level 10 NFQ) in the Sciences and Technology, and an emerging research platform in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The Institute programmes are modularised but delivered on a year-long basis. The Institute programmes are not semesterised, with the exception of one programme. The Institute decided not to semesterise programmes following extensive consideration and based upon learner needs and perceived risk to new learners in particular.

Student Profile

ITC has a student population of 4,795 (2,921 undergraduate, 312 trade apprentices, 133 Erasmus, 198 non EU, 38 postgraduate and 1,193 lifelong learning (programmes undertaken part-time by night) or part-time/mature continuing professional development). More than 70% of students studying for major awards are enrolled on Level 7 and Level 8 Bachelor Degree programmes. The Institute has presided over 25,000 graduates to date and the current student diversity is reflected in its mix of students. This comprises the traditional leaving certificate entrants; a growing European and International student body; an increasing proportion of mature students; learners from disadvantaged backgrounds; and a significant number of part-time learners. On average, over 80% of ITC graduates find their first employment in the counties of South Leinster and Dublin.

Table 1 IT Carlow – Snapshot of Core Academic Provision

Level 6 Trades Higher Certificates	Level 7 Ordinary Degrees	Level 8 Honours Degrees Higher Diplomas	Level 9 Masters Degrees PGrad Diplomas	Level 10 Doctorate Degrees
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74 Undergrad Full-time Programmes, 4 Apprentice Programmes, 38 Research Postgrad Programmes & 2 Taught Postgrad Programmes in 2009/10

Undergraduate & Postgraduate Statistics 2009/10

Business & Humanities - **1,360**
Engineering - **727**
Science - **696**
Wexford - **469**
Postgraduate (Research) - **38**
Apprentices - **312**
Lifelong Learning - **1,193**

TOTAL Number: 4,795

Undergraduate Full-time Analysis 2009/10

By Award Level

Level 6: **922** Level 7: **1,123** Level 8: **1,519**

By Gender

Male: **2,137** Female: **1,427**

By Domiciliary Origin

Leinster: **2,799** Connaught: **106**
Munster: **227** Ulster: **101**
EU Erasmus & NonEU International: **331**

Lifelong Learning Part-time Analysis 2009/10

By Award Level

Level 6: **8** Level 7: **358** Level 8: **524**
Level 9: **12**

SP Level 6: **68** SP Level 7: **22** SP Level 8: **34**
SP Level 9: **7**

Minor Level 6: **30**

Non IT Carlow Accredited Awards: **130**

By Gender

Male: **440** Female: **753**

By Domiciliary Origin

Leinster: **1174** Connaught: **4**
Munster: **15** Ulster: **0**

Total Students 2009/10
4,795

Home Undergrad F/T 2,921	Apprentices 312	EU Erasmus 133	Non EU International 198	Postgraduate (Research) 38	Lifelong Learning 1,193
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Total Number of Graduates 2005 to 2009

School/Centre	2005-09
Engineering	872
Business & Humanities	1,671
Science	1,047
Wexford Campus	445
Lifelong Learning (2009 only)	169
TOTALS	4,204

Research Output 2005 to 2009

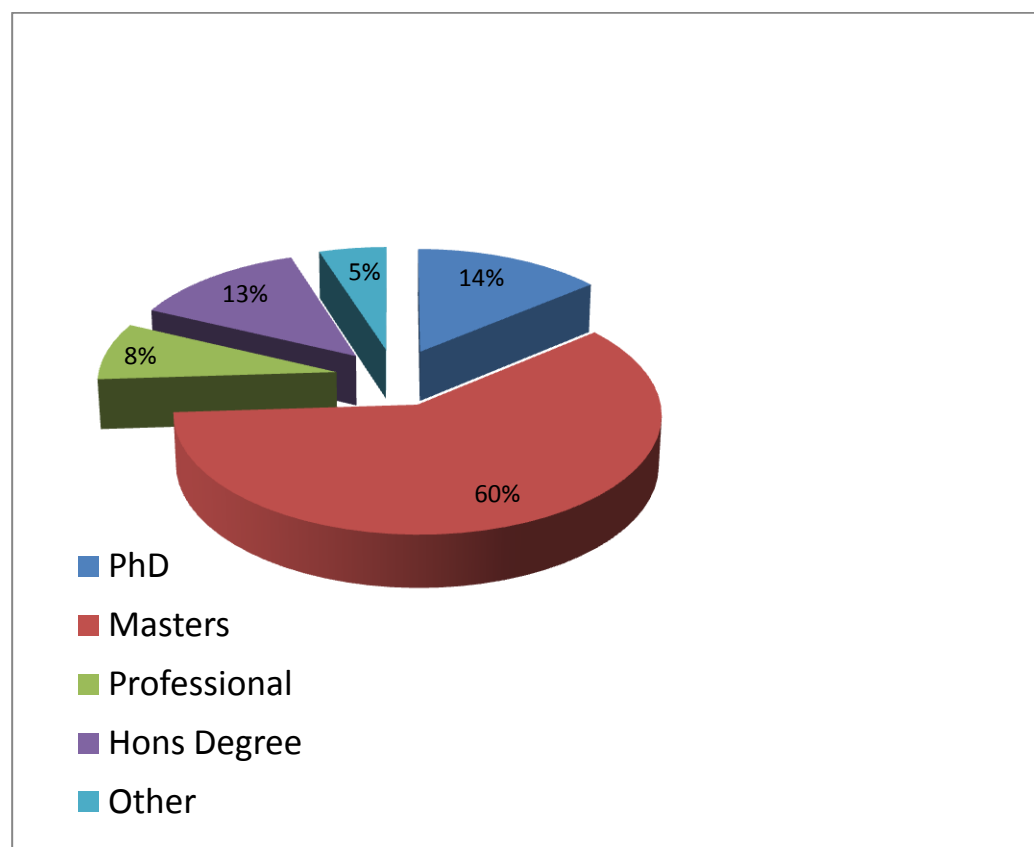
Doctorate Degrees	12	Peer Reviewed	86
Masters Degrees	16	Conference Proceedings	54
Income: €7.55million (18% HEA, 16% EI, 15% EU, 3% SFI, 48% other)			
Research Priorities: EnviroCORE, DesignCORE, GameCORE, GeoCORE, Health Sciences			
Enterprise Development: 37 EPP Companies, 25 Innovation/Incubation Companies (1,573m2 incubation space), 6 patents filed, 71 RDI Company Projects under Enterprise Ireland Innovation Voucher Programme			

Note: Each Postgraduate 'Research Project' is a separate programme of study.

Staff Profile

The total staff complement for ITC is 616, of which 295 are full-time and 321 part-time. Staff breakdown into 363 academic, 88 administration, 161 student services and support and 4 dedicated research staff. Of the Academic Staff over 74% are Level 9 qualified or higher. (See chart below). Staff development remains a strategic priority in the new Institute Strategic Plan 2009-2013 and will focus on staff training programmes targeted at enhancing the qualification profile of all staff in the Institute. In the area of academic staff development, a specific objective in the development of programmes which will enable all academic staff obtain training and/or a qualification in teaching and learning.

Whole Time Academics Qualifications Profile



Quality Assurance

The Institute was granted Delegation of Authority by HETAC to make awards up to Level 8 of the NFQ in 2005. Further Delegation of Awarding Authority was granted by HETAC in 2009 to Level 9 and Level 10 of the NFQ, in Research in the fields of Biotechnology and Molecular Environmental Science. ITC intend to apply for Delegated Authority for taught programmes at Level 9 in the near future. ITC agreed an initial set of quality assurance policies and procedures with HETAC in 2004. The Institute appointed a quality assurance (QA) officer approximately 12 months ago. The QA officer is currently engaged in re-establishing and reviewing the quality assurance procedures and manual(s) in the context of a comprehensive management documentation system. The Institute has completed three programmatic reviews (Science, Engineering and the Wexford Campus) and two strategic reviews in the Schools of Business & Humanities and Lifelong Learning in 2010. The Wexford campus is integrated structurally and academically into the main Carlow campus. The Wexford campus completed its programmatic review in 2010.

Partnerships and Collaborations

In the provision of its programmes and services, ITC has significant educational and research partnerships and collaborations with national and international industries and higher education institutions in Europe (62 European partner institutions across 17 countries), Asia and the US. Non-national full-time students currently account for over 10% of the Institutes full-time student population, with an equal division between EU and non-EU nationalities. Developments in this area are consistent with the national priority of significantly increasing the number of non-EU international students in Ireland. ITC considers that it is contributing to the national objective of boosting Irelands academic reputation in China through the establishment of formal links between Irish higher educational providers and China's leading institutes of learning. An example of this is the transnational arrangements in place for two ITC Bachelor degree computing programmes which are being delivered in Henan University of Finance and Economics, China. ITC has also established other transnational collaborations which include dedicated feeder, progression or recognition arrangements, and exchange programmes with the following institutions:

- Guilin University of Electronic Technology, China
- Louyang University of Finance & Economics, China
- Dong-A University, South Korea
- Chung-Ang University, South Korea
- Inha University, South Korea
- UTHM, Malaysia
- Nilai University College, Malaysia
- UMP, Malaysia
- Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore
- St. Ambrose University, USA
- Nova Scotia Community College, Canada
- College of the North Atlantic, Newfoundland
- University of Prishtina, Kosovo
- Université de La Rochelle, France.

ITC has established other alliances with higher education institutions through the Strategic innovation Fund (SIF) and the National Digital Learning Repository (NDLR) funding streams. Over €1million has been allocated to date to the Institute of Technology Carlow for its involvement in a number of strategic alliances, through the Higher Education Authority (HEA) SIF funding schemes, the details of which are outlined below in Table 2.

Table 2 HEA Strategic Innovation Funding (SIF) Alliances

SIF 1		SIF 2	
Continue Project		Eastern Regional Alliance (ERA)	
- Emotional Competencies - Problem Based Learning - Learner & Staff Support - Learning Styles - Assistive Technologies	Lead Institutes: ITTD Partners: ITC, ITB, IADT	- Consolidating Services for - Increased Capacity - Repositioning Learner Assessment - Transitions - Repositioning Learner Assessment	Lead Institute: ITC Partners: DKIT, ITB, ITTD, HETAC (Repositioning Learner Assessment)
IOT Sector – Wide Area Networking: Delivering Systemic Change		IOTI Sectoral	
- Capacity & Analysis Review - Learning Innovation Networking - Staff Empowerment - Senior Management Development - MIS (BI & Portal Project	Lead Institutes: IOTI Partners: all IOTs	- Addressing the Needs of the Knowledge Economy	Lead Institute: IOTI Partners: all IOTs
Strategic Alliances with IOT & NUI Maynooth		Limerick IOT	
- Academic Structures - Lifelong Learning - Staff Development & Teaching & Learning - Knowledge Transfer - Post Graduate Training	Lead Institute: NUIM Partners: ITC, DKIT, ITTD, AIT, WIT	- Work Based Learning Approach Craft Persons	Lead Institute: LIT Partners: ITC
IOT Research Alliances			
- IT Research Alliances	Lead Institute: IOTI Partners: all IOTs		

The National Digital Learning Repository (NDLR) funding streams was established as part of the HEA's strategic initiative to support greater collaboration in eLearning within the higher education sector. It was set up to support access to and provide support for the development of sharable digital learning resources. Partners include all the National universities and Institutes of Technology in Ireland. The overall objectives of NDLR are to:

- Support individual, group and community HE sector staff in the sharing of digital learning resources and associated teaching practices
- Provide access to storage, search and retrieval facilities for shared resources
- Promote sharing across HE sector by events and training,
- Support open access digital rights management.

Lifelong Learning

The Institute offers a range of Lifelong Learning opportunities through its recently expanded Lifelong Learning Centre. ITC considers that this development reflects the emphasis on the knowledge-based society where an ability to continuously acquire knowledge, skills and competencies throughout the working life is required in an environment where change appears to be the only constant. Within this context, educational delivery needs to be more flexible and accessible to learners of all ages and backgrounds. ITC considers itself to be at the forefront of such delivery, providing a range of programmes across a variety of subject areas at its centres in Carlow, Wexford and Wicklow. The Lifelong Learning Centre liaises and works with local companies in the identification and development of customised programmes, through Special Purpose, Minor and Supplemental Awards, to meet their specific training and development needs.

Research and Innovation

ITC considers that Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) is an integral part of the Institutes activities and is a vital aspect of the interaction of the Institute with industry and other higher education and research institutes on both a national and international basis. Its collaborative RDI programmes have been variously funded by the Department of Agriculture Ireland, the European INTERREG Programme, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) PRTL, the HEA Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF), EU Framework Programmes, Industry, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Irish Research Council for Science Engineering & Technology (IRCSET), the Technological Sector Research Programme (TSR, Department of Education and Science Ireland), Enterprise Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland.

The Institute has a strategic collaborative relationship with Teagasc Oak Park Research Centre Carlow and is working closely with its National Biotechnology Centre. The Institute says that this collaborative relationship is appropriate in terms of Carlow's prosperous agricultural hinterland and attractive environment for the location of Green Technology businesses.

The Institute's RDI activities are complemented by various campus-based specialist centres and campus companies based on the Institute campus. These include the Campus Innovation Centre (established in 1992) and the new Enterprise & Research Incubation Centre (established in 2006). These centres help accelerate the development of start-up companies through a comprehensive combination of infrastructure, business support services and specialised resources before and during their foundation. Companies within the South East and Mid East regions have grown and developed with the support of the Institutes CIM Centre.

A snapshot of the Institute's resources, enterprise development and student support activities is provided in **Table 3 below - IT Carlow - Resources & Support Activities Snapshot.**

Strategic Planning

Last year, the Institute launched its new Strategic Plan for the period 2009-2013. It has a mission which incorporates a proactive commitment to its learners and the region, supporting exploration and development of the full potential of both. This commitment is over eight strategic goals, ranging from provision of a diverse and niche academic portfolio for fulltime and Lifelong Learning students, to active engagement in Research & Development. This commitment includes supporting these goals with a modern organisation structure, prioritising staff development and a strong engagement with the wider community.

Table 3 IT Carlow – Resources & Support Activities Snapshot

Staff Numbers 616

Full-time 295
Part-time 321

Breakdown

Academic 363
Admin 88
Support 161
Research 4

Income 2009 €28,451,000

Fees € 7,147,000
Dept €19,876,000
Other € 1,428,000

Expenditure 2009 - €28,531,000

Staff €22,892,000
Non-Pay € 5,639,000

Area of IT Carlow

Overall: 11.5 hectares

Buildings: 25,763m²

Rented: 2,765m²

Teaching & Learning Centre

- Academic Professional Development
- PG Cert/Dip in T&L
- SIF & NAIRTL Projects
- Supplementary Teaching
- Tutor System
- ELearning & Technology
- Consultation on T&L
- Resources for T&L
- Policy on T&L

Enterprise Development Activities – Enterprise & Research Incubation Centre
Innovation Centre, Computer Integrated Manufacturing Centre, Enterprise Platform Programmes,
Wales Ireland Sustainable Enterprise, Business & Technology Centre, EnviroCORE, DesignCORE,
GeoCORE, GameCORE.

Enterprise Development Support Services – Enterprise Development Support, Specialised
Incubation Facilities, Pre&Post Incubation Supports, Science & Technology Research & Consultancy,
Commercialisation of R&D, Technology Transfer Supports, Business Development & Mentoring,
Training Programmes.

Support Activities

Student Services – Sport & Recreation, Sports Scholarships, Accommodation, Access, Medical, Counselling, Chaplaincy, Health, Student Academic, Disciplinary Regs, Code of Discipline, Student Complaints & Appeals, International Student Supports, Careers Advice & Support, Links to Sporting Bodies

Students' Union – Clubs & Societies, Welfare & Education, Student Rep Council, Entertainment, etc.

Academic Regs, Admin, Review & Quality – Admissions, Exams, Conferring, Prizes & Awards, Tutorial Support, Evaluation of Learner Supports, Retention, Academic Council, Academic Regulations, Quality Assurance, Academic Reviews, Programme Design, Programme Boards, Research & Development, Schools Liaison, Industry Liaison, Technical Support, etc.

Learning Resources – Learning Resource Centre – Library & Computing Services

Non-Academic – Governing Body, Finance, Grants & Scholarships, Payroll, Human Resources, Estates, External Services, Communications & PR, Freedom of Information, Reprographics, etc.

Academic Staff External Higher Education Activities

- Programme Validation Panels
- Programmatic Review Panels
- High Level HETAC Panels
- HETAC Consultation Groups
- SIF Projects
- Interview Panels
- External Examiners (*Undergrad & Postgrad*)
- Visiting Lecturers
- International Review Panels
- Consultancy Work for Social Care Standards & Organisations, e.g., IASC
- Subject Matter Experts for Fás
- Accreditation Board, RIAI
- Accreditation Board, Panels, etc. Engineers Ireland

Table 4 Summary of School/Centre Programme Provision

There are **74** undergraduate programmes and **4** apprentice Level 6 programmes being delivered during the academic year **2009/10**:

School	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8
Business & Humanities	4	6	12
Engineering	8	9	7
Science	5	5	11
Wexford	3	3	5
TOTALS	20	23	35

Table 5 Level 9 & 10 Higher Degrees by Research - Postgraduate Register

There are **22 learners** at Level 9 and **15 learners** at Level 10 (PhD) referred to as postgraduate research programmes being delivered by the Institute in the academic year **2009/10**:

School	LEVEL 9 (Research)	LEVEL 10 (Research)
Business & Humanities	4	0
Engineering	3	1
Science	14	14
Wexford	2	0
TOTALS	23	15

NOTE: *Each Postgraduate 'Research' Project is a separate programme of study.*

Chapter 2

Public Confidence in Quality and Standards

2.1 Introduction

Public confidence in the quality of the activities of the Institute may be determined by the degree to which it achieves and communicates the quality of its standards, its competitiveness, the quality and importance of its undergraduate and research programmes and the range and quality of its contribution to economic, social and cultural development. The degree to which it is recognised for these aspects will determine its reputation and recognition amongst stakeholders including prospective students, parents, employers, collaborative partners locally, nationally and internationally, and local and national media.

2.2 Award Recognition

The National Framework of Qualifications, (NFQ) which was launched in October 2003 by the then newly formed National Qualifications Authority (NQAI) is a qualifications system for all levels (1 to 10) in Ireland. The NQF is a categorisation system designed to provide recognition, clarity and confidence in the standards and quality of awards at all level made in Ireland. This clarity and relativity is achieved through the standards determined, at each level, of the knowledge skills and competencies required to be achieved by learners to be eligible for the award. The purpose of this NFQ is to ensure public confidence in the standard and quality of all national educational and training awards. The NQAI are continuing the task of aligning and comparing the NFQ to other national and international education and training and professional accreditation systems so that the graduates will be able to have the facility of access, transfer, progression and that these national awards are recognised and upheld globally.

In 2004, the Institute of Technology Carlow went through a validation process whereby all of the Institute programmes validated by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) were placed at appropriate the Higher Education levels (6 to 10) on this Framework. Then in 2005, as recognition of its capacity and capability to meet the legislative requirements, the Institute achieved delegated authority from HETAC to make awards at levels 6, Higher Certificate, Level 7, Degree and Level 8, Honours Degree as provided by the Qualifications (Education & Training) Act 1999. In 2009 the Institute successfully applied for, and was granted Delegated Authority at levels 9 and 10 in the scientific discipline of Biotechnology and Molecular Environmental Sciences. The Institute is also a recognised provider at Levels 9 and 10 on the NFQ in a variety of other disciplines. As part of this delegated authority the Institute must undergo a Quality Review every five years to ensure that quality standards are maintained, improved and revised as appropriate in line with best practice.

Many of the Institute awards also have accredited recognition from professional bodies and other organisations for the purpose of further studies and professional memberships. (*See Appendix 3 - professional recognition*).

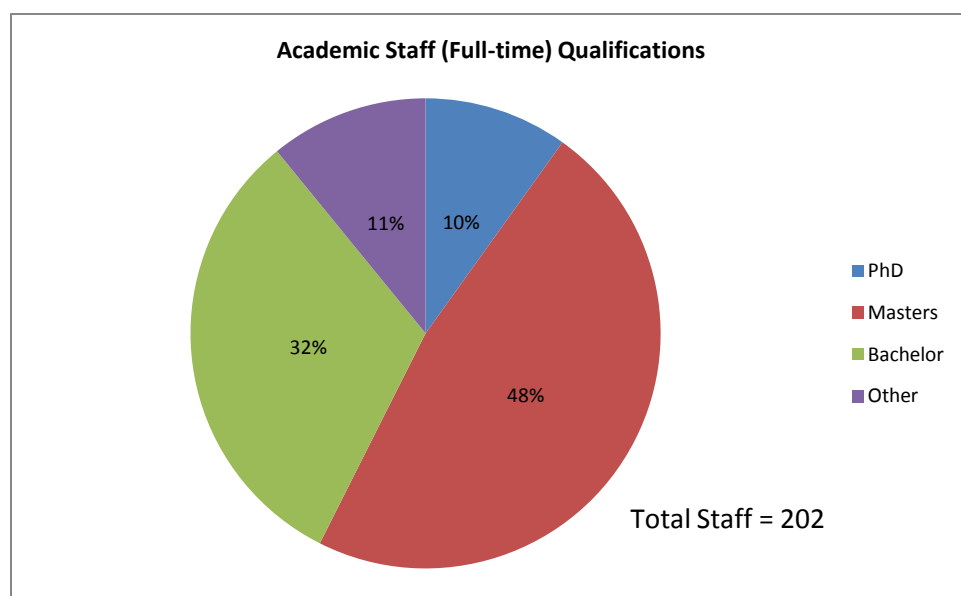
2.3 Monitoring of Academic Standards

The Monitoring of academic standards is an integral part of the Institute Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement system. The Institute has a Quality Assurance and Improvement Manual was first approved by HETAC and published in 2004 and is available on the staff intranet with the Quality Framework available on www.itcarlow.ie . This Manual is updated regularly and as required in line with the Institute Quality procedures. The Institute policies and procedures are designed to monitor and track the processes and improvements in the programme development, validation and delivery to ensure that quality is enhanced and public confidence is maintained. A full exposition of all academic policies and procedures are detailed later in this report in Chapter 4 on Quality Assurance. The Institute responds as appropriate to consultation by HETAC on policies in development e.g., HETAC draft Consultation Policies on Monitoring and Research Degree Programme Policy and Criteria. This link with HETAC also benchmarks the Institute policy and procedures with international and national best practice. The use of Extern Examiner reports and feedback from panel experts on programme development and review together with the upgrading of the pedagogical qualifications of academic staff members through the Teaching and Learning Centre play a major part in quality assurance and improvement in this area. Also, of equal importance is the on-going continuing professional development in discipline specific areas of expertise so that their knowledge, skills and competencies are up to date and relevant to current industry and professional needs.

Staff

The Institute currently employs 202 full-time academic staff. Figure 1 provides a profiles of their qualifications.

Figure 1 **Qualification Profile of Academic Staff**



The distribution of staff category numbers are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Staff by Category

STAFF		
Classification	Fulltime	Part-time
Academic	202	10
Support ¹	47	19
Administration ²	72	6
Other ³	26	0
TOTAL⁴	347	35

Notes:

1. Includes general operatives, technicians, Student Services
2. Includes Library
3. Includes Heads of Function and Managers
4. Does not include:
 - a. Invigilators
 - b. Life Long Learning lecturing panel members = 160

2.4 Student Numbers

Tables 2 and 3 show that the full-time student population has shown substantial growth; with an increase of 24% in the decade. The Lifelong Learning wholetime equivalent student population has grown dramatically with a growth of 652% over a ten year period.

Table 2 Student Numbers (WTEs) from 2000-2010

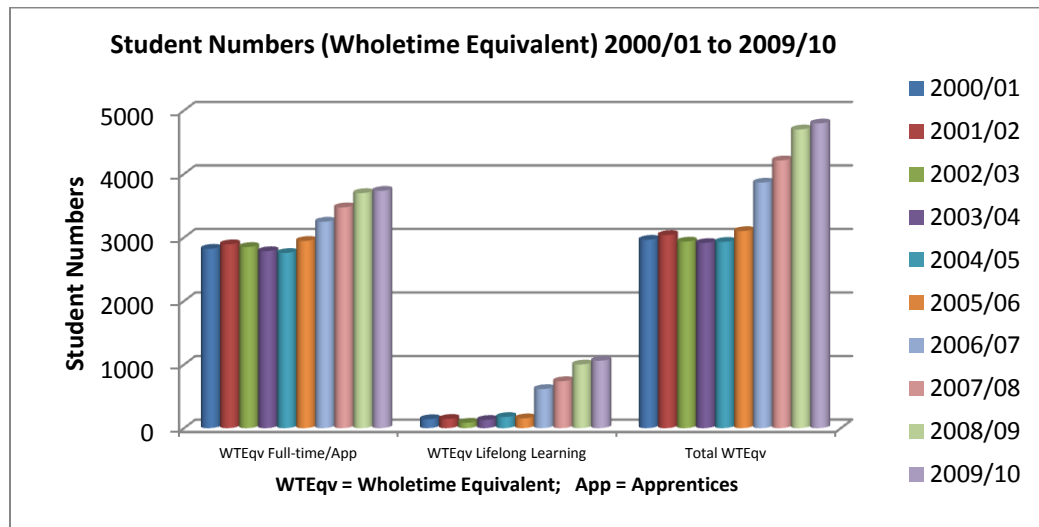


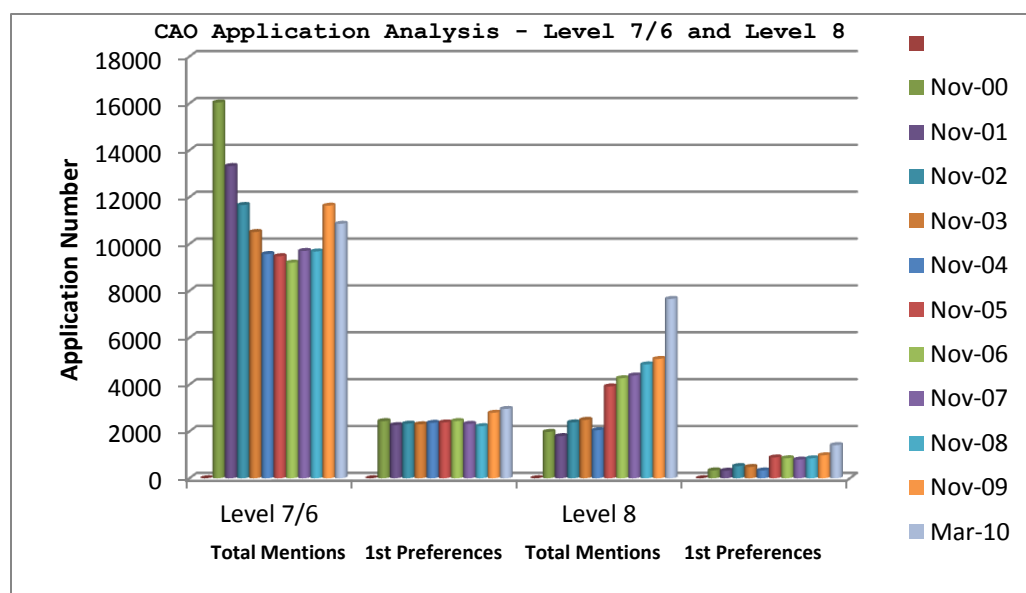
Table 3 WTE Student Numbers for Full-Time, Apprentices and Lifelong Learning

Year	Fulltime (WTE)	Apprentices (HC)	Apprentices (WTE)	LLL (HC)	LLL (WTE)	Total (WTE)	% LLL
2005/06	2,711	236	79	926	180	2970	6.00%
2006/07	2,935	314	105	965	615	3655	16.8%
2007/08	3,097	378	126	1,137	739	3962	18.0%
2008/09	3,234	465	155	1,334	1,002	4391	22.0%
2009/10	3,277	458	153	1,193	1,066	4496	23.0%

CAO Application Numbers

Despite the decline in the number of persons sitting the Leaving Certificate and increased competition in the third level sector IT Carlow has maintained it's share of the application market and is showing phenomenal growth in the number of Honours Degree applications in 2010. Table 4 illustrates this.

Table 4 CAO Application Analysis 2000-2010



Graduate Survey

ITC conducts a survey of graduate first destination in association with the annual conferring. The proportion of graduates continuing their studies shows a gradual decrease from 2004-2009. This can be explained in part by the higher percentage of students completing abinito degrees and honours degrees before entering the workforce, rather than the traditional progression of graduates through Higher Certificate, Diploma and Honours Degree award levels. Table 5 illustrates this.

Table 5 ITC Graduates 2004-2008

ITC Graduates					
Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Employed	25.6%	28.4%	38.3%	37.2%	35.0 %
Further Education	67.3%	65.1%	57.6%	57.1%	54.7%
Seeking Employment	5.4%	4.7%	3.6%	5.4%	8.7%
Not Available	1.7%	1.8%	0.5%	0.3%	1.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

2.5 Provision of Information to the Public

The Institute is subject to demands for transparency and openness, the need to communicate successfully to the public about what it is doing and how well it is doing it. The target audience is dictated by the Institutes geographical location, catchment area and range of services provided.

ITC is located in the centre of Ireland's South Leinster region and on the periphery of the Mid East and South East Regions of Ireland. Serving an immediate catchment area of 700,000 persons containing approximately 15% of the State's workforce (*An Economic Profile of Carlow, 2009, DKM Economic Consultants*), the ITC provides full-time programmes in the counties of Carlow and Wexford, and a range of part-time programmes in Carlow, Wexford, Wicklow and Kilkenny (with plans to extend provision to Portlaoise in September 2010). ITC's current student diversity is reflected in its mix of traditional leaving certificate entrants, a growing European and international student body (approximately 10% FT WTE), an increasing proportion of mature students and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as a significant number of part-time learners (23% WTE). ITC has significant educational and research partnerships and collaborations with national and international industries and higher educational institutions in Europe (approximately 58 European partner institutions across 16 countries), Asia and the US. ITC is also contributing to the national objective of boosting Ireland's academic reputation in China through the development of formal China's institutes of learning e.g. ITC-accredited computing programmes are delivered in Henan University of Finance and Economics, PR China. Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) is also an important part of ITC's activities and is a vital aspect of the interaction of the Institute with industry and other higher educational and research institutes on both a national and international basis.

The provision of quality information to the public is critical for the successful recruitment of students (nationally and internationally) and the development of collaborative partnerships which ensures maximum contribution to economic, social and cultural development. The Institute also fulfils its obligations under the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003, and a Freedom of Information Office was established in 2001. The Freedom of Information Officer assists students, staff and the general public with any requests for information under the Freedom of Information Acts. A Communications and Public Relations Office was established in the Institute in 2002 within the Development Department, with the first formal communications plan published in April 2006. A recent 5-year review of this area was completed in 2009, together with a new plan to run in parallel with the 2009-2013 ITC Strategic Plan. This plan includes a number of communications and marketing-related

objectives across 10 categories including online communications, media communications, corporate identity, internal communications, promotional material and merchandising, exhibitions, events, school liaison, direct marketing campaign, ITC Alumni.

2.6 External Communications - Print and Electronic

The Institute endeavours to keep the public updated using various communications tools (print publications and online/electronic communications). These documents are issued annually and are designed to meet the information needs of prospective students, employers, the local community, the media and the general community. In line with the statutory obligations, and also, as an opportunity to communicate with and provide information to interested parties the Institute has a Freedom of information (FOI) Office and assists individuals seeking information held by the Institute in accordance with the provisions of the relevant legislation. In addition the Institute endeavours to supply desired information to key stakeholders without any need to go through FOI procedures an example of this would be that the Institute makes provision for candidates to view their marked examination scripts through the Examinations Office.

ITC print publications **include the following:**

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| • ITC Full-time Prospectus | • Student Handbook | • Financial Statements |
| • Life Long Learning Prospectus | • Get Involved Brochure for Sport, Recreation, Clubs & Societies | • ITC <i>Freedom of Information Act</i> Section 15 Reference Book |
| • E-brochure for Non-EU applicants (<i>Eng., Chinese, Korean, Arabic</i>) | • Equal Opportunities Booklet | • ITC <i>Freedom of Information Act</i> Section 16 Reference Book |
| • Erasmus Student Guide for EU applicants | • Quality Manual | • ITC <i>Freedom of Information Act</i> , 1997 & 2003 Staff Guide |
| • Course to Career Charts | • Conferring Brochure | • Staff Handbook |
| • CAO Change of Mind Supplement | • CAO Supplement | • Records Management Policy & Schedule |
| • Accommodation List | | |

Media Communications

Other external communications from the Institute comes through the issuing of news releases to national and local media; advertising - both print and radio; editorials and the participation of staff and students in radio and TV programmes e.g. an ITC Design student featured on RTE's The Afternoon Show in November 2009, while the launch of the BA in Sport & Exercise (Soccer) was shown on all the national TV stations and in most of national newspapers in 2009.

Website

ITC publications are made available to the public through a number of channels including the website. The website is an integral and vital part of marketing communications and it is a central information point for the public to source various documents, publications, operations and activities. Website visits continue to increase year-on-year e.g. for the single month of January (immediately prior to the CAO closing date), visits to the ITC website increased from 49,851 visits in 2008, to 61,183 in 2009 and to 98,258 visits in 2010. This increased interest is consistent with the significant increase in CAO applicants to the Institute in 2010.

Online Communications

In response to the ever increasing use and expansion of the world-wide web, ITC has recently established a number of online interactive communications tools which link to the Institute website. These include social networking sites such as Facebook and Bebo, discussion sites such as Twitter and Boards.ie, and Youtube. Within three months of its establishment (December 2009) the ITC Facebook site recorded 1,482 fans.

Online Advertising

As part of the development of online activity by ITC, various online advertisements are placed on social networking sites. For example: An advert placed on Yahoo's BEBO site for a four week period in January 2010 delivered 16,144,106 impressions of the Institute advert and 51,161 clicks to the Institute Website.

Direct Mail Campaigns

A number of direct mail campaigns targeting CAO applicants, Guidance Counsellors and Employers occur annually. These campaigns can be significant in that they target audiences nationwide as well as locally. Examples include mailing copies of the Institute's most recent promotional supplement to guidance counsellors throughout Ireland, direct mail campaigns to CAO applicants and direct mail shots to employers and past graduates outlining the educational and training opportunities provided by the Lifelong Learning Centre.

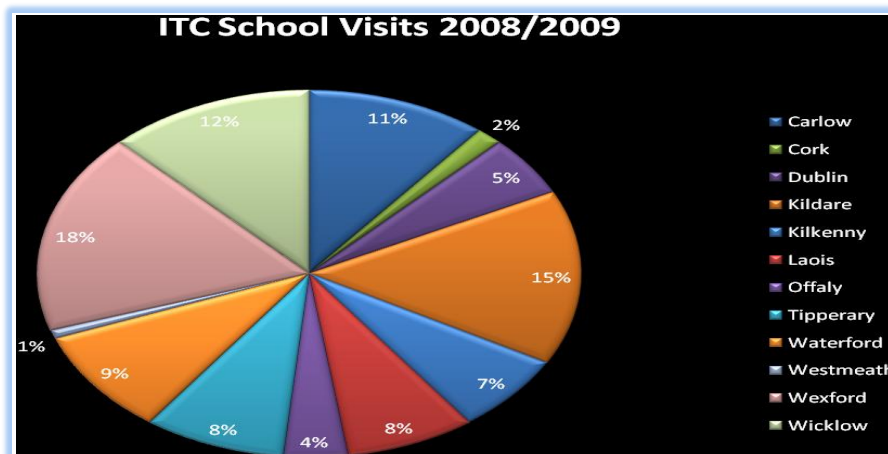
2.7 External Communications - Schools Liaison, Events and Exhibitions

The Institute endeavours to meet with potential students, guidance counsellors, teachers, principals, parents and guardians through various activities including: School / Campus Visits, Institute Events, and participation in exhibitions by ITC representatives.

School Visits & Campus Visits

Through our Schools Visits Programme, prospective students and their guidance counsellors are afforded the opportunity to receive in-depth information in relation to higher educational opportunities open to them at ITC. On average approximately 120-130 second level schools are visited annually each year by trained ITC representatives (including ITC graduate interns). Each school visit is customised to meet the needs of the target group. A number of schools also avail of campus visits to ITC at various times throughout the academic year where they meet with relevant administrative and academic staff members, and also have the opportunity to experience the ITC environment directly.

Figure 2 ITC School Visits 2008/2009 by County (126 tot.)



The Student Services Access Office also has a communications channel with the Adult Education and Guidance Providers in the surrounding six counties providing information on the Access Programme and financial supports available to eligible students. An information stand is also provides similar information on Mature Applicant and other Open Day events to ensure that relevant information is available to target applicants. This facility is available on request to other similar Information event organisers in the region. Information relevant to applicants with a disability is provided through AHEAD, CAO and Qualifax websites for disability. Talks and other supporting information is provided through the Access Office to relevant key stakeholders and applicants.

Events

The Institute hosts approximately 40 events annually. These include Open Days, Conferrals, Scholarships Awards, Careers Fair, International Day, Student Enterprise Awards and a variety of departmental-specific initiatives such as the Industrial Design Annual Exhibition, Science Week and Extreme Engineering. Open Days and targeted national events such as Science Week go some way to ensuring that knowledge transcends the academic boundaries and reaches out to the community. Hosting events as a marketing and communications activity offers a number of benefits. Such events can build profile locally, regionally, and nationally according to their size and type. They can also increase ITC brand identity awareness and they can generate interest among those who traditionally fall outside the traditional target audience profile.

Exhibitions

The Institute on average attends approximately 25 exhibitions annually. These exhibitions include three-day events such as the Higher Options Exhibition and the National Ploughing Championship. Events such as these expose the Institute to thousands of potential students.

2.8 External Communications - International

The first non-EU students were registered in 2000, and the growth in non-EU students numbers has increased over the past 6 years from 67 in 2004/2005 to 190 in 2009/2010 (approx 1.5m income/annum). This is a result of increased initiatives in the marketing of our programmes on the international stage: in China and Korea primarily, but also the USA, Russia, Malaysia and Iran. Marketing is by way of:

- Outgoing educational visits by ITC representatives to the target markets (university visits and participation in international education fairs), sometimes in association with Enterprise Ireland, the IOTI and /or the International Education Board of Ireland.
- Incoming educational visits to the ITC Campus by Presidents and other high level officials from non-EU universities
- A network of agents and representatives in the target countries including Malaysia, Korea, China and the USA.
- ITC Website; E-brochures translated into English, Chinese, Arabic and Korean; ITC International on Twitter (http://twitter.com/ITCarlow_Intl).

ITC has approximately 58 European partner institutions across 16 countries. The number of incoming EU students under the Erasmus Lifelong Learning Programme is maintained at approx 140 per annum because of the need for balanced outward and inward mobility. This number is maintained via:

- Experience and feedback from students studying at ITC from partner European institutes.
- European staff mobility programme
- E-mail-based partner searches directly from European HE partners and / or the HEA.

- Website notices and information packs to established partners

2.9 Corporate Identity & Internal Communications

Corporate Identity

Corporate identity involves the organisations logo and design strategy and is an important component of the overall Institutional brand strategy, which is underpinned by the long-term vision for the organisation (*ITC Strategic Plan 2009-2013*). The objectives of the ITC brand are as follows:

- To position ITC as a recognised leader in higher education
- To develop a unified brand image that will best represent the brand values both internally with staff and externally with the community and existing and potential partners and will facilitate the long-term vision of the Institute.

Internal Communications

ITC recognises that the internal audience (staff and students) is as important as the external one in terms of public relations, and that a well-structured and cross-functional approach to internal communications will help achieve the long-term vision for the organisation. There are many communication systems in place encompassing meetings (formal & informal), staff intranet, Campus TV & notice boards, blackboard virtual learning, website, email (general and public), internal post, telephone and newsletters. The Institute has defined Good Practice in the development of a positive organisational climate (*ITC Quality Assurance / Improvement Policy and Framework Manual 2004, Quality Standard 2.9*) which includes two way consultative systems for staff and students, access to up-to-date information from Governing Body, Academic Council and other committees, as well as leadership development programmes for staff etc. An evaluation of how the Institute is meeting this good practice definition is currently being considered for 2011 and will involve the assistance of an external company in conducting staff and student experience audits, followed by the development of a comprehensive communications improvement plan.

The Students Union has a proactive and well established communications programme and communicates regularly with the student body through a weekly student magazine publication 'Feic IT'. It also utilises other channels such as text messages, the all student Email sent to the college email accounts. Facebook, the social networking site has an IT Carlow Students Union page. There is a pop-up system on the Institute Library Computers and the Plasma Screens are used to convey short notices and messages of interest to all.

Focus Groups and Surveys

The most recent comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the external ITC Communications & PR strategy was completed in April 2008. The report investigated the following: Schools Liaison Programme, Institute Open Day, Full-time Prospectus, Events/Exhibitions, Promotional Supplements, Website, Print & Radio Advertising. Focus groups were conducted amongst 1st year students, online surveys were sent to students from the three schools of Business, Science & Engineering, in-depth interviews were conducted with a small sample of guidance counsellors and a postal survey was conducted with guidance counsellors from the Institute's broader catchment area. The feedback continues to inform the ITC Communications and PR Strategy. In addition to the above, feedback is sought on an annual basis from guidance counsellors regarding school visits, and a Q & A session is conducted on annual basis with Guidance Counsellors by the President and in the presence of Heads of Schools, Departments and relevant functions.

A range of surveys are conducted on a regular basis. These are listed below:

Survey Type	Comment
Employer/Industry Survey/Professional Bodies Survey (New Programme Development and Accreditation)	A survey is sent to employers in industry and professional bodies when the Institute is developing a new programme. The survey gauges the relevance and need for graduates from the new programme. Each survey is customised for the individual programme.
Programmatic Review Survey (Programme Revision: 5 Years)	The process of sending a survey to industry and professional bodies is repeated during a programmatic review (every five years) to ensure course material and content continues to be relevant and current.
Graduate Destination Survey	A graduate first destination survey is conducted annually in conjunction with the Institute's conferring ceremonies to establish the percentage of students who have gained full time or part-time employment; returned to education or are unemployed. A variety of information is gathered including starting salary scales for graduates from different disciplines area, and geographic location.
ITC Student Survey QA1 (FT)	A student satisfaction survey (QA1) on each individual lecturer's performance and modules is completed annually by all students. Lecturers feedback (QA2) on the QA1 survey is presented annually to their Heads of Department
ITC Student Survey QA3 (FT)	A student satisfaction survey re: their overall programme, departments, services and facilities are also conducted on an annual basis.
ITC Student Survey (PT/LLL)	LLL students are formally surveyed twice a year to gauge student satisfaction with the LLL Centre, facilities and staff.
Erasmus Student Survey	At the end of their period of study, European Erasmus students are surveyed on their overall experience in Carlow and at the ITC. (Interim focus groups are conducted with this cohort of student on an annual basis, usually in January of the year of Study.
Disability Survey	A census of all employees was carried out in 2009 to enable the Institute as a public service employer to meet its legal obligation under the Disability Act 2005 to report each year on the number and percentage of employees with disabilities. NDA Form S.1
Blackboard Survey 2010	A survey was issued in March 2010 to all students to gauge their satisfaction with Blackboard.
Student Services Survey 2007	This survey was conducted in 2007 to establish how aware students are of the services available to them within the student services department.
Student Services Induction Survey 2009	Survey was issued in Autumn 2009 to gauge student satisfaction levels with the induction programmes offered by the Institute.

2.10 Institute contribution to Social, Cultural & Economic Development of the Region and the Wider Community

The Institute by virtue of its core activity of higher education programme provision enhances the social and cultural development of the region and the wider community. The Institute Strategic Plan 2009-2013 identifies the purpose, in one of its eight core goals, *‘to continue to contribute to the social and cultural development of South Leinster through interaction and involvement in the wider community’*. The Institute also endeavours to find appropriate opportunities to further enhance the social and cultural of the region and the community. This is manifest in the range of educational, cultural, arts policy, health promotion, sporting events and public policy initiatives facilitated by the Institute. Staff and Learner members are encouraged to participate in community based organisations and there are collaborations with local and regional networks as well as voluntary bodies. The Institute has, in addition, a Fine Art collection on display in the public areas of its buildings to be shared and appreciated by all.

Contribution to Economic Development

For planning purposes County Carlow is located in the South-East region, which has a population base of 487,800 persons. Carlow accounts for around 11% of the region’s population with approximately 53,000. Although Carlow did not figure in the national strategic growth triangle designated for the South-East in the National Spatial Strategy 2002 (NSS), it recorded the second fastest population growth in the South-East region over the period 1996-2006 (after Wexford). At the time the NSS was prepared, Waterford was designated the gateway in the South-East region, supported by Kilkenny and Wexford as hubs. Carlow was designated as a county town.

Carlow’s location to the North of the South-East region makes it the county which is closest to Dublin and the Mid-East region (Kildare, Meath and Wicklow). This is reflected in county and regional origins of ITC students. Almost 30% of the registered students at ITC come from Dublin and the Mid-East region while approximately 24% come from the South-East region excluding Carlow. Outside of the home county, Kildare and Wexford together supply 31% of ITC’s registered students, while the remaining counties of Leinster, Laois, Wicklow, Kilkenny and Dublin provide 25%. In total approximately 70% of students at ITC come from the six counties of Laois, Kilkenny, Kildare, Wicklow, Wexford and Carlow. ITC’s location is best described as being at the centre of a national strategic growth circle comprising Wicklow, Kildare, Laois, Kilkenny and Wexford, with an actual catchment area of 700,000 (representing 15% of the entire workforce across the State).

Table 6 on the following page shows the demographic distribution of students in ITC from 2003 to 2009.

Table 6 ITC Registered Student by Region of Origin

<i>%of total</i>	09/10	08/09	07/08	06/07	05/06	04/05	03/04
Region	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Dublin and Mid-East	27.6	28.8	28.2	29	27.9	28.6	30.3
South-East (excl. Carlow)	24.6	21.4	21.8	22.1	23.9	24.2	24.3
Sub-total	52.3	50.2	50	51.1	51.8	52.9	54.6
South-East (incl. Carlow)	42.1	38.2	39.3	39.7	41.2	41.7	41.7
Other regions:							
Midland	12.4	13.2	12.4	12.2	12.2	11.9	12.4
International Non EU	5.9	5.8	5.2	3.7	3.5	2.6	1.3
International European	4.2	4.2	4.4	4.4	4.7	4.5	4.4
West	2.4	3	3.1	3	2.6	2.1	1.5
Border	2.5	2.7	3	3.1	3.4	3	2.8
South-West	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.9	2
Mid-West	0.9	1.7	2	2.7	2.6	3.2	3.1
Other	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.4
Total	100.0	100	100	100	100	100	100
Strategic Growth							
Circle in South Leinster	68.7	67.8	67.1	67.7	66.6	67.8	68.8

Looking at the regional breakdown of the employer county of ITC graduates (see Table 6 overleaf), the South-Leinster region employs an overwhelming majority of ITC graduates. Dublin and the Mid-East region provided employment for 46% of graduates in 2008. Adding Carlow increases this proportion to 62%. Adding the rest of the South Leinster East region (Kilkenny, Laois, Wexford and Wicklow) to Dublin and the Mid~East region (excluding Meath), a phenomenal 80% of ITC graduates are employed the South Leinster region. The Midlands is the next largest source of jobs, employing over 11.5% of the total, over 8% of which are employed in Laois. Thus the six counties which form the strategic growth circle of Kildare, Wicklow, Laois, Kilkenny, Carlow and Wexford provide employment for almost 58% of ITC's graduates. Carlow employs around 17% of ITC's graduates, implying that it employs significantly fewer graduates than it produces. Thus there are opportunities in Carlow for companies seeking to locate in Ireland who need access to a ready supply of graduate workers with diverse skills. The 2008 First Destination Graduate Survey also asked graduates about their sector of work. The classification of employment by sector showed that over three-quarters (77.5%) worked in the services sector and almost one fifth (19.1%) worked in manufacturing and non-service industries. Table 6 gives the employment destination of graduates from 2003 to 2008.

Both the Carlow Town Development Plan 2009 and the Carlow Environs Local Area Plan 2008 note that education is the biggest industry in the town, with a third-level student population in excess of 5,000 and a full-time equivalent staff of around. Both plans note that education is key to the future prosperity of Carlow. In this regard it is the policy of both the Carlow Town Development Plan 2009 and the Carlow Environs Local Area Plan 2008 to facilitate and promote

the development of the higher education and research base in Carlow Town to its maximum potential. This policy is supported by the zoning of 50 hectares of lands for education within 1km of the Institute of Technology Carlow.

Table 6 Employment Destination of ITC Graduates

Region	2008 %	2007 %	2006 %	2005 %	2004 %	2003 %
Dublin and Mid-East	45.9	39.9	42.9	48.7	53.2	51.2
South-East (exc Carlow)	13.3	21.2	18.6	16.4	11.7	10.6
Sub-total	59.2	61.1	61.5	65.1	64.9	61.8
South-East (inc Carlow)	29.8	37.4	33.2	33.9	28.8	31.1
Other regions:						
Midland	11.5	8.9	7.1	7.4	2.7	5.5
Overseas	5.5	4.4	6.2	3.2	8.1	2.4
West	2.3	0.5	2.2	1.1	0.9	6.3
Border	2.3	2.5	1.3	0.5	0.9	0.8
South-West	1.4	0.5	2.2	2.1	1.8	0.8
Mid-West	1.4	5.9	4.9	3.2	3.6	2.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Thus Strategic Growth Circle in South Leinster	57.8	52.2	46.0	52.4	55.0	55.1

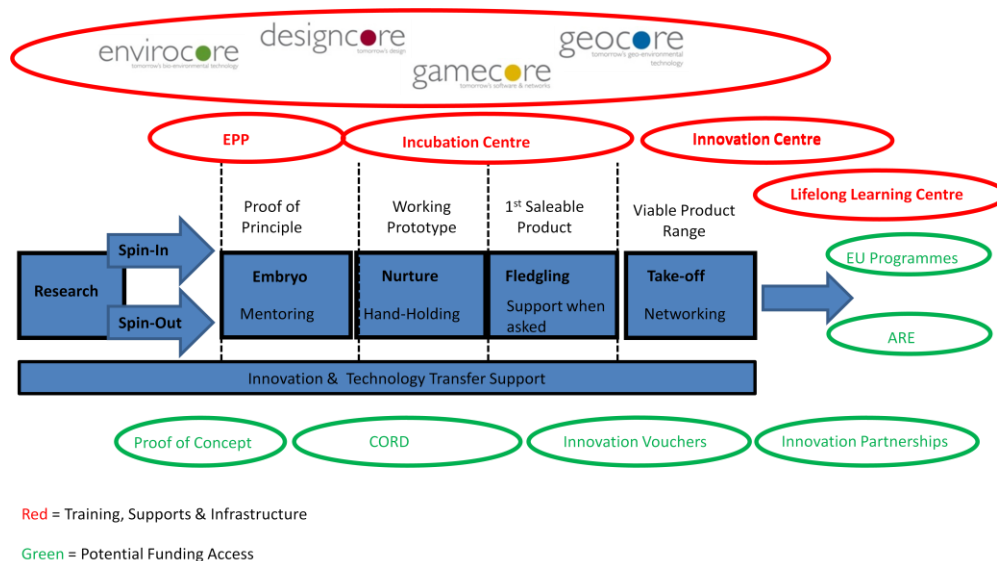
ITC is undoubtedly a key driver of progress and development in Carlow and was an important factor in the success of County Carlow to-date in influencing major international companies to locate in Carlow. These include UNUM (strategic software services centre, 2008) and Merck Sharp & Dohme (human vaccines and biologics, 2007). UNUM's announcement of its intention to expand into Ireland and invest in Carlow stated that it was "*particularly impressed with Carlow*" and that "*the town's business and civic leaders, along with the Institute of Technology Carlow, are genuinely interested in partnering with UNUM to help us succeed*". Similarly, the Vice President of Global Vaccine Manufacturing for Merck Sharp and Dohme, communicated similar sentiments:

The ITC Strategic Plan acknowledges the importance of the contribution made by the Institute in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to its catchment area, and of its essential role in the continued support and development of knowledge-based industries within the region.

Other contributions to economic development include ITCs role in servicing enterprises across the South-East and Mid-East regions. A focal point for these activities is the Development and External Services functions within the Institute, which are supported by campus-based specialist centres and campus companies. These include the Enterprise & Research Incubation Centre (established 2006), Campus Innovation Centre (established 1992-has supported 34 companies since its foundation), CIM Centre (established 1990) and Business & Technology Centre (established 1989), which help accelerate the development of start-up companies through the provision of comprehensive supports both before and during their foundation. The Incubation / Innovation Centres provide a total of 1,573m² incubation space comprised of 24 self-contained units ranging in size from 22.5 to 133 m² for e-business, technology & bio- / pharma-based enterprises up to and including pilot plant stage.

Knowledge Transfer and Innovation activities are also supported by various European Commission Partnership Programmes (e.g. the European INTERREG-funded ITC Winnovate, WISE and CORACLE Programmes) and Enterprise Platform Training Programmes (EPP) for Graduate Entrepreneurs (37 EPP companies 2007-2009). The Institute also avails of various Enterprise Ireland Programmes to support enterprise development, e.g. in a recent survey of firms assisted under the Enterprise Ireland Innovation Voucher Programme, ITC was found to have worked with the most companies, ahead of any other higher education institute in the country (71 projects 2007-2009). These projects cover a wide range of industry sectors including Computing and Networking (38%), Business and Communications (11%), Engineering (10%), Science (7%) and Industrial Design (6%). Figure 3 illustrates this.

Figure 3 Training Supports and Infrastructure with Potential Funding Areas



Knowledge Transfer and Innovation activities are also supported by the Institutes Centres of Research and Enterprise (COREs: EnviroCORE, DesignCORE, GameCORE, GeoCORE).

EnviroCORE (BioEnvironmental Technologies) - EnviroCORE's priority is to further advance its collaborative multi-disciplinary molecular environmental-based RDI activities to develop and deliver a sustainable strategic response to specific thematic areas relevant to the broader national Green Technology Agenda (Irish Governments Smart Economy 2008). EnviroCORE is focussed on the development of niche areas within bioenergy, waste management, bioenvironmental monitoring and high value commodity products from biomass.

DesignCORE (Industrial Design and Product Innovation) - DesignCORE continues to play a pivotal role in supporting regional and national industry in the development of innovative and sustainable products for national, and export markets.

GameCORE (Interactive Applications Software & Networks)- GameCORE is focussed on industrially relevant, innovative and timely research into software development and networking architecture for interactive applications.

GeoCORE (Green Energy Optimisation) which supports regional and national industry in the development of modelling, testing, investigation and analysis techniques to optimise building energy performance.

IT Carlow's strategic research focus also extends to emerging research and development activities in the following areas:

- **National Centre for Men's Health (NCMH)** which is focussed on the development of innovative and multi-disciplinary research and training programmes on men's health.
- **Rehabilitative Sciences Research Centre (RSRC)** which is focused on the critical evaluation of therapeutic practices and procedures employed by therapists in clinical practice, and also other areas such as Strength & Conditioning, Exercise Rehabilitation, Gait Analysis and Sports Rehabilitation.

Over the past 10 years, ITC has obtained over €13mn in funding through competitive applications under EU Programmes, HEA PRTL, EPA, DAF, EI, TSR, IRCSET and SFI. The Institute has graduated approximately 30 PhDs, primarily in the biotechnological sciences. IT Carlow has significant research partnerships and collaborations with national and international industries and higher educational institutions in Europe, Asia and the USA.

The current challenging economic circumstances have focused policy makers on the need to build a 'smart economy' with a thriving enterprise sector and high quality employment. This development reflects the emphasis on the knowledge-based society where an ability to continuously acquire knowledge, skills and competencies throughout the working life is a necessity. Within this context, educational delivery needs to be more flexible and accessible to learners of all ages and backgrounds. In this regard, ITC is at the forefront of such delivery, providing a range of programmes across a variety of subject areas at centres in Carlow and Wexford, and in conjunction with other organisations in Wicklow, Kilkenny and Kildare.

Two developments at the forefront of such delivery include:

1. ITC's recently expanded *Lifelong Learning Centre*, which provides a range of lifelong learning opportunities for employees to upgrade their qualifications and to support companies in raising their awareness of changing technologies. Companies that engaged in this process include Braun, Odlums, Lapple, Wyeth Medica and Avonmore.
2. ITC's *Labour Market Activation Initiative*, which was designed to help people who have received statutory redundancy or have been in receipt of social welfare payments and want to fast track to a higher education qualification. In the current environment where the numbers of unemployed have increased at a rapid pace, this programme continues to provide important support to those joining the Live Register over recent times.

Table 7 Courses Developed Specifically for Companies/Organisations

Programme/Module	Type	Company/Organisation	Host Department
Refrigeration & Air Conditioning (Level 6)	Special Purpose Award	Defence Forces, Curragh	LLL
Health & Safety (Level 7)	Special Purpose Award		LLL
Instrumentation & Control (Level 6)	Special Purpose Award		LLL
B.Eng. in Electronics (Level 7)	Part-time Award	Defence Forces, Curragh	LLL
B.Eng. in Electronics (Level 7)	Full-time Award	Defence Forces, Curragh	EMA Dept.
B. Eng. In Military Communications (Level 7)	Full-time Award	Defence Forces, Curragh	EMA Dept.
B.Eng. in Electronics (Level 8)	Part-time Award	Defence Forces, Curragh	LLL
Club Treasurer	Special Purpose Award	GAA	BC
Instrumentation & Process Control	Certificate	Wyeth	LLL

2.11 Recommendations

1. The Institute should seek and obtain approval to be designated as a research programme provider in key emerging discipline areas including design and fine art.
2. Application should be made for delegated awarding authority at Level 9 for taught programmes across Institute Schools and Centres.
3. Delegated awarding authority should be sought in further developed research areas in the Institute including GameCore and Health Science.
4. Further expand the current level of professional recognition and accreditation of Institute programmes
5. Continue to seek and maximise Teaching Council recognition for all relevant degrees.
6. Continue to monitor and address public debate and media analysis of Higher Education, and in particular, the coverage of issues in the sector that may erode public confidence in the quality of education and training provision.
7. Continue to offer a range of programmes across existing discipline areas to meet the needs of applicants and employers.
8. Implement 'Module Builder' to provide specific programme content information to key stakeholders.
9. Continue the monitoring of risk to implementing the strategic plan 2009-2013 in the current changing educational and economic environment.
10. Strengthen links with employers and industry in the Region.
11. Continue to produce 'employment ready' skilled graduates to cover the National and Regional expertise and skills needs.

Chapter 3

Strategic Planning and Governance

3.1 Context of and Impetus for Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is now accepted as a key activity in the governance and management of publicly funded institutions. In ITC strategic planning is at the core of how the Institute expresses its values and expectations and makes these explicit to all of its stakeholders, both internal and external. Such planning articulates these as goals and objectives for a period of time and acts as a barometer indicating the Institute's priorities and actions in the use of the human, financial and physical resources available to it. An effective strategic plan is one where there is a coherence of mission, values and goals, where planning is informed by evidence-based research, where there is an explicit articulation of the educational philosophies and policies underlying the institution's values and goals, and where the objectives and targets stated to realise the plan can be evaluated on an on-going basis, with evidence-based feedback used to both identify where goals are being reached, and so enable adjustments to be made to the plan where this is not happening. Strategic planning promises accountability and transparency.

ITC believes its strategic planning meets these requirements, and sees it is an essential part of operating effectively in a higher education environment that regionally, nationally and internationally requires effective adaptation to change to be successful. In the past decade the higher education environment has been one where the constant has been change; examples of major drivers of this change have been the National Qualifications Authority with the implementation of the National Framework of qualifications, competitive national and international research, development and innovation funding; the establishment of an academic accreditation council in the non-university sector (HETAC) driving delegation of awarding authority throughout the Institute of Technology sector; a major focus on equity of access to higher education by the HEA has seen institutions diversify their first year undergraduate entrance routes to encourage such equity. Academic quality assurance has been benchmarked with the agreement and adoption of the HETAC NFQ level discipline standards, and the broad quality parameters of the European Quality Association.

Economically, the country has seen the famed Celtic Tiger rise and fall and the new economic renaissance is identified as knowledge led – the 'smart' economy, but with the recessionary requirement to significantly curtail spending and yet stimulate growth. In this turbulent environment there is an expectation that in 2010 the Higher Education Review group (the Hunt report) will publish its recommendations, which may have a significant effect on the strategic planning of ITC.

ITC operates in a higher education environment that is on an accelerator of improvement through regular cycles of peer assessed academic programmatic reviews, strategic reviews, research reviews, institutional reviews, and internal audits of quality assurance. In the last decade, ITC has had 18 peer/expert reviews, not including the current 2010 Institutional Review. The governance of ITC is legislated for through various Acts of the Dail, and these are described and detailed below under the section on Governance.

Summary of Institute Mission and Vision

ITC derives its mission from legislation in the early 1990s that established it with a statutory Governing Body (*Regional Technical Colleges Acts 1992 and 1994*) with a set of functions and powers. These functions provided the basis for an Institute mission to evolve in that they provided a set of objectives by which the college could measure its own progress with some degree of autonomy. In 2005 ITC created its first strategic plan which incorporated a statement summarising its mission; this is a vision of a quality academic provision in teaching, learning, research and enterprise, so enabling its learners and members the opportunity to develop to their full potential, and through these activities contribute to a sustainable South Leinster regional economy and culture.

3.2 Overview of Strategic Planning Process and Development

In the development of its first strategic plan in 2005, the Institute used an extensive consultation process with its stakeholders and in particular the staff of the Institute, to agree a series of goals and objectives that would deliver in an effective quantifiable manner its mission. The strategic plan covered the period 2005-2009, and focused on eight key goals with largely measurable objectives; broadly summarised these were;

- The development of ITC's academic portfolio and teaching excellence, within a high quality environment supportive of staff and learners.
- The expansion of research activities through the strengthening of emerging research centres.
- The development of quality educational opportunities for lifelong learning.
- The development of an organisational and physical infrastructure with the capability of supporting ITC's educational, social, and sporting and employment needs.
- The strengthening and enhancement of the Institute's position as a key driver in the economic cultural and social development of the South Leinster region.
- The creation of a partnership approach to the development of the Institute.

Informing this first strategic planning operation included an environment in which Government policies were dictating Institute thinking. Policies such as the *National Development Plan 2000-2006*, *Sustaining Progress- the Social Partnership Programme 2003-2005*, the *National Spatial Strategy*, the Enterprise Strategy Group Report 2004 '*Ahead of the Curve*' and the recommendations of the OECD group 2004 Report '*Review of National Policies for Education: Review of Higher in Ireland Examiner's Report*'. There was an explicit threat too; an expectation that changing demographics would lead to an ever decreasing pool of entrants to the Institute of Technology sector as institutes competed with universities for a share of this smaller pool. This was a serious issue for ITC as the mid and south east regions were predicted to experience a drop of between 15% and 20% in the population of 16-19 year olds over 2000-2010. The major goals and outcomes of the 2005-2009 strategic plan are outlined below. Appendix 4 contains the 2005-2009 Strategic Plan and also the full action plan which details work completed on the each goal, objectives and targets of the plan. What follows is a brief synopsis of Institute progress over this period.

3.3 Strategic Plan 2005-2009 - Goals and Achievements

Goal 1 Academic Portfolio

To be recognised as a higher education institute of international reputation and teaching excellence that facilitates learning within a high quality supportive environment.

Achievements

- Quality assurance & Improvement Framework – areas of quality standards prioritised & implementation commenced; quality Officer appointed
- Delegation of authority to make awards at level 6 to level 10 on the NFQ
- Full & balanced suite of taught programmes with emphasis on niche areas was reflected in the distribution of programmes in 2009; 19 Higher Certificates, 29 Ordinary Degrees, 45 honours degrees, 1 Higher Diploma and 2 taught Masters
- Retention action group recommended establishment of Teaching & Learning Centre. This was established in 2007 and a Teaching & Learning Coordinator appointed
- Continued development and implementation of the information and telecommunications strategy on Institute's campuses
- Student Services review recommending improved integration of services; Head of Student Services and Learner Support appointed
- Staff training & Development policy implemented; staff teaching and learning postgraduate programmes, seminars and workshops delivered through Teaching & Learning Centre.

Goal 2 Learner Population

To become the third-level applied education and training provider of choice for learners in South Leinster.

Achievements

- Ranking of Institute in IoT sector improves significantly on independent criteria of CAO first year overall applications and first preferences for programmes in 2010
- International student population of 15% achieved
- Links made with all FETAC providers in South Leinster area; all secondary schools in area visited at least once bi-annually
- Through its Academic Council, the modularisation of all programmes agreed
- Number of mature student entrants as a percentage of all 1st year full-time entrants rises from 8.5% to 14.5% over the period 2005-2009
- An increase of 33% in learners registered on undergraduate major awards between 2005 and 2009; from 2452 to 3267
- The total learner population in the Institute (including apprentices & lifelong learning students) rose from 2970 whole-time equivalents to 4496 whole-time equivalents over the strategic plan; an increase of 51%.
- Implementation of new marketing plan; website project completed; work commenced on corporate identity and internal communications plan.

Goal 3 Research and Development

To enhance our reputation as a research-informed educational institute through expansion of our research activities across all primary degree-level specialisms and through the strategic development of our emerging research centres.

Achievements

- DA for research level 9 and 10 achieved in specialised science fields

- Development of departmental research and research training management plans and these prioritised so resources can be allocated
- Policies and procedures for postgraduate research revised, published & implemented
- New training programme for research directors implemented
- Agreement on an institutional code of ethics for research
- Design of new planned research wing
- Development and piloting of an ITC competitive research conference scholarship for staff and research students
- Strategic expansion of our inter-institutional research collaborations and joint research funding applications
- Website for research funding completed for students and staff
- Revision and implementation of our policy on campus companies.

Goal 4 Lifelong Learning

To provide quality educational opportunities for lifelong learning that meet the varied needs and demands of all learners, consistent with the National Framework of Qualifications.

Achievements

- Lifelong Learning Centre established in 2006 and a Head of Lifelong Learning appointed together with support staff
- A developmental trajectory established for Institute major awards to be delivered in a flexible manner together with implementation of the established Institute quality assurance procedures on teaching and learning
- Development and use of the recognition of prior learning and experiential learning mechanisms
- Establishment of Centres for Lifelong learning in Carlow, Wexford, Kilkenny, and Wicklow
- Significant recruitment of learners – 925 in 2005 rising to 1205 in 2009, and more importantly, a significant growth in whole-time equivalents from 180 in 2005 to 1066 in 2009.
- Distribution of Lifelong learning provision over NFQ levels shows the provision is meeting the needs of learners; 15 programmes at level 6, 10 programmes at level 7, 20 programmes at level 8, and 10 programmes at level 9.
- Institute-wide strategy implemented to encourage use of Blackboard virtual learning environment in all programmes. Strategy includes developing on-line courses, and remote access to learning resources.

Goal 5 Organisational and Physical Infrastructure

To develop an organisational and physical infrastructure capable of supporting our educational, social and employment needs.

Achievements

- 5 year development plan communicated to all staff
- Allocation to managers of responsibilities and timelines for implementation of strategic plan
- Annual review of progress achieved and improvements needed of the strategic plan
- Roles of committees and managers reviewed in relation to strategic plan
- Generation of organisational policies and plans addressing the professional development of staff through PDP and TDP processes
- Development and expansion of Wexford Campus organisation and staff
- Regular assessment completed through audit and budget review procedures of the financial, operational, systems and compliance risks involved in pursuit of Institute objectives

- Review of existing space provision and identification of space deficits in Carlow and Wexford campuses
- Review of Institute's physical master-plan re 2004 HEA report and re-prioritisation of planned projects
- Financial plan completed to fund the development of the physical master-plan over 5 years and more.

Goal 6 Regional Development

To become a key driver for balanced economic development within South Leinster, which is informed and enhanced by our national and international activities and collaborations.

Achievements

- Close liaison with Carlow County Council and IDA re company visits to region resulted in two major companies locating to Carlow; Merck Sharp & Dohme (human vaccines and biologics) and Unum
- Enterprise Development Officer appointed to initiate a platform for entrepreneurship support in the region
- Business Incubation Centre established and Enterprise Platform Programming running through new county, regional and national programmes that support through technology transfer, management development and e-business, the economic development of the region
- Documentation and promotion of the Institute's range of facilities and expertise available to the region's industrial and commercial sectors including indigenous start-up companies
- Increased networking achieved with enterprise agencies, knowledge and service providers and others so that the Institute is recognised by these as their regional information portal
- Development of an information database completed for industrial and commercial sectors of the region.

Goal 7 Social and Cultural Development

To continue to contribute to the social and cultural development of South Leinster through interaction and involvement with the wider community.

Achievements

- On-going development of a community service policy and plan
- Institute art collection established through long-term and permanent loans and through occasional sponsorship. Over 200 works by major Irish and international contemporary artists now on display in Carlow and Wexford campuses
- Carlow campus hosts yearly Eigse arts festival exhibition
- On-going encouragement of staff and student participation in community based organisations.

Goal 8 Partnership

To create, through a partnership approach, a quality workplace environment where involvement and contributions of all staff is encouraged and valued in developing and achieving our strategic objectives.

Achievements

- The Sustaining Progress common forum and staff consultative committees achieved a participative and proactive approach to change and modernisation in the Institute
- Organisational climate surveys used to gather views of all staff and students
- Completion of a staff resource handbook
- Establishment of flexible work organisational arrangements including flexi-time (administrative staff), career break, and term-time working

- Consultation with all staff in strategy formulation and implementation through the Strategic Planning and Review Steering Group
- Grievance and disciplinary procedures agreed for all staff
- The nationally agreed performance management and development scheme (PMDS) implemented throughout the Institute
- Equality statement, code of practice on the employment of people with disabilities, and briefing of all staff on Institute dignity at work policy, all agreed and implemented
- Review of resources for staff training and development takes place annually, with a target of an allocation of 4% of our non-pay budget to this key activity.

3.4 Strategic Plan 2009-2013 and Progress to Date

The second strategic plan for the period 2009-2013 used essentially the same structure and the majority of the goals of the 2005-2009 Plan; this decision was taken to give an on-going sense of continuity, stability and progression in Institute strategic planning. In addition, another extensive period of consultation took place involving all staff, student representatives, Governing Body members, and external stakeholders. The outcomes of these consultations were considered by the Institute's *Strategic Planning and Review Steering Group** (SPRSG); also input into this process of deliberation were relevant Government policy papers, reports from advisory bodies, higher education reports, sectoral reports for the Institutes of Technology, legislation and various reviews involving the Institute conducted over the period of the previous strategic plan.

These reviews included:

- An Institutional self-study leading to a successful submission to HETAC and the NQAI for delegation to make awards up to level 8 in 2005.
- An Institutional self-study leading to a successful submission to HETAC and the NQAI for delegation to make awards up to level 10 in 2005.
- School programmatic reviews in the Schools of Business & Humanities, Science, and Engineering over the period of the 2005-2009 strategic plan.
- On-going audits under the Institute's quality assurance and improvement framework.
- Formal feedback from national and international funding agencies on applications put forward by ITC for research, development and innovation funding over the period of the previous strategic plan.
- Progress, obstacles met, and achievements made with implementation of the 2005-2009 strategic plan.
- Project planning for the current Institutional Review in 2010.

**The Strategic Planning and Review Steering Group is a group with an Institute-wide membership. For details of membership see Appendix 5.*

The 2009-2013 Plan was adopted by the Governing Body of the Institute in early 2009. Progress on the Plan is reviewed regularly by the Senior Management of the Institute, where deviations or necessary modifications to the Plan are made, in the light of a changing environment, stakeholder views and on-going national and international peer evaluations. The Plan is also reviewed annually by the SPRSG.

Strategic planning is a dynamic process, and five year plans reflect a best estimate of what might be achieved with strategic goals over that period, given the changing higher education landscape and the current economic recession. As with the 2005-2009 plan, the Institute took the view that its monitoring

of the implementation of the Plan should be within an action framework, where for each goal, and its objectives and targets, there is a level of managerial responsibility and accountability. Appendix 6 contains the 2009-2013 Strategic Plan and also the full action plan which details work completed in 2009-2019 on the each goal, objectives and targets of the plan.

In this overview of the process of strategic planning and development in the Institute, it is of value to review the Institute's approach, by comparing the 2005-2009 strategic plan and the new 2009-2013 strategic plan and to highlight the main differences between them. This gives an opportunity for constructive critical self- evaluation of an important factor vital for the Institute's future. The high level goals of both strategic plans appear quite similar with five of the goals almost identically labelled. While this may give an image of continuity, the definitions of the goals differ significantly between the plans. **Academic Portfolio** in 2005 had as its main aim for ITC to be recognised as a higher education institute of international reputation; in 2009 this goal has includes this aim but also has a focus for the Institute to become the higher education provider of choice for learners in South Leinster. The **Learner Population** goal has in 2009 a much broader and inclusive aim, where the Institute commits to supporting learners to develop to their full potential. The goal covering **Research & Development** now has an enhanced role for innovation and has become more focused on targeted priority areas supporting economic and social development. **Lifelong Learning** is defined identically in both plans and reflects the rapid developmental trajectory part-time learning is on; keeping the same definition highlights that the growth of flexible learning has to remain consistent with the NFQ a framework that is itself very learner-centred. **Physical Infrastructure** in 2009 merits a goal on its own and reflects the Institute's commitment to meeting its new build and infrastructure programme which is progressing at pace. Similarly, **Organisational and Staff Development** is a new goal, and reflects the importance of recognising that the Institution is a community in which structure, systems, values and culture underlie the professional development of its staff. In the 2005 plan **Regional Development** merited a goal and in 2009 this has being subsumed under a new goal of **Economic, Social & Cultural Development**, so reflecting a more integrated view of the key drivers of community development in our region. The last goal in the 2005 plan, **Partnership**, has been subsumed into the new goal on **Organisational & Staff Development**, reflecting the mainstreaming of the partnership ethos in higher education today. A new goal of **National & International Positioning & Alliances** is the final goal in the 2009 plan. While aiming to ensure the consolidation of our reputation in higher education, this goal allows the Institute to strategically position itself with respect to collaborations with other higher education providers. It also reflects the progress made with HEA strategic innovation funded collaboration undertaken on joint projects with other Institutes of Technology and Universities from 2007 onwards, and with research and development collaboration.

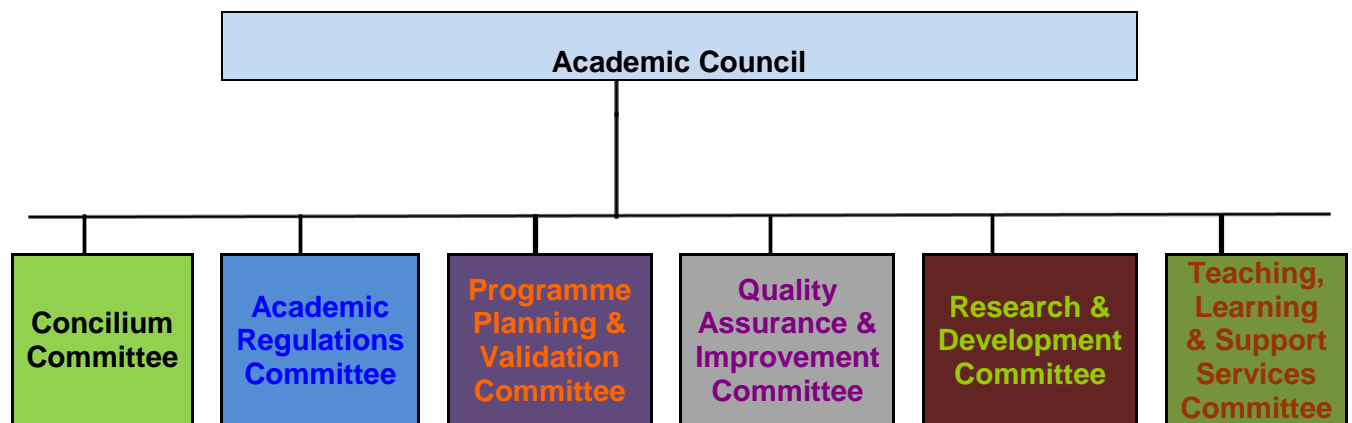
A striking difference in implementation methodology has been incorporated in the 2009 plan. It not only aligns each target with an objective aligned to a goal, but also states what targets are to be met in the first year of the plan, *i.e.* in 2009-2010.

3.5 Overview of Institute Governance, Organisation, Management & Administration

The Institute has a Governing Body established under the *RTC Act (1992)* with a range of functions and powers defined under the Act. Its broad remit is the setting of policy for the Institute. It is representative of the major stakeholders in the region, including industrial, commercial, educational and political interests. It has Institute staff and student representatives and the Chairperson is appointed by the Minister for Education & Science. The President is a member of Governing Body and the Institute's Secretary & Financial Controller is Secretary to Governing Body. The *RTC Act (1992)* and the later

Institutes of Technology Act (2006) requires that the Governing Body have the principal function of the provision of 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 Institute. In addition to the Governing Body, there is one other statutory body also established under the 1992 *RTC Act*, the Academic Council. This is appointed by the Governing Body and has prescribed functions regarding the creation of taught academic programmes, the progression of research and development, the making of academic regulations regarding the selection, admission, examination, retention and exclusion of learners, and other functions prescribed by Governing Body under Delegation of Awarding Authority granted to the Institute under the *Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999)*. Figure 1 gives a schematic view of Academic Council and its committees (*See appendix 7 for a full description of each committee's terms of reference*).

Figure 1 Academic Council and Committees



Legislative Environment

The Institute operates within a complex legislative framework and defines its approach to Corporate Governance as the implementation of best governance practice. Its quality standards system under its quality assurance framework supports this approach. There is a commitment to agreed codes of best practice regarding internal audit, procurement, recruitment of staff, and all financial procedures relating to assets, remuneration, accounting reports and compliance with appropriate legislative requirements. Table 2 gives a list of the Acts, regulations & guidelines applying to the Institute.

Table 2 Acts, Regulations and Guidelines

Acts

- *Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992*
- *Regional Technical Colleges (Amendment) Act 1994*
- *Data Protection Act 1998*
- *Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003*
- *Qualifications (Education & Training) Act 1999*
- *Ethics in Public Office Act 1995**Standards in Public Office Act 2001*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1997*
- *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act 1997*
- *Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act, 1989*
- *Official Languages Act 2003*
- *Equal Status Act 2000*
- *Institutes of Technology Act 2006*

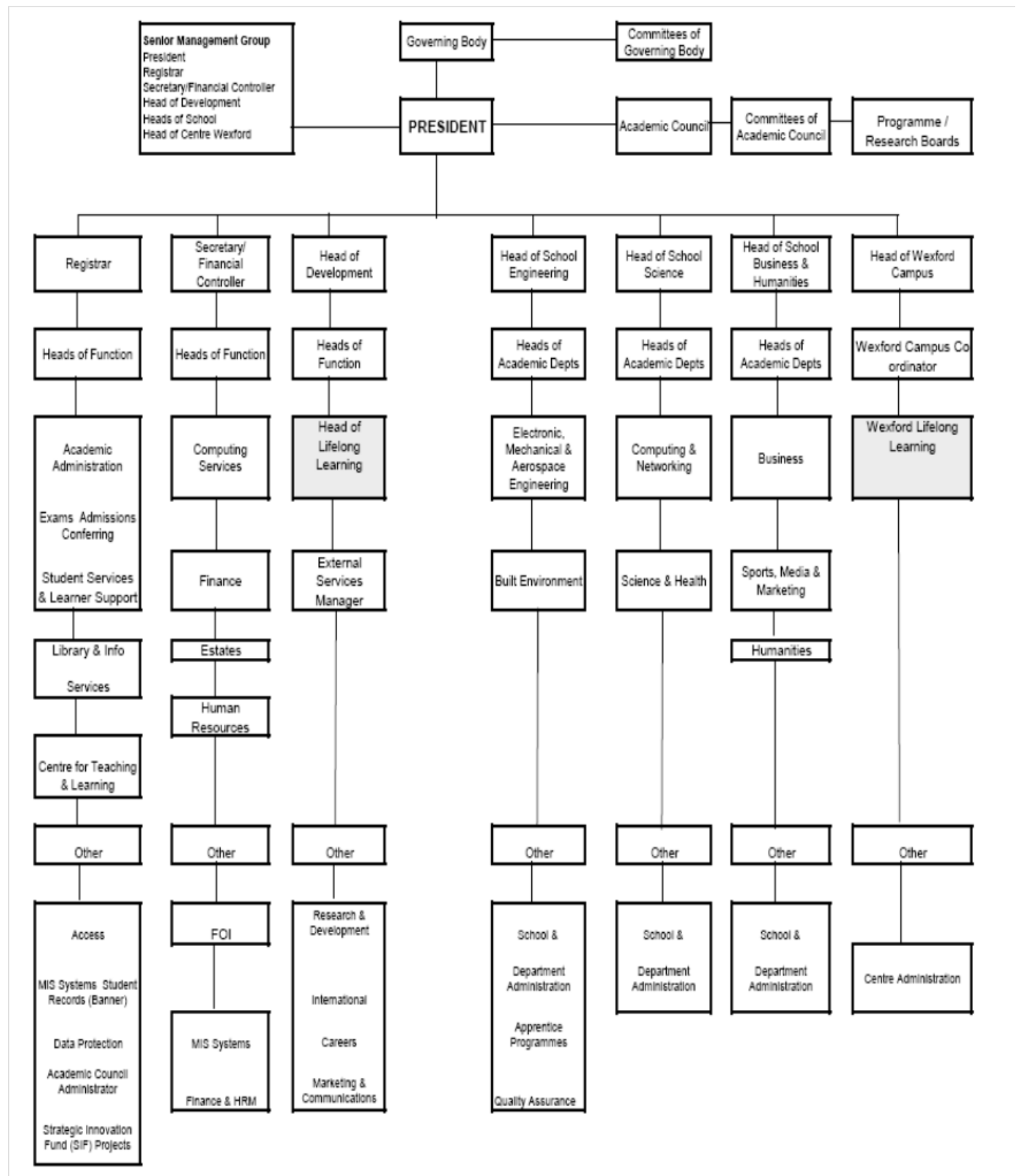
Regulations and Guidelines

- *Safety, Health & Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2001*
- *Department of Education and Training*
- *Higher Education Authority*
- *Higher Education Training and Awards Council*
- *Further Education Training and Awards Council*

Organisation, Management and Administration

To implement the Institute mission and functions, the Institute has a complex organisational structure with a senior management team led by the President of the Institute whose duties and functions are defined in the two Acts referred to above. The management team leads a range of academic, academic support, and non academic functions, and these have a range of administrative and technical support staff working to them. In implementing the mission and operational functions of the Institute, the Senior Management Team (SMT) representative of the academic, academic support, and non-academic operations of the Institute meets to manage and monitor the ongoing implementation of the Institute's strategic plan, and deal with operational matters arising from the day-to-day running of the Institute. Figure 2 on the next page gives an overview of the organisational and management structure of the Institute. The SMT report to the President on the operation of their areas of responsibility and functions; while this is self-explanatory through Figure 1, essentially the Registrar reports on academic affairs, the Head of Development on research, development, innovation and lifelong learning, the secretary Financial Controller on finance, human resources and estates, and the Heads of School/Centre on the academic management of their relative academic departments and centres. This however is a formal description, and many of the matters arising at meetings of the SMT concern issues that have to be dealt with through an inter and cross-functional approach where a team approach is considered most effective.

Figure 2 Statutory Bodies and Organisational Management Structure 2010



Within this functional structure the business of management is organised through a range of scheduled meetings, with formal agendas, and minutes documenting the decisions made. These group meetings cover Governing Body and committees, Academic Council and committees, Senior Management, Heads of School. Senior leaders also hold less formal meetings with their respective Heads of Departments/Functions on operational matters of day to day importance. Programme Boards hold regular meetings where matters concerning a programme(s) are discussed and minuted. (*See IR Library for location of these meeting agendas and minutes*).

3.6 Management Information Systems (MIS)

The Institute has a Management Information System (MIS) consisting of a number of key applications that are under regular review to ensure they comply with external developments and meet customer service requirements and demands. These systems are; the *Banner Student Record System*, *Millennium Library System*, *Core HR/Payroll System*, and the *Aggresso Finance System*. In addition, the Institute has a *Computing Services Department* that provides the computing infrastructure for the college and monitors, initiates and develops this infrastructure to enable all of these customised MIS to operate effectively. The MIS is used to provide data for planning, monitoring, and assessing progress on the operational management of the Institute.

3.7 Quality Assurance in Strategic Planning, Governance and Management

The broad topic of leadership, governance, planning and management reflects the emphasis of making best use of resources. Leadership is essential. Resources have to be ever more thinly spread as budgets decrease and the Institute no longer has the level of resources per student that it formerly enjoyed. Learning and teaching material may be delivered more economically if new methods (e.g., Internet) are effectively used. In addition, new legislation impacting on the Institute's environment (employment, health, safety, etc.) can impact on strategic planning and operational management. The Institute's Quality Assurance system uses quality standards (QS) to monitor improvement; QS that monitor current dynamism and improvement (and are defined as Leading and Learning QS) are even more important in monitoring progress than QS that reflect past achievements (defined as Lagging). For these reasons, Quality Standards that cover governance, leadership, planning, and management are important. (*See Appendix 11 Quality Standards for Strategic Planning, Governance and Management.*)

3.8 Strategic Planning, Governance and Risk

All higher education institutions operate in an increasingly turbulent environment – no organisation is an island. The management of risk in ITC involves a strategic and operational awareness of the many challenges facing the Institute, and the categorisation of risk in terms of its impact and likelihood of occurring. The Senior Management Team keeps this under regular review and reports to Governing Body with updates on risk management operations and decisions. Appendix 8 contains a recent audit of risk, the Corporate Risk Register. It is an important monitoring activity and provides a realistic framework for assessing risks to key areas important to strategic planning and governance. The recommendations below include actions arising out of this risk framework.

3.9 Recommendations

1. Review Goal 8: '*National & International Positioning & Alliances*' of the Strategic Plan, on publication of the Higher Education Review (Hunt Report).
2. Continue to lobby HEA for replacement of key posts.
3. Increase investment in staff training & development in key areas of expertise to mitigate against loss of experience if key staff who retire are not replaced.
4. Increase focus on non-exchequer sources of funding.
5. Maintain profile of Strategic Plan through regular briefings on progress with management & staff, so as to ensure competitiveness.
6. Ensure Institute meets expected standards of corporate governance and financial probity by promoting awareness of code of business conduct amongst all staff and governing body members. Have corporate governance compliance reviewed by internal audit.
7. Complete Delegation of Awarding Authority progress by achieving it for NFQ level 9 taught Masters awards, and for level 9 and 10 Masters and Doctoral Research awards in areas where research activity reaches a critical mass.

Chapter 4

Quality Assurance and Improvement in IT Carlow

4.1 Context and Background

The *Qualifications Act (1999)* required all Institutes to establish procedures for quality assurance for the purpose of improving and maintaining quality of education and training. Since then a structured approach to quality assurance in higher education has evolved under the guidance of HETAC and the NQAI.

The Institute of Technology Carlow's approach to the assurance of quality and academic standards is based on adherence to the published Marks and Standards document; Schools' ownership of programmes; highly qualified staff; teaching and learning initiatives; auditing of procedures; internal and external reviews and the IT Carlow Quality Assurance Policy and Framework Manual. The evolution of the Institute's Quality Assurance and Improvement structures and an evaluation of their effectiveness are presented in this chapter.

From its inception, the Institute has had a strong value of a commitment to a quality educational provision. In the last decade, the requirement to demonstrate its vibrant quality ethos to all of its stakeholders has become a focus for the Institute. The growth of predominantly public funded mass higher education systems nationally and in the European Union has led to the need for a transparent and accountable demonstration by higher education providers that they were delivering services that met not only the needs of learners but also of the national economy, and general social development. A range of recommendations on quality assurance in higher education has been published by quality assurance agencies nationally and internationally.

In the context of these on-going developments, the Institute developed its first formal Quality Assurance Policy in 1996 approved by its Academic Council and Governing Body. This Institute-wide Quality Policy was initiated by the Institute's first Institutional Review, a major self-study of all of its activities completed in the academic year 1996-97, submitted to and approved by the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA). This Institute's Quality Policy provided a basis for the induction and development of a more transparent and accountable Quality Policy and Procedures. It embedded in the College an ethos of the requirement to demonstrate its quality educational provision to stakeholders. Its core principles set out expectations that have guided the Institute's development of quality; these principles are described below:

1. Quality is the achievement of excellence through continuous improvement.
2. The processes of quality have to be owned by staff.
3. The implementation of quality has to occur at an operational level.
4. Quality processes are to be fully documented at each operational level.

Further, it was recognised that the quality framework would ensure the following:

- An operational definition of quality for each activity in the College
- Management of quality for an activity to ensure the following: quality management system; an assessment of quality of the activity; analysis, appraisal and feedback from the quality assessment to enhance its quality.

The overall approach to development of a QA/QI system was divided into four phases:

- Preparation of an agreed IT Carlow Quality Assurance Policy and Framework Manual (produced in September 2004, approved by Governing Body in October 2004)
- Preparation of an agreed IT Carlow Institutional Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures Manual (produced in February 2004, approved by Governing Body in March 2004)
- Implementation of the quality system with agreed time-scales and format for internal audits and peer review/external expert check assessment.
- Review of the results of implementation and further ongoing development of the system.

Supporting parallel developments included the drafting and implementation of the Institute's Strategic Plan 2005-2009, so that there was a solid foundation and focus for the quality policies and procedures developed.

4.2 The Quality Standards Policy and Framework

The Institute following an extensive consultative process decided on a benchmarking Quality Assurance and Improvement Policy and Framework Manual (available on the Institute's website at http://www.itcarlow.ie/downloads/QA%20QI%20Policy%20and%20Framework%20Document.pdf?top_section=1&lower_section=2&uid=itcarlow))

The course of this approach was the concept of the Quality Standard, an approach developed for use by Australian universities.

A Quality Standard is a distinct element of an area of Institutional activity, guided by a defined purpose or rationale, described in terms of good practice (benchmarking) that can be measured either qualitatively and/or quantitatively. An example of a Quality Standard is given in Table 2.

Quality Standards are presented in the following standard format:

- **Area** identifies a major activity of the Institute, e.g., governance, learning & teaching, research.
- **Element** identifies a sub-area component of a major-activity of the Institute, e.g., for the major area of learning and teaching, course establishment processes is an element; for governance, leadership is an element.
- **Type** identifies whether the benchmark is a lagging indicator, that is, essentially a record of past performance (which may, of course, be continuing on into the future), a leading indicator (indicative of the drivers of current and future performance), or learning (indicative of the rate of change).
- **Quality Standard Purpose** is a description of why that element is important and what is being assessed.
- **Sources of data** list existing, known sources of data. It also specifies areas where data availability or suitability is doubtful.
- **Good practice** is a description of good practice in that element. The intention is to define the best observable practices rather than some theoretical ideal.
- **The levels** section asks users to match the practice/performance of the Institute on the five-point scale, generally (but not always) against one of three descriptions or at intermediate levels, where 1 = minimum alignment with good practice and 5 = close/very close alignment with good practice. It

is intended to help the Institute realise that even good performance may not be the upper limit, that level five indicates the current best practice.

- **Self-assessment** is a convenient way to record the self-assessment made the Institute, Department or Schools using that Quality Standard.
- **Check assessments** is for when the Institute, Departments or Schools invite independent experts to make an assessment of the functioning of that element of the Institute.

The purpose of the good practice statements is to provide tools to identify performance trends in Institute activities and so proved a means whereby a process of continuous improvement can be initiated in each activity. The Quality Standard approach has as its main philosophy the belief that it is important to include not only aspects of performance that can be quantified, but also performance that can only be assessed qualitatively. The Quality Standards approach strives to achieve a balance between both of these.

Another cornerstone of the Quality Standards approach is the assumption that Higher Education Institutions are best managed through a partnership ethos, where the strategic aims and objectives of the institute are prioritised through a process of agreement by all stakeholders. Hence the concept of best practice is perceived as being defined into Quality Standards through a consensual process.

Significant emphasis is placed in many quality systems on the measurement of past performance. In the Quality Standards approach, a more rounded and comprehensive set of performance indicators is defined; lagging, leading and learning indicators (Quality Standard Types). These three indicators measure not only outputs in the Quality Standards systems but also provide a means of assessing innovation and how well the Institution is adapting to its environment and achieving its strategic objectives. The Quality Standards approach is also intended to provide information for the Institute's internal community on improvements needed.

Sixty-two Quality Standards have been developed for the Institute following the process outlined in the previous section (see Table 1 overleaf). Each Quality Standard is, or will be, supported by procedures and processes to facilitate implementation of the standard. These Quality Standards are developed in the following nine categories: (i) Governance, Planning and Management, (ii) External Impact, (iii) Finance and Physical Infrastructure, (iv) Teaching and Learning, (v) Student Services/Support, (vi) Research, (vii) Library and Information Systems, (viii) Internationalisation, (ix) Staff.

Table 1 Quality Standards Developed by the Institute

Ref	AREA	ELEMENT	LAGGING	LEADING	LEARNING
2.1	Governance	Governance & Leadership		✓	
2.2	Governance	Institute-wide Planning		✓	
2.3	Planning	Strategic Change Initiatives			✓
2.4	Planning	Equity Planning			✓
2.5	Management	Responsibility & Decision-making		✓	

2.6	Management	Core Business Systems	✓		
2.7	Management	Risk Management		✓	
2.8	Management	Teaching & Research Expenditure	✓		
2.9	Management	Organisational Climate		✓	
3.1	Learning & Teaching	Learning & Teaching Plan		✓	
3.2	Learning & Teaching	Course Establishment Processes		✓	
3.3	Teaching Quality	Scholarly Teaching			✓
3.4	Teaching Quality	Teaching Environment			✓
3.5	Quality Assurance	Effective Academic Review Processes			✓
3.6	Quality Assurance	Fitness of Courses			✓
3.7	Student Learning	Monitoring Academic Progress			✓
3.8	Learning & Teaching	1 st to 2 nd Year Retention			✓
3.9	Equity	Access & Participation		✓	
3.10	Student Outcomes	Student Satisfaction			✓
3.11	Student Outcomes	Employability of Graduates	✓		
3.12	Student Outcomes	Student Assessment	✓		
4.1	Research Planning	Research – Training & Planning		✓	
4.2	Staff into Research	Proportion of Academic Staff Involvement	✓		
4.3	Research Student	Student Experience & Completion Rates	✓		✓
4.4	Research	Research Income Trends		✓	
4.5	Research Outcomes	Higher Degree Completions / FTE Staff	✓		
4.6	Research Outcomes	Weighted Publications per FTE Academic Staff	✓		
4.7	Research Impact	Impact of Research			✓
5.1	Finance	Operating Result	✓		
5.2	Finance	Diversity of Revenue	✓		
5.3	Finance	Liquidity	✓		
5.4	Finance	External Debt	✓		
5.5	Finance	Quick Ratio		✓	
5.6	Finance	Academic Salaries Expenditure			✓
5.7	Commercialisation	Net Return on Equity	✓		
5.8	Physical Assets	Strategic Asset Management	✓		
5.9	Physical Assets	Recurrent Maintenance Funding	✓		
5.10	Physical Assets	Maintenance Backlog	✓		
5.11	Space Utilisation	Space Management		✓	

5.12	Space Utilisation	Teaching Space: Use & Effectiveness		✓	✓
5.13	Equipment	Large Equipment Utilisation	✓		
5.14	IT Infrastructure	IT & T Infrastructure		✓	
6.1	Information / Library Services Planning	Effectiveness of Information Planning Services		✓	
6.2	Contribution to Key Objectives	Contribution to Teaching & Learning	✓		
6.3	Contribution to Key Objectives	Provision of Support for Research	✓	✓	
6.4	Collaborative Alliances	Effectiveness of Collaborative Alliances		✓	
7.1	Student Services	Student Administrative Services	✓		
7.2	Student Services	Student Services		✓	
7.3	Student Services	Effectiveness of Services			✓
8.1	Human Resource Planning & Mgt	Strategic Human Resource Planning		✓	
8.2	Human Resource Planning & Mgt	Management of Workforce		✓	
8.3	Human Resource Planning & Mgt	Workforce Diversity	✓		
8.4	Human Resource Planning & Mgt	Career Development		✓	
9.1	Internationalisation	Internationalisation Strategy		✓	
9.2	Internationalisation	Culture of Internationalisation		✓	
9.3	Internationalisation	Balanced Onshore International Student Programme	✓		✓
9.4	Internationalisation	Financing of International Student Programme	✓		
9.5	Internationalisation	Students' exposure to International Experience	✓		✓
10.1	External Impact	Reputation			✓
10.2	External Impact	Competitiveness	✓		
10.3	External Impact	Academic Staff Qualifications	✓		
10.4	External Impact	Community Service and Practices		✓	

Table 2 Example of a Quality Standard

Quality Standard	3.10, Version 1.0
Element	Student Satisfaction
Area	Student Outcomes
Type	Learning
<p>Purpose: In-house questionnaires are administered to students. Students describe their perceptions of five areas of study and their overall level of satisfaction with the course. High scores correlate positively with high quality student learning. The data is best used for year-on change within a single Institute but has relevance as a comparative measure. Of most relevance are comparisons at the course level; data similar to that below should be available for each course.</p>	

Good Practice
<p>The Institute is achieving mean scores across all fields of study on each of the six scales.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good Teaching 2. Clear Goals and Standards 3. Appropriate Assessment 4. Appropriate Workload 5. Generic skills 6. Overall Satisfaction <p>Good practice requires evidence that the Institute is striving to improve low scores, and to achieve a profile of scores better than the average of the scale. Sub-set scores relating to international students are extracted for use in the international programme.</p>

Levels				
1	2	3	4	5
No evidence of action in response to scores		Evidence of support and remedial action to improve low scores		Evidence of effective support and remedial action to improve low scores
No evidence of improvement of previous years scores		Some of the previous years scores have improved		Improvements in most or all of previous years scores
A profile of scores where only some of the fields of study reach average levels in most dimensions and few are higher		A profile of scores in most of the fields of study equal to average in each dimension and reaching higher in some.		A profile of scores in fields of study at least equal to average in each dimension, and reaching the top quartile in some.

Self-Assessment (5 max)

Check Assessment (5 max)

Please document any specific comments relating to the Institutes performance in this area and attach.

4.3 Example implementation of Quality Standard

From the point of view of student, it is desirable to measure the quality of their academic experience, both directly and indirectly. The most direct way is to measure their perceptions of their learning experiences.

Quality Standard 3.10 (Student Satisfaction) monitors student ratings of their experience of teaching goals and standards assessment practices, workload, generic skills and overall satisfaction, as measured by in-house questionnaires. While there are many challenges to the usefulness of this information, there is an established correlation between its results and other data about teaching quality.

The Institute administers questionnaires with current students and use the outcomes for internal management purposes. This is done during the academic year as this can give instant feedback to Heads of Departments and in turn a faster response to Students. Graduate surveys are of limited use because of partial returns and delays in the collection and publication of feedback.

Following the surveys, a self-assessment team considers the results. In the past two years the score has had an average of three. Analysis is carried out on a department basis and fed back to programme boards. All recommendations made are acted upon.

4.4 Compliance with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance

Table 3 Summary of Quality Compliance with “Seven Elements” of ENQA Guidelines

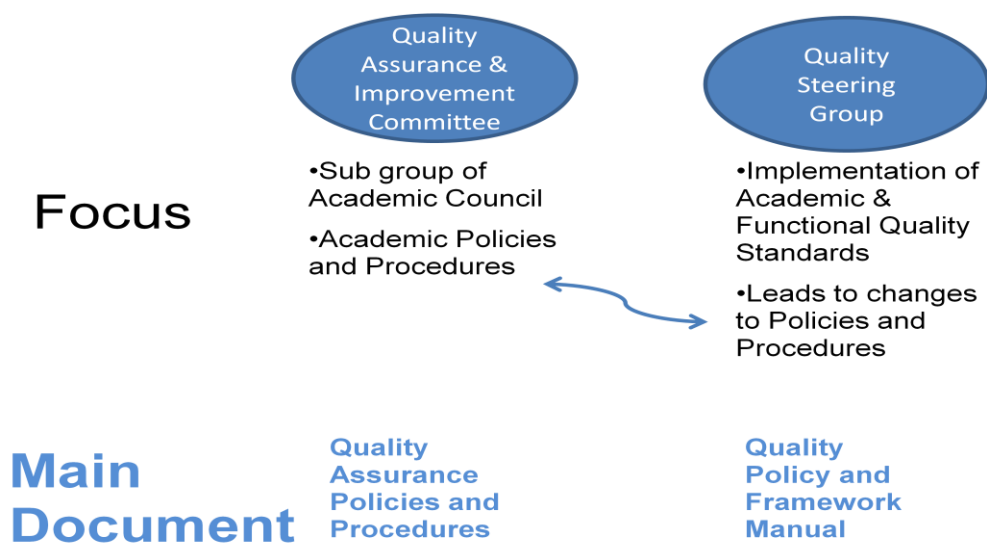
	ENQA Element	Quality Policies and Procedures	Typical Quality Standard applicable
1.	Policy and Procedure for quality assurance	Quality Assurance / Improvement Policy and Framework Manual	2.1 Governance and Leadership 2.2 Institute-wide Planning 3.5 Effective Academic Review Processes 3.6 Fitness of Courses
2.	Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards	Procedures for the Design and Approval of New Taught Programmes Procedures for Postgraduate Research Programmes Procedures for ongoing Monitoring of Programmes Procedures for the Evaluation of each Programme at Regular Intervals	3.1 Learning and Teaching Plan 3.2 Course Establishment Processes 3.3 Scholarly Teaching 3.4 Teaching Environment 3.7 Monitoring Academic Progress 3.8 1 st to 2 nd Year Retention 4.5 Higher Degree Completions / FTE Staff
3.	Assessment of Students	Procedures for the Assessment of Learners	3.12 Student Assessment
4.	Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff	Human Resources Policies and Procedures	8.1 Strategic Human Resource Planning 8.2 Management of Workforce 8.3 Workforce Diversity 8.4 Career Development
5	Learning Resources and Student Support	Procedures & Guidelines for Academic Support Services Teaching and Learning Strategy	3.9 Access and Participation 4.3 Research Student Experience and Completion Rates 7.1 Student Administrative Services 7.2 Student Services 7.3 Effectiveness of Services 3.10 Student Satisfaction
6.	Information Systems	Library and Information Services	6.1 Effectives of Information Planning Services 6.2 L&IS: Contribution to Teaching and Learning 6.3 L&IS: Provision of Support for Research
7.	Public Information	Communications and Marketing Strategy	3.11 Employability of Graduates 10.1 Reputation 10.2 Competitiveness

4.5 Evaluating the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Procedures

Quality improvements are guided by recommendations from Management, Governing Body, Academic Council and its sub- Committees. The day-to-day operational approach to quality improvement is indicated in Figure 4.6. It is a continuous responsive process that seeks to improve outcome through the input of key stakeholders (students, staff and other internal and external stakeholders) as identified by each Department/Function.

In order to facilitate quality improvement activities, two committees were established as shown in Figure 1. The first of these primarily focuses on the academic policies and is a sub-committee of Academic Council established in 2006. The second is focused on the rollout of the Quality Standards across all Institute activities.

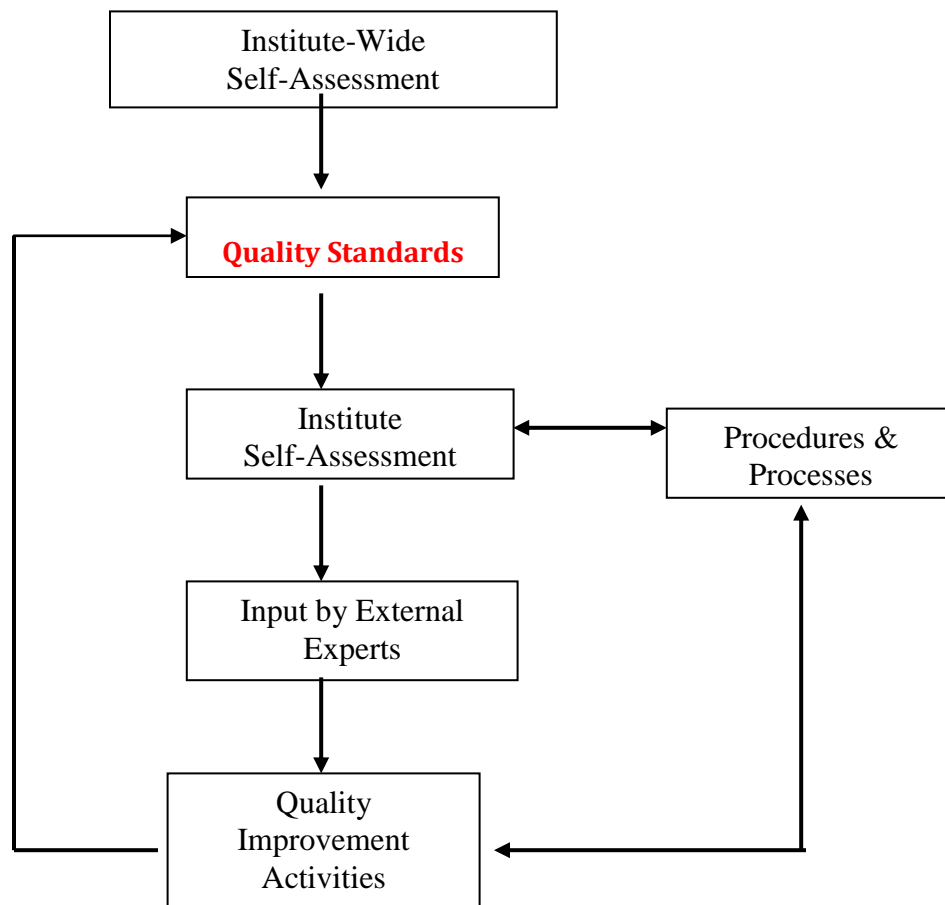
Figure 1 **Institute Quality Committees**



The Institute's Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement Policy together with the Framework Manual clearly defined quality standards as listed in Table 1 above with a set of 25 core standards suggested. It also outlined a system for implementation of the quality standards as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

The system of self-assessment audits commenced in 2008 under the direction of the Institute's Quality Steering Group. As highlighted within the Institute's Self-Study in our Submission for Delegation of Awarding Authority, the Head of School of Engineering was given responsibility for the implementation of the Quality Standards. He was greatly assisted by the appointment of a Quality Assurance and Improvement Officer.

Figure 2 Schematic Representation of the Quality Standard System



In order to define the implementation policy, a calendar to cover the five year cycle was defined. A minimum of ten and a maximum of twelve quality standards per annum were targeted for implementation.

To date the Quality Standards as listed in Table 4 have been implemented. The self-assessment teams are composed of members of management, academic and non-academic staff, students and representatives of the Governing Body. The exact composition will depend on the Quality Standard being implemented.

Table 4 Quality Standards undertaken 2008-10

QUALITY STANDARD	STATUS
QS 2.2 Institute wide planning	Self Assessment completed. Report Approved by QSG
QS 3.3 Scholarly Teaching	Standard Revised. Pilot to commence
QS 3.10 Student Satisfaction	Self Assessment completed. Report Approved by QSG.
QS 4.5 Research higher degree completions per academic staff	Information gathered for Self Assessment

QS 4.6 Weighted Publications per FTE Academic Staff	Draft database compiled from various sources Categories of Publications finalised by R&D Committee. Database validation ongoing
QS 5.1 Operating Result	Self Assessment completed. Report Approved by QSG.
QS 5.2 Diversity of Revenue	Self Assessment completed. Report Approved by QSG.
QS 5.3 Liquidity	Self Assessment completed. Report Approved by QSG.
QS 5.4 External Debt	Self Assessment completed. Report Approved by QSG.
QS 5.5 Quick Ratio	Self Assessment completed. Report Approved by QSG.
QS 5.6 Academic Salaries Expenditure	Self Assessment completed. Report Approved by QSG.
QS 6.2 Contribution to Teaching and Learning	Self Assessment completed. Report Approved by QSG.
QS 7.2 Student Services	Self Assessment completed. Report Approved by QSG.
QS 9.3 Balanced Onshore International Student Programme	Self Assessment completed. Report Approved by QSG.
QS 10.2 Competitiveness	Self Assessment completed. Report Approved by QSG.

In addition, the following standards are listed for completion by December 2010:

QS 3.8 1 st to 2 nd Year Retention
QS 5.7 Commercialisation: Net ret return on Equity
QS 5.8 Strategic Asset Management
QS 6.3 L&IS: Provision of Support for Research

This process ties in with the HETAC Criteria and Process for reviewing the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures in higher education and training. A process of continuous review is undertaken on the framework to identify better descriptions of good practice and with some quality standards being superseded by better of different ones.

The Institute Quality Assurance Manual also details the series of internal and external audits in place designed to assess whether quality assurance procedures are being implemented (as defined in the Institute procedures) and as part of a learning process, to evaluate if these procedures and review mechanisms are adequate for the purpose for which they were established. Senior Management has responsibility for ensuring that the audit/review process is conducted appropriately and that the recommendations are implemented.

Institutional Reviews and the Periodic Programmatic Evaluations (in each of the Institute's three Schools and Wexford Centre) are undertaken by external panels of experts. These review procedures for the ongoing monitoring and review of the Institutes academic programmes and their delivery. Governance, management and administration within the Institute are reviewed on a regular basis through a variety of different formats as discussed below. The Governing Body also oversees all governance and financial audit processes.

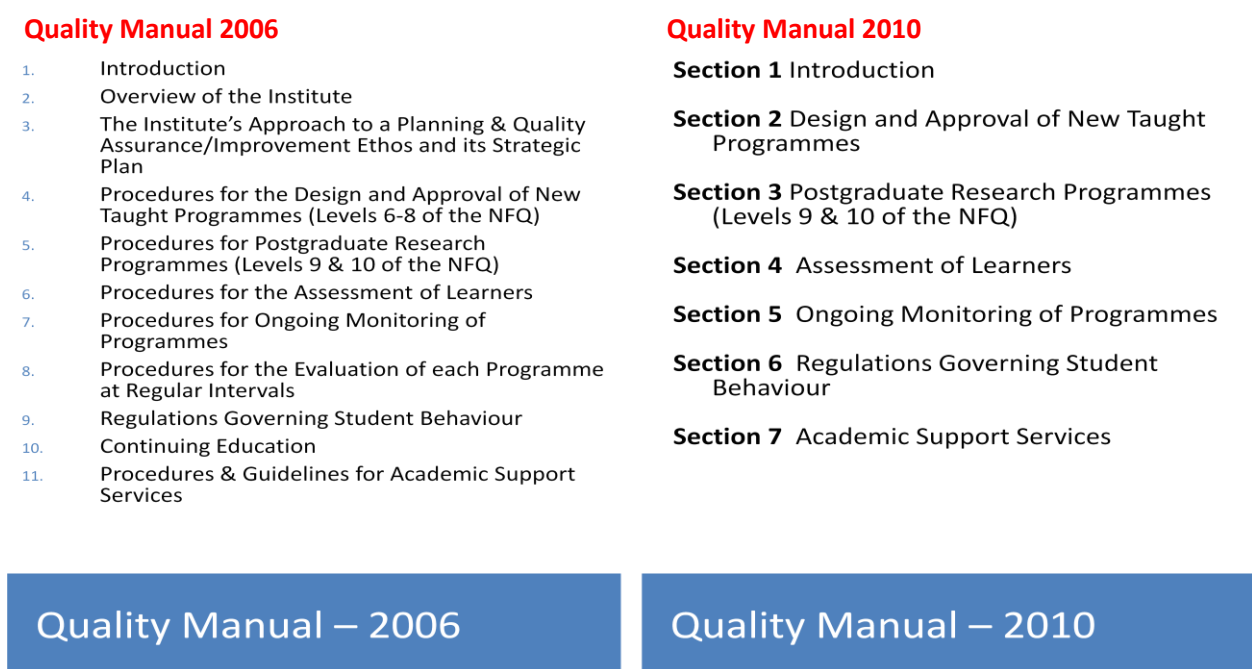
Considerable effort is made to incorporate feedback from as wide an audience as possible on the activities of the Institute. Surveys undertaken which input directly to the Quality Standards and Reviews processes include: Student Surveys undertaken by staff (QA1 &2) and departments (QA3); Student

Services; Computing and Library Services; survey on use of the Virtual Learning Environment; graduate destination surveys and employer surveys.

As part of the Institute's Strategic Plan 2009-2013, a clear objective was inserted to further develop the Institute's planning, policies, internal organisational arrangements, quality assurance and management information systems under the goal on Organisational and Staff Development. Key to this will be the rollout of the Module Manager and Document Management (based on Sharepoint©) systems.

As part of this objective, considerable work has been undertaken on the review of the Quality Assurance / Improvement Policy and Framework Manual. The revised structure of the manual is shown below in Figure 3. This is now published to <http://www.itcarlow.ie/quality>.

Figure 3 Quality Manual Structure Revision



4.6 Example of Process Improvement

During a review of the Student Services Department, the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) was identified as an area that required more time and resources year on year. It was decided to look at this area and streamline the process where possible. Members of the Student Services team, Student representatives and the Quality Assurance Officer were involved in the exercise. Steps in the process which were deemed to be inefficient were highlight and either adapted or removed. The application process which initially had 11 forms was reduced to 2 comprehensive forms. Gathering more information up front made the interviewing stage more proficient and straight forward. SAF Reports are generated for the HEA and Department of Education and improvements were also made in this area. Throughout the Academic year 09/10 the new process was reviewed and continuously improved with revisions to application forms and steps in the process.

4.7 Audits by Consultant Auditors

The Institute, in conjunction with the Council of Directors/Presidents of the Institutes of Technology, initially engaged Deloitte and Touche and currently Mazars as consultant auditors to provide an independent audit and appraisal of systems within the Institute. The systems examined are of a significant nature, focused on governance, management and administration and the audits form a key part of the risk management and internal controls in the Institute.

In all cases it is the responsibility of Senior Management to review the findings of these audits and to identify and implement follow up actions. The reports of these audits are presented to the Internal Audit Sub-Committee of Governing Body and to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Table 5 Internal Audits 2000 to 2010

Internal Audits Undertaken since 2000		
Deloitte and Touche		
Efficiency/Value for Money Issues	Department of Education/ESF Funding	The Examination System
Financial Controls Review	Computer Audit	Information Technology Strategy
Payroll Review	Health and Safety	Industrial Liaison/Self-financing
Mission/Strategy & Fixed Assets	Library	Internal Financial Control Checks
Marketing	Implementation of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies	Expenses
Mazars		
Review of System of Internal Financial Control	Student Support Services	Recruitment of Academic Personnel

4.8 Audit Sub-Committee of Governing Body

An internal audit committee is established as a sub-committee of Governing Body. The purpose of the audit committee is to advise the Governing Body on internal control, corporate governance and any matters referred to it by Governing Body.

The scope of the Audit sub-Committee is a review and oversight committee. The terms of reference for the committee include – Review of internal audit programme; Annual review of abridged statutory accounts and management observations prior to their submission to the Comptroller and Auditor General; Review of external audit report including management letter; Review of internal financial and non financial controls; Review of risk assessment reports; Review of statutory reports, Review of compliance with Corporate Governance.

The audit committee is appointed by Governing Body and membership consists of three members of Governing Body who are not employees of the Institute; the chair will come from this group.

4.9 Audits by the Comptroller and Auditor General

The Comptroller and Auditor General conducts regular review of the Institute to ensure;

1. Expenditure is for the intended purpose as stated in the allocation by the HEA

2. Financial controls are properly applied
3. Expenditure provides value for money

In this context the Institute also produces regular programme and budgetary and expenditure reports which are monitored by the Department of Education.

4.10 Deloitte and Touche review of Academic Administration

In 2009, The Institute of Technology Carlow (IT Carlow) commissioned Deloitte to undertake a review of its Student Administrative processes in the following areas: Admissions; Registration and Examinations.

The core objectives for the review were articulated as follows:

- Improving customer service levels;
- Enhancing internal efficiencies (staffing and resource effort required);
- Improving data quality and reliability;
- Streamlining processes for reduced cycle times, reduced complexity and improved quality;
- Optimising the capability of IT systems;
- Enhancing Financial Management processes, with particular reference to the management of revenue flows; and
- Improving the job satisfaction of administration staff.

An IT Carlow Steering Committee and Project Team were established to work in conjunction with Deloitte to manage and drive forward the programme of work, with overall internal sponsorship resting with the Registrar.

It was recognised in the report that Student Administration lies at the heart of the activities of all Higher Level Institutions. When strategically managed, the various components work together to recruit and retain students for the institution and provide seamless support through to graduation and beyond. The outputs from the workshops and consultation programme undertaken as part of this review highlighted that there is a base level of effectiveness with regard to Student Administration at IT Carlow but from an efficiency and economy perspective, there are a number of common issues that need to be addressed.

Opportunities or proposals for improvement were made drawing on the collective feedback from internal stakeholders. The Steering Committee was involved in the review and discussion surrounding the proposals. An indicative roadmap was developed, designed to facilitate the initial implementation of a number of the “*quick win*” proposals which should be implementable with relative ease and without any significant changes to policies, roles or structures.

Fundamentally, they should serve to initiate a change in culture as well as process. However, in order to deliver maximum gain, it is essential to address the strategic building blocks that will enable and support the implementation of other improvement opportunities that require more significant change. Our view is that the roadmap will take circa 18 -24 months to implement in its entirety.

4.11 Quality Assurance Arrangements under transnational and collaborative provision.

IT Carlow are aware of the policy and criteria set out in the HETAC document on *Policy for collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards*. Following HETAC’s workshop in July 2010, IT Carlow’s policy, procedures and templates are to be drafted for approval by the Academic Council, Governing Body and by HETAC.

Table 6 below lists current partners, nature of partnership and applicable policy. For the out-centre provision in Wicklow and Wexford Campuses, IT Carlow QA& I Policies and Procedures, in their entirety, apply. For the partnerships with An Cosán and Henan University of Finance and Economics, China, detailed memoranda of agreements, drafted with the advice of HETAC, have been signed. In both cases, the collaborating parties adhere to IT Carlow's QA & I policies and procedures for the provision of the relevant programme. The relationships with the sporting bodies for the joint running of the specified programmes on the IT Carlow campus strictly adhere to IT Carlow's QA systems.

Table 6 Current Transnational, Collaborative and Joint Award provision

Partner	ITC School	Nature of Partnership	HETAC Policy
An Cosán, West Tallaght	Lifelong Learning	ITC developed a BA in Leadership and Community Development in association with An Cosán – a community education centre in Tallaght Dublin. An Cosán staff deliver the Level 7 degree under the remit of ITC quality assurance	Collaborative Provision Off-campus
Wexford Campus	Wexford Campus	All programmes delivered by Staff employed by ITC. Three Level 6, three Level 7, Ordinary Bachelor Degree programme and five Level 8 Honours Bachelor Degree programmes, one Taught Masters (MBA) and two Level 9 research candidates. Almost 900 learners on campus.	Out-centre provision
Wicklow Campus, Rathnew	Lifelong Learning	Enterprise development and training support through provision of lifelong learning programmes, run and delivered by ITC staff for a mature/part-time cohort of approx 200 learners.	Out-centre provision
Leinster Rugby & Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU)	Business & Humanities	Programmes run jointly by ITC staff and Leinster Rugby/IRFU staff Bachelor of Arts Level 7 (in Sport and Exercise) (Rugby) [IT Carlow Award]	Collaborative Provision Main Campus
Football Association of Ireland (FAI)	Business & Humanities	Programme(s) run jointly by ITC staff and FAI staff. Bachelor of Art, Level 7 (in Sport and Exercise) (Soccer) [IT Carlow Award]	Collaborative Provision Main Campus
Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	Business & Humanities	Programme(s) run jointly by ITC staff and GAA staff. Bachelor of Arts, Level 7 (in Sport and Exercise) (GAA) [IT Carlow Award]	Main Campus
Communications and Information Services Corps, Irish Defence Forces	Engineering	Programme provided jointly by staff of ITC and Irish Defence Forces: Bachelor of Engineering in Electronic Engineering (Military Communications Systems) – Level 7, Ordinary Bachelor Degree	Collaborative Provision ITC and Irish Defence Forces (Curragh Co Kildare)
Henan University of Finance and Economics, China	Science	ITC Bachelor of Science in Computer Systems Management Level 7, provided and awarded by ITC in Henan University, China.	Transnational Collaborative Provision

The collaborative provision with the Communications and Information Services Corps of the Defence Forces are covered by a specific Memorandum of Understanding and Academic Council approved policies and procedures. It is only in year 3 of the programme that the four modules are delivered in the

Defence Forces Training Centre in the Curragh. This programme was first validated by HETAC before the awarding of delegated authority to IT Carlow and subsequently has been subjected to ongoing monitoring and programmatic review in line with IT Carlow policy and procedure. Alongside the professional body recognition by bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Building and Engineers Ireland, IT Carlow are also recognised by licensing authorities. For example IT Carlow are the sole providers of approved basic training leading to Part-66 Aviation Maintenance licences in the A1, B1.1, B1.2 and B2 categories in the Republic of Ireland. This approval to be a Maintenance Training Organisation (Part 147-approved) is given by the Irish Aviation Authority, a competent authority under the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). These EASA licences are recognised worldwide. The BEng in Aircraft Systems is directly linked to these professional licence exams.

4.12 Recommendations

1. Strengthen awareness amongst all parties of the Institute's QA&I Framework and its importance to the development of the organisation.
2. Continue to review, refine and implement the Institute's QA & I Framework Manual including QA structures.
3. Expand pilots of integrated user-friendly document management and module management systems to be used by all function and department areas.
4. Review proposals of Deloitte and Touche report and implement to reduce cycle times, reduce complexity and improve quality
5. Expand the process mapping and improvement activity in Student Services to other area starting with the Disability area.
6. IT Carlow's policy, procedures and templates for collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards are to be drafted for approval by the Academic Council, Governing Body and by HETAC.

Chapter 5

Implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications and the Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression

5.1 Implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

Establishment of the Framework

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) was established through legislation on a statutory basis in 2001 together with two other new statutory bodies, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). In 2003 the NQAI launched the NFQ. The framework has created a single, coherent and more easily understood qualifications system for all levels of education and training in the Irish Republic. The NFQ is designed for the development, recognition and award of qualifications based on agreed generic standards of knowledge, skill and competence acquired by learners. The NQAI vision is to recognise all levels of learning and to facilitate a structure that will encourage the development of life-long learning. The NFQ consist of 10 levels, from basic learning to Doctoral awards. FETAC makes awards from levels 1 to 6, and HETAC makes awards from levels 6 to 10. (For a more detailed explanation of the NFQ see www.nfq.ie)

Transition of Institute Taught Programmes to the NFQ

In 2003 HETAC adopted the generic award-type descriptors of the NFQ as interim standards for the development of programmes leading to awards on the NFQ. In 2004 HETAC initiated a process that approved all of ITC's taught programmes of study for transition onto the NFQ. There was considerable engagement by the academic staff of ITC with this process, and substantive work by all taught Programme Boards across ITC was completed to enable the transition of all existing programmes to the NFQ. This work involved the conversion of existing programmes into learning outcomes meeting the HETAC interim standards of knowledge skill and competence at each level of the NFQ appropriate to the award being proposed for conversion. Programme Boards added additional learning outcomes where required to achieve the interim standards, and also amended existing programmes where appropriate to achieve the interim standards, and produced new programme schedules. A collaborative programme 'Graduate Diploma in Primary School Language Teaching' led by IT Carlow and involving nine other Institutes of Technology was also converted for the NFQ. These programme conversions were presented to and approved by the Academic Council of ITC and presented and approved by a HETAC visiting Panel (*see IR Library -Transition to New Awards for a full listing of Institute Programmes & Awards transferred to the Framework*). Through this transition process ITC was approved to provide programmes of study from levels 6 through to 8 (Higher Certificate to Honours Degree) on the NFQ. ITC adopted the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and concurrent with this the credit weighting benchmark between programme size and credit assignment as determined by the NQAI and HETAC (*see IR Library - Principles and operational guidelines for the implementation of a national approach to credit etc NQAI 2004*). In this transition, ITC also adopted formally through its Academic Council the NQAI vision and principles for access, transfer and progression as determined in the NQAI Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners , published in 2003.

Transition of Institute Research Programmes to the NFQ

In 2004 HETAC adopted the NFQ award type descriptors as standards for postgraduate level 9 to 10 programmes. In November 2004 HETAC agreed the policies and procedures of ITC and a Certificate of Quality Assurance & Improvement was issued to ITC. Under HETAC's transition process for awards to be placed on the NFQ, ITC had 38 postgraduate programmes from Masters to Doctoral level transferred to the NFQ. For further developments in the relationship between ITC's postgraduate programmes and the NFQ see Chapter 6 on Delegation of Awarding Authority.

5.2 The Meaning of the Framework for ITC

Structure of Programmes and Academic Year

The Framework encapsulates a new philosophy of learning, the learning outcomes paradigm. Each award in the Framework is described in terms of learning outcomes of knowledge, skill and competency. The shift from the traditional focus on the processes of learning to the outcomes of learning heralded a fundamental rethinking of ITC's approach to the structure and delivery of its core activities of teaching and learning. The introduction of the NFQ stimulated considerable debate and in 2004 ITC adopted the principle of a modularised ECTS structure for all of its academic programmes based on units of modules (multiples of 5 ECTS credits) to a maximum value of 60 ECTS credits per full-time stage/year (levels 6 to 8). After considerable discussion and debate, a framework for the modularisation of programmes (FMP) within a year long academic structure was agreed by ITC's Academic Council in 2009 for implementation from September 2010 (*see Appendix 9 – for FMP*). The FMP allows for semester based programmes to be approved where external requirements dictate e.g., European based exchange programmes such as ERASMUS. Programmes in the School of Science, the School of Engineering, and the Wexford Campus have all been converted to the FMP during Programmatic Reviews carried out in 2009-2010. The School of Business and Humanities is due to fully implement the FMP via a Programmatic Review scheduled for 2010-2011. The Lifelong Learning Centre (part-time provision) implements the FMP within the flexibility of the Accumulation of Credits by Certification of Subjects (ACCS) system.

Programme Design and the NFQ

Following the achievement by ITC in 2005 of Delegation of Awarding Authority (DA) for NFQ level 6 to 8 awards (see Chapter 6 of this Review) the Academic Council approved a new taught programme submission design document which also incorporated a template for programme module design. All new programme submissions for validation under DA were required to conform to this. It embedded the NFQ learning outcomes paradigm and led to a significant shift where compliance with this approach became reflected in programme learning outcomes, module learning outcomes, and a consequent re-thinking of assessment and teaching methodologies. For a full exposition of the process of programme initiation, design and validation see Chapter 6 of this Review.

The NFQ and its Impact on Teaching and Learning

In 2006 ITC established a Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) with a mission to foster a culture of excellence in teaching and learning and to support the provision of a quality learning experience for all learners at ITC. The challenges of changing the academic culture from a process approach to teaching and learning to an outcomes based learner-centred approach, was a key priority for the TLC in embedding the full implications of the NFQ into teaching pedagogy. The drivers to achieve this was (i) a comprehensive suite of academic professional activities including an accredited certificate and diploma in 3rd level learning and teaching, and (ii) the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Strategic Innovation Funding (SIF) projects focused on innovation in teaching and learning and on the assessment of learning.

In 2008-2009 a total of 445 staff participated in 37 workshops and seminars (represents 154 individual staff; 136 academics and 18 support staff). These were designed to develop academic staff for their roles in teaching, learning, assessment and research supervision. A total of 67% of academic staff participated. 20 academic staff registered on the Postgraduate certificate and Diploma in Teaching and Learning. *(For a full report and analysis please see IR Library - Teaching & Learning Centre Annual Report 2008-2009).*

Strategic Innovation Funded (SIF) Projects Impacting on Teaching and Learning

SIF Projects have been very learner centred and learning outcomes based, and in their design and rationale pivotal to the development of a critical and discerning approach to bringing about the cultural change from the focus on input processes to that of outputs in ITC's implementation of the NFQ; a brief summary is given below of the impact of SIF projects over the period 2006 to 2010.

SIF 1 projects impacting on teaching and learning included; (i) The Learning Styles project in which 400 learners and 50 staff participated. Outputs included a developed community of practice with 30 staff involved in the application of learning styles in classrooms and across 8 discipline areas. (ii) The Assistive Technologies project in which 30 staff trained in disability awareness and 12 staff trained in assistive technologies. Outputs included more targeted screening of the practical needs of learners with disabilities, assistive technologies training for learners, identification of and purchase of additional assistive technologies to support learners. (iii) The Problem Based Learning project in the School of Engineering; (iv) Developing Emotional Competencies in 1st year Learners in which over 300 1st year learners participated. Outputs included the identification of key emotional competencies enabling highly successful academic performance in first year examinations.

The SIF 2 project 'Repositioning Learner Assessment' includes a HE sector –wide dimension and partnership with HETAC and ITCs of Technology in Blanchardstown, Tallaght and Dundalk. Outputs to date include; a review of international and national best practice in assessment, the funding of 9 case-studies for action research projects on assessment; workshops and seminars on effective assessment and learner feedback, and criterion-based assessment, all delivered by leading academics in these fields. (for a full report and analysis please see IR Library reference on SIF Progress Reports to the HEA)

Case Study on the Transition from an Input to a Learning Outcome based Model

An Institutional Review Working Group examined the transition from an input to a learning outcome based model in teaching and learning within ITC. It examined the implementation of the NFQ and contextualised this using the NQAI Framework Implementation and Impact Study (published in 2008; see IR Library), and in particular Chapter 4 of this study titled 'Theme 3: Learning Outcomes and Cultural Change in Education and Training', to inform the groups' work.

The Group conducted a self study of the use of learning outcomes by examining;

- The knowledge and use of HETAC Award Standards for the development of new programmes, where developed for specific fields of learning
- Legacy programmes designed prior to the transition to the NFQ and new programmes designed subsequent to the transition to new awards process in 2004
- The difference (if any) in teaching and learning in an outputs defined environment
- The inter-connectivity between module and programme learning outcomes
- The impact on learners

- Whether academic processes and procedures have kept up with the implementation and use of learning outcomes.

Using nine programmes randomly selected and balancing for Departments, Wexford Campus and Life Long Learning, the Working Group used an investigative research methodology and also in-depth structured interviews with the Director of each programme.

The following recommendations were made by the case study Group:

1. Academic Council procedures need to be amended regarding Annual Programme Reviews to take account of the impact of amendments on programme learning outcomes.
2. An Institute template for programme and module design should be developed to (a) standardise the number of learning outcomes for a 10 ECTS module and (b) include a method of linking assessment criteria to learning outcomes more explicitly.
3. The programme validation documentation needs to be amended to facilitate the inclusion of explicit linkages between module and programme learning outcomes
4. The expertise of the Teaching and Learning Centre in the area of programme design should be utilised in a more formal way, perhaps as a 'sounding post' or first check at programme learning outcome level.
5. The information deficit relating to programme learning outcomes expressed by students needs to be addressed at an Institute level.

(The full report of the Working Group is in the IR Library. 'Case Study on the Transition from an Input to an Learning Outcomes Based Model')

Case Study – Cooperation between ITC and Engineers Ireland

ITC maintains links with a substantial number of professional bodies and organizations. The consequence of these relationships for our learners can range from admission to basic membership of the body or organization to continuing professional development and on to the recognition of ITC's awards as professional benchmarks providing eligibility to practise in a particular profession.

As a case study, the relationship between ITC and Engineers Ireland (EI) helps to highlight the extent to which such cooperation can result in professionally accredited awards being included on the NFQ and therefore facilitating the access, transfer and progression of learners.

ITC submitted a number of programmes to EI for professional accreditation (one at level 8 and five at level 7 on the NFQ). As part of this process, ITC described the ethos, policies, procedures and regulations applying when facilitating learner transfer from other engineering education programmes in Ireland and abroad, into an accredited EI Institute programme. Under NQAI policies *'the Authority considers that the alignment with the Framework of the learning outcomes associated with the awards of certain Irish Bodies which regulate professions will normally be a responsibility of FETAC or HETAC, given their statutory remit. Thus it is through the recognition processes of the Councils that the Authority considers that there can be Framework alignment of such awards.'*

ITC awards accredited by EI are now included on the NFQ by virtue of ITC being a recognised institution with delegated authority to make awards in its own name. In addition, the relationship between ITC and EI means that its accredited programmes are quality assured both by ITC's own quality procedures and by those of EI.

A report on this accreditation process with EI is attached and also included is a full listing of Institute awards that are recognised in various ways by other professional bodies and organizations.

5.3 Implementation of the Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression

Context for Access, Transfer and Progression of Learners

ITC articulates its implementation of access, transfer and progression for learners through the elaboration of the definitions of access, transfer and progression in the NQAI Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners, published in 2003 (see *IR Library* or www.nqai.ie), and through the HEA National Plan for Equity of Access.

The NQAI definitions are:

- Access – the process by which learners may commence a programme of education and training having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence required.
- Transfer – the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme having received recognition for knowledge, skill or competence required.
- Progression – the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme, where each programme is of a higher level than the preceding programme.

In addition, ITC articulates equity of access for disadvantaged learners as expressed by EU education ministers in the London Communiqué 18th May 2007 (and quoted in the HEA National Plan for Equity of access to Higher Education):

- *‘Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competences in society. Policy should therefore aim.....to create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity.’*

Within this National and European context where equity of access, transfer and progression for all learners is the goal, ITC has adopted policies and procedures to achieve this over the lifetime of its 2009-2013 Strategic Plan. Under the goal relating to Learner Population the plan has the following objective:

- *Embed equity of access for learners across all of ITC through the provision of a collegiate environment which promotes greater equity of access to and participation in all programmes of study and research. This process should be cognizant of the objectives set by the HEA in its national plan for equity of access to higher education*

Under this objective it set the following actions for 2009-2010:

- *Review ITC’s equality of access policy to align with the objectives in the HEA National Plan for equity of access to higher education.*
Action to-date; a revised access policy statement has been drafted and is progressing through the committee stages of the Academic Council of ITC.
Complete an audit and evaluation of resources currently available to assist equity of access and on-going support.
Action to-date; this is on-going and a report on progress to-date is available (see *IR Library*)
- *Identify learner supports needed for all student groups including full-time undergraduate, postgraduate and lifelong learners.*

Action to-date; as a starting point, the current supports for full-time undergraduates (the most developed support services) has been benchmarked as a provision reference for both postgraduate and lifelong learners. A draft 'learner Supports for the Future' document has been prepared (see IR Library).

- *Complete an audit of the physical facilities of ITC to enable commitments to be made and prioritised in relation to any changes/modifications required to improve access for disabled learners.*

Action to-date; this has been completed and full reports made on all Institute buildings identifying where changes/modifications are needed and these have been prioritised (see IR Library).

Institute Policies & Procedures for Equitable Access, Transfer and Progression

ITC adopted formally through its Academic Council in 2004 the NQAI Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners, published in 2003. In implementing this policy a number of procedures have been developed and adopted by ITC (see *IR Library: Quality Assurance & Improvement manual- section 11 Procedures & Guidelines for Academic Support Services – (i) Academic Administration Procedures*). These procedures cover what are referred to as standard (or traditional) first year undergraduate applicants (those who apply directly from second level schools taking the national leaving certificate examinations and equivalences- the majority of applicants), non-traditional applicants such as mature of age (over 23 years), applicants who complete post leaving certificate programmes and obtain a FETAC level 5 or 6 award, applicants whose social and economic backgrounds clearly identify them as disadvantaged, those applying through the HEA recent Labour Market Activation Initiative, non-EU as well as EU learners on Erasmus schemes, through to applicants for admission to postgraduate study. In addition, a range of procedures identify supports for entrants with disabilities, access to the student assistance fund, counselling and health services etc.

Information Provision to Applicants

The provision of quality information to the public is critical for the ability of potential applicants to make competent choices on programmes.

ITC provides a suite of quality publications for potential applicants; these include a full-time prospectus, a part-time lifelong learning prospectus, an e-brochure for non-EU applicants, an Erasmus student guide for EU applicants, and course to career charts. The Institute prospectus details entry requirements and arrangements for all full-time programmes together with an outline of progression and transfer arrangements within the Institute. Specifically, admission requirements and application procedures are detailed for standard second-level leaving certificate, non-standard applicants i.e. mature, those with FETAC level 5 and 6 awards, special needs applicant, and the ITC direct access programme for those in second level who have a background of social and economic disadvantage. The Lifelong Learning prospectus uses a similar structure in terms of information, and the Student Services handbook details all of the support services available to learners.

Information for potential applicants on how programmes of study reflect the standards of knowledge, skill and competence at the NFQ level and at the discipline (HETAC standards) level are contained in the programme documentation within the quality validation process. The Institute is aware of the importance of communicating this to potential applicants and currently provides it as part of the application process for postgraduate entry. Under a HEA funded Strategic Innovation Funded (SIF) project, in 2008 the Institute commenced the process of acquiring a database product (module-builder) tailored to computerise and provide online processes for the complete cycle of programme

development, submission, expert panel evaluation, and validation. An output of this will be the availability of all modules in all programmes of study in an online format, both to staff and learners. This will include also the programme learning outcomes and is scheduled for development in 2010-11, and for online access in 2010-12.

The Institute endeavours to keep the public updated using various communications tools (print publications and online/electronic communications). These documents are issued annually and are designed to meet the information needs of prospective students, employers, the local community, the media and the general community. In line with the statutory obligations, and also, as an opportunity to communicate with and provide information to interested parties the Institute has a Freedom of information (FOI) Office and assists individuals seeking information held by the Institute in accordance with the provisions of the relevant legislation. In addition the Institute endeavours to supply desired information to key stakeholders without any need to go through FOI procedures an example of this would be that the Institute makes provision for candidates to view their marked examination scripts through the Examinations Office.

ITC publications are also made available to the public through its website. The ITC website was redesigned in 2006 with a new user-friendly layout and a content management system. The website is an integral and vital part of communications and it is a central information point for applicants, learners and the public to source various documents, publications, operations and activities. Website visits continue to increase year-on-year e.g. for the single month of January (immediately prior to the CAO closing date), visits to the ITC website increased from 49,851 visits in 2008, to 61,183 in 2009 and to 98,258 visits in 2010. This increased interest is consistent with the significant increase in CAO applicants to the Institute in 2010. In response to the ever increasing use and expansion of the world-wide web, ITC has recently established a number of online interactive communications tools which link to the Institute website. These include social networking sites such as Facebook and Bebo, discussion sites such as Twitter and Boards.ie, and Youtube. Within three months of its establishment (December 2009), the ITC Facebook site recorded 1,482 'fans'.

Institute Progress in Implementing Equitable Access, Transfer and Progression

Statistical Overview of Learner Population in ITC 2005-2009

Table 1 **Overview of whole-time equivalents (WTE) and where appropriate head count (HC) for the past five years. *Over this period the total WTE has increased by 51%***

Year	Fulltime (WTE)	Apprentices (HC)	Apprentices (WTE)	LLL (HC)	LLL (WTE)	Total (WTE)
2005/06	2,711	236	79	926	180	2970
2006/07	2,935	314	105	965	615	3655
2007/08	3,097	378	126	1,137	739	3962
2008/09	3,234	465	155	1,334	1,002	4391
2009/10	3,277	458	153	1,193	1,066	4496

5.3.1 Equitable Access

Statistical Overviews of Specific Targeted Access Groups

In its Strategic Plan 2005-2009 ITC had under its goal on 'Academic Portfolio – Learner Population' the target **'a 3% per annum increase in (full-time) non-standard applicants over the next five years'**. In addition, a separate goal was agreed for part-time learners with the Objective of establishing a Lifelong Learning Centre with a number of targets to enable as much as practicable of the full-time programme suite be delivered in a flexible part-time mode to meet the needs of mature and non-standard applicants.

The above has been met as the following tables illustrate. Details of pre and post entry support strategy and operations are described below following the tables.

Table 2 **Mature Students: Full-Time Undergraduate entrants compared to total first year entrants over the period 2005-2009 and projections for 2010-2011**

	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11
1st Year Entrants	1021	1203	1109	1054	1128	1212
Mature Entrants	87	152	181	190	272	372
Matures as a %	8.5%	12.6%	16.3%	18%	24%	30.7%

The target of a 3% per annum increase has been met.

Comparing ITC with other Institutes of Technology and Universities

Using HEA statistics, in 2008-09 the Universities have an average mature intake of 9%; the IoTs have an average mature intake of 13%; ITC with its average of 18% has the second highest intake of mature learners in the State.

Table 3 **Carlow Access Programme (CAP) for socio-economic disadvantaged second level learners; number of participants on full-time undergraduate programmes over the period 2005-2009, with projections for 2010-2011**

	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11
Carlow Access	12	32	43	39	56	76

CAP is specifically targeted as a direct entry scheme devised to advance the social and cultural needs of our region. Learners entering through this are awarded a financial scholarship throughout each year of their studies. Cumulatively, the number of learners participating has risen from 12 to 56 over 2005-2009: a sixfold increase.

Table 4 **Full-time Learners with Disabilities availing of the Special Fund for learners with Disabilities over the period 2005-2009, with projections for 2010-11**

	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11
Number of Learners	15	42	40	50	75	90

This funding is available to facilitate, encourage and support learners with disabilities to participate in third level education. ITC operates a proactive approach to these learners; those who have indicated a

disability on their application to ITC are contacted by ITC Access Officer who makes an assessment for application to the fund so the person's special needs can be supported. Those who have a disability but who for personal reasons do not indicate this, are given opportunities to engage with our Student Support Services (including the Access Officer) at first year registration or at any point during their first year studies.

Table 4a Lifelong Learners (part-time) with whole-time equivalents (WTES) 2005-2009

	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10
Number of Learners	926	965	1137	1334	1205
WTE	180	615	739	1002	1066

Table 4b Distribution of Lifelong learning numbers (part-time) across Centres in 2009-2010

	Carlow	Wexford	Wicklow	Kilkenny	An Cosán*	Curragh**	Total
Number of Learners	693	296	178	8	18	12	1205

* An Cosan is a collaborative partnership with a community development organization in Dublin

**The Curragh is the base of the Irish Army Defence Forces educational division

Table 4c Distribution of Lifelong Learning Awards Provision over NFQ Levels

	NFQ Level				
	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9 (Taught)	Total
Special Purpose	15	4	13	7	39
Minor		2			2
Ordinary Degree		4			4
Honours Degree			6		6
Higher Diploma			1		1
Postgraduate Diploma				2	2
Masters Degree				1	1
Total	15	10	20	10	55

Table 4d Age Distribution of Lifelong Learning Students on Degree Programmes 2009-2010

	Age Range					
	Under 23	23-30	30-40	40-50	60+	Total
Learners	36	308	312	160	5	821
Percentage	4%	37%	38%	20%	1%	100%

Pre-Entry Supports Strategy for non-standard entry

ITC in pursuing the Strategic Plan target increase established a range of pre-entry supports to promote and encourage non-standard applications. These are described below.

Kildare into Tertiary Education (KITE)

KITE is a collaborative initiative between County Kildare Leader Partnership, ITC, nine DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) secondary schools in Kildare, potential mature students, and up to 2009, NUI Maynooth. It provides second level students in the DEIS designated schools in Kildare with an opportunity to experience College life and can help them see themselves as 3rd level candidates of the future. Throughout each year ITC organises a range of activities for the students including 'shadowing days to computer skills programmes. In 2007-2008 a total of 70 DEIS students participated, in 2008-2009 137, and in 2009-2010 312 students took part. Over three academic years the numbers have more than quadrupled.

Access South Leinster (ASL)

The aim of this project is to broaden the activities of KITE to DEIS schools and VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme) providers in South Leinster, by giving those coming from a lower socio-economic group who may have not considered applying to 3rd level, the opportunity to experience college life and so stimulate a desire to enter 3rd level. Planning for ASL started in 2008-2009, and funding of €40k was awarded by the HEA to initiate ASL. Activities are being prepared for the 2010-2011 academic year and will work in conjunction with KITE activities.

KICK Start

The project 'KICK Start' is a learning after school club for primary school students and it symbolises the combination of sport and learning; it is run in association with ITC, Carlow County Development Partnership Ltd, and the DEIS primary school in the Carlow area. It started in November 2005 and offers primary school students the opportunity to participate in sporting activities and become familiar with a third level environment. It also offers students in ITC the opportunity to get involved with the community. Sporting facilities and refreshments are provided by ITC. To date 150 primary school students have participated.

Traveller Programme

This project aims to enhance the academic performance and potential of traveller children attending secondary schools in the South East Region by providing tuition. It aims to motivate and encourage these children to stay in second level throughout the Junior and Leaving Certificate and to encourage them to progress into further or higher education. ITC works with second level teachers and other professionals in the region who are already working with traveller children and their families, to identify children who have evidence of academic ability and have an interest in participating. Funding of €75k over two years has been awarded to ITC by the HEA to progress this project. To date 28 traveller children from a range of schools have attended Engineering and TV & Media activities in ITC. Tuition has also been provided to some of these children at junior and leaving certificate levels. The project is a unique venture and cooperation between second and third level institutions and will continue in 2010-2011.

Mature Non-Standard Applicants

ITC has a successful history of attracting mature non-standard applicants (see statistical overview above); it actively develops links with further education and training providers (FETAC accredited institutions) and with VTOS programmes in its region. A mature student information day is run annually to highlight opportunities available to potential mature entrants. Mature applicants are also given the opportunity to attend for an interview session in relation to their preferred programme choices. The

purpose of the interview is to twofold; as mature applicants may not meet the normal (second level leaving certificate) minimum entry requirements it gives ITC and the applicants an opportunity to assess whether they have a realistic prospect of completing their preferred programme of study. Entry is competitive and ITC carries out a thorough assessment process as mature 'non-standard' applicants are competing with second level leaving certificate applicants for places on programmes, and equity of opportunity is paramount. (see IR Library for Mature Student application process and assessment) Mature entrants have steadily increased over the past five years (see Table 1 above) and it is expected that proportionally they will be over 30% of the first year cohort in 2010-2011.

Special Needs Applicants

ITC welcomes applications from people with disabilities. They are required to complete the Central Application Office (CAO) process and are asked to indicate what their specific medical condition/disability is. This enables ITC to plan for any special requirements at post-entry. The number of students under this category has increased steadily; in 2005 there were 15 students, and in 2009 this had risen to 75 students. This increase has been encouraging; ITC through its capital works programme is steadily improving access and supports (both physical and academic) to enable special needs learners participate more fully at 3rd level.

Direct Entry Scheme for Socially/Economically Disadvantaged Applicants

ITC implemented a pilot policy in 2004 to target first year undergraduate applicants completing the leaving certificate at second level but who for reasons of socio-economic disadvantage (SED) may not meet the CAO cut-off points required for admission to a programme of study but who meet the minimum academic requirements for entry. The types of SED include long-term unemployed parent(s); low family income; no culture/tradition of progression to third level. Those who apply under this scheme are required to supply authenticated documentation to support their application. Other criteria for eligibility include attendance at a school designated as disadvantaged by the Dept of Education. Applicants are also required to have participated fully in pre-entry taster visits, student shadowing, project work, summer school, and Easter revision programmes run by ITC for the Leaving Certificate preparation. There is an interview process and each applicant is assessed on the same criteria. The score on this is combined with their leaving certificate points to determine their eligibility for a place on their programme(s) choice. In 2005 12 students were admitted under this Carlow access Programme (CAP) and in 2009 a total of 56 students registered (*see IR Library - Policy on Direct Entry*). Progression to second year of their studies has improved from a retention rate of 61% in 2006-2007 through to 77% in 2008-2009.

Labour Market Activation Initiative (LMAI)

Established by the HEA in 2008, the LMAI is aimed at creating opportunities for accelerated entry to third level for adults made redundant/unemployed for at least 6 months. In 2008-2009, 73 learners entered Certificate level, with 27 of these on a specially validated preparatory certificate in higher education allowing options in business, science or engineering.. In 2009-2010, a total of 38 learners entered through the LMAI route on successful completion guaranteed progression to the 2nd year of Higher Certificate. A total of 15 learners gained entry to the postgraduate programme Higher Diploma in Management.

5.3.2 Post-Entry Supports

General

ITC has a comprehensive and wide-ranging system of academic supports and student services for full-time students (including a comprehensive orientation programme for new entrants), as well as specific targeted supports for particular categories of students. These are fully described in the full-time Student Handbook. In addition the Students Union provides valuable services including student representation at a variety of levels in ITC's decision making structures.

The Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC) provides support services for part-time students, including both academic and personal support. In its Strategic Review June 2010, the LLC identified as a priority the establishment of learner support services that will be equitable to the support full-time learners can access. Areas include career guidance, counselling and pre-entry services including taster courses, and a query based web package that will assist learners identify the most suitable programme for their needs. Supplementary targeted academic tuition is provided through academic departments for students identified as 'at academic risk' through monitoring and early assessment and feedback. The Teaching and Learning Centre overviews and monitors this support. In 2008-2009 a total of 1,019 additional tuition hours were approved under this support scheme. Support from this scheme is available for all full-time learners.

Post-Entry supports for Non-Standard Full-Time Learners

Learners admitted under the Carlow access Programme (CAP) for socio-economic disadvantaged are awarded a scholarship throughout their studies. The scholarship approximates to €1,200 per student per academic year. In 2009-2010, 56 students were awarded scholarships under CAP.

Disadvantaged learners are supported by finance from the Irish Government and the European Social Fund. This is allocated by the HEA to HE Institutions and is called the Student Assistance Fund (SAF). ITC has supplemented the SAF each year; the number of learners benefiting from the SAF has increased from 259 in 2005 to 272 in 2008. The allocation of funding has remained relatively static over that period, €109k in 2005 to €106k in 2008, with an Institute added contribution of €32k in 2005 and €41k in 2008.

Learners who have disclosed a disability are able to avail of special targeted support; funding is administered by the Government Department of Education. In 2005 a total of 15 students were supported by this scheme and total funding was €25k. In 2008 50 learners were supported, from a fund of €134k.

Mature learners are facilitated with a series of targeted orientation programmes; as well as getting an introduction to college life, they also receive an in-depth hands-on experience of computing and library services (most have been out of a learning environment for many years) and of course the full range of other supports services. In 2008 55 mature learners attended this targeted orientation, this more than doubled to 125 in 2009.

5.3.3 Case Studies in Equitable Access

IT Carlow Wexford Campus

Wexford has the largest population in the South-East, in excess of one hundred thousand people (131,749). The population has grown by 13% in the period 2002 – 2006. About one third of the population live in urban areas, two thirds in rural areas; Wexford's substantial economic and education deficit has been highlighted in a number of key reports on the County (e.g., the Bacon Report). The

national figure for third level graduates is 19%; Wexford has a rate of 17%. It is highly dependent on agriculture, which is in decline as a substantial employer in the county, and on low-productivity manufacturing industries. Third level attainment is a key requirement to secure economic growth; industries locate to where the skills are available.

IT Carlow has provided programmes of full-time study in its Wexford Campus since 1995. As part of its strategic objectives for the campus, it aims to encourage participation in third-level among second-chance learners and disadvantaged groups in Wexford. In 1996 the Campus had a total of 100 full-time and 103 part-time students, and in 2009 this has grown to 503 full-time and 401 part-time students. In its Programmatic and Strategic Review 2009-2010, Wexford Campus undertook a review of its Access work for the period 2003-2009. The Wexford Campus Access Programme (WCAP) has since 2003 worked with second level schools, further education centres and the wider community in Wexford County to break the cycle of disadvantage and marginalisation persisting in families and communities for generations. Since 2003, the WCAP has expanded significantly from the original designated disadvantaged schools and now includes all second-level schools and further/alternative education/centres across County Wexford. The main elements of the WCAP are the Schools Programme, the Carlow Access Programme, links with community Organisations, and both pre and post entry support on the Campus. In its conclusions, Wexford's self-study highlighted the success of the WCAP in meeting its goals; it has made significant impact in enabling learners gain access to third-level who almost certainly would otherwise not have been able to do so. The WCAP has been instrumental in changing attitudes and raising aspirations in the community and schools.

Table 5 gives a statistical overview of the learner categories availing of the various access routes into the campus, over the period 2005 to 2009.

Table 5 Learner categories availing of Access Routes into Wexford Campus

	2005-6	2006-7	2007-8	2008-9	2009-10
1st year Entrants	102	146	129	146	166
Mature Entrants	19	37	45	63	93
Mature as a %	19	25	35	43	56
Special Needs*	8	14	18	21	25
CAP*	7	9	13	16	22
Traveller*	-	2	3	2	2

**These numbers are representative of the total learners in the campus .i.e. of 503 learners in 2009-2010. Special needs category covers all areas of disability. CAP category is the targeted access programme for socio-economic disadvantaged learners. Traveller category is the minority traveller community in Wexford.*

Disadvantaged learners are supported by finance from the Irish Government and the European Social Fund. This is allocated by the HEA to HE Institutions and is called the Student Assistance Fund (SAF). ITC has supplemented the SAF each year; Wexford allocation to learners of this fund has increased from €39k in 2005 to €54k in 2008. More than half of the total SAF funding in ITC in 2008 -2009 was allocated in Wexford.

For the full study on the WCAP see IR Library Wexford Programmatic Review 2010, Section 4.9.

Carlow and An Cosán Dublin - Supporting Access to 3rd level within a Community Context

ITC welcomed the approach by An Cosan (the Shanty Education & Training Centre) in 2006 with a view to embarking on an educational partnership that would benefit learners from severely disadvantaged backgrounds.

An Cosan provides community based education, early childhood education and care, and social enterprise to Tallaght West Dublin, an area classified in the top 1% of disadvantaged areas nationally. ITC, in cooperation with HETAC, developed a BA Ordinary degree in Leadership and Community Development with AN Cosan based on research by An Cosan which identified that this would be a natural progression route for West Tallaght community workers, leaders and volunteers who wanted access to an accredited degree programme. The programme commenced on a part-time basis in 2008, is delivered by An Cosan in Tallaght, under the quality assurance policies and procedures of ITC. The Head of Lifelong Learning in ITC manages the partnership. The overall aim of the programme is to develop learners with the knowledge, skills and competencies to become effective leaders in the community and voluntary sector at local and national levels. There is a focus on the real, relevant, current local issues present for the residents of Tallaght West.

ITC's background in reach-out activities (e.g., its Wexford Campus) combined with its lifelong learning objectives and that of social and cultural development in its 2005-2009 Strategic Plan, gave it the impetus to help meet this educational need.

In 2008, 19 learners registered on the programme. One learner withdrew in this first year, and in 2009 one student decided to exit from the programme with an embedded award of a Higher Certificate in Leadership and Community Development. 17 learners will commence the final stage of the degree in September 2010, representing a retention rate of almost 90%. Academic performance has been very satisfactory, and all quality assurance arrangements regarding e.g., examinations, assessment standards, extern examiners, are being implemented under ITC's mentoring and supervision. Given its resources, An Cosan decided in 2008 to adopt an entry policy of a cohort of learners admitted every three years.

ITC's Head of Lifelong Learning and the Executive of An Cosan have identified a number of challenges going forward. These include;

1. Ongoing professional development of practitioners – adding a stage 4 honours degree
2. Enhancement of library facilities and learner supports
3. Opportunities to undertake research
4. Possibility of An Cosan running ITC BA in Early Childhood Education and Care

From a learner perspective, feedback on motivation to start on the Leadership & Community degree includes:

1. Gain skills to effect social change in the community
2. Gain academic qualification
3. Improve job prospects
4. Understand more of grassroots community issues
5. Understand my experience of being disadvantaged
6. Become more active as grassroots leader in local community
7. Move on to further study

5.3.4 Equitable Transfer and Progression

The NQAI (in its policies on transfer and progression routes - see IR Library) conceptualises the NFQ as defining the relationships between awards, and delegates to higher education institutions the implementation of the articulation of transition routes for learners between framework levels, between award-types at the same level, and between named awards. The NQAI recognises that the majority of the transfer and progression routes in higher education are based on programme-to-programme articulation protocols. It further emphasises that there should be at least one transfer or progression route into and onwards from every programme leading to an award in the Framework, that these routes are mapped and documented, and that information on transfer and progression routes is made available to learners.

Institute Transfer and Progression Routes

Transfer & Progression into Full-Time Programmes

ITC since its inception in 1970, and in common with other institutions in its sector, operated a ladder system of award progression to higher award levels, under the awarding authority of the predecessor of HETAC, the NCEA (National Council for Educational Awards). The current ladder system offers a flexible system of progressive awards at NFQ level 6 to level 10, i.e. Higher Certificate to Ordinary Degree to Honours Degree to Masters (taught or research) to Doctoral studies. The traditional ladder system has often been described as the add-on qualifications system and has served ITC of Technology sector well over more than three decades – see Table 5a below. However with increased learner demand for abinitio degree programmes, ITC responded with a structure providing abinitio degree awards, but with the flexibility of exit awards within this. This is an option for learners to exit a programme of study prior to completion with a major award, and to return in another year to complete their studies –see Table 5b. Both systems are operated at ITC to offer maximum flexibility of progression to all learners enrolled on taught programmes leading to major awards.

Table 5a Traditional Institute Ladder System of Transfer and Progression

Award	Year of Study			
	1	2	3	4
Higher Certificate				
Ordinary Degree				
Honours Degree				
Honours Degree				

Table 5b Abinitio Degree Award System with Embedded Exit Awards

Award	Year of Study			
	1	2	3	4
Ordinary Degree				
• Higher Certificate <i>Exit Award</i>				
Honours Degree*				
Honours Degree				
• Ordinary Degree <i>Exit Award</i>				
• Higher Certificate <i>Exit Award</i>				

**Note: 3 year Honours Degrees do not have exit awards.*

Table 5c shows the distribution of learners progressing through major award types in 2009-2010. Taught programmes show the following distribution; 20% are at level 6, 30% at level 7, and 50% at level 8. Learners are similarly distributed across the levels, and there are opportunities for the vast majority of learners to progress through levels 6 and 7 to level 8 (where deficits of progression exist, ITC is developing add-on award opportunities, or articulating progression pathways with other higher education institutions or professional bodies).

The meaning of progression within the policies adopted by ITC is that defined by the NQAI –‘the process by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another programme, where each programme is of a higher level than the preceding programme.’ This transfer process is understood in practice as the learner achieving the award (programme learning outcomes as quantified by ECTS credits required). Table 5d below shows ITC major award graduates from 2005 to 2009, i.e. those eligible to progress to a higher level programme. In practice the majority of our graduates at levels 6 and 7 progress to higher level programmes within ITC.

Table 5c Summary of all Learners* Progressing through NFQ Major Awards 2009-10

	Higher Certificate	Ordinary Degrees	Honours Degrees**	Postgraduate***	Total
Number of Programmes	19	29	46	19	113
Number of Learners	604	1142	1521	19	3286*
% of Learners	18%	35%	46%	1%	100%

**includes 156 whole-time equivalents (part-time learners pursuing modules of full-time programmes)*

***includes one higher diploma*

****postgraduate research programmes*

Table 5d **Graduates by Year and Award Type & Level**

Award Type (Level)	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Higher Certificate (L6)	301	363	363	253	1280
Diploma (L7)		6	3	-	9
Ordinary Degree (L7)	406	281	329	406	1422
Honours Degree (L8)	209	302	373	481	1465
Higher Diplomas (L8)	14	-	-	-	14
Masters by Research (L9)	2	-	5	2	9
PhD (L10)	1	4	2	1	8
Totals	1033	956	1075	1143	4207

Transfers into Institute Programmes

European Exchange Transfers

From the early 1990s ITC also facilitated significant numbers of trans-national European learner exchanges through the Socrates scheme and its successor Erasmus; these allowed for the mutual recognition by European higher education institutions of academic credit (ECTS = European Credit Transfer System), between programmes of study at the same award level, in participating institutions, for up to one full academic year of study. A substantial number of learners across Europe have gained ECTS credits and named awards at the same level, in this way. Table 5e below gives an overview of these transfers between ITC and mainland European partner HE institutions. Prior to programme transition in 2004 to the NFQ, exchange students completing programmes successfully in ITC were awarded the NCEA National Diploma, and after transition, the ordinary degree.

Table 5e **European Exchange Transfers**

	1992	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2010
ITC Learners to EU Institutes	4	19	36	41	16	28	14	1	9	9
EU Learners to ITC	11	47	64	101	115	107	117	140	140	133

Table 5f **External Transfers into Institute full-Time Undergraduate Programmes**

Transfer to Award	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Higher Certificate	98	102	94	65	35	394
Ordinary Degree	180	251	150	138	135	854
Honours Degree	102	143	188	256	250	939
Total	380	496	432	459	420	2187
As a % of all full-time Learners	14%	17%	14%	14%	13%	14%

Transfer and Progression through the Recognition of Prior Learning

ITC approaches the recognition of prior learning (RPL) for the purposes of granting exemption to learners from a part or parts of a programme of study, from two distinct perspectives; certified prior learning, where the learning achieved is certified by a recognised awarding body, and uncertified prior learning, where the learner can demonstrate e.g., via prior experiential learning, that they have

achieved the minimum learning outcomes justifying exemption. ITC has adopted these as policy in its Academic Standards and Assessment Regulations (for policies, definitions and processes see IR Library)

Under RPL, a total of 313 learners have been granted exemptions in one or more modules since 2007. Over 80% of these have been granted to lifelong learning students. Almost all of this prior learning has been recognised under ITC's certified prior learning procedures. A small number of learners have been granted exemptions through fulfilling the RPL portfolio requirements for the recognition of prior experiential learning.

It is also worth noting that mature learners who apply to enter first year of full-time undergraduate programmes, and who do not have any formal qualifications at level 5 on the Framework that would make them eligible to progress to third level, are interviewed by academic staff and their experiential learning is assessed and rated as to capability to succeed on their chosen programme(s). In 2009-2010 approximately 45% of mature entrants (120) entered through this route (see IR Library for description of this route).

Other Progression Routes

The Lifelong Learning Centre teaches a range of Special Purpose and Minor Awards which facilitate learners who wish to gain accreditation in specialised academic/professional areas but at award volumes and credits that are below that of a Major Award on the NFQ. These are detailed in Chapter 6 on the Operation of Delegation of Awarding Authority.

5.4 Quality Assurance and Implementation of the NFQ

The thoroughness of implementation of the NFQ can only be monitored using multiple avenues, including assessment of the Institute's planning for learning and teaching, the learning environment provided for students, teaching quality, measures of learner outcomes (including learner progress, satisfaction and employability). The Institute uses Quality Standards (QS) as a system that monitors current dynamism and improvement (defined as Leading and Learning QS) and these are even more important in reflecting progress in key aspects of learning and teaching than Quality Standards that reflect past achievements (defined as Lagging QS).

The practice in this Institute has been to assess learning and teaching via internal annual academic reviews through Academic Council and School/Centre Programmatic Reviews every 5-years. Programmatic Review Boards, most often including peer professionals from other higher education institutions and the private sector, are given terms of reference that allow them to examine the gamut of learning and teaching matters within the programme. See appendix 10 for a description of the Institute's QS for Learning and Teaching.

5.5 Recommendations

1. Implementation of the five recommendations made by the Institutional Review Working Group on the transition from an input to a learning outcome based model in teaching and learning; these covered the areas of programme design, amendment and documentation.
2. Monitor and review progress with the new Framework for modularisation following its implementation in 2010-2011, after the 2009-2010 programmatic reviews in the Schools of Science and Engineering, and the Wexford Campus.
3. Mainstream the SIF 1 project outcomes in teaching and learning.

4. Explore possible further professional body cooperation in relation to alignment of professionally recognised academic awards (following success with Engineers Ireland).
5. Prioritise and set a time-line for implementation of learner supports for lifelong learners.
6. Increase activities in the project Access South Leinster.
7. Design and implement a tracking database for all non-standard entrants so that academic progress can be monitored so that both pre and post entry support activities are improved where needed.
8. Implement the remaining targets in Objective 2 (Equity of Access) in ITC Strategic Plan 2009-2013.
9. Timeline and implement the Head of Lifelong Learning and An Cosan's recommendations on improving and developing the ITC and An Cosan joint provision and partnership.

Chapter 6

Evaluation of the Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

General Note

In 2005, following a review process by HETAC, ITC was granted Delegation of Awarding Authority (DA) by HETAC (through the NQAI) to make awards at Levels 6, 7 and 8 of the NFQ (Higher Certificate, Ordinary degree, and Honours Degree). From 2005-2006, ITC became responsible for the validation of its own awards at these levels.

In 2009 Delegation was extended to research levels 9 and 10 awards in the field of Biotechnology and Molecular Environmental Science. This Chapter deals with ITC's operation and management of DA, and also with the operation and management of minor, special purpose and supplemental awards, and with the operation and management of major 5 yearly and minor annual programme reviews, and also gives a statistical overview of progress with DA since 2005.

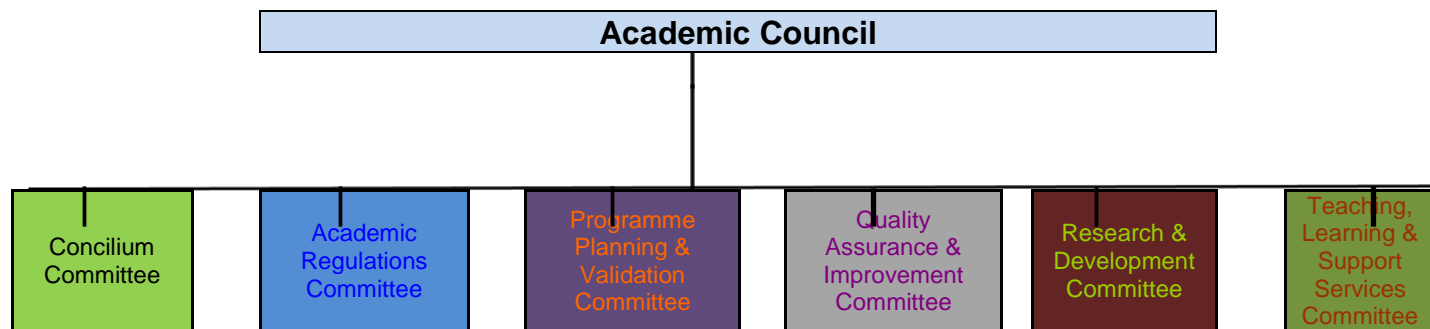
What DA has meant to ITC is also explored, and finally series of recommendations for the enhancement of ITC's operation and management of DA are made.

6.1 Operation and Management of Delegated Authority at Level 6, 7 and 8

General

The responsibility for the accreditation of new programmes rests with the Academic Council of the Institute, a statutory body created under the *RTC Act (1992)* with specific responsibilities for '*the planning, co-ordination, development and overseeing of the educational work of the college, and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the courses and activities of the college.*' (section 10 –(1) of the Act). The Council is appointed by and reports to the Governing Body of ITC. Figure 1 shows the committee structure of Council. The responsibilities of Council and the terms of reference for each committee are detailed in the IR Library. The Committee with responsibility for the planning, validation and reviewing of all taught programmes is Programming Planning & Validation Committee (PPVC).

Figure 1 Academic Council Committees



Procedures and Processes for the Design, Approval and Validation of Major Awards at Levels 6, 7 and 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

In October 2005, ITC adopted a policy 'Institute Policy & Guidelines for the Accreditation of Taught Programmes Levels 6 to 8 of the National Framework of Qualifications' which was adapted from the HETAC 'Supplementary Guidelines for the Accreditation of Taught Programmes and Research Degree Programmes (of August 2005). This policy states the general principles ITC observes and promotes with regard to its operation of delegation of awarding authority. These are briefly summarised : consultation & involvement of stakeholders; transparency and openness in the operations of accreditation; professionalism, integrity, impartiality and reasonableness in the conduct of accreditation; and quality, a commitment to the regular monitoring and evaluation of accreditation policies, guidelines and processes. This accreditation policy has informed and guided the development of the precise procedures, templates, and the associated processes involved in the validation of new taught programmes. An overview of these is presented below in schematic form in Figure 2 whereby an outline proposal for a new programme is considered, if agreed then developed, and then evaluated by an external expert panel, and if approved submitted through final validation and accreditation procedures and processes. The policies, templates and procedures associated with and key at critical stages of the new programme flowchart are also indicated, and these are attached to this Review as appendices. They are also part of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Manual (*see IR Library*).

Figure 2 New Taught Programme Accreditation Flowchart for Major Awards (Full-time & Part-time Mode), Level 6-8 of the NFQ

Flow of Information	Institute Policy/Procedure Reference (See Appendix attached)
1. Review of Programme Demand by Programme Development Team	<i>Institute Policy & Guidelines for the Accreditation of Taught Programmes Levels 6 to 8 of the National Framework of Qualifications</i>
2. Completion of New Programme Proposal Form (PPI) by Development Team (Programme Leader, Head of Department, Head of School/Centre)	<i>New Programme Proposal Form (PP1)</i>
3. Outline Approval of PP1 by Institute Senior Management 2	<i>New Programme Proposal Form (PP1)</i>
4. Outline Approval of PP1 by Programme Planning & Validation Committee of Academic Council	<i>New Programme Proposal Form (PP1)</i>
5. Outline Approval by Academic Council for development of programme	<i>New Programme Proposal Form (PP1)</i>
6. Programme Development Team prepare submission document (PP2) 3	<i>Submission for the Validation of a New Taught Programme (PP2)</i>
7. Evaluation of submission by the Registrar using checklist criteria	<i>Checklist for the accreditation of new taught programmes Level 6 to Level 8</i>
8. Appointment of Programme Evaluation Panel	<i>Institute Policy & Guidelines for the Accreditation of Taught Programmes Levels 6 to 8 of the National Framework of Qualifications</i>
9. Programme Submission Document (PP2) to Programme Evaluation Panel	<i>Extract from Institute Policy & Guidelines for the Accreditation of New Taught Programmes (Levels 6 to 8) of the National Framework of Qualifications and New Taught Programme Evaluation Panel Guidelines</i>
10. Programme Evaluation Panel Assessment	<i>Evaluation Panel Report</i>
11. Programme Development Team consider Programme Evaluation Panel Report	<i>Department Response</i>
12. Final Resource Approval by Institute Senior Management with Proposed Starting Date	<i>Senior Management</i>

13. Agreed Report from Programme Evaluation Panel & Departmental Response to Programme Planning & Validation Committee for approval	<i>Evaluation Panel Report; Department Response; Proposed Programme Schedule</i>
14. Recommendation from Programme Planning & Validation Committee to Academic Council for approval	<i>Programme Planning & Validation Committee report to Academic Council</i>
15. Recommendation from Academic Council to Governing Body for accreditation	<i>Academic Council Report to Governing Body</i>
16. Approval by Governing Body to accredit programme under Delegation of Authority	<i>Governing Body</i>
17. Issue of Certificate of Programme Accreditation by Academic Council	<i>Statement of Council and Certificate of Accreditation</i>
18. Notification to HETAC of New Programme	<i>Updated list of programmes submitted to HETAC twice yearly</i>
19. Approval by HEA	<i>Submission of Operational Report to HEA</i>
20. Appointment of External Examiners by Academic Council & Governing Body	<i>Institute Examiner Nomination Form</i>

Important Notes:

1

This Programme Approval Flowchart assumes a new programme proposal has a successful passage through the various stages outlined. At any point in the cycle the programme may be referred back to an earlier stage for particular reasons, e.g. more information, clarification, etc.

2

Outline approval is granted by Senior Management Subject to resource implications being outlined and that the programme is scheduled in alignment with the Institute's Strategic Plan

3

As part of this process providers are required to consult with Industry Advisory Board/Peer Review Group

There are certain milestones to be aware of:

HETAC require three months formal notice prior to the commencement of new programmes.

The Institute is required to seek HEA approval prior to the commencement of programme.

In the case of CAO entry, planning should allow for publication in the CAO Handbook in May for entry in the following year, e.g. for a programme to begin in September 2010, entry in the CAO handbook would be May 2009.

CAO: 31st October CAO Mailshot to 2nd Level Students

CAO: 31st March CAO Mailshot to 2nd Level Students.

For Non-CAO entry programmes (Add-on Degrees), the Institute will require a deadline of June for the inclusion in its Prospectus for the coming academic session.

In order to meet the above deadlines it is proposed to complete all Programme Evaluation Panel assessments by MARCH of each academic year.

Procedures and Processes for the Design, Approval and Validation of Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards on the NFQ (Non-Major awards at levels 6, 7 and 8 on NFQ)

In 2006 ITC under its Delegation of Awarding powers, adopted a policy on Minor, Supplemental or Special Purpose Awards. This provided a framework for the validation of these awards. The flexibility provided by this new awards structure allowed the Institute to offer a wider range of programmes on the NFQ levels 6, 7 and 8 at ECTS credit volumes less than that required for a major award on the Framework. An overview of the procedures and processes for the design, approval and validation of these awards is shown below in schematic form in Figure 3 flowchart. The policies, templates and procedures associated with and key at critical stages are also indicated, and these are attached to this Review as appendices. They are also part of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Manual (see *IR Library*).

Figure 3 Non-Major Programme Accreditation Flowchart Under DA (Levels 6-8 of NFQ)

Flow of Information	Institute Policy/Procedure Reference (See Appendix attached)
1. Validation Panel Consider Proposed Award	<i>Form SPP1: Course Proposal Form</i>
2. Recommendation of Validation Panel	<i>Validation Panel Report (Summary Sheet)</i>
3. Recommendation from Programme Planning & Validation Committee of Academic Council for approval	<i>Programme Planning & Validation Committee Report to Academic Council</i>
4. Recommendation from Academic Council to Governing Body for approval	<i>Academic Council Report to Governing Body</i>
5. Approval by Governing Body	<i>Governing Body Statement of Council and Certificate of Accreditation</i>
6. Issue of Statement of Council and Certificate of Accreditation	<i>HETAC Order of Council submitted to HETAC twice yearly</i>
7. Notification to HETAC of New Programme	<i>Institute Examiner Nomination Form</i>
8. Appointment of Examiners by Academic Council and Governing Body	

6.2 Operation and Management of Delegated Authority at Research Levels 9 and 10 on the NFQ – in the field of Biotechnology and Molecular Environmental Science

An overview of the procedures and processes for the design, approval and validation of these research awards is shown below in schematic form in Figure 4 flowchart. The policies, templates and procedures associated with and key at critical stages are also indicated, and these are attached to this Review as appendices. They are also part of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Manual (see *IR Library*).

Figure 4 Research Programme Accreditation Flowchart under DA (Levels 9 &10 of NFQ)

Flow of Information	Institute Policy/Procedure Reference (See Appendix attached)
1. Receipt of Application form	Policy and Procedures for Postgraduate Research Students (Admission, Registration, Supervision and Examination)
2. Evaluation by External Expert on Research Proposal proposed	<i>Application form for Admission to the Postgraduate Register</i>
3. Approval by Research & Development Committee of Academic Council	<i>External Expert Evaluation Form; Level 9 Award Standards</i>
4. Approval by Academic Council	<i>Research & Development Committee Approval Form</i>
5. HETAC Notified*	<i>Research & Development Committee Approval Form In the case of applicants under DA HETAC notified of application approved by email and applicant added to the postgraduate register</i>
6. Bi-Annual Progress Reports	<i>Progress Report Form</i>
7. Application to Transfer to PhD Register	<i>Application for Transfer to the Doctoral Register</i>
8. Evaluation by External Assessor on Research Proposal proposed	<i>External Expert Evaluation Form; Level 10 Awards Standards</i>
9. Notice of Intention to Present	<i>Notice of Intention to Present Form</i>
10. Appointment of Examiners	<i>Guidelines and Nomination Form for the appointment of Examiners</i>
11. Nomination of Independent Chairperson	<i>HETAC Nomination of Independent Chairperson Form</i>
12. Examination of Thesis	
13. Examination Board Meeting	<i>Examination Broadsheet</i>

The above flow of information applies to individual research degree programmes for registration by HETAC on a case-by-case basis in specified discipline areas and at specified levels outside of the Delegation of Authority area of Biotechnology & Molecular Environmental Science also.

In the case of these applications the decision of Academic Council and the application are forwarded to HETAC for their approval.

6.3 The Meaning of Delegation of Awarding Authority to the Institute

Achieving DA for NFQ levels 6, 7 and 8 was a milestone in the development of ITC. It coincided with the implementation of the NFQ, and brought about considerable change in how the Institute conducted its academic affairs. This change has seen an authoritative and responsible process of academic policy development, procedures and processes, with significant changes in the academic culture of an Institution of higher education that was established four decades ago in 1970. The introduction of the NFQ brought major change in the awards environment ITC operated, providing a new awards structure for assimilation within the College. The NFQ also changed the dominant teaching and learning paradigm from an input based academic culture to that of a learning outcome based one, and placed the learner at the centre of higher education. In 2005 ITC emerged from decades of preparation for academic autonomy, with legislation that in the early 1990s established it with a statutory governing body and academic council (Regional Technical Colleges Acts 1992 & 1994) changed its name from a Regional College to that of Institute of Technology (Institute of Technology Act 2006) and then gave it the potential for academic autonomy (Qualifications-Education & Training Act 1999).

In response ITC adapted to the wider NFQ environment and implemented DA with the maturity and ethos of an institution that had for 35 years delivered third level programmes of benchmarked high quality, with over 20,000 graduates. Building on this confidence, In 2008 ITC applied to HETAC to extend DA to research level 9 and 10 awards in the field of Biotechnology and Molecular Environmental Science, and this was granted in 2009. These achievements also reflected key objectives in ITC's Strategic Plan for 2005-2009.

The tables below give a statistical overview of Institute programme activity (major awards) pre and post DA at levels 6, 7 and 8 on the NFQ.

Table 1 Comparison of Number of Major Awards Validated Pre and Post DA

Award	Higher Certificate Level 6 NFQ	Ordinary Degree Level 7 NFQ	Honours Degree	Total
Pre-DA 2004-2005	19	20	20	59
Post-DA 2005-2010	7	18	29	54
Total*	26	38	49	113

**total available validated awards*

Table 2 Comparison of Learners registered on Undergraduate Major Awards 2004-05 and 2009-10

Award	Higher Certificate Level 6 NFQ	Ordinary Degree Level 7 NFQ	Honours Degree	Total
2005	1017	809	626	2452
2009	604	1142	1521	3267
Difference	- 413	+333	+895	+815
% Diff	- 59%	+41%	+143%	+33%

The major differences in pre and post DA award activity are the trend away from validation at level 6 towards increased programme validation at levels 7 and 8; and the similar trend for increased numbers of learners at levels 7 and 8, with level 6 registrations decreasing in 2009. This reflects also the decrease in learner demand for level 6 programmes, and the increase in demand for level 7 and 8 programmes. Programme Validation since DA is listed below by NFQ level, Award Type, and Specialisation. Total ECTS credits are also specified, and intake approval dates. This gives an over view of the range of areas covered in validation activity, and gives an indication of the depth and breadth of academic expertise in the Institute. Please note that not all programmes are necessarily running in 2009-2010.

NFQ Level	Award Type	Specialisation	ECTS Credits	Intakes Approved
6	Higher Certificate	Leadership and Community Development	120	01-Sep-08
6	Higher Certificate	Business with Law	120	01-Sep-09
6	Higher Certificate	Military Communication Systems	120	01-Sep-07
6	Higher Certificate	Aircraft Systems (Avionics & Airframe)	120	01-Sep-08
6	Higher Certificate	Network Administration & Security	120	01-Sep-10
6	Higher Certificate	Legal Studies	120	01-Sep-10
6	Higher Certificate	Visual Communications & Design	120	01-Sep-10
7	Ordinary Degree	Applied Social Studies (Social Care)	180	01-Sep-06
7	Ordinary Degree	Sport and Exercise (Rugby)	180	01-Sep-07
7	Ordinary Degree	Leadership and Community Studies	180	01-Sep-08
7	Ordinary Degree	Sport and Exercise (GAA)	180	01-Sep-09
7	Ordinary Degree	Sport and Exercise (Soccer)	180	01-Sep-09
7	Ordinary Degree	Business with Law	180	01-Sep-09
7	Ordinary Degree	Management	180	01-Sep-07
7	Ordinary Degree	International Business*	60	01-Sep-07
7	Ordinary Degree	Marketing*	60	01-Sep-09
7	Ordinary Degree	Mechanical Engineering	180	01-Sep-07
7	Ordinary Degree	Aircraft Systems (Avionics & Airframe)	180	01-Sep-06
7	Ordinary Degree	Pilot Studies	180	01-Sep-09
7	Ordinary Degree	Computing in Systems Management*	60	01-Sep-08
7	Ordinary Degree	Software Development	180	01-Sep-08
7	Ordinary Degree	TV and Media Production	180	01-Sep-08
7	Ordinary Degree	Management (Craft)*	60	01-Sep-09
7	Ordinary Degree	Computing in Cyber Security	180	01-Sep-10
7	Ordinary Degree	Visual Communications & Design	180	01-Sep-10
8	Honours Degree	Accounting	180	01-Sep-06
8	Honours Degree	Industrial Design*	60	01-Sep-06
8	Honours Degree	Marketing Practice	180	01-Sep-06
8	Honours Degree	Law	180	01-Sep-08
8	Honours Degree	Product Design Innovation	240	01-Sep-06
8	Honours Degree	Art	240	01-Sep-07
8	Honours Degree	Early Childhood Education and Care	180	01-Sep-09

8	Honours Degree	Applied Social Studies (Social Care)	240	01-Sep-09
8	Honours Degree	Management	240	01-Sep-06
8	Honours Degree	International Business	240	01-Sep-06
8	Honours Degree	Marketing	240	01-Sep-06
8	Honours Degree	Supply Chain Management	240	01-Sep-06
8	Honours Degree	Human Resource Management	240	01-Sep-08
8	Honours Degree	Business with Law	240	01-Sep-09
8	Honours Degree	Civil Engineering	120	01-Sep-06
8	Honours Degree	Electronic Systems*	60	01-Sep-09
8	Honours Degree	Biosciences with Bioforensics	240	01-Sep-06
8	Honours Degree	Biosciences with Biopharmaceuticals	240	01-Sep-06
8	Honours Degree	Sustainable Architectural Technology*	60	01-Sep-07
8	Honours Degree	Software Development*	60	01-Sep-08
8	Honours Degree	Architectural Technology*	60	01-Sep-08
8	Honours Degree	Computing in Information Technology Management	240	01-Sep-09
8	Honours Degree	Construction with Facilities and Energy Management	240	01-Sep-08
8	Honours Degree	Construction in Buildings and Services Management	240	01-Sep-08
8	Honours Degree	Sports and Exercise Rehabilitation	120	01-Sep-06
8	Higher Diploma	Management	120	01-Sep-08
8	Honours Degree	Visual Communications & Design	240	01-Sep-10
8	Honours Degree	Economic & Social Studies	180	01-Sep-10
8	Honours Degree	Social & Community Studies	180	01-Sep-10
8	Higher Diploma	Business in Management	60	18 Feb 09
9	Masters Degree	MBS Business Studies**	90	29 Mar 10
9	Masters Degree	MBA Business Administration**	90	23 Jul 10
10	Doctoral	Research degree programmes in the specific fields of Biotechnology and Molecular Environmental Science	90	May 07

* indicates an add-on award in the 'ladder system'

** indicates validated by HETAC

Table 3 Distribution of Lifelong Learning Non-Major Award Provision over NFQ Levels

Award Type	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9 (Taught)	Total
Special Purpose	15	4	13	7	39
Minor		2			2
Total	15	6	13	7	41

A total of 41 Special Purpose and Minor awards have being validated through DA on NFQ levels 6 to 9. Prior to HETAC issuing its policy on Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards, the Institute had agreed a policy using as a template an interim policy framework agreed through the Council of Registrars of Institutes of Technology. This was approved as policy by ITC's Academic Council and implemented. With the issuing of the HETAC policy, ITC has adopted this and is currently implementing it. When compared, the interim policy interpretation of what defines a Special Purpose award differs to HETAC, and most of these awards would most likely be classified as Minor awards under HETAC policy. ITC has adjusted its validation procedures to reflect this.

Programmatic and Strategic Reviews and Validation

The methodology and process of Programmatic and Strategic Review are the tools used to initiate and develop a more long-term strategic view of a School/Centre/Department's development and future role in ITC. The Programmatic Review normally incorporates a strategic review and is also a root and branch evaluation of each individual programme currently delivered in the relevant area. They are initiated every 5 years and evaluate the previous five and plan the next five years activities in the area. They are all self-studies with subject to external peer review. Within the context of DA, programmatic reviews are the means by which the Institution re-validates the programmes it has authority to make awards from. Over the last decade, ITC carried out a number of these reviews, the most recent occurring in 2009. However with the onset of significant strategic planning by the Institute in the form of Institute plans with goals, objectives, targets and action timelines (see ITC Strategic Plans 2005-2009 and 2009-2013), the role of strategic planning within a programmatic review is defaulting to the relevant area reporting on its implementation of the Institute's current strategic plan. While this does not necessarily preclude an area having its own strategic goals etc. there is an expectation that planning at a local school/centre/department will be predominantly reflective of the overall strategic plan of the Institute. Table 3 shows the type and the area of reviews carried out since the year 2000.

Table 3 Reviews in the Institution 2000 to 2009

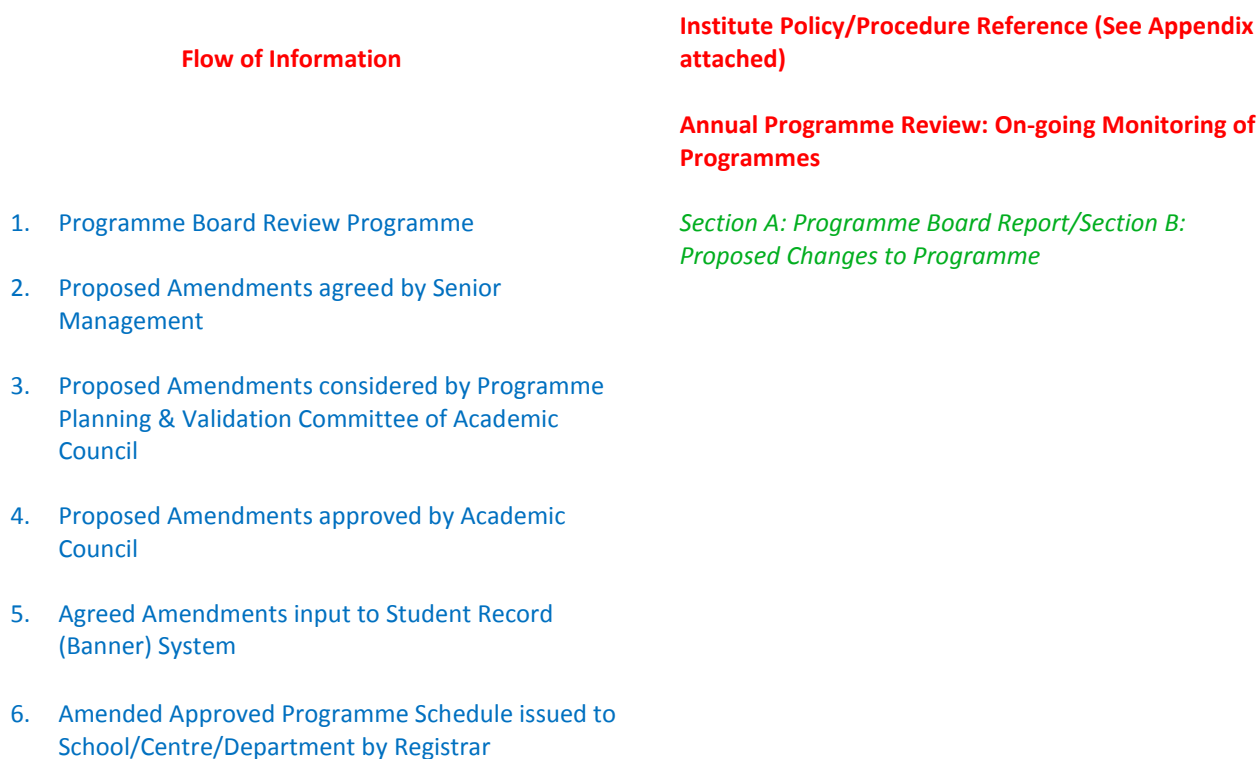
Type of Review	Area	Year Completed	Review Authority
Institutional	All	1997	NCEA
Programmatic	School of Business & Humanities	2000	NCEA
Strategic	Wexford Campus	2002	ITC
Strategic	Wexford Campus	2004	ITC
Strategic	School of Business & Humanities	2004	ITC
Programmatic	School of Engineering	2004	HETAC
Programmatic	School of Science	2004	HETAC
Institutional	Delegation Levels 6, 7 & 8	2005	HETAC/NQAI
Programmatic	School of Engineering	2009	ITC
Programmatic	School of Science	2009	ITC

Programmatic	Wexford Campus	2009	ITC
Institutional	Delegation Levels 9 & 10	2009	HETAC/NQAI
Strategic	Lifelong Learning Centre	2010	ITC
Strategic	School of Business & Humanities	2010	ITC
Institutional	Designation for Level 9 research in Design	2010	HETAC

6.4 Procedure for Minor Changes to Taught Programmes outside of Programmatic Reviews

Outside of programmatic review 5 year cycles, minor changes to programmes are submitted by programme boards using the Annual Programme Review policy and procedure. Figure 5 gives a schematic overview of this process.

Figure 5 Minor Changes to Programmes Flowchart, Levels 6 to 8 of the NFQ



6.5 Recommendations for the Enhancement of IT Carlow's Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

1. In the School of Engineering and the School of Science Programmatic Reviews in 2009 the Peer Review Group expert Panels for both Reviews, made the recommendation that the strategic review be a separate review process to the review of and re-validation of programmes. This they argued would give an opportunity for a more thorough (depth as opposed to breadth) treatment of both important areas.

2. Programme Directors across the Institute, in a feedback/review session of the Annual Review of Programmes procedure, recommended a number of changes;
 - (i) That the annual review process of individual programmes be completed in May as opposed to Oct-Jan, as this would be both timely and allow for awareness of current improvements in programmes to be implemented in time for the next academic year.
 - (ii) Academic Council procedures need to be amended regarding Annual Programme Reviews to take account of the impact of amendments on programme learning outcomes.
 - (iii) Clarification/guidance is required on assessment protocols; the linking of assessment to module learning outcomes, and incorporating the three types of assessment – tutor, peer, and self.
 - (iv) Future programmatic reviews should separate out the strategic from the review of programmes i.e. have these as separate review exercises.
3. An Institute template for programme and module design should be developed to (a) standardise the number of learning outcomes for a 10 ECTS module and (b) include a method of linking assessment criteria to learning outcomes more explicitly.
4. The programme validation documentation needs to be amended to facilitate the inclusion of explicit linkages between module and programme learning outcomes
5. The expertise of the Teaching and Learning Centre in the area of programme design should be utilised in a more formal way, perhaps as a 'sounding post' or first check at programme learning outcome level.
6. The information deficit relating to programme learning outcomes expressed by students needs to be addressed at an Institute level.

Note: Recommendations 3 to 6 were made by the Working Group on the Transition from an input to learning outcome based teaching and learning model on the NFQ.

Chapter 7

Main Recommendations arising from Reviews Completed in the Institute in 2009-2010

In addition to the Institutional Review Self Evaluation Report, the current session (2009-2010) has also seen the Institute complete a significant number of Peer Reviewed Self Studies and Evaluations, along with a specially commissioned External Expert Review of Academic Administration. This chapter summarises the main recommendations for improvement extracted from the final reports of these studies. It excludes all commendations (of which there are many) on the achievements and progress made in each area under review, and focuses only on the improvements suggested, but includes where appropriate, programme revalidation recommendations to the Institute. For a full exposition of all the findings and recommendations (excluding the Institutional review SER), please see Appendix 12.

7.1 Institutional Review (SER) Main Recommendations

1. The Institute should seek and obtain approval to be designated as a research programme provider in key emerging discipline areas including design and fine art.
2. Application should be made for delegated awarding authority at Level 9 for taught programmes across Institute Schools and Centres.
3. Delegated awarding authority should be sought in further developed research areas in the Institute including GameCore and Health Science.
4. Further expand the current level of professional recognition and accreditation of Institute programmes
5. Continue to seek and maximise Teaching Council recognition for all relevant degrees.
6. Implement 'Module Builder' to provide specific programme content information to key stakeholders.
7. Strengthen links with employers and industry in the Region.
8. Continue to produce 'employment ready' skilled graduates to cover the National and Regional expertise and skills needs.
9. Continue the monitoring of risk to implementing the strategic plan 2009-2013 in the current changing educational and economic environment.
10. Review Goal 8 – '*National & International Positioning & Alliances*' of the Strategic Plan, on publication of the Higher Education Review (Hunt Report).
11. Continue to lobby HEA for replacement of key posts.
12. Increase investment in staff training & development in key areas of expertise to mitigate against loss of experience if key staff who retire are not replaced.
13. Increase focus on non-exchequer sources of funding.
14. Maintain profile of Strategic Plan through regular briefings on progress with management & staff, so as to ensure competitiveness.
15. Ensure Institute meets expected standards of corporate governance and financial probity by promoting awareness of code of business conduct amongst all staff and governing body members. Have corporate governance compliance reviewed by internal audit.
16. Continue to review, refine and implement the Institute's QA & I Framework Manual including QA structures.

17. Expand pilots of integrated user-friendly document management and module management systems to be used by all function and department areas.
18. Review proposals of Deloitte and Touche report on Academic Administration, and implement to reduce cycle times, reduce complexity and improve quality
19. Expand the process mapping and improvement activity in Student Services to other area starting with the Disability area.
20. IT Carlow's policy, procedures and templates for collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards are to be drafted for approval by the Academic Council, Governing Body and by HETAC.
21. Monitor and review progress with the new Framework for modularisation following its implementation in 2010-2011, after the 2009-2010 programmatic reviews in the Schools of Science and Engineering, and the Wexford Campus.
22. Mainstream the SIF 1 project outcomes in teaching and learning.
23. Prioritise and set a time-line for implementation of learner supports for lifelong learners.
24. Design and implement a tracking database for all non-standard entrants so that academic progress can be monitored so that both pre and post entry support activities are improved where needed.
25. In the School of Engineering and the School of Science Programmatic Reviews in 2009 the Peer Review Group expert Panels for both Reviews, made the recommendation that the strategic review be a separate review process to the review of and re-validation of programmes. This they argued would give an opportunity for a more thorough (depth as opposed to breadth) treatment of both important areas.
26. Clarification/guidance is required on assessment protocols; the linking of assessment to module learning outcomes, and incorporating the three types of assessment – tutor, peer, and self.
27. The programme validation documentation needs to be amended to facilitate the inclusion of explicit linkages between module and programme learning outcomes.
28. The information deficit relating to programme learning outcomes expressed by students needs to be addressed at an Institute level.

7.2 School of Business and Humanities Strategic Review

Peer Review Main Recommendations

1. The School to produce a '*Strategic Future Action Plan*' document. This Plan should set out on a prioritised implementation timeline for the recommendations for improvement contained within the School's Self Study Review. Also, this planning document must ensure that the recommendations are linked to the goals and timelines of the Institute's Strategic Plan 2009-2013.
2. The School incorporate its alumni into future planning.
3. The School further develop Design CORE activity and increase its research postgraduate activity.

7.3 Lifelong Learning Centre Strategic Review

Peer Review Main Recommendations

1. The Strategic Review Group agreed that there are a number of recommendations contained within the Centre for Lifelong Learning Self Study Report (*e.g.*, derivatives from the SWOT analysis, and the specific initiatives for development) which should be identified and prioritised and that their implementation timelines should be clear and transparent. The Centre to produce a '*Strategic Future Action Plan*' document, linked to the Institute's Strategic Plan 2009-2013. This document should contain the Institute's priorities and targets for completion.
2. The Centre for Lifelong Learning to continue to develop partnerships with industry and other educational partnerships as this complements the Institute's mission on serving the wider community.

7.4 Wexford Campus Programmatic Review

Peer Review Main Recommendations

1. The Panel formed the view that there might be potential for research development in the areas of access, teaching mature students, community links and other notable features of the Wexford Campus. The staff were acutely aware of the link between the quality of teaching and research. There is also an obvious link between the postgraduate qualifications of the staff and the potential for research development at Wexford.
2. Wexford has been notably successful in addressing the target groups set by the National Access Office, helping IT Carlow to exceed targets for mature students and agreed targets for inclusion of the Traveller community. The lack of support for an Access Officer post from the National Access Office for IT Carlow Wexford Campus was a concern for the Panel. IT Carlow to apply to the National Access Office for an additional post of Access Officer dedicated to the Wexford Campus and its strategic objectives.
3. The potential for further development of the International student market for Wexford, in Wales and further afield, was discussed and is encouraged.
4. It was noted by the Panel that Wexford Campus is reaching a point of development of critical mass where the potential for its own indigenous postgraduate programmes should be explored.
5. The students commented positively on the support from staff and the library services support. Their main concern was around the building infrastructure, particularly that of the Art students. There was a specific concern raised around the computing and software availability at the Westgate facility. They commented on the absence of broadband and *wifi* facilities. Students also expressed strong support for postgraduate progression options.
6. The technical infrastructure available at the Westgate facility to be reviewed and considered for upgrading.
7. Working within the constraints of a lease on a listed building, both management and staff acknowledged that the physical facility was less than ideal and that further investment is needed in buildings to enable the Campus to develop to its full potential.
8. The Panel recommend, to the Academic Council of the Institute of Technology Carlow, the revalidation of programmes delivered at the Wexford Campus until academic session 2014-15 or until the next Programmatic Review of the Wexford Campus, whichever is the earliest.

7.5 School of Engineering Programmatic Review

Peer Review Main Recommendations

1. The Panel recommends that the Institute continue to monitor the implementation of Modularisation, through Academic Council, and to ensure that it meets the needs of programmes. The packaging of modules and assessment of modules needs further development within the new system.
2. The Panel recommends that the use of the Virtual Learning Environment and On-line Delivery be further developed in future years to exploit the full potential of Blackboard Version 8 technology.
3. Building on Engineer's Ireland Accreditation, the School should consider, as appropriate, a more structured approach. The importance of a more structured approach to staff development to achieve the objectives set down by the Institute was recommended by the Panel.
4. The School of Engineering should consider opportunities for the development of a Level 9 taught programme, based on its own internal expertise and on the requirements of external stakeholders.
5. The Panel recommend the revalidation of existing Awards up to and including the academic session 2014-2015, or until the next Programmatic Review, whichever is the earliest.
6. The importance of the Industrial Liaison Advisory Board in informing programme teams should be considered. The Panel strongly recommend the introduction of such Boards.
7. The Panel commends the PBL approach to teaching and group projects.
8. The Panel recommends that the Department continue to engage with the change to the Learning Outcomes approach as an alternative to special regulations and failed elements as in the past.
9. The Panel commends the cross-disciplinary projects that are currently carried out by students across different programmes, which has potential for further development.
10. The holistic building approach to conservation, energy and sustainability in construction is a positive feature of the programme.
11. The Industrial Liaison Advisory Board for the Dept of Electronic, Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering should be further developed and formalised.
12. The importance of work experience was restated by the students and acknowledged by the Panel.
13. To facilitate student access to software packages, where feasible, software packages should be provided in access areas and available to all students.
14. Student involvement in Programme Boards was confirmed. However, the notification to students in advance of the meetings seemed somewhat inconsistent and needs to be addressed.
15. Students commented positively on the assessment strategies on their programmes. They would welcome more continuous assessment and more reward for practical work if possible.
16. Students would like greater use of the Virtual Learning Environment.
17. Professional Accreditation of programmes was important to students and their perception for future employability.
18. The Panel recommend, to the Academic Council of the Institute of Technology Carlow, the revalidation of programmes delivered by the School of Engineering until academic session 2014-15 or until the next Programmatic Review whichever is the earliest.

7.6 School of Science Programmatic Review

Peer Review Main Recommendations

1. Given the National Framework of Qualifications, with the emphasis on learning outcomes, both programme learning outcomes and module learning outcomes should be aligned to ensure that assessment in teaching and learning follows a delivery schedule that facilitates student independent learning. This is particularly important at the later stages of programmes. The balance of Project and Lab hours should be considered within this context.
2. The Panel recommend the ongoing incorporation of innovative and best practice approaches to teaching and learning to optimise learning outcomes.
3. Within the Dept of Science & Health, the Panel commend the move to ECTS standards with a 5 hour maximum contact time for teaching modules. This should be consistent across all programmes in the Department.
4. Within the Dept of Computing & Networking: The Project in Year 2 to be replaced by a module that helps to deliver the learning outcomes to develop soft skills.
5. Within the Dept of Computing & Networking: Review licensing of 'industry standard packages' used in the Animation module within the Games programme.
6. In light of the number of applications for some programmes, the Panel recommends that synergies be found with other programmes.
7. The Panel recommend that ongoing management of programmes should be on a stream (discipline) basis, rather than by individual programme boards.
8. The Panel recommends, given the School priorities and funding arrangements going forward, that the School's contribution to lifelong learning activities and the development of Masters programmes should be carefully considered. The two Departments might adopt different strategies in this regard.
9. The Panel recommends that the Dept of Science & Health should review their policy with regard to the 'failed element'. They should identify the modules where the failed element is absolutely required.
10. The Panel recognises the achievements of staff in the promotion of the School and its programmes, the supports offered to students including induction, retention and the tutorial fund, and they recommend that this work is both continued and supported.
11. The Panel strongly recommend the establishment of Industry Boards which could be used as a major resource in providing feedback on currency and relevance of the programmes and activities.
12. Consideration should be paid to providing a Work Placement Office given the expansion in work placement throughout the Institute. This could also play a role in Project development.
13. The Panel recommends that the Research Centres should benchmark themselves.
14. A small number of strategic research collaborations should be developed to enhance critical mass.
15. A clear publication strategy for each postgraduate student should be developed.
16. Blackboard facilities to be used as more than a depository for notes.
17. It is recommended that the feedback systems be publicised more widely amongst the learner population. A tracking system should be developed at Departmental level.
18. The Panel recommend, to the Academic Council of the Institute of Technology Carlow, the revalidation of programmes delivered by the School of Science until academic session 2014-15 or until the next Programmatic Review whichever is the earliest.

7.7 Deloitte and Touche Expert Review of academic Administration

Expert Review Main Recommendations

1. Communications need to be improved across departments where there is a clear dependency for the same information leading to duplication of work, confusion, errors and frustration.
2. Duplication of work and parallel activities across departments and campuses.
3. Considerable re-checking and validation of manual processes and data.
4. A combination of legacy and evolving practices has formed a complex environment that creates departmental silos rather than an integrated approach to the provision of services to student.
5. The constraints of the Banner system are widely recognised. General consensus across stakeholder groups is that Banner's capability is not being fully utilised and there is significant opportunity to migrate many processes currently being performed in excel spreadsheets onto Banner, including invoicing (BIPS) and fee collection (GIROs). The integrity of Banner is undermined by its poor data quality and will require a significant clean up in order to build trust and credibility amongst users.
6. Creation of a Banner User Group.

7.8 Overall Recommendation on Review Processes and Outcomes

The Institutional Review Team (IRT) consider that given the complexity and range of activities and the plethora of reviews, this can lead to staff and learners, because of their own unique perspectives (often determined by academic discipline or support activity), having a 'fragmented' view of the Institution.

The IRT make the following recommendation:

1. That the Senior management Team of the Institute consider making a synopsis of the Institutional Review SER available to all staff and learners as part of the ongoing trajectory of cultural transparency and accountability.

The IRT is aware that the complete Institutional Review SER and the Expert Panel Report will be available to all stakeholders and the general public, in due course, on HETAC's website. However it considers that implementing the above recommendation will enhance the debate about higher education at ITC within its own cultural ethos, particularly given the pending publication of the Government's review of Higher Education in the State (Hunt Report).

