# Chapter 1 Governance and Academic Management.

This document has been developed to present the quality assurance procedures at the Institute of Technology Sligo that are in operation. Accompanying documents including inter alia the Institute's Procedures Manual, Marks and Standards, Staff Handbook and the Institute's Interview Guidelines shall be considered as an integral part of the Institute's quality assurance procedures. The Institute is committed to compliance with statutory requirement quality assurance regulations and to timely revision of this document in keeping with changing National and International requirements and in harmony with improved work practices within the Institute.

> *"There is nothing wrong in change if it is in the right direction. To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often"*.
>
> Winston Churchill

**Revision History**

| Rev. No. | Issue Date | Description of Change |
|---|---|---|
| 000 | Feb 2003 | Original |
| 001 | Mar 2003 | Chart error Page 50 and type editing |
| 002 | Aug 2003 | Editing |
| 003 | May 2004 | AC Committee Terms of Reference (Appendix 1.4) |
| | | Audit of Conditions of Validation (2.7) |
| | | Minor modifications to programmes (2.8.2) |
| | | Continuous Assessment (3.5) |
| | | Rewording recommended by self-study groups |
| | | Chapter layout including underlined links. |
| 004 | October 2008 | DRAFT Update of entire document |
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| 006 | June 2010 | Editing |
| 007 | September 2011 | Editing |
| 008 | May 2012 | Update of categories to "Composition of Selection Boards". |
| 009 | October 2012 | Chapter 3 updated appendices currently in use. |
| 010 | February 2013 | Chapter 2 and 4 Complete Revision |
| 011 | 4 December 2013 | Appendix 2.4 EAP 4. 7.2 request Module descriptor; Insert |
| Q 9 | | Will the programme learning outcomes change as a result of the proposed module or programme modifications. If yes, please outline the changes, as this may require a panel visit. (P&C) |
| 012 | March 2015 | Amendment to Section 4.6.2 to include Senior Lecturers as ex officio members of School Policy Committee |
| 013 | April 2016 | Format revamp. Incorporation of external QA report recommendations. Update on legislation and statutory bodies. |
| 014 | Jan 17 | Updating for online version with links |

# Introduction

The achievement of academic excellence is a complex process involving all staff members and students of the Institute.  The active co-operation of members acting in concert is necessary to ensure excellence and the support and encouragement of the Institute's stakeholders helps to achieve the goal of quality.  The physical environment, buildings, grounds, facilities, library, information technology, equipment and student support services also contribute significantly towards achieving academic excellence.  The Institute recognises that ownership of quality mechanisms and working practices must be shared among those directly involved.  An indispensable characteristic of quality is the desire to continually review work practices and procedures and so ensure that the aims and objectives of academic programmes are optimised with respect to the mission and strategy of the Institute.  In the final analysis however, quality assurance is dependent on students and individual staff members working in unison to the highest possible standard under the guidance of the Academic Council and with the support and encouragement of the external environment such as the QQI, DOES, HEA, business and professional bodies.

# Quality documentation in the Institute

This document describes the academic procedures and work practices used in the Institute.  These procedures are not written in stone; rather they are dynamic and are subject to improvement and modification in the light of experience and practice.  Through agreed mechanisms committees of the Academic Council, update policy and procedure.   The institute has a [Document Manual.](#)

# Currency of the QA Manual

The published electronic manual located on the Institute's website is the current approved suite of Quality Assurance and improvement procedures in operation in the Institute. New policies and procedures only become active after they are formerly approved and published on this site. Legacy policy and procedure is removed and archived. All hard copy versions of the QA manual are subordinate to this published document. In the case of disputes the relevant policy and procedure is that published on this site. Where a dispute is of historical nature the relevant policy and procedure is either that published on this site or the relevant policy and procedure for that time stored in the Quality Assurance archive file.
All procedures, either new or modified, are then channelled through the document controller, who at present is the Registrar.  The document controller is responsible for ensuring that the procedures are posted on the Institute Website as soon as they are approved and that redundant policy and procedure is archived. Institute staff have read-only access to these procedures.
As part of the Institute's quality improvement process, any member of the institute may propose a change in policy and/or procedure (reference template and procedure for review and adoption). In all situations where procedures have become redundant then such procedures will be formally revoked and archived.

# Glossary of Acronyms

| Acronym | Title | Website |
|---------|-------|---------|
| AC | Academic Council | |
| ACCS | Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects Scheme | |
| AGCAS | Association of Graduate Career Advisory Service | http://www.agcas.org.uk |
| AGSCI | Association of Graduate Career Services in Ireland | |
| AUP | Acceptable Use Policy | |
| BIM | Bord Iascaigh Mhara | |
| CAO | Central Applications Office | www.cao.ie |
| DOES | Department of Education and Science | |
| EC | Executive Committee | |
| ECTS | European Credit Transfer System | |
| ESG | Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Equal Area | |
| FDS | First Destination Survey | |
| HEA | Higher Education Authority | HEA |
| ITS | Institute of Technology Sligo | www.itsligo.ie |
| NFQ | National Framework of Qualifications | |
| PCC | Planning and Coordinating Committee | |
| PRTLI | Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions | |
| QQI | Quality and Qualifications Ireland | www.qqi.ie |
| RMS | Research Management Strategy | |
| SFC | Student Finance Committee | |
| SOP | Standard Operating Procedure | |

# Governance and Academic Management

## 1.1    Scope

Chapter 1 outlines the legal framework that governs the establishment and operation of Institutes of Technologies (Regional Technical Colleges until 1998).

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

The functions of the Institute are described in the Institutes of Technology Acts, 1992 to 2006 (Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992 and the Institutes of Technology Act 2006).

The acts relevant to the Institutes of Technology are:-

Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992

Regional Technical Colleges (Amendment) Act, 1994

Regional Technical Colleges (Amendment) Act, 1999

Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012

Institutes of Technology Act 2006

This document contains a consolidated version of the RTC and IOT Acts.

Throughout this chapter, line responsibility for ensuring academic quality in the Institute is assigned to particular functional managers and institute committees.

## 1.2    The Governing Body

The Governing Body comprises 19 members who typically meet 8 times each year, during the academic period. The President is an ex officio member of the GB and the Secretary/Financial Controller acts as its secretary. The rest of the Institute Executive team attend meetings in an advisory capacity. The Governing Body routinely considers the recommendations made by the Academic Council.

The current membership of the IT Sligo Governing Body can be found here.

## 1.3    Legal Changes

Under Section 53 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, the Institute of Technology Sligo, was granted delegated authority to confer its own awards for all taught programmes at all Levels from Level 6 to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (see Section 1.4). For research programmes, delegated authority has been granted in the areas of

Environmental Science and Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering up to Level 10. Such delegation remains under the Quality and Qualifications Act (2012). QQI currently makes all other awards for Level 9 and 10 qualifications by research.

The Act also led to State funding of the Institute of Technology Sector, in line with what prevailed in the university sector, being directed through the Higher Education Authority.

## 1.4    The National Higher Education Awards Structure

QQI has responsibility for developing and maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It is also responsible for promoting and facilitating greater access to education and training and progression from one qualification to another, through the NFQ.

The NFQ was launched in 2003. It is a system of ten levels that incorporates awards made for all kinds of learning, wherever it is gained.  Secondary, further education and higher education are all included. The NFQ has introduced new qualifications to the Irish education and training system. Through its ten Levels, the NFQ provides a means of comparing and contrasting national and international education and training qualifications. It helps learners to plan their education and training and employers to identify the qualifications they require.
National standards define the outcomes to be achieved by learners seeking to gain an award at any given Level within the Framework. A learner is assessed for achievements standards in order to gain an award. The NFQ has four award-types, they are:
1.      Major Awards
2.      Minor Awards : for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award
3.      Supplemental Awards : for learning that is additional to a Major Award
4.      Special Purpose Awards: for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement

The NFQ has significantly enhanced the recognition of further education through the development of Levels 1-6 qualifications. The apprenticeship qualifications of Advanced Certificate are at Level 6 on the Framework. There are seven major Higher Education award-types offered by Institutes of Technology:
1.      Higher Certificate                    Level 6
2.      Ordinary Bachelor Degree              Level 7
3.      Honours Bachelor Degree               Level 8
4.      Higher Diploma                        Level 8
5.      Graduate Diploma                      Level 9
6.      Masters                               Level 9
7.      Doctoral Degree                       Level 10
Minor, Supplemental and Special Purpose awards are classified as Certificate and Diploma, depending on the award level and number of credits awarded.
For naming Minor, Special Purpose & Supplemental awards reference see QQI policy.

A key element of the NFQ is to improve access (entry) to education and training, *transfer* within and between education and training and *progression* within and between education and training.  This includes national policies and operational guidelines on the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and

award of academic credit.  QQI oversees quality assurance in relation to programmes on the framework.

The introduction of the NFQ has provided a tool by which qualifications gained outside the State can be recognised. The NFQ, is also linked to similar initiatives that are taking place in other countries and at an overall European level.

IT Sligo is required, under delegated authority from QQI, to determine the standards of knowledge, skills and competencies for all of its named awards at Levels 6 to 10, to ensure that these comply with both national framework standards and specific discipline standards published by QQI and to ensure that it has established and maintains fair and consistent policies and processes for assessing achievement of those standards.

## 1.5    The European Higher Education Structure

### 1.5.1    Context

The Bologna Framework, adopted by the Ministers for Education in 47 countries, including Ireland, provides a mechanism that provides comparability of standards and qualifications across the signatory countries and promotes mobility in education.
Parallel to these developments the European Qualifications Frameworks for Lifelong Learning (EQF) provided an overarching qualifications framework, or common European reference framework, which links countries' qualification systems together, acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe. The alignment of these frameworks is given below.

**Relationship between the Irish National Framework of Qualifications, the Bologna Framework of**

| EQF Levels | Bologna Framework | Irish Framework Levels | Irish Major Award-Types | ECTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | 1 | Level 1 Certificate | |
| 2 | | 2 | Level 2 Certificate | |
| | | 3 | Level 3 Certificate, Junior Certificate | |
| 3 | | 4 | Level 4 Certificate, Leaving Certificate | |
| 4 | | 5 | Level 5 Certificate, Leaving Certificate | |
| 5 | Short Cycle within First Cycle | 6 | Advanced Certificate **Higher Certificate** | 60 |
| 6 | First Cycle | 7 | **Ordinary Bachelor Degree** | 180 |
| | | 8 | **Honours Bachelor Degree, Higher Diploma** | 180 – 240 60 |
| 7 | Second Cycle | 9 | **Master's Degree (taught), Post-Graduate Diploma** | 60 – 120 60 |
| 8 | Third Cycle | 10 | **Doctoral Degree, Higher Doctorate** | |

**the EHEA and the European Framework of Qualifications**

Note:   Higher Education awards are shown in bold. The Advanced Certificate at level 6 is a Further Education and not a Higher Education award

### 1.5.2   The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is the credit system for higher education applied on the European Higher Education Area. ECTS is a learner-centred system of credit accumulation and transfer based on the transparency of the learning outcomes and learning processes. ECTS credits are based on a notional workload (a proxy for the average amount of time a student would need to achieve the intended learning outcomes and includes all learning activities such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and examinations).  Learning outcomes describe what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of a process of learning. They relate to level descriptors in national and European qualifications frameworks.  Workload indicates the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and examinations) required to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

60 ECTS credits are attached to the workload of a full-time year of formal learning (academic year) and the associated learning outcomes. In most cases, student workload ranges from 1,500 to 1,800 hours for an academic year, whereby one credit corresponds to 20 to 30 hours of work.
The ECTS is implemented in IT Sligo to facilitate credit transfer and accumulation and to ensure that the time demands on students are reasonable, using available time and resources to the best effect. In this context, the ECTS ensures compatibility and consistency of learning outcomes, Levels and credits for modules taken across a wide range of disciplines.

A final component of the Bologna process is the requirement for a HEI to provide Diploma Supplements (DS) to its graduates. The DS is a document attached to a higher education award parchment aiming at improving international 'transparency' and at facilitating the academic and professional recognition of qualifications. It is designed according to a national template, and aims to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It is provided automatically and free of charge to every graduate of the Institute.

### 1.5.3   Quality Assurance Policy

It is the policy of IT Sligo to have procedures in place to ensure that the quality of its programmes and awards meet the internal specifications and those of other bodies empowered to make specifications.

The Quality Assurance policy is framed within the context of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the Quality and Qualifications Act 2012 and the determinations of QQI.

- It is informed by the mission, vision and strategic development of the institute (ref current Strategic Plan, proposals for TUQF and draft ISO draft International standards for QA in Education)
- Is designed to ensure the quality of awards, programmes and the teaching and learning process
- It provides for openness, transparency and accountability in the work of the institute.
- It is subject to continuous review and improvement underpinned by evidence based analysis
- It is published and available publicly
- The learning process in IT Sligo is student centred. Quality assurance policy and procedures underpin this by incorporating within overarching policy the specific requirement of IT Sligo that all learners:

    1. Are treated fairly, consistently and with courtesy and respect
    2. Are enabled to provide feedback about their academic experience
    3. Will have opportunities, as appropriate,  to participate in committees
    4. While acknowledging competing demands on the budget, will have access to the best student support services that the Institute can provide.
    5. to student support services as provided by the Institute
    6. Are provided with useful and relevant information in relation to courses.
    7. Will receive information on programme content, assessment procedures and expectations.
    8. Will be provided with the relevant institutional regulations and the appropriate penalties for breach of regulations
    9. Are exposed to a variety of teaching methodologies
    10. Will have reasonable access to lecturing staff for individual consultation
    11. Will receive a course timetable
    12. Will receive timely, specific and adequate feedback on assessments.
    13. Will have access to all relevant policies and procedures and that procedures will be in place to cater for all substantiated mitigating circumstances in deciding a student's progression.

### 1.5.4    Quality Objectives for Academic Programmes

#### 1.5.4.1 Basis for Quality Assurance in IT Sligo

The Institute recognises that the primary responsibility for quality assurance lies within the Institute. It is further recognised that external quality reviews are an essential element of the quality assurance machinery providing accreditation and reaccreditation of our programmes and placement on the NFQ as well as providing an objective external peer evaluation of the effectiveness of our policies and procedures.

Taken together, internal QA and external quality reviews aim to implement the ESG as follows:

1. Policy for quality assurance
   Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

2. Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
   Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
   Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

5. Teaching staff
   Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

6. Learning resources and student support
   Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

7. Information management
   Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

8. Public information
   Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
   Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

10. Cyclical external quality assurance
    Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis

**Standards and Guidelines for QA in the European Higher Education Area**

*1.5.4.2 Evaluation of Quality Assurance performance*

The following is a list of some of the metrics used to evaluate the quality of education provided by IT Sligo:

1.  Student feedback surveys
2.  External examiners reports
3.  Programme Monitoring Reports EAP7
4.  New programme evaluation Panel reports
5.  Annual internal reviews of programme performance
6.  Institutional reviews
7.  Surveys of graduates
8.  Surveys of employers

## 1.5.5    Academic Council

The Academic Council is a statutory body appointed by the Governing Body to assist the Institute, with the planning, co-ordination, development and implementation of its educational work, as well as promoting and maintaining good academic standards and procedures in all its activities.  The Academic Council is appointed under *Section 10 (1)* of *the Institutes of Technology Acts 1992-2006.* Membership of the Academic Council is afforded to staff through elected representation.  The President, Registrar, Heads of School, and the Heads of Academic Department, Education Development and Quality Manager, head of Research and Librarian are ex officio members of the Academic Council, while administrative staff, support staff and students are also represented The President is Chairperson and the Registrar is Secretary to the Council.
Information on the Academic Council can be found here.

## 1.5.6    Academic Council Committees

Committees carry out the work of the Council.
This document details the Functions of the Academic Council Committees.

## 1.5.7    IT Sligo Organisation

The IT Sligo organisation chart can be found here.

Information on the Executive of IT Sligo can be found below.
President https://www.itsligo.ie/about-it-sligo/administration/presidents-office/

Registrar https://www.itsligo.ie/administration/registrar/

Secretary/Financial Controller https://www.itsligo.ie/administration/financeandcorporateservices/

IT Sligo Strategic Plan and Annual Reports
These can be found at https://www.itsligo.ie/about-it-sligo/publications/