

## Chapter 3 Assessment of Students

### 3.1 Introduction

The Institute has, as part of its quality assurance procedures, systematic arrangements for evaluation and for auditing the effectiveness of student assessment procedures to ensure that they are, in the context of the national framework of qualifications, fair in practice, consistent and in compliance with Institute and QQI standards.

The standard for validation of programmes by QQI, which provides a basis for IT Sligo's policy are described in Section 45 (3) (b) of the **Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 as follows** .....*Establish procedures which are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled students to ensure the standards of knowledge, skill or competence determined by the Authority under section 49 (1) are acquired, and where appropriate, demonstrated, by enrolled students*

### 3.2 Scope

This Chapter describes the processes and procedures utilized by the Institute related to the assessment of students. All procedures referred to in this chapter are contained in the Institute Marks & Standards, , as well as in the Institute's procedures available on the Staff Portal and IT Sligo website.

### 3.3 Learning and Assessment

- a) Learning refers to the processes by which a sustainable change in a student's knowledge, skill or competence occurs as a result of experience (of phenomena). Experience includes everything that affects the student. Learning actively involves the student.
- b) Learning activities are diverse: examples include study, writing, practice, discussion, enquiry, experience, reflection working in a group, problem solving, performing, game playing, designing, composing, etc. Both students and teachers can set learning activities.  
Effective learning activities are purposefully directed towards attainment of the programme's educational goals (intended programme learning outcomes) and build on (connect with) prior learning.  
The engagement by the student with any assessment process, including the reception of feedback, is a learning activity.
- c) "Learning outcomes" generally describe the change in knowledge, skill and/or competence in an individual (differential form) but they may also mean the cumulative result of all learning including prior learning at the time of entry to the programme (integral form). Award standards and award-type descriptors generally describe cumulative learning outcomes.

- d) Intended programme learning outcomes describe the minimum achievement (in terms of knowledge, skill and competence) that the student is certified to have attained if he/she successfully completes a particular programme (i.e. passes all the required assessments).
- e) The intended learning outcomes are the minimum learning outcomes that the teacher intends that students will attain as a result of teaching and learning activities. A threshold of 40% (or validated pass mark) of these is necessary to pass a module.
- f) Principles of assessment  
Student assessment means inference (e.g. judgement or estimation or evaluation) of a student's knowledge, skill or competence by comparison with a standard based on appropriate evidence. Self-assessment is included in this.

There are six core principles related to **the** assessment of students:

### **1. Students are responsible for demonstrating their attainment**

A *student* who is enrolled on a *programme* should submit himself or herself to assessment for the purpose of demonstrating attainment of the *programme's intended learning outcomes*.

Each student should undertake assessment tasks honestly and truthfully and not engage in plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty.

The *provider* should ensure that there are appropriate learning opportunities for the *programme's* intended learning outcomes except those which are satisfied by prior learning.

### **2. Assessment supports standards based on learning outcomes**

Awards (including those made under delegated authority) are made and classified exclusively on the basis of *criterion referenced* assessment of learning outcomes (knowledge, skill and competence.)

The learning outcomes required to qualify are specified by the *awards standards* issued by IT Sligo or by QQI.

The awards standards are threshold standards which means that they describe the minimum learning outcomes to be attained before an award may be made (i.e. the learning required to pass).

The *intended programme learning outcomes* define the minimum learning outcomes for a particular programme. A student who completes a validated programme is eligible for the relevant award if he or she has demonstrated, through assessment (including by recognition of prior learning), attainment of the relevant intended programme learning outcomes. Credit (e.g. ECTS), while not a proxy for attained learning outcomes, should normally be linked to them.

### **3. Assessment promotes and supports effective learning and teaching**

Teaching and learning and assessment are linked activities— they affect one another.

Effective assessment is (i) consistent with, (ii) supportive of, and (iii) derived from the intended programme and module learning outcomes.

Module assessment strategies and programme assessment strategies are necessary for effective assessment.

The effort required of a student to complete an assessment task should be proportional to the associated educational benefit to him or her.

*Formative assessment* supports learning and should involve *formative feedback*.

Teachers and students share in the responsibilities for effective learning. Involvement of students in the construction of assessment tasks and criteria can enhance learning. *Authentic* assessment supports effective learning.

#### **4. Assessment procedures are credible**

Credible assessment is *fair* and *consistent* and more specifically it is *valid* and *reliable*.

Fair assessment is inclusive, recognising that different people can have different learning needs, styles and approaches.

Any person who would have a conflict of interest (actual or potential, real or apparent) if he/she were to act as an assessor in a particular situation should neither act nor be required to act as an assessor in that situation.

The processes for assessment of *complaints* and *appeals* should meet the same standards of fairness, consistency and fitness for purpose as assessment in general. In particular they should be straightforward, efficient, timely, and transparent.

#### **5. Assessment methods are reviewed and renewed as necessary to adapt to evolving requirements**

Developing and testing new assessment methods, tactics and strategies is necessary for continual enhancement and to cope with emerging challenges.

#### **6. Students are well informed about how and why they are assessed**

Students need to be familiar with the relevant programme and module assessment strategies and regularly reminded of these and the assessment regulations. Students are informed of these through the programme webpage, programme handbook or other programme resources.

### **3.4 Pre-Examination Procedures**

The quality of the pre-examination process at the Institute is managed by a range of procedures which have been developed and adopted by the Academic Council of the Institute and supplemented with Institute generated procedures. These are outlined below.

#### **Responsibility for Examinations**

The Institute's Marks and Standards Section **A3**, specifies that the President or nominee has overall responsibility for the conduct of examinations at the Institute and lists the responsibility of the President for the proper conduct of the examinations, including invigilation, accommodation, preparation of examination papers and marking of scripts.

### Internal Examiners

Section A4 of the Institute's Marks and Standards details the duties and responsibilities of the internal examiners. The annual examination paper submission dates are covered by Institute procedure [EXAM029](#)

### External Examiners

For every Programme the Institute appoints at least one External Examiner (Extern). External Examiners for all taught courses are approved by the Academic Council. The overall role of the external examiners is to ensure adequacy of standards for all awards.

External examiners are expected to act in an ethical manner, and demonstrate a fair and consistent approach through objectivity, confidentiality, declaration of interests, and the avoidance of conflicts of interest, etc. The processes related to External Examiners are specified in the following sections and are outlined in the flow chart in Appendix 3.1.

### Nomination and Appointment of External Examiners

The Institute shall ensure that sufficient External Examiners are appointed so that it can satisfy that the standard of its programmes and student performances can be adequately moderated and the assessment, examination and determination of award processes are being fairly conducted. In the nomination of External Examiners the need for continuity in the process from one year to the next should be considered.

- External Examiners may be appointed on the basis of Department, course/programme ( preferred), or module/subject as determined by the needs of the Institute.
- An External Examiner may moderate one or more Programmes.
- An External Examiner may be appointed who has expertise in particular subject area, and may be involved with particular modules for a range of programmes across Schools.

The Head of School/Department may consult externally or may seek recommendations for nominations through a Programme Committee to act as External Examiners. The Head of Department/School /programme committee member may consult the person proposed for nomination to seek his/her consent to be nominated, to determine his/her availability to act as an External Examiner and request a CV. This is a consultation process only and should not imply any commitment on behalf of the Institute to make an appointment.

Consultation may take place with other Institutions with a view to arriving at suitable arrangements in relation to the appointment of External Examiners to more than one Institute, taking into account the requirement for independence of External Examiners and such other requirements as in the criteria for appointment in the Appendix 3.2.

The Head of Department (or nominee) then nominates the new external examiner in GURU by entering some basic biographical details, uploading the CV, period of appointment and identifying the programmes and or modules to be assigned to the external examiner. The External Examiner then receives a notification through GURU to agree to the nomination. Once complete this is electronically endorsed by the Head of Department once they are satisfied that the External Examiner meets the criteria for appointment or returned for editing / correction.

The Examinations officer (nominated by the VP Academic affairs and registrar to co-ordinate External Examiner Management) forwards the nomination form and CV to the Academic Processes Committee of Academic council for review. The Committee on behalf of the Academic Council shall satisfy itself that persons nominated for appointment satisfy the criteria for appointment and approve the nomination. The nomination shall be ratified at the next Academic Council meeting.

Following approval of an External Examiner the Examinations officer shall issue a contract through GURU see sample in Appendix 3.3. Once the External Examiner electronically accepts the contract in GURU the appointment process is complete.

The term of contract shall be for a period of three years, with an allowed extension for one further year to commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> October and end on the 30<sup>th</sup> September of the contracted period. The Academic council can approve a nomination for a three plus one year period thus allowing the faculty to extend the contract for the 4<sup>th</sup> year if they require it, without recourse to Academic Council. The External Examiner Manager in each faculty can extend the end date of an existing external examiners three year contract for one additional year once the extension has been approved (or pre-approved) by Academic Processes committee. Approval as External Examiners by the Academic Council shall take place no later than the last Academic Council meeting of a given academic year for appointment for the following academic year.

The Head of Department may make minor revisions to the list of assigned modules within a Programme or Subject area during the course of a contract, subject to External Examiner and Programme Board agreement. Access to personal data e.g. CV of nominated external examiners shall be restricted to the minimum required for the nomination and approval process.

If there is any breach by the External Examiner of any of the terms and conditions or if at any time in the opinion of the Institute the Extern shall fail to provide a satisfactory service, the Institute may terminate the agreement by giving the External Examiner one month's notice in writing to that effect. Should it be necessary to terminate the contract, the Head of Department shall recommend termination of the contract to the VP Academic Affairs & Registrar, detailing the reasons for the proposed termination. The VP Academic Affairs & Registrar shall notify in writing an External Examiner whose contract has been terminated and inform Academic Council.

Following appointment, the Schools/ Institute shall ensure that the External Examiner receives adequate additional documentation and training to enable him/her to understand the examination processes operated by the Institute. The External Examiner may be invited to visit the Institute to

become familiar with its operations and to discuss his/her responsibilities as an External Examiner. Such visits should occur before the External Examiner commences examining activities. Where External Examiners are required to act as a team, the Institute shall ensure that such External Examiners have an opportunity to meet prior to a final Board of Examiners meeting.

External Examiners are required to submit a written report within GURU to the VP Academic Affairs & Registrar following the Summer/ Autumn Examinations before 01<sup>st</sup> October each year. The details in respect of the external examiners visit to the Institute are specified in section **A5** of the Institute's Marks and Standards. The duties and responsibilities of the External Examiner are outlined in Appendix 3.4.

### 3.5 Student Registration and Notification of Examination Regulations and Timetable

With the exception of repeat students the procedure for registering for examinations is part of the normal registration process at the beginning of the year and is the responsibility of the VP Academic Affairs & Registrar. The Head of Department signs off on the class lists in early February, highlighting any discrepancies on the official register. It is the responsibility of repeat students to register for examinations and they are informed of this by notice with their transcript of results.

All registered students are issued with a copy of the Student Support Services Handbook which includes the examination regulations and requirements. Information on the complete range of examination procedures is available on the Institute's website and is dealt with in a comprehensive manner during the academic year. The Examination timetable is made available on-line to both academic staff and students in advance of the commencement of the formal end of semester or end of year examinations. Students who have Special Learning Needs or Disability may apply for special arrangements for sitting assessments/examinations in accordance with EXAM009\_Reasonable accommodation Procedure.

### 3.6 Assessment

#### 3.6.1 Essential Requirements of Assessment

It is critical in relation to assessment of students, that:

- The aims and objectives of the assessment are compatible with the stated learning outcome for the programme/module.
- Procedures at institute level and within each school/programme are fair, consistent and transparent.
- In the delivery of a programme, the scheduling of assessment tasks should be coordinated to ensure an appropriate workload balance for students.
- An assessment schedule is in place and communicated to students at the beginning of each semester

- The totality of assessment is considered to ensure that students are not over assessed and pays due cognisance to the learning outcomes being assessed, the stage, and the weighting of the assessment.
- That all students are assessed individually, even in the context of group projects. This is particularly important as it is the individual, not group, achievement of learning outcomes that is being assessed. Parts of this assessment will, however, determine how well each individual performs as a member and/or leader of group work.
- Attendance requirements are clearly communicated. The requirement for attendance by students at formal timetabled learning periods is to be determined by each lecturer, as they consider appropriate to the achievement by the student of the learning outcomes of the particular module. Where a lecturer can demonstrate that non-attendance has resulted in a failure of the student to attain the learning outcomes of a module (and where there is documented evidence of non-attendance), this may be brought to the attention of the Progression and Awards Board when the overall performance of the student is being considered. Undocumented evidence will not be considered.
- The procedures for dealing with missed assessments/assignment deadlines, etc. as per Marks and Standards are explained.
- The procedures for Re-check, Review and Appeal are explained. A lecturer should clarify to students how they intend to address an appeal made by a student directly to a lecturer. If the matter is not resolved, there are formal Institute appeals processes relating to examinations which include an appeal in respect of continuous assessment.
- Programme assessment strategies should take cognisance of the practicalities of offering repeat continuous assessment opportunities. For example, it may not be feasible for some conceivable continuous assessment tasks to be repeated in the same timeframe as written examinations. However, alternative assessment modalities may be employed provided they address the same learning outcomes.

The lecturer should

- Have a defined answer plan and/or marking scheme.
- Distinguish between formative and summative assessment
- Specify the details of the assignment in writing and provide this to the student
- Specify the due dates and submission method well in advance of the expected submission date.
- Provide details of how the marks will be allocated.
- Seek to ensure that plagiarism does not occur.
- Provide information on what constitutes plagiarism and the IT Sligo Plagiarism procedure.
- Seek to ensure that individual student assignments /mini-projects / essays, etc. are equitable i.e. comparable in complexity and levels of competence involved.
- Programme handbooks or other written requirements provided to students are to be held by the lecturer until the expiry of the period for any possible appeal.

- Give feedback in a timely manner on all continuous assessments.

### 3.6.2 Examination Papers

Examination papers are prepared by internal examiners and are submitted to external examiners in accordance with deadlines listed in the Institute Calendar for semester, annual and autumn repeat examinations, and as per EXAM029 Exam Paper Generation Process Procedure. Examination papers reviewed by the external examiners are submitted via GURU to the Examination Secretary in accordance with this procedure. EXAM004 Maintenance and Storage of Examination Materials Procedure deals with safe storage of exam scripts.

### 3.6.3 Examination Invigilation

Examination invigilators are selected and trained by the Examinations Secretary in accordance with the Institute's Human Resource Policies and Procedures. The Examination Secretary also sets out their duties and responsibilities. These include procedures for dealing with late arrivals, examination irregularities, and/or illness during examinations and collection of scripts.

### 3.6.4 Alleged infringements of examination regulations

EXAM036 Exam Regulation Procedure sets out the regulations in regard to conduct during assessment and examination. EXAM016 Plagiarism Procedure sets out the regulations in relation to plagiarism. Any infringement of the exams regulation are addressed in EXAM024 Disciplinary Procedure for Students (Examination) procedure

### 3.6.5 Assessment of Scripts

The role and responsibility of internal examiners in providing marking schemes and in marking scripts in a transparent, fair and consistent manner, is outlined in the Institute's Marks and Standards Documentation Section A4. The responsibility of the internal examiners to consult with external examiners and to agree grades/marks for each candidate is also covered in the Institute's Marks and Standards Section **A4**.

### 3.6.6 Continuous Assessment

The term continuous assessment is used to describe assessments that are completed during the course module. Continuous assessments can be used in two ways; (summative) assessment on activities/products contributing to the final grade or (formative) assessment on activities/ products not contributing to the final grade. In both cases, feedback to students is part of the process. The reason for doing continuous assessment is to secure/ enable continuous an independent work rate for students during the course. A wide range of continuous assessment types are utilized in the Institute.

The four broad categories of continuous assessment are written, oral, practical and placement.

**Written – Continuous Assessment of Theory**

- a) Mid-term written assessment tests
  - b) Assignments/mini-projects/essays, etc.
- A marking scheme for oral presentations associated with such assignments/mini-projects/essays, etc., is required to ensure that they are equitably assessed.

**Oral – Continuous Assessment of Oral or Viva Voce Presentations**

This can include student presentations/ seminars. It may involve peer assessment or active participation. In many final year Degree Courses oral/viva voce presentations may contribute significantly to the Level of Award. In such cases, there should be mechanisms/regulations/procedures appropriate to relevant course disciplines.

**Practical – Continuous Assessment of Practical Work**

- a) **Laboratory/workshop practical courses, Site/Industrial Visits, Field Trips, etc.**  
Marking schemes for these may be based on performance, results, notebooks, reports, attendance, etc.
- b) **Course Specific Subjects assessed exclusively (or almost exclusively) by Continuous Assessment**

Many programmes list Project as a separate subject in the Approved Course Schedule. Very often this subject is weighted by a factor of 2 or 3, and therefore makes a very important contribution to the overall Level of Award.

This category of continuous assessment also includes practical courses in disciplines such as Fine Art, Interior Architecture, Industrial Design, Tourism & Recreation, Performing Arts, etc., which contain subjects which are assessed entirely, or almost entirely, by practical continuous assessment. These are subjects largely carried out through Studio Work, such as Painting, Sculpture, Design, Printing, etc. They also include activities such as Swimming, and other formal Sports Activities formally associated with a course. Also included in this category are certain Information Technology/Computing courses involving software development and web-based design.

Special arrangements may be necessary to ensure that such courses are equitably assessed. These should include a detailed marking scheme, clearly defined criteria for allocation of marks within each category of the marking scheme, and/or assessment by a panel of two or more examiners. It may also include the External Examiner being involved in oral presentations or other parts of the assessment.

**Placement – Continuous Assessment of Industrial Placement/Work Experience**

As for project work, the written instructions for industrial placement/ work experience should list the learning objectives. These instructions may be supplied to the placement partner and the student and may be the basis of their unwritten contract with the Institute covering the placement.

It remains the responsibility of the Institute to assess the student and decide the mark allocated. Placement tutors are expected to look critically at any feedback being provided by industrial supervisors before using it to assign a mark for the placement. Other means should be used for the majority of the marks. This might be a report written by the student to demonstrate the achievement of the learning objectives of the placement and / or an oral presentation on return to college. Where practical, the placement mark should not be a part (at least not a significant part) of the marks used to decide the award level (pass / honours etc.). If the placement occurs during a year that contributes to the average mark used for award classification, this may be achieved by making it a PASS / FAIL subject with no mark assigned.

Students who fail this module should have some means open to them to repeat. If they are not able to complete the work placement an alternative assessment should be provided where practical.

### 3.7 Progression and Award Board

#### 3.7.1 Compiling of Marks

The process for the submission and compilation of examination marks/grades is included in Section A6 of the Institute's Marks and Standards.

#### 3.7.2 Internal Examiner Boards (Pre-Boards)

It is normal practice in the Institute for each Programme Board and or Department to hold a meeting of the Internal Examiners at which all results are compiled on an electronic Student Record and checked for accuracy. See Section A6 in Marks and Standards

#### 3.7.3 Meeting of Board of Examiners

Procedures for the conduct and operation of the meeting of Board of Examiners are included in Section A7 of Marks and Standards.

#### 3.7.4 Special Considerations

Upon completion of examinations, and prior to the meeting of the Progression and Award Board, candidates may make a formal submission to the examiners requesting that they take certain facts into consideration when deliberating upon the candidates results. In the interests of fairness and consistency, such requests are reviewed by the Head of Department who will present a synopsis to the Examinations Board. See EXAM007 Request for Consideration by Exam Board Procedure.

### 3.8 Notification of Examination Results

#### 3.8.1 Presentation of Results

Procedures and timelines in relation to the notification of provisional Examination results are provided in Section A7.11 of the Institute's Marks and Standards. Final results are released following ratification by academic council.

### 3.8.2 Notification

Each student is notified with information to access his or her provisional Semester One result on the web using a unique pin-code. These results are provisional and may be modified in the summer examination board where it is in the interests of the student.

Following the summer session of examinations, each student is notified with information to access their results using their unique pin-code. The notification will inform the student as follows:

1. In the case of a terminal award students will be advised of the classification of the award e.g. Pass, Merit 2 etc.
2. In the case of the completion of a stage e.g. a first year student will be advised that he or she passed the examination and is therefore eligible to proceed to the next stage.
3. In the case of non-satisfactory completion of a stage the student will be so advised and will also receive instructions on the conditions he or she must fulfil in order to pass the examination.

## 3.9 Post Examination Procedures

### 3.9.1 Pastoral Meeting: Consultation/Results Feedback days

All academic staff members must be available to students on nominated days, between the date of notification of examination results and the 20<sup>th</sup> June to provide advice and support on examination performance. These dates are published on the Academic Calendar at the commencement of each year. Academic Heads of Departments are available to students up to 30<sup>th</sup> June to provide advice and guidance in relation to repeat examination requirements.

### 3.9.2 Request for Review and Appeal of Examination Results

Students have a right to have access to view their scripts and receive feedback on continuous assessment and /or terminal assessment. Following feedback, if a student wishes to request a formal recheck or review of their examination results they may do so in accordance with EXAM027 Procedure.

### 3.9.3 Programme Board Audits

Examination Board results are considered at the first programme committee meeting held each academic year. At these meetings, the committee reviews the actions and outcomes since the previous year's meeting, retention, progression and completion, External Examiners' Reports, student course evaluation reports and staff evaluation of subjects by students, as reported by individual lecturers. Consequent action for the next academic year is discussed and agreed. This review is summarised in the Programme Monitoring Report, which is described in more detail in Chapter 4.

### 3.9.4 Academic Council Audit of Examination Results and Process

Following the Autumn Examination Board meetings the Registrar prepares an overall analysis of the performance of students, on all Higher Education programmes in the Institute. Annually in October this analysis (which addresses the outcome of each programme), is presented to the Academic Processes Committee of the Academic Council for its consideration. The Registrar then issues the analysis to Departments and seeks responses from Programme Boards where pass rates are unacceptably low and attrition rates are unacceptably high.

As Extern Examiners Reports become available in GURU, these are notified to the Heads of Department, who then forward them for consideration to Programme Boards. The November meeting of the Academic Processes Committee of the Academic Council reviews and considers them using the technique "managing by exception". The Committee will also have a dossier prepared by the School Secretary, outlining in summary form examination issues which particular Extern Examiners require the Institute to address. Following consideration by the Committee the VP Academic Affairs & Registrar will communicate with the Relevant Head of Department and request action or explanation where necessary.

### 3.9.5 Report on the Administration of Examinations

An annual report is prepared by the Examinations Secretary on the organisation conduct and functioning of the Summer and Autumn Examination. The Examinations Secretary requests reports from the Chairperson of the Summer and Autumn Examination Board Meetings and exceptional matters to the examination process are reported upon. This report is considered by the Executive Committee and the Academic Processes Committee of the Academic Council.

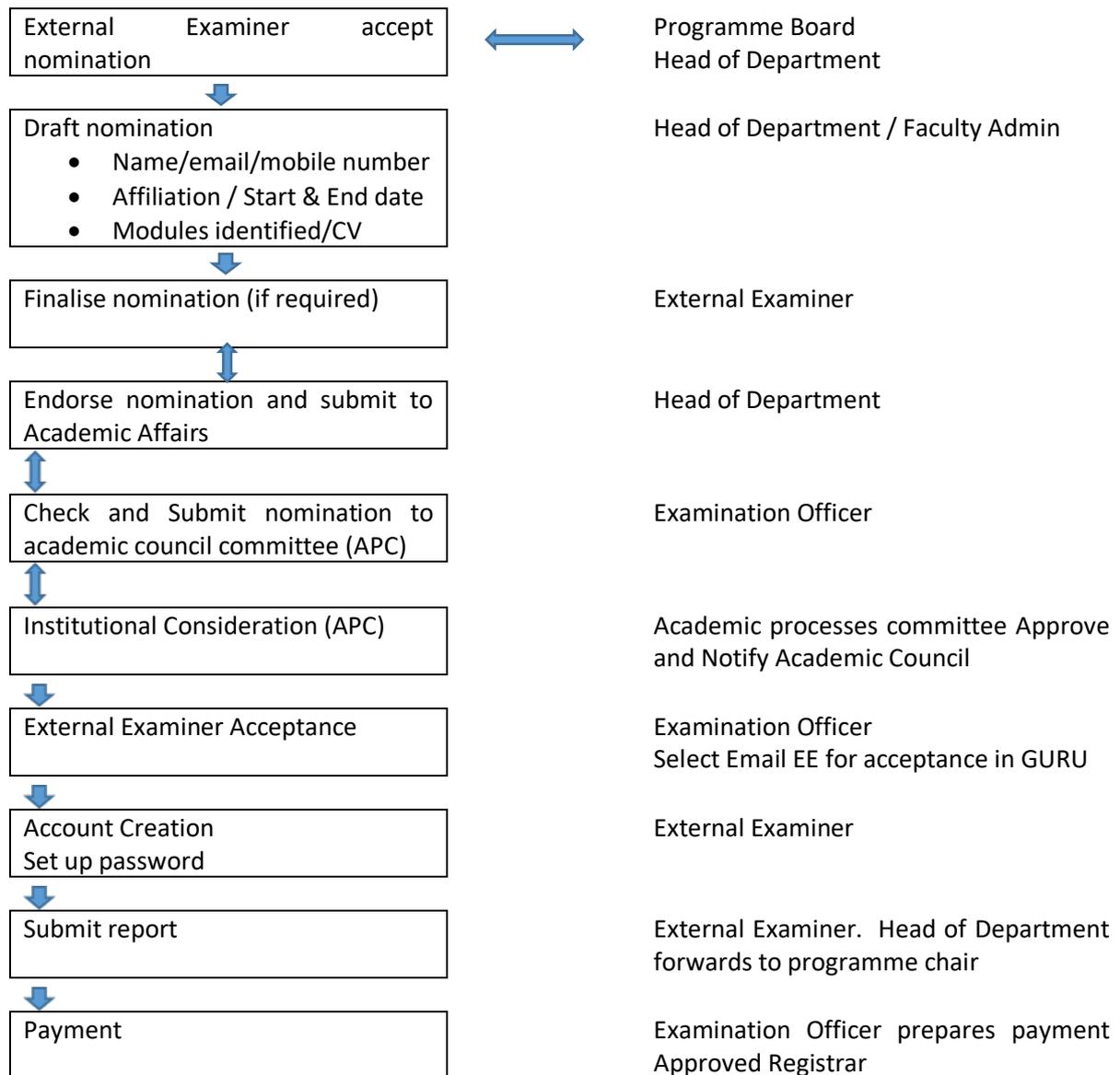
### 3.10 Post graduate research Degrees

Awards granted for taught programmes at Postgraduate Diploma and Masters Level are classified as per Institute's Marks and Standards. Research Degrees of Masters or a Doctor of Philosophy are awarded without classification. In the case of successful candidates, the Broadsheet of Results is annotated "Recommended" and signed by the Internal Supervisor(s) and External Examiner(s) concerned.

## Revision History

Rev. No.	Issue Date	Description of Change
000 to 013	Feb 2003	All chapters of the Quality Manual were incorporated into one document, see chapter 1 for revision history.
014	Jan 17	Updating for online version with links. Chapters separated into separate document. Future revisions will have separate revision numbers
015	19 Feb 2021	Change to arrangements for external examiner nomination due to GURU implementation and general update of document.

Appendix 3.1 Flow Chart of the External Examiner(EE) Nomination and Approval Process



## Appendix 3.2 Criteria for the nomination and appointment of external examiners

1. The primary criterion is that an external examiner nominated for appointed should be a person of academic or professional distinction, whose association with a particular programme(s) is considered to enhance the academic integrity of the programme(s).
2. They should have both current and relevant experience in the areas of industry, education or research. External examiner nominations/appointments should be such as to ensure maximum objectivity in relation to the institutions.
3. Each programme should have a minimum of one external examiner. External examiners drawn from business, industry or professional practice should be of senior standing in their fields. Normally, an external examiner drawn from academic life should hold an honours degree (or equivalent) academic qualification, in the appropriate discipline. For programmes above level 8 they should hold a qualification equal or higher than that of the programme(s) to which he/she has been nominated. In general, only persons associated with degree and postgraduate programme in their own institutions should be nominated for degree programme in other institutions.
4. Academics may be nominated from Irish Higher Education Institutions and from universities and other higher education institutions at home and abroad. Institute of Technology, Sligo should seek to draw nominations from a variety of institutions, and within a single discipline should avoid multiple nominations from the same institution.  
Institute of Technology, Sligo should take due cognisance for the desirability of gender balance when nominating teams of external examiners.
5. It is wholly inappropriate for individuals to canvass colleges/institutions on their own behalf for the purpose of seeking a nomination as an external examiner.
6. External examiners should not exceed more than one appointment period of four years on a programme. External examiners who have served for a three or four year period should not be considered for re-nomination until a minimum of three years has elapsed.
7. Former staff should not be appointed as external examiners until a minimum of 5 years have elapsed since leaving employment in IT Sligo. Graduates should not be appointed as external examiners within 7 years of graduating from IT Sligo. Current registered students may not be appointed as external examiners unless agreed by the VP Academic Affairs and Registrar. A member of the validation panel who approved a programme should not be appointed as external examiner until a period of 3 years has elapsed from the commencement of the specific programme. Guest lecturers should not normally be appointed as external examiners, though exceptions may be considered on a case by case basis.
8. Reciprocal arrangements between higher education institutes within the same field are to be avoided.
9. The totality of the workload for an external examiner per year should be balanced in line with the following examples. Only one external examiner should be appointed per module (dissertations excepted). Approval for higher number of modules per examiner shall be on an exceptional basis.

Two external examiners	Full Level7/ Level 8 One external examiner drawn from academic life and a second, where appropriate, from business, industry and professional practice.
One external examiner	Level 9 taught masters / Level 6 programme/ Two stages on a Level 8 /One or more SPA programmes / subject examiner to an equivalent workload.

**Appendix 3.3. Sample External Examiner Acceptance form.**

Contract for the provision of an External Examiner Service to the Institute of Technology Sligo.

The Institute of Technology Sligo wishes to enter into an agreement for use of your services as an External Examiner for the Institute's Academic Programmes.

- This is not a contract of employment – rather it is a contract of services. You will be paid in accordance with the schedule of fees set out below. In addition will be eligible to claim for any legitimate expenses incurred while providing the service using the Department of Finance Motor Travel and Subsistence rates.
- Expense forms should be submitted before the end of September of each Academic Year to ensure payment.
- Legitimate expenses are as per the Department of Finance Motor Travel and Subsistence rates. Please note that the final decision as to what constitutes a legitimate expense rests with the Secretary/Financial Controller of the Institute. Public transport should be used where possible.
- It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the External Examiner to ensure that all returns are made to Revenue at the appropriate time as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012. Please note due to Revenue returns all External Examiners **MUST** supply their PPS/Tax Reference Number on their Finance Form and Expense Claim Form.

Schedule of Fee's:

Contracted by Programme

€300 – Institute fee

€18 per module on the programme (s) to a maximum claim of €432 per year

Contracted by Subject Speciality

€300 – Institute fee

€18 per module to a maximum claim of 24 modules

### **Appendix 3.4 Role and Responsibility in External Examination.**

#### 1. Preamble

This Section outlines the expectations of and from external examiners in relation to the examination quality assurance procedures of IT Sligo. These guidelines encompass the external examining of all full programmes and modules.

#### 2. Responsibilities of Institute of Technology Sligo

2.1 The Institute is responsible for the assessment of students and the maintenance of programme standards that accord with the relevant award standards.

2.2 The Institute's external examining policy in regard to selection, and conditions of external examiners includes:

- i. a statement of the competencies to be demonstrated prior to nomination of the external examiner recognising that the required competencies can be met by a team of external examiners where appropriate (for example, in relation to examining theory and practice);
- ii. nomination of external examiners having regard to the need for independence, gender balance, and the avoidance of conflicts of interest;
- iii. ratification of the external examiner nomination by academic council or equivalent and appointment;
- iv. the role and responsibilities of the external examiner;
- v. the extent of the external examiner's authority;
- vi. formal agreement between the provider and the external examiner; and
- vii. the process and criteria for the replacement of an external examiner.

The process of reporting and timeframes, as well as, notification of appointment and other contractual issues are also addressed.

The Institute will communicate to stakeholders the name and primary occupation of the external examiner(s) for each of its higher education and training programmes.

#### 3 Duties of the External Examiners As Agreed by Academic Council

3.1 External Examiners are normally appointed with responsibility for a programme or a module/subject or range of modules/subjects over a number of programmes. External Examiners deal primarily although not exclusively with the award year(s) of programmes.

3.2 External Examiners should approach their responsibility with a view to ensuring that each candidate's performance is properly assessed subject to the regulations and standards applicable generally for the award.

3.3 It shall be the duty of the External Examiner to examine the relevant syllabi and the drafts of all examination papers, marking schemes and worked solutions before the examination papers are printed and copied. External Examiners have the right to

- make such suggestions regarding deletions, additions and amendments as appropriate to draft examination papers.
- 3.4 External Examiners are expected to communicate with Internal Examiners within ten (10) working days following receipt of examination documentation e.g. draft examination papers.
  - 3.5 It shall be the duty of the External Examiner to examine the relevant syllabai and the drafts of continuous assessments with significant weighting and outline marking schemes before the continuous assessments are carried out.
  - 3.6 Correspondence between Internal and External Examiners including finalisation of examination papers and continuous assessment should normally be through GURU/email.
  - 3.7 External Examiners should review a representative sample of scripts and other material presented for assessment especially work which contributes to a student's final award and classification. e.g. projects, practical work and continuous assessment.
  - 3.8 The sample should include sufficient material to enable the External Examiner to form a judgement on the reliability and consistency of marking and on the levels of classification including borderline cases and proposed fails.
  - 3.9 The External Examiner should certify the agreed marks for each candidate on the appropriate documentation e.g. White Sheets and Broadsheets.
  - 3.10 External Examiners may be consulted about relevant matters concerning Examination Appeals requested by candidates.
  - 3.11 External Examiners are expected to visit the Institute **once** in each academic year. This visit will normally take place at the time of determination of final results at the Summer Examination Board Meeting.
  - 3.12 External Examiners shall ensure that the confidentiality of Examination Board Meetings is maintained at all times.
  - 3.13 External Examiners are required to submit a report on the prescribed form for each programme(s) module(s)/subject(s) for which they have responsibility. The payment of expenses and fees will be conditional on the submission of this report and claim form.
  - 3.14 If there is any breach by the External Examiner of any of the terms and conditions or if at any time in the opinion of the Institute the External Examiner shall fail to provide a satisfactory service, the Institute may terminate the agreement by giving the External Examiner one month's notice in writing to that effect.
  - 3.15 Once notice has been given the Institute may decide to pass over the duties to another External Examiner.
  - 3.16 In other circumstances the agreement may be terminated with a minimum of three (3) months' notice by either party. Such notice shall be given in writing.
  - 3.17 Please be advised that the Institute deems that all documentation in the examination process is accessible under the Freedom of Information Act which came into force on

1 October 2001. Accordingly we recommend that following the completion of the Summer Examinations the External Examiner should hand over to the Institute all correspondence and documentation associated with the examination in his/her possession.

#### 4 The external examining process

- 4.1 External examining is a quality assurance mechanism employed by providers that supports public confidence in academic qualifications.
- 4.2 The external examining process offers valued objective interface; a principal outcome of external examining is the introduction of an independent element into student assessment procedures.
- 4.3 An external examiner is an independent expert who is a member of the broader community of practice within the programme's field of learning and whose accomplishments attest to his/her likelihood of having the influence necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of the role.
- 4.4 External examiners will be selected from a variety of backgrounds – including industry, academic, module and programme. Typically, two external examiners are engaged for a full programme; one from academic and one from the world of work – although additional external examiners may be deemed necessary from time to time depending on the complexity of the programme.
- 4.5 The main functions of the external examiner are
  - to comment on the programme standard (educational goal);
  - to probe the actual attainment of students using information agreed with and supplied by the provider;
  - to comment where appropriate on the qualification-related assessment strategy and procedures and proceeding from there to probe the overall assessment strategy;
  - to review written examinations prior to their assignment;
  - to review continuous assessment work, either during the academic year or at the time of the final examination period;
  - to review any recommendations for exemptions arising from the evaluation of prior learning, at the time of the final examination period;
  - to report findings and recommendations to the Institute.
- 4.6 An extern examiner is expected to comment on the design, structure, and content of a programme and its constituent components, and on the standard of the programme and its assessment in a national and international context.
- 4.7 The term of appointment of an external examiner is sufficiently long to allow the extern to assess trends and sufficiently short to provide diversity and maintain the required level of independence. A typical term of office would be up to 4 years duration.

#### 5 Determining scope and fulfilling the role of the external examiner

- 5.1 The Institute will agree with the external examiner:
- i. the information required to enable the external examiner to carry out his/her functions effectively (for example, module and programme descriptors, draft examination papers and model answers); and
  - ii. a schedule of outputs and meetings including meetings with students where appropriate.
- 5.2 It is a normal requirement that external examiners visit the institute at least once in the academic year. The purpose of this visit is to, in addition to tasks under Section 4.5 above, ensure that the full range of assessments is covered, including continuous assessment.
- 5.3 The Institute requires each external examiner to take part in an induction process (this might be delivered as an information pack) shortly after his/her appointment. Following this he/she will be able to:
- (where the programme is a professional one) outline the relevant professional infrastructure (regulation, associations, etc.) in Ireland, the professional educational requirements, and how the programme prepares students for entry into the profession;
- i. compare and contrast the **programme standard** with similar programmes with which they are already familiar;
  - ii. outline the overall structure of the programme and be familiar with the module and programme descriptors and the Approved Programme Schedules;
  - iii. discuss and critique the **programme assessment strategy**; marking schemes etc.
  - iv. explain how the programme standard relates to the **award standard** and how the award standard relates to the **National Framework of Qualifications**, and if the examiner is from outside Ireland how the NFQ relates to the other HE Qualifications Frameworks with which the extern may be familiar;
  - v. outline the programme assessment procedures and explain the grading system and how awards are classified; and
  - vi. (for external examiners who are not academics) discuss the principles of learning outcome criterion referenced assessment.
  - vii. effectively carry out the functions of an external examiner.
  - viii. From time to time, the Institute may require external examiners to attend refresher meetings to update on, for example, new procedures, marks and standards and developments in the Higher Education sector.

## 6 The report of the external examiner

External Examiners are required to submit to the VP Academic Affairs & Registrar, not later than 1<sup>st</sup> October in each year, a full report on the examinations with which they are involved. One report covering the academic year will normally be sufficient. The report should be submitted in accordance with the standard Report Form supplied as available in GURU.

- 6.1 An external examiner will be facilitated in providing both verbal and written, informal and formal, feedback. Formal feedback in the format of a written report will constitute the official record.

- 6.2 The external examiner issues a written report each time an individual or a cohort of students is assessed. The report addresses the following:
- i. the evidence considered including meetings and interviews with students and academic staff and others;
  - ii. the appropriateness of the provider's programme standard (i.e. intended learning outcomes) in light of the external examiner's experience and having regard to the award standard and the National Framework of Qualifications;
  - iii. the external examiner's perception of the attainment of students;
  - iv. the external examiner's opinion of the quality of the programme (as distinct from the programme standard) citing strengths and areas for improvement;
  - v. the quality of the assessment instruments (examination papers, dissertation guidelines, etc.) and scoring rubrics/schemes etc.
  - vi. the fairness and consistency of assessment procedures;
  - vii. the reliability of the provider's benchmarking of its assessment procedures
  - viii. appropriate national and international comparisons
  - ix. any substantial concerns (even if they have already been communicated verbally) so that these may be addressed
  - x. changes from previous years if not reporting for the first time
  - xi. the design, structure, and content of a programme and its constituent components, and on the standard of the programme and its assessment in a national and international context.
    - a. It is important that the report is well balanced in terms of highlighting positive aspects and areas for concern.
    - b. External examiner reports are securely retained in accordance with the adopted records retention policy by the Institute and will contribute to the quality assurance procedures and institutional research review activities.
    - c. The Institute considers external examiner reports at all appropriate organisational levels. Actions arising from the report are recorded, communicated to students, and other staff as appropriate.
    - d. The external examiner is provided with a timely, considered response to his/her comments and recommendations, including information on any actions taken by the Institute.
    - e. The External Examiner's report is notified to the Head of Department and then forwarded through GURU. . The formal response of the Department to the report is incorporated in the annual Programme Monitoring Report (see Appendix 4.1 of the Institute's QA procedures), which are reviewed by the Academic Council.