

# Chapter 5 - School Planning and Programme Revalidation Process

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**Policies**

**Procedures**

**Forms**

**Documents**

## 5.1 Introduction

The Programmatic Review process was evaluated and it was agreed that the process would be enhanced by *separating* the process of Programme Revalidation from the process of School Planning. Furthermore, these two processes do not need to occur at the same time.

## 5.2 Scope

This chapter describes two processes:

- The planning of a School for its future development
- The revision of programmes for the purposes of revalidation.

Typically, the School Planning process precedes the revalidation process and encompasses the entire activities of the School, within the wider sphere of education, business and the community. The whole School will carry out a Planning process every 5 years.

The revision of programmes may comprise the review of a single programme or of a suite of programmes. In any case, the entire process must normally be carried out at least once every 5 years.

The procedures and practices outlined in this section are in accordance with the established practice of the Institute, with best practice of the IT sector and with international best practice. This is achieved by ensuring that membership of the internal and external evaluation panels comprise personnel from the Institute, from other higher education institutions in Ireland and from overseas, members of the business community and of professional bodies.

Other ITs and QQI documents which relate to the programmatic review process include:

- Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education and Training
- School of Business and Humanities Programmatic Review 2011
- School of Engineering Programmatic Review 2013
- School of Science Programmatic Review 2013

## 5.3 Self-Evaluation

Elements of self-evaluation are included in both School planning and programme revalidation and data from both should be used in both processes. The self-evaluation stage of the process is essentially concerned with an in-depth assessment of how the business of the School has been conducted since the previous planning or revalidation process was carried out. The views of the stake-holders in the education process are sought and analysed, to establish areas of improvement. The range of typical data required in any self-evaluation is listed below

### **Sources of data required for a self-evaluation**

#### ***Documented Consultation with the Stake-holders:***

Stake-holder	Suggested modes of Consultation to be documented
Students (past and present)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Surveys (e.g. relevance of topics, mode of learning, facilities)</li> <li>2. Focus Groups (e.g. computing facilities)</li> <li>3. Policy and Programme Committee (student representatives contribute to the review)</li> <li>4. Student committees (ensuring that the student body is aware of upcoming changes)</li> </ol>
Staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Questionnaires (e.g. relevance of topics, mode of learning, facilities)</li> <li>2. Focus Groups (e.g. Maths, Computing)</li> <li>3. Programme committee meetings (dealing with learning outcomes, programme schedules and syllabi)</li> </ol>
Employers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Surveys of appropriate industrial sectors (learning outcomes; relevance of topics; appropriate depth of knowledge)</li> <li>2. Focus Groups (e.g. specific interested, e.g. accounting; design, healthcare)</li> <li>3. Industrial Advisory Panels (to explore possible future directions of the School; strategic issues; organisational and management issues)</li> </ol>

**Programme Performance:**

Metric	Analysis (per programme each year)
Intake statistics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of CAO applicants, by preference</li> <li>2. Number of acceptances, registrations and losses</li> </ol>
Exam Performance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Breakdown of fail/pass/merit/distinction levels</li> </ol>
Graduate statistics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Destination of graduates</li> <li>2. Future studies of graduates</li> <li>3. Pay levels of graduates</li> </ol>

**Student Intake:**

Student Cohort	Relevant details
CAO	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number applying for each programme</li> <li>2. Numbers offered places</li> <li>3. Number accepting places</li> <li>4. Number registered</li> <li>5. Geographic origins of students</li> </ol>
Those with qualifications from other Institutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Previous institution of education</li> <li>2. Qualification attained</li> <li>3. Final qualification at IT Sligo</li> </ol>
International	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formal agreements for educational exchanges with Institutes abroad</li> <li>2. Where do incoming students come from</li> <li>3. What programmes do they take</li> <li>4. Where do IT Sligo students go to</li> <li>5. What programmes do they take</li> </ol>
Mature	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Numbers applying for programmes</li> </ol>

	7. Entry qualifications and any exemptions granted 8. Special preparatory programmes/bridging offered 9. Any initiatives (e.g. timetabling to suit students; tutorials; study groups)
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**Strategic Planning**

Strategic Goal	Target	Achievement to date
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**5.4 School Planning**

**5.4.1 Introduction**

Through various means a School will evaluate its performance and achievements over recent past years, will analyse its future possible directions and will propose plans for the future changes and development of the School. This will include, for example, strategies in respect of resources, research, teaching and learning, staff training as well as strategies for addressing issues that arise during the self-review stage. Plans for any changes of focus in the range of programmes offered to attract different or more learners should also be presented.

The process is shown in Figure 5.1.

**SUMMARY SCHOOL PLANNING PROCESS**

**PERSONS RESPONSIBLE**

**PROCESS**

**DOCUMENTS**

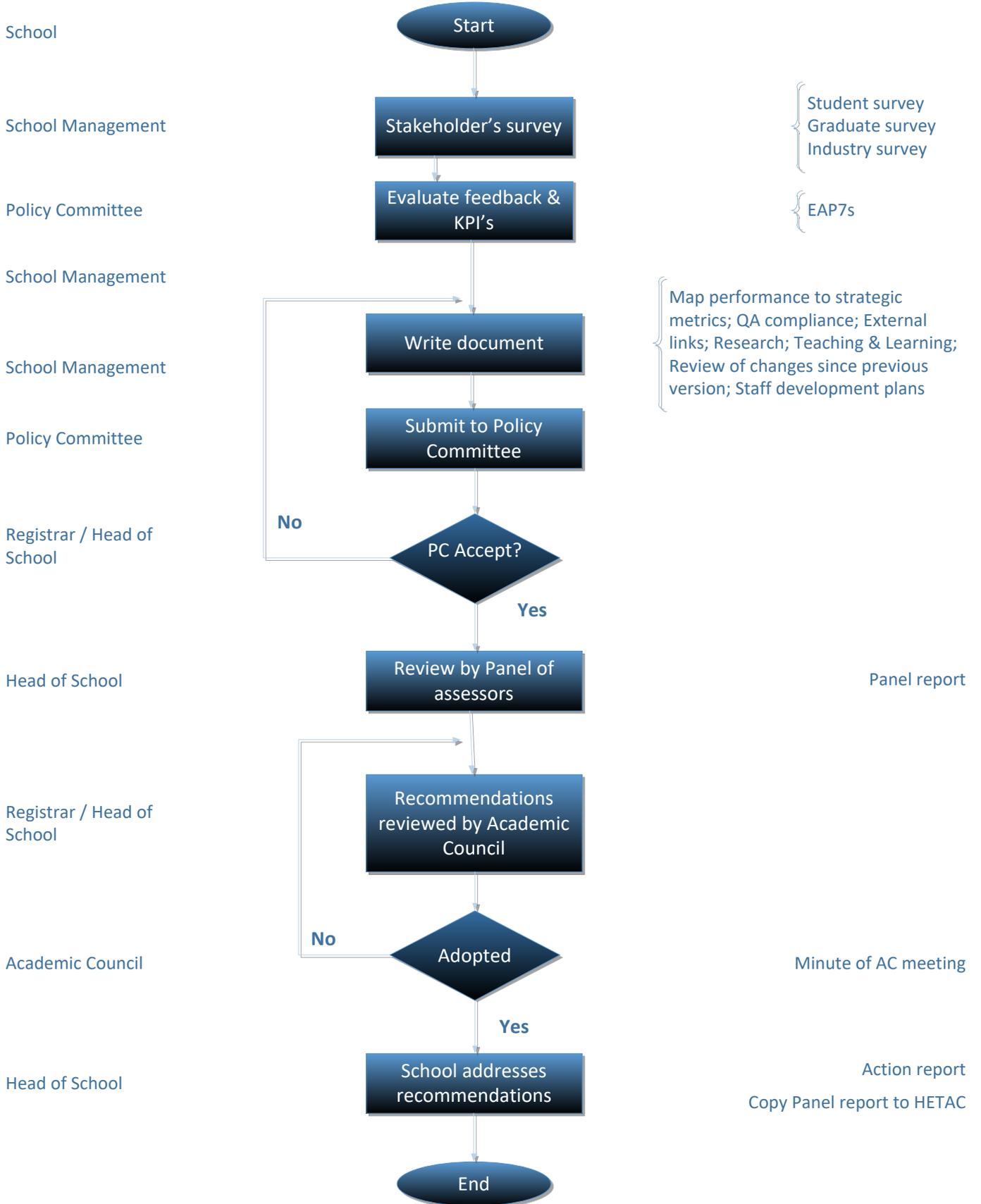


Figure 5.1

## 5.4.2 Objectives of School planning

The objectives of conducting a School Planning process are to:

1. Optimise the resources of the School for the purposes of delivering the highest standard and quality of education and to meet the School strategic objectives
2. Specify how the School will respond to the Institutes Strategic plan
3. Make proposals for changes in direction and focus of the School
4. Identify key performance indicators for the School and specify how these will be measured
5. Map the proposed actions to the strategic objectives
6. Update the procedures for monitoring quality, management, and operations within the School.

## 5.5 Process of School planning

At least once every 5 years, or as directed by the academic Council from time to time, a School will formally present its plans for the future development of the School.

The process is controlled by the Academic Council and managed by the Head of School in collaboration with the Registrar.

The starting point for the Planning process is a self-evaluation of the covering the period since the previous Planning process. This is likely to include the following:

1. A summary of changes made since the previous Planning process.
2. An analysis and evaluation of how the school has responding to the Institute's strategic plan and a mapping of how the school is contributing to the strategic targets.
3. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the channels of communication and engagement with the business sector and employers
4. A statement of QA compliance. For the period since the previous Planning process, this should include reviews and summaries of:
5. Actions taken in respect of recommendations of the annual Programme Monitoring Reports (PMR).
6. Achievements against the School's KPIs
7. Recommendation made by reports of any Panels of assessors
8. Conditions and recommendations from programme (re)validation boards.
9. Minutes of meetings of School, School Management and Programme Boards.
10. A review of past performance of the School in relation to its strategies and an analysis of the current external environment to identify future potential directions
11. An analysis of the main findings from surveys of current students and of graduates
12. A summary of changes made to programmes since the last Planning process was carried out.
13. An evaluation of performance in strategic areas, e.g:
  1. Research
  2. Learning and teaching
  3. Collaborations with employers and other providers

4. An evaluation of staff contribution to the achievements of the School strategic plan, together with staff training and development needs
5. Staff CV's, updated to include research and publications.

### **Suggested list of chapter headings for School Planning Documents.**

#### **School Planning Document**

##### **1. Introduction**

Brief overview of the School function and structure in the context of the Institute and historical developments and interaction with industry. The external context in which this Plan takes place.

##### **2. Executive Summary**

Key findings and proposals.

##### **3. Performance of the School since the previous Plan**

This section to include achievement of previously set targets, covering topics such as programme developments/changes, external links, research, teaching and learning, levels of attainment and graduates. Related policies, procedures and infrastructure.

Review of staff qualifications and distribution of employment grades. Any changes in staffing. Staff recruitment and training policies. Training which has taken place and its relevance to the strategic objectives of the School. Staff CVs. Level of staff involvement in the development of the School including publications, conferences attended and organised.

##### **4. Evaluation of the external environment and feedback from stakeholders**

Analysis of responses to surveys of students, staff and external stakeholders, indicating the key findings that will inform the new proposed strategic plan for the School. A study of relevant external developments, summarising how they will influence the direction of the School.

##### **5. Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan**

Following from Chapters 3 and 4, this should be a brief statement of how the School intends to position itself in higher education over the next five years.

##### **6. Programme Development**

Plans for development or cessation of existing programmes. New growth areas and how these developments will be supported. A list of new programmes identified for development over the next five years.

##### **7. Operational Plans**

How the strategic Plan will be delivered, key targets and how the achievement of these will be measured. Staff and facilities development plans.

Following on from the self-evaluation, the School will document its proposals for the future. These proposals will be supported with data from the evaluation of the reviews listed in Section 5.4.3 above. The School will also link these proposals to the Institutes Strategic Plan. Changes and the direction and focus of the School will be highlighted and justified. There should be clear indications of how these activities/facilities will be developed in future years.

The final draft is considered by the School Policy Committee and any recommendations for revision are taken into consideration by the School.

The Registrar in consultation with the Head of School, selects a Panel of experts (see 5.7.3 for the composition of this group) to conduct a thorough evaluation of the documentation on behalf of the

School. This Panel will be competent in assessing the academic standing of the Institute and have experience of strategic planning for higher education. The Panel will include stakeholders and persons competent to assess the proposals at national and international levels. The Panel will receive the documentation at least three weeks prior to visiting the Institute. This group will visit the Institute over 2 days and will conduct a review of the School's activities and discuss the future plans with the staff, students and stakeholders. Typically, the group meets with the staff and the students, views the facilities and issues a report. The 'visitation' is normally a two day process, with, if necessary, parallel discussion sessions with staff involved in each programme.

An External Evaluation Report will be issued, setting out the findings of the external evaluation review group. In particular, the Panel may comment on the appropriateness of the proposed changes to the School direction and focus, in the context of national and international requirements and trends.

The School will have an opportunity to comment on the final draft of the External Evaluation Report, before the report is formally submitted for consideration and action by the Academic Council.

### **5.5.1 Recommendations of Academic Council**

The Academic Council will, at a formal meeting, adopt or otherwise to the recommendations made to the School by the Panel of assessors. The Academic Council will identify those recommendations which it cannot adopt and provide reasons for this.

### **5.5.2 On-going review by Academic Council**

Within six months of approval of the School Plans, the Academic Council will initiate a review process that will be managed by the Registrar or a nominee. The purpose of this review is to monitor the implementation of the changes identified in the School planning process. This is a means of ensuring that the changes have been made (and, if necessary, to identify blockages to the changes), rather than being a simple auditing exercise. The review will be carried out in consultation with the School. The auditing panel will normally comprise The Chair of the Planning and Coordination Committee of the Academic Council or his / her nominee, two members of the External Peer Review Panel one of whom should be an academic from another university or Institute and the Registrar. A report arising from the review will be prepared within one month following the review and presented to the following meeting of the Academic Council.

## **5.6 Programme Revalidation**

A detailed evaluation and analysis of the content of modules and programmes must be carried out at the expiry date of validation or sooner if deemed necessary by a Programme Board. This is to ensure that the School/Department updates its programmes so that they remain relevant to students and employers and that it has the opportunity to make the necessary changes to the programme structures and content to keep them current.

### 5.6.1 Objectives of Programme Revalidation

The objectives of a programme revalidation process are to:

1. Evaluate the operation of the Programmes over the previous period of validation.
2. Incorporate feedback from staff, student and employers into the revised programmes
3. Ensure that programmes remain relevant to learners needs, including academic and labour market needs
4. Ensure that learning modes are compatible with academic standards, coupled with the life style of learners
5. Achieve enhanced integration between all aspects of learning, teaching and research incorporating any new pedagogical thinking, where appropriate
6. To achieve revalidation of all programmes, incorporating the agreed changes (for up to a maximum of 5 years)

### 5.7 Process of Programme Revalidation

Each programme in the School/Department, both full time and part time should be evaluated at least once every 5 years. A submission for revalidation of programmes may be presented, by discipline area, by Department or for all programmes across the School.

The revalidation process is shown in Figure 5.2.

**SUMMARY OF PROCESS FOR THE REVALIDATION OF PROGRAMMES**

**PERSONS RESPONSIBLE**

**PROCESS**

**DOCUMENTS**

School / Department



Programme Board



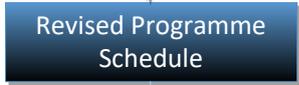
EAP7/s (if more than one programme is being revalidated)

Programme Board



Student survey  
Graduate survey  
Industry survey

Programme Board



Existing and proposed programme schedules and reasons for changes

Policy Committee



No

Yes

Programme Board

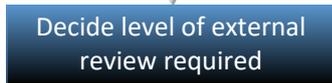


New Modules / Programmes written in Module and Programme Manager format

Head of Department



Planning and Coordination Committee



Minutes of P&C Committee Meeting

Head of Department



Panel report

Registrar / Head of School



Academic Council



No

Yes

Minutes of AC Meeting  
E-versions signed off

Head of Department



Action Report

Copy Panel Report to HETAC

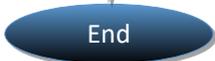


Figure 5.2

In the process of preparing an existing programme for revalidation an evaluation is undertaken by all academic staff involved in the programme together with learner representatives, graduates of the programme and others with close involvement in the programme including those involved in the provision of support services, such as library and information services and counselling services. Consultations with outside stakeholders and any necessary market research and review of recent research findings in the discipline concerned should form part of the evaluation. Self-evaluation must also include an assessment of the learning and teaching processes and the contribution of active research to learning.

The process is controlled by the Academic Council and managed by the Head of School in collaboration with the Registrar.

The starting point for the programme revalidation process is an evaluation of the programme to date. This is likely to include the following:

1. A summary of changes made since the previous validation.
2. A summary of the key performance indicators for the programme from the annual programme monitoring reports. Longitudinal trends should be provided in graphical form.
3. Actions taken as a result of school/AC committee response to review of monitoring forms.
4. Resourcing issues in the context of these programmes.
5. Statistics in respect of access (standard/nonstandard etc.), transfer (into and out of programmes, exemptions granted advanced entry) and progression (from graduate surveys)
6. Placement and internship (data and issues, where relevant)
7. Student workload issues, if any, and how they were addressed
8. Are award titles still relevant taking into account minor changes and modifications that might have been made
9. A statement of QA compliance. For the period since the previous revalidation process, this should include reviews and summaries of:
10. Actions taken in respect of recommendations of the annual Programme Monitoring Reports (PMR).
11. Conditions and recommendations from programme (re)validation Panels.
12. Minutes of meetings of School, School Management and Programme Boards.
13. An analysis and evaluation of the main findings from surveys of current students, of graduates, and of employers of graduates of the programme.

Suggested list of chapter headings for Programme Review and Revalidation Documents.

### **5.7.1 Programme Review and Re-validation**

#### **1. Introduction**

Brief overview of the School function and structure in the context of the Institute and historical developments and interaction with industry. External influences in the context of how they guide and drive changes in programmes.

## **2. Executive Summary**

A brief statement of the proposed changes to programmes, perhaps grouped into major and minor level changes. Some top level indication of the resource implication of these changes should be provided.

## **3. Performance of Programmes since the previous revalidation**

Statistics on each programme since the previous re-validation, entry points, pass and retention analysis, graduate numbers, employment of graduates. A summary of any changes made since the previous revalidation. An analysis of these statistics to identify reasons for changes to be made to programmes.

A review of the Programme Monitoring Reports and/or programme validation Panel reports with an explanation of how the identified actions and recommendations were achieved.

## **4. Evaluation of the external environment and feedback from stakeholders**

Analysis of responses to surveys of students, staff and external stakeholders, indicating the key findings that will inform the proposed changes to programmes and new programmes. A study of relevant external developments, summarising how they justify and drive the changes.

## **5. Proposed Changes to Programmes**

For each programme, state the proposed changes and the proposed new programme content and Programme schedule. Indicate how the proposed changes will ensure that the programme remains relevant to learner and employer's needs. Indicate any changes in modes of teaching and learning, including new assessment methods.

Plans for cessation of existing programmes and why. New growth areas and how these developments will be supported. A list of new programmes identified for development over the next five years.

Identify links such as how research feeds into the undergraduate programmes, the enhancement of links with employers and how programmes are delivering on any national priorities and objectives.

## **6. Operational Plans**

How the proposed changes will be implemented including any challenges with 'phasing in' the changes.

Identify any staff or resource implications.

Following on from the programme evaluation, the programme board will document its proposals for the future. These proposals will be supported with data from the evaluation of the reviews listed above. Specifically, the existing and proposed Programme Schedules will be presented with the reasons for the changes explained. Any other changes (such as the mode of teaching or delivery) will be identified, including any changes in the resource requirements for the programme.

The final draft of the programme revalidation document is considered by the School Policy Committee and any recommendations for revision are taken into consideration by the Programme Boards.

The Registrar in consultation with the Head of School, selects a Panel of experts (see below for composition) to conduct a thorough evaluation of the documentation on behalf of the School. This Panel will be competent in assessing programmes of higher education and will include discipline

experts from other Institutes of Technology, from the university sector and from the world of work. The Panel will receive the documentation at least three weeks prior to the visit to the Institute. Typically, over a one day visit to the Institute, the group meets with the staff and stakeholders, views the facilities and issues a report.

### 5.7.2 Composition of the External Peer Review Panel (Selected By the Academic Council)

1. **Chairperson** (e.g. Registrar from another Institute of Technology or Senior academic)
2. **Minimum Members:**
3. Head of School from another Institute of Technology
4. Head of Department from another Institute of Technology (where the range of programmes is wide spread within a School, it may be appropriate to have more than one Head of Department).
5. Senior Academic from university sector and/or overseas.
6. Representative from the professional bodies (where appropriate).
7. Employer/industrial representatives (typically more than one will be required to cover the range of the programmes).
8. Student Representative (From other Institution or USI)
9. Recording Secretary (Registrar nominee from IT Sligo)

**Note 1:** Every effort should be made to ensure gender equity where possible in the composition of the group.

**Note 2:** In selection of 2(iii) it is desirable to include an academic from an overseas organisation.

An External Evaluation Report will be issued, setting out the findings of the external evaluation review group. In particular, the Panel may comment on the appropriateness of the proposed changes to the programme and could make conditions and/or recommendation regarding the direction of programme revalidation.

The School will have an opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of the External Evaluation Report, before the report is formally submitted for consideration and action by the Academic Council.

### 5.7.3 Recommendations of Academic Council

The Academic Council will, at a formal meeting, adopt or otherwise to the findings made by the Panel of assessors. The Academic Council will identify those recommendations which it cannot adopt and provide reasons for this. A copy of the Panel report will be sent to QQI by the Registrar.

### 5.7.4 On-going review by Academic Council

Within six months of approval of the School Plans, the Academic Council will initiate a review process that will be managed by the Registrar or a nominee. The purpose of this review is to monitor the implementation of the changes identified in the revalidation process. This is a means of ensuring that the changes have been made (and, if necessary, to identify blockages to the changes), rather than being a simple auditing exercise. The review will be carried out in consultation with the School. The auditing panel will normally comprise Education Development and Quality Manager and the

Head of Department for the programme. A report arising from the review will be prepared within one month following the review and presented to the following meeting of the Academic Council.