National College of Ireland

Institutional Review

Volume 1: Self Evaluation Report

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1   Introduction

The National College of Ireland (NCI) is a not-for-profit company with charitable status, which currently derives 37% of its funding from the Irish Government, through an annual core grant and the payment of undergraduate fees for full-time Irish/EU learners[1]. The College provides further and higher education and training programmes in the area of Business, Human Resource Management, Accounting, Finance, Computing and Community Studies.

1.1   Background

The National College of Ireland has a long and proud history as a third level educational institution. Established by the Jesuit order in 1951 as the Catholic Workers College, it quickly gained recognition for excellence in its subject fields, particularly human resource management and industrial relations, and for the provision of educational opportunities for employees entering third level education. It established a reputation as the National College of Industrial Relations (NCIR) and in the late 1990's the College became the National College of Ireland (NCI).

In the middle of the 1990s the College entered a new phase of its development expanding its part-time provision to a number of off-campus locations throughout the country and extending its full-time undergraduate programmes to include accountancy, finance and informatics. In 2002 the College moved from its original site in Ranelagh to a new 'State of the Art' purpose built premises in Dublin's International Financial Services Centre.

The core activities of the College, its mission, curriculum and the diverse nature of its learner population reflect its history, geographical location in Dublin Docklands, established expertise, links with business and trade unions, as well as its commitment to extending educational opportunities to non-traditional learners.

1.2   Governance & Management

With an independent Chair, the Governing Body of the National College of Ireland is comprised of representatives from the national employer & trades union bodies, the Jesuit Community, representatives from wider education and business, as well as the President, staff and learner representation through the President of the Student Union.

The College is managed by a Senior Team, comprising the President, the Director of Finance and the Vice President and an Executive Board, chaired by the Vice President. The Executive Board manages the day to day operations of the College and comprises the Director of Finance, Registrar, and the Deans of School and Heads of support functions.

Academic governance is provided by Academic Council and its subcommittees;
- Academic Quality,

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[1] The number of funded learners is capped at 925

- Learning Teaching & Assessment,
- Research,
- Academic Progress & Student Support
- School and Programme Committees

1.2.1 Current Management

The current President, Dr Paul Mooney commenced his 3 year term of office in January 2007 on the retirement of Prof. Joyce O'Connor who had served as President for 17 years. In tandem with this appointment, a new senior management structure was put in place with the appointment of a Vice-President (Academic & Administration), Vice President (Research) & new Director of Finance.

The School of Community Studies was established in 2008. The current Dean of the School of Business was appointed in September 2008. In 2008, the academic governance of the College was strengthened with the introduction of subject heads in the Schools of Business and Computing.

The resignation of the Vice President (Research) in 2008, lead to a restructuring of the role. This is now a rotating role between the Deans of the School of Business and Computing. The Vice President (Academic & Administration) resigned in September 2009 and in the interim, the President is chairing the Executive Board.

Dr. Mooney has decided not to renew his contract in January 2010. This, coupled with the resignation of the Vice-Presidents between 2008-9 has given the Governing Body an opportunity to review the organisation structure of the College to lead it forward during this challenging time for the sector.

1.3 Programme provision

NCI's programmes are accredited by the Higher Education & Training Awards Council (HETAC), the Further Education & Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD) and most recently, the Institute of Commercial Management (ICM).

Programmes in Accounting and Finance enjoy recognition by such professional bodies as the Chartered Accountants Ireland, (formerly the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (ACA)), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, (ACCA), and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA). National College of Ireland is the largest provider of Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) accredited programmes in the Human Resource Management area

NCI, has three schools, the School of Business, School of Computing, and School of Community Studies They offer a wide range of full-time and part-time programmes as follows:

- The School of Business offers 26 programmes from level 5 (or equivalent) to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications. The School's level 5 equivalent programmes are mainly professional training programmes accredited by the Chartered Institute of

Professional Development (CIPD) which are at NVQ Level 3 on the UK qualifications framework.

- The School of Computing offers 13 programmes from level 3 to level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications. The School has recently had approval to run a PhD in Technology Enhanced Learning on a case by case basis. The School's level 3 programme is accredited by FETAC and was developed in conjunction with the state training agency FAS.

- The School of Community Studies offers programmes from level 3 to level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications in subjects which range from employability skills to family law, advocacy and active citizenship. All of the Schools programmes are run on a part-time basis. The School offers 2 FETAC major awards as well as a number of minor awards. As well as these awards, the Early Learning Initiative which was established as a Community Based Educational Initiative aimed at addressing educational disadvantage through the provision from birth, offers an integrated programme of activities, training and supports, for children, parents, families, and child care and education providers. This is a joint initiative between NCI and St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

- Part time programmes across all three Schools, are run through several modes of delivery including evening delivery, block release, weekend delivery and a limited amount of blended learning. Programmes are run throughout the calendar year. Most programmes run on a semester basis.

- A limited number of programmes are offered in centres outside of the main campus. These form the National Campus Network but can also include employer premises and community based locations.

Profile of Programme Delivery by Level

3% 1%
2% 10%
36% 37%
11%

□ Level 3 ■ Level 4 □ Level 5 □ Level 6 ■ Level 7 ■ Level 8 ■ Level 9
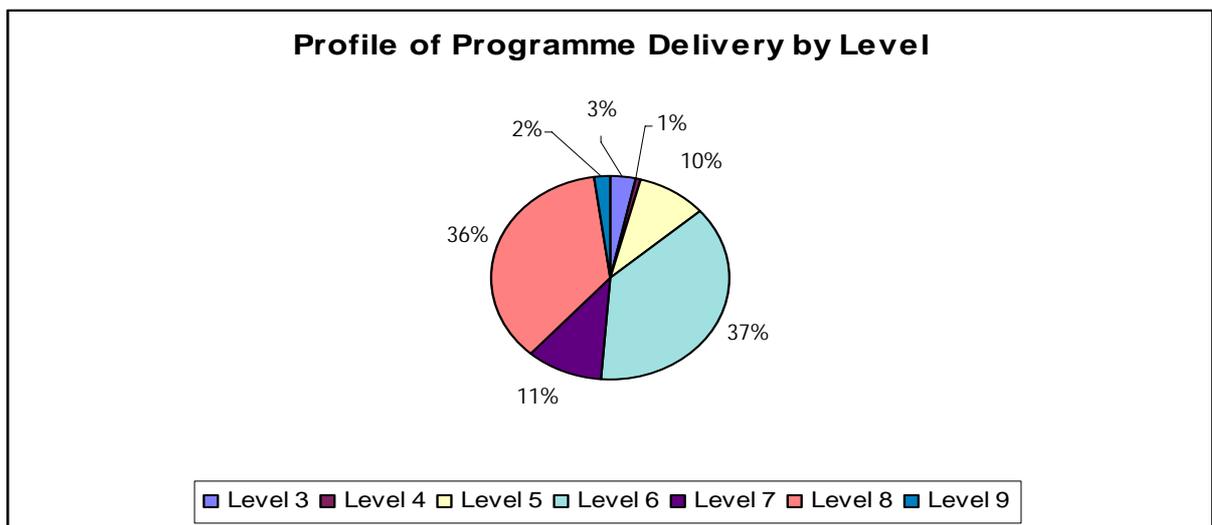
Figure 1: Profile of Programmes by Level

NCI has a history of working closely with organisations to create programmes that are tailored to their requirements. These organisations range from trade unions, employers organisations, individual companies and community

groups. NCI has also commenced forging alliances with other education providers and organisations in India and Romania.

1.4 Learner profile

In 2008-9, National College of Ireland had an enrolment of 3,700 learners of which 70% were part-time learners. The School breakdown of learners is as presented in Table 1:

School	No Enrolled	Full time	Part-time
Business	2914	30%	70%
Computing	415	52%	48%
Community Studies	360		100%

Table 1: Learner Profile

9% of these learners study at locations in our National Campus network. These are locations outside of the main campus in the Greater Dublin area, in major towns throughout the country as well as in employer organisations. Currently all programmes offered via this delivery method are at level 6 or below on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Approximately 16 percent of enrolments in 2008-9 were for programmes at Levels 3 to 5 on the NFQ. These programmes are offered mainly by the School of Community Studies and consist of personal, employment & advocacy skills programmes. The remaining 84 percent were registered on programmes leading to awards at levels – 6 to 10 on the NFQ. There are 70 learners registered for postgraduate programmes leading to awards at level 9 on the NFQ and 4 registered for programmes leading to level 10.

1.4.1 Demographic Profile

While the College has a small full-time International Student body (approx 45 learners), over 50 nationalities are represented in our learner profile across all of our programmes. The accepted definition of International Student being that of a learner who pays the international fee on full-time programmes masks the international dimension of our learners. 54% of the total learner population are mature learners. Mature learners are defined by the College as those that are aged 23 on the 1st of January of the year of admission. Of those learners who have declared a socio-economic background, 40% of full-time learners are from the DEF[2] economic group (manual skilled-unskilled workers) with 29% being from the ABC group (professional).

1.4.2 Learner Retention & Completion

Two types of retention are reviewed at National College of Ireland – 'In-Year Retention' and 'Cross-Year Retention'

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[2] These categorisations are based on the Central Statistics Office definition of the occupation of the head of household in the census.

In-Year retention

In year retention is defined as the number of learners who remain registered at the end of the year as a percentage of learners who registered on the programme at its start date. Repeat Learners are discounted from this calculation.

	2006	2007	2008
1st Year FT	92.84%	86.05%	94.02%
1st Year PT	97.46%	92.50%	95.42%
Continuing FT	98.88	98.28%	100%
Continuing PT	99.53%	99.47%	99.60%

Table 2: In Year Retention

Cross Year Retention

Cross -Year retention gives a more complete picture of retention as it looks forward into the next year of the programme. Cross year retention calculates retention as not only those who do not withdraw in an academic year but also proceed to the following year or come back to repeat 1 or more modules. As the learner is repeating, they are deemed to be retained. This measure can only be calculated for programmes longer than 1 year in duration and is not calculated for the final year of a programme.

Generally speaking, cross year retention mirrors the features of in-year retention in that learners that have progressed to the 2nd or subsequent year of a programme tend to stay on with retention rates in the mid 90% range. First year cross year retention tends to be in the early to mid 80% range. It was a result of reviewing these first year trends which were often masked by intakes of transfer learners that programmes of learning support in maths and computing support were put in place. The success of these interventions is under continual monitoring to ensure that they are effective.

Completion

The completion rate is defined as the number of learners who have graduated from the programme within 5 years of commencing. Completion rates are naturally affected by 1st year retention and by the degree of transfer between similar programmes at the same level. The completion rate for the 2005 intake of learners is presented in table 3 below

NQF Level	2005 No Students started	No Graduates	% Graduated
NQF Level 7	118	97	82.20%
NQF Level 8	104	82	78.85%

Table 3: Completion Rates

1.5 Research

Research at National College of Ireland is regarded as a core activity which is embedded in the academic culture and which contributes to the overall mission of the College. The vision for research at the National College of Ireland is one which sees it as contributing to the realisation of Ireland's full potential as a knowledge-based economy. The delivery on this vision is through the development of a number of research active clusters. Through this approach, the Research Strategy is directly linked to and informs the Teaching and Learning and the Knowledge Transfer Strategies. The College is also committed to ensuring that learners from a diversity of backgrounds have access to education, at all levels including postgraduate research opportunities.

1.6 Staff & Faculty Profile

NCI employs 438 people with a full-time equivalent of 248 employees of which 122 are administrative/support staff and 126 are teaching staff. 49% of employees are male and 51% are female. 12 nationalities are represented. The tables below demonstrate the number of staff in each School and functional area and the breakdown between full and part-time staff.

School/Dept	Role	No Employed	Full Time Equivalence
School of Business	Administrative/Support	10	9.09
	Faculty/Associate Faculty	189	85.40
School of Community Studies	Administrative/Support	21	11.50
	Faculty/Associate Faculty	44	12.60
School of Computing	Administrative/Support	3	1.69
	Faculty/Associate Faculty	40	21.51
Centre for Research & Innovation in Learning & Teaching	Faculty/Associate Faculty	3	3.00
	Administrative/Support	4	2.34
Library	Administrative/Support	9	7.43
Information Technology	Administrative/Support	22	15.49
Student Services (incl admissions & examinations)	Administrative/Support	18	16.71
International Office	Faculty/Associate Faculty	4	3.14
	Administrative/Support	2	2.00
Marketing Dept	Administrative/Support	15	8.91
	Faculty/Associate Faculty	1	0.17

School/Dept	Role	No Employed	Full Time Equivalence
Finance	Administrative/Support	10	9.57
Human Resources	Administrative/Support	4	4.00
President's Office	Administrative/Support	2	2.00
	Faculty/Associate Faculty	1	0.14
Vice President's Office	Administrative/Support	1	1.00
Registrar's Office	Administrative/Support	1	1.00
Quality Assurance & Statistical Services	Administrative/Support	2	2.00
Millennium Scholars	Administrative/Support	4	2.59
	Faculty/Associate Faculty	1	0.43
NCI Foundation	Administrative/Support	3	3.00
Total		**438**	**248.43**

Table 4: Staffing by School/Department

Breakdown of full-time & part-time staff

Role	Status	No Employees	FTE
Administrative/Support	FT	98	97
	PT	57	25
Faculty/Associate Faculty	FT	34	33
	PT	249	94
		438	**248**

Table 5: Breakdown of staff

Length of Service

The average length of service of NCI staff is 3.7 years. When Associate Faculty and other temporary staff are removed, the average length of service rises to 4.7 years. The average service of full-time faculty is 5.73 years, with both the Schools of Computing and Business Studies having comparable rates. However, in the School of Business, of 23 members of faculty, 15 members of faculty have less than 5 years service with NCI of which 6 have less than 2 years service.

This can place additional demands on operational aspects relating to the role of the faculty member due to inexperience of NCI processes and procedures and/or the sector. The need to address this at School level and through ongoing knowledge and skills development is recognised.

Figure 2: NCI: Organisation Chart
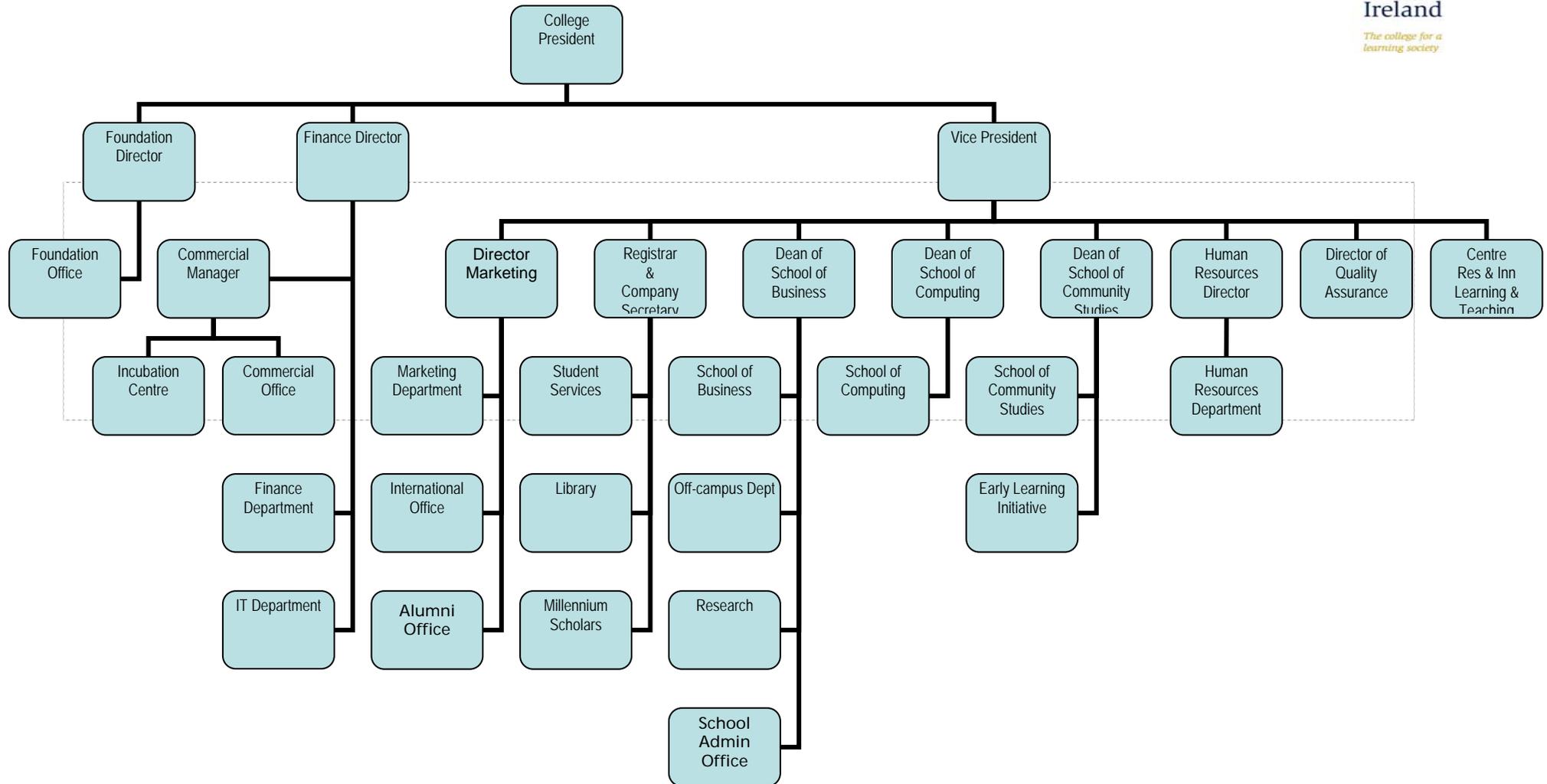
Figure 3; NCI Academic Governance
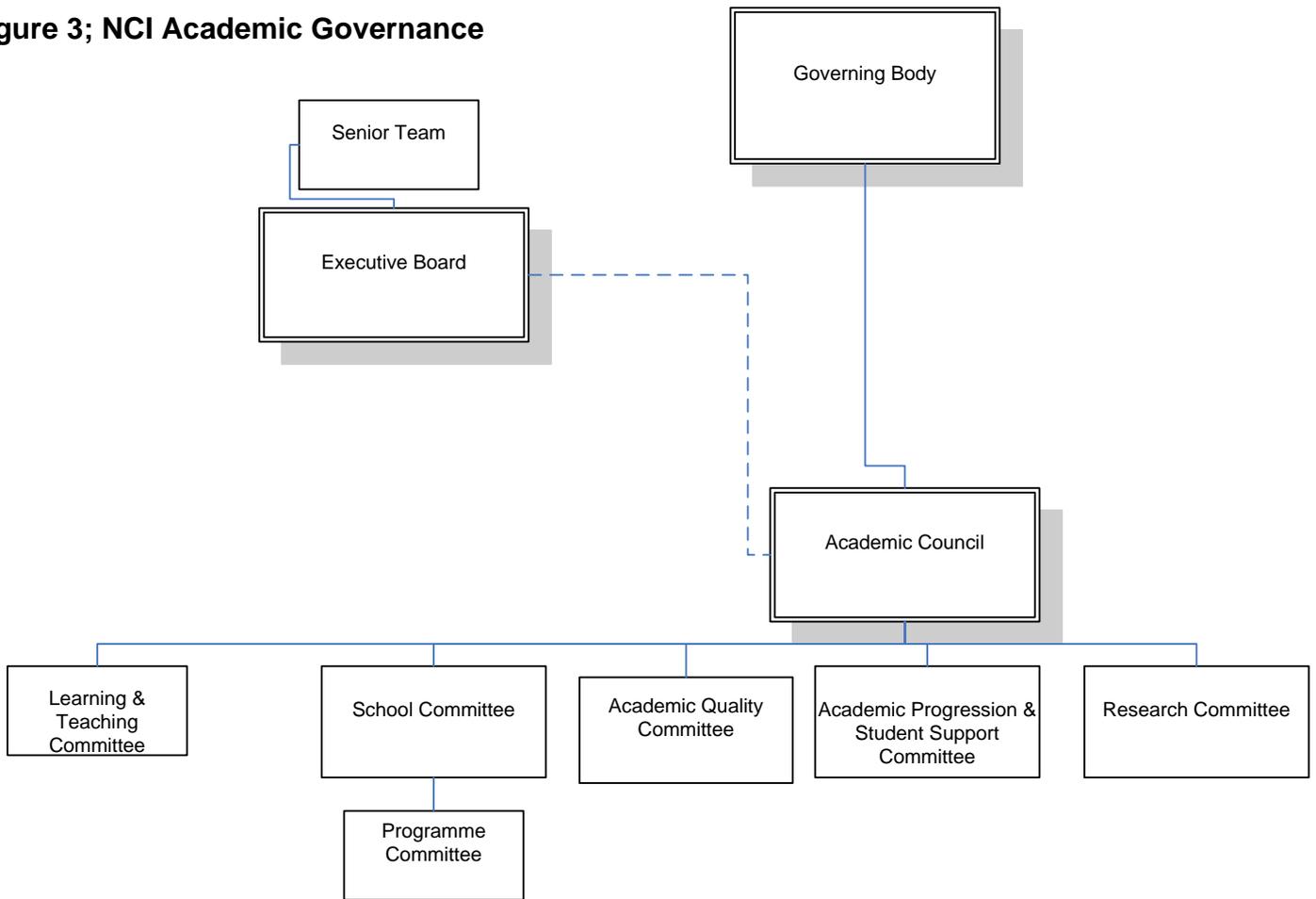
2   Institutional Review Process

The process was lead by the Vice President and managed by the Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services (DQASS). The Executive Board undertook the role of Steering Committee and the DQASS joined the Executive Board for the period January 2009 to date.

The process officially commenced within the College in January 2009 when Academic Council was informed that the College would be reviewed during the second phase of HETAC's schedule. The College had just emerged from a strategic planning process (2007-8) and a similar self evaluation process which had been instigated by Senior Management in order to apply to the HEA for Institute of Higher Education status. The Schools of Computing and the School of Business were also in the middle of a major programmatic review process. The Institutional Review team had some concern that there may be a degree of 'self evaluation' fatigue within the College and given the small core of full-time staff, that the capacity of the College to fully engage with the process would be compromised. This concern proved to be unfounded.

The institutional review has been a standing agenda item at Executive Board, Academic Quality Committee and Academic Council since January 2009. The terms of reference were discussed and approved at Academic Council in August 2009. The final draft of this report was discussed and approved at Governing Body on the 23rd October and Academic Council on 4th November 2009, with the final report being approved by Executive Board on the 23rd November 2009.

2.1   Communication

A staff briefing, to which all staff – academic, administrative and part-time associate faculty were invited, outlined the objectives of the review, the manner in which it would be carried out and how it would integrate with the programmatic review processes that were taking place in parallel. The processes that had preceded this were recognised at that meeting and the approach taken was that the institutional review would give the College the opportunity to build on the work already undertaken in these previous reviews and benchmark the progress of the implementation of the Strategic Plan and the improvement plans developed as part of the HEA application.

A status report on the review has been included in all staff briefings from the President.

Communication to learners has been achieved via the Students' Union. There is close co-operation between the Students' Union and the College executive. This is achieved via regular meetings and the handover process between the incoming and outgoing SU Presidents. A specific briefing to class representatives was made in October 2009 as part of their annual class representative training.

2.2 Self Evaluation Model Used

The use of cross functional groups has been a proven method of engaging staff with issues and ensuring that assumptions and perceptions are challenged. A number of self-evaluation groups[3] were set up and represented the following areas within the College:

- School of Business
- School of Community Studies
- School of Computing
- Student Support Services
- Facilities
- Information Technology
- Marketing
- Human Resource Management

These groups were in large part the same groups that had previously undertaken self evaluations under the HEA and strategy review groups.

The approach taken was that the groups would each provide a self evaluation report from their respective area which would require them to evaluate how well the quality assurance procedures were working on the ground, what barriers were in place which prevented procedures being implemented and how effective were these procedures.

The groups each had a Chair (head of function/Dean of School) and met regularly. Each group devised its own meeting schedule and how the work would be achieved.

As the Dean of the School of Business had just been appointed, he used the process as an opportunity to undertake a root and branch review of the School, its operations and how it interacted with other functions.

Recognising the demands on the teams, an information and collaboration area was set up on Moodle, (the virtual learning environment) to allow pre-reading of materials and contributions from those who were unable to attend meetings and to facilitate engagement with Associate Faculty.

The groups then drafted a self evaluation report and submitted this to the Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services. The degree of engagement from all groups was commendable, particularly from academic staff given that this process took place between March and June 2009 and ran in parallel with programmatic review processes, new programme development and the demands of teaching and assessing.

As outlined earlier the relatively long lead in time was deliberately chosen in order to accommodate the quality assurance processes that were already ongoing. Whilst the terms of reference for the review were in large part set by HETAC, the institutional review team was cognisant that the terms of reference had not been finalised. These were finalised in October 2009 and

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[3] See Appendix 1 for the outputs of the process

the groups were asked to review their reports against the final terms for completeness.

2.3   Parallel processes

2.3.1   Review of Quality Assurance Procedures

National College of Ireland's quality assurance procedures were last reviewed by HETAC in January 2007. As a result of its application for accreditation of PhD awards on a case by case basis, quality assurance procedures for research were further reviewed in 2008 and again in 2009. As part of its annual processes, the quality assurance procedures are reviewed and where required updated or indeed replaced. This process is informed by policy change by awarding bodies and the outcomes of examination boards, student complaint and appeal, observation of the operation of existing procedures. These changes are usually instigated by the Registrar or Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services.

An audit of the Quality Assurance Procedures against HETAC policy, ENQA standards was undertaken. Interactions with staff, particularly new staff had already indicated that the QA handbook was perceived to be user unfriendly. To make the policies more accessible, a decision was made by the DQASS to make the handbook more process driven rather than be a list of procedures. This requires that handbook be reviewed from that viewpoint and a degree of cross referencing has to take place.

Whilst this process was taking place, FETAC announced its intention to undertake a monitoring review of NCI's agreed quality assurance procedures. This review took place between June and July 2009. It was found that while all of the appropriate policies and procedures were in place, preparation for the review demonstrated that there was a gap in how the handbook explicitly stated how the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures should be monitored.

2.3.2   Audit of Quality Assurance Mechanisms

An independent review and audit of the following quality assurance mechanisms was undertaken by the Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services:
- Academic Committee minutes,
- School and programme committee minutes,
- Student complaints and appeals reasons,
- Publication & content of programme handbooks

The audit validated the opinion that not all quality assurance mechanisms were being used or being used effectively in a consistent manner.

2.3.3   Associate Faculty

An area of specific interest to the review is the experience of the associate faculty member and the challenges of off-campus delivery. Associate Faculty were included in the School groups and a special meeting was hosted for

them in May 2009, where a specific series of issues was raised. This session proved invaluable to the College and has already resulted in a series of improvements, in particular attempts to improve communication.

2.3.4 External Stakeholder involvement

External engagement with the review process has taken place through a variety of media. As all HETAC approved programmes have undergone programmatic review or have been validated in the last year, a large amount of stakeholder feedback had been gathered in relation to the relevance of programmes, programme development and review. As part of the strategic review process, the College had engaged in summer 2007, in a number of focus groups and one-to-one interviews with key organisational stakeholders. Recognising the time lag between this and the institutional review process, organisations and community groups that the College works closely with have been asked to supplement the views that they held in 2007. An invitation to participate in the survey was also placed on the public website of the College and in the College magazine 'Inside NCI'.

2.4 Outputs from the Process

- School of Business Self Evaluation
- School of Community Studies Self Evaluation
- School of Computing Self Evaluation
- Student Support Services Self Evaluation
- Facilities Self Evaluation
- Marketing Self Evaluation
- IT Self Evaluation
- Review and audit of QA procedures with ENQA guidelines/HETAC policy

This documentation, together with copies of the full and part-time prospectus and programmes offered by the Early Learning Initiative are included in this submission in Volume 2.

2.5 Self Evaluation Report

The following is an evaluation and reflection on these outputs and the activities of each of the activities outlined above.
The report follows the structure of the Terms of Reference and addresses each objective

- Public Confidence
- Strategic Management & Governance
- Quality Assurance
- Access, Transfer & Progression
- Improvement Implementation Plan

NCI's special objective is integrated into the quality assurance section on programme development, review and evaluation.

3   Objective 1: Public Confidence

Public confidence in National College of Ireland (NCI) is critical to its success as an education provider. NCI has long worked with its constituent stakeholders to ensure the continued quality and relevance of its programmes to those stakeholders. This takes place regularly through consultation on new programme development, programme review and the strategic direction of the College.

NCI has benefited from having representatives from the Social Partners; IBEC & ICTU, the Jesuit Community and the wider education community on its Governing Body since 1988. The position of Chair of the Governing Body has been held by distinguished members of the Irish business community during this period. The engagement of this well respected board shows confidence in the College's mission and strategic plan. The involvement of eminent leaders in Irish society in the very successful 'Legends in your Lunchtime' series at NCI also places the College firmly as a credible academic institution as does the membership of the College's Foundation board and Alumni Council.

This confidence is further underscored by NCI being selected as a provider of choice for business, trades unions, state, semi-state and community groups for tailored education and training. The College's experience, particularly in adult education, its flexibility and use of a mix of academic & practitioner based teaching is particularly attractive to these organisations. Most recently the College has been funded via a tender process to develop programmes in Entrepreneurship and Financial Regulation by FAS and by the Summit/Finuas skillsnet group.

Stakeholders have indicated that administration systems of the College need to be tightened in order to complement the quality of the activity in the classroom.

In June 2009, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) announced the funding of 1,500 part-time undergraduate places for part-time unemployed in identified key areas of predicted employment. That NCI is the largest single beneficiary of these places (130 places), 65 of which are major awards at level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications further underpins its reputation for the provision of relevant programmes relevant to the workplace.

While many of NCI's full-time programmes are in the niche areas of business and computing, nevertheless, NCI has a strong relationship with the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and with local school principals. An active schools liaison programme ensures that feedback from these groups is used to further programme design and development. An example of the implementation of such feedback is the delivery of a general business degree on a full-time basis.
The success of NCI's team for the Newstalk Student Enterprise competition raises the profile of the College among younger learners.

3.1 Recognition by Professional Bodies

NCI's core programmes in the School of Business are recognised by their respective professional bodies e.g. Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) and the major international accounting bodies[4]. Programmes are also recognised by the Teaching Council of Ireland. The College's graduates have progressed to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes both nationally and internationally.

3.2 Quality Assurance Reviews

Confidence in NCI's FETAC awarded and CIPD accredited programmes and associated quality assurance processes has recently been endorsed by the Chartered Institute of Personal Development (December 2007) and by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) in September 2009. Both these involved 2 day evaluation visits to the College.

3.3 Involvement in the Wider Education Arena

NCI has arranged a number of activities encouraging individuals to upskill, particularly in the current economic climate. Examples of this are the 'Think 2 Act' Conference held in July 2009 which was followed in September 2009 by the extremely successful 'Career Bootcamp'

Many of NCI's staff and faculty are actively involved in professional and other user groups in the Irish and international education arena. The Student Support Officer is a member of the executive of DAWN and AHEAD[5], the Careers Advisor is a previous member of the executive of Guidance Counsellors of Ireland. Although the Registrar and Vice-President have contributed to validation panels and quality assurance reviews for peer institutions, few members of faculty are external examiners, moderators and/or authenticators for Irish and international awarding bodies or sit on validation panels. It is recognised that further development of our Faculty is required in this regard.

The College Librarian is an active member of the Library Association of Ireland and involved in a collaborative project with Dundalk and Waterford Institutes of Technology in setting up a digital institutional repository.

3.4 Publication of Information

3.4.1 General College Information

Unlike other education institutions, the College does not publish a 'Presidents or Directors' annual report, however all of the College's activities are reported on the public website. This is supplemented by the College magazine 'Inside NCI', which is circulated 3 times per year to a range of stakeholders. The College's audited financial statements are publicly available from the Companies Registration Office.

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[4] Chartered Accountants Ireland, Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
[5] Disability Advisors Working Network(DAWN) and Association for Higher Education Access & Disability (AHEAD)

3.4.2 Programme & Service information

NCI annually publishes two prospectii – a full-time programme prospectus (for entry to the following academic year) and a part-time prospectus for entry to the current academic year. Supplementary brochures and subject led brochures are published for specific clients or where programmes do not follow the traditional academic year. NCI also provides information to off-campus centres and collaborative provision providers.

All programme information is published on the public website.

3.4.3 Quality Assurance Reports

Since 2007, all quality assurance reports and programme validation reports have been published on the public website, as is the College's quality assurance handbook.

3.5 Recommendations for Improvement

   a) More external involvement by academic staff in QA processes
   b) More systemised and regular feedback processes to be put in place with external stakeholders in order to ensure that programmes remain to be relevant and that administrative issues can be managed more proactively.

4 Objective 2: Strategic Management & Governance

4.1 NCI in the Irish Higher Education sector

NCI has a somewhat unique place in the Irish Higher Education sector in that while it receives public funding for its full-time undergraduate provision in the form of tuition fees and a small operating core grant, it is not funded in any other way by the State. This funding is capped at 925 undergraduate learners, which compromises the College's ability to expand its full-time undergraduate provision. The College also uniquely provides programmes from Level 3 to Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

As the College is part publicly funded, it is also subject to the Freedom of Information Act and the Irish Language Act.

4.2 Role of the Governing Body

The Governing Body meets four times per year and approves the strategic direction of the College. The Governing Body is updated on academic, financial and other matters of significance at each meeting. Since 2007, the level of academic reporting to the Governing Body has been expanded. The current Chair has a keen interest in quality assurance and in particular, in feedback from learners on teaching. These are now firmly on the agenda of the Governing Body. Information is provided pre-meeting in an appropriate format for all participants.

In 2006 the Governing Body commissioned Arthur Cox Solicitors to undertake a review of its corporate governance framework to ensure that NCI complied with best practice. Arising from this review a number of changes were made to the composition and gender balance of the Governing Body and to manner in which the board conducts its business through changes in the Articles of Association of the company. Three governors are now appointed on the recommendation of a Nominations Committee to ensure that the board has the appropriate balance of skills and experience. A number of other changes were made to improve the functioning of sub-committees of the board and to provide clearer rules on the rotation of governors.

4.3 Organisational Structure

The flat management structure of the School of Business has previously caused some issues with the effective management of the School. The role of Subject Head was introduced in 2008. As it is a new role and not all posts have been filled, the purpose of the role has yet to be fully realised. A review of the School management and administrative structure is recommended to ensure that its current structure is effective.

4.4 Strategic Plan 2007–12

The current strategic plan[6] was adopted in January 2008. The plan, which was formulated as a result of a lengthy internal and external consultation

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[6] See Appendix 2: Strategic Plan

process, reaffirmed and strengthened the College's commitment to widening participation in higher education and supporting activities that unlock each student's potential.

The College has identified five key strategic goals:

- Widening participation in and promoting access to higher education
- Provide a high quality, innovative and supportive learning environment
- Increase student numbers and diversify programme offerings
- Support the national agenda to build 'Knowledge Economy skills'
- Develop an active research and enterprise culture which supports Ireland's Knowledge Economy

Following on from this over-arching strategy, the College reviewed and revised its Research Strategy during 2007 and developed for the first time, its Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy in 2008.

4.5   Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy

The College's learning, teaching and assessment (LTA) strategy[7] is designed to build an evidence-driven and scholarly approach to teaching and learner support. It aims to develop closer links between teaching and research and to support the needs of a diverse student population. The strategy is derived from the mission, aspirations and values of the College which fully commit to widening participation and supporting lifelong learning, the fulfilment of potential and improved progression. It is underpinned by the College's commitment to promoting excellence and innovation in learning and teaching and to its support of scholarship in its broadest sense. It specifically addresses the goals of the overall strategic plan. Its implementation, which is overseen by the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Committee is ongoing. Table 6 outlines the implementation plan for 2009-10

Development Strand	Progress to date (November 2009)	Target Actions for 2010
Curriculum development	Programmatic review and new programme development reflects improvements in: Articulating student progression routes for students; Making full use of all assessment options A teaching and assessment strategy for each programme.	Wider integration of Service Learning.
Quality of assessment	New policy on Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL). New RPEL sub-group of the Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee established.	Open workshops for new entrants on the RPEL process.

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[7] See Appendix 3: Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy

Development Strand	Progress to date (November 2009)	Target Actions for 2010
	Revised code of practice for plagiarism. New processes for dealing with plagiarism cases replacing direct referral to Disciplinary Committee. Greater use of continuous assessment and formative assessment in new and existing programmes. New consultation document on assessment and regulations.	
Support for student learning	Clearer integration of generic skills in the development of new programmes. Increased use of problem based learning and strategies to support learner self-directedness. Continue to use Maths diagnostic testing	Monitor intervention success against results
Enhanced teaching practices including blended learning	Development of an e-learning strategy. Development of a strategy of extending the reach of the College through blended learning.	Pilot programme to deliver the Certificate in First Line Management using blended learning.
Connecting research and teaching	Two faculty research PhDs on teaching and learning related topics Professional development seminars do not distinguish between teaching and research scholarship.	A new policy on integrating teaching and research.
Professional development of faculty	On-going Friday lunchtime professional development seminar series (now available by streaming) New MA and PG Diploma in Arts in Learning and Teaching. New faculty participation in two modules: Theories of Learning and Practicum in Teaching New Peer Review of Teaching scheme	Faculty may participate in two modules of the PG Dip. in L&T using a flexible blended learning option.
Recognition of excellence in teaching	Implementation of Teaching Fellowship scheme	Participation in the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme.

Table 6: LTA implementation plan

4.6 Research Strategy

The Research strategy was first developed by the College in 2004 when the College applied for approval to offer Masters Degrees and PhD degrees by research in the area of Teaching and Learning. Approval was granted for Masters level in 2004. A further successful application was made in 2007 for the award of PhD on a case by case basis in the area of Technology Enhanced Learning. In the intervening period, the College had greatly enhanced its internal experience and capacity in the area. Due to the degree of change in the School of Business management over a period of years, there was an acceptance that until the position of Dean of School of Business was filled permanently, it would not be possible to have a long term research strategy for the School. This position was filled in September 2008 and a revised Research Strategy for has been developed.[8]   Cross School research clusters are proposed in order to build research capacity across the College.   The appointment of external advisors to the Research Committee and the use of external co-supervisors is also expected to enhance internal expertise. Research at NCI is undertaken in collaboration with other HEIs as evidenced by recent funding bids with Irish and EU based institutions

4.7 Strategy Implementation

The development of the Strategic Plan, the Research strategy, the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy, together with the introduction of a new academic structure in the Schools has resulted in a significant review of the of the programmes offered by the College in terms of their structure, the teaching and assessment strategies in use and the skills and competences required of faculty. These processes in large part coincided with the scheduled programmatic review of programmes in the School of Computing and School of Business. These programmatic reviews will be completed after this report will have been submitted, however, it is expected that in some cases, such is the degree of change, that a revalidation of the programme will be recommended. The School of Computing programmatic review had completed prior to the finalisation of the LTA strategy and therefore not all of the recommendations have been addressed e.g. the introduction of service learning, the wider use of 10 credit modules.

The challenge for the implementation of each of these strategies is to ensure that the momentum is maintained while there are restrictions on resources and in managing through the change of organisational leadership.

4.8 Communication

The College regularly holds staff briefings as updates on current issues for the College. These are held quarterly in a 'Town Meeting' format. The President also holds 'skip' meetings every 6 months as part of this communications strategy, where the President meets with small staff groups who are not direct reports. Notwithstanding this, it is recognised within the College that due to the profile of our academic staff, communication of

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[8] See Appendix 4: Research Strategy

decisions made at Academic Council and its subcommittees or at School level needed to be managed more effectively. The introduction of the staff portal in September 2009 was as a direct response to this issue. It will now be seen as the one stop shop for all official communication. This will not replace other communication methods such as staff briefings, skip meetings or other operational meetings.

Key strategic issues are also formally discussed with the Students' Union as evidenced by consultation on the implementation of the new undergraduate scheme, service learning and learner involvement in the strategic review process. As outlined earlier the Students' Union is represented on the Governing Body.

4.9 Use of Management Information Systems in Quality Assurance & Strategic Management

The College has invested significantly in various information systems to assist in its management and services to learners. The main information system that informs programme and student activity is the student record system, QuercusPlus. On an annual basis, the wealth of information provided by this system is used to manage the educational, operational & financial viability of programmes and centres, and to advise the College on its student profile. More recently, it has been used as the resource for programme directors to inform their annual monitoring reports for information on learner achievement and completion. This information is also used at examination boards allowing trends in modules or subject areas to be investigated.

The College acknowledges that more work is required to integrate the student record system, the HR system and the timetabling system to provide for more effective resource planning and timetable information to learners.

A review of the cost/benefit of implementation of online services is required. Although 2/3 of applications are received online, other online services do not appear to have been embraced by the student body. In order to confirm the reasons for this, a survey to ascertain learners' attitudes to the services provided is underway. The outcome of the survey will inform the approach taken to the range of services that will be offered.

Management information is developed on an ongoing basis throughout the College. As part of the strategic management review process, a cross functional group was established to consider a balanced scorecard approach and the utilisation of key performance indicators. This is used at Governing Body level and now needs to cascade to other levels of the organisation. There has been significant improvement in the reporting of management information both at Governing Body & Executive Board levels. This is in turn, disseminated at staff briefings. Further improvements on the use of the information collected by the College can be made at School and departmental level. This is likely to take place in the context of the development of departmental annual reports, agreed metrics and the improvement of School and programme reporting.

Examples of reporting using management information is provided in Appendix 8.

4.10 Recommendations for Improvement

a) Review of Structure of the School of Business
b) Effective use of College communications systems
c) Review and promotion of online services available to learners/applicants
d) The agreement of metrics and use of management information at functional level for more effective decision making

5   Objective 3: Quality Assurance

The approach taken to Quality Assurance at the National College of Ireland is one of creating a culture of continuous improvement and enhancement based on the objective review of existing policies and practices as referenced against best practice and awarding body policy, regulation and guidelines. The view that is taken of improvement is a longitudinal and cyclical one, recognising that embedding of practice and to some degree attitudinal change, will take time particularly in an organization which has experienced and is still experiencing a large amount of change in the past 5 years. There can be tensions between the requirements of the regulatory framework and those of the market, the institution, Schools and individual faculty and professionals. Where appropriate, the approach taken to policy change and implementation is a consultative and supportive whilst at all times ensuring that national standards are maintained. The Quality Assurance function at NCI also has responsibility for providing a framework for the provision of management information in the learner and staff related areas. The office fulfils some of the functions that would normally be undertaken by the Institutional Research functions within the university sector. Currently this provides the Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services with the advantage of being able to closely monitor trends and outcomes and in reporting to Academic Council. The future direction of the role of Quality Assurance at NCI will be very much dependent upon the appointment of the new President and the organisation structure that is decided upon.

5.1   Quality Assurance Procedures

5.1.1 Context

NCI first agreed its quality assurance procedures with HETAC in 2004. In 2006, due to a number of issues that had arisen particularly in the area of programme development and evaluation, HETAC was invited to review these procedures. It was found that there was little evidence of engagement with these procedures among staff and faculty and a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities. Between two visits in November 2006 and January 2007, the quality assurance procedures were reviewed by a series of cross functional groups with recommendations made for improvement. This coincided with the creation of and appointment to the role of the Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services. This appointment has facilitated a greater engagement and ownership of policy and procedures within the College.

The presence of the Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services on the Academic Committees and at examination boards allows a direct link between issues arising at meetings and formulating policy change. However, as the audit of mechanisms has shown, some mechanisms had still not embedded into the operational processes of some Schools and programmes. This has been addressed in this academic year as a result of the audit.

Going forward the model for the review of quality assurance at NCI will include peer reviews of the support services and Schools. A scheduled review of service functions will begin in 2010-11. This will allow each service

function to benchmark itself against peer services and review its processes and standard operating procedures in greater detail that this review allowed. In some departments, the lack of written standard operating procedures becomes evident when there is staff turnover or a member of staff is on leave. The support functions have also agreed to provide an annual report which will further enhance the review process. These reviews will complement the Programmatic review process within the Schools.

5.1.2 Updating Policy & Procedure

The approach that the College takes to quality assurance is one of continuous improvement. Policy change is a standing agenda item on both the Academic Quality Committee and Academic Council. As outlined earlier, policy change is undertaken on an annual basis arising from awarding body policy change and issues arising from the quality assurance mechanisms in place.
All policy changes are circulated at School and general College level as appropriate, for consultation prior to their approval at these meetings.

Policies relating to assessment are currently undergoing major review, the catalyst being the publication of HETAC's Assessment & Standards 2009. The research procedures were updated in 2008 as a consequence of the successful application for the registration of PhD students on a case by case basis in the area of Technology Enhanced Learning.

The process of preparing for the Institutional Review has also highlighted that a more systemised approach to evaluating the effectiveness of the policy and procedure is required with less reliance on the role of the Director of Quality Assurance and allow devolution of that activity to other roles.

5.1.3 Quality Assurance Handbook

The Quality Assurance handbook is available publicly via the NCI website and on both the staff and student portals. As a result of feedback from users of the handbook, a process of stripping out the policies into a more process driven approach has begun. This recognises difficulties that new members of faculty have had in finding policy without having to 'trawl' through a daunting manual. This approach also facilitates our ongoing challenge of making the QA manual a living document which is under constant review. The current Quality Assurance Handbook, which demonstrates version histories, is included with this submission. An example of the revised presentation of the policy with its associated process for ensuring the effectiveness of the process is included in Chapter 8. Placing the handbook on the staff portal also gives greater access to associate faculty, especially those not teaching in the IFSC campus.

5.2 Challenges to the Quality Assurance Mechanisms

5.2.1 Composition of Faculty

One of the recommendations made by the panel in 2007 was the continued integration of the role of associate faculty into the academic systems. This is

a continuing challenge and permeates much of the discussion in this submission. .

5.2.2 Academic Governance

The audit process confirmed that a major challenge to the quality assurance system is the effective functioning of the College committee structure. Based on feedback from committee training sessions carried out in December 2008, and the results of self evaluation, a number of issues have been highlighted

- The need for quora for committees
- The overlap between operational and policy matters
- The number and frequency of meetings given the small core full-time faculty base
- The inconsistent functioning of a number of programme committee meetings
- Communication of agenda and minutes in timely manner
- Clarity around the role of committee members

A review of the academic governance of the College will be undertaken during 2009-2010 academic year.

5.2.3 Off-Campus Delivery

The delivery of programmes at locations removed from the College requires careful attention on behalf of the Schools and service providers to ensure the consistency of standards and delivery and that learners receive the same support services as those on campus. Whilst second marking has been introduced, a more systemised approach to the review of assessment results is required to ensure that consistency of marking of modules between locations is assured.

5.2.4 Multiple Awarding Bodies

The requirements of multiple awarding bodies can sometimes add to the difficulties in communicating policy. Where possible, all policy is streamlined to make communication easier. The subtleties of language and definition, and different processes between awarding bodies can challenge the communication of policy. The School evaluations and the observation of the implementation of administrative processes has also highlighted the need of the organisation to amend some of its processes, systems and practices to support the needs of awarding bodies other than HETAC.

5.3 Procedures for Programme Development, Monitoring and Periodic Review[9]

5.3.1 New Programme Development

As outlined above, it was in this area that NCI's policies were found wanting in 2006-7. In the two academic cycles since, our new programme development process has improved significantly. There is a greater appreciation of the timescales required to develop programmes, particularly

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[9] See Appendix 11: Samples of internal and external programme validation reports

major awards. The Schools involve the office of the Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services at an early stage in development, thus ensuring policy is implemented.

An area that does still require greater streamlining is the integration of the programme development process and the service functions. The Deans of School/programme developers need to more effectively engage the service functions such as Library, IT, Finance and Facilities earlier in the development process to assure that the service requirements of prospective learners are fully understood and the business case for the programme fully costed.

More consistent market research in some cases is also required. This will be assisted by a more systemic engagement with external stakeholders to ensure that programmes remain relevant and that programmes being developed do have a sustainable market.

As the implementation of the revised processes took place, it became evident that there was too much onus on the members of the Academic Quality Committee to read and fully engage with the programme submission documents prior to the internal review of the programme. The internal review is the process where the School engages a panel comprising members of the academic staff, members of the Academic Quality Committee and external academic and industry members to evaluate a new programme prior to its submission to HETAC. It was recognised that the Schools were not fully engaged in their responsibility of ensuring that the quality of the submission document ranging from ensuring the use of appropriate learning outcomes to the quality of reading lists to typographical errors to the Academic Quality Committee members.

This process was changed in 2007/8 to bring the internal review process prior to the Academic Quality Committee meeting thus firmly placing the responsibility of producing the submission document in the School. This has proven to be a hugely successful change which ensures a closer engagement between the School and the validation process. As outlined above in the area of public confidence, the College needs to become more outward looking and expand the range and experiences of its internal and external panelists to ensure that the process and the programme under review is benefiting from best practice.

Demands on the Schools to respond to tender documents from outside agencies and to develop programmes in a rapidly changing economic environment had led to tensions between the need to respond to market forces while upholding quality assurance procedures. This is managed using special meetings of Academic Quality Committee and Academic Council where required. It is NCI's policy that all programmes that are delivered are placed on the National Framework of Qualifications at major, minor or special purpose award level. More and more, client companies require this accreditation, recognising its value for employees and learners. Whilst it is understood that in order to assure the quality of the programme, procedures must be followed, NCI's ability to provide this with effective speed is compromised due to the requirement to have the programme further evaluated by a HETAC appointed panel which effectively covers the same ground. NCI recognises that this is a current requirement under legislation

and current HETAC regulation but would welcome the institutional review panel's endorsement of the internal process as being robust in its own right should the legislation change.

Programme modifications can also be affected by the requirement to seek approval from HETAC for assessment structure changes and replacement modules. These requests arise from the formal annual programme review events described below. The administration surrounding such changes could be made more efficient by the introduction of information systems at HETAC which would allow providers update their own programme information but still be subjected to approval by HETAC staff.

5.3.2 Programme Monitoring and Periodic Evaluation

In procedural terms, the systems of Programme Director, programme committee meeting, annual monitoring report, class representative liaison and annual learner feedback are well defined and understood. It is in their implementation that difficulties have arisen.

Role of Programme Director

There has been a practice where the programme director may be assigned to a particular year or mode of delivery of a programme rather than having an overall responsibility for the programme in its totality. Therefore it was found that one person did not have a holistic view of the programme and the issues arising within it. The programme in effect may have had 3 different directors each with a view for the cohort that they were managing. It was also found that it was better to ensure that the programme director was teaching on the programme, allowing for more informal interaction with the group.

A change to this process is being implemented over the next year, where a programme will be managed by one programme director but may be assisted by 'year heads' where the group is large. It is expected that this will have a positive impact on the effective functioning of programme committees.

Programme Committee

It is recognised that in some cases, the programme committee structure could be improved further. Having such a large group of associate faculty, some of whom teach only 2 hours per week in a semester challenges the quality assurance system. In a review of the communications systems with associate faculty, it was found that the College needed to employ more creative methods of engaging with associate faculty. The role of Subject Head, particularly in the School of Business was created specifically to address the area of the communication to and management of associate faculty. To address the issue of associate faculty not being able to attend programme committee meetings when scheduled, the timing of meetings and the use of technology to assist in the process was looked at. The Schools have undertaken to schedule programme committee meetings, particularly for programmes that are delivered exclusively part-time, in the evening or at times more convenient for associate faculty. The implementation of discussion fora on the Staff Portal is expected to provide greater access to debate both at programme committee and at subject level.

Where the programme committees have worked well, they have contributed to minor programme amendments e.g. change to assessment instruments, sequencing of modules and other such elements. These amendments arise largely from faculty and learner feedback provided during the previous academic year.

As with new programme development, a greater degree of engagement is required with the support and services functions during the academic year and in planning for ongoing development and delivery of programmes.

Annual Monitoring Report

The annual monitoring report was introduced as a mechanism for reporting on all aspects of the programme in August 2007 for the academic year 2006/7. The effectiveness of the annual report is directly related to the functioning of the programme committees. The quality and standard of what is being presented were identified by the Deans of School as an area for improvement and development in 2007/8 and it is anticipated that the report for the academic year 2008/9 will provide a platform for standard reporting going forward.

Class Representative Liaison

As a small institution, NCI prides itself on being close to its learners, particularly those on campus. The quality of class representative liaison is also dependent upon the participation of the class representatives themselves and the feedback loop from these meetings to the programme and School level.   Part-time learners rarely formally elect a class representative and generally will represent themselves individually. When a collective issue arises, it is usually dealt with by the Programme Director and spokespersons from the class group. This approach works well with part-time learners whereas full-time learners tend to be less confident and assertive and will often use the class representative liaison as a method to further individuals' issues. As this group changes annually, the College needs to work more closely with the Students' Union so that the role of the class representative is fully understood by both learners and staff. As part of their training, a briefing was given to Class Representatives on the Quality Assurance mechanisms in place and their role in these mechanisms by the Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services in mid-October 2009. This will become an annual event.

Annual Learner Feedback

Learners are asked to provide feedback on each module taught in each semester or at the end of term depending on the delivery of the programme. Typically, in the 1st semester, the response rate has been 50-55%. This is lower in the 2nd semester. Feedback in the School of Computing is carried out online and in the other 2 schools via paper survey. A feature of NCI's feedback process is that feedback is first processed under the aegis of the Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services who then analyses the data and provides reports to the Deans of School. The Deans then meet with individual members of faculty to discuss this feedback. Where associate faculty achieve a score of 75% satisfaction, their feedback is sent to them with comment from the Dean. Those with less than 75% satisfaction are met or telephoned.

This feedback is confidential to the Dean and the member of faculty. Reports on learner feedback are published at course and College level only. While this method provides an appropriate developmental opportunity for the member of faculty and allows the Dean to be aware of any issues that may be arising with an individual's teaching, it is dependent upon the individual member of faculty to raise any issues with the module itself at the Programme Committee meeting. Analysis at programme level does allow trends to be reviewed, which in turn informs the staff development programme and the learning, teaching & assessment strategy.

This type of feedback process is both time and resource intensive. Experiences with online feedback have proven that unless the learners are requested to do it during class time, feedback levels are very low. There is a recognition that the speed in which feedback is processed can be too slow to contribute to change within an academic year. Further attempts to engage learners in completing surveys online have been made this academic year with the introduction of incentives whilst maintaining learner anonymity and a targeted publicity campaign.

5.3.3 Programmatic Review

The development of the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy, coupled with extensive current programmatic review has given NCI the opportunity to look at curriculum structure, relationships between modules, the standardisation of modules at the same level in the NFQ to ensure consistency and quality. In reviewing curricula and based on learner feedback, large elements of overlap were found both between modules and, indeed, programmes. The programmatic review process, particularly in the School of Business has facilitated a thorough review of the portfolio of programmes, identified appropriate synergies between programmes and streamlined the activities of the School.

The role of the tutorial is also to be addressed under programmatic review in order to ensure a consistency of approach to delivery, frequency and size of group.

The School of Computing review of undergraduate programmes was undertaken in the context of falling demand for the programmes (a national trend) but also to take account of the changes in the computing field. Such were the nature of the changes, that on advice of HETAC, the programmes underwent revalidation. The review also allowed greater synergies between programmes and improved the progression and transfer options of students. Evidence thus far is that this review has been successful as the number of part-time students registering on the revised programme has increased from 15 to 50 learners on part-time programmes, even when discounting the number of HEA funded places under the programme for the unemployed. Full-time numbers have also increased, which reflects the national trend as reported by the HEA.

These are the first extensive programmatic reviews that have taken place using the HETAC standards for business & computing awards and have assisted the Schools to critically look at the linkages between programme

and module learning outcomes and associated assessment. There is a view that a five year review is not frequent enough and that a balance between change for the sake of it and change needed to ensure that a programme remains relevant is needed.

5.3.4 Collaborative Provision

NCI has a history of working with non HEI providers in accrediting its training, working with them to have their programmes accredited by HETAC or delivering tailored NCI programmes in a company setting. Whereas previously the NCI brand was sufficient accreditation, the introduction of the National Framework of Qualifications and employers requiring formal accreditation, has resulted in NCI bringing these programmes to HETAC or FETAC for accreditation. The recent publication of HETAC's policy on Collaborative & Transnational Provision has facilitated the development of a more comprehensive policy for this provision. Academic Council approved NCI's policy on collaborative provision in June 2009. This policy now applies to all programmes that have the involvement of another party be it in the recruitment, teaching or assessment of learners and to programmes of any type delivered outside of the Republic of Ireland.

5.4 Quality Assurance of Assessment

Learner assessment has been a major topic of discussion and development within National College of Ireland in the past 2 years. This has taken place in the context of the development of the Learning, Teaching & Assessment strategy, the consultation on and subsequent publication of Assessment & Standards in 2009, and in addressing issues being raised by learners and faculty as part of the programmatic review process.

The College recognised that due to the manner in which the academic year was semesterised, learners may have been over assessed and that there was a need to ensure the appropriateness of the assessment instrument and the experience of the learner. This has been addressed in the programmatic review process by the introduction of larger credit value modules and a review of the assessment strategies of each module.

It is expected that an outcome of the Programmatic Review processes will be an increase where appropriate in continuous assessment and in more innovative methods of assessment.

The consultation on and subsequent publication of Assessment & Standards 2009, became the context for discussion on standarisation of marking, progression, classification of awards, groupwork, plagiarism and repeat assessment.

5.4.1 Assessment Feedback to Learners

This item is a priority of the Learning, Teaching & Assessment Committee. The reports from the Schools and learner feedback highlight this area that requires a more consistent approach by faculty. Whilst there is a policy and process in place, this appeared not to be used. As part of the review of

assessment procedures under Assessment & Standards, this area will be addressed to ensure that feedback is consistent and more timely to learners via structures such as Moodle, class feedback and individualised feedback

5.4.2 Standards of Marking

Second Marking

NCI has introduced sample second marking on all programmes during the academic year 2008/9. Second marking had existed for final year projects at undergraduate level and at postgraduate level. This has not been without its challenges as evidenced by comments from external examiners who themselves have differing views on the effectiveness of second marking. Specific issues have arisen in terms of agreeing a process, sourcing qualified second markers in niche areas, ensuring associate faculty had assigned second markers and the logistical issues of second marking practical and performance based assessment. The College recognises that full implementation is a journey toward a desired end and will take some time to perfect and bed down.

Modular and off-campus delivery

As the College introduces a more modular approach, greater analysis of the performance of different cohorts of learners taking the same module will be required to ensure that the assessment assigned is fair and consistent. Closer monitoring is required of such variances between location as well as programme in cases where the programme is offered at locations other than the main campus.

5.4.3 Reasonable Accommodation

NCI has recently revised its policy on reasonable accommodation and has implemented DAWN's best practice guidelines which were published in 2008. An assistive technology strategy is being developed to ensure that this policy can be supported. The rising number of learners with special needs (6.5% of full-time learners) may put some pressure on resources in terms of providing reasonable accommodation e.g. individual rooms, specialized equipment. This is an area that will require constant monitoring.

5.4.4 Plagiarism

Arising from a number of cases of plagiarism, the College has revised its Code of Practice. A number of cases appeared to be cases of poor referencing on behalf of the learner rather than willful intent to deceive. The existing policy meant that all learners were then subject to the Disciplinary Committee of the College. The revision has not only introduced a plagiarism committee to investigate all cases of suspected plagiarism, it has also clearly outlined the responsibilities of faculty to ensure that learners are aware of proper practice and of learners to ensure that they avail themselves of the services that will assist them in citing correctly. The School of Computing has also provided guidelines to learners on avoiding plagiarism in programming. The use of plagiarism detection software has also being introduced to assist in both detecting plagiarism and in potentially providing a learning opportunity for learners to understand how best to reference. The use of this

technology is being piloted in order to assist devising a policy for the electronic submission of assessment.

5.4.5 Engagement with External Examiners

With the appointment of a new set of external examiners in 2007, an induction day was provided for all new external examiners that were appointed. This day allowed NCI to outline its mission, programmes and policies to the external examiners. It also allowed a sharing of experiences between the examiners and faculty. External examiners reports demonstrate that there is good interaction between them and internal examiners and that any operational or academic issues that arise are in the main, resolved at an individual level. External examiner reports are circulated to all faculty and a summary of comments is circulated to Academic Quality Committee. An area of concern is external examiners availability in the autumn sitting as it can clash with their annual leave schedule. A possible method of reducing this issue may be to again broaden the pool of external examiners beyond the Irish system. Longer term, the College is reviewing its academic calendar which may also alleviate this issue.

In reviewing HETAC's consultation paper on best practice in external examining, it was found that NCI's current practices were in line with these. An area that requires further refinement is ensuring that, as assessment practices change, all elements of assessment and not only the examination are externally assessed. This is required not only after the learner has submitted work but also in advance of providing the assessment to the learner. NCI's current policy is that any individual assignment that contributes 40% or more to the final mark is externally assessed. The internal examiner agrees the approach to continuous assessment for all other pieces of assessment. More effective systems are required to ensure that this policy is implemented in all cases.

5.4.6 Examination Boards

Examination boards for HETAC awards are held at NCI to coincide with the major examination periods – June and August. The boards are attended by all full-time faculty and in fewer cases by associate faculty. Again, this proves a challenge to ensuring that there is a full discussion by all internal examiners at these boards. As more programmes are offered in a non traditional academic year, e.g. January to December, there is a requirement to be able to submit learners to HETAC in the autumn semester e.g. October and to hold examination boards in December. This will be addressed at local level with HETAC.

5.5 Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff

All NCI staff are recruited according to the policies and procedures of National College of Ireland. The competencies required for the appointment and promotion of NCI lecturing staff are defined[10]. The introduction of teaching standards is being addressed in the implementation of the Learning,

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[10] See Appendix 5: Appointment & Promotion Criteria for Faculty

Teaching & Assessment Strategy. In order to acknowledge the teaching contribution made by faculty, the Teaching Fellowship[11] award was introduced in 2008/9. This award is available to both teaching and learning support staff. Each full-time member of staff agrees as set of goals annually with their line manager. In the case of faculty, greater alignment of this process is required with the academic year rather than date of appointment, to ensure that individuals' goals are linked to the School overall plan for that year

5.5.1 Feedback on Teaching

Learner Feedback
As outlined earlier, faculty are provided with feedback on their teaching via the module survey. The meeting between the Dean of School and the member of faculty is a developmental one and is not used as a formal performance measure. However, if learner feedback warrants it, faculty are advised of a course of action to assist improvement e.g. attendance at staff development sessions etc. This process needs to be further formalised. The speed at which feedback can be provided to faculty is an area of concern to the College. Processes and systems are being reviewed to ascertain how this can be best achieved with the resources available to the College without losing its 55% response rate. One area of concern expressed was that the learner may be dissatisfied with the structure or content of module but not specifically with the lecturer, yet the lecturer's score was low. To accommodate this feedback, and to implement best practice, peer observation of teaching is being implemented to assist new and experienced lecturers improve their teaching. This will be done as a development rather than management tool.

Peer Observation
Peer observation of teaching is being implemented in the current academic year with a view to it commencing during the second semester of 2009/10.

5.5.2 Staff Development[12]

Staff development opportunities have been put in place through a variety of methods;

- Formal support to complete PhDs and other qualifications
- Lunch-time lecture series
- Specialised sessions in Assessment, Writing Learning Outcomes, Lecturing
- President's Research Fund
- Attendance of new and inexperienced full-time faculty on modules from the MA in Learning & Teaching
- Internal briefings on QA issues, new initiatives from awarding bodies, consultations on relevant issues

Staff development opportunities are available to all staff including associate faculty. Where possible, sessions are made available on Saturdays to accommodate their schedules.

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[11] See Appendix 6: Teaching Fellowship scheme
[12] See appendix 7 for a sample of staff development initiatives

An area where faculty have indicated more development is required is in the use of blended learning, problem based learning and other methods of teaching, assessment and aiding learning. The results of an Employee Engagement Survey undertaken in November 2008 illustrate that the College's performance management tool is seen as ineffective and that more individualised staff development, better 'on the job' training and induction is required. An Employee Development officer has been recruited on a fixed term contract of one year to assist in identifying individual training needs.

5.6   Learning Resources & Student Support[13]

All learners at NCI enjoy a number of dedicated supports of their learning. The College has a dedicated

- Student Support Office
  - Learning Support
  - Mathematics Support
  - Disability Support
- Careers Office
- Library & Information Service
- IT service

Each function provides services to the entire learner body – full and part-time, at the main IFSC campus or at an off-campus location.

5.6.1 Maths Diagnostic Testing

This initiative was introduced in 2007-8 in response to concerns regarding learner retention and learner performance in maths related subjects. All new first year undergraduate learners or those who first take maths in later years, take part in maths diagnostic testing early in the first semester. This enables the learner and the College to identify where additional support may be required. Additional group and individual support is then available to learners. Analysis of the results of learners has shown an appreciable improvement in maths based modules. The effectiveness of this intervention is a subject of ongoing research by the Maths Support Tutor.

5.6.2 Services for Off-campus learners

In recognition of the distance from support services that Off-Campus learners may have felt, the Support Services Roadshow first took place in 2006. This involves representatives of each of the services visiting each off-campus site and giving a presentation on the services provided. The advantage of the Roadshow is that it personalises the services for those learners not physically attending the College, and makes them feel part of the physical institution.

This is supplemented with the provision of a USB key with all of the service information provided on it. This was further supplemented in 2008/9 with

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[13] See appendix 8 for a description of how off-campus learners are supported

the introduction of the Student Portal. This is still developing into a useful resource for all learners giving them access to their own space on the college network to hold documents etc. as well as to all IT services such as specialised software which could previously only be accessed within the IFSC campus.

The Library & Information Service supplements a postal book and article service for off-campus learners with a substantial online service.

Learning development workshops are provided at weekends for learners, particularly those returning to education after a period of time. An online learning support service is also being piloted with this group.

This model has worked very well with the programmes that are currently offered off-campus. As major awards at higher levels on the NFQ are proposed for off-campus or blended learning, the supports available at a distance for learners will require to be closely linked to these developments.

5.6.3 Learners with Special Needs

NCI proportionally attracts a large number of learners with a disability (6.5%) of full-time learners. The College has succeeded in gaining funding from the HEA for an additional post in the Disability Support service for the 1st semester in 2009/10 to assist in the assessment of learners. The IT service and Student Support services work closely to ensure that the appropriate technologies are in place to support learning. A member of the IT department has also been assigned to assistive technologies on a part-time basis. The Student Support office has also facilitated awareness training for all staff on the issues that arise in supporting learners with special needs. Whilst this demonstrates our widening access mission, it also raises the issues of resourcing appropriate services for these learners. The College has been successful in attracting some funding from the corporate community with O2 sponsoring the post of Student Support Officer.

5.6.4 International Learners

In 2008/9, over 50 nationalities were represented in the learner body, 33 in the full-time learner body. Whilst the number of full-time undergraduate international learner is low, the number of nationalities demonstrates a culturally diverse learner body which can raise some challenges for the support services and teaching staff – e.g. different approaches to learning, awareness of cultural practices etc. Plans to recruit additional undergraduate and postgraduate international learners in the coming years will require additional supports and training to be provided. In October 2009, a review of the results and attendance of international learners resulted in the recommendation of the provision of an additional support service for international learners. Learners are required to attend a monthly session which will support academic writing and any other academic issues that arise for these students. It is hoped that this will also assist in highlighting any learners at risk of dropping out.

5.6.5 Postgraduate Learners

The number of research students at NCI is very small which has both advantages and disadvantages. Supports for research students have been inconsistent and frustrated by organisational restructuring. As part of an overall review of Research, the placement of the Research Office in the Centre for Research & Innovation in Learning & Teaching will be reviewed.

Plans to recruit a substantial number of postgraduate taught students will also put increasing pressure on services for resources particularly the library, IT and Careers service. These areas will have to be monitored closely.

5.6.6 Services to Part-time Learners

The College does recognise that the opening hours of administrative services tend to be more appropriate to full-time learners. Efforts are being made to increase the hours of service through discussions with staff representatives. The College has made services such as online registration, online payment of fees and administrative tasks such as online change of address available. These have however, not been well taken up by learners. The College is currently looking at ways in which to address this by extending the opening hours of services and the attractiveness of online services.

The College is very sensitive to changes in the external economic environment. This has been very noticeable in the past year where a number of learners have approached the College due to their concerns about their employers' ability or their own to continue to fund their studies. The College has responded by in some cases lowering or freezing the tuition fee of the programme. While the College continues to have a policy to assist learners by agreeing payment plans on a one-to-one basis, it has responded to this specific issue by introducing a direct debit plan to facilitate the payment of tuition fees on a monthly basis. This is an attempt to alleviate some of the financial pressure that students face in the current economic downturn

5.6.7 Quality Assurance of Off-Campus Locations

Off-Campus locations are audited annually based on the information provided by the centre and on feedback from learners.

5.7 Information Systems

NCI has made substantial investment over a period of time in robust management information applications and the supporting IT infrastructure. Due to its size, NCI outsources a large amount of this activity and all enterprise applications are vendor supplied applications. As outlined in Section 4, the student record system QuercusPlus provides all information related to student demographics, performance and progression. Learner interaction with the support services (disability, learning, mathematics) tends to be managed in localised databases or spreadsheets. In order to have a 360 degree view of the student record, there is a desire to centralise these activities to either integrate a commercially available application with the student record system or extend the student record system to hold this data.

Learner feedback is managed as described earlier and data is stored using Survey Monkey application. The decision to move to a commercial and integrated application has been postponed due to resource restrictions.

NCI staff members are active members of various application user groups and regularly host site visits as a reference site for vendors. NCI is an education reference site for Microsoft and has been cited by Quest Software as an example of best practice in its White Paper on Active Roles Server.

A review of how the research requirements of some faculty can be accommodated within the required security framework of the College is being undertaken. The recent upgrade of the network backbone should also alleviate previous issues caused by bandwidth restrictions. To progress this issue a Research/IT Roadmap has been agreed.

The internal self assessment review for HEA application has lead to the reintroduction of the IT Advisory Committee which is seen as a key communication vehicle for IT projects. This committee allows all internal stakeholders to interact with the IT department in order to improve communication of requirements.

As a consequence of learner and staff feedback a large degree of integration has been achieved between the College's enterprise and teaching systems. Where learners previously had 12 passwords to access systems, they now have 2. The student record system and the HR system are seen to be the 'single points of truth' for learner or staff information. This ensures that learner and staff information are held consistently throughout the College.

The College's IT strategy is reviewed every 3 years and is due for review in 2009/10.

5.8 Public Information

5.8.1 College Website

The College website (http://www.ncirl.ie) provides information on all activities of NCI. Each School and Department is responsible for maintaining its information. A recommendation from the review process is that a named individual from each School and Department should be responsible for ensuring that this is audited on a monthly basis.

5.8.2 Programme Information

NCI publishes all programme information in printed and electronic formats. This information is internally reviewed through 3 cycles of proofing (Programme Director/Head of Function pre typesetting, Director Quality Assurance & Statistical Services/Registrar, Programme Director/Head of Function post typesetting,) and finally the Director Quality Assurance prior to publication for accuracy, consistency and accessibility of language.

Each programme committee is required to produce a programme handbook outlining the programme content, regulations and key contact personnel

which is provided to learners. The audit process has highlighted that this handbook has not been provided to learners in many cases. The current template for the provision of programme information will be reviewed on finalisation of the programme assessment strategy documents in order to include more detailed information on the assessment strategies employed in programmes.

Further work is required on baselining NCI programme documentation and module descriptors to make them available to the general public. This will be a product of the programmatic review processes that are taking place, the introduction of the staff portal which allows better document management systems and the intention to implement a commercially available module/programme management application.

5.8.3 Enquiry Handling

Arising from annual review of enquiry, admissions and registration processes, it became clear that there was an issue with the consistency of information being provided during the learner recruitment process. The process was divided between four main sources of information, an outsourced enquiry handling company, College administrators, faculty attending open evenings/days and the website. A root and branch review of the enquiry and admissions process took place in 2009 which resulted in all enquiries being handled internally and a series of training sessions were provided to all attending open events to ensure that information provided was accurate and consistent. These events also now have a feedback form in order to inform future events and issues that may be arising.

5.8.4 Statistical Information

NCI provides statistics to the HEA[14] which are included in its annual sectoral publication on the demographical profile and performance of learners. This publication provides a snapshot of NCI provision at a given time but does not show the complete activity of the College particularly at levels below level 7 (e.g. embedded minor awards in programmes) on the National Framework of Qualifications and programmes that do not run to a traditional academic cycle. This can lead to discrepancies in official figures and those used by NCI in its publications.

The QASS office has provided intermittent statistical reports which benchmarks NCI against these national reports. While these are not currently publicly published, the data has been provided as part of national press information.

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[14] Until 2006, registration & demographic data was provided to the Dept of Education & Science. Performance data was provided to the HEA for the first time for the 2008/9 academic year.

5.9 Recommendations for Improvement

5.9.1 Quality Assurance Systems

- Continued Review of the Handbook and identification of effectiveness of mechanisms
- Review of Academic Governance :
  - o Implement recommendations re quora, review frequency of meetings and terms of reference for each committee
  - o Benchmark against institutions of similar size and profile

5.9.2 Programme Development, Review & Evaluation

- Review role of programme director:
  - o role to be assigned at programme level rather than by year or mode of study
- Ensure Programme Committee operation via
  - o continued training of programme teams
  - o Schedule of programme committees set up and published
  - o Standardised agenda

- Feedback from learners
  - o Continued review of the process to ensure speedy turnaround and feedback loop is closed
  - o Engage Students Union and Class Representatives more closely into the QA mechanisms

5.9.3 Assessment of Learners

- Full Review and implementation of Assessment & Standards

5.9.4 Quality Assurance of Staff

- Implementation of Peer Observation of teaching
- Implementation of more individualised training plans pending outcome of training needs analyses
- Encourage use of staff portal as a collaboration and experience sharing tool

5.9.5 Learning & Teaching Support

- Continual monitoring of services to ensure that resources are balanced according to increasing learner numbers/changing learner profiles.

5.9.6 Public Information

- Improvement of detailed programme information available outside of the College

6 Objective 4: Access, Transfer & Progression

6.1 Implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications

NCI's stated policy is that all programmes that it delivers should be placed on the National Framework of Qualifications. In some cases, professional body programmes are accredited in another jurisdiction and therefore have equivalence. NCI offers programmes from level 3 to level 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications, with major awards being offered from level 5.

All programmes accredited by HETAC at level 6 and above are structured in or are being transitioned to modules that are multiples of 5 credits to facilitate greater transferability. It is expected that the most prevalent module type will be of 10 credits.

NCI has developed a number of special purpose and minor awards to complement its major award portfolio. This enables learners who are either returning to education or attending at an off-campus or company location to have their learning recognised as an award in its own right rather than as single subject certification. In the College's experience, it has been found that mature learners particularly like having a named award– 'I have a Certificate or Diploma in …. '. As this award type has been developed, a challenge to the College has been the explanation to the wider public of use of 'Certificate' or 'Diploma', particularly where the programme previously had an NCI award of Diploma or a similar programme is being offered in another institution that has a differing accreditation structure.

6.2 Access

NCI's stated mission is to widen participation to education and as a result the notion of 'access' permeates all of our activities. Access at NCI goes beyond the nine measures defined in the Equality Act – access at NCI includes time of delivery, physical place, and mode of delivery. As an action of the strategic plan an internal group on Widening Participation has been set up. The terms of reference of the group are to

- Identify models of best practice to support the objective of Widening Participation in Higher Education

- Identify a suitable evaluation frameworks and evidence based data to assess NCI's existing activities and record in widening participation.

- Identify potential funding sources to provide sustainable funding for existing and potential new initiatives

- Develop an action plan aimed at supporting the College's mission in Widening Participation in Higher Education

6.3 Full-time Education

NCI has a number of special initiatives for those from designated disadvantaged groups entering full-time undergraduate education where 10% of places for each group are reserved. These include the area based partnership scheme, those living in the Dublin Docklands area, and entry for students with a disability and mature learners. In all cases once the student has met the minimum entry requirements and fulfilled the requirements of the scheme, the points requirements are either waived or lowered.

6.3.1 Socioeconomic Disadvantage

The effectiveness of the area based partnership scheme and the DDDA scheme have not been fully investigated in large part due to the lack of uptake to these particular schemes. The ABP scheme has not been reviewed since 1996 and its current requirements are possibly outdated. The requirements of the HEAR scheme at a national level will be used as a benchmark to review this scheme.

The uptake of learners from these disadvantaged areas underlines the more fundamental issue of how to get a typical teenager in areas where there is little or no educational culture, where employment is seen to be more useful and where they may not have benefited fully from primary or second level education, interested in attending third level education. The work of the Early Learning Initiative reviewed below demonstrates NCI's attempts to address this more fundamental need.

Other initiatives such as the introduction of service learning, the Discovering University programme and Progressions - an initiative with the financial services sector to train and employ local people in the Financial Services sector from the Docklands area of Dublin - are also in place to demonstrate that the College is relevant to the local community.

6.3.2 Early Learning Initiative[15]

The Early Learning Initiative (ELI) is a community-based educational initiative and is part of the School of Community Studies. It provides learning support programmes, which enable positive educational change in the local community. This has been made possible through the donation of €5m over a period of five years by a number of patrons.

One of the ELI's key objectives is to involve parents in their children's education and support children and parents as they make the transitions between educational providers. This begins in early infancy with our Spórt is Spraoi Toddler groups and Parent Child Home Programme (PCHP). These are focused on helping parents to develop their children's social, language and thinking skills. The books and toys provided are gifts to the families to enable the family to continue the activities in their own time and at their own pace. This helps the children to develop the skills they need to succeed in school as well as providing them with essential early learning materials.

The ELI also trains local educators to facilitate the Parents Together Community Course in their settings. Developed in partnership with the

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[15] See Appendix 9: ELI programmes

Parents Plus Charity, Mater Hospital, it brings parents together to discuss their relationships with their children. This helps them to find new ways to encourage their children and help them to learn.

While support in the Early Years is an essential feature of ELI's programmes, the College also believes that if learners are to progress to further and higher education, both they and their parents will need on-going support. This is provided in the *Stretch to Learn* Programmes, which include various literacy and numeracy projects, family celebration awards, and second level tuition along with support for third level learners. A set of case studies in Appendix 9 outlines how a number of families have engaged with programmes in a variety of ways and at different levels.

6.3.3 Mature Learners

From its inception in 1951, the College has dealt with mature learners, learners who did not benefit from education in their formative years – the so called 'second chance' learner.

NCI's total learner body is currently comprised of 60% mature learners. Of the full-time cohort, 10% are mature, with 15% of 2009/10 intake (new entrants) being mature. This has risen from 7% in 2008.

Mode of Study	% Mature Learner
Full-time	10%
Part-time	79%

Table 7: Mature Learner Profile

The average age of the NCI part-time learner is 36 whilst the average age of the full-time learner is 21

6.3.4 Students with Special Needs

NCI is a member of the DARE[16] scheme which facilitates access to programmes for students with a disability. 6.5% of NCI's full-time students have registered and been assessed with the Student Support office as having a disability. This represents a proportionately much higher representation that the national average of 3.5%

6.4   Transfer & Progression

In reviewing the curriculum under the LTA strategy and programmatic review the Schools' portfolio of programmes has been streamlined to allow easier transfer and progression between programmes within the College. Programmes had been developed over time and to some extent, in a piecemeal way. The development of a postgraduate suite of taught programmes has also now given a progression route at NCI to those completing an undergraduate programme at NCI.

Many of our learners, while mature, are not necessarily those returning to education as a 'second chance' learner. Many are attending programmes to

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[16] Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)

build on existing qualifications, gain professional qualifications associated with a particular programme and to use that learning to progress at work or take a more active role in their local community.

Special purpose awards are now developed with a critical view to where the learner may transfer to, should s/he so wish within the NCI portfolio of programmes. As many learners are studying at a geographical distance from the College, it is also ensured that they can use this learning in similar awards offered by other HEI's where NCI is not offering a programme that they can transfer to.

The College has begun to work more closely with Further Education Colleges to allow advanced entry into appropriate undergraduate programmes and has also reviewed its entry requirements to allow Foundation Mathematics as a level certificate subject in certain programmes.

6.5 Recognition of Prior Learning

NCI has long upheld the principle of recognition of prior learning, be it formal or experiential. NCI has granted module exemption particularly to part-time learners based on previous accredited learning.

The College's approach to the recognition of experiential learning needs further development. Typically experiential learning is used to gain admission to a level 8 at Higher Diploma or Level 9 programme. The College needs to ensure that its processes comply with the principle of fair and consistent assessment of the learner and is in the process of developing a more transparent process. In accordance with Assessment & Standards, new programme validations are now explicitly required to state the RPL criteria and the form of assessment that will be used for admission. Programme Committees are being urged to develop stage learning outcomes in order to assist in the assessment of candidates applying for experiential learning. What is heartening is that programme directors are actively seeking to recognise experiential learning rather than recommending that the learner take a programme ab initio. A working group on RPL has commenced work on this area with a view to having a more consistent approach to experiential learning being implemented by June 2010.

6.6 Recommendations for Improvement

- Maintain systematic arrangements with Further Education Colleges
- Recognition of Prior Learning
    o Implementation of working group recommendations

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7   Implementation of Improvement Plan

7.1   Public Confidence

Improvement	Priority	Action	Dependency	How will it be monitored	Measure of Success	Status	Responsible	Complete by
Expansion of outward activities	Medium	Faculty encouraged to take part in QA mechanisms of other institutions	N/A	Annual review of those involved with other organisations	Increased awareness of best practice	Not started	Deans Heads of function	Ongoing
More systematic engagement with stakeholders	Medium	Set up programme of focus groups, interviews, surveys, feedback mechanisms	N/A	Annual review by DQASS	More informed programme development	Not started	DQASS/Deans of School	Apr 2010

7.2   Strategic Management & Governance

Improvement	Priority	Action	Dependency	How will it be monitored	Measure of Success	Status	Responsible	Complete by
Review of Structure of the School of Business	High	Review of role of subject head Review of	N/A	Executive Board to review progress	More effective operation of Programme Committees	Commenced	Dean School of Business	Apr 2010

Improvement	Priority	Action	Dependency	How will it be monitored	Measure of Success	Status	Responsible	Complete by
		administrative functions			Better integration of associate faculty			
Effective use of College communications systems	High	Continue training of staff on use of staff portal, sms systems Initiate annual associate faculty conference	N/A	Review of training attendance sheets	Use of the staff portal, sms as a communication mechanism throughout the organisation Associate faculty feedback of improved communication/engagement	Work in Progress	Director Marketing/Deans	Ongoing
Review of student online services	High	Survey of students to test suspected reasons for non take-up of services	N/A	Report on findings and issue recommendations	Implementation of recommendations will	Work in Progress	Registrar	Dec 2009
Review of Research support	High	Review of placement of the research office in the organisation structure	N/A	Learner surveys Progress reports Research Committee minutes	Learner feedback		Deans of School	Dec 2009

7.3   Quality Assurance

Improvement	Priority	Action	Dependency	How will it be monitored	Measure of Success	Status	Responsible	Complete by
Quality Assurance Procedures	High	Continued Review of the Handbook and identification of effectiveness of mechanism	Implementation of Assessment & Standards	Academic Council	QA handbook is used and easily accessible	In Progress	Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services	Jun 2010
Review of academic governance	High	• Implement recommendations re quora, review frequency of meetings and terms of reference for each committee • Benchmark against other providers of similar size and profile	N/A	Academic Council	Committee meetings and outcomes are effective	In progress	Registrar	Jun 2010
Review of Programme Director assignment	High	PD role to be assigned at programme level rather than by year or mode of study	N/A	Programme directorship list to be reviewed	Programmes reviewed holistically	In progress	Dean of School	Jun 2010
Programme Committee operation	High	• Continued training of programme	Assignment of PD	Review of minutes, agenda and	Programme committees operate as	In progress	Dean of School	ongoing

Improvement	Priority	Action	Dependency	How will it be monitored	Measure of Success	Status	Responsible	Complete by
		teams • Schedule of programme committees set up and published • Standardised agenda		decisions	required Improved feedback from learners/associate faculty			
Annual Programme Reporting	High	•	Programme Committee meeting process	Academic Council	Improved programme knowledge and more efficient programmatic review processes	In progress	Dean of School	Ongoing
Student feedback processes	Medium	• Continued review of the process to ensure speedy turnaround and feedback loop is closed • Engage Students Union and Class Representatives more closely into the feedback mechanisms	Research on learner feedback mechanism	Quality Committee minutes	Faculty & Learner feedback improved	In Progress	Deans of School/ DQASS	Ongoing
Assessment of learners	High	• Full Review and implementation of Assessment	N/A	External examiners reports		in Progress	• Deans of School • DQASS	Jun 2010

Improvement	Priority	Action	Dependency	How will it be monitored	Measure of Success	Status	Responsible	Complete by
		& Standards		Review of academic performance				
Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff	High	• Implementation of Peer Observation • Implementation of more focussed training on technologies • Encourage use of staff portal as a collaboration and experience sharing tool • Initiate annual associate faculty conference • Further engagement interventions with AF	• Training on portal • Identification of individual training needs	Student feedback Faculty feedback	Improved learner feedback Improved faculty feedback	In Progress	Director Centre for Research & Innovation in Learning & Teaching/ Deans/HR	Ongoing
Student Support Services	Medium	• Continual monitoring of services to ensure that resources are balanced	N/A	Annual reports by support function providers	College able to meet learners needs	In progress	Registrar	Ongoing

Improvement	Priority	Action	Dependency	How will it be monitored	Measure of Success	Status	Responsible	Complete by
		according to increasing student numbers/changing student profiles.		Learner feedback				
Public Information		• Improvement of detailed programme information available outside of the College	Completion of programmatic reviews		• Improved learner feedback • Improved applicant feedback	In Progress	Deans of School Programme Directors	Jun 2010

7.4 Access, Transfer & Progression

Improvement	Priority	Action	Dependency	How will it be monitored	Measure of Success	Status	Responsible
Recognition of Prior Learning	Medium	• Working group to report on action plan for implementation of the policy and procedure • All new	• Implemenation of Assessment & Standards • Forthcoming guidelines to be published by HETAC	• Review of admissions procedures used • Review of assessment materials and results outcomes • Review of subsequent	Learners admitted under RPL are done so consistently	In Progress	Director Centre for Research & Innovation in Learning & Teaching

Improvement	Priority	Action	Dependency	How will it be monitored	Measure of Success	Status	Responsible
		programme development to have specific RPL policy		performance of learners admitted under RPL			