

HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING AWARDS COUNCIL, IRELAND

Comhairle na nDámhachtainí Ardoideachais agus Oiliúna, Éire

Institutional Review of Providers of Higher Education and Training

**Institutional Review of National College of Ireland on
9-10 February 2010**

Report of the Expert Panel

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HETAC Institutional Review

Introduction

This is the Report of the Expert Panel, appointed by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), which carried out the Institutional Review of the National College of Ireland in February 2010.

HETAC is the qualifications awarding body for third-level educational and training institutions outside the university sector in Ireland. All providers offering HETAC awards are subject to external quality assurance review of their institutions. HETAC carries out such reviews as part of its Institutional Review process.

HETAC appointed a panel to carry out the Institutional Review on its behalf. Under the chairmanship of Mr. Michael Kelleher, the review panel membership reflected a wide range of expertise and experience, in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the review. HETAC wishes to record its thanks to the members of the panel for accepting this task and for their generous and professional commitment to the review.

The National College of Ireland will submit a follow-up report to HETAC not more than 12 months after the publication of this report. The College follow-up report will outline how it has implemented the recommendations, as set out in its response to the Institutional Review, and evaluate the initial impact of such implementation. The follow-up report will be considered by the Academic Committee of HETAC, and a commentary by the HETAC Executive will be included. The Academic Committee may adopt the College's follow-up report and may consider further conditions. Following adoption by the Academic Committee of HETAC, the follow-up report will be published on the Council's website.

Note:

HETAC's institutional review process is designed to address only those objectives described in the Terms of Reference appended to this Report.

In particular, the Expert Panel cannot make any finding regarding:

- *the financial standing and commercial viability of the institution reviewed;*
- *the institution's compliance with its general statutory obligations;*
- *the general fitness of the institution's systems and arrangements for the governance and management of financial matters.*

The Report of the Expert Panel contains no assurances, warranties or representations, express or implied, regarding the aforesaid issues, or any other issues outside the Terms of Reference.

While HETAC has endeavoured to ensure the information contained in the Expert Panel Report is correct, complete and up-to-date, any reliance placed on such information is strictly at the reader's own risk and in no event will HETAC be liable for any loss or damage (including without limitation, indirect or consequential loss or damage) arising from or in connection with the use of the information contained in the Expert Panel Report.

Report of the Expert Panel - Executive Summary

This is the Report of the Expert Panel appointed by HETAC to undertake the Institutional Review of the National College of Ireland on 9–10 February 2010. The review process was carried out in accordance with the HETAC *Policy on Institutional Review of Providers of Higher Education and Training*, 2007.

Findings

Overall recommendation to HETAC, including details of any conditions attached

The following is an Executive Summary of the Expert Panel’s key findings:

- The effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements operated by National College of Ireland has been assessed and the arrangements have been found to be substantially effective in accordance with the seven elements of Part One of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* 2009, Helsinki, 3rd edition, and the HETAC *Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education*, 2004.
- National College of Ireland has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression, as determined by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

Commendations and Recommendations

The Expert Panel made a total of 7 commendations and 22 recommendations, identified in the body of the report, in relation to the Objectives for Institutional Review to which each corresponds.

The panel is grateful to the National College of Ireland for the cooperation and assistance provided to the review team and wishes it well in its future development.

Background to National College of Ireland

The National College of Ireland (NCI) is a not-for-profit company with charitable status. In compliance with its legal status, the College operates under a Board of Directors and this functions as the Governing Body of the institution. The Governing Body is comprised of an independent Chair, representatives from the national employer and trade union organisations, the Jesuit Community, representatives from wider education and business, as well as the President, two staff representatives and a learner representative.

The College provides further and higher education and training programmes in Business, Human Resource Management, Accounting, Finance, Computing and Community Studies. These programmes operate at Levels 3 to 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications.

The National College of Ireland has a significant history as a third level educational institution. Established by the Jesuit order in 1951 as the Catholic Workers College, it later developed as the National College of Industrial Relations and 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.

In the late 1990's the College re-designated itself as the National College of Ireland. Prior to this the College expanded its part-time provision to a number of off-campus locations throughout the country and extended its full-time undergraduate programmes to include Accountancy and Finance. Informatics was included in the late nineties. In 2002 the College moved from its original site in Ranelagh to a new purpose built premises in Dublin's International Financial Services Centre.

NCI has three schools, the School of Business, the School of Computing and the 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 has a number of programmes accredited by professional bodies.
- The School of Computing offers 13 programmes from Level 3 to Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications.
- 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 School's programmes are run on a part-time basis. The School offers two FETAC major awards as well as a number of minor awards. In addition, the School has established a community based educational initiative aimed at addressing educational disadvantage which it operates in conjunction with St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

Part-time programmes 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 semesterised basis.

A limited number of programmes are offered in centres outside of the main campus. NCI terms these locations the National Campus Network and they can include educational establishments, premises of employers and community based venues.

In the academic year 2008-9, National College of Ireland had an enrolment of over 3,800 learners. Of these, 70% were part-time learners with 9% of the learners studying at locations in the National Campus Network. The School of Business accounted for close to 80% of the total enrolment, with the remainder being almost equally divided between the other two schools. 84% of students were registered on programmes leading to higher education awards at Levels 6 to 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications. Of these, 70 were registered on programmes leading to awards at Level 9 and a further 4 for awards at Level 10, PhD.

The College is managed by a Senior Team, comprising the President, the Director of Finance, the Vice-President (Academic and Administration) 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, the Registrar, the Deans of School and Heads of support functions. At the time of the review, the position of Vice-President (Academic and Administration) was vacant with the functions of the position being carried out by the President. For a short period in 2007-2008, there was a Vice-President (Research); this post is also vacant and, as a temporary measure, the functions are being carried out on a rotating basis by the Deans of the Schools of Business and of Computing.

The current president, Dr. Paul Mooney, has decided not to renew his contract and at the time of the Institutional Review site visit his successor was in the process of being appointed. A new incumbent for the office was expected to take up his position in March 2010. This, coupled with the resignation of the Vice-Presidents in the academic year 2008-2009 has given the Governing Body an opportunity

to review the organisation structure of the College with a view to leading it forward during this challenging time for the sector.

Academic governance is provided by Academic Council and its subcommittees. The Council has a membership of 20, including senior staff, two learner representatives, six full-time elected members of academic staff and a further three academic staff appointed by the President. The Council has the following subcommittees:

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

National College of Ireland 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. The number of such funded learners is capped at 925 full-time students. However, the College has an additional number of approximately 200 full-time students and in the region of 2,700 part-time students. Because of the limitation on the number of funded students there is a significant emphasis on the need to generate additional funding. The College relies on student fees, philanthropic donations, commercial activities and other fund-raising to cover the costs of the additional full-time students and the expenditure on its part-time programmes.

National College of Ireland employs 438 people with a full-time equivalent (FTE) of 248 employees. Of these, 155 persons or 122 FTE are administrative/support staff. In total, 283 academic staff are employed, or 127 FTE. A particular feature of NCI is the balance between the full-time and part-time Faculty/Associate Faculty with 249 being categorised as part-time and 34 as full-time.

Additional background on the profile of the College is set out in the Terms of Reference, Appendix A.

Institutional Review Methodology

The Institutional Review process was carried out in accordance with HETAC's *Policy on Institutional Review of Providers of Higher Education and Training*, 2007. The process consists of the following six phases, with the Report of the Expert Panel coming at the end of phase 3.

1. HETAC sets the Terms of Reference following consultation with the College.
2. Self-evaluation carried out by the College, followed by the production of a written Self-Evaluation Report (SER).
3. Visit of the expert panel appointed by HETAC, followed by the written Report of the Expert Panel.
4. Institutional response to the panel's report, including its implementation plan.
5. Publication of the Report of the Expert Panel and the College's subsequent response and implementation plan.
6. Follow-up report submitted by the College.

The Terms of Reference for National College of Ireland were discussed at a number of meetings between HETAC and the institution from April to September 2009. The Terms of Reference were set in October 2009. The objectives of the Institutional Review of National College of Ireland were set by HETAC as follows:

1. To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made.
2. To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution with the following special considerations for National College of Ireland:
 - The management structure and team of the College is relatively new. The new post of Subject Head was established in each school in 2008 as an addendum to the new structure. The College considers that the full impact of the Subject Head posts has not been fully realised to date.
 - Research Strategy: The Institutional Review panel should consider the overall research strategy of the College following recent HETAC approval to provide Doctoral Level research programmes in the field of Technology Enhanced Learning.
3. To assess the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the institution with the following special considerations for National College of Ireland:

- Off- Campus Provision: - The Institutional Review panel should consider the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements in place for off-campus provision.
 - Off-campus provision is defined as those locations where NCI is using a rented facility to deliver programmes. These facilities include adult education centres, schools, employers' premises, hotels or other appropriate locations. The programmes are staffed and managed by NCI staff and faculty. The main programme run/provided in this format is the Certificate in First Line Management. This programme is run in approximately 25 off-campus locations. This is a 30 credit (ECTS) Special Purpose award at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The College also offers a number of FETAC minor awards from Level 3-6 on the NFQ at a number of locations.
 - Part-time provision: As the majority of learners attending the National College of Ireland are part-time learners. The Institutional Review panel should consider the effectiveness of arrangements in place for the delivery and support of part-time programmes by the College.
4. To confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression with the following special considerations for the National College of Ireland:
- The College would like to highlight to the panel the traditional broad mix of part-time learners facilitated by the College through its provision of part-time programmes. Part-time learners include mature learners returning to education for the first time and progressing through the levels of the national framework, to part-time learners seeking continuing professional development or postgraduate programmes.
 - The College would also like to highlight to the panel the role of the School of Community Studies to widen participation as part of the mission of the College. In particular the success of the early learning initiative designed to increase participation by targeting potential learners in their younger years. A case study will be provided to demonstrate this initiative as part of the Self Evaluation Report submission.
6. To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution.

(Objective 5 ‘*To evaluate the operation and management of delegated authority where it has been granted*’, does not apply to National College of Ireland and is therefore not included in this review.)

In addition to these prescribed objectives, the following additional objective was set in the Terms of Reference for the National College of Ireland:

7. NCI welcomes this review as a method of reviewing progress since the 2006-2007 review of quality systems carried out by HETAC. The College considers the Institutional Review process as an opportunity to measure its progress and identify areas for further enhancement. The College believes it has made significant progress in enhancing the robustness of its new programme development process.

The Institutional Review should explore whether or not the current division of responsibility between the internal and external quality assurance procedures supporting programme validation is optimal, while recognising that HETAC is required to formally validate new programmes, and make recommendations for enhancement.

The Terms of Reference for National College of Ireland are included in full in Appendix A.

HETAC appointed a panel of experts to carry out the Institutional Review on its behalf. Under the chairmanship of Mr. Michael Kelleher, the review panel membership reflected a wide range of expertise and experience, in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the review. Panel members were asked to declare any potential conflicts of interest prior to their appointment and none were declared. Panel members received an induction and training on the conduct of Institutional Reviews in advance of the site visit. The panel membership is outlined in full in Appendix B.

National College of Ireland undertook the following internal preparations in advance as part of the Institutional Review process.

The Institutional Review process was led by the Vice-President (Academic and Administration) and managed by the Director of Quality Assurance and Statistical Services. The Executive Board of the College undertook the role of steering committee. The process included briefings of staff and considerations at Academic Council and Academic Quality committee meetings. Communications with learners took place through the Students Union and a briefing of class representatives. A special meeting with Associate Faculty was also held.

A number of cross functional groups were established to conduct self-evaluations in academic and other relevant areas. A virtual learning environment platform was used to assist the deliberations of these groups. Each of the groups produced and submitted a report on their assigned areas. In parallel with this, a review of the quality assurance procedures was conducted and the quality assurance mechanisms were audited.

Inputs from external stakeholders had previously been obtained for the purpose of producing the College's strategic plan and for programmatic reviews. These stakeholders were invited to update their views in the context of the Institutional Review.

The Self Evaluation Report was based on reflection and evaluation of the outputs referred to above. The final draft of the report was approved by the Governing Body, the Academic Council and the Executive Board.

In advance of the site visit, the National College of Ireland submitted a Self-Evaluation Report and additional supporting documentation. A desk-based review of the SER was undertaken by HETAC prior to forwarding the report to the review panel. The expert panel assessed the SER in advance of the site visit, and forwarded their initial thoughts to HETAC and the Review Secretary.

The SER set out, as background, a brief history of NCI and presented information on its governance and management. The document also gave an outline of the programme provision, a profile of the learners in the institution and a further profile of its faculty and other staff. In individual chapters the report addressed each of the Terms of Reference as specified by HETAC. The processes in which the College engaged for the Institutional Review were also described in the report.

A number of other documents were submitted in support of the Self-Evaluation Report. A list of these documents is given in Appendix C.

An advance meeting between the Chairperson, Secretary and HETAC Head of Institutional Review and representatives from the Institution was held on 13 January 2010. The meeting

- agreed an outline agenda and logistical on-site arrangements for the visit,
- confirmed the panel composition and noted that there were no conflicts of interest,
- reviewed the Terms of Reference including the special objective under Section 7 of these Terms,

- agreed further documentation to be provided in advance of the site visit,
- agreed documentation to be available to panel members during the site visit and
- discussed the timeframe for the panel report and institutional response.

The additional documentation requested by the panel, was provided by the College.

The panel convened on the 8th February 2010 and the site visit took place on the following two days, 9th and 10th February. It met with members of the institution, learners and other stakeholders according to an agenda drawn up by the panel in consultation with the institution. The agenda for the site visit is set out in Appendix D. A list of people met by the panel is provided in Appendix E.

Findings in relation to objectives of Institutional Review

Objective One – Public Confidence

To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the College and the standards of the awards made

This overarching objective covers all areas of the College's activity. The quality of the Institutional Review process itself is a critical part of this, as is the publication of the Self-Evaluation Report, the Report of the Expert Panel, and the College's own response and action plan. The information provided by the College to the public is part of this objective.

Summary of Objective 1 — Public Confidence

In arriving at its views in relation to this objective, the panel was informed by a wide range of sources and considerations. These included the Self Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices, additional material provided after the preliminary advance meeting, other publicly available documentation on the College which was made available to the panel and the discussions during the panel visit with staff, students and external stakeholders.

In the SER the College highlighted the role of the quality and relevance of its programmes in maintaining and building public confidence. This was emphasised throughout the site visit. Other illustrations provided relating to public confidence in the institution included the standing of members of the Governing Body and the selection of NCI as a preferred provider of tailored programmes for employers, trade unions, State, semi-State and community organisations. The recent achievement of NCI in competing successfully with other higher education institutions for HEA funding for the 2009 Labour Market Activation Programme was also referenced.

Recognition of programmes by professional bodies, the relationship with second level schools and the involvement of staff with other higher education institutions were also emphasised in relation to public confidence in NCI.

Key Findings of Objective 1 — Public Confidence

The date for the Institutional Review visit had been set in January 2009 and since then the College had engaged in a comprehensive self-study process leading to the production of the Self Evaluation Report. The process had involved committees and personnel at all levels of the institution and extensive consultation and engagement. The outputs from the process included a series of evaluations of the academic and support areas of the College. These were provided to the panel as appendices to the SER.

It was apparent that the Institutional Review had been viewed by NCI as being of major significance to the College and that it had addressed the review seriously and comprehensively over a prolonged period. There was ample evidence of engagement by staff at a variety of levels in the self study process.

The panel considers that the SER was in the main comprehensive and readable. It was structured to address the Terms of Reference as set by HETAC and responded well to these. The approach in the report was reflective and evaluative and it incorporated an improvement plan based on these considerations.

A substantial amount of supporting documentation was provided with the SER. This was augmented by additional documentation supplied following the preliminary advance meeting between the Review Chairperson, the Review Secretary and HETAC representative. As agreed, further documentation was provided during the visit.

While the documentation was comprehensive and relevant, the panel members found difficulties in navigating their way through it and using it to obtain information it required about the structure and operation of the College. The problem was somewhat alleviated by the production of a cross referencing document by the College following the advance meeting. However, the panel is satisfied that through the documentation and through the presentations, meetings and discussions during the site visit, it had sufficient information to properly conduct its business.

Programme information for the public is provided in the College's prospectuses, brochures and on the website. Other information on the College's activities is conveyed through the public website, the publication of a magazine and through public events organised in NCI.

The panel considers that NCI enjoys a high level of public confidence and support. External stakeholders stated that they regard the College as being very receptive, flexible and responsive. Its location in the Financial Services Centre and close to inner city communities is a prime asset. NCI capitalises on this by successfully engaging with a wide range of commercial and other organisations. It is evident that employers and students have confidence in the standing and acceptability of the programmes in NCI and in the awards achieved.

Engagements of the College with external stakeholders appear to be mainly on an informal and an ad-hoc basis. The panel considers that NCI would benefit by reviewing these arrangements and augmenting them with formal processes. There was also evidence that at an operational level, there is scope for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of dealing with prospective student and external partners and the panel recommends that appropriate structures be put in place to deal with this. For example, a ‘one-stop-shop’ concept could be considered to facilitate approaches to the College on specific projects.

The panel is satisfied that the College has used a wide range of methods for communicating with the public. Its publications, such as prospectuses and website are attractive and well presented. However, the effectiveness of the different methods of providing information to the public about the College and its activities has not been evaluated and the panel recommends that such an evaluation be carried out.

Unlike other higher education institutions, NCI does not publish a formal annual report. Such a report with consolidated information on the governance, structures, operation and management of the College would be of value in communicating with State and private organisations, other higher education institutions and the general public. The panel recommends that consideration be given to publishing such a report.

Commendations — Public Confidence

1. The panel commends the College for the high standing and respect that NCI has achieved for itself and for the awards made among students, employers and other external stakeholders.

Recommendations — Public Confidence

The panel recommends that:

1. Consideration should be given to the publication by the College of an Annual Report.
2. An evaluation should be carried out of the effectiveness of the methods employed for communicating with the public regarding the College and its activities.
3. The College should address means by which it can improve the efficiency and effectiveness at an operational level of interacting with prospective students and external stakeholders and put in place appropriate structures for these purposes. For example, a ‘one-stop-shop’ concept could be considered to facilitate approaches to the College on specific projects.
4. The College should review its current arrangements for interacting with external stakeholders and augment them with formal processes.

Objective 2 – Strategic Planning and Governance

To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the College

The review may address the coherence of institutional mission, vision and values and overall institutional strategic planning.

Summary of Objective 2 — Strategic Planning and Governance

The Strategic Plan of the College for the period 2007 – 2012 is entitled *Changing the Future: Making 3rd Level Education Accessible to Everyone*. It was initiated before the commencement of the Institutional Review process. The panel was informed that it is intended to review the plan within the next six months and that this would be influenced by the Institutional Review and its outcomes.

As previously indicated, there were significant changes at senior management level with the pending appointment of the new President and the appointments to the two vacant positions of Vice-President. The panel was also informed that it was intended to review the management structures following the taking up of office of the new President.

The corporate governance framework of NCI has reviewed in 2006. This resulted in a number of changes to the composition, gender balance and rotation of members of the Governing Body. Other changes were made to improve the functioning of sub-committees of the Governing Body. The structure of the Governing Body reflects corporate governance principles as well as general practice in the higher education sector.

Key Findings of Objective 2 — Strategic Planning and Governance

The panel recognises that in recent years the College has undergone significant developments and changes. These have included relocating to its new building in the Financial Services Centre and changes in governance, management structures, academic structures and senior personnel.

The panel welcomes the forthcoming review of the strategic plan and concurs with the view that the outcome of the Institutional Review should have a significant bearing on that process. In this context, the panel would like to draw attention to a number of key issues. These include the balance between the numbers of Faculty and Associate Faculty staff members, the need to focus objectives

to take into account the availability of resources and to benchmark the College against other higher education institutions.

A particular feature of the staffing structure of NCI is the balance between the numbers of Faculty and Associate Faculty staff members. Of a total of 283 academic staff members, 249, or 94 full-time equivalents, are categorised as part-time and 34 classified as full-time.

The panel found that this balance was placing heavy demands on the limited number of full-time staff due to the reliance on them for programme administration, academic development and quality assurance. While it recognises the wealth of experiences and other benefits that Associate Faculty bring to the College and the resource implication in changing the balance of staff, the panel considers that the College would be better served by having a higher proportion of full-time staff. It recommends that this matter be considered in the forthcoming review of the Strategic Plan.

The Governing Body meets in ordinary session four times per year and meetings are of relatively short duration of 1.5 to 2 hours. There are standing committees of the Governing Body, viz. the Finance, Audit and Organisation Committee, the Remuneration Committee and the Nominations Committee. Academic governance is provided by the Academic Council and its committees, one of which is the Academic Quality Committee. School Committees also operate under the aegis of the Academic Council. However their role in practice in relation to the Council was unclear to the panel.

The panel was impressed by the quality and comprehensive nature of the documentation provided to the Governing Body for its meetings. It also welcomes the increased emphasis on academic matters placed by the Governing Body in its deliberations in recent years.

The panel was of the view that the Governing Body appears somewhat remote from the running of the College rather than being proactive in areas such as contributing to the process of strategic planning and monitoring of quality assurance.

The panel is pleased to note that it is the intention of the Governing Body to undertake a review of the management structure of the institution in consultation with the new President. The current formal structure includes two positions of Vice-President, those of Vice-President (Research) and Vice-President (Academic and Administration). Both positions are vacant at present. Due to this and the impending departure of the current President, there is an apparent instability in the

management structure of the College. The panel is concerned at the potential risks to standards and quality that arise in these circumstances and urges that the position be addressed speedily.

The panel considers that, in reviewing the management structure, the Governing Body should take into account a number of matters raised in this report. These include the requirements of senior management for the roles of academic leadership, the overview of the Quality Assurance system and its operation and the implementation of a research strategy appropriate to the institution.

The Research Strategy of the institution was first formulated in 2004 and was revised in 2007. The implementation plan for the strategy recognised that, in realising the research goals, a key role was that of the position of Director of Research at the Vice-President level. That position was filled but subsequently fell vacant. It is now filled on a rotating basis by the Deans of the School of Business and of Computing. Implementation of the strategy in the School of Business was further constrained until the filling of the position of Dean of the School in 2008. A research strategy for the School has since been developed.

One of the five goals of the Strategic Plan is the development of a research and innovation culture in the institution and it is stated in the Research Strategy that research is integral to the achievement of other goals. The panel considers that in the forthcoming reviews of the Strategic Plan and the management structure, the research requirements of the College should be addressed.

The panel believes that the current Research Strategy may be too wide ranging and ambitious. It recommends that the revised strategy arising from the forthcoming reviews should prioritise building on the College's existing research strengths and be based on a realistic appraisal view of the resources that the College may succeed in allocating or obtaining for research, as well as the track record and research competency of the staff.

Commendations— Strategic Planning and Governance

2. The panel commends the attention which has been given to governance issues at Governing Body level and the higher priority that has been given in recent years to academic affairs in the deliberations of the Governing Body.

Recommendations— Strategic Planning and Governance

The panel recommends that:

5. The forthcoming review of the Strategic Plan of the College should address:
 - the appropriate balance between the numbers of Faculty and Associate Faculty staff members,
 - the need to focus strategic objectives to take into account the limited availability of resources and
 - the need to establish arrangements for benchmarking the College against other higher education institutions.
6. The forthcoming review of the management structures should take into account:
 - the requirements of senior management for fulfilling the roles of academic leadership,
 - the overseeing of the Quality Assurance system and its operation and
 - implementing a research strategy appropriate to the College.
7. The review of the Research Strategy of the College should seek to build on its existing research strengths and take account of the limited availability of resources for research, particularly staff capacity to carry out and supervise research.

Objective 3 – Quality Assurance

To assess the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements operated by the College

This is based on Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (QA). By including this in the Institutional Review process, the statutory requirement for the review of QA is met. How the College reviews the effectiveness of its QA for the seven elements of the European Standards and Guidelines should be explicitly addressed by the review process.

Summary of Objective 3 — Quality Assurance

NCI first agreed its quality assurance procedures with HETAC in 2004. The procedures and their operation were reviewed by HETAC¹ in 2006-2007 and a follow-up report was provided by the College to HETAC in December 2007. That report concluded that significant progress had been made in addressing issues identified in the review but recognised that there was further work to be done in embedding the culture of quality throughout the College.

The self-study and the Self Evaluation Report set out the approach to quality assurance in NCI as creating a culture of continuous improvement and enhancement. It outlined the challenges being faced by the College in relation to quality assurance and identified these under the headings of staff profile (with a large number of associate faculty members) academic governance; off-campus delivery and multiple awarding bodies.

The SER reviewed quality assurance in the institution under each of the headings of the seven elements of Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines. The report outlined progress that had been made in developing the system. It provided an analysis of its operation and detailed recommendations for further improvements under each of the seven headings.

Key Findings of Objective 3 — Quality Assurance

Element 1 — Policy and procedures for quality assurance findings

The process of embedding the quality assurance system has continued since the review carried out in 2006-2007. The panel recognises the commitment to improvement and the significant progress that has been made. It also acknowledges the improvement plan for the system which includes the

¹ *Review of Quality Assurance at the National College of Ireland, January 2007*. Report is available at: <http://www.hetac.ie/docs/NCI-HETAC%20review%20report.pdf>

continued review of the Quality Assurance Handbook, identification of the effectiveness of mechanisms and a review of academic governance.

The College has developed a complex committee structure for the delivery of its quality assurance requirements. Arising from the academic and management structures and the limited number of full-time faculty members, there is considerable overlap in membership between the different committees.

From its discussions and in reviewing the documentation from the various committees, it was not clear to the panel that the system was operating as well as it could. It considers, for instance, that there should be formal mechanisms for capturing agreed actions in minutes of meetings and also a mechanism to demonstrate how these actions have been taken forward. The panel also had concerns about the operation and effectiveness of the reporting lines between the committees and considered that there was a lack of clarity regarding how the monitoring and review processes inform systematic change.

The panel considers that the structure may be over elaborate and recommends that serious consideration be given to streamlining it and ensuring that reporting lines operate clearly and effectively. It also considers that there is a need for appropriate action plans so that identified quality assurance issues are addressed in a timely manner, that actions taken in this context are documented and reported to the appropriate bodies in the College and recorded in their proceedings.

The Academic Council has key functions in regard to quality assurance and the panel is concerned that it would be seen to be fully carrying out its assigned role. The panel welcomes the increased profile of academic affairs in the business of the Governing Body. It suggests that as a means of reflecting the role of the Academic Council and its position in the organisation structure, a direct report from the Council should be a regular feature on the Governing Body's agendas.

The panel recognises the good relationship between staff and students and the value of this in terms of communications. However, it feels that the formal student feedback mechanisms need further embedding and recommends that there should be effective student representation on relevant committees.

The panel considers that in the forthcoming review of the academic governance, the significant requirements of the academic quality system need to be taken into account. While an appropriate

emphasis is being placed on embedding quality assurance and developing the functions at school and other levels, there is a need at central level for academic leadership, the development of policies and procedures and the stringent oversight of their application.

Element 2 — Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards findings

The Quality Assurance Manual describes the procedures used for the approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards.

A system of generating formal annual monitoring reports on programmes was introduced in 2007 and has been further refined in the intervening period. The Quality Assurance Manual specifies the information to be used for monitoring purposes and the roles of the relevant committees and personnel. During its visit, the panel was provided with the documentation for a range of programmes and had an opportunity to discuss these with staff and students.

The panel concurs with the view in the SER that the quality and standard of information is an area for improvement and development. It found that there is a need to ensure, that all appropriate information is collected, evaluated and acted upon and that there is a consistency of approach across all programmes. A specific example in relation to this is the treatment of and follow-up on reports from external examiners.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of procedures for maintaining the quality of programmes and standards of awards, there is a need to be able to follow audit trails in relevant documentation. This would include the use, for example, of programme documents, reports of programme committees and minutes of the Academic Council. Demonstrating the overview and the cross-institutional functions of the Academic Council would be particularly important in this regard.

In relation to the approval of new programmes, NCI is operating in accordance with the procedures as detailed in its Quality Assurance Manual and has identified a number of areas for improvement. The College is concerned that it would be able to be in a position to develop programmes in a rapidly changing economic environment and respond expeditiously to tender documents when there is a need for new programme approvals or significant alterations to existing programmes. To this end, an institution specific objective is included in Section 7 of this report.

Programmatic reviews in the institution are conducted on a school basis. Reviews for the School of Business and the School of Computing are underway and scheduled to be completed in the current

academic year. Again in this case, the panel wishes to emphasise the importance of documenting decisions and the follow-up actions. For instance, the review carried out by the School of Business in preparation for the Institutional Review was particularly informative and evaluative. However, it was not apparent to the panel from the documentation what happened to the recommendations that were made.

Element 3 — Assessment of learners findings

The panel was informed that learner assessment had been a major topic of discussion and development in NCI over the last two years. This had taken place in the context of the development of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy; as part of the Programmatic Review process and against the background of the publication of the HETAC policy document, *Assessment and Standards 2009*.

The panel would like to draw attention to marking criteria as an important factor impacting on securing standards. Based on the examples with which it was provided at the visit, it found some variability in these within Schools and across the College. The panel considers that there is a need to strengthen the central overview of standards so as to ensure consistency, compatibility with levels of awards and adherence to approved policies and regulations.

HETAC's policy document *Assessment and Standards 2009* provides the policy and procedures for assessment of learners from September 2010 onwards. The College has commenced preparations for implementation of the provisions of that document. The panel was assured that these preparations would intensify following the Institutional Review so that full implementation would be possible by the scheduled commencement date of September 2010.

NCI acknowledges the key role of extern examiners in assessment and in maintaining standards. The panel considers that greater benefit to the College could be derived from the extern examining system. In general, it found that the feedback in the externs' reports with which it was provided was relatively uninformative and lacking in detail. In addition, there was no evidence of an appropriate central evaluation of externs' comments. There also appears to be a relatively low rate of attendance of externs at examination board meetings.

The panel draws attention to the HETAC document *Effective Practice for External Examining Guidelines (2009)*. It recommends particularly that the College should ensure diversity of backgrounds and institutions in the panel of extern examiners, appropriate on-campus involvement of externs at the

time of examination boards, more detailed written reports by externs and processes and procedures for demonstrating that externs' reports are considered and acted on.

Element 4 — Findings on Quality assurance of teaching staff

The panel members were highly impressed with the teaching staff met during the site visit and by their engagement and professionalism. It was provided with information on such matters as staff appointment procedures, contracts, staffing structures and progression. It considers these appropriate to the College. However it re-iterates in this context, points made earlier about the institution addressing matters of the appropriate balance between the numbers of Faculty and Associate Faculty members.

The College has a well developed staff development programme and the opportunities it provides are widely availed of. The establishment of teaching fellowships is a noteworthy recent initiative, as is the internal peer review process. Associate Faculty have a major role in the delivery of programmes and the panel considers that care should be taken to ensure that Associate Faculty are integrated as fully as possible into the staff development programme.

Student feedback on staff was very positive and it was evident that there are good relationships between staff and students and good levels of interactions between them. However, in the case of part-time students, access to some Associate Faculty was cited as a problem. For these students there was also a lack of clarity about the structures for addressing matters of concern to them and some uncertainty regarding their effectiveness.

Element 5 — Findings on Learning resources and support

NCI has an extensive range of resources and supports for students and these are operated by an energetic and dynamic staff. The College has responded well to issues such as the increased numbers of students with disabilities wishing to avail of third level education and to other changes in the nature of the student population. The ability of the institution to secure funding for student supports from private sources is noteworthy.

Learner support services in the College and resources allocated to them continue to develop. Ways of providing more effective responses to the needs of part-time students, such as automatic check-out systems in the library, are under active consideration.

The panel recommends that learner resources and supports be kept under review in the context of the College's development plans. In particular, areas such as library resources for increased numbers of post graduate students, supports for students with disabilities and catering for additional international students should be taken into account.

Element 6 — Findings on Information systems

The College has made substantial investments in its management information systems and supporting IT infrastructure. In the SER and through discussions at the site visit, there was an acknowledgement that the full potential benefits of the system had not yet been fully realised.

The panel concurs with this view. It considers that there is scope for improving for quality assurance purposes the collection of data on programmes and students, for communicating such data and for its use by internal bodies with quality assurance functions. This would provide a firmer base for informing the College about the health of its provision and opportunities for enhancement. The panel recommends addressing these requirements. It also suggests that statistical data gathered on the College as a whole and on individual programmes be used for benchmarking against similar data from other higher education institutions.

Additional resources may have to be allocated to obtain these benefits.

Element 7 — Findings on Public information

Matters relating to public information were referred to in Section 1 above. Additionally, it is noted that as a result of the self-study and the SER, the College plans to improve a numbers of areas such as the template for programme information, the process for ensuring that handbooks are consistently provided to learners and also the provision of more detailed programme information to people outside the College.

The panel welcomes these proposals.

Special Consideration – Off Campus Provision and Part-time Programmes

The Certificate in Front Line Management programme, which leads to a 30 credit special purpose award, is run by NCI in approximately 25 locations throughout the country. This is the main off-campus programme provided by the College. A small number of other programmes are also run and these are at Levels 3-6 of the National Framework of Qualifications.

The panel considers that a valuable service is being provided by these programmes. It is satisfied that appropriate quality assurance arrangements for the current programme provision are in place. There is, however, an on-going need to ensure that the off-campus programmes are subject to the same rigour and scrutiny as those offered on-campus. This requires oversight from the centre on a regular basis with a view to ensuring that the experiences of students is not diminished significantly by being off-campus, especially relative to those attending the same on-campus programme. Regular central oversight is also necessary to ensure that the locations are fit-for-purpose. It is suggested that consideration be given to including in the Quality Assurance Manual the special requirements to be applied to off-campus programmes.

The panel was informed that the operation of other off-campus programmes is contemplated. It considered that any such expansions should be supported from the outset by a robust quality assurance system and that care is taken to comply with all QA requirements. The resources for such arrangements need to be taken into account in planning any further off-campus programmes.

Part-time programmes were an inherent part of the panel's overall considerations of quality assurance and its findings and recommendations are comprehended within the above.

Commendations— Quality Assurance

The panel commends:-

3. The professionalism and dedication of the academic staff that it met during the review.
4. The extensive range of resources and supports for students and the energetic and dynamic student support staff.

Recommendations— Quality Assurance

The panel recommends that:-

8. Consideration should be given to streamlining the committee structure used for the delivery of quality assurance and ensuring that reporting lines operate clearly and effectively.
9. As a means of reflecting the role of the Academic Council and its position in the organisation structure, a direct report from the Council should be a regular feature on the Governing Body's agendas.
10. In the forthcoming review of the academic governance, the significant requirements of the academic quality system should be taken into account.

11. As a means of further embedding the formal student feedback mechanisms, there should be effective student representation on relevant committees.
12. For the purposes of monitoring programmes all appropriate information should be collected, evaluated and acted upon and there should be a consistency of approach across all programmes.
13. Improvements should be made in documentation relating to the quality assurance of programmes so that clear audit trails can be demonstrated, including the closing of quality loops.
14. In relation to the assessment of students, the central overview of standards should be strengthened so as to ensure consistency, compatibility with levels of awards and adherence to approved policies and regulations.
15. The College should review its arrangements for extern examiners in the context of the HETAC document “Effective Practice for External Examining Guidelines (2009)”. It should ensure diversity of backgrounds and institutions in the panel of extern examiners, appropriate on-campus involvement of externs at the time of examination board meetings, more detailed written reports by externs and processes and procedures for demonstrating that externs’ reports are considered and acted on by the College.
16. Associate Faculty should be integrated as fully as possible into the staff development programme.
17. Learner resources and supports should be kept under review in the context of the College’s development plans.
18. Improvements should be made to the collection of statistical data on programmes and students and their use for quality assurance purposes.
19. Any expansions in the provision of off-campus programmes should be supported from the outset by a robust quality assurance system and care should be taken to comply with all QA requirements.

Objective 4 – Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

To confirm the extent to which the College has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and its procedures for access, transfer and progression

This objective has two main strands:

1. Review of the Institution’s activity in implementing the National Framework of Qualifications
2. Procedures for access, transfer and progression

The National Qualifications Authority has produced guidelines in relation to this. They include issues such as credit, transfer and progression rules between levels and award types, entry arrangements, information provision, and policies and procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Summary — Objective 4 — Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

Widening participation and promoting access to higher education is a core element of NCI’s mission and is a central component of its strategic plan.

Since the foundation of the College in 1951, it has provided ‘second chance’ education for mature learners and currently these constitute some 60% of its total student cohort. Mature students represent an overwhelming majority of learners on the part-time programmes. There are also significant numbers on the full-time programmes, with 15% of new entrants in 2009/10 being categorised as mature.

NCI is a member of the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) scheme which facilitates access to higher education for students with disabilities. In recent years the College has had a significant increase in the numbers of students with disabilities on its full-time programmes. Proportionately, it has a higher representation of these categories of students than the national average in higher education.

The College has well developed programmes for promoting access for learners from socio-economically disadvantaged groups and has been successful in providing opportunities for a high proportion of students from these backgrounds. It has strong links to local communities and

involves members of those communities in lifelong learning in a variety of ways and at different levels. Access is also promoted through its strong links with second level schools and further education colleges and by the special admission scheme for those from designated disadvantaged groups.

The College states that its policy is that all programmes it offers should lead to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications. NCI offers programmes from Levels 3 to 10 on the Framework and these include both major and special purpose awards. In recent years these programmes have been streamlined to provide easier transfer and progression.

Key Findings — Objective 4 — Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

The panel considers that the National College of Ireland has fully implemented the National Framework of Qualifications. It has done so by ensuring that its programmes comply with the requirements for award levels, award types and standards. It has also implemented procedures for access, transfer and progression through appropriate entry arrangements, credits, transfer and progression routes and information provision.

The panel was impressed with the strong commitment to widening participation and promoting access that it encountered at all levels in the College. Access activities are well embedded in the culture and life of the College. They are well resourced and supported and have been successful in providing opportunities for a broad mix of learners on both the full-time and part-time programmes.

Initiatives, such as the Early Learning Initiative and other programmes operated by the School of Community Studies play a unique role in building bridges between the higher education sector and disadvantaged communities. They add significantly to NCI's already well established profile as a College committed to widening participation and achieving important goals of higher education.

The processes in place in the College for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) are not yet fully developed or uniformly applied. With a large cohort of mature students from a variety of backgrounds, there is considerable scope for improvements in this area. The panel recommends that the College would further develop its RPL policy and apply it in its programmes.

Commendations— Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

The panel commends:-

5. The strong commitment to widening participation and promoting access that it encountered at all levels in the College.
6. The unique role played by the Community Studies School in building bridges between the higher education sector and disadvantaged communities.

Recommendations— Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

20. The panel recommends that the College would further develop its policy for recognition of prior learning and apply it in its programmes.

[Objective 5 relates to delegated authority and is not applicable to the National College of Ireland.]

Objective 6 – Recommendations for Enhancement

To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the College

This includes both the recommendations arising from the external peer review process and the recommendations arising from the internal self-evaluation process.

Summary — Objective 6 — Recommendations for Enhancement

The SER contains wide ranging recommendations for enhancement and the College has incorporated these into an improvement plan. The plan includes target dates for completion, responsibilities, methods of monitoring and measures of success.

The panel commends the reflective manner in which the SER had been compiled and the improvement plan developed by the College. There was a strong institutional involvement in the preparation of the SER and commitment to implementing the recommendation for enhancement.

In its meetings and discussions at the site visit, the panel encountered a similar openness to change, development and enhancement. It welcomes this approach and is confident that the development plan, taken together with the recommendations in this report, will lead to a significant enhancement of NCI's provision of education and training. The panel considers that the College should adopt a strategic approach to enhancement, with forward planning based on evaluation of evidence of areas needing enhancement.

The College is facing a number of significant challenges at a time when a new President is about to take over. These include other changes at senior level, possible restructuring of management arrangements and the revision of the strategic plan. The panel considers that the development plan in the SER and the recommendation for enhancement contained in this report should have an important function in addressing these challenges.

Commendation

7. The panel commends the reflective manner in which the Self Evaluation Report had been compiled and the improvement plan developed by the College.

Recommendation

21. The panel recommends that the improvement plan in the Self Evaluation Report and the recommendations in this report should be used in addressing the challenges facing the College.

7. Institution-specific objectives

In addition to the prescribed HETAC objectives and the special considerations noted in relation to them, institutions have the option to include additional objectives to maximise the benefits of the review process.

NCI added an additional objective to the Terms of Reference for Institutional Review.

- NCI welcomes this review as a method of reviewing progress since the 2006-2007 review of quality systems carried out by HETAC. The College considers the Institutional Review process as an opportunity to measure its progress and identify areas for further enhancement. The College believes it has made significant progress in enhancing the robustness of its new programme development process.

The Institutional Review should explore whether or not the current division of responsibility between the internal and external quality assurance procedures supporting programme validation is optimal, while recognising that HETAC is required to formally validate new programmes, and make recommendations for enhancement.

Summary — Objective 7

The panel recognises the progress that the College has made in seeking to enhance and embed its quality systems since they were reviewed by HETAC in 2006-2007. It also accepts the commitment apparent at the Institutional Review to further enhancement of these systems.

The panel acknowledges the purpose of this objective for seeking to have a more streamlined process for the validation of new programmes and for alterations to existing ones. Increasingly, higher education institutions need to be flexible and responsive in order to meet economic and social requirements of students and employers. This is particularly important to NCI with its extensive lifelong learning programmes, its strong tradition of engagement with employers and trade unions and its social commitments.

Additionally, NCI is in many respects a unique institution in regard to the manner in which it is resourced. It derives 37% of its funding from state sources and the remainder from student fees commercial activities and private sources. The College considers that it needs to be in a position to

respond quickly to identified needs and, in certain cases, to compete with other higher education institutions. Having programmes validated in a timely manner is a key consideration in this regard.

Nevertheless, there is a need for adherence to robust quality assurance procedures and observing the statutory requirement for HETAC validation of programmes. There may, however, be scope for streamlining the process in the context of further development of NCI's quality assurance system and enhancement of its operation. The panel recommends that the College would engage with HETAC in the future to address this issue.

Recommendation

22. The panel considers that at this stage in the development of the NCI's quality assurance system it is premature to recommend further devolution of validation activity. The panel recommends that when the system is implemented more fully the College would engage with HETAC with a view to examining whether there is scope for streamlining the processes for programme validation.

Appendix A Terms of Reference

Higher Education and Training Awards Council
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF
National College of Ireland in February 2010
STATUS: SET

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to specify the Terms of Reference for the institutional review of National College of Ireland in February 2010. The HETAC Institutional Review policy applies to all institutions providing HETAC accredited programmes, or programmes accredited under delegated authority. These Terms of Reference are set within the overarching policy for institutional review as approved in December 2007 and should be read in conjunction with same. These Terms of Reference does not replace or supersede the agreed policy for Institutional Review. The Terms of Reference once set may not be amended and any significant revision required to the Terms of Reference will result in a new Terms of Reference to be set by HETAC following consultation with the College. These Terms of Reference should be read in conjunction with the supplementary guidelines for institutional review.

The objectives of the institutional review process are

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

It is possible that, within the objectives outlined above, institutions may have specific sub-objectives to which they will attach particular importance and wish to emphasise in their TOR. To maximise the benefits of the review process, institutions may also consider including additional objectives relevant to its context.

The approach taken by HETAC to institutional review will:

- Acknowledge that institutions have ownership of and responsibility for their activity;
- Be conducted in a spirit of partnership with institutions, with a view to improvement and enhancement, whilst acknowledging statutory requirements for accountability;
- Be conducted in a manner which adds value to the institution, minimises overhead and assists in building institutional capacity;
- Be flexible, adaptable and scalable in order to meet the needs of diverse institutions;
- Be conducted in an open, consistent and transparent manner;
- Be evidence-based in accordance with established criteria;
- Promote learning and development for all involved;
- Reward innovation and experimentation when it seeks to enhance our understanding of good practice;
- Promote collaboration and sharing of good practice between institutions;
- Take cognisance of international best practice and contribute to European and international developments in this area.

2. Institution Profile

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 learners². The College provides further and higher education and training programmes in the area of Business, Human Resource Management, Accounting, Finance, Computing and Community Studies.

Background

The National College of Ireland has a significant 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).

At this stage 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 current President (when the Terms of Reference were set) is Dr Paul Mooney, Dr Mooney commenced his term of office in January 2007 on the retirement of Prof. Joyce O'Connor. Dr. Mooney's term of office will conclude in February 2010 and the recruitment of his replacement is in process. In tandem with Dr Mooney's appointment, a new senior management structure was put in place with the appointment of a Vice-President (Academic & Administration) and Vice-President (Research). Both of these positions were subsequently filled, however the Vice-President (Research) post was restructured in 2009 as an alternating post between the Deans of the Schools of Business and Computing. The Director of Research post is currently held by the Dean of the School of Business. The position of Vice-President (Academic & Administration) was vacant when the Terms of Reference were set. In 2008, the academic governance of the College was strengthened with the introduction of subject heads in the Schools.

Programme provision

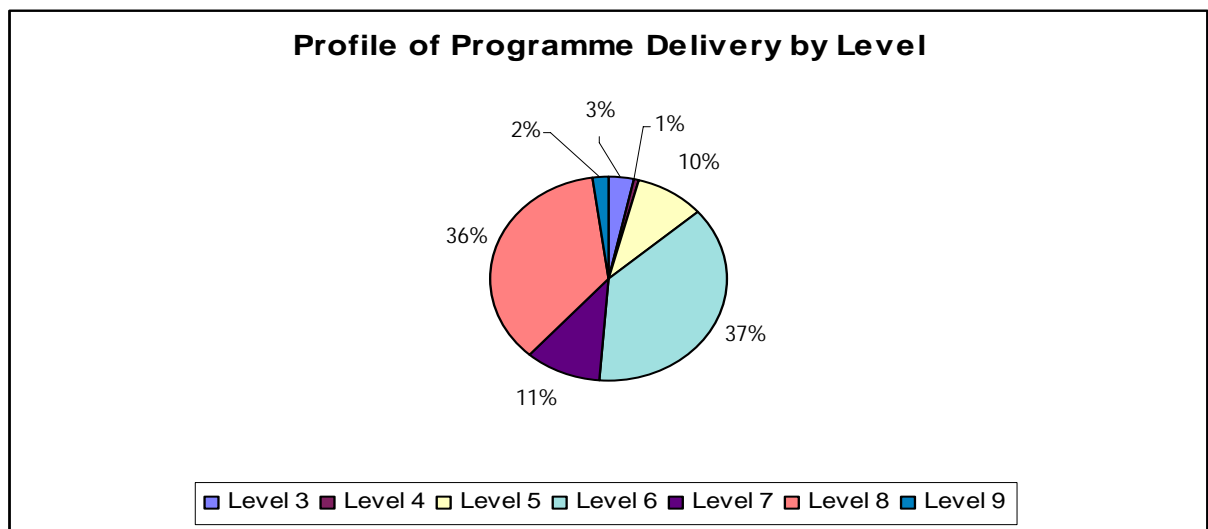
NCI, has three schools, the School of Business, School of Computing, and School of Community Studies They offer a wide range of full-time and part-time programmes as follows:

- The School of Business offers 26 programmes from Level 5 (or equivalent) to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications. The school has a number of programmes accredited by the Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) as National Vocational Qualifications (Level 3) in the UK qualifications framework, which is roughly comparable to Level 5 in the Irish national framework of qualifications.
- 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

² The number of funded learners is capped at 925

family law, advocacy and active citizenship. All of the Schools programmes are run on a part-time basis. The School offers two FETAC major awards as well as a number of minor awards. As well as these awards, the Early Learning Initiative was established as a Community Based Educational Initiative aimed at addressing educational disadvantage through the provision from birth. It 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 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.



NCI's programmes are accredited by the Higher Education & Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education & Training Awards Council (FETAC). Programmes in Accounting and Finance enjoy recognition by such professional bodies as the Institute of Chartered Accountants (ACA), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, (ACCA), and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. 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 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.

Learner profile

In 2008-9, National College of Ireland had an enrolment of 3,700 learners of which 69% were part-time learners. The School breakdown of learners is as follows:

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

Nine percent of these learners study at locations in the National Campus network. These are locations outside of the main campus in the Greater Dublin area, in major towns throughout the country and 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.

While the College has a small full-time international student body (approx 45 learners), over 50 nationalities are represented in the learner profile across all of our programmes. The College considers that the definition of international students, as determined by the Department of Education and Science, (as students who pay international fees on full-time programmes) masks the international dimension of the learners attending. 54 per cent 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 percent of full-time learners are from the DEF³ economic group (manual skilled- unskilled workers) with 29 percent being from the ABC group (professional).

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. The new institutional Strategy reflects this commitment.

National College of Ireland first agreed its quality assurance procedures with HETAC in 2004. In 2006 the College requested HETAC to undertake a review of its Quality Systems which was carried out between November 2006 and January 2007. As part of this review the College revised its quality assurance procedures and instigated processes to ensure that these procedures were embedded in the organisation.

The College considers that its educational philosophy and operational structure embodies participation, collaboration and applied problem solving strategies. These are enabled by a faculty whose qualifications and professional experience help integrate academic theory with current practical application. The College assesses both the quality of its academic programmes and the academic achievement of its students and utilises the results of these assessments to improve academic and institutional quality.

³ These categorizations are based on the Central Statistics Office definition of the occupation of the head of household in the census.

3. Institution's Team

Name	Role	Telephone Contact	Email
Dr Paul Mooney	President	+353 1 4498510	pmooney@ncirl.ie
Mr John McGarrigle	Registrar	+353 1 4498414	jmcgarrigle@ncirl.ie
Prof Jimmy Hill	Dean School of Business	+353 1 4498520	jimmy.hill@ncirl.ie
Dr Pramod Pathak	Dean School of Computing	+353 1 4498611	ppathak@ncirl.ie
Ms Michele Ryan	Dean School of Community Studies	+353 1 4498544	mryan@ncirl.ie
Ms Sinéad O'Sullivan	Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services	+353 1 4498632	sosullivan@ncirl.ie

The Institutional Review is being co-ordinated by Ms Sinéad O'Sullivan, Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services.

4. HETAC objectives for institutional review

There are six prescribed objectives for institutional review as outlined below. Institutions may wish to highlight any areas of specific importance to the institution within each of the objectives.

Objective 1 To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made

This objective is to enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made. This is an overarching objective which covers all areas of the institution's activity. The quality of the institutional review process itself is a critical part of this as is the internal self study, the publication of the Self Evaluation Report and panel report. The information provided by the institution to the public falls within this objective.

Special considerations for National College of Ireland

- None

Objective 2 - To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution

This objective is to contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution. The review may address the coherence of institutional mission, vision and values and overall institutional strategic planning. For recognised institutions with delegated authority this objective also includes the Operation and Management criterion of the review of delegated authority (governance, management, administration, planning and evaluation) and the Objects of the Qualifications Act criterion relating to national contributions *etc.*

Special considerations for National College of Ireland

- The management structure and team of the College is relatively new. The new post of Subject Head was established in each school in 2008 as an addendum to the new structure. The College considers that the full impact of the subject heads post has not been fully realised to date.

- **Research Strategy:** The institutional review panel should consider the overall research strategy of the College following recent HETAC approval to provide Doctoral Level research programmes in the field of Technology Enhanced Learning.

Objective 3 - To assess the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the institution

This objective is to assess the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the institution. This will be based on Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance⁴. By including this in the institutional review process the statutory requirement for review of QA is met. How the institution manages its QA for the **“seven elements”** of Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines should be explicitly addressed by the review process including : Policy and procedures for quality assurance; Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards; Assessment of students; Quality assurance of teaching staff; Learning resources and support; Information systems; Public information.

Special considerations for National College of Ireland

1. **Off- Campus Provision:** - The institutional review panel should consider the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements in place for off-campus provision.
Off-campus provision is defined as those locations where NCI is using a rented facility to deliver programmes. These facilities include adult education centres, schools, employers’ premises, hotels or other appropriate locations. The programmes are staffed and managed by NCI staff and faculty. The main programme run/provided in this format is the Certificate in First Line Management. This programme is run in approximately 25 off-campus locations. This is a 30 credit (ECTS) Special Purpose award at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The College also offers a number of FETAC minor awards from Level 3-6 on the NFQ at a number of locations.
2. **Part-time provision:** As the majority of learners attending the National College of Ireland are part-time learners. The institutional review panel should consider the effectiveness of arrangements in place for the delivery and support of part-time programmes by the College.

Objective 4 - To confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression

This objective is to confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression. The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland has produced guidelines in relation to this⁵. For example, this includes issues such as credit, transfer and progression routes between levels and award types, entry arrangements and information provision. As part of this objective, HEA-funded institutions should be mindful of the goals of the HEA’s National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2008-2013) and pay particular attention to the objectives relevant to higher education institutions.

Special considerations for National College of Ireland

- The College would like to highlight to the panel the traditional broad mix of part-time learners facilitated by the College through its provision of part-time programmes. Part-time

4 “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area”. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2007, Helsinki, 2nd edition.

5 *Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression*”. National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. 2003. www.nqai.ie.

learners include mature learners returning to education for the first time and progressing through the levels of the national framework, to part-time learners seeking continuing professional development or postgraduate programmes.

- The College would also like to highlight to the panel the role of the School of Community Studies to widen participation as part of the mission of the College. In particular the success of the early learning initiative designed to increase participation by targeting potential learners in their younger years. A case study will be provided to demonstrate this initiative as part of the Self Evaluation Report submission.

[NOT APPLICABLE: Objective 5- To evaluate the operation and management of delegated authority where it has been granted]

Objective 6 To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution

This objective is to provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution. This will include both the recommendations arising from the external peer review process and recommendations arising from the internal self study process.

Special considerations for National College of Ireland

- *None*

5. Institution-specific objectives

In addition to the prescribed HETAC objectives and the special considerations noted in relation to them, institutions have the option to include additional objectives to maximise the benefits of the review process. These might include for example:-

- the management of significant organisational change (such as a merger, campus relocation, organisational re-structuring, *etc.*);
- accommodating joint review with other statutory or non-statutory bodies from Ireland/overseas;
- integrating institutional review and programmatic review where feasible (*e.g.* in the case of specialised institutions having a single (or few related) programmes);
- using the process to progress a priority policy area or strategic objective (*e.g.* research management, internationalisation, *etc.*).

Additional Institutional Objectives

- NCI welcomes this review as a method of reviewing progress since the 2006/2007 review of quality systems carried out by HETAC. The College considers the institutional review process as an opportunity to measure its progress and identify areas for further enhancement. The College believes it has made significant progress in enhancing the robustness of its new programme development process.
The institutional review should explore whether or not the current division of responsibility between the internal and external quality assurance procedures supporting programme validation is optimal, while recognising that HETAC is required to formally validate new programmes, and make recommendations for enhancement.

Appendix to Objective 3 of the Terms of Reference:

National Campus Network

Location	Facility	Programmes Delivered	Award Type	Level/Equivalence	Collaborative /Off-Campus
Athlone	Athlone I.T. Dublin Road Athlone Co. Westmeath	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Bray	St Killians Community School Ballywaltrim, Bray Co Wicklow	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Carlow	Carlow Institute of Further Ed. Vocational School Kilkenny Road Carlow	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Coolmine	Coolmine Community School Grove Road Clonsilla Dublin 15	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Douglas	Douglas Community School Clermont Avenue Douglas Cork	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Drogheda	Drogheda Institute of Further Education (DIFE) The Twenties Drogheda Co. Louth	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Galway	Western Management Centre Galway Business Park Dangan	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC

Location	Facility	Programmes Delivered	Award Type	Level/Equivalence	Collaborative /Off-Campus
Leixlip	Galway Coláiste Chiaráin Celbridge Road Leixlip Co Kildare	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Letterkenny	Letterkenny I.T. Port Road Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
		Certificate in Personnel Practice (CIPD)		5 (NVQ3)	
Malahide	Malahide Community School Broomfield Malahide Co. Dublin	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Newbridge	St. Conleth's Vocational School Station Road Newbridge Co Kildare	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Palmerstown	Pobalscoil Iosalde Palmerstown Community School Palmerstown Dublin 20	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Portarlinton	Laois Third Level Centre Bracklone Street Portarlinton Co. Laois	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Roscommon - Boyle	Co Roscommon Higher Education Centre Elphin Street Boyle Co. Roscommon	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
		Certificate in Personnel Practice (CIPD)		5 (NVQ3)	

Location	Facility	Programmes Delivered	Award Type	Level/Equivalence	Collaborative /Off-Campus
Roscrea	Roscrea Community School, Roscrea Co. Tipperary	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Sligo	St. Angela's College Lough Gill Co. Sligo	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Tallaght	Old Bawn Community School Old Bawn Tallaght Dublin 24	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Trim	Boyne Community School Trim Co. Meath	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Tullamore	Ormonde Business School, Millennium House, Main Street, Tullamore, Co. Offaly	Certificate in Personnel Practice (CIPD)		5 (NVQ 3)	OC
Waterford - Dunhill	Dunhill Multi Education Centre Dunhill Enterprise Park Ballyphilip Waterford	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Wexford	FYDS Francis Street Wexford	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Whitehall	Plunket College Swords Road Whitehall Dublin 9	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC

Employer Based

Location	Programmes Delivered	Award Type	Level	Collaborative/Off-Campus
An Post, Fenian St., Dublin 1	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Dublin Bus	Advanced Certificate in Management	Major	6 (FETAC)	OC
Symantec, Ballycoolin, Dublin 15	Certificate in First Line Management	Special Purpose Award (30 ECTS)	6	OC
Health Services National Partnership Forum, Phoenix House, Conyngham Road, Dublin 8, Ireland	Changing Together Programme (Action Research)	Minor	6 (FETAC)	C

Community Based

Location	Programmes Delivered	Award Type	Level	Collaborative/Off-Campus
Dundalk	Cert. in General Studies	Major	5	C
Drogheda	Cert. in General Studies	Major	5	C
Ballymun		Minor	6	OC
Community Law Centre	Mediation Theory and Practice			
Northside	Employment Law	Minor	4	OC
Community Law Centre	Family Law			
Ballymun		Minor	4	OC
Community Law Centre	Family Law			
PACE, Santry	Family Law	Minor	4	OC
CASPR, Sean McDermott St	Family Law	Minor	4	OC
Offaly, Vocational Education Committee	Mentoring Theory and Process	Minor	6	OC

Location	Programmes Delivered	Award Type	Level	Collaborative/Off-Campus
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Warrenmount School, Dublin 1	Mentoring Theory and Process	Minor	6	OC
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Other

Location	Programmes Delivered	Award Type	Level	Collaborative/Off-Campus
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Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU)	Certificate in Trade Union Studies	Minor (60 ECTS)	6	C
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)	Certificate in Trade Union Studies	Minor (60 ECTS)	6	C
Labour Relations Commission [¥]	Certificate in Workplace Dispute Resolution	Special Purpose Award (10)	6	OC
Business Analysts Association of Ireland	Certificate in Business Analysis	Special Purpose Award (30)	8	C

¥Submitted to HETAC in April 09 - still awaiting panel date

6. Schedule for National College of Ireland

As outlined in the Institutional Review policy, the process consists of six phases

1. HETAC sets terms of reference following consultation with institution;
2. Self-study by the institution;
3. Visit by expert panel appointed by HETAC and written panel report;
4. Institutional response including implementation plan;
5. Panel report and response published;
6. Follow-up report submitted by the institution.

The major milestones in the timeframe for the institutional review of NCI are outlined below. This should be read in conjunction with the supplementary guidelines for institutional review.

Relative timeframe	Actual Date	Milestone
At least 6 months before panel visit	June 2009	Institution indicates timeframe for institutional review as per overall HETAC schedule of reviews
At least 6 months before panel visit	July 2009	Terms of Reference set following consultation with institution
3 to 6 months before panel visit		Institution undertakes self study process and produces self evaluation report
8 weeks before site visit	23 November 2009	Submission of Self Evaluation Report and other documentation
1 weeks after submission	30 November 2009	Desk based review of SER and feedback to institution
Approx 3 weeks before site visit	13 January 2010	Advance Meeting between Chair, Secretary and institution
Panel Visit	9-10 February 2010	Site Visit by external peer review panel (2 days approximately as determined by TOR) Preliminary (oral) feedback on findings
Approx 12 weeks after site visit	<i>Estimated:</i> 10 May 2010 <i>Actual:</i> 24 May 2010	Draft report on findings of panel sent by HETAC to institution for factual accuracy
4days following this	<i>Estimated:</i> 14 May 2010 <i>Actual:</i> 28 May 2010	Final report on findings of panel sent by HETAC to institution
Usually 6 weeks following receipt of final report	24 September 2010	Response by institution to HETAC including plan with timeframe for implementation of any changes
Next available HETAC Council meeting	18 October 2010	Consideration of report and institutional response by HETAC Council Publication of report and response on website once adopted
12 months after Council adoption	July 2011	Follow up report by institution to HETAC on implementation of recommendations

Appendix B Panel Membership

Review Chairman

Mr. Michael Kelleher

Former Secretary & Bursar, University College Cork (UCC)

Review Secretary

Mr. Brendan Goggin

Former Registrar of Cork Institute of Technology

Dr. Pat O Hara

Former Policy Manager at the Western Development Commission

Ms. Wendy Stubbs

Assistant Director at QAA (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) in the Development and Enhancement Group

Mr. Bartley Rock

Former Education Officer with the Union of Students in Ireland 2008/2009, currently studying for a Masters degree in the University of Bristol

Appendix C Supporting Documents

Documentation provided in advance of the site visit

Self Evaluation Report

Appendices to the Self Evaluation Report

Quality Assurance Handbook

Early Learning Initiative (ELI) Programme Information

Full-time Prospectus

Part-time Prospectus

Supplemental Appendix, including:

- Description of governance, management structures, funding arrangements
- Arthur Cox report
- Sample contracts for FT and associate faculty, general contracts and faculty job description
- Staff profile
- Students enrolments per stage/year between 2006-2009
- Access data provided to the HEA in 2008/9 - derived from data files provided to the HEA.

Sample Governing Body pack, including statutory accounts and management accounts

Supplement to the SER - cross referencing document

Directory of supporting documentation provided at site visit

A – College committee meetings

A1 – Academic Council

A2 – Academic Quality

A3 – Learning, Teaching & Assessment

A4 – Academic Progress & Student Support

A5 – Research Committee

A6 – Outline of committee structure and roles (Cht 2: Quality Assurance Handbook)

B – Sample Learner Support documentation

B1 – Student Support

- Clubs & Societies
- Disability Support
- Learning Support Services
- Maths Support Services
- Peer Mentor Programme
- Student Life & Support

B2 – Student Services

- Sample Registration pack for all cohorts
- Examination Information packs
- Sample correspondence
- Disciplinary & Appeals
- Careers & Opportunities

- Sample Graduation pack

B3 – Library
B4 – IT services
B5 – USB key provided to learners

C – Staff Development

C1: Induction
C2: Associate Faculty – Training
C3: CPD Seminars & Workshops
C4: Sample Cert of Attendance
C5: Employee Engagement Survey
C6: Samples of Staff CPD Folders

D – Programme Documentation – School of Business

D1: BA (Hons) HRM

D1.A: Validation document
D1.B: Current schedule & revised module descriptor
D1.C: External Examiner reports 2007/8-2008/9
D1.D: Programme Committee minutes
D1.E: Learner feedback
D1.F: Programme Handbook
D1.G: Module descriptors and sample assessments
D1.H: Award classification information

D2: BA (Hons) HRM – Part-time

D2.1 Validation document & revised module descriptors
D2.2 Sample modules as presented on Moodle & assessment
D2.3 External examiner reports – 2007/8-2008/9
D2.4 Programme Handbook
D2.5 Learner feedback
D2.6 Award classification information

D3: Certificate in First Line Management

D3.1 Validation document
D3.2: Programme Committee minutes
D3.3: Annual Reports
D3.4: External Examiner Report
D3.5: Learner feedback
D3.6: Sample assessments
D3.7: Award classification information
D3.8: Off-Campus centre audit forms
D3.9: Associate faculty feedback
D3.10: Class Rep communications
D3.11: Programme handbook
D3.12: Detailed module content

D3.13: Assessment information provided to learners

D3.14: Examples of support & administrative back-up material given to off-campus students

D4: Higher Certificate in Business Studies

D4.1: Validation document (2005)

D4.2: Prospectus Extract

D4.3: Current Programmatic review deliberations

D4.4: Proposed programme documentation post programmatic review

D4.5: Programme and Class representative minutes

D4.6: External examiner feedback

D4.7: Learner feedback

D4.8: Award classification information – full & part-time

D4.9: Review of retention

D4.10 Programme Guide

D4.11 Sample module descriptors and assessment material – Stage 1

D4.12 Sample module descriptors and assessment material – Stage 2

E1 – Programme Documentation – School of Computing

E1.1: BSc in Computing

E1.2: Programme Committee minutes

E1.3: Class representative minutes

E1.4: Operational plan for Final year project

E1.5: Operational plan for Work Placement Module

E1.6: Programmatic Review Evaluation Process

E1.7: External Examiners Reports

E1.8: Annual Reports

E1.9: Programme Handbook

E1.10: Samples of other activities – Lab schedules, project showcases etc.

E1.11: Computing Support service

E1.12: Award classification information – full & part-time

E2: MSc in Learning Technologies

E2.1: Validation document

E2.2: Programmatic review overview document

E2.3: Programme Committee minutes

E2.4: Class representative minutes

E2.5: Annual Reports

E2.6: Learner feedback & Award Classification & Information

E2.7: Programme Handbook

F: Programme Documentation – School of Community Studies

F1: FETAC self evaluation 2009 documents

F2: School of Community Studies Annual Reports 2008/9

F3.1: School of Community Studies Programme Committee minutes

F3.2 Additional School of Community Studies information
F4: Early Learning Initiative information

G: Quality Assurance Reports

G1: Learner Retention 2006-9
G2: Academic Performance 2007/8 & 2008/9
G3: FETAC monitoring report
G4: CIPD review report
G5: Review of admissions process report
G6: Registrar's review of key modules
G7: Learner feedback 2006-9
G8: Sample monitoring report to Academic Council
G9: External examiner's induction day
G10: Associate faculty communication recommendations
G11: Consultation documents on the implementation of assessment standards 2009
G12: QA Handbook devised under FETAC standards

H: Institutional Review process supporting documentation

H1: Institutional Review briefings & presentations to staff
H2: Audit report on school level QA mechanisms
H3: Stakeholder reports

Documents tabled by NCI during the review following panel requests

- Summary of Research Achievement and update to PhD registration - *document provided to HETAC in December 2009*
- Pay scales
- Feedback loop for External Examiner & Learner Feedback
- Lines of Communication between Academic Council and Sub-Committees
- Minutes of Academic Quality and Academic Council Meeting that referred to follow up to External Examiners reports
- External Examiners Comments- (paper to academic quality committee 26/11/08)
 - Follow up to specific external examiners reports as requested by panel
 - Follow up to CIPD approval recommendations as requested by panel
 - Samples of assessment materials sent to external examiners referring to marking guidelines being used in the correction of assessment
 - Statistical digest based on provisional HEA statistical returns - 2008/9 academic year

Appendix D Agenda for Site Visit

National College of Ireland Institutional Review Site Visit Agenda 9 - 10 February 2010

The format of each session is a discussion in question and answer format unless otherwise indicated. Mr. Michael Kelleher, Review Chairperson, will chair all sessions unless otherwise indicated.

Monday 8 February	<p>6.00pm- 8.00pm - Panel Induction and planning (Evening before) in Clarion Hotel, IFSC, Dublin K. Maguire, HETAC. Presentation on the Institutional Review Process in the context of the College’s profile. This session will cover any issues and queries on the process raised by panel members.</p> <p>8.00pm - Dinner</p> <hr/> <p><u>Day one - NCI - Tuesday 9 February</u></p> <p>9.00am - 11.30 am - Panel Induction (continued) and Panel planning - Private meeting of panel in National College of Ireland</p> <p>1.00 – 1.30 -Panel private lunch</p> <hr/> <p>1.30 pm – 2.15pm - Session One with College Representatives - Objective 2: Strategic Planning and Governance. Brief presentation (10mins max) Setting the scene - an overview of the College context, mission, and vision. Clarification on structure and roles and overall activities the College is engaged in. Environmental factors including competitive position. Strategic planning and governance. Links between internal reflection and strategic planning decision making. Brief presentation by President or nominee (10 minutes). The session will also include the special considerations and research strategy.</p> <p>2.15pm – 3.00pm - Objective 1: Public confidence –Overarching objective. Demonstrating evidence of public confidence in the quality of education and training and standards of awards made. Information provided by the institution; Stakeholder interaction. Overall approach taken to self study for Institutional Review (outline of self study process etc).</p> <p>3.00pm- 3.30pm Break for coffee / brief panel discussion</p> <p>3.30pm – 4.30pm - Objective 3: Quality Assurance - Overview of Quality Assurance system/framework in place in the College (Brief presentation 10 minutes maximum) and management of change to QA system. The “seven elements” covered by the European Standards and Guidelines and the stage of development of the Colleges QA system in each area ; evidence of performance of QA system in each area; evaluation of effectiveness of QA system in each area; improvements identified; integration between processes and strategic planning etc. The session will also consider the institution specific objectives and special considerations.</p> <p>4.30pm- 4.45pm Break for coffee / brief panel discussion</p> <p>4.45pm- 5.30pm – Objective 3 : Quality Assurance continued - Meeting with Staff of Learner Support Services and some administrative staff This session will deal with the “seven elements” covered by the European Standards and</p>
Day One	

	<p>Guidelines and the stage of development of the institution’s QA system in each area ; evidence of performance of QA system in each area; evaluation of effectiveness of QA system in each area; improvements identified; integration between processes, governance, management and planning etc)</p> <p>5.30pm- 5.45pm Break for coffee / brief panel discussion</p> <p>5.45pm – 6.30pm– meeting with learners and Graduates Two parallel sessions with representative learners and graduates</p> <p>Private meeting of panel 6.30pm – 7.30pm in College</p>
<p>Day Two</p>	<p><u>Day two - NCI - Wednesday 10 February</u></p> <p>9.00am – 10.00am Meeting with External Stakeholders (for example employers and others to be clarified by the College in advance of the site visit)</p> <p>10.00am – 10.45am Objective 3: Quality Assurance continued (Seven Elements Review): Meeting with <u>non committee</u> lecturing staff - faculty and associate faculty. This session will deal with the “seven elements” covered by the European Standards and Guidelines and the stage of development of the institutions QA system in each area ; evidence of performance of QA system in each area; evaluation of effectiveness of QA system in each area; improvements identified; integration between processes, governance, management and planning etc)</p> <hr/> <p>10.45 am-11.00 am Coffee and brief meeting of panel</p> <hr/> <p>11.00am – 12.00am Objective 4: Access, Transfer and Progression: Review of Implementation of the national framework of qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression. Learning outcomes, learner assessment etc. This session will also consider the special objectives.</p> <p>12.00am – 1.00pm Documentation trail - Format: Opportunity for panel members to review supplementary evidence in private.</p> <p>1.00pm - 2.00pm - Panel private lunch and opportunity for panel members to review supplementary evidence – documentation</p> <p>2.00pm - 2.30pm - Supplementary meeting with College staff/College facilities</p> <p>2.30pm – 4.30pm Private meeting of panel to consider its findings and recommendations</p> <p>4.30pm – 4.45pm Meeting with President, and College’s Senior Management team to provide preliminary feedback on findings and recommendations.</p>

Appendix E List of people met by the panel

Tuesday 9 February 2010

1.30pm – 2.15pm - Session One with College Representatives - Objective 2: Strategic Planning and Governance

Dr. Paul Mooney	President
Mr. Ciaran McGivern	Director Finance
Prof. Jimmy Hill	Dean, School of Business/Director of Research
Dr. Pramod Pathak	Dean, School of Computing
Ms. Michele Ryan	Dean, School of Community Studies
Mr. John McGarrigle	Registrar & Company Secretary
Dr. Tony White	Member of Governing Body
Prof. Aine Hyland	Member of Governing Body
Mr. Desmond Gibney	Lecturer, Member of Governing Body
Ms. Ann Noonan	Director of Human Resources

2.15pm – 3.00pm - Objective 1: Public confidence

Dr. Paul Mooney	President
Mr. Ciaran McGivern	Director Finance
Prof. Jimmy Hill	Dean, School of Business/Director of Research
Dr. Pramod Pathak	Dean, School of Computing
Ms. Michele Ryan	Dean, School of Community Studies
Mr. John McGarrigle	Registrar & Company Secretary
Mr. Robert Ward	Director of Marketing
Mr. Bertie Kelly	Commercial Manager
Ms. Sinead O'Sullivan	Director Quality Assurance & Statistical Services

3.30pm – 4.30pm - Objective 3: Quality Assurance - Overview of Quality Assurance

Ms. Sinead O'Sullivan	Director Quality Assurance & Statistical Services
Prof. Jimmy Hill	Dean, School of Business/Director of Research
Dr. Pramod Pathak	Dean, School of Computing
Ms. Martina Murray	Director of Academic Programmes, School of Community Studies
Mr. John McGarrigle	Registrar
Dr. Leo Casey	Director, Centre for Innovation in Research in Learning & Teaching
Mr. Paul Stynes	Lecturer, School of Computing
Mr. Colin Whitston	Subject Head, IR/HR, School of Business
Ms. Corina Sheerin	Subject Head, Accounting & Finance, School of Business

4.45pm- 5.30pm – Objective 3: Quality Assurance continued - Meeting with Staff of Learner Support Services and some administrative staff

Mr. Stephen Kennedy	O2 Student Support Officer
Mr. Michael Goldrick	Learning Support Tutor
Ms. Caroline Kennedy	Careers & Appointments Officer
Ms. Frances Sheridan	Computing Support Tutor
Ms. Mary Buckley	Librarian
Ms. Geraldine Minogue	IT Manager
Ms. Sheila Mahon	Off-campus manager
Ms. Nicola Carroll	Head International Office
Ms. Leah Kinsella	Programme Co-ordinator, School of Business

Ms. Shauna Cassidy Snr. Programme Co-ordinator – School of Computing

5.45pm – 6.30pm– meeting with learners and Graduates
Two parallel sessions

Group A- Full-time Learners & Graduates

Fan Zhang	Student, Higher Certificate in Computing, Year 1
Gary Rafferty	Student, BSc in Software Systems Year 4
Chris Bolger	Graduate (2007), BA (Hons) in Accounting & HRM (former Vice President & Education Officer, SU)
George Coffey	Graduate (2009), BSc in Software Systems
Arghir Moldovan	MSc/PhD research student – School of Computing
Aideen Blake	Student, BSc (Hons) Business Information Systems, Year 2
Peter Geraghty	Student, BA Management of Technology in Business Year 1
Robert Brady	Student, BA (Hons) Business, Year 1
Haibo Yu	Graduate

Group B- Part-time Learners & Graduates

Austin Foley	Student, Entrepreneurship programme
Patricia Brady	Student, Progressions programme
John Kelly	Student, Certificate in Business Studies, Pt 2
Charlain Pepper	Parents in Education
Adrienne Taafe	Home Visitor, Early Learning Initiative
Yvonne O'Reilly	Student, Progressions programme
Anthony Finn	Student, Certificate in First Line Management - Whitehall
Emmett Jordan	Student, BSc in Business Information Systems, Year 3
Helen Hogan	BA Human Resource Management, Year 1
Robert O'Grady	Student, BSc in Business Information Systems, Year 2
Joan Gogan	Student, Certificate in First Line Management - Tallaght
Margaret Dromey	Graduate (2006), BA (Ord) in HRM, (Flexible delivery mode) also graduate of Cert in Managing Community & Voluntary Organisations (2003)
Jennifer O'Sullivan	Mediation (Theory & Practice)
Christian Brandtner	Graduate (2008), BSc. (Hons) in Software Systems

Wednesday 10 February 2010

9.00am – 10.00am Meeting with External Stakeholders

Carmel O'Byrne	State Street Bank, IFSC
Tom Kennedy	Manager: Services to Business – Dublin Region, FAS
Mark Morgan	St. Patrick's College Drumcondra
Phil Chambers	Business Analysts Association of Ireland.
Mary Lally	Guidance Counsellor, Ringsend Technical Institute, Dublin 4
Emma O'Brien	Guidance Counsellor, Marino College, Dublin 3
Pat Normanly	Dublin Bus

**10.00am – 10.45am Objective 3: Quality Assurance continued (Seven Elements Review):
Meeting with non committee lecturing staff - faculty and associate faculty.**

Dr. Orla Lahart	Lecturer, School of Computing
Dr. Stephan Weibelzahl	Lecturer, School of Computing
Mr. Fabian Armendariz	Lecturer, School of Business
Ms. Caitriona Hughes	Lecturer, School of Business

Ms. Deirdre Giblin	Associate Faculty, Schools of Business & Community Studies
Ms. Maria Hegarty	Associate Faculty, School of Community Studies
Mr. Ron Elliot	Associate Faculty, School of Computing
Ms. Leonie Deasy	Associate Faculty, School of Computing
Mr. Michael Bane	Lecturer, School of Business
Mr. John Slattery	Associate Faculty, School of Business – Off Campus

11.00am – 12.00am Objective 4: Access, Transfer and Progression

Ms. Michele Ryan	Dean School of Community Studies
Dr. Josephine Bleach	Director Early Learning Initiative
Ms. Martina Murray	Director Academic Programmes, School of Community Studies
Ms. Niamh McAuley	Director Student Services (Admissions, Transfer & Progression questions)
Dr. Leo Casey	Director Centre for Research & Innovation in Learning & Teaching
Ms. Beth Fagan	Early Learning Initiative
Mr. Thomas Mallon	School Manager, School of Community Studies
Mr. John McGarrigle	Registrar
Ms. Brigina Crowe	Early Learning Initiative
Mr. Jonathan Brittain	Lecturer, School of Business

4.30pm – 4.45pm Meeting with President, and College’s Senior Management team to provide preliminary feedback on findings and recommendations.

Dr. Paul Mooney	President
Mr. Ciaran McGivern	Director Finance
Prof. Jimmy Hill	Dean, School of Business/Director of Research
Dr. Pramod Pathak	Dean, School of Computing
Ms. Michele Ryan	Dean, School of Community Studies
Mr. John McGarrigle	Registrar
Ms. Sinead O’Sullivan	Director Quality Assurance & Statistical Services