



**Progress report following the review of  
Quality Assurance at National College of Ireland**

Following the completion of the Higher Education Training and Awards Council (HETAC) panel visit to review quality assurance systems a number of policy and procedural improvements were implemented to strengthen quality systems at National College of Ireland (NCI). This report sets out the progress achieved during 2007 in the development of these systems.

## **Organisational and Academic Governance Developments**

Prior to the visit by the HETAC panel a number of senior appointments had been made but had not at that time taken up their positions. During March and April the Vice-President Research and Graduate Studies and the Vice-President Academic and Administration joined the College. These new appointees have many years of experience working in the third level sector and in the operation of quality systems both in Ireland and in the UK.

In May 2007 Academic Council approved the formation of a new sub-committee for Learning Teaching and Assessment. This sub-committee was established to develop, monitor and evaluate the College's learning, teaching and assessment strategy. The Committee also seeks to enhance the quality of learning, teaching and assessment through the formulation of appropriate policies and the identification of staff development needs.

The involvement of academic and support staff on the sub-committees of Academic Council has, over the past year, resulted in a greater level of engagement by staff in the development and maintenance of effective quality assurance policies and procedures than was previously the case.

The position of Director of Quality Assurance and Statistical Services (DQASS) was established in October 2006 and over the past year this role has also had a significant impact in creating greater awareness and understanding of Quality Assurance requirements. The Director of Quality Assurance and Statistical Services provides guidance on the development of appropriate policies in accordance with best practice and on the operation of these policies on a daily basis. This is evident from the level of interaction that academic staff have with the Director.

The Director of Quality Assurance and Statistical Services has also greatly assisted in documenting and monitoring the implementation of effective quality standards. A number of regular reports are now issued that assist in demonstrating the existence of effective quality assurance processes.

- **Quality Assurance Monitor:** Bi-annual report that identifies key measures by which progress can be assessed.
- **Annual Monitoring Reports by Programme:** Course directors and programme teams are required to critically appraise programmes on an annual

basis. These reports are used as the basis for programme enhancements and as a form of rolling programmatic review.

### **Updating of Policies:**

The quality assurance policies continue to be updated and amended. Over the past year a number of new policies have been developed through a working group forum prior to recommendation to Academic Council. Policies developed or amended through this approach in the past year have included

- Diversity policies with respect to assessment
- Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
- Complaints policy required for students with disability (in conjunction with Student Support Officer)
- Code of practice for students with a disability (in conjunction with Student Support Officer)
- Child & vulnerable adult protection policy (subject to final review with the Health Service Executive)

All policies and procedures are now available to current and prospective students and stakeholders through publication on the staff and student intranets and on the Internet. Copies are also circulated to the College's Associate Faculty both on and off-campus.

### **Training and Induction**

Induction and refresher training on Quality Assurance policies was provided to all new members of faculty in September 2007. The College also introduced an on-going staff development programme in the areas of teaching, learning and assessment. This involves seminars during semester breaks and at weekends.

### **Programme Development & Programmatic Reviews**

A number of course structure modifications, both major and minor, have been completed during the past year. The implementation of these modifications has been evident in the formal episodic interactions with HETAC on programme accreditation. Programmes that have been accredited or reviewed during the period are listed below.

### **New Programme Accreditation**

- Postgraduate Diploma in Arts in HRM
- BA (Ordinary) in Training & Development
- Special Purpose Award Knowledge Economy Skills Passport
- PhD level awards in Technology- Enhanced Learning -recommendation subject to conditions

### **Programmatic Reviews**

- Master of Arts in HRM
- Master of Arts in Finance
- Major module modifications within a range of existing programmes

### **HETAC Relationship**

The report refers to historic deficits in the programme records and the need to develop confidence in the effectiveness of NCI's quality management. To address these issues NCI has maintained regular and consistent communication with HETAC through the Registrar's office. NCI has also undertaken a thorough reconciliation of course records and a detailed report on any variances between HETAC and NCI records with supporting documentation was submitted to HETAC. NCI continue to work with HETAC to resolve discrepancies in these records

NCI has also actively engaged with HETAC in the area of policy development through the provision of feedback on draft policies and attendance at HETAC workshops.

### **Conclusion**

Significant progress has been achieved in the past year in addressing issues identified in the report and in implementing the new Quality Assurance procedures. The changes in the organisational structure and in the academic governance of the College have greatly assisted in broadening 'ownership' of the quality process. This progress is evident in the outcomes from recent validation panel visits and in the increased training and development opportunities provided to academic staff.

The College recognises that there is still further work required to embed a culture of quality throughout the organisation. The engagement of academic and administrative staff at all levels is a key requirement in the development of a quality culture. Under the new College management there has been greater engagement with staff in addressing quality and strategic issues. A recent example was the NCI strategy review which was undertaken with the involvement of almost 60% of the full-time staff and representatives from the part-time staff and student body. The College is confident that in 2008 further progress will be achieved in the development of a quality culture.