

National College of Ireland
Policy on Collaborative & Transnational Provision



June 2011

Revisions in Response to Panel Report

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1 Policy and procedures for the design, approval and quality management of collaborative provision & transnational education

This section of the Quality Assurance Handbook details the policy and procedures which should be followed for the design, approval and ongoing quality management of taught or research programmes operated in collaboration with other organisations in Ireland or internationally.

This document is based on HETACs Policy for collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards –Accreditation, Quality Assurance, and Delegation of Authority (2008) as a key external reference point, but also is interdependent with other College policies and procedures relating to programme development, teaching, learning and assessment.

These should be read in conjunction with this document when relevant.

It also draws on the UNESCO (2005) Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education, experiences of HEIs¹ and best practice developed by the QAA (2004) in the UK.

NCI's academic Schools who are considering the development of a proposal for collaborative provision should contact the following at the earliest possible opportunity prior to developing a formalised relationship with a potential partner, to receive guidance and advice on the feasibility of developing such a proposal and the process for doing so:

- The relevant Dean of School (where not directly involved in development of the initiative) .
- Registrar
- Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services
- Where a proposal involves an overseas institution, Schools are also required to contact the International Office.

This policy should also be consulted when reviewing applications for admission under advanced entry from prospective partner Colleges from other jurisdictions and where agreements are being made to guarantee places on NCI programmes under advanced entry.

1.1 College policy on collaborative provision

Collaboration with other HEIs, industry and community organisations was identified as being one of the critical aspects of achieving the goals of the strategic plan. The College recognises the benefits of further developments in this area, but also the costs and potential risks, and therefore it considers proposals for collaborative provision on a case by case basis according to their merits.

Underpinning collaborative activity is a set of key principles which form the College's policy on collaborative provision. All activities

- must be consistent with the **College's strategic plans, (ideally) arise from School plans and be congruent with the School's academic provision, bringing clear benefits**

¹ E.g. <http://www.kent.ac.uk/uelt/quality/collaboration/Policies/newcollabprov.html>
<http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/pandpcp.pdf>
<http://www.mmu.ac.uk/sas/cpo/collaborative-partnerships.php>

- to all those involved;
- should only be with other organisations,
 - which have the academic OR professional standing to successfully deliver programmes of study to appropriate academic standards,
 - the financial standing to sustain them,
 - adequate infrastructure facilities and resources (including appropriate staffing) to support them and
 - the legal standing to contract to their delivery;
 - should be equivalent in quality and standards to comparable programmes delivered solely by the College,
 - should be comparable in student learning, support and experiences to those programmes based at the College;
 - should give adequate opportunity for student representation and feedback;
 - should be financially viable and feasible, and be fully costed and priced accordingly;
 - should not be over-reliant on an individual member of staff, either within the National College of Ireland or the other organisation;
 - should be compliant with internal and national (Irish or EU) legislative requirements and adhere to the principles of the Charter on inclusive teaching (AHEAD 2010) and guidelines for the teaching of international students (IHEQN, 2009)

The due diligence activities of the process should test each of these principles.

Except where the subject matter of the course is a language, English is the primary language of instruction and assessment.

1.2 Defining collaborative provision

Building on the definition of collaborative provision given in HETAC's Policy for Collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards – Accreditation, Quality Assurance, and Delegation of Authority, the College defines collaborative provision as:

Any programme directly leading to an award (HETAC, FETAC or professional body) which is delivered in part or in whole through an arrangement with a partner organisation. A partner organisation may be another education provider, professional body, business or community organisation.

In this context 'delivered' includes any combination of one or more of the following activities: admissions decisions, teaching, programme design, preparation of learning materials, and assessment.

Activities which fulfil this definition fall into the following categories:

- The application for validation of programmes designed and delivered jointly with the partner institution where that institution
 - is not an education provider or
 - is one which does not have degree awarding powers e.g. another HETAC provider who does not have delegated authority)
- Collaboration on research projects (See 1.6.1 below)

Other types of arrangements with Partner Institutions which are felt to fall short (to a greater

or lesser extent) of true collaborative provision include:

- Off campus/in company delivery
- Recruitment arrangements (entry to the start of a programme)
- Student exchange and study abroad arrangements
- Placement/Service learning
- Articulation arrangements (direct entry to an advanced point in a College programme)

These arrangements will not normally be subject to the full in depth approval process which applies to collaborative provision arrangements, but are still subject to appropriate approval processes. In the case of all articulation arrangements, a partner profile is required to be completed (Appendix part 3). These arrangements can be requested to undergo the full approval process at the discretion of the Vice President, Academic Administration or the Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services (QASS). This is particularly true of due diligence of the partner organisation. This must be completed where articulation **(progression) is being guaranteed from a partner's programme of study to the NCI programme of study.**

Specific College policies exist for the establishment of articulation and progression agreements. For any other arrangements, the QASS Office should be consulted for advice on how to proceed. (See College admissions policies)

Transnational education for the purpose of this document is the provision or partial provision of a programme of education in one country by a provider which is based in **another country. The term 'transnational' for the purpose of this document may be construed as cross-border or cross-jurisdictional.**

Joint Awards are not included in this policy at this time (Jun 2011). Should the occasion arise, this policy will be expanded to include the requirements of joint awards. This will take place in consultation with HETAC and with reference to its policies on joint awards.

1.3 Quality Assurance Framework for Collaborative Provision

Any programmes developed or delivered with a collaborative partner are subject to the **College's quality assurance framework as laid out in the Quality Assurance Handbook.** (http://www.ncirl.ie/Current_Students/Registrar's_Office/Academic-Policies-&-Procedures).

Where the existing quality assurance arrangements require amendment to facilitate the collaborative arrangement, these changes will be submitted to the awarding body with the proposal for validation or differential validation of the programme. Figure 1 illustrates the **College's academic governance structure.** Differential validation occurs where significant change to a programme results in a new programme that must be revalidated. However, the change may be such that the findings of the original validation can be re-used and the elements of difference become the subject **of a 'differential validation'**. Procedures for differential validation are outlined in Chapter 3 of the Quality Assurance Handbook.

1.3.1 Approval of Collaborative Provision

The Governing Body constitutes the Board of Directors of the National College of Ireland Ltd (**'the College'**) and, as such, its members have all of the responsibilities of Directors under the Companies Acts and at common law.

In accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association the Governing Body is responsible for managing the affairs of the College and delegates day to day management to the College President. The President of the College is responsible for planning in conjunction with the Governing Body, and for the implementation of the strategy, policy and administrative decisions of the Governing Body. S/he plays a proactive role as a member of the Governing Body, as well as chairing the Executive Board of the College and Academic Council and other committees as appropriate.

The Academic Council assists the Governors in planning, co-ordination, development and overseeing the educational work of the College. As Chair of Academic Council and Chief Executive, the College President signs all memoranda of understanding and/or legal agreements on behalf of the College. The risks associated with these collaborative agreements are identified and reflected in the risk register

The Governing Body is responsible for the implementation of appropriate risk management policies. The implementation of these policies is monitored through the operation of a risk register which is reviewed periodically by a sub-committee of the Governing Body. This risk register identifies how key risks are monitored and what actions are taken to mitigate these risks. Proposals for collaborative agreements are subject to review by Academic Council which must approve all collaborative provision proposals.

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1.3.2 Responsibility for Quality and Standards

The arrangements for assuring the quality and standards of programmes delivered in collaboration with other institutions must be as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those for programmes provided wholly within the responsibility of the College.

The College always retains responsibility for the ensuring that the standard of the award as defined by the awarding body and the quality of the programme are maintained, although it will be necessary for it to delegate certain quality management functions to its partner(s). Award standards and programme quality will be maintained through programme committees, annual review and quinquennial review of programmes, as well as through normal academic good practices in the provision of collaborative programmes on an ongoing basis. Reviews conducted will remain the responsibility of NCI. This introduces an additional element of risk, which must be countered by rigorous quality management and reporting processes.

Where areas of quality management are delegated to the partner organisation, these arrangements will form part of the agreement reached between NCI, the partner organisation and the awarding body as appropriate. Where the partner institution is not an academic institution, NCI will always retain responsibility for ensuring the quality and standards summative **assessment**, appointment of external examiners and learner feedback. Notwithstanding this, it is expected that all involved in teaching will be involved in the setting of assessment.

1.3.3 Responsibility for managing the relationship

The overall responsibility for managing the collaborative relationship lies with the Dean of the School involved in the relationship.

1.3.4 On-going Programme management and monitoring

The School has responsibility for the day to day management of all elements of the collaborative programme. The Programme Director is the Chair of the Programme Committee who is responsible for ensuring that the programme is delivered as approved and for ensuring that the curriculum is maintained. In the case of a differentially validated programme, the Programme should either be brought under the aegis of an existing Programme Committee or, if felt necessary, a new Programme Committee created to provide oversight. It is recognised that a programme delivered under differential validation or in another jurisdiction may require a dedicated programme director to manage the variations and/or issues that may arise in such contexts. However, if a separate programme committee is created, it must be seen as a sub-committee of the overall programme committee, in order to ensure that the academic integrity of the programme is maintained.

Figure 1 outlines the monitoring cycle.

1.3.5 Responsibility for Due Diligence

The Registrar & Company Secretary is responsible for the due diligence process. (See 1.5 below)

1.3.6 Monitoring collaborative provision

Programmes are subject to the College's existing processes for programme monitoring. The annual School and programme report reviews the outcomes of these processes i.e. Programme Committee Meetings, Class representative meetings, external examiner reports, learner feedback surveys etc. The School annual report will contain an evaluation of all collaborative provision provided by the School.

Programmes validated for collaborative provision are subject to revalidation every 5 years using the programmatic review process. Should a programme have been differentially validated out of sequence with its parent programme, the differentially validated programme should be included in its next programmatic review.

Collaborative arrangements with an overseas institution or organisation will normally require a greater level of initial scrutiny, on-going monitoring and review than would be the case with Irish institutions, due to the different educational culture and context that the programme will be operating within and the difficulties caused by geographical location. Academic Council may request more frequent use of the mechanisms above in order to mitigate this issue.

The contents of all material relating to collaborative provision is brought together and analysed annually in an overview report, compiled by the QASS office. It is an opportunity to highlight good practice and identify any problems or issues that might have wider relevance beyond the individual programme.

These reports will be shared with the partner organisation and the awarding body and will form part of any decision making process to continue or terminate a relationship.

1.3.7 Responsibility for Agreement preparation

The Registrar & Company Secretary is responsible for the preparation of the memorandum of understanding and/or agreement on behalf of the College. This is informed by the programme development team and the Director of Quality Assurance & Statistical Services. **Agreements should be reviewed by the College's legal advisors prior to submitting to the awarding body.**

1.3.8 Decision to Terminate Agreements

Each collaborative agreement shall have specific conditions regarding the termination of a programme or collaborative provision. Agreements should outline circumstances in which a **programme may not run e.g. insufficient numbers, availability of resources**. NCI's policy on the cessation of programmes states that once a programme has commenced, NCI will not terminate the programme until all learners currently enrolled have completed the

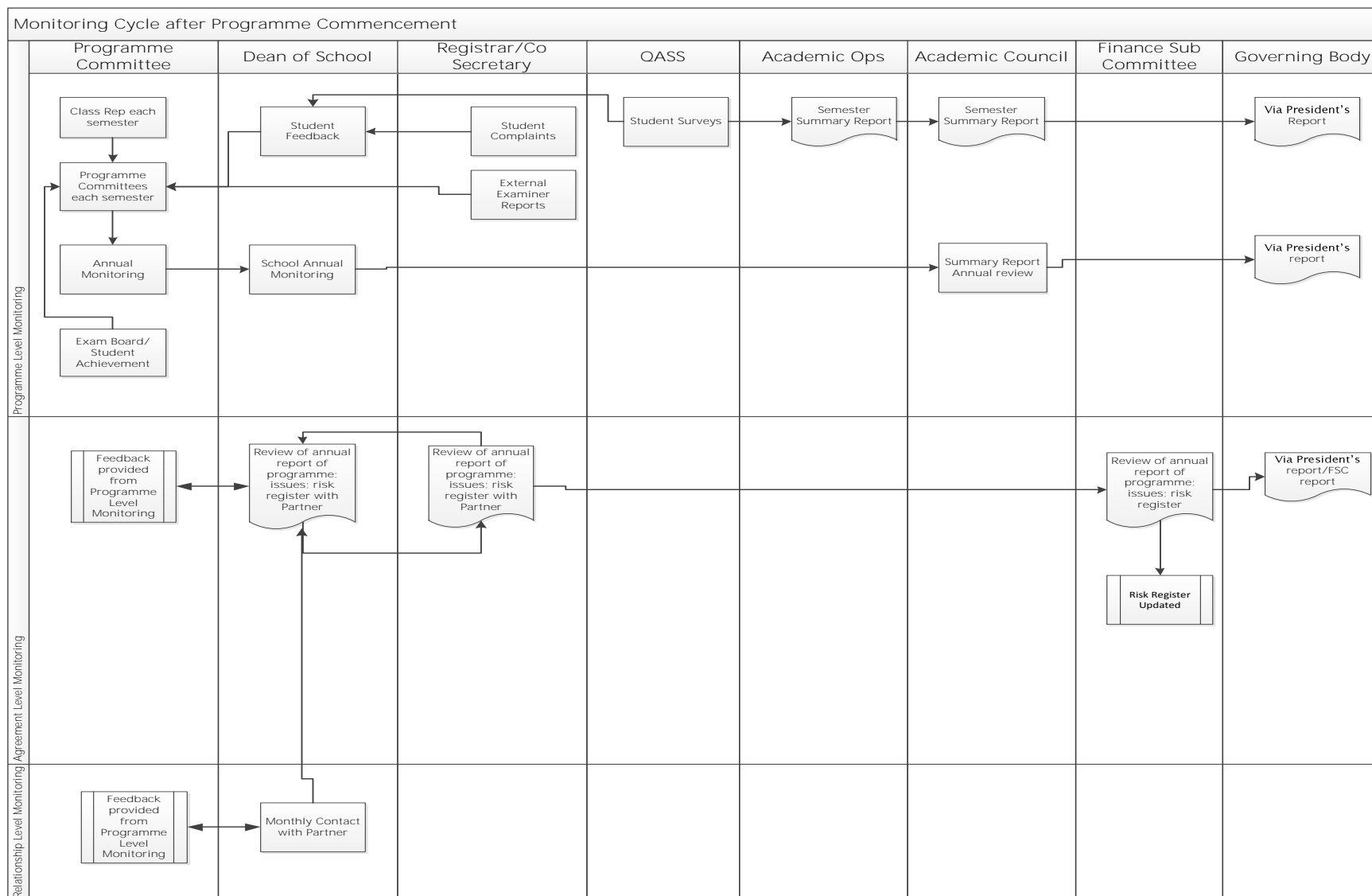


Figure 1: Collaborative agreement and programme monitoring cycle.

programme. In order to assure the protection of learners, this agreement should outline how learners would be accommodated by NCI should the agreement be terminated. Agreements must contain a provision for ***'Force Majeure'***

1.4 Timing

Schools should note that developing a collaborative programme will necessarily require involved, and often complex and lengthy, discussions with staff at both partner institutions and within the College. Such discussions should take part prior to the programme being submitted for the interim checkpoint stage of development. See 1.6.4 below.

The dates of committee meetings, such as Academic Council, are set prior to the commencement of the Academic Year, however, and Schools should consider these dates when establishing their timetable.

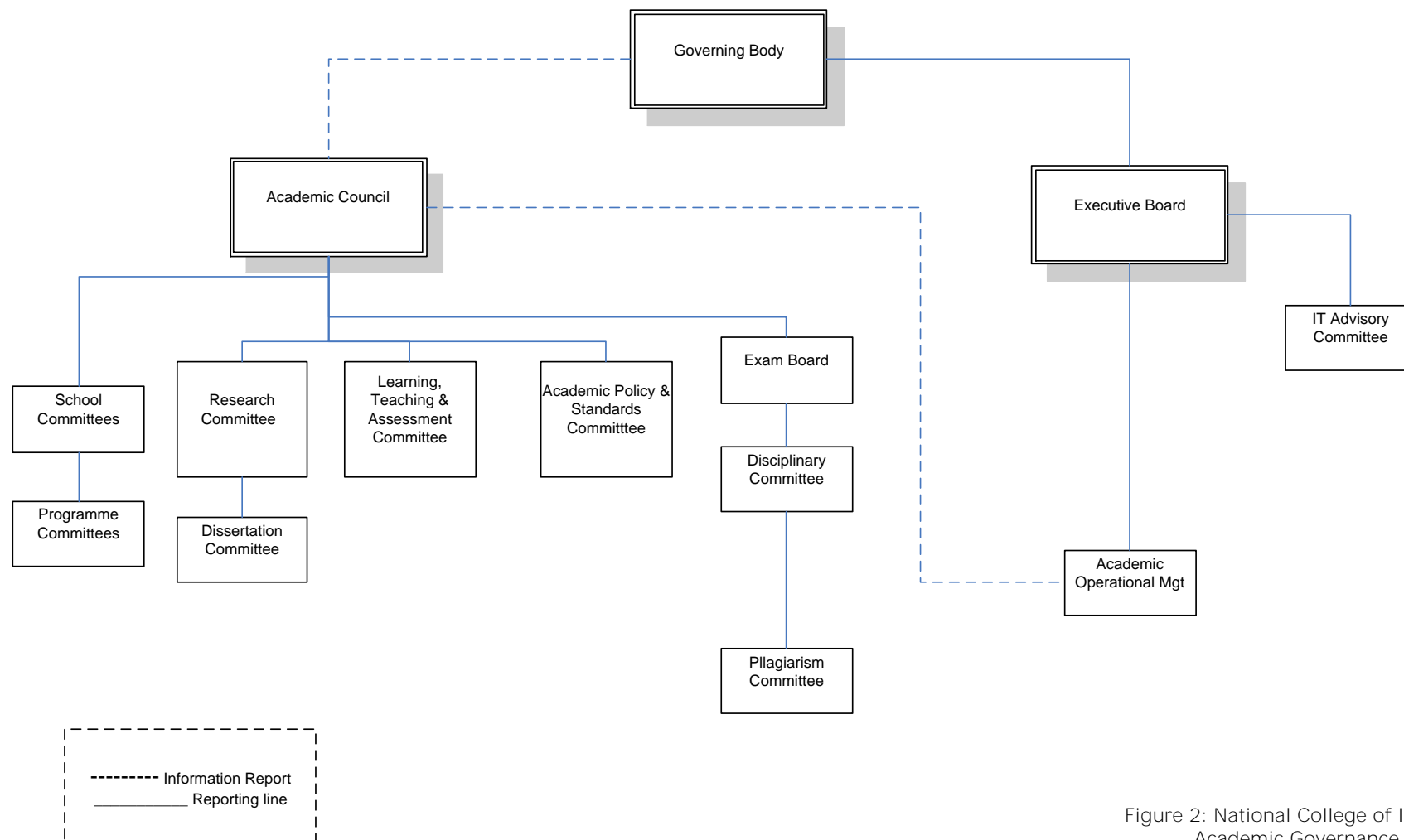


Figure 2: National College of Ireland Academic Governance

1.5 Due Diligence Process

In addition to consideration of the academic suitability and business viability of the collaborative arrangement the College will need to be assured that any proposed new partner institution is of an appropriate standing. This involves several integrated processes:

- a **'Due Diligence' investigation of a range of relevant** information relating to the partner institution.
- a visit to the prospective partner institution by relevant staff;
- a review of the socio-political environment in the case of transnational provision
- **'internal due diligence' i.e. the strategic fit and benefit to the College of the** collaborative partnership and any associated programmes.

This strategic fit of the partnership and programme is carried out by the School and programme team prior to submitting the initial programme proposal as outlined in section 1.6 below

1.5.1 Due Diligence investigations of prospective Partner Institutions

As part of the process of considering whether to work with a partner institution, the College **will carry out a 'Due Diligence' investigation in order to assure itself that the proposed** partner is one with which it would be happy to collaborate. The purpose of this visit and process is to satisfy the College that the partner has the requisite legal standing, financial and academic resources with which to engage in partnership with NCI. This investigation should include the legal status of the prospective partner or agent, and its capacity in law to contract with the College and the awarding body.

The Registrar's/Company Secretary's Office will ask prospective partners to supply the following documentation:

- **An Annual Report (akin to the College's Annual Review);**
- A set of Annual Accounts;
- Details of Professional Indemnity insurance cover, such as a letter from the partner **Institution's brokers confirming this cover and its extent;**
- CVs of staff who will be teaching on relevant programmes (where relevant) .
- To support and substantiate this information, other sources of information will be investigated as follows:
 - The QASS Office will undertake a review of the proposed partner institutional website, including investigation of institutional mission;
 - The QASS Office will undertake a review of FETAC, HETAC, QAA (in the UK) and appropriate other websites to investigate whether there have been any reports relating to the proposed partner;
 - Where applicable, the International Office will seek information from appropriate organisations in Ireland and abroad about the standing of the proposed partner and whether they have any existing collaborations with other Irish HEIs;
 - A review of the information systems provided by the partner (where appropriate) to ensure that required data on learners can be held securely and exchanged with NCI

- A review of data protection legislation and arrangements to ensure that learner data can be released to NCI for submission to required regulatory and awarding bodies
- Where applicable, the **Registrar's Office** will seek information from appropriate organisations about the legal standing of the proposed partner and its ability to operate within its national legislative and cultural requirements.

1.5.2 Partner approval

Visits to prospective Partner Institutions

The visit to the prospective partner institution will normally be undertaken by an appropriate member of staff of the relevant School or Department and also by a member of the QASS office. Other staff, may from time to time, accompany them. Many of the items outlined below can be reviewed using documentary evidence. The visit should be used to explore in more depth and/or provide clarity if required.

The visit to the prospective partner institution will involve the following:

- Consideration of the quality of the teaching and learning facilities in relation to the proposed programme(s), including library and IT resources. The member of staff of the relevant School or Department will have a particular responsibility in this area;
- meeting key teaching and other staff of the proposed partner, where relevant;
- consideration and discussion of a range of academic issues relating to the partnership including:
- **the Partner Institution's existing quality assurance arrangements;**
- arrangements for managing the partnership (including the committee structure);
- proposed quality assurance arrangements for the programme(s), including Annual Programme Reports and future Periodic Review and Revalidation;
- arrangements for seeking the views of student (representation and evaluation);
- assessment arrangements, including External Examiners;
- student complaints and appeals procedures;
- student welfare support and facilities;
- admissions arrangements, including admissions criteria, English language provision (where appropriate) and the minimum and maximum size of a cohort;
- arrangements for marketing of and recruitment to the programme (including website and publicity material);
- staff training and development, and staff appraisal;
- discussion of a draft Memorandum of Agreement (based, particularly, on discussions related to issues set out in (c) above);
- where appropriate, an observation of teaching;
- Where appropriate, meeting a group of existing students.

Following the visit, the representative of the QASS office will produce an agreed report for consideration by Academic Council

1.5.3 Due Diligence of the Socio-political & Educational Environment

Where collaborative provision involves provision outside of the Republic of Ireland, a full analysis of the socio-political and educational environment of the country involved should

be undertaken. This will inform the risk analysis of any proposed project. This analysis will include contact with appropriate Quality Assurance agencies, ministries of education and other sources in order to ascertain the operating environment. Evidence of this analysis may be

- Legislation governing right to operate commercially and/or academically in a jurisdiction
- Reports from international organisations e.g. OECD, Economic Intelligence Unit
- Reports available from the Department of Education, Department of Foreign Affairs, HETAC, etc.

1.5.4 Consideration and approval of Due Diligence information

On receipt of the relevant documentation and other pieces of evidence, these will be considered as follows:

The Finance Office will consider the set of Annual Accounts and provide a brief report to the **Registrar's Office indicating whether** these are satisfactory;

Where applicable, the International Office will provide a report to the Registrar's Office relating to its findings;

The Registrar's Office will confirm whether the partner Institution's Professional Indemnity insurance cover is appropriate;

The Registrar's Office will produce a summary report on the complete Due Diligence process, including the Academic due diligence process (1.5.1; 1.5.2) for consideration by the Academic Council and also, in relation to the financial aspects of due diligence, Executive Board. This report will form part of the documentation required for the interim checkpoint of the Development phase as described above.

1.5.5 Timing of Due Diligence investigations

Whilst there is the potential for the Due Diligence process to take a little time, the College will seek to ensure that this does not stop innovation and proposals for partnership coming forward. The Due Diligence process is intended to run in parallel with the development of a Business Plan and with the programme approval process for a partnership and can begin as soon as approval has been granted at the feasibility phase.

1.5.6 Reciprocal Due Diligence

The College is aware that the Due Diligence process is sensitive, both politically and culturally. The investigation will therefore be conducted with appropriate tact and diplomacy, particularly as it is the expectation that any future partner will be a well-established institution with an excellent reputation. Nevertheless, a Due Diligence investigation is something which the College is obliged to carry out and this should be made clear to prospective partner institutions at the outset. However, in order to act in a transparent way and to encourage the development of a partnership, the College will provide the following documents to a proposed partner on a reciprocal basis:

- The Annual Report
- The Annual Accounts (Financial Statements);

- The College Prospectus;
- **A copy of the College's most recent Institutional Review report (or equivalent) ;**
- **Confirmation of the College's Professional Indemnity insurance;**
- A standard note setting out the legal standing of the College and its relationship with awarding bodies

1.6 Approval process

The approval process required for collaborative provision depends on the nature of the activity. Prior to developing specific initiatives, the College must be satisfied that the partner organisation is an appropriate partner and that the legal and financial requirements of a particular jurisdiction do not prohibit activity in that geographical area. In order to proceed with the process of due diligence the School must apply for initial approval to commence the process.

The information required by this approval process will differ depending on the activity.

1.6.1 Research:

All research proposals involving collaboration must have the approval of the Research Committee and Academic Council prior to them being submitted to an external body for funding. If the proposal is approved by Academic Council, any suggested revisions should be made and a final copy of the application documentation submitted in good time to the **Registrar's Office. It will then be submitted for signature by the President as appropriate.**

Application documents should under no circumstances be submitted to the President's office directly. It is up to proposing School to ensure that enough time is allowed for the initial approval process to take place before any external funding deadline.

It should be noted that should NCI wish to undertake collaborative research programmes i.e. Research Masters and PhD degrees, this section of the policy will require further consultation and approval with HETAC

1.6.2 Taught Programmes

Table 1 outlines the four phases of programme development at National College of Ireland and the associated outputs associated with those phases for collaborative provision activities. A full description of this process is outlined in the quality assurance handbook, which is graphically represented in Figure 2. Where new programmes are being proposed or existing programmes are being put forward for differential validation, the programme team will comprise representatives from NCI and from the partner organisation.

Phase	Feasibility	Development		Internal Validation	External Validation	
		Interim	Final			
Outputs	Programme Proposal Form	Interim Checkpoint form	Programme Submission Document	Internal Report	Review	Awarding body report
	Partner Profile	Due Diligence Report	Draft Agreement (As agreed by partner and NCI)	Programme response	team	Signed Agreement between NCI & partner Signed Agreement between awarding body and partner
	Initial Risk Analysis		Self Assessment	Final Submission Document		Order of Council (HETAC/FETAC) or equivalent

Table 1: Programme Development Process & Outputs

In developing or amending programmes for collaborative provision, the following general principles apply:

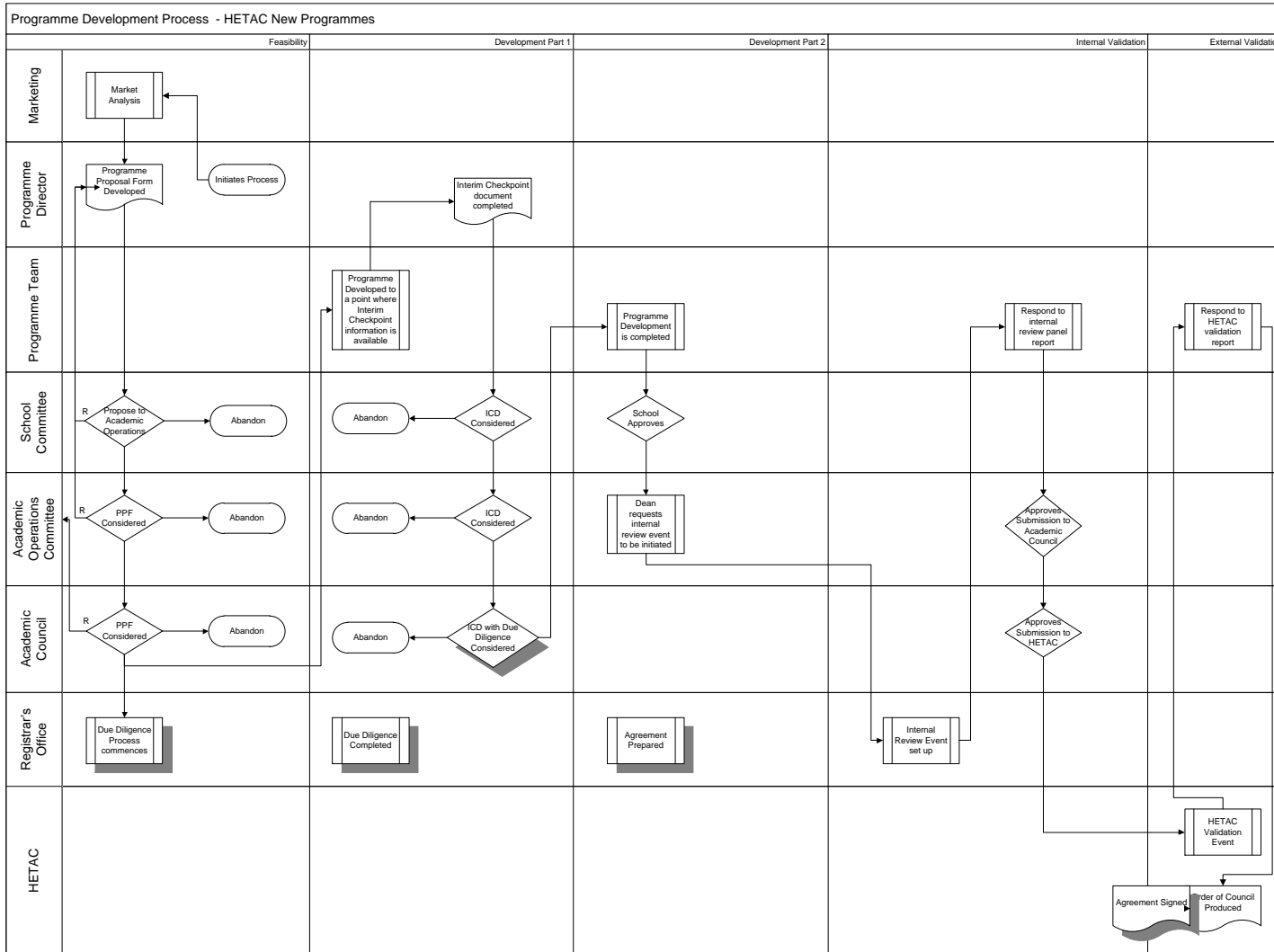


Figure 2: Programme Development Process for Collaborative Provision

New Programmes

Schools must ensure that:

- The Programme is placed at the appropriate level of the National Framework of Qualifications and that academic standards are equivalent to programmes delivered at the College. (ie. HETAC or FETAC award standards; CIPD professional standards etc.)
- **Arrangements for admission comply with the College's admissions regulations** (Chapter 6)
- **Arrangements for assessment comply with the College's assessment regulations** (Chapter 4)
- **Procedures for external examining align with the College's regulations on external examining** (Chapter 4)
- Schools will be required to prepare a Programme and Module Handbook, **developed in line with the College's template.**

Existing Programmes

Where existing programmes are to be delivered in conjunction with a partner, Schools must ensure that

- Where the programme is accredited by HETAC, FETAC or a professional body (CIPD, ICM etc) the programme delivery in conjunction with a partner, is approved by and fulfils requirements of those bodies. This is done via the differential validation process in the case of HETAC awards or through a revised business case in the case of CIPD.
- **Arrangements for admission comply with the College's admissions regulations** (Chapter 6)
- **Arrangements for assessment comply with the College's assessment regulations** (Chapter 4)
- **Procedures for external examining align with the College's regulations on external examining** (Chapter 4)
- Schools will be required to prepare a tailored Programme and Module Handbook, **developed in line with the College's template.**

1.6.3 Feasibility

The Feasibility phase examines the overall merits of the proposed collaboration and/or programme so that a decision can be taken whether to further the development of the proposal. Programmes that are considered at this stage in the process will have been approved as part of the overall strategic plan of the College but it is at this point that these plans can be implemented or reviewed should the environment warrant it. The information provided at this stage is outlined in the document programme proposal

form. An output of this process is the completion of the initial risk analysis form (see Appendix) and will contribute to the decision of Academic Council to proceed with programme development or applications for differential validation. A more comprehensive **description of this process is contained in the College's programme development process** (Chapter 3, QA Handbook)

In the case of collaborative provision, once approved, the due diligence process described in 1.5 above will be commenced by the Registrar.

1.6.4 Development

The development phase is divided into 2 parts. At the end of part 1, the programme team completes the interim checkpoint document. In the case of collaborative provision a detailed risk analysis will be undertaken. This risk analysis will include the results of the complete due diligence process. The purpose of the interim checkpoint is to ensure that the assumptions made regarding the financial and academic viability of the partnership and/or programme in the feasibility phase hold true and that any issues raised in the development of the programme with regard to its viability can be addressed by the College. The programme development or collaborative arrangement may be abandoned at this point.

Phase 2 of development allows development of the programme to be completed and the detail of the agreement to be completed. It will also allow the programme team, in collaboration with the QASS office, consider how quality assurance arrangements for the proposed programme are to be handled, paying particular attention to the monitoring of those quality management functions which have been delegated to the partner institution and which need to be outlined in the agreement (and provided in more detail in the Programme Handbook, see below). This will include arrangements for:

- the operation of the Programme Committee and Examinations Board, and the provision of annual reports to the School on an equivalent basis to that for programmes delivered at NCI;
- regular monitoring of the programme and related learning facilities, including frequency and purpose of visits to the partner institution by the School;
- mechanisms for students to provide feedback and to make complaints/appeals;
- on-going and regular contact between the College and its partner, and the management of operational issues;
- periodic review and revalidation (in line with the policy for programmatic review and revalidation of programmes).

The programme team must submit for internal validation:

- the programme submission document using the template provided
- the agreement
- **its self assessment of the programme against the awarding body's validation**

criteria and the collaborative arrangements.

The length of the development phase is dictated by the type of programme and whether validation is for a new programme or is an existing programme which requires a differential validation due to the collaborative activity.

1.6.5 Internal Validation

The internal validation process will evaluate the programme and collaborative arrangements as submitted. Whilst an internal process, the evaluation panel has representation from external academic and industry providers. Normally, these external members will have experience of collaborative provision in order to inform the process.

1.6.6 External Validation

This process managed by the awarding body results in the approval of the programme and the collaborative agreements.

1.7 The Agreement

NCI and the partner organisation will establish a formal agreement to be known as the **'Consortium Agreement'**. **Academic Council will approve such agreements on advice** from the Company Secretary/Executive Board.

The Consortium Agreement will assure that education and training provision and associated services are provided in a streamlined manner and in compliance with the relevant awarding body policy and in accordance with its guidelines and with any other legitimate requirements; and will normally

- Establish and specify the consortium (indicating the partner providers and the designated address for communication);
- Establish the rights and obligations of all partner providers;
- Establish the nature of the services to be performed by each partner provider; specify the scope of the agreement and the relevant programme(s) and the award(s) that each will lead to;
- Establish the period of the agreement;
- Establish the conditions under which the agreement will be reviewed and under which it will be renewed;
- Provide for the amendment of the agreement;
- Establish the entity (normally the consortium) that learners can hold legally liable for any deficiencies in the provision of education and training;
- Specify any limitations on liability and provide for mutual indemnification;
- Provide for the resolution of disputes arising in respect of the agreement;

- Provide for the termination or suspension of the agreement (setting out the conditions under which this can be done) having regard for learners concerned;
- Make appropriate arrangements for the protection of learners as stipulated in Section 43 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act and in all cases for residual obligations to learners on termination of the agreement;
- Name the jurisdiction within which the agreement is enacted and should be interpreted; establish a process for addressing disputes in respect of the agreement including any perceived breaches of the agreement and grievances by learners and involved employees;

1.7.1 Financial arrangements

- State financial arrangements
- That address the distribution of any income arising from services provided by each of the partner providers;
- **That assure each partner provider's capacity** to account for income and expenditure involving the consortium;
- That meet all legal requirements in all of the involved jurisdictions;
- That make adequate provision for protection for learners as described above

1.7.2 Specific Programme Requirements

Specific arrangements in respect of each of the programmes covered by the agreement **specify the programme's essential parameters including prior learning and other admission requirements, programme assessment strategy and intended learning outcomes;** They will also

- specify the awarding body or bodies and including the necessary awarding agreements;
- oblige partner providers to participate in the collaborative programme review/accreditation/validation process required by the relevant awarding bodies and to comply with any conditions that are attached to review/accreditation/validation;
- establish quality assurance procedures for the collaborative programme and **require partner providers to cooperate and participate in each other's quality assurance procedures** and in related quality evaluations whether internal or externally organised, while ensuring that quality assurance procedures applying to the collaborative programme should be recognised as meeting the **national requirements in each partner provider's country;**
- provide for the relevant awarding bodies to monitor the quality and standards of the programme and associated services;
- require, and provide for, the partner providers as appropriate to jointly contribute to the provision of the programme;
- specify the regulations (recruitment, access and admission, academic standard, transfer, progression, assessment, appeals, complaints etc.) that apply to learners or prospective learners concerned while ensuring that the procedures

- for access, transfer and progression determined by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland are implemented;
- specify in detail the rights and entitlements of learners (including necessary learner support services) at each of the partner provider sites and how the relevant services will be delivered and how access to same by learners should be assured;
 - deal explicitly with the provision of, and access by learners to, human and material resources;
 - specify in detail (with explicit rationale based on the learning outcome standards required by the awarding body or bodies and any other requirements needed for approval) the programme assessment strategy and learner assessment procedures for the programme and the conditions under which an award will be recommended and provide for the appointment of external examiners;
 - collect and maintain the information required by external quality assurance agencies and produce a Europass Certificate/ Diploma Supplement with complete information about the ECTS credits earned on the collaborative programme;
 - require that partner providers will encourage and make provision for cooperation between their staff in respect of the programme;
 - deal with intellectual property rights relevant to the collaboration;

1.8 Programme Information

1.8.1 Advertising and recruitment

Programme recruitment, publicity and marketing materials for collaborative programme may be produced by the College or by the Partner Institution, or both, subject to the conditions in the agreement. Advertising and recruitment for the programme should not, however, formally begin until the agreement has been finalised and signed by the President and Partner Institution.

The Student Recruitment & Marketing Department has a responsibility to maintain oversight of the advertisement of collaborative programmes. At regular intervals relevant websites and printed material will be checked

1.8.2 **Provider's Handbook**

The QASS office will work in consultation with the School and the partner institution to devise an operational handbook which will detail all operational and quality assurance procedures, and forms part of the formal Agreement.

This should ideally be completed before recruitment begins but should be in place **before the first students are enrolled. The Provider's Handbook should be reviewed annually.**

1.9 References

AHEAD(2010) '*Charter for Inclusive Teaching & Learning*', Dublin, AHEAD

HETAC(2008) *Policy for Collaborative programmes, transnational programmes and joint awards – Accreditation, Quality Assurance, and Delegation of Authority*, Dublin, HETAC

IHEQN (2009) *Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Irish Higher Education Institutions*. Dublin IHEQN

QAA (2004) *Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality in Higher Education: Collaborative Provision and Flexible and Distributed Learning (including eLearning*. Gloucester, QAA

UNESCO (2005) *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*. Paris, UNESCO

Other Sources

VanGaalén, A ed.(2010) Internationalisation and Quality Assurance. *EAIE Professional Development Series for International Educators Vol 4*. Amsterdam, European Association for International Education.

1.10 Appendix: Accompanying documents:

- Programme Proposal Form
- Partner Profile
- Initial Risk Analysis
- Interim Checkpoint Form

Programme Validation Template

1.11 Glossary

Awarding Body	A body that makes awards namely: HETAC, FETAC, ICM, CIPD
Award	An award which is granted, conferred or given by an awarding body and which records that a learner has acquired a standard of knowledge, skills or competence
Joint award	An education qualification issued jointly by at least two or more higher education institutions or by one or more education institutions and other awarding bodies on the basis of a programme development and/or provided jointly by the higher education institutions, possibly in conjunction with other institutions.
Programme	A programme means any process by which learners may acquire knowledge, skill or competence and includes courses of study, instruction, workplacement, training or employment

Validation	The process by which an awarding body shall satisfy itself that a learner may attain knowledge, skill or competence for the purpose of an award made by the awarding body
School	The School is the academic unit of the National College of Ireland. There are currently two schools: School of Business & School of Computing