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Comhairle na nDámhachtainí Ardoideachais agus Oiliúna, Éire

Institutional Review of Providers of Higher Education and Training

Institutional Review of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
21-23 February 2011
Report of Expert Panel

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Contents

Introduction	3
Executive Summary — Report of the Expert Panel	5
Background to the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown	6
Institutional Review Methodology	10
Findings in relation to objectives of Institutional Review	15
Appendix A Terms of Reference.....	63
Appendix B Panel Membership.....	76
Appendix C Supporting documentation issued by ITB with the SER.....	77
Appendix D Documentation requested by the panel.....	78
Appendix E Glossary of documentation provided to the panel at the site visit.....	80
Appendix F Agenda for Site Visit.....	85
Appendix G List of People met by the Panel	88
Appendix H ITB Review of QA Policies and Procedures.....	92

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 Institute of Technology Blanchardstown on 21-23 February 2011.

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 an expert panel to carry out the Institutional Review on its behalf. Under the chairmanship of Professor Graham Chesters, membership of the expert panel 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 Institute of Technology Blanchardstown will submit a follow-up report to HETAC not more than 12 months after the publication of this report. Their follow-up report will outline how they have 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 including a commentary by the HETAC Executive will be considered by the Academic Committee of HETAC. The Academic Committee may adopt the Institute'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 included in Appendix A.

The expert panel points out that it cannot make any findings regarding:

- 1. The financial standing and commercial viability of the institution reviewed*
- 2. The institution's compliance with its general statutory obligations*

or

- 3. 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 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 Report of the Expert Panel.

Executive Summary — Report of the Expert Panel

This is the Report of the Expert Panel appointed by HETAC to undertake the Institutional Review of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) on 21-23 February 2011. The review process was carried out in accordance with the HETAC *Policy on Institutional Review of Providers of Higher Education and Training, 2007*.

Findings

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

- The effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements operated by the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown has been assessed and the arrangements have been found to be generally 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, 2002*.
- The Institute of Technology Blanchardstown has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression, as determined by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.
- The Institute of Technology Blanchardstown meets the criteria for the delegation of authority to make awards that relate to Operations and Management; Education and Training Programmes; Council Conditions related to Delegation of Authority and the Objects of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999.

Commendations and Recommendations

The panel made a total of 15 commendations and 41 recommendations, identified in the body of the report, in relation to the Objectives for Institutional Review to which each corresponds. The panel acknowledges that several of the recommendations are based on the Institute's proposed enhancements resulting from the internal self study process.

Acknowledgements

The panel is grateful to the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown for the cooperation and assistance provided to the review team and wishes it well in its future work.

Background to the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown

Learners and campus

The Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) is located in the north west of Dublin city and county, directly serving that area while also drawing its learners from neighbouring counties and from further afield. In approximate figures, 82% of its learners are from the greater-Dublin region and 14% of all learners are of non-Irish origin, of which 62% are from outside the EU.

From the Institute's establishment in 1999, its learner community has grown to almost 3,000 students; in the academic year 2009/2010 it was composed of 1,572 full-time and 1,358 part-time learners which equates to 2224 FTE¹. Over 40% of the learner intake in 2010/2011 is referred to as non-standard which includes mature applicants, further education learners and those from under-represented or disadvantaged groups. Some 71% of learners have entered through the CAO² system and 29% are learners not typically progressing from second level of which 10% are apprentices and 19% are non-CAO fee paying- part time and/or mature learners.

Table A: Number of learners accepting a place in first year from the different categories through the CAO system

	2010/2011
Total acceptances to 1 st year through CAO system	950
Number entering with leaving certificate	533 (56%)
Number entering through other route (non-standard)	417 (44%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mature 	232 (24%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deferral from previous year 	16 (2%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progressing from FETAC Level 5 or 6 course 	154 (16%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering through channels for disadvantaged learners 	15 (2%)

(SER numbers as at November-December 2010)

¹ FTE- Full-time (student or staff) equivalent.

² The higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland have delegated to the Central Applications Office (CAO) the task of processing centrally applications to their first year undergraduate programmes.

ITB has a single campus in Blanchardstown which currently includes a student services block, two teaching blocks, a library, apprentice workshops and facilities for research development and innovation, including a Learning and Innovation Centre (LINC).

The Institute co-exists with several other higher education and training providers in the greater Dublin area. The most significant in terms of similarity of mission, proximity and catchment area include the Institute of Technology Tallaght, Dublin City University, the National University of Ireland Maynooth and the Dublin Institute of Technology.

Programmes offered

The Institute aims to provide flexible third-level programmes designed to meet the skills needs and increase the level of participation in third level education and training, particularly in Dublin North West and its environs, with an emphasis on:

- Specialist higher education for leading-edge industries in the region;
- Upgrading of specialist technical/technological skills;
- Continuing education and the needs of mature learners;
- In-service programmes, retraining and updating of skills;
- Special needs arising from educational disadvantage or disability.

The Institute has two academic schools, the School of Business and Humanities and the School of Informatics and Engineering. These offer a broad range of full-time and part-time programmes in Business, Humanities, Informatics and Engineering at Levels 6 to 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Table B: Learners and programmes of each academic school

School	Full-time Learners (2009/10)	Part-time Learners (2009/10)	Programmes
Business and Humanities	957	384	Business, sports management and coaching, languages, social care, social and community development, early childhood care and education
Informatics and Engineering	607	974	Electronics, computer engineering, computer science, creative digital media, mechatronics, horticulture and apprenticeships/trades

ITB emphasises that its schools and their departments actively promote ‘the ladder’ of educational opportunity with graduated programmes of study. These allow for progression from Higher Certificate at Level 6, to Ordinary Bachelor Degree at Level 7, to Honours Bachelor Degree at Level 8, and on to postgraduate awards at Level 9. In 2009/2010, 456 learners graduated from ITB, the large majority with Level 7 (53%) or Level 8 (32%) awards.

At the end of 2010, 19 students were engaged in research in electronics and mechanical engineering, mechatronics, learning and technology, informatics/computing and business leading to research awards mainly at Master degree Level 9 and, occasionally, to progression to PhD Level 10.

The Institute has developed a selection of programmes for adult learners to support their return to education, up-skilling and re-skilling. These continuing education programmes range from Higher Certificate at Level 6 to Master degree programmes at Level 9. The Institute also offers a range of Minor and Special Purpose awards as part of its part-time provision.

Partnerships and external relationships

The Institute has established a number of partnerships with local industry. These have included collaborative education programmes with companies and co-operation in the core areas of curriculum design and research to enhance the relevance of programmes to the labour market and to society at large. ITB has also forged close links with the community, in particular schools, further education colleges, community and development organisations. This cooperation encourages

students from the local area to progress from second to third level and subsequently make a successful transition from the Institute to other educational institutions or to employment.

Research and innovation

The academic staff and research community of ITB are involved collaboratively in research projects with industry, community organisations and agencies in the locality, such as the National Roads Authority, IBM, Intel, Havoc, Wavebob, ESB and the Health Service Executive. ITB has also established links with small and medium-sized enterprises through the Enterprise Ireland Innovation Scheme. The Learning and Innovation Centre (LINC) is ITB's tangible link between the Institute and the business community, providing incubation space for start-up companies and making accessible to them the skills and expertise of the Institute.

Delegated Authority

In June 2006 the Institute received Delegated Authority from HETAC to make awards for all taught programmes up to and including Level 9 taught masters degrees on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). ITB does not currently hold Delegated Authority for research degree programmes at Levels 9 or 10.

Additional background on the profile of the Institute 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 consisted 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 Institute.
2. Self-evaluation carried out by the Institute, followed by the production of a written Self Evaluation Report (SER).
3. Visit of the panel appointed by HETAC, followed by the written report of the panel.
4. Institutional response to the panel's report, including its implementation plan.
5. Publication of the report of the panel and the Institute's subsequent response.
6. Follow-up report submitted by the Institute.

The Terms of Reference for Institute of Technology Blanchardstown were discussed at a number of planning meetings between the Institute and HETAC over the period from February to October 2010. The objectives of the Institutional Review of Institute of Technology Blanchardstown were set by HETAC as follows:

1. To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the Institute and the standards of the awards made.
2. To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the Institute.

Special considerations

ITB would like to draw to the attention of the panel that the positioning of the Institute within the higher education and training provision in the local catchment area has remained true to the original mission on its establishment. Certain districts in ITB's catchment area were characterised by low participation rates in third level education and priority has always been attached to catering to demand from mature learners who may not originally have completed second-level education. ITB has remained constant in terms of the overall institutional response to the challenge involved in the delivery of academic programmes that take account of this particular profile of learners.

The Institute would welcome the panel's view on the continued relevance of the original ITB mission notwithstanding the changes that may occur in higher education following the publication of the Higher Education Strategy Report.

3. To assess the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance arrangements operated by the Institute.
4. To confirm the extent to which the Institute has implemented the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and its procedures for access, transfer and progression.

Special consideration

Lifelong learning

The Institute considers that it has captured and enhanced its overall approach to addressing the needs of lifelong learners which it defines as those learners seeking:

- *Specialist higher education for leading-edge industries in the region;*
- *Upgrading of specialist technical/technological skills;*
- *Continuing education (mature learners);*
- *In-service programmes, retraining and updating of skills.*

It also includes learners with special needs arising from educational disadvantage or disability.

The Institute welcomes the panel's view on the success of this approach and how the Institute can further enhance this approach to broadening access to lifelong learners.

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 Institute.

No Additional Institutional Objectives were set out in the Terms of Reference in addition to those prescribed above.

For the complete Terms of Reference for Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, see Appendix A.

HETAC appointed a panel of experts to carry out the Institutional Review on its behalf. Under the chairmanship of Professor Graham Chesters, membership of the panel 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 induction training on the conduct of Institutional Reviews in advance of the site visit. The panel membership is outlined in full in Appendix B.

Prior to the panel's visit, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown engaged in a self-study exercise which resulted in a Self Evaluation Report (SER). The exercise was conducted between June and December 2010. Three interrelated elements of ITB were subjected to review: strategy, programmes and quality (SER,p6). The Governing Body appointed a sub-committee to engage with the process

and a steering group chaired by the President of the Institute was established to manage it. Four working groups reported to this steering group, three of which addressed strategy, programmes and quality and a fourth coordinated internal and external communications. The working groups consulted, collated source material and produced draft sections of the SER (SER, page 6).

ITB used a self-reflective and collective approach for the self-study, based principally on broad consultation with staff, learners and stakeholders. A key feature was “appreciative inquiry”, focussing on the positive rather than the negative in order to influence the culture of the organisation. Concerning strategic review, 47 current learners were consulted through focus groups as part of a process conducted by external consultants. A forum of about 50 academic and management staff was conducted. This also included recent graduates, external stakeholders and Governing Body members.

In the case of programme review, feedback was received through questionnaires and from course boards, school and department meetings, from learners’ class representatives, from alumni meetings and employer seminars. The recent programmatic review panel meetings provided an additional source of stakeholder input. The programmatic review of the School of Informatics and Engineering took place in November 2010 and the programmatic review of the School of Business and Humanities was carried out in December 2010.

The Institute’s review of the effectiveness of quality assurance policies and procedures was based on consultation with staff, learners, validation panel members, teachers, guidance counsellors and external examiners.

The consolidated SER was considered by the steering group, Academic Council, Institute top and middle management and the Governing Body, through its appointed subcommittee. It was finalised in December 2010.

In advance of the site visit, the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown submitted its SER and additional supporting documentation (detailed in Appendix C) in December 2010. A desk-based review of the SER was undertaken by HETAC prior to forwarding the report to the review panel. Panel members assessed the SER in advance of the site visit, and forwarded their initial thoughts to HETAC and the Review Chairperson and Secretary.

The SER set out the current profile of the Institute and provided a detailed review of its mission and strategy, of the recent programmatic review process for its academic schools and of the effectiveness of its quality assurance procedures, including an evaluation of the extent to which the Institute's quality assurance arrangements reflected the seven elements of Part One of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* 2009, Helsinki, 3rd edition. Finally, the SER reflected on the six objectives for the Institutional Review as set out in the Terms of Reference and on the Institute's overall learning in conducting the self-evaluation review.

A number of other documents were submitted in support of the self-evaluation report including quality assurance policies and procedures with a review of their effectiveness, full-time and part-time prospectuses, the student handbook, the strategic plan and teaching and learning innovations. The Institute also made available, prior to and at the time of the visit, a large collection of additional documents in hard copy and electronically, via a website set up especially for the Institutional Review. A list of documents submitted in support of the SER is contained in Appendix C.

An advance meeting was held between the Review Chairperson, Secretary, HETAC Head of Institutional Review and representatives of the Institute on 3 February 2011. That meeting:

- Reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Institutional Review;
- Considered and agreed the agenda and arrangements for the site visit;
- Highlighted key themes and issues raised by the Review Panel members having read the Institute's SER for the review;
- Identified additional documentation to be provided before the site visit and additional documentation to be available to the panel at the site visit (provided in Appendix D); and
- Confirmed the timeframe for producing the panel's report and the Institute's response.

The site visit took place on 21-23 February 2011 in the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown. The index of documentation provided to the panel at the site visit is shown in Appendix E. The full panel met with members of the Institute, learners and other stakeholders according to an agenda drawn up by the panel in consultation with the Institute. The agenda for the site visit, agreed in advance with representatives of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, is set out in Appendix F. With minor changes, that agenda was followed during the visit. Lists of persons with whom the panel met are provided in Appendix G.

The members of the panel were satisfied that they received full cooperation from the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and that they had the necessary documentation and discussions to reach their conclusions and produce their report.

Findings in relation to objectives of Institutional Review

Objective 1 — Public Confidence

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

This overarching objective covers all areas of the Institute’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 Panel, and the Institute’s own response and action plan. The information provided by the Institute to the public is part of this objective.

Key Findings of Objective 1: Public Confidence

Self Evaluation Report

- 1.1 The self-evaluation process was led by a steering group chaired by the President of the Institute and conducted by a series of working groups with the involvement of top and middle management and a selection of academic staff and learners. Governing Body and staff were briefed on objectives, process, and expected outcomes of the institutional review. The Governing Body engaged with the process through a sub-committee and which considered the SER prior to its submission.

- 1.2 The overall approach adopted was to ensure maximum engagement with and ownership of the self-reflection process and the SER within the Institute. The methodology was one of collective self reflection using the “appreciative inquiry” form of consultation focussing on an image of “what is right” rather than “a problem to be solved”³. A staff forum involving a quarter of staff played a key role in the process and the “appreciative inquiry” for staff is still ongoing. Although broader stakeholder feedback was taken into account, the self-reflection in the SER appeared to come primarily from the various categories of management and staff. There was learner feedback from small focus groups managed by external consultants and

³ David L. Cooperrider and Diana Whitney : <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/whatisai.cfm>

from learner representatives but the student voice was not emphasised in the SER. The support services were not explicitly included in the self-evaluation, although some have been the subject of separate peer reviews or external studies (for example, the 2009 Duffy study on student services-see § 3.48).

- 1.3 The SER contained detailed descriptions and self-reflections and as a result it was significantly longer than the suggested length for such a document, in the opinion of the panel. Due to the emphasis on the internal perspective, the report's overall structure was not based on the six objectives of the Institutional Review. These were, however, addressed in summary form in the last section of the report. The overall structure added to the work of the panel and resulted in the Institute being requested to provide further documentation dealing with the two objectives relating to Delegated Authority and the special consideration requested by the Institute under Objective 4 - lifelong learning, access, transfer and progression.
- 1.4 The SER met the Institute's primary purpose of providing an overview of internal self-reflection. The panel was concerned that, given external developments, this resulted in a somewhat inward-looking perspective. Nevertheless it provided a valuable insight into the Institute's policies and processes and an open and honest evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. The report was complemented by a comprehensive set of additional documentation and evidence and the Institute ensured a very well-structured and easily accessible documentation room for the panel's site visit. This provided a sound overall basis for the Institutional Review.
- 1.5 The SER summarised the reflections resulting from a systematic review of the effectiveness of the Institute's quality assurance procedures which were set out in detail in an informative supporting document. It also identified, in its concluding section, overall areas for further development and critical challenges, but these did not clearly link back to the report's more specific self-reflections. Although the SER was evaluative at a strategic level and identified issues for attention and challenges, it identified few high-level recommendations for improvement which could be factored into future strategic planning. Because of the SER's introspective nature, ITB had not yet considered its future use as a source of public confidence.

Information provided by the Institute to the public

- 1.6 The Institute disseminates information to the public through hard copy and its electronic media. Feedback from external stakeholders expressed general satisfaction but indicated that there is scope for continuing improvement in the quality of the web-based services and electronic information, such as on programmes offered. The open days on campus and outreach activities throughout the community were considered very effective by stakeholders as a means of communicating and interacting with the public.
- 1.7 Stakeholders and learners had no hesitation in confirming that the Institute has a distinctive and attractive brand based on strong local recognition and endorsement of its identity and value-base. This was fully in line with the clear vision expressed by staff responsible for marketing ITB. It was seen as a young and innovative organisation which is accessible, multi-cultural, empowering and responsive. This recognition was achieved through active engagement with second level schools, further education colleges, community-based groups, companies and public authorities.
- 1.8 The panel met with a number of stakeholders during the site visit (as set out in Appendix G). The stakeholders told the panel that the Institute had built a strong local brand that will allow it to move to its next phase of development and that ITB could achieve stronger recognition as a “local +” or regional centre of excellence combining access to quality higher education and lifelong learning with a prestige quality brand in innovative and hi-tech business.
- 1.9 Industry stakeholders expressed a view that, in order to achieve this prestige status, the Institute needed to do more to develop its relations with companies. They found their contact persons, such as programme coordinators, very accessible and responsive but questioned the lack of strategic involvement on an institutional level. Some industry stakeholders felt that there was more scope for integrating work experience and placements, particularly in the Institute’s business programmes- some learners and graduates met by the panel also expressed this view. The panel was told that links between companies and academics could be strengthened and systematised, notably through industrial liaison platforms and by fully exploiting the considerable potential that the LINC offers. ITB could also be more confident in taking a proactive approach by developing marketing initiatives to target the specific needs of key employers including multinationals.

- 1.10 ITB emphasises the increase in its learner numbers and diversity as a source of public confidence. As an indicator this has its limitations as the entire higher education sector is similarly affected due to the economic crisis. Other indicators and data sources could be developed in order to avoid an over-reliance on student numbers, for example more comprehensive and representative data on the employability of graduates was requested by stakeholder schools who met with the panel (see also § 2.2).

Commendations — Public Confidence

- 1.11 The panel wishes to commend Institute of Technology Blanchardstown on the following:
1. The accessibility of documentation on-site during the Institutional Review, particularly the presentation and completeness of the documentation room (1.4).
 2. The strong recognition and endorsement of the Institute's distinctive mission, values and brand by learners and stakeholders in the local community (1.7).
 3. The open and active engagement of the Institute with a wide range of external stakeholders, including secondary schools, further education colleges and employers (1.7).

Recommendations — Public Confidence

- 1.12 In relation to Objective 1 (Public Confidence), the panel recommends that the Institute should:
1. Use the SER as a source of public confidence and added value, by following up in a transparent manner the key issues it identified as needing attention, linked to the recommendations from the Institutional Review (1.5).

2. Continue to enhance the quality of its information available electronically to the general public and external stakeholders, including the use of focus groups representing its different target audiences (1.6).

3. Act on the SER conclusion that engagements with stakeholders should be further extended by
 - developing their recognition of the Institute as a prestige brand and centre of excellence for learning and innovation throughout its catchment area and beyond (1.8).
 - reinforcing relations with companies to enhance strategic involvement at an institutional level for example, by establishing industrial liaison platforms in all departments and by taking specific initiatives to target the skills and innovation needs of key employers and expand work-based learning (1.9).

Objective 2 — Strategic Planning and Governance

To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the Institute

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
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Monitoring and evaluation of performance against strategic planning

2.1 At the time of the panel's site visit, the Institute had commenced a process of evaluating the implementation of the priorities and objectives of its current Strategic Plan (2006-2011). This included programmatic review processes in both academic schools, a management report on one of the plan's priorities to the Governing Body in October 2009 and the self evaluation process itself in the second half of 2010. The current Strategic Plan identifies specific objectives, targets and strategies under each of the priorities. The priorities are:

- Priority 1: achieve diversity in the background of our students and growth in student numbers
- Priority 2: adapt our teaching—the same high standards, new styles and methods
- Priority 3: make ITB a vital resource for the region
- Priority 4: adopt high standards for the use of our resources
- Priority 5: ensure cohesion in our work as a college community.

(Strategic Plan 2006-2011, page 5)

In February 2007, the Director and top management group (TMG), which is responsible for strategic planning, set out a roadmap for implementation of the 2006-2011 Strategic Plan. This provided guidance to members of academic departments and support services for the development and implementation of their own team development plans. The resulting plans drawn up by the individual departments and sections varied considerably in terms of both concreteness and format. Some of these plans set out objectives, actions/deliverables, responsibilities and timelines which could be monitored and evaluated in terms of performance. However, many of the plans are too abstract to provide such a basis. It is

unclear how an aggregate picture can be built bottom-up from an evaluation of the disparate plans which exist at department/section level. Despite this, the Institute as a whole should evaluate and report on the extent to which the various objectives and targets in the overall 2006-2011 Strategic Plan have been achieved. For the implementation of its next Strategic Plan, the Institute will require a more comprehensive management information and monitoring system that will ensure that all departments and sections align themselves in a consistent manner to the overall objectives and targets.

- 2.2 The Institute currently uses two key performance indicators (KPIs) which are closely linked to priority 1 of the Strategic Plan: full-time and part-time student numbers and progression rates by academic year. It has also developed data on unit costs in line with the HEA's⁴ new funding model. Despite concerns that the unique nature of ITB reduces the value of benchmarking against other higher education institutions, the SER recognised the need for an effective ranking system for comparison purposes. The Institute is therefore committed to developing a broader range of KPIs which would measure short and long-term performance throughout the system. Performance areas that could be developed include graduate employment by programme; diversity management; student satisfaction; and the added value of ITB for learners in terms of their outcomes and achievements from entry to award- for example, for mature learners or entrants with a low points score. Any such broader-based set of indicators and benchmarks should be linked to targets of the next Strategic Plan and form part of the Institute's management information system.

Mission and next phase of development

- 2.3 The preparation of the next Strategic Plan will be informed by the evaluation of the implementation of the current plan and by the results of the self-evaluation process and the current Institutional Review. A special consideration raised by the Institute is *"the continued relevance of the original ITB mission notwithstanding the changes that may occur in higher education following the publication of the Higher Education Strategy Report"*. The Institute's current mission, which has been at the heart of the self-evaluation and Institutional Review, has been to serve learners and the community by:

- Achieving consistently high standards of relevance and quality

⁴ HEA: Higher Education Authority

- Offering a welcoming and supportive environment to students of all educational and social backgrounds and to adults wishing to increase or update their level of technical skills.

2.4 The Institute is moving on from a highly successful start-up period during which it has built a high reputation and a distinctive brand underpinned by a strong culture and set of values. It has achieved its priority of a more diverse learner community and a significant growth in student numbers. There is a strong institutional commitment and attachment to the existing mission and a sense of collective ownership of it which has served the Institute well until now in fulfilling the purpose it was given. But the Institute is entering a new and very different phase, its period of maturity, at an extremely challenging time. It now faces a rapidly changing environment with financial and human resource constraints which, despite a new HEA funding model based on learner numbers, will affect its capacity to meet its existing mission. The continued alignment of the Institute's performance with national strategic priorities will be crucial if its development is to remain sustainable. Notwithstanding the Higher Education Strategy Report, this new period of high volatility will require strategic and organisational responses from ITB. The panel acknowledges that the Institute is already thinking beyond its existing mission although this is not fully reflected in the final conclusions of the Self Evaluation Report. In preparing its next strategic plan, the Institute should evaluate, in consultation with external stakeholders and partners, the new demands and different scenarios it could face and re-examine critically how its current mission and strategic approach should be updated to meet them.

2.5 The panel suggests that, in particular, the Institute should aim to build on its existing strong ethos and values linked to the local community in order to grow in line with the international industrial potential of the broader region it serves. If it strengthens its relations with companies of all sizes, using the full potential of the LINC, ITB is well-placed to become the hub of a "learning region" and a prestige centre of excellence for innovative and hi-tech business.

Governance, executive and deliberative committees

- 2.6 The Governing Body has responsibility for the governance and strategic direction of the Institute, overall responsibility for the management of its assets, and for the preparation of its budgets and accounts for submission to the Higher Education Authority (HEA). It is also responsible for appointing the President and the Institute's Academic Council. The President is responsible for the implementation of the Institute's strategic plans, and for the management of the activities and staff of the Institute.
- 2.7 The President has established two management groups to support her in discharging her responsibilities. The top management group (TMG) comprises the President, the Heads of Schools, the Registrar, the Secretary/Financial Controller and the Head of Development. The panel met the members of the TMG at various stages during the site visit and found that they form a cohesive and influential group within the Institute, pursuing strategic goals; taking decisions; assigning actions relating to resource management; reviewing performance and quality assurance data and reporting to the Governing Body as required. Middle management meets in the Croi⁵ group which comprises the heads of academic departments, of administrative and support services, academic administration and the LINC. It is responsible for the day-to-day operational management of the Institute and provides a valuable platform bringing together academic and support services.
- 2.8 The Academic Council is responsible to the Governing Body for the planning, development and oversight of the programmes of the Institute, and for setting and maintaining academic standards and quality assurance. The Council meets about every two months. It has established a number of sub-committees on:
- Quality Assurance
 - Admissions
 - Postgraduate studies
 - Education

The sub-committees dealing with admissions and postgraduate studies appeared to meet more regularly than the quality assurance sub-committee which met only once or twice per

⁵ Croi- The middle management group (pronounced CREE and is the Irish word for heart).

- annum. The education sub-committee has not met for the last 3 years although the panel was informed that it is being revived.
- 2.9 The panel noted a strong overall sense of collective ownership and trust throughout the governance and management structures of the Institute. This highly participative and inclusive culture plays an important and positive role with both management and staff identifying with the organisational values, mission and objectives. There is general acceptance of collective responsibility. However, the panel found that there was less clarity as to who precisely in the organisation was accountable and where individual responsibility lay (see § 3.5 in relation to quality assurance). Management, academic and support structures should be designed to guide, underpin and support each individual's work. The successful implementation of the student information desk shows how clear structures and allocation of responsibilities can work well for the Institute. The panel therefore considers that the Institute's valuable model of collective ownership would be strengthened if tangible accountability was embedded more systematically throughout the organisational structure (for example, clear responsibility for objectives and deliverables within individual departments and sections).
- 2.10 The Academic Council has an essential statutory responsibility for academic standards and quality assurance reporting directly to the Governing Body (see also § 3.6). Panel discussions with staff and examination of the relevant minutes suggested that the functions and added-value of the Academic Council and its sub-committees were not adequately recognised compared to those of the other organisational structures, for example, the top management group. The quality of the Institute's governance is dependent on the effectiveness and independence of the deliberative committee structure. The panel therefore considers that the role of the Academic Council should be reinforced. Its sub-committees should also be strengthened and their terms of reference reviewed, in particular the quality assurance sub-committee (see § 3.6). There should also be a role for Academic Council sub-committees in monitoring the achievement of academic targets and key performance indicators such as on progression and retention.
- 2.11 The SER and the panel's discussions with management, staff and learners indicated that the student voice within the Institute is not as strong as it should be. For example, there was a limited participation of learners in the self-reflection process and in meetings of Course

Boards (see § 3.20). The SER also concluded that better and alternative mechanisms to obtain feedback from learners needed to be developed. The Institute has accepted that learner participation needs to evolve further from being consultees on matters of interest to becoming full and active partners in governance. Specific measures are required to enhance the learner role, such as providing them with additional training and a regular satisfaction survey of all learners. The learner experience should also be addressed more explicitly through the Academic Council and its sub-committee structure.

- 2.12 The Institute has 18 mobility agreements with other European countries and some 40 students per annum come from these countries to attend ITB as part of their academic programme. The Institute made a decision two years ago to establish links and agreements with foreign institutions and has since signed memoranda/agreements with Indian and Saudi Arabian partners. Nevertheless, it was unclear to the panel whether the Institute has an internationalisation strategy or whether it sees this as being fully compatible with its existing mission, learner profile and capacity. The National Strategy for Higher Education⁶ and the new government programme have identified internationalisation as a means of increasing capacity for development. The Institute's policy in this field should be clarified as part of the preparations for the next Strategic Plan.
- 2.13 The SER described ITB's research and innovation profile, in particular the wide range of collaboration projects with companies and external agencies and the key role played by the LINC as the Institute's link between academia and industry. Although the Institute stated that it looked forward to meeting the challenges of even greater and more diverse research activities over the next five years, the panel was unable to identify a coherent strategy to define how to address these challenges.

⁶ National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, published by the Department of Education and Skills in January 2011 and often referred to as the Hunt Report

Commendations — Strategic Planning and Governance

2.14 The panel wishes to commend the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown on the following:

1. The strength of the institutional commitment to its existing mission of access and relevance which has served it well in its developmental phase and in meeting the needs of learners and the community (2.4).
2. Its strong sense of collective ownership and highly participative culture with both management and staff supporting the Institute's organisational values and principles (2.9).

Recommendations — Strategic Planning and Governance

2.15 In relation to Objective 2 (Strategic Planning and Governance), the panel recommends that the Institute should:

1. Develop during 2011-2012 an integrated management planning and reporting system that will:
 - ensure all departments and sections are aligned with the implementation of the next Strategic Plan by monitoring and evaluating the performance of their own action plans, specific objectives and deliverables (2.1).
 - include a more balanced set of key indicators, benchmarks and targets, such as on learner achievement, diversity management and graduate employability, to enhance measurement of performance against strategic and operational objectives (2.2).
2. Evaluate the new demands and different scenarios it faces in its post-development phase and update its mission accordingly, including by considering how to become the hub of a “learning region” and a prestige centre of excellence for innovative and hi-tech business (2.4, 2.5).

3. Ensure that tangible accountability is embedded more systematically throughout the organisational structure and enhance the governance role of the Academic Council and its sub-committees (2.9, 2.10).
4. Take specific measures to help learners to become full and active partners in governance throughout ITB, such as by providing training opportunities and more effective feedback mechanisms (2.11).
5. Specify ITB's strategies on internationalisation and research as part of its next Strategic Plan (2.12, 2.13).

Objective 3 — Quality Assurance

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

This section of the report is based on Part One of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* (QA).⁷ By including this in the Institutional Review process, the statutory requirement for the review of quality assurance is met. Section 3 of the report comments on the seven areas covered by the *European Standards and Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance* namely:

- i. Policy and procedures for quality assurance
- ii. Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
- iii. Assessment of learners
- iv. Quality assurance of teaching staff
- v. Learning resources and support
- vi. Information systems
- vii. Public information

Key Findings of Objective 3 — Quality Assurance
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Overview

- 3.1 The panel considered the Institute’s procedures in relation to the seven elements above and concluded overall that the criteria have been met. In relation to each of the seven elements of the *European Standards and Guidelines*, the panel’s findings are summarised below.

⁷ “*Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*”. *European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, 2009, Helsinki, 3rd edition.

Element 1 — Policy and procedures for quality assurance- findings

Quality Assurance Framework

3.2 The Institute's quality assurance framework is structured in four levels. Level 1 includes the quality manual which sets out the mission, values, overall approach, principles and governance framework (first drafted in 2003 with a last major revision in 2005). Level 2 comprises management procedures that are considered mission critical including those on:

- Design and development of new academic courses (2003, revised in 2005)
- Staff training and development (2007)
- Evaluation of effectiveness of QA policies and procedures (2005, revised in 2007)
- Monitoring and evaluation of academic programmes (2003, revised in 2007)
- Evaluation of facilities and services (2003, revised in 2007)
- Research policy and strategy (2005)
- Teaching and learning (2005)

Level 3 comprises a range of operational procedures, including:

- Admissions (2003, revised most recently in 2010)
- Marks and standards (2004, revised most recently in 2010)
- External examiners (2003, revised most recently in 2006)
- Academic Council and its sub-committees' terms of reference (2003, revised annually and most recently in 2011).

Level 4 includes a series of forms and templates.

3.3 The first set of quality assurance policies and procedures were prepared by the Institute in 2003 for review by HETAC in 2004. These were then completed in 2005 which provided a basis for the HETAC review in 2006 leading to Delegated Authority. The panel's scrutiny of the documents in the current quality assurance framework indicated that they had not undergone major revision since 2005, including the quality manual which has not been approved by the Governing Body since then. The Institute accepted the need for the updating of some of the policies and procedures. In 2010 the Institute undertook an overall review of the effectiveness of its quality assurance policies and procedures as part of the

preparation for the Institutional Review and intends this to provide the basis for updating the framework. It is significant that the effectiveness review, carried out by the Institute, suggested that quality assurance policy and procedural documents, including a revised policy manual, should be made more user-friendly for staff.

- 3.4 ITB's review of effectiveness of procedures was overseen by a working group including management, academic and support staff, a learner and a graduate representative. The approach included obtaining feedback against the seven elements of the *European Standards and Guidelines* from academic, management and support staff, learners, graduates, employers, validation panel members, teachers, guidance counsellors and external examiners. The key quality assurance policies and procedures were assessed and specific recommendations suggested. Although academic staff are key actors in implementing quality assurance, only 18 out of 158 appeared to take an active part in the consultation. The Institutional Review panel nevertheless found the effectiveness review to be a good exercise. It was comprehensive and self-reflective, providing valuable analysis and insight both for the Institutional Review itself and for the continued enhancement of ITB's policies and procedures.
- 3.5 A key development since 2006 has been the appointment of a Quality Assurance Officer with responsibility for assisting the Registrar in ensuring compliance with key policies and procedures and their updating. In addition, the Institute reported that the roles of Registrar, Head of School and Head of Department have acquired a more significant component contributing to the enhancement of quality assurance. Top management plays a key role through the TMG, signing off on high-level policies and procedures but responsibility is spread across all levels of the organisation. All the academic staff met by the panel accepted that they were responsible for quality assurance. But, apart from the responsibilities of the Registrar and Quality Assurance Officer, the panel found it difficult to identify from the quality assurance framework which were the key roles and responsibilities of organisational units, committees and individuals for monitoring and revising policies. The panel is of the view that there is a lack of clarity as to the specific locus of institutional authority and accountability for monitoring the effectiveness and enhancement of implementation.
- 3.6 The panel particularly found limited evidence that the two bodies principally responsible for academic standards and quality assurance, the Academic Council and its Quality Assurance sub-committee, were actively involved in the development and updating of policies and

procedures or in monitoring the effectiveness of their implementation. The Academic Council has clear statutory functions assisting the Governing Body with explicit responsibility in ITB for academic quality assurance. The Institute's Quality Assurance sub-committee, according to its terms of reference, should assist the Academic Council by periodically reviewing quality assurance procedures, making recommendations for change and periodically auditing the effectiveness of those procedures. The role actually played by the Academic Council in relation to quality assurance is determined by the advice and recommendations it receives from its sub-committee. However, the panel found that the Quality Assurance sub-committee met infrequently and there was little evidence in its minutes that it played an active role in influencing the development of policies and procedures or in monitoring or auditing their implementation. The findings of the quality assurance effectiveness review indicate that "most of the work occurs outside the committee meetings" (Review of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures at the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, page 28). The panel considers that this sub-committee's terms of reference should be reviewed. It should meet before every Academic Council meeting to consider all issues arising in quality assurance implementation including, for example, follow-up of quality assurance-related recommendations from review panels, possible enhancements and updates to policies and procedures, the minutes of all Course Boards and external examiner reports.

- 3.7 The 2006 report of the Delegated Authority Evaluation Group concluded that the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the implementation of the Institute's agreed quality assurance processes was yet to be fully tested. The current Institutional Review panel acknowledges that ITB has made important improvements since 2006 and has in place a comprehensive set of policies and procedures for which there is ownership throughout the organisation and which have been reviewed in-depth. As the SER stresses, the quality assurance system has progressed over the last five years from a state of documented policies and procedures to used policies and procedures. However, the panel considers that concerns persist about the consistency of implementation, including the lack of clarity on the authority and accountability for monitoring implementation, which may diminish ITB's capacity to continue to enhance quality.

Recommendations — Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance

3.8 In relation to Objective 3 (Quality Assurance: Policy and Procedures), the panel recommends that the Institute should:

1. Review the terms of reference and operation of the Academic Council and its Quality Assurance sub-committee to ensure that they assume fully their crucial role within the Institute in monitoring the effectiveness and enhancement of quality assurance processes (3.6).
2. Implement the effectiveness review suggestions that quality assurance policy and procedural documents, including a revised policy manual, should be made more user-friendly for staff (3.3).
3. Strengthen its procedures for the consistent implementation and continuous enhancement of quality assurance, including by specifying more clearly the roles, responsibilities and means for monitoring and revising policies and procedures and by implementing the recommendations of its own review of effectiveness (3.5).

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

Programme approval

3.9 The Institute’s programme approval procedure is set out in a policy document on the “design, validation and accreditation of new programmes” (2MP01⁸). Once the Academic Council has approved an outline of the new programme, a programme planning board establishes a full proposal for evaluation by an external panel. This is composed of senior educationalists, representatives of industry and, where necessary, additional specialist expertise including the learner and international perspectives. The validation report is published on the website and the Head of School arranges for any necessary amendments to be made to the submission document. A response is prepared to each of the validation

⁸ A code is attributed to each of the ITB policies and procedures. Appendix H details all policies and procedures considered as part of the ITB Review of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures.

panel's recommendations citing those applied and a rebuttal for those not followed. The validation report, school response and course schedule are submitted to Academic Council for consideration and ratification. Once approved by the President, the approved course schedule and syllabus documents are published on ITB's document management system.

- 3.10 Staff and validation panel members were consulted on the effectiveness of this policy and procedure as part of the Institute's review of quality assurance. A large majority of staff consulted had participated as programme design members. They considered that the process drove the development of well-designed and relevant programmes and that the external feedback from the validation panel was very beneficial. Validation panel members reported satisfaction with panel composition and the way in which their opinions were taken up. The Institutional Review panel highlights the following suggestions from staff and stakeholders as part of the quality assurance effectiveness review:
- Greater emphasis should be placed on industry requirements and feedback to secure the programme's relevance
 - The introduction of a post-validation evaluation stage to monitor progress.

Periodic review

- 3.11 The periodic review process is described in a policy document on "monitoring and evaluation of academic programmes" (2MP15). It foresees that the programmatic review process shall be undertaken at least once every five years and formally launched at the level of each school, considering a group of related programmes at the same time. The process includes a self-evaluation followed by external peer reviews and a period of change implementation leading to final follow-up reports to Academic Council. This final report is described as "a combined report of the external review and internal review groups by both groups in partnership". The Institutional Review panel considers that this should include a similar process to that used for the validation of new programmes whereby a clear response is prepared to each of the external panel's recommendations.
- 3.12 The Institute's programmatic review of its School of Informatics and Engineering and School of Business and Humanities programmes and special purpose awards was undertaken during 2010 with the external peer review panel meetings taking place in November and December 2010. At the time of the Institutional Review site visit, only the peer-review panel

report for the School of Informatics and Engineering had been finalised. The wrap-up reports are due to be submitted to the Academic Council in June 2011. The Institute's approach to the 2010/2011 programmatic review was set out in the SER. In particular, it stressed that a more strategic approach was adopted for programmatic review, including a strategic review of the disciplines currently on offer, compared to the module by module analysis of each programme which took place for the previous programmatic review. As part of the self-evaluations, individual programmes were reviewed by subject teams and SWOT analysis, which included stakeholder input, was conducted at programme, department and school levels. The external peer review panels were composed of a wide range of academics from the institute of technology and university sectors (including academics from overseas), learner representatives, consultants and other experts. The Institutional Review panel is concerned that, although representatives of business or industry were consulted, representatives of key employers were not included in the external peer-review panels. It also highlights the following suggestions on the process from staff as part of the quality assurance effectiveness review:

- Planning and preparation should start at least one year prior to submission dates in order to ensure quality outcomes
- An interim process for making adjustments to programmes should be introduced to ensure their relevance, for example for high technology programmes.

3.13 In relation to both programme approval and periodic review, the Institutional Review panel, based on its on-site examination of the programme documentation and on feedback from staff and stakeholders, is satisfied that effective approval and review processes have taken place.

Continual monitoring

3.14 The principal structure within the Institute to ensure continuous monitoring of academic programmes has been the Course Board structure (policy documents 3CD05+3CD06). The Head of School appoints Course Boards to consider all matters affecting the operation and development of each programme within the school. They are composed of the Head of School, Head of Department, programme Co-ordinator, all lecturers and tutors teaching on the programme and one learner per year. Staff feedback indicated an awareness of the importance of Course Boards but half the staff surveyed as part of the review of quality

assurance felt that, in their current format, Course Boards were not an efficient and adequate method of programme monitoring.

- 3.15 This part of the system was raised as a concern in the 2006 report of the Delegated Authority Evaluation Group, particularly that the Course Boards were not sending recommendations for action based on examiners' reports to the Registrar for him to inform the external examiners of actions taken or planned. The panel was unable to verify during its visit that this loophole had been fully closed. The peer review panel report of December 2010 for the School of Informatics & Engineering made a related policy recommendation, that "external examiner reports should be forwarded to Course Boards and discussed with recommendations where feasible adopted".
- 3.16 During the site visit the panel examined a number of sets of minutes of Course Board meetings. These revealed that the meetings often took the form of discussion forums addressing operational concerns with few follow-up actions specified or points raised for the attention of the Academic Council. The Boards appear to deal efficiently with amendments to programme schedules which are communicated by the Head of Department and implemented by the Quality Assurance Officer. But there was little evidence that the strategic or academic review issues listed in Course Board terms of reference (3CD05) were adequately covered, for example, by making use of retention data and making recommendations in relation to it. The issue of Course Board agendas was raised at the Academic Council but the outcome appeared unclear.
- 3.17 The lines of reporting for Course Boards also appeared vague. The minutes of their meetings had multiple destinations such as Head of School and Head of Department, senior administrators, the Quality Officer, the Academic Council and the archives. It was unclear to whom they were primarily addressed. The link between the Course Boards and the Academic Council appeared to be through the Heads of Department but it was difficult to find a feedback loop. The panel detected no sense of urgency to clarify the formal role of the Course Boards within the organisation and to ensure that they take full responsibility for the continuous monitoring and review of programmes.

- 3.18 It is foreseen that Course Boards meet at least twice per semester. They appeared to operate primarily on a year-of-programme basis. Staff have expressed the concern that overarching programme issues over several years of the programme run the risk of being missed.
- 3.19 It is Institute policy (3CD06) that a programme monitoring report on the operation of each programme be maintained. It foresees that this should include programme details, data on applications, registrations, and examination performance, Course Board activity, recommendations from previous reports, actions taken and programme feedback from learners, stakeholders and external examiners. The panel requested examples of these key documents and saw two incomplete and unsigned Annual Course Board Reports for 2008/2009, relating to the Mechatronics and Social Care programmes. These contained valuable statistical data on progression but no other key information or comments to be brought to the attention of the Academic Council. The panel was informed that Annual Course Board Reports had been suspended for several years due to industrial relations issues at ITB. It was unclear what these issues are and how long this suspension has existed. Management and staff agreed with the panel that the Institute should now take action to resolve this problem and re-activate the approved procedure.
- 3.20 The learner role in quality assurance procedures is a crucial feature of the European Standards and Guidelines. However, the panel learnt that Course Board participation by learners was often determined by their availability and whether they had particular issues to raise. Only 35% of class representatives surveyed regularly attended Course Boards but those who had participated felt that the meetings were an effective means of communication. However, meetings were sometimes fixed for dates when learners were unavoidably unavailable, for example some meetings were scheduled when students were on work placements.
- 3.21 ITB procedure foresees that learners should withdraw from Course Board meetings “where student assessment or student progress is being discussed”. The panel learnt that, in practice, this meant that learners left before the end of meetings which was in line with the agenda template. The panel came to the view that the learner involvement in these meetings tended to be for specific learner-related points rather than as a contributor of equal status throughout the agenda. The panel report of the peer review on the School of Informatics & Engineering recommended that class representative attendance should be a quorum condition for Course Board meetings and that a mechanism should be developed to provide

feedback to learners relating to issues raised at these meetings. The Institutional Review panel considers that specific measures are required to raise the status of learners as partners in these fora, for example the provision of relevant training opportunities.

- 3.22 In general, the panel felt that the above weaknesses in the Course Board process were undermining the overall effectiveness of the continuous monitoring of programmes.

Commendations — Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes and Awards

- 3.23 The panel wishes to commend the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown on the following:

1. The thoroughness of the procedures for the approval of new programmes (3.10).

Recommendations — Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes and Awards

- 3.24 In relation to Objective 3 (Quality Assurance: approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards), the panel recommends that the Institute should:

1. Establish an interim reflection process between five year programme reviews to monitor the progress of programmes, including in terms of graduate employability, and to make adjustments to ensure programme relevance (3.10, 3.12).
2. Include in the final reporting on the programmatic reviews a clear response to each of the external panel's recommendations and ensure that representatives of key industry/business/employers are represented on all future external panels, in particular for periodic reviews where all programmes are under review at the same time. (3.11, 3.12).
3. Review critically the policy and terms of reference of Course Boards to formalise their role and responsibility for the continuous and effective monitoring of programmes, including their route to the Academic Council (3.17, 3.18, 3.22).

4. Improve the management and procedures for Course Board meetings to ensure that they consistently:
 - Address in a structured way strategic and academic review issues, such as retention, and identify clear action points and issues for the attention of the Academic Council, such as feedback from external examiners (3.16).
 - Assess external examiners' reports for action required so that the Registrar can inform the examiners of action taken or planned (3.15).
5. Ensure that learners are treated as full partners in the implementation of quality assurance, programme development and monitoring, particularly by facilitating their full and active contribution to Course Board meetings and by revising the relevant agenda template (3.21).
6. Resolve any outstanding issues blocking the use of Annual Course Board Reports and re-activate the process in accordance with approved policy (3.19).

Element 3 — Assessment of learners- findings

Assessment of learning outcomes

- 3.25 Based on ITB's review of the effectiveness of quality assurance, the SER reported that the Institute had procedures for fair and consistent assessment of learners which are learning outcomes-based. The policies and procedures which were relevant to this essential element of quality assurance were cited. In particular, the marks and standards procedure (3AS06) declares that learning outcomes required are specified by the award standards as agreed and published by HETAC and that standards are classified exclusively on the basis of criterion-referenced assessment of learning outcomes. However, this procedural document does not develop this in any way but concentrates on grading and award classifications. The panel was unable to find any Institute procedure to implement assessment on the basis of learning outcomes consistently across all programmes and modules.
- 3.26 Information for learners and staff with regard to assessments was provided by programme handbooks and programme assessment schedules issued by individual departments. But

feedback from learners, as part of the effectiveness review, indicated that only 63% of learners confirmed that the assessment methods adequately measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Programme handbooks contained one or two pages on assessment with a schedule for grading and marking but did not include a learner assessment matrix linking to learning outcomes at the level of individual modules. The Institute provided no template for such a matrix or for programme handbooks in general. The report of the external peer review panel for the programmatic review of the School of Informatics & Engineering recommended that a standard assessment matrix should be introduced. It also suggested that clearly articulated learning outcomes should be assessed by “specific pieces of continuous assessment”.

- 3.27 The panel was informed that learning outcomes were introduced at the module level five years ago. Each department and programme has separately implemented the approach but there is insufficient evidence of institute-wide guidance and support for academic staff. Some relevant staff training was obtained through the Dublin Institute of Technology. The risk is that when modules were rewritten to use learning outcomes, the assessment instruments were left largely unchanged, without checking whether they and the assessment criteria were still valid. Although the panel heard evidence of good practice in the business studies and social care areas, it did not detect any overall approach to ensure consistency. There has been considerable reliance on external peers to ensure that the level and standards of learning outcomes were clear and were being attained. The Institute has encouraged certain departments in piloting the use of the “Coursebuilder” software which, if mainstreamed across all ITB programmes, would provide a valuable means of defining assessment systems in line with the learning outcomes of modules.
- 3.28 What emerged in the panel’s discussions with management and academic staff was a lack of awareness of the implications of the NFQ learning outcomes concept for assessment procedures at the level of programmes and particularly of modules. Staff references to programme content and to knowledge rather than learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competence) suggested an outdated approach. Despite the official procedure (3AS06), there was no mention of HETAC’s 2009 “Assessment and Standards” publication⁹ as a support for ITB in developing its own assessment and standards policy and procedures. In particular, it was clear that there was no central function in the Institute verifying the

⁹ HETAC Assessment and Standards, December 2009

effectiveness of programme handbooks. Therefore there was no check that assessment information and guidance made available to learners and staff was exclusively based for each module on clear learning outcomes criteria.

- 3.29 Based on the above findings and following its examination of programme documentation, the panel came to the view that the learning outcomes approach was not embedded adequately in procedures and criteria for learner assessment.

External examiners

- 3.30 Procedure 3AS09 sets out the Institute's external examiners' and reporting arrangements. ITB's quality assurance effectiveness review concluded that these have been considered with an awareness of HETAC *Effective Practice Guideline for External Examining*, March 2010. External examiners are nominated by the Heads of Schools and appointed by the Registrar on behalf of the Academic Council. They are appointed for a period of three years which can be extended. A full listing by programme is published annually on the on the ITB internal document management system. External examiners' reports received are stored on file and forwarded to Heads of School. Recommendations are extracted and recorded on the tracking database. On completion of their term of office, the external examiners submit a general report to the Registrar on their opinion of the standards of the programme/subject area and of overall learner performance.
- 3.31 The Institute procedure specifies that external examiners should attend at the time of coordinating results and at such other times as may be determined by the Institute in consultation with the external examiner for the purpose of assessing the standard of the programme and/or of learner performance. The panel received confusing information concerning the attendance of external examiners at examination board meetings. During the engagement with staff it was stated that all external examiners were available at ITB at some stage before the board meeting. But it was clear to the panel that external examiners generally do not attend examination board meetings and therefore do not sign off on the overall assessment results/award classification decisions and the standard of the awards. It was also clear that ITB considers their attendance at examination boards to be entirely optional and certainly not essential. This does not correspond with the HETAC protocol¹⁰

¹⁰ HETAC Assessment and Standards, December 2009, page 37

which recognised institutions with Delegated Authority are encouraged to use. The protocol recommends that examination boards should, as the norm, include the programme's external examiners although there may be "rare and exceptional circumstances in which an external examiner is unable to attend". The panel considers that this is a critical issue in sustaining public confidence in the quality of ITB's awards.

- 3.32 The panel noted that the Institute's external examiners' report form is not up to date in terms of best practice. It does not appear to ask for a report on the achievement of learning outcomes and it has tended to facilitate box-ticking rather than to encourage qualitative comments in the view of the panel. The quality of feedback and the added value for ITB has therefore been reduced.
- 3.33 The Institute's existing list of external examiners did not include any examiners from abroad despite considerable advantages in terms of enhancing independence and ITB's reputation. The panel was also concerned that the current list of external examiners might not be providing sufficiently up-to-date experience and competences to review the range of learning outcomes of all the Institute's current programmes and modules. It is essential that external examiners understand how learning outcomes relate to the award standard and how that relates to the NFQ. Their role is critical if ITB is to implement fully the learning outcomes approach. The panel suggests that a clearer definition of the expectations from the external examiners is established, followed by institutional monitoring of their contribution and, where necessary, updating of the register of externs.

Recommendations — Assessment of Learners

- 3.34 In relation to Objective 3 (Quality Assurance: assessment of learners), the panel recommends that the Institute should:
1. Accelerate the mainstreaming of "Coursebuilder" to all programmes and modules (3.27) and develop a template for programme handbooks including a matrix clearly linking assessment to learning outcomes (3.26).
 2. Provide training to all academic staff on the assessment of learning outcomes based on best practice (3.28).

3. Develop a new ITB assessment and standards policy and procedure, including a specific central function to verify that all assessment information made available to learners and staff is exclusively based on clear learning outcomes criteria (3.25, 3.28, 3.29).
4. Strengthen the policy and procedures on external examiners in relation to:
 - Their recommended attendance at examination board meetings and sign-off of assessment results and award standards (3.31);
 - Their selection in terms of experience, range of competences and origin/diversity (3.33);
 - The institutional monitoring of their contribution (3.33);
 - The report format and content of feedback, particularly on the achievement of learning outcomes (3.32).
5. Review thoroughly the effectiveness of the existing external examiners and update the current register of externs as appropriate (3.33).

Element 4 — Quality assurance of teaching staff- findings

- 3.35 At the end of 2010, the Institute employed 249 staff equating to 218 full time equivalents (FTE). This included 158 academic staff (134 FTE) and 91 technical/administration/student support staff (84 FTE). 65% of academic staff were qualified at masters level with 23% at doctorate level. The SER stated that the staff profile was similar to other Institutes of Technology.
- 3.36 All staff at the Institute are recruited according to nationally agreed criteria, procedures and qualifications for each post. Management feedback through the effectiveness review of quality assurance suggested that the Institute needed a more robust and consistent approach in evaluating potential employees, both at the interview stage and during probationary periods.

- 3.37 The Institute stressed the importance of ensuring innovation in its teaching and learning and has developed a range of initiatives with the support of the Strategic Innovation Fund, the National Digital Learning Repository and the IT Investment Fund. These are described in ITB's June 2010 publication "Teaching & Learning Innovations", which highlights good examples of teaching and learning techniques, including the delivery of online and flexible learning programmes, screening of learning styles and problem-based and enquiry-based learning methods. The Learning and Innovation Centre (LINC) has also been heavily involved in the development of training programmes to meet the specific needs of local companies, leading in some cases to dual ITB/industry accreditation. The challenge for ITB is to disseminate and mainstream good practice in teaching and learning throughout the schools, departments and programmes while continuing to innovate.
- 3.38 The Institute's principal means of obtaining learners' feedback on the quality of teaching and learning was the "QA" system of forms for learners to complete. Both staff and learners were critical of the "QA1" part of this system. Staff considered it ineffective because it was largely a box-ticking exercise, usually without qualitative comments, which did not result in higher level overview, follow-up of issues or analysis of trends. Some academic staff have therefore undertaken their own separate surveys. As to learners, only 23% have completed a "QA1" form and of those only 40% felt that the process was effective (Review of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures, page 65). A specific learner concern expressed to the panel was that there was no anonymity in handing in the form. The panel shares the view, highlighted in the Institute's review of effectiveness, that a more effective and efficient system is required. Notwithstanding that the feedback mechanism is agreed throughout the IoT sector, ITB should explore possible improvements to its use and, in any event, a supplementary online system should be developed.
- 3.39 In terms of training and professional development, staff met by the panel during the site visit informed the panel that they felt supported by the Institute in their initiatives to up-skill when they raised a requirement or request for up-skilling. According to staff, the main obstacle to their participation in training lay primarily with their workload and lack of available time. In 2009, some 54% of staff participated in training, many in ITB, workshops on learning and teaching technologies and particularly in relation to the virtual learning environment. Based on staff feedback, the panel formed the view that the provision of training and professional development tended to be ad-hoc (confirmed by the effectiveness

- review). Rather than having an institutional strategic approach built on an assessment of staff needs, the Institute appeared to rely on the readiness of staff to identify their own needs.
- 3.40 The key instrument for the identification of staff training and development needs in line with strategic objectives should be the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS). This is intended to allow managers to discuss the individual's goals and support the establishment and implementation of Personal Development Plans (PDPs). The SER stressed that ITB has previously had significant success in doing this. The panel also received some positive feedback from staff of their experience of PMDS and PDPs despite dissatisfaction with inconsistent use of the system. Although this system has been suspended for a year or two, the Institute is now re-launching it. This should provide a new opportunity for both management and staff to be fully involved in using the system as an effective and transparent tool across the organisation leading to Personal Development Plans for all staff.
- 3.41 In 2006, ITB indicated to the Delegated Authority Evaluation Group that it did not plan to increase its spending on staff development from 2.4% of the total payroll budget to a suggested level of 3%. During the recent Institutional Review site visit, the panel was unable to obtain a clear view of the current level of spending, particularly as training and development is now almost exclusively self-funded from surpluses on continuing education which are not clearly visible in the financial statements. There were also indications from management and staff that less funding was now available because of reductions in state funding and that, as a result, training and development allocations and opportunities were being reduced.
- 3.42 The panel is of the view that the Institute requires a strategic approach and action plan to ensure the quality assurance of its staff, bringing together its teaching and learning objectives with the assessment of the training and development needs of staff. The re-launch of the PMDS should underpin this strategy as should provide a transparent identification of adequate financial and other resources. Crucial staff skills and competences required for the Institute's performance should be identified, including institution-wide needs raised in this report such as the assessment of learning outcomes, diversity management and the enhancement of quality assurance.

Commendations — Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff

3.43 The panel wishes to commend the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown on the following:

1. The range and quality of innovative initiatives in teaching and learning (3.37).
2. The commitment among management and staff to re-launch the effective use across ITB of the Performance Management and Development System and Personal Development Plans (3.40).

Recommendations — Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff

3.44 In relation to Objective 3 (Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff), the panel recommends that the Institute should:

1. Reinforce the evaluation of potential employees both at the interview stage and during probationary periods (3.36).
2. Develop a mechanism to disseminate and mainstream good practice in teaching and learning throughout the schools, departments and programmes (3.37).
3. Develop a more effective system of learner feedback including a learner-friendly online system (3.38).
4. Establish a coordinated strategy to ensure the training and development of all its staff over a multi-annual period, integrating teaching and learning objectives, assessment and planning of both institutional and individual requirements and the transparent allocation of appropriate resources (3.39, 3.41, 3.42).

Element 5 — Learning resources and support- findings

- 3.45 The Institute provides a wide range of physical facilities and services for the support of student learning. The SER stressed that these services were originally designed to meet the needs of a stable learner cohort comprising mainly school-leavers attending classes in daytime hours over the traditional academic year. However, services have been put under strain in recent years as ITB has witnessed a surge in the more traditional leaving certificate learner intake and in the demand by mature learners for up-skilling and re-skilling programmes. An additional need has been to accommodate a far greater diversity in the learner cohort. This has resulted in extra demands, such as support in literacy skills for those whose mother tongue is not English.
- 3.46 The SER recognised the challenge of aligning processes in terms of priority, timing or scarce resources between the academic and support services. This challenge of communication and coordination was also discussed by the panel with management and the support services during the site visit. The panel was informed that this challenge was being addressed in two ways: through the “Croi” middle management group which brings together the academic, support and administrative services for operational management purposes; and through “annual planning weeks” during which academic and support managers engage in intensive meetings to discuss and agree plans and resource allocations for the coming year. The SER stresses that this had reduced many of the problems previously experienced although it was unclear to the panel how the outcomes of the planning weeks were being followed up. The panel was also concerned by the lack of any formal route from the support services to the Academic Council or one of its sub-committees other than indirectly through the “Croi” management group.
- 3.47 The Institute’s self-reflection leading to its SER did not specifically cover the support services and few support staff participated in the appreciative inquiry. It is ITB’s policy (2MP16) to evaluate key academic services once every five years. The effectiveness review of quality assurance commented that relatively few of these reviews had been completed and that the time-table had regularly slipped during the last five years. Although, as described below, various forms of review and compliance audits have taken place, the policy and timetable needs to be reviewed in the light of the current approach and planning.

- 3.48 A comprehensive external review of student services (the Duffy Report) was completed in 2009. It is stressed in the SER that this revealed a strong commitment to student welfare among support staff but revealed deficiencies in information for learners, and their access to information, on academic and administrative processes. ITB has, as its main follow-up to the Duffy Report, established a student information desk to act as a “one-stop-shop” for learner queries. Feedback from learners on this initiative has been very positive.
- 3.49 The panel also saw evidence of intra Institute compliance audits (by peers) of academic services and procedures on admissions (2010), student guidance and support (2008), examination paper authoring and marking (2010) and staffing (2008.) Other peer reviews which included external participants examined the IT services (2008) and student affairs and library services (2006). The follow-up to the recommendations from these audits, reviews and the Duffy Report has been monitored using the tracking database managed by the Quality Assurance officer. The Institute policy (2MP16) specifies that reviews of services should lead to a “final evaluation report and a period of change implementation leading to a final follow-up report to the Top Management Group”. The panel saw no evidence of the completion of this feed-back loop.
- 3.50 The Institute also uses learner feedback to monitor the adequacy of its services, namely through the “QA3” departmental survey and learner representation on course boards. The large majority of learners consulted as part of the quality assurance effectiveness review considered that they had adequate mechanisms of providing feedback to Institute staff although this contrasts with their criticism of the “QA1” form (see § 3.38).
- 3.51 The “Moodle” virtual learning environment was highlighted by both staff and learners as a particular success providing access to programme materials and inter-active communication from anywhere with an internet connection. It supported the running of 400 active programme modules with 1,500 active learners and over 1 million page views during the first four months of 2010. “Moodle” was used by nearly all learners surveyed by the Institute.
- 3.52 ITB stressed diversity as part of its image and ethos. Staff feedback emphasised the challenge of implementing this, particularly to accommodate a high level of multi-cultural diversity (37% of part-time learners in 2010 were not born in Ireland). The Institute has provided some intercultural awareness training and specific academic modules are being developed by

staff relating to this issue. However, the panel considered that a more strategic approach to diversity management would be justified, based on actions, responsibilities and deliverables.

- 3.53 Another means employed by the Institute to support student learning and address its diversity mission, starting in 2009, was the screening of individual students' learning style and any learning difficulties during their first year induction, supported by the National Learning Network. The resulting profiles were made available to learners and in summary form to their programme coordinators and to some lecturers. As a result, there has been an increased awareness and identification of learners with specific learning difficulties. Where necessary, student services were mobilised to offer support such as study skills, independent living skills and communication skills. Lecturers were informed where necessary about the specific needs of individual learners and could request training on how to cater for diverse learning needs, although, due to limited resources, this was not necessarily granted. The panel considers this to have been a good initiative in terms of understanding the level of diversity amongst the student cohort and providing an opportunity to engage with any students experiencing difficulties. Mathematics workshops were also appreciated by both learners and programme coordinators.

Commendations — Learning Resources and Support

- 3.54 The panel wishes to commend the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown on the following:
1. The positive impact of the new student information desk providing a “one-stop-shop” for student queries (3.48).
 2. The effective and widespread use of “Moodle” as a support for student learning (3.51).
 3. The successful development and implementation of the learning difficulties screening initiative with the support of the National Learning Network (3.53).

Recommendations — Learning Resources and Support

3.55 In relation to Objective 3 (Quality Assurance: learning resources and support), the panel recommends that the Institute should:

1. Reinforce the ways in which learning resources and support issues can be raised by the support services, including a formal link to one of the sub-committees of the Academic Council (3.46).
2. Review and update the policy and current planning for the evaluation of academic and support services to ensure that adequate reviews are taking place in accordance with the five year timetable and that all reviews and audits result in a final follow-up report to the Top Management Group and Academic Council (3.47, 3.49).
3. Develop a strategic approach to diversity management based on actions, responsibilities and deliverables, including an expansion of its professional development opportunities to allow all academic and relevant support staff to benefit from training in this field (3.52, 3.53).

Element 6 — Information systems- findings

3.56 The completeness and accessibility of documentation on-site during the Institutional Review, provided evidence that ITB collects a significant amount of information. The Quality Officer has recently established a database tracking recommendations emanating from compliance audits, review panels, external examiners, evaluation reports and other sources (although not from the Engineers Ireland accreditation report). On this basis, the Quality Officer monitored follow-up of recommendations and gave appropriate feedback to the TMG and the Quality Assurance sub-committee. The panel considers that the tracking database is a useful initiative which can be reinforced by clear oversight and monitoring at management level and, as the quality assurance effectiveness review suggests, “mechanisms of ensuring more rapid addressing of recommendations”. It should also include professional and statutory body reports, so that the Institute as a whole has oversight of important external recommendations and advice.

- 3.57 Staff reported that most important information was available but was not always centrally stored or easily accessible. The Institute's information for decision-making includes data extracted from the student record system "Banner", the financial management database "Agresso" and the human resources database "Core". The main source of general information for and on decision-making is the document management system (DMS). This appeared to be well-embedded at the management level where it was used to access policies, procedures, forms and templates. However front-line staff, who are less familiar with policies, found the DMS too large to navigate and to find what they were looking for. Some staff indicated that they preferred to use parallel systems, for example by consulting their heads of departments or head of Section. As the quality assurance effectiveness review suggests, there is a need to review and update the DMS system, including through improved search facilities, to ensure that all critical management data and relevant policies and procedures are made more accessible and user-friendly for staff. This should form part of the new IT strategy that the Institute is currently developing.
- 3.58 Course Boards should also be a key source in disseminating relevant information. The information used by Course Boards is sourced from learner feedback processes and reports generated by the quality assurance officer in accordance with programme monitoring policy and procedure. The panel saw two Course Board Annual Reports which contained data by programme on examination performance, progression and withdrawals (see § 3.19). However academic staff feedback, as part of the effectiveness review, suggested that the information available at Course Boards was not effective in reviewing academic programmes.
- 3.59 Two specific key performance indicators are tracked on an ongoing basis: overall learner numbers and progression rates. The latter is a concern for the Institute because, for certain disciplines and at certain levels, it performs less well than other similar institutions. However, apart from the data which the panel saw in the two Annual Course Board Reports, there was no analysis available of progression trends and the specific reasons for withdrawals as a basis for action to improve performance (see § 4.10).

Commendations — Information systems

3.60 The panel wishes to commend the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown on the following:

1. The completeness of its information collection and the potential of its database tracking recommendations for follow-up action (3.56).

Recommendations — Information systems

3.61 In relation to Objective 3 (Quality Assurance: Information Systems), the panel recommends that the Institute should:

1. Review and update its Document Management System, as part of the new IT strategy, to ensure that key management data, policies and procedures are more readily accessible and user-friendly for staff (3.57).
2. Develop further the use of the tracking database through systematic management monitoring of its content and of the follow-up of recommendations (3.56).

Element 7 — Public information- findings

3.62 The Institute publishes details of all its programmes and awards on-line and in print. Information on academic programmes can be sourced from the main website homepage, or from a programme information database, the commissioning of which was in progress in December 2010. The website contains pages on quality assurance and a selection of key policies, and all programme validation reports are also accessible. The format of the material is controlled by a website style policy. There were concerns expressed to the panel by external stakeholders that the website needs to be further developed and 31% of the Institute's academic staff who were surveyed did not think that the website was up to date and accurate (see also § 1.6).

3.63 ITB's hard copy communication included the full-time and part-time prospectuses, student handbook, strategic plan and a publication on teaching and learning innovations. The Institute has not published an annual report for several years.

Recommendations — Public Information

3.64 In relation to Objective 3 (Quality Assurance: public information), the panel recommends that the Institute should:

1. Renew its previous practice of publishing annual reports, starting with 2010 (3.63).

Objective 4 — Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

To confirm the extent to which the Institute 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 Institute's activity in implementing the National Framework of Qualifications
2. Procedures for access, transfer and progression.

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland has produced guidelines in relation to this.¹¹ These include matters 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

Implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

- 4.1 The SER summarises the Institute's implementation of the NFQ. All its programmes are validated in line with the NFQ Levels 6 to 9 and are modular, semesterised and credit-based. The Institute's quality assurance procedures were agreed by HETAC in 2004. In 2006, the Delegated Authority Evaluation Group also satisfied itself as to the Institute's implementation of the NFQ.

- 4.2 The Institute's admission policies explicitly aim to support access, transfer and the progression ladder through its suite of programmes. As the SER emphasises, ITB has developed a regional learning network with local VEC colleges delivering FETAC validated programmes that provide significant support for learners progressing between further education (Levels 5 and 6) and higher education. The number of FETAC learners accepting places in ITB has increased from 11% in 2007/08 to 16% in 2010/11. The access, transfer and progression routes are set out in the programme handbook, prospectuses and are also

¹¹Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. 2003. www.nqai.ie.

published on the website. Although all awards should normally have some associated possibilities for transfer or progression¹², the panel found that there was less information available to potential applicants for part-time programmes on transfer and progress linkages.

- 4.3 A key criterion for the implementation of the NFQ is the integration into quality assurance procedures of sound principles and practices for assessment and standards, in line with the HETAC guidelines and protocols which institutions with Delegated Authority are encouraged to use¹³. A crucial element of this is the learning outcomes approach which should be fully embedded in learner assessment criteria and procedures. As indicated above under element 3 of Quality Assurance (§ 3.29), the panel is concerned that this important aspect requires improvement by the Institute.

Lifelong learning, access, transfer and progression

- 4.4 ITB requested the addition of a special consideration under this Objective in the terms of reference *“the Institute considers that it has captured and enhanced its overall approach to addressing the needs of lifelong learners which it defines as those learners seeking:*

- *specialist higher education for leading-edge industries in the region;*
- *upgrading of specialist technical/ technological skills;*
- *continuing education (mature learners);*
- *in-service programmes, retraining and updating of skills.*

It also includes learners with special needs arising from educational disadvantage or disability.

The Institute would welcome the panel’s view on the success of this approach and how the Institute can further enhance this approach to broadening access to lifelong learners.” (Terms of Reference)

- 4.5 The Institute is clearly committed to lifelong learning and access which are implicit in its mission, values and admission policies, particularly in meeting the goal of widening participation in education and training to new learner cohorts and those who are educationally disadvantaged. This is reflected in ITB’s higher than average proportion of part-time, non-standard and non-CAO learners (46%, 40% and 29% respectively). In terms of action, the SER and supporting documents highlighted the extent of work-based learning and a range of once-off and on-going initiatives addressing access, the needs of the unemployed (the “Start-Over” initiative), up-skilling and re-skilling under labour market

¹² Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, 2003. www.nqai.ie.

¹³ HETAC Assessment and Standards, December 2009

activation and through close links with further education colleges and local companies. Since 2006, the Institute has developed a range of minor and special purpose awards specifically addressing lifelong learning needs. As highlighted in its “Teaching and Learning Innovations” publication, the Institute has also developed, partially with the support of the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF), its capacity to offer flexible, modularised, on-line and blended learning programmes to enhance its provision of lifelong learning.

- 4.6 Detailed data was provided to the panel on the impact of ITB’s initiatives on access from local disadvantaged districts and schools. Stakeholders confirmed its strong outreach and on-campus engagement with local educational and community-based bodies addressing educational disadvantage. Although the Institute was optimistic that it could mainstream the best access initiatives, the panel was concerned about the overall sustainability of systemic action on access without a continuation of dormant account¹⁴ and SIF funding in the future.
- 4.7 The panel is of the view that, to underpin its institutional commitment and provide a clear and coherent framework for its diverse range of specific initiatives, the Institute should develop a comprehensive strategy addressing both lifelong learning and access. This strategy should include ITB’s implementation of the recommendation of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education¹⁵ that “institutions will develop an institution-wide plan to promote greater equity of access...”. The ITB strategy should be supported by targets and resources and be linked to its overall strategic priorities, particularly to its potential development as the hub of a learning region. The Institute should examine how the implementation of this strategy could best be coordinated internally and externally, building on its existing external networks and links with other educational and community-based bodies.
- 4.8 The recognition of prior learning (RPL) is critical to broadening access to and progress in lifelong learning. It is also inherent in the learning outcomes and credit-based approach which is at the core of NFQ implementation. ITB stresses in its SER that it has made creative use of prior certified and experiential learning for entry and progression purposes in particular. It also has specific quality assurance policies in this regard. The Institute

¹⁴ Dormant accounts are accounts in financial institutions that have not been used, or insurance policies that have not been used or reclaimed by their owners for at least 15 years. Dormant accounts legislation provides for a scheme for the disbursement of funds that are unlikely to be reclaimed for projects and programmes designed to alleviate poverty and social deprivation.

¹⁵ National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, Higher Education Authority, 2008-2013

demonstrated to the panel that it has accepted numerous applications based on prior certified learning for the purposes of advanced entry. However, the documentation also showed that ITB had only processed 10 experiential learning portfolios over the three years 2008-2010 (advanced entry and module exemptions) and that the quality of its assessment of these applications was inconsistent. The panel learnt that the Institute considers applications for the recognition of experiential learning to be time-consuming. It prefers not to publicise possibilities through its website or prospectuses although full information for all access, transfer and progression routes should be communicated clearly for each programme. It is difficult to reconcile this reticence towards experiential learning with ITB's commitment to lifelong learning. Indeed it is the view of the panel that the Institute's profile in attracting non-standard and mature learners to part-time, work-based and flexible programmes creates considerable potential for the cost-effective use of RPL. As the need for flexible and work-based learning provision expands, RPL will be an important means of achieving the national skills strategy. The Institute should link up with the network of Institutes of Technology who have developed good practice in RPL so that the benefits to the Institute and the learner outweigh any costs.

- 4.9 According to the HEA's definition¹⁶, ITB's progression rate (2007/08) was slightly lower than the national average for Institutes of Technology at Levels 6, 7 and 8. This can be traced back to certain disciplines at certain levels. The SER suggested that the reasons are linked to the profile of ITB's learner cohort, for example their socio-economic background and points from the CAO system (SER, page 31). The Institute's support services required that learners consult a member of staff before leaving, for example the programme coordinator. However, the emphasis appeared to be primarily aimed at form-filling and ensuring students received financial refunds due.
- 4.10 Data on retention and withdrawals was held by the admissions office and, for each programme, statistics were to be provided in Annual Course Board Reports. A specific retention initiative for first year learners has also been undertaken by the Department of Engineering. However apart from this, there was no evidence that an analysis of data was undertaken at institutional, school or departmental level to ascertain progression trends and the specific reasons for withdrawals so that action can be taken to improve ITB's performance in this regard, including through its student support services. An analysis of the

¹⁶ Non-presence in the following year as measured in HEA Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education 2010.

factors that influence learner experience could be linked to an analysis of the outcomes/achievements of learners compared to their entry level. In general, the panel was concerned by the lack of attention given by the Institute to an issue of such significance in terms of progression and outcomes.

Commendations — Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

4.11 The panel wishes to commend the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown on the following:

1. All ITB's programmes are validated and its policies support access, transfer and the progression ladder (4.1, 4.2).
2. Its achievement in attracting and meeting the needs of under-represented and disadvantaged groups, up-skilling and re-skilling through flexible lifelong learning provision and innovative initiatives throughout the community (4.4, 4.5).

Recommendations — Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

4.12 In relation to Objective 4 (Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression), the panel recommends that the Institute should:

1. Complete its implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications by ensuring that the learning outcomes approach is fully embedded in programmes and modules, particularly in all criteria and procedures for learner assessment (4.3).
2. Develop a clear and comprehensive lifelong learning and access strategy linked to its overall strategic priorities, particularly to the development of ITB as the hub of a learning region, building on its existing external networks with other educational and community-based bodies (4.6, 4.7).

3. Implement its existing policy on the recognition of prior learning by building on established good practice in other institutes and by disseminating clear information to all potential applicants on the RPL possibilities in its programmes (4.8).

4. Develop a pro-active policy on retention based on a central management information system, including data collection, analysis and reporting across the Institute, with follow-up action and practical initiatives involving the student support services, to improve performance in this crucial area (4.9, 4.10).

Objective 5 – Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

This objective is to evaluate the operation and management of Delegated Authority (where applicable) for both taught and research programmes

The Institutional Review process will satisfy the statutory requirement for the review of Delegated Authority for recognised institutions, once Objective 5 of the Institutional Review process is included in the Terms of Reference. The majority of the Delegated Authority criteria are covered under the prescribed objectives of Institutional Review.

Key Findings — Objective 5 — Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

- 5.1 The Institute received Delegated Authority (DA) to make awards initially in 2006 following a HETAC evaluation. It has Delegated Authority for all taught programmes at Levels 6, 7, 8 and 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications. ITB does not currently hold DA for research degree programmes at Levels 9 or 10. The Institute has received approval from HETAC to carry out research at the Master degree Level 9 in the fields of Learning & Technology; Social Science; Informatics/Computing; Mechatronics; Electronic & Mechanical Engineering and Business. Approval has also been received for research at Doctoral degree Level 10 in the fields of Informatics/Computing; Electronic & Mechanical Engineering; Mechatronics and Learning and Technology.
- 5.2 The SER stated that the granting of DA was a valuable event for the Institute which has embedded responsibility for standards to its staff, improved its image with stakeholders and provided a flexibility of response in terms of programme development. The culture of programme validation, monitoring and review as developed under DA has been constructive and collaborative in nature. The Institute stressed to the panel that it particularly valued the freedom resulting from greater ownership of its own activities. The increased responsibility has been internalised throughout the organisation and has become collective. The enhanced image and confidence has also made it easier to discuss and develop education and training programmes with industry and to accredit them.
- 5.3 ITB therefore confirmed the benefits of having DA and that they are using it responsibly. As suggested in the 2006 report of the Delegated Authority Evaluation Group, the Institute has

developed and used a comprehensive set of quality assurance policies and procedures and has monitored their implementation. It has, notably, undertaken a thorough and self-reflective review of the effectiveness of its quality assurance procedures against the seven elements of the *European Standards and Guidelines* as part of its self-evaluation in preparation for the current Institutional Review.

- 5.4 However, a number of important quality assurance issues have been raised earlier in this report in key areas such as accountability, the functions exercised by the Academic Council and its sub-committees, the Course Board process, the assessment of learning outcomes and the role played by external examiners in assuring award standards. The concerns raised by the panel on these issues indicate that further work is required by the Institute to improve the effectiveness and consistency of its implementation of quality assurance policies and procedures.

Commendations — Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

- 5.5 The panel wishes to commend the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown on the following:
1. Its thorough and self-reflective review of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures (3.4).

Recommendations — Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

- 5.6 Having considered the Institute's operation and management of Delegated Authority, the panel recommends that:
1. The recommendations on quality assurance in this report and in ITB's own effectiveness review should be implemented.
 2. An external audit should be commissioned by the Institute to confirm within the next 12 months that these recommendations have been implemented.

3. Delegated Authority granted to the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown be continued as provided for in the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999.

Objective 6 — Recommendations for Enhancement

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

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

Key Findings — Objective 6 — Recommendations for Enhancement

- 6.1 The Institutional Review is particularly timely for ITB because its current strategic plan ends in 2011 and the Institute is entering a period of significant change in both the aims and the structure of higher education contributing to national economic and social recovery. ITB has established itself successfully in its start-up phase as a pioneering Institute. The panel recommends that the Institute should now prepare for the major challenges of the new period by seeking out and sharing best practice across higher education institutions, both nationally and internationally.

- 6.2 The panel acknowledges the areas for further development and critical challenges identified by the Institute in the SER and recommends that these should be further evaluated and refined in the context of its future strategic planning and the recommendations of the panel in this report.

Appendix A Terms of Reference

Higher Education and Training Awards Council
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF
Institute of Technology Blanchardstown in February 2011
STATUS: SET

Section 1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to specify the Terms of Reference for the Institutional Review of Institute of Technology Blanchardstown in February 2011. 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 do 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 institution. 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.

Section 2. Institution Profile

Background

The Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) is a third level institution located in Blanchardstown, a growing suburb of Dublin. It directly serves the greater Blanchardstown area and the north and west of Dublin city and county. Like other Institutes of Technology, it also draws students from neighbouring counties, such as Meath, Kildare, Cavan and Louth as well as from further afield. The greater Blanchardstown area is located approximately 10 kilometres north-west of Dublin city centre within the south western portion of the council area of Fingal and close to the borders of counties Meath and Kildare. This area has experienced a period of unprecedented economic growth over the last decade and is now the industrial and commercial hub for Fingal with large concentrations of retail, pharmaceutical, IT, distribution and service companies.

ITB coexists with many other higher education and training providers in the greater Dublin area. The most significant in terms of similarity of mission proximity and catchment include the Institute of Technology, Tallaght, located on the south west of Dublin; Dublin City University, which is located close to the Airport; National University of Ireland (NUI), Maynooth in County Kildare and the Dublin Institute of Technology which has a number of city centre locations.

ITB first opened its doors to students in 1999 with an investment of €75 million and in the current academic year 2009/2010 caters for almost 3,000 students - 1,569 full-time students and 1,341 part-time students which includes 365 trade apprentices. 41% of student intake is referred to as non-standard which includes mature applicants, further education learners and those from underrepresented/disadvantaged groups 24% of student intake is from the Dublin 15 local area. Overall 93% of all learners are from the Lenister counties (Carlow, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow) surrounding and including Dublin.

The development of the Institute is taking place as a single campus, on a phased basis. The campus development to date includes a student services block, two teaching blocks, a library, apprentice workshops and facilities for research development and innovation.

Academic Structure

The Institute has two academic schools: the School of Business and Humanities and the School of Informatics and Engineering.

The School of Business and Humanities is primarily focused on the development and provision of programmes in:

- Business
- Sports Management and Coaching
- Languages
- Social Care
- Social and Community Development
- Early Childhood Care and Education

Programmes at Levels 6 to 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) are developed and delivered to enable students to acquire the knowledge, develop the skills, and cultivate the attitudes necessary for success in employment. Both the theoretical and practical aspects of each programme are reviewed regularly to ensure ongoing relevance to career opportunities in the industrial,

commercial and service sectors. The School of Business and Humanities has also established links with approximately 10 partner institutions in Europe to facilitate student exchanges, particularly for those taking European languages as part of their programmes. More students from partner colleges attend ITB as part of Erasmus studies (approximately 15-20 students per year) than ITB students visit European colleges.

The School of Informatics and Engineering offers programmes at Levels 6 to 9 on the NFQ. The programmes reflect the interdisciplinary approach to teaching, programme design and research. The Institute currently serves the needs of a knowledge-based society by offering a range of vocationally oriented higher education programmes in the areas of:

- Electronics
- Computer Engineering
- Computer Science
- Creative Digital Media
- Mechatronics
- Horticulture
- Apprenticeships/trades

ITB is proud of the fact that its schools and their departments actively promote what is referred to as *'the ladder'* of educational opportunity. This refers to a *'ladder'* of educational opportunity with graduated programmes of study which allow for progression from Higher Certificate at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to Ordinary Bachelor Degree, Level 7, to Honours Bachelor Degree, Level 8 and on to postgraduate awards at Level 9. ITB considers that the combination of a modern learning environment and a professional and supportive staff ensures that all students have an opportunity to engage in and contribute to a comprehensive and contemporary experience of higher education. Nineteen students are currently engaged in research in Electronics & Mechanical Engineering, Mechatronics, Learning & Technology, Informatics/Computing and Business leading to awards mainly at NFQ Level 9 research master degrees and occasionally at Level 10 with a transfer from master degree to PhD. The Institute also offers a range of Minor and Special Purpose awards as part of the part-time provision. Further details are provided in Table 1 on page 8.

The expertise of school staff has enabled a range of partnerships with local industry and the community to develop. In particular this co-operation in the core areas of curriculum design and research has ensured that the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes have direct relevance to industry and society.

Staff profile

The Institute currently (June 2010) employs 249 staff, which equates to 217 FTE. This total number includes 158 (134 FTE) academic staff and 91 (83 FTE) technical/administration/student support staff. The academic staff structure is similar to other Institutes of Technology, with progression offered from assistant lecturer to lecturer grade based on duration of service or shorter service and being granted a PhD award. The knowledge, skills and abilities of the staff are key to the continuous delivery of a high performance culture, through which innovative, flexible and rapid responses to economic and competitive pressures is made possible. The Institute says it strongly encourages staff development initiatives to support individual career development aspirations. In 2009, the Institute invested more than €104,000 in staff training and development initiatives, participated in by more

than 135 staff. Investment in staff development continues to be a priority in 2010. The senior management will experience significant change in 2010-2011, due to the recent resignation of the Head of School of Business and Humanities with subsequent replacement in August 2010, and the impending retirement of the Head of Development in December 2010. ITB has the same organisation structure in terms of management, administrative, academic and support staff as other Institutes of Technology. The Management team comprises the President, Registrar, Secretary/Financial Controller, Head of Development, two Heads of School, Heads of Departments, and other Heads of Function. According to ITB the role of the management team is to ensure that strategic and operational matters are progressed in line with ITB's overall goals.

Mission

The mission of the Institute is to serve its students and the community by meeting the skills needs in the economy and increasing the level of participation in third-level education and training, particularly in Dublin North-West and its environs.

The Institute says it does this:

- By achieving consistently high standards of relevance and quality in teaching, research, development and consultancy;
- By offering a welcoming and supportive environment to students from all educational and social backgrounds and to adults wishing to increase or update their level of technical skills.

In accordance with the original mission statement the Institute has established admissions and student support policies to ensure that a relatively high proportion of its students are non-standard entrants such as:

- Mature students;
- Applicants without Leaving Certificate qualifications who can meet entry requirements in other ways;
- Students with disabilities;
- Students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

Strategic overview

The Institute says that it is meeting its strategic objective of providing for the needs of the region, with some programmes having up to 80% of student intake either living or working in the local area. It has been noted that certain districts in ITB's catchment area were characterised by low participation rates in third level education and priority has been attached to developing foundation programmes and catering to demand from mature students who may not originally have completed second-level education.

The objectives in the initial strategic plan drafted (1999 to 2006) have now been delivered according to ITB. The programmes specified in that plan – business, languages, engineering and apprentice education – have all been implemented, with the addition of a social care programme, horticulture, digital media, sports management and coaching, social and community development and early childhood care and education. Over 70% of full and part-time students are resident or are employed in the region and more than 30% are mature students or from the non-CAO category¹⁷.

¹⁷ The higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland have delegated to the Central Applications Office (CAO) the task of processing centrally applications to their first year undergraduate programmes.

The Institute has developed a number of programmes for adult learners (learners not typically progressing from second level) to support back-to-education and upskilling needs. These continuing education programmes range from Higher Certificate, Level 6 to Master degree programmes at Level 9 on the NFQ. Efforts to develop and deliver joint education programmes with local industry have been particularly successful according to the Institute. Flexible modes of delivery, including on-line delivery, have been used effectively to accommodate production commitments in participating companies.

The current strategic plan (2006-2011) identified the current strategic priorities. These include:

- Priority 1: Achieve a more diverse student community and growth in student numbers;
- Priority 2: Develop the teaching role – same high standards, new styles and methods;
- Priority 3: Make ITB a vital resource for the region;
- Priority 4: Adopt high standards for the use of the Institute resources;
- Priority 5: Ensure cohesion in the work as a college community.

As the Institute takes stock of where it's at and begins to consider how to move forward, what emerges first, according to ITB, is that the Institute's mission remains as relevant and valid today as it was initially. This is true although the profile of the student has changed and as the national economic downturn takes hold, ITB considers the need for re-training and upskilling is becoming even more important. A desire to continue delivering upon that mission aligned with the Institute's belief in its continued relevance provides the impetus for the next stage of development according to ITB.

Approach to Education

ITB provides flexible third-level programmes designed to meet regional and national requirements with an emphasis on:

- Specialist higher education for leading-edge industries in the region;
- Upgrading of specialist technical/technological skills;
- Continuing education and the needs of mature students;
- In-service programmes, retraining and updating of skills;
- Special needs arising from educational disadvantage or disability.

Commitment to Lifelong Learning

ITB says that strong linkages have been forged with a targeted number of secondary schools and colleges of further education to maximise student progression opportunities. A Cisco Regional Academy¹⁸, established in 2002, provided an opportunity to develop relationships with colleges in the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) sector. This has significant potential to develop co-operative education and extend access to education and training in information technology.

¹⁸ Cisco Networking Academy is a global education program that teaches students how to design, build, troubleshoot, and secure computer networks for increased access to career and economic opportunities in communities around the world. Regional academies provide training and support to local academies.

The Institute says it is committed to lifelong learning and second-chance education and has developed an active adult continuing education programme. The ITB learning strategy is aimed at enabling students to update knowledge and skills in a rapidly changing working environment. Inherent in this approach ITB says is the essential attitudinal development for increasing motivation and for promoting self-management, critical analysis, decision-making, problem solving and entrepreneurship.

Commitment to the Community

In line with its commitment to community service, the Institute says it has developed and continues to develop close links with schools and other educational institutions, community and development organisations and industrial and commercial interests. For example, these links will encourage students to progress from second to third level and will help them to make a successful transition from the Institute to other educational institutions or to employment.

Commitment to Research

The Institute is developing research, development and consultancy programmes to further its educational and community development objectives. It is establishing strategic alliances with other educational institutions.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance procedures were initially agreed with HETAC in 2004.

The Institute first received delegation of authority to make awards from the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) in June 2006 for all programmes at Level 6 up to and including taught Master degree programmes at Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Since then, the Institute offers a broad range of academic programmes, and offers taught programmes mainly between NFQ Level 6 and 9.

The Institute does not currently hold Delegated Authority for research degree programmes at Level 9 or 10. The Institute has received approval from HETAC to carry out research at the Master degree Level 9 in the fields of Learning & Technology; Social Science; Informatics/Computing; Mechatronics; Electronic & Mechanical Engineering and Business. Approval has also been received for research at Doctoral degree (PhD), Level 10 in the fields of Informatics/Computing; Electronic & Mechanical Engineering; Mechatronics and Learning and Technology. Table 1 provides details on the current research degree activity in ITB.

Programmatic reviews¹⁹ commenced in January 2010 in the School of Informatics and Engineering and in the School of Business and Humanities. External panel visits for the programmatic reviews are scheduled for November and December 2010. The reports of the programmatic panel visits will be available in January 2011 and the response and proposed action to be taken by the Schools to the reports will be available for the Institutional Review panel when visiting the Institute in February 2011.

¹⁹ Programmatic review is a quality review process whereby a provider conducts a periodic (typically 5 years) critical evaluation of its programmes, or all programmes within a unit/department or school. Programmatic review is required for revalidation of all programmes.

Table 1: Capacity and scale: ITB in numbers

Student numbers 09/10:	Total 2,910 (2096 FTE)	Full-time 1,569	Part-time 1,341
First year intake 09/10:	Standard (Leaving Certificate) 59%; Non standard (Mature; FETAC ; Medical/disadvantage) 41%		
Origin of FT 1 st years 09/10	From Dublin 15 24%; From Dublin 1 to 24 82%; From Leinster 93%		

FT student 09/10	School of Business & Humanities		School of Informatics & Engineering	
	Business	Humanities	Informatics	Engineering
NFQ Level 6	49		41	15
NFQ Level 7	268	165	163	219
NFQ Level 8	268	223	98	52
NFQ Level 9 (taught)	7			

NFQ Level 09/10	NFQ Level 6	NFQ Level 7	NFQ Level 8	NFQ Level 9 (taught)
	6.7%	51.9%	40.8%	0.6%

Gender analysis 09/10	Male %	Female %	Total full-time students 09/10
	57%	43%	1569

PT student 09/10	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9 (taught)
Business	140	34	16	
Humanities		29		17
Informatics	49		21	15
Engineering	23	69		
Professional	141	66		12
Apprenticeships	Phase 4 – 322; Phase 6 – 313		Total part-time students 1341 (including 635 apprentices)	
Other / Erasmus	52 / 23			

Graduate analysis	NFQ Level 5	NFQ Level 6	NFQ Level 7	NFQ Level 8	NFQ Level 9	Totals
2007	7	71	319	129	30	556
2008	9	98	278	130	9	524
2009	3	71	197	132	13	416

Postgraduate research	19 students currently engaged in research in Electronics & Mechanical Engineering, Mechatronics, Learning & Technology, Informatics/Computing and Business.
Learning and Innovation Centre (LINC)	# companies located in the LINC in the last 3 years: 12 # start-ups supported through the EPP in the last 2 years; 24 Total # supported through M50 EPP since 2001 : > 150 # potential start-ups supported through the Enterprise Start Programme: 35 # spin-outs: 1 formed from graduates of the college R&D funding; €5,534,694 [including SIF funding of 876,947 euro]
Average yearly completion rate	2006/07 First year 65% Later years 84% 2007/08 First year 59% Later years 79% 2008/09 First year 61% Later years 81%
Staff numbers 09/10	Total 249 (217 FTE); Academic 158 (134 FTE); Tech/Admin 91 (83 FTE)
Financial data 2008/09:	Expenditure: Pay €14m; Expenditure: Non Pay €7,5m; Income: State grant €12m
International students	14% of all students born outside Ireland Small number of International students recruited annually

Student experience

The learning strategy of the Institute is aimed at guiding students towards the levels of knowledge and skills acquisition for an evolving working life. Inherent in this approach is the essential attitudinal development for increasing motivation and for promoting self-management, critical analysis, decision-making, problem solving and entrepreneurship.

The requirement in the Strategic Plan 2006-2011 to provide a supportive learning environment and attain high quality standards in teaching proved to be complimentary in practice. A range of teaching methodologies and programme supports are employed by ITB. The Institute says this has improved student retention and achievement. In developing such initiatives, an alliance with the National Learning Network²⁰ and their presence on the ITB campus has been of particular assistance.

Research and Innovation

The research community at ITB is involved collaboratively with research projects with industry, community organisations and different agencies in the locality. Some of these include: National Road Authority; IBM; Intel; Havoc; Wavebob Ltd.; ESB; Health Service Executive; SMEs on the Innovation Voucher scheme²¹. Funding for these collaborations has been secured from a range of sources, including the Technological Sector Postgraduate R&D Skills Training Programme; Enterprise Ireland's Innovation Partnership scheme where the Institute has teamed up with local companies to conduct R&D to improve processes and procedures; Enterprise Ireland's Proof Of Concept funding which allows the development of a possible commercial activity; Enterprise Ireland's Innovation Voucher Scheme for linking SMEs with 3rd level institutions; the Embark Initiative; the Higher Education Authority; Leonardo da Vinci programs. ITB says it has been very successful in linking with SMEs through the Enterprise Ireland Innovation Scheme which allows enterprises to link with 3rd level Institutions to enable the enterprise to get some innovative research and development completed for the growth of their business.

The LINC (Learning and Innovation Centre) is ITB's tangible link between the Institute and the Business Community making accessible the skills and expertise of the Institute to the business community in a professional and cost effective manner. The Institute says it is a forum of excellence for innovation, creativity, research and enterprise focused on developing high-technology knowledge based companies.

The key activities of the LINC are:

- Facilities, training and support for start up of high growth knowledge based businesses which may develop from research projects, from within the graduate cohort or are otherwise linked to the Institute.
- Facilities and support for Research and Development activity within the Institute and in particular applied research projects which will be carried out in collaboration between the Schools and industry partners.
- Training, consultancy and other supports such as Innovation Vouchers to improve the competitiveness of SME's in the region in areas which are identified as strategic competencies.

²⁰ National Learning Network is Ireland's largest non-Government training organisation with centres in almost every county in Ireland.

²¹ <http://www.innovationvouchers.ie/>

Recent activities

The following is a selection of titles of reports of activities provided by ITB which cover the past two academic years, which provide an indication of activities and events which involve the Institute. Full details are available on [www.itb.ie/news & events](http://www.itb.ie/news&events)

- Former SR-Technics workers retrain with ITB
- ITB College of Choice for D15 students
- Young Horticulturist of the Year 2009 is an ITB student
- ITB Student wins RDS Horticulture Student of the Year Award 2009
- Dublin's Most Innovative Incubation Centre Announced
- Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation presents IT Blanchardstown with the Inaugural iFactor Award
- ITB celebrates 10 years with Community Day
- Institute of Technology project with Daughters of Charity service
- ITB receives over 225K from Dormant Accounts to fund Access programmes
- A Flavour of ITB' Raises Funds for Hospice and Laura Lynn Foundation
- Science of the Circus at ITB –a Day to 10 year olds
- Cando Group Partnership with ITB by Denise Lyons, ITB Department of Humanities
- ITB Student is Powerlifting World Champion
- Two students from the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) have been chosen to showcase their garden designs at Bloom
- ITB participates in trade mission to China
- ITB runner-up in Sunday Times University Guide

Further information

Further details relating to Institute activities are available at www.itb.ie

Section 3. Institution's Team

Full Legal Name	Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
Address	Blanchardstown Road North, Dublin 15.
Telephone	01-8851000
Fax	01-8851001
Web address	www.itb.ie
President	Dr. Mary Meaney
Registrar	Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan
Head of Development	Mr. Tom Doyle
Head of School of Informatics and Engineering	Dr. Larry McNutt
Head of School of Business and Humanities	Mr. Pat O'Connor
Secretary/Financial Controller	Ms. Eileen Quinn
Liaison for Institute Review	Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan. Phone 01-8851040; 0872329979. E mail: diarmuid.ocallaghan@itb.ie
Institute Review Project Manager	Mr. Damian Cox. Phone: 01-8851113. Email: damian.cox@itb.ie

Institute Review Project Steering Committee

Dr Mary Meaney	President and Chair
Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan	Registrar and working group convenor
Mr. Tom Doyle	Head of Development and working group convenor
Mr. Damian Cox	Institute Review Project Manager and working group convenor
Ms Mairead Murphy	Marketing Manager and working group convenor
Dr. Larry McNutt	Head of School
Mr. Pat O'Connor	Head of School
Ms. Eileen Quinn	Secretary/Financial Controller
Mr. Niall Campbell	Senior Lecturer
Mr. Brian Watters	Senior Lecturer
Mr. Mark Cummins	Staff member and Trade Union representative
Ms. Ann Brady	Staff member and Trade Union representative
Mr. Ray Andrews	Staff member and Trade Union representative
Mr. Denis Murphy	Staff member and Trade Union representative
Ms. Louise Dwyer	Students' Union President
Ms. Grace Fitzpatrick	Intern and Graduate
Ms. Margaret Davis	Administrative support

Section 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 ITB

- *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 ITB

ITB would like to draw to the attention of the panel that the positioning of the Institute within the higher education and training provision in the local catchment area has remained true to the original mission on its establishment. Certain districts in ITB's catchment area were characterised by low participation rates in third level education and priority has always been attached to catering to demand from mature learners who may not originally have completed second-level education. ITB has remained constant in terms of the overall institutional response to the challenge involved in the delivery of academic programmes that take account of this particular profile of learners.

The Institute welcomes the panel's view on the continued relevance of the original ITB mission notwithstanding the changes that may occur in higher education following the publication of the Higher Education Strategy Report.

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 Assurance. 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 ITB

- None

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 has produced guidelines in relation to this. 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 ITB

Lifelong learning

The Institute considers that it has captured and enhanced its overall approach to addressing the needs of lifelong learners which it defines as those learners seeking:

- specialist higher education for leading-edge industries in the region;
- upgrading of specialist technical/technological skills;
- continuing education (mature learners);
- in-service programmes, retraining and updating of skills.

It also includes learners with special needs arising from educational disadvantage or disability.

The Institute welcomes the panel's view on the success of this approach and how the Institute can further enhance this approach to broadening access to lifelong learners.

Objective 5: To evaluate the operation and management of Delegated Authority where it has been granted

This objective is to evaluate the operation and management of Delegated Authority (where applicable) for both taught and research programmes. The Institutional Review process will satisfy the statutory requirement for the review of Delegated Authority for recognised institutions, once Objective 5 of the Institutional Review process is included in the Terms of Reference. The majority of the Delegated Authority criteria are covered under the objectives of Institutional Review. Additional criteria which relate specifically to the operation of Delegated Authority are included in the Supplementary Guidelines and should be addressed in the institution's submission. Institutional Review will cover all areas for which (Institution) has Delegated Authority (both taught and research).

ITB received Delegated Authority to make awards up to and including Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications for all taught programmes in June 2006.

Special considerations for ITB

- None

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 ITB

- None

Section 5. Institution-specific objectives

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

Additional Institutional Objectives

- None

Section 6. Schedule for Institute of Technology Blanchardstown

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

1. HETAC sets the Terms of Reference following consultation with the 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 ITB 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	February 2010	Institute indicates timeframe for Institutional Review as per overall HETAC schedule of reviews
From 6 months before panel visit	October 2010	Terms of Reference set following consultation with Institute and post on HETAC website
3 to 6 months before panel visit	September- November 2010	Institute undertakes self study process and produces self evaluation report
Approx. 8 weeks before site visit	10 December 2010	Submission of Self Evaluation Report (SER) and other supporting documentation
1 week following receipt of SER	17 December 2010	HETAC Desk based review of SER and feedback to Institute (one week after submission)
Approx. 3 weeks before site visit	3 February 2011	Advance Meeting between Chair, Secretary and Institute
Panel Visit	21-23 February 2011	Site visit by external peer review panel (3 days approximately as determined by TOR) Preliminary (oral) feedback on findings
Approx. 12 weeks after site visit	<i>Estimated:</i> 23 May 2011 <i>Actual:</i> 7 June 2011	Draft report on findings of panel sent by HETAC to Institute for factual accuracy
Usually 4 days following this	20 June 2011	Final report on findings of panel sent by HETAC to Institute
6 weeks following receipt of final report	12 September 2011	Response by Institution to HETAC including plan with timeframe for implementation of any changes
Next available HETAC Academic Committee meeting	17 October 2011	Consideration of report and institutional response by HETAC Academic Committee. Publication of report, response and SER on website once adopted
12 months after adoption	October 2012	Follow up report by Institute to HETAC on implementation of recommendations

Appendix B Panel Membership

Chairperson

Prof. Graham Chesters

Independent Educational Consultant (Higher Education), formerly with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

Secretary

Mr. Gordon Clark

Formerly of the European Commission, responsible in the DG Education and Culture for the EU's lifelong learning policy and strategic framework for cooperation supporting national reforms in education and training

Ms. Birgit Hanny

Deputy Managing Director of ASIIN (Accreditation Agency for Study Programs in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics) in Düsseldorf, Germany

Mr. Henning Detleff

Responsible for Higher Education Policy at the BDA Confederation of German Employers' Associations in Berlin, Germany

Ms. Linda Kelly

Former Equality Officer at USI (Union of Students in Ireland), currently working as Project Assistant with AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access & Disability

Mr. Terry Twomey

Academic Registrar of Limerick Institute of Technology

Appendix C Supporting documentation issued by ITB with the SER

1. Report of review of effectiveness of quality assurance procedures
2. Selection of quality assurance policies and procedures
3. Institute strategic plan 2006-2011
4. Full-time prospectus 2011/2012
5. Part-time prospectus 2010/2011
6. Student handbook 2010/2011
7. Full-time undergraduate programmes summary information 2011/2012
8. Teaching and Learning Innovations, ITB June 2010

Appendix D Documentation requested by the panel

Following the advance meeting on 3 February 2011 the panel requested the following from ITB:

Documentation to be provided before the site visit

1. Summary of revisions made to the Quality Manual since March 2006
2. Detailed organisation chart – with names on each position
3. Extract the HEA evaluation of Entrepreneurship and Transition projects (pages 43+44)
4. Latest evaluations of and follow-up action reports on support functions (i.e. estate management, information technology, student services, library)
5. (2009) Report on Student Services at ITB by Martin Duffy, ASA Consulting and a summary of ITB's actions in response to the report.
6. 2008 and 2009 financial statements and audit reports
7. Staff training and development policy
8. Staff training and development procedure
9. Examples of TMG team development plans linked through departmental team plans to individual PDPs – as discussed at the advance meeting
10. Surveys of students by lecturer and by department additional forms or blank forms.
11. Summary document on the range of alternative mechanisms in place to supplement student feedback in general e.g. focus groups with part-time learners for consideration by the panel
12. Minutes of Academic Council and of its sub-committees 2008/2009/2010
13. Strategic collaboration arrangements – summary documentation that provides greater detail around strategic alliances, partnerships and collaboration with other education and training institutions HEIs – Further education institutions etc.
14. Lifelong Learning – summary document that will provide a coherent picture of how the Institute is dealing with access, retention, transfer and progression, including upskilling and reskilling. This should include any quantitative data or analysis on retention and any statistics/studies around benchmarking on access, retention, transfer and progression, if available.
15. Data on the extent of improvement in access to HE (or to ITB specifically) of students from local disadvantaged districts or schools
16. Policy document on prior experiential learning
17. Data on the actual use of APEL – case study – in advance to Secretary (please supply a list of the volume, type and outcome of other similar case studies)
18. Delegated Authority - additional information on Delegated Authority to include clarity on the committee/sub committee structures for ITB and for QA in particular – indicating roles and responsibilities of the key QA functions throughout the institution.

Documentation to be available on-site for panel members

19. Some hard-copy programme documentation to be available on site for the following programmes:
 - Bachelor of Business (Hons) in international business (Level 8)
 - Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Social and Community Development (Level 8)
 - Higher Certificate in Business (Level 6)

- Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Electrical and Control Technology (Level 7)
- Higher Diploma in Science in Computing (Level 8)
- Master of Science in Technology Entrepreneurship (Level 9) (part-time)
- One Minor Award
- One Special Purpose Award

The documentation should include, for example – for each programme:

Programme validation documentation, including programme/ course handbook

Minutes of course committees - 2008/2009/2010

Follow up issues relating to student input - 2008/2009/2010

External Examiner reports 2008/2009/2010 and documentation relating to follow-up by ITB on the reports

Programme review documentation

Programme evaluation forms/ reports of evaluation results

Staff qualifications – summary

Other appropriate QA documentation indicating follow-through of issues raised

Sample exam Board minutes

20. Accreditation reports on programmes produced by other third parties
21. Examples of completed documentation for Research degree students (operation of the procedures for admission, project approval, selection of supervisory team, reporting system, appointment of examining board, procedures for viva, possible recommendations from the examining board)
22. List of current research degree topics, supervisors and summary qualifications of supervisors (including number of completions at doctoral level)
23. Information on the number and nature of appeals taken through the Examination and Board of Appeal procedure

Appendix E Glossary of documentation provided to the panel at the site visit

Documentation as requested by the panel following advance meeting

Programme documentation for:

Higher Certificate in Business
Bachelor of Business (Honours) in International Business
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social and Community Development
Master of Science in Technology Entrepreneurship
Master of Science in Computing
Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Electrical and Control Technology
Higher Diploma in Science in Computing
Certificate in Club Management (Minor award)
Certificate in Frontline Management (Special purpose award)

Information provided to the panel in respect of each of the objectives of Institutional Review:

Objective 1: Public Confidence

1. Making education accessible. Strategic plan 2006-2011. ITB
2. SZRSCNT output for Y1 report from Banner (ITB student record database)
3. SZRSCNT from Banner.
4. ITB Appropriate Behaviour Charter (4RHR03) (2008)
5. Submission on Accreditation for Associate Engineer to Engineers Ireland (22nd October 2009)
6. Report of focus group discussions held on behalf of ITB November 2010. Language.
7. Invitation - Conferring of Awards 2010
8. Conferring of Awards Booklets 2010, 2009, 2008 & 2007
9. Alumni - Celebration Edition
10. ITB Bulletin (December 2003)
11. ITB Calendar 2010
12. LINC, Launch of the LINC
13. Accelerated Technician Courses June 2000
14. Part-time courses, 2000-2001
15. Continuing Education Programme, 2001-2002
16. Life: Continuing Education Prospectus 2008/2009 - 2002/2003
17. New Horizons, Part-Time Prospectus, 2009/2010 & 2010/2011
18. Prospectuses for 1999-2000, 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003
19. The Next Step, Full Time Prospectus, 2011/2012 - 2003/2004
20. Student Handbook, 2010/2011 - 2000/2001
21. ITB, Report on Focus Group Discussions held on ITB Thursday, 18 June 2009
22. Marketing and Development Unit, Induction, January 2009
23. ITB Marketing Plan Academic Year, 2007/2008
24. Press coverage, Jan 2004 - Dec 2004, Jan 2005 - Dec 2005, Jan 2006 - Dec 2006
25. Review of the Recruitment and Selection Process within the Institutes of Technology, IOTI, 2008
26. Community Voice Supplement; ITB Celebrating 10 Years.
27. The Irish Times; Bubble Show photo, Front page.
28. The Sunday Times; University Guide 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010
29. Press Clippings

Objective 2: Strategic Planning and Governance

1. HEA, National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, <http://www.heai.ie/en/node/1303>
2. Report of SIF Evaluation. Gordon Davis. HEA February 2010.
3. Blanchardstown Regional Technical College report of the strategic planning group. Presented to the Minister for Education and Science, December 2007. Unpublished.
4. Building Ireland's Smart Economy – A framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal Department of An Taoiseach (2009) and Making it Happen- Growing Enterprise in Ireland Forfas (2010).
5. Economist Intelligence Unit Report (2008) [http://www.nmc.org/pdf/Future-of-Higher-Education-\(NMC\).pdf](http://www.nmc.org/pdf/Future-of-Higher-Education-(NMC).pdf)
6. Lead or Follow? Prospectus Report on Future of Higher Education Sector. November 2007.
7. Investing in Global Relations-Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010-2015 – <http://www.educationireland.com/why-ireland/publications/37-global-report-sept-2010.html>
8. ITB Strategic Priority 1
9. ITB, Development Plan, Ahrends Burton & Koraleck Architects, January 1999.
10. Strategy Statement, Working Draft - Confidential, 1998.
11. The University Challenged: A Review of International Trends and issues with Particular Reference to Ireland, Malcolm Skilbeck.
12. Report of the Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education (Based on a Study of Needs to the Year 2015), June 1995.
13. Technology University of Dublin; TU-D.
14. A University Benchmarking Handbook, Benchmarking in European Higher Education, November 2010.
15. Empowering Staff Through Institute Planning, IOTI.
16. Research Profile (Evidence of Research) 2 Files
17. Application for approval to submit research degrees at PhD (NFQ Level 10) in Informatics and in Engineering on a case-by-case basis.
18. The LINC Blog
19. The LINC Launch & Jumpstart 2010
20. Reinventing the Civic University, Professor Emeritus John Goddard (Sept 2009)
21. Industry Training: IP & Networking Training Programmes
22. Industry Training: IT Certification Training Programmes
23. SIF 2 Project: Flexible Learning ITB Report 2009-2010
24. SIF: Learning Styles Theme Final Report; Learning Styles Sub Theme, Project Report: 2007-9
25. Risk Register
26. Developing alternative perspectives for quality in higher education, G. Srikanthan & J. Dalrymple
27. Innovation Vouchers
28. Research Project: Innovation Partnership with Wavebob
29. AIB Innovation Fund
30. Damovo Ireland
31. Dublin Airport Authority
32. Incubation
33. Enterprise Platform Program

Objective 3: Quality Assurance

1. Review of effectiveness of Institute quality assurance procedures. ITB. November 2010.
2. Institute review 2010. Human Resources overview 2005-2010. ITB Human Resources Manager November 2010.

3. School of Business and Humanities, Programmatic Review 2010, Volumes 1 & 2, School and Department Overview
4. School of Informatics and Engineering Programmatic Review 2010, School Overview and Department of Informatics Overview
5. School of Informatics and Engineering Programmatic Review 2010, Department of Informatics Programme Review and Centre for Disciplinary Studies Programme Review
6. School of Informatics and Engineering Programmatic Review 2010, Centre for Disciplinary Studies Overview and Department of Engineering and Trades Overview
7. School of Informatics and Engineering Programmatic Review 2010, Department of Engineering and Trades Programme Review
8. Delegation of Authority Submission (January 2006)
9. Quality Assurance Policies & Procedures (December 2010)
10. Institutional Review - Self Evaluation Report (December 2010)
11. Human Resources - Recruitment & Selection Evidence
12. Human Resources - Training Documents
13. Learner Support Documentation

Objective 4: Qualifications Framework, Access, Transfer and Progression

1. A social, economic and demographic profile of Blanchardstown. Ryan, C., Blanchardstown Area Partnership. September 2004.
2. A guide to education supports available in Blanchardstown D 15. ITB, October 2010.
3. Completion rates for students taking full-time programmes of study in Institutes of Technology. Circa May 2006.
4. A study of progression in Irish higher education. HEA October 2010.
5. What do Graduates do? The Class of 2008, HEA.
6. ITB 2010 progress report to HEA on equality of access and lifelong learning.
7. Making education accessible. Strategic plan 2006-2011. Institute of Technology Blanchardstown.
8. (2010) Access initiatives at ITB funded by Dormant Accounts
9. (2010) Teaching and Learning Innovations at ITB
10. (2010) Statistics on NLN Engagement with ITB Students
11. Enterprise Strategy Group Ahead of the Curve Forfas Secretariat Wilton House <http://www.forfas.ie/publication/search.jsp?ft=/publications/2004/Title,819,en.php>
12. Securing a sustainable Future for Higher Education in England. Lord Browne of Madingley (2010) <http://hereview.independent.gov.uk/hereview/report/>
13. Lead or Follow? Prospectus Report on Future of Higher Education Sector. November 2007.
14. Minutes of Academic Council Meeting, Wednesday 10th February 2010.
15. Supplementary material for HEA, Evaluation of SIF Cycle 1 Programme Project start to October 2009, ContinueIT Project.
16. eye on ITB, Lin Newsletter, October 2009
17. ITB Journal, The academic journal of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown. Issue 2, December 2000.
18. Cultural Diversity in Schools, Challenges and Opportunities for Irish Education.
19. Seeing Ahead: Executive Summary. A Study of Factors Affecting Blind and Vision Impaired Students going on to Higher Education
20. Final Report PACTS v17.02.06
21. National Learning Network, Assessment Service, YouthReach Training.
22. National Learning Network, Assessment Service Follow up Evaluation on YouthReach Training.
23. Learning Styles Sub Theme: ContinueIT: Strategic Innovation fund, Project Report: 2007-2009.

24. Higher Education, Key Facts and Figures 2009/2010. HEA.
25. Department of Lifelong Learning and Outreach, University of Limerick, Academic Year 2009/2010.
26. Discipline Choices and Trends for High Points CAO Acceptors 2006, HEA.
27. A Good Practice Guide: Access and Achievement Supports, Planning and Implementing Education Initiatives to Address Educational Disadvantage.
28. A Good Practice Guide: Further and Third Level Education Supports, Planning and Implementing Education Initiatives to Address Educational Disadvantage.
29. Power, Privilege and Points, The Choices and Challenges of Third Level Access in Dublin.
30. Motivating Learners Through Creative Approaches to Assessment, Lin 2009.
31. Mechatronic Maintenance Syllabus, MoFIT, December 2006.
32. Mutual Recognition, Mobility and Progression of Mechatronics Technicians as an occupation in a knowledge based Europe, MoFIT, December 2006.
33. Managing Diversity in the Workplace, Focusing on the Employment of Migrant Workers.
34. Perceptions of Migrants and their Impact on the Blanchardstown area: Local Views, 2009, Brid Ni Chonail.
35. Review of National Policies for Education: Review of Higher Education in Ireland, Examiners Report. Education Committee 2004.
36. Education for Employment Report on Partner Organisations Experiences, E4 Project Education for Employment, December 2007.
37. Teaching and Learning in Further and Higher Education: A Handbook by the Education for Employment Project.
38. CDVEC; Study Skills Manual, National Learning Network.
39. CDVEC Disability; Support Service, Principals Manual.
40. ITB - Flexible Learning 2011
41. Student Information Desk (SID)
42. Retention Initiative - Postcard to student
43. Progression from FETAC Level 5 Certificates and Level 6 Advanced Certificates to HE Courses 2011
44. Lifelong Learning - Summary Document February 2011
45. IOTT - Innovative Research Solutions with Industry
46. SIF: Learning Styles Theme Final Report. Learning Styles Sub Theme ContinueIT: SIF (2007-2009)
47. Audit Report - Admissions - June 2010

Objective 5: Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

1. Review of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures at ITB. November 2010.
2. Certificates of Approval
3. Sample Parchment
4. Order of Council
5. KPI 1 & 2, FAS Memorandum of Understanding, Qualification (Education and Training Act)

Appreciative Inquiry

(Confidential Material Available on Request)

1. Management feedback
2. Student feedback
3. Staff feedback
4. Feedback on strategy piece of self-evaluation report
5. Institutional Review - A Personal Reflection
6. Communications Overview

7. ITB - Student Experience – UnCovered
8. A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry. David L. Copperrider & Diana Whitney

Appendix F Agenda for Site Visit

**Agenda for Institutional Review of
 Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
 21-23 February 2011**

Prof. Graham Chesters, Review Chairperson, to chair all plenary sessions.

The format of each session is a discussion in question and answer format unless otherwise indicated.

Sunday evening 20/02/11	5.00pm- 8.00pm - Panel Induction and planning in Crowne Plaza Hotel, Blanchardstown (private meeting for panel)
Day One Monday 21/02/11	<p>Private meeting of panel and briefing session at institution</p> <p>8.30am-12.00pm - Panel Induction (continued) and panel planning and review of documentation provided by the Institute.</p> <p>12.00pm -1.00pm Lunch at institution– Panel private lunch and opportunity for panel members to continue review of supplementary evidence – documentation.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>1.00pm – 1.30pm – Session 1 Brief presentation by President (10 mins) and panel questions</p> <p>1.30pm – 2.30pm – Session 2 Objective 2 Strategic planning and governance; -an overview of the Institute and the Institutional Review self study process. Links between internal reflection and strategic planning decision making. This meeting will involve setting the scene - Institution overview, context, mission, and vision. Clarification on structure and roles and overall activities the Institute is engaged in. Environmental factors including competitive position.</p> <p>2.30pm- 2.45pm coffee break and panel discussion</p> <p>2.45pm - 3.45pm – Session 3 Objective 1 - Public confidence – Institutional review self study process- demonstrating evidence of public confidence in the quality of education and training and standards of awards made. Information provided by the Institute. Overall approach taken to self study for Institutional Review (outline of self study process etc).</p> <p>3.45pm – 4.00pm coffee break and panel discussion</p> <p>4.00pm- 5.30pm – Session 4 Objective 3 : Quality Assurance (Seven Elements Review): Overview of QA System - Presentation by Registrar on the overview of the Quality Assurance System/structures (10 mins) The “seven elements” covered by the European guidelines and the stage of development of the Institute’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)- committee linkage – Institute QA recommendations for enhancement plan – summary changes to the QA procedures over the last 5 years.</p> <p>5.30pm – 6.00pm Private meeting of panel</p>

<p>Day Two Tuesday 22/02/11</p>	<p><u>All meetings take place at the Institute</u></p> <p>9.00am – 10.00am - Session 5 Objective 3: Quality Assurance continued (Seven Elements Review): Overview of QA System - Committee staff The “seven elements” covered by the European Standards and Guidelines. 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>10.00am – 10.15am Coffee break and private panel discussion</p> <p>10.15am - 11.15am - Session 6 Objective 3 - Meeting with Learner Support/ Service Staff / Administrative Staff on the QA seven elements as appropriate. Including academic English class, Maths tutorials etc.</p> <p>11.15am – 11.30am Coffee break and panel discussion</p> <p>11.30am - 12.45pm - Session 7 Objective 3: Quality Assurance continued (Seven Elements Review): Overview of QA System – Non Committee staff The “seven elements” covered by the European Standards and Guidelines. 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>12.45pm – 1.30pm private lunch for panel (at institution) - panel discussion and review of documentation</p>
	<p>1.30pm – 2.30pm - Session 8 (2 parallel sessions) Meeting with learners (student union representatives), Graduates and Erasmus learners representing a variety of students across the schools and programme levels including postgraduate and non-standard students.</p> <p>2.30pm- 2.45pm- Coffee break and panel discussion</p> <p>2.45pm -3.45pm – Session 9 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; recognition of prior learning (RPL). Including special consideration on Lifelong learning.</p> <p>3.45pm–4.30pm – Session 10 (2 parallel sessions) Meeting with Stakeholders, including community/educational and industry reps.</p> <p>4.30pm- 5.00pm- Coffee break and panel discussion</p> <p>5.00pm–5.30pm - Session 11 Programme session – Bachelor of Business (Honours)</p> <p>5.30pm - 6.30pm Private meeting of panel – feedback and preparation and review of documentation.</p>

Wednesday 23/02/11	<p><u>All meetings take place at the Institute</u></p> <p>9.00am-10.00am - Session 12 Objective 5: Operation of Delegated Authority - operation and management of DA.</p> <p>10.00am- 10.15am – Panel meeting and coffee</p> <p>10.15am – 10.55am – Session 13 Teaching and Learning</p> <p>10.55am - 12.00pm - Clarification meeting with Institute staff on any outstanding issues/ documentation required.</p> <p>12.00pm- 1.00pm – Review of documentation</p>
	<p>1.00pm – 1.30pm Private lunch for panel (at institution)</p> <p>1.30pm- 3.15pm - Private meeting of panel to consider findings and recommendations</p> <p>3.15pm – 3.30pm Coffee break</p> <p>3.30pm – 3.45pm - Meeting with President, Registrar (and institution’s team) to provide preliminary feedback on findings and recommendations</p>

Appendix G List of People met by the Panel

Monday 21 February 2011

1.00pm – 1.30pm Brief presentation by President

Mary Meaney (President)

1.30pm – 2.30pm Objective 2- Strategic planning and governance

Mary Meaney (President)

Diarmuid O'Callaghan (Registrar)

Eileen Quinn (Secretary/Financial Controller)

Larry McNutt (Head of School)

Pat O'Connor (Head of School)

Paddy Bowler (Governing Body & IR GB steering group)

Joan Maher (Governing Body)

Malachy Buckeridge (Governing Body)

2.45pm - 3.45pm Objective 1 - Public confidence

Mary Meaney (President)

Diarmuid O'Callaghan (Registrar)

Eileen Quinn (Secretary/Financial Controller)

Larry McNutt (Head of School)

Pat O'Connor (Head of School)

Cathy Brennan (Human Resources Manager)

Brian Nolan (Head of Department)

Celesta McCann James (Head of Department)

Mairead Murphy (Marketing Manager)

Amanda Brennan (Finance Manager)

4.00pm- 5.30pm Objective 3 - Quality Assurance (Seven Elements Review): Overview of QA System

Diarmuid O'Callaghan (Registrar)

Larry McNutt (Head of School)

Pat O'Connor (Head of School)

Richard Gallery (Head of Department)

Bronagh Elliott (Academic Administration and Student Affairs manager)

Celesta McCann James (Head of Department)

Michael Keane (Quality Assurance Officer)

Dave Carroll (Academic staff and QA sc of Academic Council)

Denise Lyons (Academic staff and QA sc of Academic Council)

Louise Dwyer (SU President)

Tuesday 22 February 2011

9.00am – 10.00am Objective 3- Quality Assurance continued - Committee staff

Brian Watters (Senior Lecturer)

Catherine Deegan (Senior Lecturer)

Fiona Malone (Senior Lecturer)

Claire Quigley (LINC)

Olivia Edge (Academic staff and QA working group)

Arnulf Horn (Academic staff and course co-ordinator)
Georgina Lawlor (Academic staff and course co-ordinator)
Anthony McGovern (student and QA working group)
Jason Darcy (Graduate, Intern and QA working group)
Tim O'Sullivan (Technician)

10.15am - 11.15am Objective 3- Quality Assurance continued - Meeting with Learner Support/ Service Staff / Administrative Staff

Suzanne Mc Carthy (National Learning Network)
Ronan Keaskin (Sports Officer)
Tom Egan (Senior Technical Officer - Electronics)
Aidín O'Sullivan (Librarian)
Marie Smyth (Institute Nurse)
Ger Quiney (Student Counsellor)
Cynthia O'Hea (Student Services Officer)
Fiona Canning (Erasmus Co-ordinator)
Olive McGivern (School administrator)
Maria Brown (Careers Development Officer)

11.30am - 12.45pm Objective 3- Quality Assurance continued -Non Committee staff

Liam Bolger (Lecturer Department of Business)
Dave Carroll (Lecturer Department of Engineering)
Joanie Cousins (Lecturer Department of Humanities)
Markus Hofmann (Lecturer Department of Informatics)
John Kilcoyne (Lecturer Department of Engineering)
Barry Kirkpatrick (Lecturer Department of Engineering)
Colm McGuinness (Lecturer Department of Business)
Orla McMahon (Lecturer Department of Informatics)
Sandra Ratchliffe (Lecturer Department of Humanities)
Joe Smith (Lecturer Department of Engineering)

1.30pm – 2.30pm Meeting with learners (student union representatives), Graduates and Erasmus learners (2 parallel sessions)

Group 1

Jason Aughney (year 3; award; Sports management; SU Entertainments)
Niamh O'Flaherty (year 4; award; Applied social studies)
Kostyantyn Ogorodnikov (Business; year 2)
Mingmar Sherpa (Business; year 2; International)
Elizabeth Simpson (Business and IT; year 2)
Lesley Nugent (Childcare; year 1; class rep)
Barry Mulvany (Engineering year 2; class rep)
Simon Murray (Engineering; postgraduate)
Fionn Ginnity (Mechatronics; year 3; award)
Vincent McGrane (Entrepreneurship; postgraduate)
Anne Lynch (Horticulture; year 3; award)
Nonsikelelo Phuti (Social care; year 4; award)
Natalia Lopez (Erasmus; Business)
Paul McCann (Graduate; Computing)
Eugene Gallagher (Graduate; Engineering)
Sean Haughey (Engineering, postgraduate)
Brendan Lawless (Computing)

Obinna Ezidinma (Engineering, 1st year)
Andrew Carroll (Computing, 3rd year)
Craig Ryan (International Business, 2nd year)

Group 2

Mark Sherwin (Business; year 1; SU Vice-President)
Diarmuid Byrne (Sports management ; year 3; award; SU Clubs and Socs)
Fiona McDonnell (Applied Social; year 4; award)
Elaine Jones (Business; year 2)
Aideen Hartnett (Business year 3; class rep)
David Heron (Business and IT ; year 3)
Brian Carpenter (Business; year 2; class rep)
Michael Brogan (Engineering; postgraduate)
Grace Dunne (Engineering; year 3; award; class rep)
Ethel Carolina Guzmán Daghero (Erasmus; business)
Paul Murray (Computing; year 2)
Jonas Fernandez (Postgraduate; Computing)
Rachel Mary Rooney (Horticulture; year 3; award)
Ann Murtagh (Computing; Graduate)
Andrew Hyland (Business; Graduate)
Ian Coleman (Engineering, Graduate)
Roy Hausmann (Business, Erasmus)
Aoife Fox (Computing, Graduate)

2.45pm - 3.45pm - Objective 4: Access, Transfer and Progression

Diarmuid O'Callaghan (Registrar)
Larry McNutt (Head of School)
Brian Nolan (Head of Department)
Patricia Doherty (Head of Department)
Tom Nolan (Academic staff)
Bronagh Elliott (Academic administration and student affairs manager)
Noeleen Johnson (Admissions officer)
Adrienne Harding (Access Officer)
Colm Dockrell (Teagasc and lecturer on programme)
Arnulf Horn (Academic staff)

3.45pm – 4.30pm Meeting with Stakeholders (2 parallel sessions)

Group 1

Sheila Porter (Intel)
Michelle Brady (St Philips Mountview)
Anita Sloane (Ladyswell)
Niall Murray (St Patrick's Corduff)
Kathy Maher (Coolmine)
Sarah Jane Gunn (Scoil Setanta)
Martin Lonergan (Dunboyne FE)
Malachy Buckeridge (Collaiste Íde)
Billy Burke (Foroige)
Fidelma O'Farrell (Business in the community)
Gillian Harty (Irish Computer Society)
Claire Fitzgerald (Alumni)

Group 2

Gerry Bedford (Iompar logistics)
Padraig O'Murchu (Intel)
Mary Bradshaw (Damovo)
Michael Brennan (FÁS)
George Howlett (Safefood 360)
Mick Byrne (Dublin Airport Authority)
Austin Hanley (Athlone Institute of Technology)
Declan Ryan (Fingal development board)
George Kelly (Enterprise Ireland)
Oishín Geoghegan (Fingal County Enterprise Board)
Edward O'Brien (Ericsson)
Siobhan Cleary (Daughters of Charity)

5.00pm – 5.30pm Programme session – for Bachelor of Business (Honours)

Patricia Doherty (Head of Department)
Tom McGrath (BN303 Course Coordinator)
Francis McGeough (BN403 Course Coordinator)
Fiona Malone (p/t Course Coordinator)
Anne Marie Nolan (Lecturer)
Paul Dervan (Lecturer)
Jessica Clarke (Graduate)
John Tuohy (F/T student)
Anthony McGovern (P/T student)
Malte Waechter (Erasmus student BN303/BN403)

Wednesday 23 February 2011

9.00am-10.00am Objective 5- Operation of Delegated Authority

Mary Meaney (President)
Diarmuid O'Callaghan (Registrar)
Eileen Quinn (Secretary/Financial Controller)
Larry McNutt (Head of School)
Brian Nolan (Head of Department)
Patricia Doherty (Head of Department)
Dave Curran (IT Manager)
Assumpta Harvey (LINC Manager)
Ruth Harris (Senior Lecturer)
Matt Smith (Senior Lecturer)

10.15am – 10.55am – Teaching and Learning

- Learning Styles (Geraldine Gray)
- Moodle (Daniel McSweeney)
- Problem-based learning (Hugh McCabe)
- Use of Blogs (Niamh O'Hora)
- Language learning (Mary Ann Kenny & Nathalie Cazaux)
- On-line Mechatronics programme (Niall Campbell)
- Drop-in clinics (Damian Cox)

Appendix H ITB Review of QA Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures were considered as part of the *Review of the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures at the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown* undertaken by ITB in November 2010 in preparation for the Institutional Review.

The quality assurance documentation system of the Institute is structured in four levels:

Level 1

-includes the Institute quality manual. This document includes reference to the Institute mission, vision, values and key publications.

- 1QM01 Quality manual
- 1QM02 Charter of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown

Level 2

- includes a range of management procedures. These address issues that apply across the Institute.

- 2MP01 Design and development of new academic courses
- 2MP04 Staff training and development policy
- 2MP09 Evaluation of the effectiveness of Institute academic quality assurance policies and procedures
- 2MP15 Monitoring and evaluation of academic programmes
- 2MP16 Evaluation of facilities and services involved in delivery of academic programmes
- 2MP17 Roles and responsibilities of external experts on validation and review panels
- 2MP18 Equal access and participation policy
- 2MP19 Research policy and strategy
- 2MP20 Teaching and learning policies and principles
- 2MP23 Intellectual property policy and procedures
- 2MP24 Policy relating to approval of students for participation in environments with children and vulnerable adults
- 2MP26 Website development policy for www.itb.ie

Level 3

- includes a range of operational procedures. These apply to activities of specific sections of the Institute. Documents are categorised into sub-sections starting with alphabetic codes as listed below followed by a sequence number.

<i>AD Admissions</i>	<i>RD Research and development</i>
<i>AC Accreditation</i>	<i>SS Student services</i>
<i>AS Assessment</i>	<i>LB Library</i>
<i>CD Course delivery</i>	<i>IT Information technology</i>
<i>GB Governing Body & Academic Council</i>	<i>HS Health and safety</i>
<i>FI Finance</i>	<i>GA General administration</i>
<i>HR Human resources</i>	<i>EM Estate management</i>

- 3AC05 Policy and procedure for proposal, development and validation of minor, supplemental and special purpose award types
- 3AD06 Exemptions from modules based on prior certified or experiential learning
- 3AD07 Policy document on prior experiential learning
- 3AD08 Admissions policy
- 3AD12 Academic programme fees 2010-2011

3AD15	Procedure for vetting students for placement in environments with children or vulnerable adults
3AS04	Examinations: Student information
3AS05	Examination regulations
3AS06	Marks and standards for HETAC accredited courses and FETAC foundation certificate
3AS08	Institute policy on plagiarism in assignments and examinations
3AS09	External examiners and reporting arrangements
3AS10	Examination script inspection and result recheck and appeals procedure
3AS15	Operating procedures for examination boards
3CD05	Course board policy and procedures
3CD06	Course monitoring policy and procedure
3CD09	Policy on consultation with secondary providers of educational courses
3GA07	Record retention policy
3GB05	Distribution of charge to defray the costs of registration, examinations and student services
3GB13	Academic Council and Academic Council subcommittees terms of reference
3GB16	Internal audit charter
3HR14	Equality policy
3HR24	ITB customer service charter January 2006
3HR29	Staff training and development procedure
3IT08	Electronic mail usage policy
3IT13	Computer acceptable usage policy
3LB01	Library usage policy
3RD01	Research ethics and code of good research practice
3SS03	Student charter
3SS04	Student disciplinary procedures
3SS05	Policy on sexual harassment and bullying of students in the Institute
3SS09	Student appeals board

Level 4

- includes a range of forms, records and minutes. Documents are categorised into a range of sub-sections starting with F (for form) R (for record) or M for minute) followed by an alphabetic codes as listed above, followed by a sequence number.

4FAD11	Application to progress with less than 60 credits and/or GPA less than 2.00
4FAD17	Application for ethical clearance of a project
4FAD22	Application form for Garda vetting
4RAS04	Grade point average (GPA) calculations
4RAS09	Schedule for examination board meetings for programmes accredited by ITB, HETAC and FETAC
4RAS10	External examiners list 2010-2011
4FCD06	QA1: Institute of Technology survey of students by lecturer
4FCD08	QA3: Institute of Technology survey of students by department
4FMP01	New course proposal outline form
4RAD04	Decisions of admissions subcommittee of Academic Council on non-standard entry
4RCD02	Approved course schedule
4RMP02	New course proposal template and module design guidelines