Professional Body survey:

An initial look at the landscape of professional accreditation in Ireland for all public and private Higher Education Institutions

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PARN (Professional Associations Research Network

- A research institute dedicated to study and support of the professional body sector

- Research all issues of strategic and operational concern to professional bodies including accreditation activities

- Membership organisation with around 140 professional body members mainly in the UK but some in Ireland, Australia and Canada

- www.parnglobal.com

The Project

- The project was established under the QQI enhancement programme

- Phase 1 aims to gain an understanding of the scope and scale of activities associated with professional body accreditation in Ireland

  - It is intended to be a mutually beneficial exercise for both QQI and the participating Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

- Long term aims will be to explore synergies between professional bodies, HEIs and QQI in relation to accreditation & internal quality assurance

Methodology

- Two sets of survey questions were produced: one to collect strategic institutional data, and the other to collect data at 'unit' level
  - By 'unit' we refer to the element within the educational establishment that takes responsibility for professional accreditation for programmes & courses.
  - The 'unit' survey enables the respondent to enter details for up to 10 professional bodies, and up to 30 programmes for each professional body.
- A pilot survey was carried out with five HEI's
- An email was sent on 2 November to all HEI representatives which contained instructions on how to access the survey interface and how to complete the two surveys
- The survey will be completed by 23 December 2016

Responses

- 53 HEI's were invited to respond

- 43 institutional survey responses were received by 2 December
- Of these, 36 HEI's have 3rd party professional accreditation

- 31 of the 43 HEI's have provided some unit survey responses
- 12 of the 43 HEI's have submitted complete responses (i.e. both institution survey & all unit surveys)

Professional Bodies

Throughout the surveys 'Professional bodies' are referred to in terms of the following:

- Professional associations that represent a profession

- Regulatory bodies that regulate a profession

- Other institutions that have a remit for regulating professions

- Or any combination of the above

Q4. What types of bodies accredit the courses at your institution?

- Statutory professional bodies- 28

- Professional organisations- 31

- Trade associations- 6

- Other- 4

Association of Chartered Certified Accountants	16
Engineers Ireland	15
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland	12
Chartered Accountants Ireland	11
Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)	11
Psychological Society of Ireland	10
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	8
Certified Public Accountants (CPA)	7
Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland	7
The Teaching Council	7

Association of MBA's	6
Institute of Physics	6
The Honorable Society of King's Inns	6
Irish Taxation Institute	5
Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland (SCSI)	5
Chartered Institute of Building	4
CORU- Ireland's multi-profession health regulator.	4
Irish Medical Council	4
Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists	4
Veterinary Council of Ireland	3

Q6. Are you currently negotiating with any new professional bodies for professional accreditation?

- Yes 12 (33%)
  - E.g. Royal Society of Chemistry Ireland, Engineers Ireland, ACCA

- No 24 (67%)

Base 36 (Total number of responding HEI's who have 3rd party professional accreditation)

Q7. What is the relationship between internal quality assurance mechanisms in your institution and external professional accreditation processes?

- The processes operate independently of each other/are quite separate processes - 5
  - Processes by nature are quite different
- Duplicated processes/overlap - looking to review activities and potentially streamlining- 6
- Internal processes are driven by the external/must be cognisant of professional standards – 4

Q8. Do you have any suggestions on how to reduce cost and/or resources for the professional accreditation process?

- Managing internal academic validation and professional accreditation through a single streamlined/standardised process- 9

- If validation and accreditation were managed simultaneously the different natures of the processes need to be recognised - 5

Q9. Is any of the output from the professional accreditation process published, made available or accessible by the institution?

- Yes 17 (47%)

- No 14 (39%)

- Unsure 5 (14%)

Q10. What are the benefits associated with professional accreditation?

- Graduates are understood to be fully prepared to work/practice at a particular level in their profession- 15

- Recognition of the qualification professionally- 8

- Increased employability prospects- 8

- Increased profile for the programmes/university concerned- 5

- Access to peer and professional networks for staff, students and graduates- 4

- Access to the profession/professional membership for graduates- 4

- Recognition of the qualification by potential students- 3

Q11. What are the challenges associated with professional accreditation?

- Duplication of time and effort

- Multiple external processes

- Cost

- Conflict of understanding

- Conflict of purpose

- Conflict of norms

Preliminary Unit survey analysis

Unit survey responses per institution range from 1 to 16, with a mean of 2.2 and a median of 5.5

- Per unit response, the number of professional bodies recorded range from 1 to 10, with a mean of 2.0 and a median of 4.5

- Per unit most have multiple programmes

- Some individual programmes are accredited by multiple professional bodies

- Roughly at this stage we see the number of programmes per professional body ranging from 1 to 26, with an estimated average of 5

What is happening in 2017?

- Analysis of the Unit survey data providing information at the programme level

- Final report

- Data sharing with HEI's

- Identify opportunities to work closer with professional bodies

- Looking towards creating synergies with professional bodies