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Introduction

Waterford Institute of Technology will apply excellence in teaching, learning and research within an inclusive student-centred environment to foster graduates of distinction who are ready to take or enhance their leadership role in business, the professions, industry, public service and society. The Institute will manage its hinterland as a Learning Region by empowering knowledge generation and knowledge transfer and is committed to the educational development of the region in a way that is reflective of its national and international aspects. The Institute will contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the South East region and beyond.

—Mission Statement of Waterford Institute of Technology

Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) is the leading educational provider in the South East of Ireland. It is also one of the biggest employers in the region and its community of approximately 10,000 (learners, faculty and support staff) across a number of campuses has a major influence on social, cultural and economic aspects of life in the region.

The Institute is a major resource for the region, providing opportunities for people to develop existing and new skills and generate new knowledge for its own sake as well as to create new opportunities for economic growth. It provides a focal point for those seeking guidance in business development and a social and cultural resource to enhance the lives of people in the region. The Institute seeks thus to be both learning- and learner-centred. It seeks in its governance and management to be informed by research and scholarship and to invigorate all its activities through ongoing improvement in the light of best international practice. It seeks at all times to place learning at the centre of its activities and to cultivate in learners habits of intellectual rigour and a questioning approach.

Since 2005, the Institute has undergone significant transformation. The student profile has changed with increased proportions of learners at level 8 and beyond. New programmes have been added to the Institute’s portfolio across all 6 schools. A credit-based modular system has been introduced. Substantial investment in physical infrastructure with many new buildings opened on the Institute’s campuses, including the Nurse Education Building and the Tourism and Leisure Building, and the development of the West campus incorporating state-of-the-art research and leisure facilities. The profile of staff qualifications has been similarly transformed with a significant increase in the proportion of staff with doctoral qualifications.

These transformations are taking place in a very challenging environment for higher education. This review coincides with significant national and global financial turmoil, and Ireland has been particularly affected by national and international aspects of this crisis, resulting in increased indebtedness, high unemployment, public sector unrest and instability in the banking sector. This turmoil has resulted in budget cuts in education and yet there is a widespread conviction that the key to future prosperity is an increasingly skilled population. In 2008, the government announced plans to develop a higher education strategy, but there is still uncertainty around future funding and structures. Moreover, the current economic crisis is likely to alter significantly the student population, and their requirements. It is likely that the Institute will be setting its strategy for the next five years in the face of external uncertainty, within a complex and rapidly changing context, at a time when successful operation will become even more challenging. This ongoing transformation and these particular challenges have informed reflections and enhancements within this review.

The attempt is made to consider the self-evaluation review through the perspective of the learner, while fulfilling the remit set out in the guidelines provided by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) for the review. Therefore, each chapter is prefaced with a brief remark attempting to locate that section of the review within the learner experience. The enhancements

1 Counties Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny, Tipperary and Carlow.
summarised in the concluding remarks are framed within the cycle of the learner experience; enhancements are summarised as they impact on pre-enrolment, the transition into higher education, teaching and learning within programmes of study, and future career development.

This review process has enabled the Institute to learn more about its strengths and weaknesses, better to contribute to the goals set out in its mission statement. This process has been enhancement-orientated and while the Institute has identified many clear examples of commendable activity, it has also identified a range of potential enhancements to policies, processes and operations. The enhancements identified below are both strategic, relating to the allocation of resources and future planning, and operational, relating to compliance with existing regulations, new ways of doing things and ongoing routine development of quality systems. These enhancements are highlighted in the text and should be read in conjunction with the more detailed enhancements set out in the “Towards a Quality Enhancement Plan” document.

The enhancement plans derived from the review process will facilitate WIT in better promoting and supporting learning across the entire Institute structure and community and the Institute very much welcomes the opportunity to engage further with the review panel with this overarching priority in mind.
1 Public Confidence in the Quality of Education and Standards of Awards

Public Confidence and the Learner
In making choices about future programmes of study, learners are informed by demonstrations of quality, currency and opportunities afforded by the institution to which they may finally ally themselves. In opting to take a programme in one institution over another, a learner commits an act of faith in an institution based on the curriculum as described in public documents, the visible physical infrastructure, feedback from other learners and evidence of the breadth of qualifications and experience of staff. This chapter examines the means by which the Institute builds public confidence in itself and its activities and thus informs student choice.

Public confidence in a higher education institute (HEI) is multi-faceted. It is influenced by an understanding and appreciation of the educational and training programmes on offer, the standards they are benchmarked against and the overall role and purpose of the higher education provider.

The importance of translating the role and value of higher education beyond the confines of the sector itself is important in building confidence and understanding. The starting point for this confidence is therefore having a clear strategic vision manifested through a published and available strategic plan. In addition public confidence requires a clear and unequivocal signal that an institution is reliable, legitimate and meets expectations of quality performance both nationally and internationally. Enhancing public confidence is also about public awareness of the commitment to ongoing quality improvement that, for Institutes, is part of periodic review.

This chapter examines a number of key aspects to generating public confidence in the Institute. Firstly, it described the student numbers since 2005 as the context within which the Institute’s strategy and operations have evolved and as a demonstration of levels of demand for—and thus expressions of confidence in—Institute programmes. Secondly, the chapter comments on the alignment of Institute programmes with the National Framework of Qualifications. The next section considers the information provided to the public, its reliability and transparency, and the processes of disseminating and collecting that information. The final section offers some reflections on the conduct of the process of this review, a process with the purpose of demonstrating a commitment to ongoing quality improvement.

1.1 Profile of the Institute

1.1.1 Staff and Students
From the Institute’s establishment in 1970, the learner community has grown to over 7,100 full-time and approximately 1,500 part-time students. The tables below describe in more detail the student cohort. The academic staff comprises 450 full-time (circa 25% of whom hold doctoral-level qualifications) and 135 part-time staff and over 150 researchers (see table 9 below for more information).

The following tables describe student recruitment at various levels on the National Framework since 2005.
### Student Enrolments by Award Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Part time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree (Honours)</td>
<td>2,895</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree (Ordinary)</td>
<td>1,805</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Certificate</td>
<td>1,055</td>
<td>657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Students</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,037</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,161</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Student Enrolments by Award Level

The Institute has sustained its student numbers over the last five years. However, there has been a significant adjustment in the profile of the student body in that period. As is clear, the number of level 8 students has increased dramatically in that period while the number of students at levels 6 and 7 has decreased in proportion. The number of postgraduate students has increased by over 50%.

Within these figures also the Institute has seen the number of non-standard students increase by nearly 60% since 2004. For an overview of First Year Admission—Non Standard 2004–9—see Table 13, Section 4.3.2. Furthermore, the recruitment of students with disabilities has increased from 152 to 255 within this period.

The sustained demand for its programmes is a clear signal of the confidence students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders have in the Institute. The growing diversity of students choosing to come to WIT, encouraged by the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications, demonstrates widespread confidence in the Institute as a diverse and open educational provider.

The culture of the Institute is student-centred, as evidenced in every report from recent School Reviews where, uniformly, faculty were commended for their consideration of student welfare, their commitment to teaching, and their commitment to upholding standards and delivering quality. Staff commitment to teaching, learning, and to standards and quality was instrumental in the delegation of authority to WIT in 2005 from HETAC. WIT was the first Institute of Technology (IoT) to be so delegated. This delegation of authority was a recognition of the Institute’s maturity and distinctive level of achievement within the sector, proportionally far exceeding expectations of an Institute of Technology. HETAC’s confidence in the Institute is a reflection of larger public confidence in the quality of WIT’s activities (see chapter 5 for more reflections on delegated authority). Further external endorsement of the Institute in the more recent past has come from two reports related to the Institute’s application for university designation; separately, both reports commended the quality of the Institute’s management and delivery of its programmes.

1.1.2 Physical Infrastructure

The quality of buildings and the general physical infrastructure is an important means of encouraging public confidence.

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2 This figure also includes other level 8 students registered on Higher Diploma programmes.
3 ‘Other Students’ includes Fáilte Ireland, Craft Apprentice, Foundation and Erasmus/Socrates Students.
In the last decade, there has been large-scale development of the Institute’s campuses with over €95 million invested in a series of high-quality buildings including the Luke Wadding Library, the Nurse Education Building, the Walton IT Building, the Tourism and Leisure Building (on the Cork Road campus), investment in the College Street campus, expansion in the facilities in the Applied Technology building located on the adjacent industrial estate, and major development in the West campus in leisure facilities and research buildings. Two further major buildings—for Engineering and Business—are planned for the Cork Road campus.

This investment has transformed the campuses and gives physical expression to the quality of the programmes offered by the Institute. The Institute’s buildings represent a crucial addition to the building stock of the city of Waterford and offer a resource to the region. The continued development of these facilities is a source of affirmation to citizens in the region in a time of economic hardship.

1.1.3 External Research Funding

Over the last ten years the Institute has secured more than €86 million in research funding. This represents approximately one quarter of all research funding received by the IoT sector as a whole. The Institute has obtained funding from a diversity of national programmes such as the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLI) cycles 3 and 4; Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Research Frontiers Programme and Strategic Research Cluster Programme, the Technological Sector Research (TSR) Programme and Enterprise Ireland’s Commercialisation and Applied Research Enhancement Programmes. In addition WIT has consistently demonstrated its ability to secure funding from the European Framework Programmes (FP) FP4, FP5, FP6 and FP7.

All research funding secured by WIT has been awarded through a process of competitive bidding with the proposed programmes of work peer-reviewed by national and international experts. A robust process of interim and final stage project evaluations by funding agencies and other external experts coupled with WIT’s internal governance measures ensures an ongoing quality review framework of its research programmes. The very significant increase in research funding as evidenced by Figure 1 below is testament to both the Institute’s capacity to deliver quality research in addition to the confidence which external agencies such as Governing Departments, research bodies, academic and industry partners nationally and internationally place in the Institute.

![Figure 1: WIT Research Awards Secured from External Sources: 2000 – 2009](image)

Public confidence in the Institute is evidenced by the growing level of engagement between the WIT research community and industry and other external stakeholders on collaborative research. For example, over the last five years Enterprise Ireland has funded the development of three Applied Research Enhancement (ARE) Centres in WIT in the area of communications services, applied
materials and pharmaceutical and molecular biotechnology. Through these centres the Institute has innovation partnerships with regional companies such as Genzyme, Teva, Bausch & Lomb, the Munster Express, O₂ and Honeywell. The Institute is the lead organisation in the SFI Strategic Research Clusters Programme FAME in association with international companies including Telefonica I& D, Cisco, Ericsson, HP and IBM. Industry representatives also actively participate in the governance of Institute research centres. WIT is also committed to supporting micro/small enterprise access knowledge of a scientific, technological or innovative nature to enhance enterprise development regionally and nationally. To this end over the last three years WIT staff and students have worked with more than 120 companies through the Enterprise Ireland funded Innovation Vouchers Programme. Public sector collaboration on the development of research capacity at WIT is also a priority for the Institute. Teagasc, the Health Service Executive (HSE), Fáilte Ireland and regional enterprise agencies are examples of partners organisations which have and are collaborating with the WIT research community.

Communicating ongoing enhancements and achievements by the WIT research community to external stakeholders is an important element of the work of the Office of Research & Innovation. The Institute has since 2004 produced a biannual newsletter, Research Matters, which highlights WIT’s achievements such as research awards to WIT staff and postgraduate students, profiling the ongoing work of research centres at WIT, funding awards, high profile conferences and publications by the WIT research community. This publication is circulated nationally to more than 1,500 external organisations including second level schools, all HEIs, government departments, funding agencies and regional and national industry.

1.2 Awards Recognition

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) provides the overarching framework for recognition of standards and qualifications. All of the Institute’s awards are placed on the NFQ. The level of the award is communicated through programme-related material (such as student handbooks, prospectus and website) and formal awards (such as the Diploma Supplements, which places the award not only on the national but also on European qualification frameworks). In addition, the programme approval processes (discussed more fully later) tie all programme learning outcomes to the Framework and ensures that the appropriate level of award is presented.

The Institute’s awards operate under delegated authority from HETAC and are subject external examination processes. The active participation of a broad range of external peers is central to quality management processes at the Institute. This range of external peers is outlined in these tables below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Irish Reviewers</th>
<th>International Reviewers</th>
<th>Reviewers from IoT Sector</th>
<th>Reviewers from University Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td><strong>233</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Origin of External Members of Programme Evaluation Panels

---

*Includes reviewers from all sectors - IoT, university, industry and practitioners.
School Review 2009-10 Panel Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Irish IoT Reviewer</th>
<th>Irish University Reviewer</th>
<th>International Reviewer</th>
<th>Practitioner/Industry Representative/Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6 (14%)</td>
<td>10 (23%)</td>
<td>11 (25%)</td>
<td>17 (38%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: School Review 2009-10 Origin of Panel Members

External Examiner Cohort 2009-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External Examiner (from Ireland, IOTs)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Examiner (from Ireland, University)</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Examiner (from Ireland, other)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Examiner (from outside Ireland)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Origin of External Examiner Cohort 2009-10

External Assessors of Postgraduate Degrees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>External Assessor (Ireland, IOTs)</th>
<th>External Assessor (Ireland, Universities)</th>
<th>External Assessor (outside Ireland)</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Origin of External Assessors of Postgraduate Degrees Since 2005

The Institute’s quality assurance procedures underpinning its awards are subject to review by HETAC (incorporating the European Standards and Guidelines). Central to quality assurance processes is the periodic review of activities. The Institute’s six Schools have undergone their periodic programmatic review in 2009-2010, with the result that all programmes and modules will have been assessed and revalidated prior to the commencement of the 2010-2011 academic year.
The School Review process (incorporating programmatic review) provided substantial data from which the Institute can assess and improve quality. A significant learning from this process was that consistent information about modules was not publically available and as a result the Institute is now moving to create a searchable and browse-able, web-based, programme and module database system to support better communication and engagement.

Many awards in the Institute are further subject to professional body accreditation. A list of accredited programmes at the Institute is included as Appendix 1a.

A final measure of public confidence in WIT awards is the demand for graduates from employers. Graduate surveys conducted over the last three years indicate strong employment prospects for WIT graduates. The Institute has been top of the Sunday Times survey of employment for the last number of years.

1.3 Provision of Information to the Public

1.3.1 Information Provided to the Public

The Institute provides information to the public with emphasis on:

- information on programmes from foundation to post doctoral levels;
- research strategy, research centres, and research outputs;
- information on collaboration, industry links, and knowledge transfer activities.

Accordingly, the following information is made available to the public and stakeholders in both hard copy and on the Institute’s website:

- Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes
- Annual Report
- Campus Development Plan
- Course Quality Assurance Procedures
- Guidelines for International Collaboration in Course Provision
- Strategic Plan
- Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy
- Postgraduate Research Degrees: Revised Strategy, Regulations and Procedures
- Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy

The Institute also publishes its undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses and prospectuses for part-time and continuing professional development programmes. These are available on the Institute’s website with print copies are distributed to schools and throughout the community. Applicants for all WIT undergraduate programmes apply through the Central Applications Office (CAO) and applicants for taught postgraduate programmes apply through the Postgraduate Applications Centre (PAC). Some of the Institute’s part-time programmes are also listed in BlueBrick, the recently launched national listing and application portal for part-time learners.

Strategic plans have been published since 2003. The current plan (2007-10) is available on the Institute’s website, in hard copy and has been disseminated widely. The plan lays out clear principles and themes that the Institute is striving towards, providing its community with clear expectations of the Institute and way-points through which they can assess the Institute’s performance.

The Institute strives to meet the information needs of the wider society. These include, inter alia, routine journalistic requests, government or other agency requirements, research data requests and general interest enquires. While it is not possible to anticipate and plan for all these information needs, the Institute maintains a constant dialogue with the public through updates on news and events at the Institute. The website provides significant background detail on the Institute and contact details for all of its officers and staff.
The Institute also recognises that it has a role in reflecting, challenging and fostering the cultural values of the wider society. It contributes to the social and cultural life of the region by sharing its resources and facilities, including organising events such as Maths Week, science festivals and wider cultural events such as New Music Week.

The Institute’s website is a central resource for disseminating information and engaging with prospective learners and the wider community. Feedback from the users however have indicated a number of deficiencies, particularly around ease of data access and some particular data gaps.

1.3.2 Management of Public Information

There are various points of contact between the general public and the Institute and therefore various sources of information. In many cases, individual queries and requests for information are dealt with by academic Departments and School offices. The central offices with responsibility for the management of the information disseminated by the Institute are listed below.

1.3.2.1 Marketing and Communications Office (including Schools’ Liaison)

In 2006, as part of the Strategic Plan 2003-6, a dedicated Marketing and Communications Office (MCO) was established with responsibility for communicating with key stakeholders. In 2009, this office merged with the Schools’ Liaison Office to ensure a more co-ordinated approach to external communication.

The MCO has successfully built on, and grown, the reputation of the Institute among external and internal audiences. The MCO works closely with academic units as well as research and administrative units to ensure a co-ordinated communications approach, and accuracy of information, across all activities at the Institute, thus ensuring the consistency of the Institute’s message to external audiences.

The Institute understands that the prospective student reaches decision milestones at different times in the year prior to attending a third-level institution. Understanding that lifecycle allows the Institute to communicate relevant messages to audiences through targeted campaigns at appropriate times. Drawing on this framework, the MCO agrees a calendar of events for the year that maximises the available information within the resources available. Campaigns include public relations, advertising (radio, press and online), social media activities and direct mail as well as direct contact with prospective students at events and presentations. Campaigns are supported by other sources of information including the prospectus, website, course flyers, schools newsletter, school presentations, applicant newsletters, open days, and exhibitions.

Analysing the trends in applications the Institute recognised the growing need for mature learner information events. To address this need an additional open day for learners, specifically addressing the needs of the adult applicant, was recently added to the calendar of events.

Provision of information to international learners is particularly challenging for all higher education providers. The Institute has dedicated significant resources to ensuring international learners have adequate access to appropriate information. This is achieved through a network of agents and dedicated publications managed through the International Office.

1.3.2.2 Reception Desk

The first point of contact for many people making enquiries of the Institute is the main Reception Desk on the Cork Road campus. This Desk is the main source of information for prospective and current students on admissions, grants, registration, examinations and related processes. The Desk also disseminates general information on the Institute to members of the public who request it. A Reception Desk is also maintained on the College Street campus.
1.3.2.3 Postgraduate Support Unit

The Postgraduate Support Unit (PSU) provides a point of contact for all potential applicants seeking advice and information on postgraduate study at WIT and provides a wide range of central supports for postgraduate students. The unit has responsibility for co-ordinating and implementing the marketing and promotion of postgraduate opportunities at WIT. The office manages the development of the postgraduate prospectus, the related Quick-Guide, leaflets and other promotional material for individual postgraduate programmes. The unit is represented at postgraduate fairs and is involved in generating advertisements and other material for postgraduate publications. The unit works closely with the MCO to promote postgraduate opportunities.

The PSU is also responsible for keeping up-to-date the various external websites listing postgraduate opportunities at WIT such as Qualifax, UCAS, Postgrad Ireland and Learning Ireland.

1.3.2.4 Adult Education Information Points

The School of Education publishes material related to part-time, continuing professional education and other programmes in its prospectus. The School also maintains a reception desk on the Cork Road campus as well as an office in the College Street campus to deal with ongoing inquiries. The School also hosts an open evening for prospective part-time students.

1.3.2.5 Freedom of Information Office and Related Policies

In common with other public bodies, the Institute has an obligation to manage the information it generates and to make it freely available to the public.

In line with legislation (specifically the Freedom of Information Act 1997 and its various amendments) the Institute publishes two reference guides, a “Section 15 Guide”, describing the functions, structure and services provided and the categories of records held by the Institute, and a “Section 16 Guide” containing the policies, procedures and guidelines used by the Institute in decision-making along with the rights, benefits, obligations and penalties imposed by the Institute in carrying out its functions and the methods by which these are administered.

The Institute publishes a range of other policy documents to support its obligations regarding public information. These include a Records Retention Policy and a Data Protection Policy.

The Institute has appointed a Freedom of Information Officer to manage freedom of information, data protection and related matters.

1.3.2.6 Quality Assurance of Public Information

Quality assurance of public information requires it to be accurate, clear, timely, relevant and communicated through an appropriate channel. While the Institute does not have a codified public information strategy, it strives to maintain a constant and regular flow of information to the public through the website (for information on news and events, for instance) and through published documents.

Defined protocols help to ensure the accuracy and clarify of information. These include the authorisation and centralising of public statements. In addition, the Marketing and Communications Office co-ordinates and directs the publication of the prospectus and other programme information to ensure accuracy and consistency.

The Institute engages external communities in many different fora (including advisory boards, information meetings, career guidance meeting and so on) to gather stakeholder on the quality of information provision.
A strong recommendation arising from a number of School Reviews was that the Institute has not sufficiently publicised its successes, particularly in terms of research activity, as a means of informing stakeholders about the possibilities that exist at the Institute and as a source of stakeholder engagement.

### 1.3.3 Engagement with Learners and Stakeholders on Information Provision

The Institute fosters a two-way engagement with its stakeholders and, in this context, develops feedback processes that assess the effectiveness of communication and information availability. For instance, the Marketing and Communications Office has embedded a formal planning cycle matching performance outcomes to individual campaigns. Debrief reports are produced following major activities or events that incorporate feedback from those involved to systematically assess effectiveness on an ongoing basis as well as plan for the following year. In addition, the Institute conducts surveys and meetings with second-level school career guidance counsellors better to understand what kinds of information they require and when, and how best to provide them with the information.

As is indicated elsewhere, the Institute seeks feedback from learners through a variety of means. The Class Representative Survey conducted as part of this Institutional Review process confirmed that, for learners, the Institute in most cases provides the information they need: most indicated that module information and information on assessment is available to them when needed, though there is also some opportunity for enhancement in this area.

### 1.4 Major Periodic Review of Academic Quality Assurance: Approach to Self-Evaluation

Effective self-evaluation, peer review and subsequent quality enhancement planning and implementation, is the key to improvement. Institutional Review is an important tool for the Institute in determining the quality and delivery of its education provision and therefore an integral part of strategic planning for the next five years.

The self-evaluation process in the Institute was led and managed by the Institutional Review Steering Committee which comprised an expanded membership of the Academic Planning and Quality Committee of Academic Council, chaired by the Registrar (membership of this group can be found in Appendix 1b). This Committee was established in October 2009 and ensured that the evaluation process was an integral part of the Institute’s academic management structure. Senior and middle management in the Institute participated in HETAC workshops on the process of institutional review and the point of contact for the institutional review was the Quality Manager of the Institute.

Using the framework and objectives set out by HETAC, the Institute established Project Teams, by open invitation, each chaired by a member of the Executive Board and with a project manager charged with carrying out the assessment under its designated objective:

- Public Confidence
- Strategic Planning & Governance
- Academic Quality Assurance and Improvement
- NFQ / Access, Transfer & Progression

A briefing phase, based on HETAC guidelines and templates, ensured that students, staff and management of the Institute were appraised of and appropriately involved in the process of self-evaluation. Specific briefings were given to Governing Body, Academic Council, Executive Board, Students’ Union, Class Representative Council and all staff in the Office of the Registrar. Information on the institutional review was disseminated to all staff through the Institute Newsletter.
The Governing Body of the Institute committed to the aims of the self-assessment and completed a self-assessment of their own performance. They received updates on the progress of the broader review.

The self-evaluation carried out by the Institute under the framework of the institutional review utilised a number of approaches to arrive at the findings described in subsequent sections of this report. Inherent in the Institute’s approaches was consideration of levels of consultation and engagement, benchmarking against best practice, reflection and evaluation of current policy and practice, to arrive at realisable enhancements. To this end, desk-based collation and analysis of institutional documentation and data, codifying key timelines for major developments and structured interviews with staff and senior and middle management were carried out.

Collation of student feedback data included the analysis of the Student Learning Experience Survey 2009, student Class Representative Survey 2010 and the biennial Research Postgraduate Student Survey. Additionally, as referenced in Section 1.3.3 above, guidance counsellors were polled for their views and opinions and targeted surveys of staff were carried out.

The audit of academic QA utilised the formal European Standards and Guidelines audit template to gather evidence across the entire programme lifecycle. Findings from periodic School Review reports were interrogated as were internal audit reports.

The self-assessment report was presented in draft format to the Institute’s community for consultation and formal approval by the Institute’s Academic Council and Executive Board was given prior to submission of the report to HETAC.

The schedule of meetings associated with the process of Institutional Review is given in Appendix 1c.

1.5 Critical Evaluation

While the Institute has a good record in public confidence, the review has demonstrated that it would benefit from more widespread and systematic engagement with stakeholders on a more regular basis. This includes the need to (i) gather and use external feedback in a more “whole Institute” fashion, (ii) further resource the Institute’s website to enable clearer provision of information, and (iii) build a web-based module catalogue to facilitate access to the high-quality provision that exists at the Institute but is not currently as externally visible as the Institute would like.

1.6 Conclusion

Assessment of the Institute’s performance in ensuring public confidence in its operations is based on quantifiable data such as student demand and employment of graduates as well as more qualitative data such as direct feedback and external recognition. With evidence of continued healthy recruitment onto academic programmes, strong employment and positive feedback (including being awarded the “Institute of Technology of the Year” twice by the Sunday Times), the Institute is aware that it enjoys strong public confidence.
2 Strategic Planning and Governance

Learners and Strategic Planning and Governance:
Publicly-funded higher education institutions (HEIs) are accountable to a wide range of stakeholders, particularly to students who use their services as well as to those who provide their legislative framework and necessary funding. Publication of an institutional strategic plan informs learners as to how an institution is positioning itself, what core competencies it offers and generally alerts them to what they can expect from that institution. Furthermore, accountability and the establishment of strong governance and control mechanisms are paramount to safeguarding standards of delivery; thus governance and planning within an institution have a direct impact on learners.

Strategic planning should result in the planned enhancement of activities and services in a way that is wholly congruent with core academic values and high standards of delivery. There are two linked aspects to this, the direction and decision-making for the long-term well-being of the Institute, and, secondly, assessing institutional effectiveness and quality outcomes. The objective of the self-assessment under the Strategic Planning and Governance theme is to examine and reflect on the effectiveness of the Institute’s strategic planning processes and governance structures in the period covered by this review and to plan enhancements for the future. The review is particularly timely as a new Governing Body is in place from April 2010 and the Institute is currently developing its next strategic plan to cover the period 2010-14.

The self-assessment of the strategic planning and governance functions of the Institute utilised a number of approaches to arrive at the findings described in subsequent sections of this chapter. Desk-based collation and analysis of institutional documentation, codifying key timelines for major developments, followed by structured interviews with senior and middle management enabled assessment of the strategic planning and governance approach of the Institute. Assessment of governance structures and their effectiveness included detailed self-assessments by Governing Body in 2006 and again in 2009-10. Work carried out by Academic Council in examining its structures and functioning was codified. A thorough audit of existing committee and working group structures and their functions was also carried out.

2.1 Overview of Institute Strategic Planning

The emphasis on the development of a knowledge-based economy means that higher education institutions are playing an essential role in economic growth and delivery of national policy. With the rapid pace of change in Irish higher education, the current economic crisis and its impacts regionally and on the financial constraints on HEIs, it is crucial that the Institute remains proactive with its stakeholders. Strategic planning in the Institute is of real importance if it gives a holistic and shared understanding of how the Institute adapts to education policy and environment and yet develops its activities in a way that maintains its core mission.

Progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2007-10 should frame the review discussion about where the Institute is positioned and that the self-study process itself should have a valuable reciprocal influence on the development of the next Strategic Plan 2010-2014.

2.1.1 Structures for Strategic Planning

Waterford Institute of Technology has prioritised and invested in building expertise in strategic planning. The Institute established an Office of Strategic Planning in 2005 to co-ordinate institute-wide strategic planning processes and to provide strategic analysis to assist senior management in decision-making. The Office incorporated strategic planning, institutional research and quality functions, directed by a Head of Strategic Planning at executive level, thereby emphasizing the importance attached to this function.
In 2008, the Head of Strategic Planning became Registrar and the roles were coalesced, embedding the Office of Strategic Planning’s functions within the senior academic office of the Institute. Whilst this has the benefit of tightly coupling strategic planning to core academic activities, it has meant that less time is available at this level for the strategic planning brief. In addition, staff retirements such as that of the Academic Administration and Student Affairs Manager and the Strategic Information Manager, have meant that functional capacity in institutional research—analysing and presenting data and information retrieval from institutional systems—has been reduced.

2.1.2 Strategic Plan Development

The period covered by this review spans the end of the 2003-6 strategic plan and most of the current plan 2007-10. In examining the approach and goals that developed from the former to the latter, a clear evolution in terms of scale of ambition about the role and functioning of strategic planning and how it deals with the growth in complexity of the Institute can be traced. The process of developing the 2007-10 plan was iterative and participative. A review of the 2003-6 Strategic Plan was carried out at institutional and departmental level prior to the development of the current plan and a working paper produced that set out an outline for the new strategy. A consultation phase and meetings at School and Department levels followed and the current strategic plan was launched in 2007.

The 2003-6 plan saw the establishment of task forces to track implementation and progress against themes. The 2007-10 plan developed a more mature and institutionally-embedded implementation process devolving to Schools and Departments and functional areas responsibility for implementation. In addition, lead sponsors for each main area of activity reported progress in that area as part of School and functional strategic plans and reports.

2.2 Evaluating the Institute’s High-Level Goals

The Strategic Plan set out five high-level goals for the period 2007–10 and progress made in each was reflected on in the mid-term review. It is worthwhile to revisit these goals as the current strategic plan nears completion.

2.2.1 High-Level Goal 1

*We will develop an internationally relevant and vibrant knowledge region that fosters an international exchange of ideas, technology and people.*

The first theme was centred on building the strengths of the South East region through a mix of international influence and embedding the Institute strongly in the region. Key performance indicators (KPIs) under this heading include the development of pillars of research excellence that are linked to national and international partners, the diversity of the student body and responsiveness to regional needs.

The relationship to the South East region remains a defining characteristic of the Institute and significant levels of interaction with regional partners occur, at institutional, School, Department and unit level. Strong partnerships and collaborations with other HEIs nationally, frequently through jointly funded research initiatives, such as Science Foundation Ireland Research Clusters and PRTLI, or strategic partnerships under the Strategic Innovation Fund. Internationally, the Institute has succeeded in a wide variety of ways. The growth of the international student base has been significant; the Institute has jointly developed a number of educational programmes overseas and significant success has been achieved in international research partnerships particularly through EU-funded programmes. The 2007-10 plan established a target for the international community to represent 10% of total student numbers. Currently there are 600 students (including students registered on collaborative programmes abroad) which represents over 8% of the student cohort.

Research activity has been centred on clusters of sustainable themes which are regionally, nationally and internationally embedded. The largest research centre, Telecom Software and Systems Group (TSSG), is a magnet for attracting inward flows of international resources including people, finance
and enterprise. Since 2001, 60 jobs have been created in 14 “Spin-Out” and “Spin-In” companies linked to TSSG. Similarly the ArcLabs Research & Innovation Centre has provided business incubation support to 27 start-up companies.

While each of the levels of partnership building (regional, national and international) has seen major developments, recommendations from across the School Review process pointed to the potential for greater engagement with external stakeholders and the benefits of the proactive development of strategic partnerships. In addition, there is significant opportunity for a whole-of-Institute approach to further externalising its activities and building a stronger presence nationally.

Another KPI established in the Strategic Plan was to prioritize development at level 8. In this respect targets were set for level 8 students at 4,000 (actual 4,171) and postgraduates at 1000 learners (actual 762). The planned profile has broadly been achieved.

2.2.2 High-Level Goal 2

We will continue to create a learner of distinction recognised by the unique characteristics of our graduates and empower them to develop through lifelong learning.

The aim of the theme “Empowering a Distinctive Learner” is to enable the WIT graduate to develop his or her full potential, both at college and beyond. The Institute has taken a number of key steps in achieving this following the modularisation of the curriculum. A critical KPI was the development and implementation of a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS). The LTAS has been delivered with a strengthening of the importance of the Graduate Profile statement (the graduate profile has been embedded in the Quality Review and the LTAS) and the initiation of projects in support of the LTAS funded variously under the Strategic Innovation Fund, RAPID and FÁS which aim to enhance the ability of students to utilise the specific knowledge they gain at WIT in the world beyond the Institute.

A challenge for the Institute—as for all HEIs—is how to translate the aspiration of developing distinctive graduates as competent, mature, and critical thinkers, into the curriculum. The Institute has made some progress in this regard, through the initiatives outlined above, but these developments are at an early stage and co-ordinating best practice across the Institute remains a priority. Their continuance at present is contingent on extramural funding and if developing “distinctiveness” in itself is a priority of the Institute it needs to be embedded, measured and assessed.

2.2.3 High-Level Goal 3

We will continue to renew and develop appropriate governance, financial and operating structures in line with best international practice to ensure the delivery of our strategic aims.

The Institute has been characterised by ongoing developments in its governance and operating structures. As indicated elsewhere in this report the Governing Body has undertaken significant review of its operations and have embedded a strong internal audit process that impacts on all aspects of the Institute. Similarly, the Academic Council has continued to debate its roles and responsibility and how best those might be achieved through new structures and processes.

The Institute recognises, however, that the landscape of higher education is changing substantially and that new pedagogies, technologies, relationships and practices are emerging. In that respect it recognises the need to renew its organisational form, from time to time, to meet with these demands. In that respect it has developed new organisational units, such as E-Learning support, invested in new offices such as Research, and created new posts, such as Quality Manager. A significant issue for the Institute management has been the substantial change in the structure of the Executive Board. The retirement of five of the senior managers within a short period of time represents a significant loss of intellectual capital. It has also afforded the Institute an opportunity to reflect on how its current structures react to the demands of learners and to evaluate how its senior management structures might address new types and portfolios of responsibility within the changing
landscape of higher education. In this regard the Institute has commenced a process of engagement and discussion, particularly at Executive Board and Management Co-ordinating Forum (MCF) levels, to look at the long-term institutional structures and processes that are required to ensure co-ordination and relevance for the future.

As with the entire higher education sector in Ireland, WIT is experiencing financial pressure in an environment of finite resources and decreasing state funding, thereby posing a major challenge to sustaining its ambitious development plans. The existing funding model, based on a sectoral approach, has restricted the Institute’s ability to achieve its strategic objectives; notwithstanding a model that “awards” all institutes equally, the Institute has achieved a great deal over the past five years. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) plans to introduce a new funding model over the coming years. This formula based model, encompassing both student numbers and type, will incentivise the Institute to continue to respond to the changing demands of its stakeholders.

How the Institute manages its human, financial, and physical resources effectively and efficiently to achieve its goals will be critical for the next Strategic Plan and will inform the future strategic direction of the Institute. While this high-level goal is stated in terms of continuous and ongoing improvement there are, notwithstanding, some areas for more strategic improvement. The School review process and general feedback from staff has indicated there is a need to crystallise any new organisational structure quickly so as to minimise levels of uncertainty and to enable new areas of activity to emerge. Secondly, there is a need to generate a culture of financial and resource incentivisation that is tightly aligned to key strategic goals and performance indicators. The greater alignment of strategic, financial and operational policy into an annual cycle of planning must be a key objective.

2.2.4 High-Level Goal 4

*We will create new knowledge in partnership with our region and we will help our region use new knowledge to the benefit of economic, social and cultural development.*

The Institute has created a thriving postgraduate research community. Its motivations for the development of research are its unique position as a catalyst for regional economic development, the demands from staff to engage in research to the highest international standards and the demand from our graduates for access to fourth level education. The emphasis on developing strong strategic research collaborations with ‘best of breed’, nationally and internationally, ensures that quality and relevance of the outcomes of our research activities.

Central to the Institute’s research strategy is its capacity to be embedded regionally and to act as a means through which information, knowledge and ideas can flow to and from relevant stakeholders. Achieving this requires mechanisms for the external stakeholders to be able to access services, facilities and programmes from all areas within the region and for the Institute to have a presence in regional areas through which centres of excellence can be developed. The success of the knowledge transfer strategy is reflected in the fact that the Institute is the only one in its sector to have a fully funded technology transfer office. The Institute recognises that knowledge creation occurs in many settings and that the most appropriate approach to enhancing knowledge creation, dissemination and application is a deep, co-dependent, partnership. Such partnerships have ensured strong stakeholder participation in its major research programmes and supported the creation of a mobile services cluster at its West Campus.

Performance in research has been a highlight of the achievements made in the past five years. The Institute has competed successfully for substantial funding streams (see section 1.1.3) and has demonstrated its capacity to target and build research capability. While the 2007-10 plan expressed a KPI in terms of increasing funding without an absolute amount, it is nonetheless evident that the Institute’s performance has been exemplary in this area. Furthermore, the post-graduate community has grown substantially, up over 66%. A key indicator was the formation of research clusters with three primary areas identified as offering potential. Two of these areas, in telecommunications and in eco-innovation, pharmaceutical and molecular biotechnology, are now established as nationally important. Research degree strategy has also advanced with improvements to quality processes,
investment in facilities and greater opportunities for research activity. The development of research clusters is closely linked to regional, national and international partnerships.

2.2.5 High-Level Goal 5

*We will place quality improvement at the centre of all our activities in an open and transparent manner and we will continually review and enhance our operations.*

The final high-level goal centred on prioritising quality enhancement and extending the existing quality management structures and systems to include all aspects of operations. Performance in this respect has been strong with improvements to the quality systems, investment in developing skills and qualifications of staff (doctoral qualifications up from 18% to 25%) and stronger structures for Academic Council now emerging. Of particular note is that the quality framework has been extended to include administration and support departments and a renewed suite of quality documentation has been developed through Academic Council. This, in turn, guided the major periodic quality assurance and enhancement reviews which took place in all academic Schools in 2009-10. The reviews aimed to develop the quality culture within each School through a participative process of reflective self-assessment and the publication of quality enhancement plans with clear, measurable outputs. The delivery of this ambitious schedule of work demonstrates the maturity of the Institute’s quality processes and capacity for change. The major challenge remaining is the translation of enhancement plans into realisable goals that directly impact students.

2.3 Measurement of Strategic Achievements

2.3.1 Mid-term Review of Strategic Plan

In early 2009, the Institute carried out a mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2007-2010. The review found that significant development had occurred in the first two years of the plan and the main findings are summarised here.

Curriculum development has been a major area of activity, with modularisation being the key driver of reform in this regard. The Institute’s Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy is in place. At the midpoint in the plan, the School Review process (resulting in quality enhancement plans across all areas of the curriculum) was underway.

Quality improvement as an ongoing process was prioritised in the Institute’s Strategic Plan 2003–6, with the resultant appointment of a Quality Manager in 2006 into the Office of Strategic Planning. Among the key strategies for achieving this aim was the ongoing development of self-assessment review systems, strengthening systems of student and stakeholder feedback and on-going staff training.

Research activity has grown strongly, with the Institute competing successfully in European Union funded programmes in particular. In addition, the Institute has established a technology transfer office. Postgraduate numbers have increased substantially over the past five years with new postgraduate programmes being developed and training for students and supervisors being prioritised. The Institute has taken a strategic approach to the development of Professional Doctorates through the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) project on Knowledge Transfer in the Curriculum in the areas of Business and Computing (in collaboration with Cork Institute of Technology).

The first two years of the plan also saw major investment in research infrastructure through PRTLI and the Research Facilities Enhancement Scheme. Other major capital investments in the Institute included the opening of the new Tourism and Leisure Building and the initiation of two major Public Private Partnerships (PPP’s) in Business and Engineering.
2.3.2 Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Research Strategies

The main priorities of the strategic plan in teaching and learning and research were translated into more detailed strategic documents. Firstly, a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy was developed in an inclusive way by an expanded committee of Academic Council and was launched in 2009. The Strategy sets out clear objectives which, along with the detailed enhancements arising from programmatic and institutional review, will provide a firm basis for implementing learning, teaching and assessment priorities in the Institute. It is intended that the 2007-10 plan will be reviewed later in 2010 in light of the recommendations from the School and Institutional Reviews, and in light of proposed new structures that may include a specific senior management post with responsibility in this area.

Secondly, the Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy sets clear priorities for the growth of research activity and its support infrastructure. The Strategy is reviewed regularly and an Annual Report on research activity is produced by the Office of the Head of Research.

2.4 Challenges and Critical Evaluation

Following the mid-term review of the current strategic plan, the Institute developed a discussion paper entitled “Towards a Strategic Plan 2011-2014: A discussion document on the development of an Institutional Strategy, 2011 to 2014 for Waterford Institute of Technology”. The paper, which is being widely circulated to internal and external stakeholders, examines the status and currency of the themes in the current plan and how, in the context of changes which are occurring both within and outside the Institute, they might appear in a future strategic plan. This engagement process is assisting the Institute focus on:

- What the high-level goals could be up to 2014 and how they will differ from current goals;
- Initiating dialogue on how to best position itself to respond to changes in the next five years;
- How to plan for these changes, and if it can refine its internal processes to enable it to be more responsive and flexible;
- Whether this be reflected by a change in the balance and mix of the Institute’s activities;
- How much this should be based on the regional context.

There is widespread awareness across the Institute of the strategic plan and the plan was used as an integral part of all School Reviews. However, there is still a need to build a more shared sense of purpose about the Plan’s relevance at different levels in the Institute. There may be a need for more sustained communications across the life-span of the plan. While the plan served to focus on key deliverables which were broadly achieved it was not a benchmark by which all individuals and functional areas measured themselves. The actual existence of an Office of Strategic Planning had the effect of allowing some areas of the Institute feel less ownership of the plan, leaving it instead to the Office of Strategic Planning alone to “own” the process. Future plans need to ensure a more unified and Institute-wide engagement.

This reflects larger questions raised through the School Review process to do with the relationship between School and central units, particularly relating to the ownership of key issues. The Institute has learned that central resources must devolve ownership in a more meaningful way and encourage and ensure that devolved units take responsibility more directly. Arising from School Reviews, a recommendation was made that the Institute’s central offices and individual Schools engage in bi-directional communication to ensure that the expectations of each are articulated and met.

To further develop participation in the strategic planning process, the planning phase of the next strategic plan will have an iterative institutional consultation process which will empower all members of the community, along with external stakeholders, to participate in a wide-ranging discussion around the future strategic direction of the Institute. A challenge is to sustain this consultation in a structured way, thereby providing a basis to initiate engagement and debate on
the Institute’s future, improve communication and engender a sense of ownership of the next plan.

An overarching framework was established for implementation of the strategic plan; however this framework was not fully applied as part of a cycle of strategic improvement, though the plan did become an important element of the School Review process, as indicated above. This lack of institutional follow-through in the implementation part of the planning cycle was also highlighted in the internal audit report on Reporting Lines and Structures. Progress in the implementation of the strategic plan is not a regular scheduled aspect of the Executive Board agenda and similarly, progress on the strategic plan is not a routine agenda item for Governing Body (a recommendation for enhancement in this regard is covered in Section 2.5.2).

More formalisation of the strategic planning cycle is required including more effective use of KPIs. The Executive Board should formalise a strategic planning cycle with defined dates, KPIs and implementation processes and which ties together strategic and financial planning systems.

2.5 Governance

As the demand for higher education continues to grow, with Government and society recognising their role in economic development, and as HEIs increase in size and complexity, it is important to ensure that institutions are managed in an effective and inclusive way. In light of its role as a public body, the Institute has reviewed its existing corporate governance arrangements and examined accountabilities and effectiveness within that framework.

The Institute’s management and governance structures include the Governing Body, consisting of regional and institutional stakeholders, the Academic Council, responsible for the academic quality of the Institute, and statutory roles for key individual staff such as the President. The senior management team—the Executive Board—comprises the President (Chairman), Registrar, Secretary/Financial Controller and all Heads of Academic Schools. As with the entire higher education sector in Ireland, WIT is experiencing financial pressure in an environment of finite resources and decreasing state funding. The Institute is currently undergoing substantial re-alignment, including the restructuring of its Executive Board, with the re-allocation of duties and the rationalisation of executive team numbers.

Current structures are described in the following chart:
WIT Management & Organisational Structure (under review)

Governing Body

Office of the President

Academic Council

School of Science
School of Humanities
School of Engineering
School of Business
School of Health Sciences
School of Education & Professional Studies
Research & Innovation
Registrar
Secretary / Financial Controller
Development

Dept. of Computing
Maths & Physics
Dept. of Languages,
Tourism & Hospitality
Dept. of Construction &
Civil Engineering
Dept. of Accounting &
Economics
Dept. of Nursing
Dept. of Adult &
Continuing Education
Industry Services &
Technology Transfer
Assistant Registrar
Finance
Library

Dept. of Chemical &
Life Sciences
Dept. of Applied Arts
Dept. of Engineering
Technology
Dept. of Management &
Organisation
Dept. of Health, Sport &
Exercise Science
Academic Admin
& Student Affairs
Human Resources
International Affairs

Dept. of Creative &
Performing Arts
Dept. of Trade
Studies
Dept. of Graduate
Business
Dept. of Architecture

Computer Services
Student Life &
Learning
Quality Promotion
Marketing &
Communications
Strategic Projects
Capital Projects
Estates

Figure 2: WIT Management & Organisation Structure (under review)
2.5.1 Governing Body

In line with the Institutes of Technology Act (2006), the Governing Body is primarily responsible for guiding the strategic direction of the Institute. During the period covered by this Review, the Institute’s Fifth Governing Body, comprising the Chairman, the Director/President and seventeen ordinary members, was in place for a five year period with effect from the first of April 2005. The composition and membership of the current and previous Governing Body are set out in Appendix 2a.

The Governing Body meets ordinarily 8-9 times in the academic year and operates to an annual plan, agreed at the beginning of each year. There are two permanently constituted standing committees of the Governing Body: the Internal Audit Committee, established in line with best practice in 2005, and the Finance Committee, established, following a Governing Body self-assessment exercise, in 2006. The former committee assists the Governing Body in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities as set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies as amended for Third Level Institutions, while the latter assists the Governing Body in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities in relation to the financial management of the Institute.

The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies⁶ guides the functioning of the Governing Body. The Institute is actively engaged in the implementation of the Code and its mapping to the Code of Governance of Irish Institutes of Technology⁷ and the concomitant implications at local level through the Institute’s active involvement at Institutes of Technology Ireland (IoTI) level on this issue. In addition, a Procedures Manual for the operation of the Governing Body⁸ has been produced and is updated annually.

2.5.2 Governing Body Self-Assessment and Evaluation

The Governing Body has been proactive in examining its effectiveness in carrying out its legislative role and in 2006, and more recently in late 2009–10, it established a sub-committee to examine its operation. As stated in the Report of this Committee, June 2006, the Committee was established to, *inter-alia*, assess the Governing Body’s strengths and weaknesses through a self-evaluation process, identify the potential impacts of university designation on governance structures and make recommendations on the future preferred governance model and how the Governing Body might best transition, under a new legislative framework.⁹

The Committee carried out a detailed self-evaluation and reviewed governance models at a number of sites—University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium and NUI, Dublin. In addition, the Vice-Rector (academic) of Karlstad University in Sweden presented to the Governing Body on that institution’s experience of transitioning from college to university designation.

The Committee made a number of recommendations to improve the effectiveness of Governance within both the existing Institute of Technology framework and in the context of University designation:

- Expand sub-committee structures of Governing Body;
- Strengthen links between Governing Body, Academic Council and Executive Board;
- Review composition of Governing Authority to ensure balance between appropriate representation of all stakeholders within region and internal staff;
- Ensure that the strategic planning process is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis.

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⁷ Code of Governance of Irish Institutes of Technology, 2009 – [www.ioti.ie](http://www.ioti.ie)
⁸ WIT Procedures Manual for Governing Body, WIT, 2010
⁹ Governing Body University Committee Report, June 2006
Around the time of this committee, two reports on WIT’s submission for university designation pointed to strengths in it having a “Governing Body ... committed to financial responsibility and public transparency”\(^ {10} \) and “the governance, management, and strategic planning capability required for a university”\(^ {11} \). In 2009-10, the sub-committee was reconvened to review the Governing Body’s effectiveness over its five year tenure. The sub-committee’s main findings were presented to the Governing Body and its recommendations for enhancement are set out in the following table:

### Self Assessment by WIT Governing Body, 2009/10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governing Body Responsibility</th>
<th>Self Assessment</th>
<th>Proposed Enhancement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oversee the alignment of the Institute’s initiatives with its Strategic objectives, Mission Statement and regulatory responsibilities</strong></td>
<td>Reporting on institutional plans through ongoing reporting and through the work of the Governing Body sub-committees.</td>
<td>Structured strategic reviews to form part of the Governing Body’s annual plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engagement with the strategic planning process needs strengthening.</td>
<td>Development of KPIs to measure progress of the strategic plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited defined KPIs for measuring progress.</td>
<td>Inclusion of strategic plan progress updates in School/Function reports to the Governing Body.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ad-hoc reporting to Governing Body on progress of strategic priorities at different levels.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Represent the interests of the community of the South East</strong></td>
<td>Regional interests strongly represented, particularly in terms of the university bid.</td>
<td>Fuller participation at national level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived isolation of the Institute.</td>
<td>Prioritise and support initiatives to overcome perceived isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oversee the implementation of government policy in higher education</strong></td>
<td>Fulfilment of oversight role.</td>
<td>Support engagement with relevant external agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deeper engagement with relevant external agencies involved in higher education policy needed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exercise due care in relation to the financial, legal and other governance obligations of the Institute</strong></td>
<td>Governing Body sub-committees for Finance and Audit functions working effectively.</td>
<td>Continuation of the work of sub-committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic planning oversight requires enhancement.</td>
<td>(see strategic planning enhancements above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exercise due care in relation to the students and staff of the Institute</strong></td>
<td>Fulfilment of responsibility through review and approval of policies.</td>
<td>Additional communication and awareness in relation to student services, student activity and academic activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greater liaison between academic activity and the work of the Governing Body proposed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Self-assessment by WIT Governing Body, 2009/10

The sub-committee systematically examined the functioning of the Governing Body against the main areas of responsibility set down in legislation. It found that the Body and its sub-committees carried out their role in a pro-

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\(^ {10} \) Some Comments on the Proposal for Designation of WIT as a University; Farquhar 2006

\(^ {11} \) Application by Waterford Institute of Technology for designation as a university; Advice to the Minister for Education and Science; JM Consulting, 2007
active and inclusive manner, taking advice and expert inputs from the Institute’s staff and students. The existence of the two sub-committees is in line with good governance practice as exercised elsewhere in HEIs.

*Governing Body considered that its engagement with the strategic planning process needs strengthening and, in order for this to happen, additional KPIs for measuring progress should be developed. The sub-committee prioritised the strengthening of the link with Academic Council and the use of valuable findings from the programmatic review process in its deliberations. The regional role of the Institute was found to be strongly represented by Governing Body, but the sub-committee proposed stronger engagement by the Institute at national level. An additional overarching recommendation is that a comprehensive induction programme for incoming members of the Sixth Governing Body be delivered in 2010.*

### 2.5.3 Academic Council

As laid down in the 1992 Regional Technical Colleges Act,

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...the Academic Council, appointed by the Governing Body, exists to promote and ensure excellence in all aspects of the academic work of the Institute. It oversees academic planning and leads, protects and supports the academic standards of the Institute, ensuring the quality of programmes across all disciplines. The composition and membership of the Academic Council is set out in Appendix 2b. The composition, structure and operation of Academic Council are set out in the Constitution of the Academic Council of Waterford Institute of Technology, a constitution adopted by the First Council. This document has since been reworked and a revised terms of reference, code of practice, and composition and regulations document is currently under discussion by Council. It is expected that this new version will be approved in advance of the Sixth Academic Council convening. (See chapter 3 below.)

The President and the Registrar are respectively Chairperson and Secretary of Academic Council. In line with legislation and with the approval of the Governing Body, the Academic Council has established a number of committees with specific terms of reference for carrying out its work—the membership of each is given at Appendix 2c. These are the Academic Quality and Planning, Support for Teaching and Learning, Research and Development, Admissions and Awards and the Standing Committee.

There have been two Councils in session in the period covered by this quinquennial review, the Fourth Academic Council (2004-2007) and the Fifth (2007-present). The Sixth Academic Council will convene in 2010. An analysis of the work of both Councils reveals a clear evolution in terms of the processes of decision-making by the Council, as well as on the evolving quality assurance and enhancement framework.

The Fifth Council first met in September 2007 and has had 26 meetings to date (March 2010). A structure has evolved over the course of the Fifth Council that sought to empower Council committees While these committees reported on a semi-regular basis to Council up to 2009, they now form part of standing items on Council’s agenda. While the work of the Fifth Council is significantly more policy-related than for the Fourth, with the introduction of a “green” and “white” paper process creating a clear mechanism by which policy matters can be brought forward. Whilst this is a positive development, the committees of Council have yet to fully realise their policy development role. The reformed committee structures, that form part of the constitution for the next Council, are designed to assist in that regard and Council has itself, with the aid of external facilitation, commenced a process to re-design and re-orientate its work. In addition, Council will continue to use the green and white paper process to communicate widely, inform debate and develop policy more efficiently.

Part of the role of the Fifth Council has been to develop the Council’s constitution, in time for the Sixth Council to convene in September 2010. To that end, Council started a process of review of its own constitution in February 2008 and has discussed it frequently since. Detailed quality enhancements, taking these observations into account, are set out in the Towards a Quality Enhancement Plan document.
2.5.4 Executive Board

The Institute’s Executive Board comprised, during the period covered by this Review, the President, Registrar, Secretary/Financial Controller and Heads of Physical and Capital Development, Development (including international affairs), Strategic Planning, Research and Heads of Schools, 12 members in total. In 2008-2009 a number of retirements and the realignment of the Strategic Planning brief under the Office of the Registrar resulted in the Executive Board being reduced to 7 members, including the loss of two Heads of School. The current membership of the Executive Board is set out in Appendix 2d. Proposals for the further re-alignment of the management structures are currently under discussion.

The Executive Board meets approximately every two weeks and the minutes of meetings are disseminated to the Management Co-ordinating Form (see 2.5.5 below). An analysis of the work carried out by the Executive Board over the five years covered by this review indicates that the majority of discussions relate to operational as opposed to strategic issues (two thirds of agenda items are operational, compared to one third strategic). A reflection by the Executive Board arising from the presentation of this data to them was that there is a predominance of central management items populating the agenda as opposed to academic items. In other words it is not currently used as a mechanism for debating academic strategy driven by the Schools as much as it might. The Executive Board considered whether alternative executive structures with separate forums for academic and administrative policy might enhance executive decision making. A proposed enhancement relating to Executive Board is outlined in Section 2.4 above.

2.5.5 Management Co-ordinating Forum

A Management Co-ordination Forum, comprising the President, Heads of Department and Central Services Managers of the Institute, has been in place since 2003; the current membership of the MCF is set out in Appendix 2e. The forum has the express aim of facilitating better communications vertically and laterally within the Institute but has met infrequently. It has, however, served to focus attention on this management layer as central to delivering on the strategic priorities developed by the Institute. MCF took part in significant professional development and training in 2007-2008. An assessment of the effectiveness of the relationship between Executive Board and the MCF was carried out through structured interviews with representatives of both bodies. A number of areas for improvement were proposed as part of the professional development training and following these interviews.

Clarity around the roles and responsibilities at different management levels and in different bodies should significantly improve decision-making and implementation processes. As part of an overall attempt to restructure management activities in the Institute, a paper on the creation of functional directorates is being discussed. These directorates, it is proposed, will link layers of management around core thematic cross institutional roles (e.g. research activities, enhancing the learning environment etc).

2.5.6 Committees within the Institute

As with other large complex organisation, the Institute has many committees and working groups in operation. As part of this review, an audit of all committees in the institution was undertaken. Findings from the committee audit indicate that there are 53 committees13 currently engaged at the Institute ranging from long-standing ones that deal with recurring issues and those that appear to be more ad hoc dealing, for example, with a current or pressing issue. Other than the sub-committees of Governing Body and Academic Council and the Staff Training and Development Committee of Executive Board, no other committees had an immediately discernable relationship to the formal governance process in terms of formal and regularised reporting. An overview of committees in the Institute is set out in Appendix 2f.

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13 This figure includes standing committees/subcommittees of the Governing Body, Executive Board and Academic Council. It does not include School or Departmental committees.
It is clear from the audit that there is a good functional spread in terms of committee work in the Institute. However, there is an unnecessarily large number of committees, some of whose functions overlap. It would appear that the common way to deal with many issues on campus is to appoint a committee, whilst at the same time, the roles and charges of the various committees are not entirely clear.

A positive result from the governance reforms currently underway in the Institute will be the streamlining of committees. The Institute needs a mechanism to further review and define what a “committee” is and discern if there is a difference between this definition and the roles of various working groups, taskforces, and other groupings. In addition, and to ensure pressing issues are addressed in a streamlined and flexible way, terms of reference should encourage the appropriate use of “sunset” rules to retire committees or working groups following the completion of their work.

2.6 Conclusion

The self-assessment of the Institute’s strategic planning and governance has indicated WIT’s progress in the past five years, particularly the development of a stronger, more mature sense of what can be delivered through the strategic planning process. The recommendations that are suggested demonstrate the real and worthy contribution that the Institute seeks from effective strategic planning. Notwithstanding these strengths, the Institute is also in a process of substantial change and re-alignment with significant challenges ahead. This self-assessment along with the School Review documentation will comprise several critical documents informing the future re-structuring and the development of the strategic plan for 2010-2014.
3 The Effectiveness of Quality Assurance

Learners and Quality Assurance:
The principles of quality assurance embraced by a higher education institution are realised in teaching and learning activity and through the provision of resources that aid teaching, learning and research. These directly impact on learners. Learners need to know that strong principles guide the approval, monitoring and review of academic programmes; assessment; the qualifications and competency of staff; the availability of resources to run the programmes; and the provision of information about these programmes to enable effective management. These principles should be articulated and properly collated into a set of procedures and policies that are available to learners.

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the Institute based on the seven elements of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG).

The starting point of this section of the review was an exercise in benchmarking the Institute’s quality assurance policies against national standards and HETAC’s published policies. The audit specified in HETAC’s Institutional Review: Supplementary Guidelines for the Review of the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Procedures was carried out under the auspices of the Institutional Review Steering Group. This review included use of focus groups, structured interviews, and questionnaires involving a broad cross-section of staff and stakeholders and sample auditing of documentation.

The latest cycle of School Quality Assurance and Enhancement Review at the Institute will have concluded by June 2010. This chapter was also, therefore, informed by a consideration of recommendations on the operation of quality assurance at School level that emerged from the School Review process to date. The School Review process, it is reiterated, involves—largely through the participation in the review of a panel of peers—measuring the Institute’s activities against national and international standards.

Finally, the Office of the Registrar is currently in the process of a quality review itself—the Office plays a key role in implementing and following up on Academic Council quality assurance procedures. This review has been informed by its efforts since 2007 to collate and articulate all its processes as well as a series of sub-office SWOT analyses conducted through 2009. It is anticipated that the Office of the Registrar will complete its review process in 2010-11. Some of the preliminary findings from this exercise have also informed the analysis below.

3.1 Element 1: Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance

3.1.1 Quality: Definition and Principles

Quality is defined as a process of continuous improvement in the services and experiences provided to learners and other stakeholders, and of the underlying management systems and processes that support the delivery of services. Quality is at the heart of the Institute’s strategy with continuous improvement being one of the five key goals for the Institute (see chapter 2 above).

Informed by national and international policy and guidelines, the quality culture at WIT is based on the following principles:

1. We aim to assure the quality of the entire student experience;
2. All members of staff are responsible for quality;
3. We aim to improve quality whenever possible;
4. We are committed to the principle of external peer involvement in assuring quality;
5. We take into account the views of our students, staff and external stakeholders;
6. We use an evidence-based approach in quality management;
7. Quality is an instrument of organisational improvement;
8. We are committed to the principle of openness, transparency and accountability in quality management.

The above definition and principles provide the guidelines according to which the Institute’s quality framework, specifically as it applies to academic matters, is evolving. They inform the development of the Institute’s quality strategy, articulated in the Institute’s strategic plan, and have formed the guiding principles behind both the School Reviews currently being finalised within the Institute and the Institute’s approach to this Institutional Review.

Translating these principles into practice involves the Institute in:

1. Ensuring engagement of stakeholders within the totality of the learning experience;
2. Benchmarking activities against appropriate standards;
3. Ensuring opportunity for reflection and evaluation;
4. Linking organisational transitions to quality demands.

While these practices will be explored in fuller detail in each of the seven elements of the ESG below, it is important to note the general framework that the Institute fosters in each case.

### 3.1.1 Ensuring engagement

The Institute fosters a culture of consultation and engagement with all stakeholders, especially learners. Learners are incorporated into the major bodies of academic quality, including Governing Body, Academic Council and all Programme Boards. They are further routinely surveyed for programme development purposes and as part of institutional processes such as School reviews. Broader stakeholder groups are similarly engaged through programme development consultations and through membership of programme evaluation committees. A number of industry-academic committees also exist which act to link industry and the Institute in more formal ways. Staff are encouraged to work within professional bodies to ensure that the Institute maintains currency in professional fields.

### 3.1.2 Benchmarking academic quality

Critical comparison of WIT standards and practices with examples of good practices and standards in other institutions is central to the Institute’s quality system. Benchmarking in academic activities occurs in several ways. The Institute monitors and responds to national and international framework standards through the Quality Office. These standards represent the minimum benchmarks that the Institute’s processes and procedures must adhere to. The Institute also opens itself to external practice through a number of standard academic quality processes such as external examiners, programme evaluation reviews and School Reviews. Similarly, the Institute attracts a large number of external visitors to make presentations and exchange best practice thinking with the Institute. This is particularly relevant in the domains of teaching and learning where the Institute is a partner in the National Academy for the Integration of Research, and Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL) project. Indeed the Institute actively promotes staff awards in teaching and in research supervision assessed by external experts. The Institute further recognises the need to facilitate change by comparing Institute processes to other institutions. It has actively promoted study visits among staff to other institutions and visiting adjunct professors to work with WIT staff. International experts have been employed from time to time to assist with particular areas of development.

### 3.1.3 Reflection and analysis

Building opportunity for reflection and analysis is a critical component of effective self-evaluation. The Institute fosters reflection and analysis by engaging staff and stakeholders in discussion around critical issues. Academic policy formation now revolves around a series of “green” and “white” papers, published discussion documents of
differing standing (a “green” paper is a broadly exploratory paper while a “white” paper is a more advanced discussion, making a specific proposal that is pending approval). A number of major data collection and analysis processes have been instigated, for the Institute’s submission for university designation, for the School Reviews 2009-2010 and for this Institutional Review. This reflective practice is also evident in the operating review processes, such as Academic Council’s revision to its own constitution or the review processes for the evaluation of the current strategic plan and the formation of the next plan.

3.1.1.4 Organisational transition

As the Institute grows in size and complexity its structures must change to service changing demands. Linking structure, change and quality is an important aspect of delivering on defined objectives. The Institute emphasises a participative approach to change and has demonstrated a strong strategic focus in that regard, changing existing School and Departmental structures and building new central offices such as the Office of Strategic Planning and the Office of the Head of Research over the past five years. However, this period of rapid change, and the emergence of predictable tensions emerging from the implementation of modularisation and semesterisation, has created a need to revise existing structures. The Institute is imbalanced in the distribution of work-load across academic areas, is experiencing tensions in the sharing of modules across the Institute, and is facing calls from managers to improve communication and integration across and between levels of management. To this end the Institute has presented a number of discussion papers for the Executive Board and MCF levels to consider how to consolidate and re-organise activity. (Current management structures are described in chapter 2 above.)

3.1.2 Current Quality Assurance Documentation

The Institute’s quality assurance framework is described in a number of documents. These documents, their coverage and their current status are indicated in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Scope and Coverage</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Quality Assurance Procedures (2009) [CQP]</strong></td>
<td>General statement on QA and QE; new programme and module evaluation process; periodic review process.</td>
<td>Approved by Academic Council, 2009. This is an interim document pending approval of “Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Procedures”, a substantially revised set of procedures in this area, currently in final draft form and under consideration by Academic Quality and Planning Committee, as well as integration with recently published HETAC documentation (including Assessment and Standards). It is anticipated that this document will be agreed by June 2010 for implementation in September 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guidelines for International Collaboration in Course Provision (2005) [GCP]</strong></td>
<td>Guidelines for transnational agreements leading to collaborative provision.</td>
<td>Approved by Academic Council, 2005. This policy will be developed in line with HETAC policy on collaborative and transnational provision and integrated into “Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Procedures”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postgraduate Research Degree Strategy, Regulations and Procedures (2006) [PRD]</strong></td>
<td>All processes and procedures relating to postgraduate research degrees.</td>
<td>Approved by Academic Council, 2006. This development of the procedures set out in this document was prioritised by the Institute following the review by HETAC that led to Delegated Authority given the responsibilities placed on the Institute by DA and the growing community of research degree students. This document is currently under review with a new edition to be published for implementation in September 2011.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (2009) [AR]

- Regulations relating to undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes; admissions, examination policies; appeals, review, recheck policies; student code of conduct; policies relating to external examiners.

Academic Council: Terms of Reference, Code of Practice, Composition and Regulations (2010) [ACC]

- Sets out the terms of reference, responsibilities and roles of Academic Council and its committees, including various committees with responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement.
- Some aspects of the management of quality assurance at the Institute relate to the organisation of the Institute’s Academic Council. Council will undergo significant reform prior to its next formation. This revised Council constitution is in the final stages of discussion with the current Academic Council for implementation with the new Council, due to be convened in September 2010.

Table 7: Current Status of QA Documentation

The development of the four documents listed above has taken place over the period since the last review of the Institute in 2005. These four documents supplant earlier documents, incorporate new policies and represent an important consolidation of regulation and practice at the Institute. These documents together represent a point in time in the evolution of the Institute’s quality assurance infrastructure; the Institute acknowledges the further and ongoing development is required in these documents—as is clear from the plans and enhancements identified elsewhere.

3.1.3 Quality Management

The following chart outlines the responsibilities of various offices within the Institute for quality assurance and improvement.
WIT Quality Management Structures

Figure 3: WIT Quality Management Structures
3.1.3.1 Role of Academic Council

The Academic Council plays a fundamental role in the management and development of quality assurance policy and procedures. The Academic Quality and Planning Committee of Council has primary responsibility for quality assurance matters, though there are quality assurance and enhancement aspects to the work of all the committees of Council. (These are described in the Academic Council constitution document.) Council, both in plenary session and in committee, actively debates and discusses the quality assurance policy and procedures of the Institute on an ongoing basis and has developed the quality assurance documentation listed above. Council approves changes to quality assurance policy and manages the implementation of all quality assurance processes as they relate to the academic programmes.

The minutes of Academic Council are published to the Institute community through the Academic Council Intranet & Document Repository and thus the wider community is kept informed of discussions at Council. Draft documents are similarly published for consultation purposes and submissions invited and encouraged. Recently, a Communications Working Group has been established as part of Council to consider developing further effective ways of disseminating information about Council and its policies to the wider community and the public. Council has a key role in fostering a quality culture within the organisation; it acts as an exemplar within WIT of a body engaged in a continued process of improvement, not only of the quality assurance infrastructure it manages but also of itself, as is clear from its review of the current Academic Council constitution.

Council subjects its quality assurance documentation to regular peer review, not only on an ongoing basis from peers within the Institute community, including students, but also—through processes such as the Institutional Review—to peer review from external experts. Consistent with the Institute’s commitment to external involvement in the review of the quality of all its activities, the Academic Council has a robust quality assurance system for its programmes of study underpinned by the involvement of external examiners; requires the involvement of external peers in all stages of the development and assessment of research projects; and involves external peers in the development of programmes (through industry committees that exist in some Schools) and in their evaluation. The Academic Council monitors external benchmarks of quality—as provided, for instance, in the documentation available from HETAC, the European University Association (EUA) and other bodies—and consistently measures its policy and procedures against those benchmarks.

Council is a representative body within the Institute and includes academics from across all Schools, academic managers and senior researchers, support staff, administrative staff, and senior management. Two members of the Executive of the Institute’s Students’ Union are ex-officio members of Council. Student members play a critical role in Council and its committees in representing the views of the larger student body, expressed through the Class Representative Council.

3.1.3.2 Quality Management: Management Appointments

Two appointments relating to Quality Assurance and Enhancement in the period since 2005 are noteworthy in that both appointments support the ongoing maintenance and development of the Institute’s quality assurance and enhancement systems and their application. In 2006 a Quality Manager role was created with responsibility for quality promotion and the development of the Institute’s quality culture. This role involves supporting and developing the quality culture across all units within the Institute. Also in 2006, an Assistant Registrar role was created within the Office of the Registrar. The Assistant Registrar has a support role for Academic Council (and in that capacity has been an advisor to Council since 2006) and is the point of contact for faculty and others on all matters relating to Council’s academic regulations.

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14 The Academic Council Intranet & Document Repository is made available to all staff (and student members of Council) through the Institute’s Moodle virtual learning environment.
3.1.3.3 Role of Other Bodies in Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement

Notwithstanding the principle that every member of the Institute community is involved in maintaining and promoting quality, there are several other bodies with a direct, formal role in managing and promoting quality, assuring the consistent application of quality processes and enhancing those quality processes as necessary. These bodies and their roles are set out in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governing Body</td>
<td>The Governing Body of the Institute has a specific role in monitoring and promoting quality through oversight and through the internal and external audit processes that it manages. In recent years, audits conducted by external consultants have reviewed the Institute’s management of modularisation and semesterisation, the deployment of staff and other resources through the timetabling system, and examination system, and other matters related to academic quality. (A full list of relevant internal audits carried out at the Institute since 2005 is appended as Appendix 3a.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Board</td>
<td>The Institute’s senior management forum is the Executive Board. Key management decisions of the organisation are made by this body and necessarily are informed by the quality principles espoused by the Institute. The Executive Board has responsibility for embedding an appropriate quality culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Co-ordination Forum</td>
<td>Heads of academic departments and central function managers of the Institute meet intermittently as the Management Co-ordination Forum. This middle-management group has no clear remit for managing quality, though the co-ordination of activity implied in its title and terms of reference necessarily involves the application of the quality principles (as outlined above) in developing advice for the senior management of the Institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and Department Committees</td>
<td>The Academic Council has devolved certain quality processes to Schools and Departments. Schools and Departments—managed by Heads of School and Head of Department, in conjunction with faculty—therefore have a vital role in the monitoring of the implementation of quality procedures, as well as in the development of quality processes across the Institute. A vital role too is played by School administrative staff who have general responsibility for keeping records relating to quality assurance, administering procedures, acting as a point of contact with administrative functions within the Office of the Registrar, and supporting faculty in implementing quality assurance procedures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Other Bodies Responsible for Quality Assurance

3.1.4 Operation in Practice

The quality philosophy and policies espoused in the Institute’s documentation are well understood across the various bodies of the Institute and amongst its staff. The full articulation of the quality management responsibilities of some of the bodies charged with quality management remains an area for enhancement, though the Institute is confident that its quality processes are well managed and appropriately implemented both at central and School levels.

3.1.5 Critical Evaluation

As indicated above, the promotion of quality across the Institute is the responsibility of all members of the community. This review has identified, however, that certain bodies—such as Executive Board and MCF—with direct and formal responsibility have, while engaging that responsibility, not articulated that responsibility fully.
3.2 Element 2: Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes and Awards

3.2.1 Current Documentation and its Relationship to HETAC Policy
The process by which taught programmes are brought forward for approval is described in section 2 of Course Quality Assurance Procedures (2009) (CQP). The process described in that document is in line with the processes outlined in HETAC’s Taught and Research Programme Accreditation Policy, Criteria and Processes (2005), specifically section 3. In accordance with the regulations set down by HETAC the Institute has also established a set of quality assurance regulations relating to postgraduate research degree activity. These are codified in Postgraduate Research Degree Strategy, Regulations and Procedures (2006) (PRD).

3.2.2 New Programme Approval
The process for new programme approval set out in full in CQP (see specifically chapter 2) is a two-stage process involving primarily consideration of resource requirements at stage 1 (CE1) and a more rigorous and searching review with a particular focus on the programme’s learning outcomes, content, teaching and learning strategy and other largely academic matters at stage 2 (CE2). Documentation relating to the programme development process prior to formal submission for approval is held by academic Schools. The Office of the Registrar is actively involved in the programme development process and advises Schools at an early stage in advance of submission for approval; annual planning meetings between Schools and the Office of the Registrar identify potential development opportunities (based on Office of the Registrar’s analysis of, for instance, CAO application patterns) and contribute to the agreement of a calendar guiding the development process. The Awards Office co-ordinates the appointment of the panel who are nominated by the School and approved by the Office of the Registrar. Panel members are either practitioners or academics in a subject area or practice context directly relevant to the programme. Normally the Institute seeks external academics from outside the state, where possible, and largely from the university sector. The profile of panel reviewers since 2005, described in section 1.2 above, demonstrates the extent to which the Institute benchmarks its standards against those of the universities. Regional practitioners are also appointed to panels where possible.

All programme proposals are required to identify the level on the National Framework of Qualifications intended for the programme. Proposals are therefore required to describe general learning outcomes and match these to the Framework. As part of the evaluation, the review panel’s attention is directed to the Framework and the panel is asked to express a view on whether the programme is appropriately situated on the Framework or whether the outcomes need revision. A section of the final CE2 panel report is dedicated to the proposed learning outcomes. The report also contains detail on the proposed teaching, learning and assessment arrangements. Module descriptors attached to the proposal include detail on the above as well as an outline syllabus, lists of support materials and other information.

The Awards Office co-ordinates the production and agreement of the panel report which in the first instance is considered by the Academic Quality and Planning Committee of the Academic Council. Once approved by Council, a Certificate of Approval is issued and HETAC is notified that the programme may be added to its list of approved programmes. Documentation related to the submission (CE1, CE2, panel report, as well as Certificate of Approval)
is held in the Awards Office. Documentation relating to the approval of the submission, specifically the minute of the relevant Academic Council meeting and relevant correspondence with HETAC, is held by the Academic Affairs Office.

### 3.2.2.1 Operation in Practice

Processes for new programme approval have been developed and refined over the course of the last five years. The Institute is confident in the robustness of these processes. Programme development happens at School level and at times, in practice, without faculty fully considering alignment with Institute strategy. Consistent with the development of its strategic thinking, the Institute seeks to develop a stronger strategic orientation in its approach to programme development and has identified some enhancements with this in mind. Staff have experienced some frustration with the process for new programme development in the context of the modularised form of curriculum organisation. Similarly staff have expressed confusion regarding the difference between the CE1 and CE2 processes (resulting in some material appropriate to the CE2 process appearing in CE1s and vice versa), confusion compounded particularly when proposals are advanced to utilise modules approved on one programme in the development of another.

### 3.2.3 Programmatic Review

Programmatic Review is accommodated in the five-yearly School Quality Assurance and Enhancement Review process, as described in detail in chapter 5 of CQP. The purpose of the School Review, as is indicated in that document, is to facilitate academic units in developing a School Quality Enhancement Plan for a five-year period through a process of reflective self-assessment in light of School and institutional strategic priorities. The Review also incorporates a quality assurance and enhancement review of all modules and programmes. This element encompasses the periodic review requirements related to delegated authority from HETAC. This process is supplemented by an audit of programmes and modules within each School by the Office of the Registrar regarding compliance with Institute curricular design regulations and other matters.

As is indicated in CQP, School Review is a three-stage process. As a first step, the School prepares a detailed Self-Assessment Report (SAR) to a specified template. The SAR is in turn submitted for consideration to a Peer Review Group (PRG) made up of national and international experts, student and industry representatives, and colleagues from Academic Council. Following consideration of the SAR the PRG visit the School and meet a cross-section of students, staff and stakeholders. The Group’s comments, commendations and recommendations are published in the form of a Peer Review Group Report. This report informs the development of the School’s Quality Enhancement Plan. The School Quality Enhancement Plans play a major role in shaping the next WIT Strategic Plan and, therefore, in how Institute resources are allocated.

A summary note of the recommendations and commendations emerging from the most recent cycle of School Review at WIT is collated into Appendix 3c.

### 3.2.3.1 Operation in Practice

The recent cycle of School Reviews at the Institute has been valuable in informing this self-assessment and, it is broadly accepted amongst the community that it will contribute greatly to the Institute’s next strategic plan. Through the Review processes, Schools are encouraged to take greater responsibility for quality review in their own areas. Faculty engaged well with this process but further work remains to be done to encourage a sense of “ownership” of quality processes such as this one. Some tensions came to the fore during the review processes that suggested faculty at times perceive such reviews as central processes imposed locally with little obvious benefit to teaching and research.

### 3.2.4 Programme Monitoring

As is indicated in chapter 3 of CQP, the day-to-day management of academic programmes falls to the School in which the programme is located. The operation of quality assurance at programme level is effected through the Programme Board. The Programme Board is a de facto committee of Academic Council and reports on an annual
basis to Council through the production of an Annual Programme Report. The Programme Board includes amongst its members all faculty teaching on the programme, a representative number of students, and the Head of Department as an *ex officio* member.

Within a School, the Heads of Department and the Head of School acting with the programme leaders of the programmes offered in that School constitute a School Committee. The School Committee acts to ensure (*inter alia*) consistency of standards within a School. Each class within a programme elects representatives who meet with the Head of Department and Head of School and all relevant support staff for consultations about student views relating to programme content, delivery, assessment and development and to identify areas of concern to the class groups. It is the practice that these (or a representative number of these) attend Programme Board meetings. Student surveys indicate that in most cases student representatives attend Programme Board meetings. Student surveys indicate that in most cases student representatives attend Programme Board meetings and have generally clear and accessible opportunities to raise issues on their learning experience. (See the Sample of Surveys Conducted document for more detail.)

### 3.2.4.1 Operation in Practice

Programme Boards within Schools perform a number of key functions for the Institute, most importantly relating to the monitoring of programmes on a day-to-day basis. Staff have extensive and valuable experience in serving on these committees as active participants in the management of programmes and of academic quality. Staff have experienced some frustration, however, in integrating this experience with the new demands on Programme Boards consequent on the modularisation and semesterisation of programmes. The provision of support for Programme Boards (in the form of staff training for instance) to implement revised policies that better align with emerging national policy (in the form of HETAC’s Assessment and Standards) presents a continuing challenge for the Institute.

### 3.2.5 Research Programme Approval and Monitoring

The regulations relating to postgraduate research degrees are collated in *PRD*. All incoming postgraduate students receive a copy of *PRD* at induction and part of the Institute’s generic skills training programme for postgraduate researchers involves briefing them on all aspects of the document. The document is also made available to all academic staff.

The range of policies and procedures described in the document are currently under review by the Institute’s Academic Council through the Research and Development Committee. The strategy described in the document has been supplemented by the Institute’s *Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy* (2009). The Institute’s policy on intellectual property (approved 2010) also supplements *PRD*.

The policies and procedures described in the document have been fully aligned with HETAC’s policies; *PRD* contains policies and procedures, mapped against best international practice, relating to, *inter alia*,

- the administration of research degrees;
- entry, registration, and transfer;
- direction, supervision, support and training of students;
- student monitoring and procedures on feedback, complaints and appeals;
- supervisor selection and training;
- examination and assessment of research degrees;
- research leadership and the institutional framework for research.

### 3.2.5.1 Operation in Practice

The operation of quality assurance for research programmes takes place in the first instance through sub-groups of the Research Committee of Academic Council and, on a day-to-day basis, takes place at School level. Staff have been challenged by the growth in its post-graduate population to implement processes to manage the quality of the post-graduate research experience. Difficulties remain in devolving some aspects of the management of
quality in this area to Schools given resource constraints. The Institute has great confidence in its capacity to deliver quality research supervision. The mentoring and training of new supervisors is seen by the Institute as vital, though it also brings with it certain resourcing challenges.

### 3.2.6 Critical Evaluation

As is indicated above, CQP will be replaced by a significantly different document; many of the proposed enhancements therefore have been incorporated into the revisions in the procedures and processes associated with programme approval and monitoring in that new document. These include revised procedures for evaluation to enable the Institute to gather information from proposals on potential resource requirements, more precise measurement of the match between the proposed programme and the Institute’s strategic priorities, and a more clearly defined role for Council in the programme approval process. The changes to this process arise from the need to reduce programme development time and to align more rigorously the initial stages of development with strategic priorities. In addition, a strengthening of the reporting arrangements for Programme Boards to Council is important; it is clear that the current arrangements for the submission of Annual Programme Board reports to Council are not working as well as they might.

All future documentation in the area of programme monitoring will need to take account of HETAC’s recently published Assessment and Standards document. The development in particular of programme assessment strategies will provide a challenge to the Institute and, with this in mind, a programme of staff training in the area will be required. This programme will also involve training in the writing and usage of learning outcomes to develop faculty understanding of the necessary linkages between articulated learning outcomes, assessment methodologies, and national standards.

The review of postgraduate activity indicates that a strong infrastructure for research degrees exists. Biennial surveys of postgraduate students indicate broad satisfaction with the supports available and the teaching and learning offered. However, the dynamic environment for provision of research degrees (for instance the move to structured PhDs) requires the Institute to continually refine and develop its quality procedures. Issues that have been identified include the development of more sophisticated software for maintaining the postgraduate register to assist in facilitating ease of reporting as well as more efficient management of student files.

The supervisor-student relationship is acknowledged by the Institute to be at the heart of the learning experience for postgraduate degree students. Accordingly, the Institute will further develop supervisory capacity including mandatory supervisory training for all new supervisors (currently it is available for all supervisors on a needs basis) and will further formalise the role of the mentor supervisor. The Institute will need to develop more robust mechanisms for dealing with grievances and occasions when the supervisor-student relationship breaks down. Finally, guideline documentation needs to be developed to support better external and internal assessors of postgraduate work.
3.3 Element 3: Criteria, Regulations and Procedures for Assessment.

3.3.1 Current Documentation and its Relationship to HETAC Policy

Institute regulations relating to assessment are contained in Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (2009) (AR). Attention is drawn in particular to sections 4.4 (Assessment Volume and Type), which describes the assessment arrangements that apply under the Institute’s MAP system; chapter 6 (Assessment: General Principles and Requirements); chapter 7 (Assessment and Examination Boards); chapter 8 (Compensation, Progression and Repeat Assessment); chapter 9 (Recheck, Review, Mitigating Circumstances, and Academic Appeals); and chapter 10 (Plagiarism). For the purposes of this review, these regulations have been benchmarked against those listed in HETAC’s Assessment and Standards. Attention is drawn to the Institute’s Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (2009) where principles associated with assessment are also articulated.

The Institute confirms that all sectoral conventions will be applied for the academic year 2010-11 and following. All sectoral conventions are currently applied at WIT, with the exception of Sectoral Convention 2 (Mixed Grading Schemes). The Institute currently operates percentage grading systems for all full-time programmes and alphabetic grading systems for most part-time programmes. The Institute will adopt Percentage only grading on all programmes from September 2010.

Assessment and Standards will be fully implemented at the Institute for the academic year 2010-2011 and all sectoral conventions will be adopted by September 2010. The AR document for 2010-11 will incorporate, where appropriate, protocols and guidelines as set out in Assessment and Standards document, subject to certain transition arrangements.

3.3.2 Examination Boards

Chapter 7 of AR sets out in detail the remit of the board of examiners, the functions of examiners within that board, and the arrangements for the consideration and approval of assessment results. Consistent with HETAC policy, and as indicated in AR, an Examination Board meets at the end of each examination session to confirm module marks, student progression and achievement. The Board is comprised of the Internal and External Examiners under the chairmanship of the Head of School or the Registrar when appropriate.

3.3.2.1 Operation in Practice

The Examination Board has been and continues to be a very powerful agent within the Institute. Staff have experienced some difficulty, however, in reconciling their experience of Examination Boards in the past—on which they have actively participated and have vast experience—with the new demands placed on Examination Boards by modularised forms of curriculum organisation. The Institute has made some enhancement recommendations relating to the mechanisms by which Examinations Boards are informed and supported in their roles, though these changes will require the Institute to meet certain resource challenges.

3.3.3 External Examiners

The roles and duties of the external examiner are set out in detail in AR, section 7.3. External examiners play a vital role in assisting the Institute in assuring academic standards and the integrity of all programmes and modules, as well as assisting in developing the learning, teaching and assessment practices and quality assurance infrastructure. AR describes, inter alia, the broad duties of the external examiner, the responsibilities of the Institute towards examiners, and the operational arrangements supporting the external examiner. The Institute has been very well served by its External Examiners and Programme Boards and Departments use their relationship with External Examiners that draws on their expertise to assist in the development of the Institute, School, Department and Programme.
The Institute’s consideration of the management of delegated authority (Objective 5 of this review) comments further on the profile of the External Examiner cohort at the Institute illustrated in section 1.2 above.

3.3.3.1 Operation in Practice

The Institute has been very well served by its 155 external examiners and external examiners continue to play a vital role in ensuring and enhancing quality at the Institute. Staff understand the role played by the external examiner and engage effectively with examiners. However, the formal reporting of the commendations and proposed enhancements emerging from this engagement requires attention. The Institute has identified some enhancements relating to further support for external examiners and relating to the changing roles external examiners have to play in the context of reformed curriculum organisation at WIT.

3.3.4 Review, Recheck and Appeals

The Institute is conscious of the centrality of assessment and examination to the learning process. With this in mind, the Institute is committed to ensuring that students receive timely and constructive feedback as a result of each assessment or examination, better to support their learning. The Institute is further committed to ensuring that assessment and decisions about assessment are conducted fairly and in accordance with its regulations and policies. Accordingly, the Institute has developed processes that permit students review examination scripts, request numerical recalculations of marks, and appeal results. These are set out in detail in Chapter 9 of AR.

Analysis of records of examination appeals since 2005 reveal no clear patterns. While the number of appellants has increased, it has not done so uniformly and it is unclear what reasons informed appeals. The number of appeals upheld has remained broadly static, despite fluctuations in the overall number of appeals coming forward. Analysis of the appeals data indicates, perhaps, confusion on the part of students about the process and that it is often used as a means of generating feedback on performance. This is addressed in the critical evaluation and enhancement recommendations associated with this Objective.

3.3.4.1 Operation in Practice

The Institute is confident that the quality assurance arrangements as they relate to assessment are such that students are assessed in a fair and transparent manner, and that the processes exist for students to appeal decisions that seem to be unfair. In practice, these formal processes are related to less formal processes of feedback to students with which staff of the Institute engage. The Institute continues to develop the means by which students are given feedback in the best interest of supporting their learning.

3.3.5 Publication of Information about Assessment

While the Institute agrees with the principles relating to the provision of information regarding assessment, there is no corresponding section in Institute regulations relating to public information about assessment. The Institute does not issue guidelines here beyond a requirement—made as a recommendation arising from programme review and validation—that programme handbooks are issued for all students. It is notable that student surveys indicate that students are broadly satisfied with the information on assessment that they receive (see Sample of Surveys Conducted document).

3.3.5.1 Operation in Practice

Students are well-informed on all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment relating to their programmes of study by faculty and other support staff. The information, however, remains un-codified and is largely disseminated locally. The development of best-practice guidelines in this area has been identified as an enhancement by the Institute.
3.3.6 Critical Evaluation

The Institute is confident that its regulations relating to assessment are consistently applied by its Examination Boards and is confident that the consistent implementation of regulations ensures learners are assessed in a manner that is open, transparent and fair. The Institute sees its examination regulations and practices affirmed by HETAC’s Assessment and Standards. Nonetheless, the Institute’s review under this element of Objective 3 has indicated some areas for enhancement.

**Consistent with the recommendations emerging elsewhere, there is a need for greater clarity around the reporting arrangements from formal bodies within Schools—such as Examination Boards and Programme Boards—and the Academic Council. A more formal, scheduled submission of Annual Programme Board reports will assist in bringing to Council’s attention emerging concerns from Programme Boards as well as providing a mechanism for Council to make comments and recommendations back to Boards. The external examiner’s role in the process could also be strengthened. Recently revised regulations identify ways in which the reporting role of the external examiner, and the onward reporting of recommendations and actions, will be strengthened. The Institute has been guided in its thinking on matters related to external examiners in part by HETAC’s recently published Effective Practice Guidelines for External Examining. The template for external examiner reports therefore has been revised in the light of this policy. The Institute will also develop guideline documents and training programmes not just for external examiners—as recommended in the policy—but also for examination boards, better to ensure consistency across the Institute.**

The Institute has at its disposal a body of statistical information relating to examination performance that has not routinely been utilised by Schools in their regular review of their programmes. It is recommended that this information is used more widely and made available to external examiners to assist them in reviewing the programme. Academic Council itself should also consider the information, better to facilitate Schools in their analysis of it. Learner satisfaction data is not a data set gathered by the Institute, at least not formally. It will be necessary for the coming period to gather information from learners more formally.

The Institute has a robust and efficient system for handling appeals, reviews and rechecks. It has been noted that learners seem to regard the appeals process, however, as a mechanism for receiving feedback on their assessments; developments in the Institute’s appeals and related processes will be set in the context of efforts to ensure there are appropriate means by which learners can receive timely and comprehensive feedback. Reports on the appeals, review and recheck processes in general should be available to the Academic Council. It is important that the Institute continues to ensure the involvement of Academic Council in interrogating learner concerns as expressed through these processes and responding to them.

The Institute fully supports the need to publish clear information on assessment—this is pedagogical best practice and in the best interests of learners. Guidelines will be developed for Schools on publishing assessment strategies and programme-level learning outcomes matched to the National Framework of Qualifications, as a minimum.
3.4 Element 4: Qualifications & Competency of Teaching Staff

3.4.1 Appointment of Staff and Allocation of Duties

All staff at the Institute are recruited according to Department of Education guidelines. The staff qualifications-level profile of the Institute is set out in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Doctoral Qualification</th>
<th>Masters-level Qualification</th>
<th>Other (incl Professional)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Staff Qualifications Profile

Advertisements, job description and selection criteria are devised by the relevant academic Head in consultation with the HR Office. Selection criteria reflect the relevant qualifications, experience, skills, knowledge and abilities required for each post. Normally the relevant academic Head (either Head of Department or Head of School, and often both) is a member of the interview board selecting the candidate. The board normally also comprises senior academics with direct experience in the subject area and professionals with experience of working in the area or in a related area.

Staff are allocated teaching and other duties by the relevant Head of Department based on experience, competence and qualifications. This allocation is reviewed on a semester-by-semester basis by the Head of Department.

3.4.2 Feedback to Staff

Staff routinely receive feedback from learners on an informal basis in-class. Formal feedback from students is collected through Programme Boards, of which students are members. Learner feedback is also collated in Annual Programme Board Reports from individual Programme Boards. Learner representatives are members of the Institute’s Academic Council and Governing Body and any substantive student concerns are tabled at meetings of those bodies.

Within some Schools formal learner feedback is gathered through module feedback forms. This practice is not widespread, however. National agreements require the operation of a paper-based system. This presents a significant logistical challenge in an institution of this size. However, the utilisation of these nationally-agreed mechanisms is under consideration.

\[15\] It is estimated that a further 11% of staff are pursuing doctoral qualifications at this point.
Learners participate in the review of all programmes at WIT through participation in the School Review process. Learner representatives are consulted during one session during the site visit, as well as participating through Programme Boards and other forums in the preparation of the School’s self-assessment report. A learner representative from outside the Institute sits on the peer-review group charged with reviewing the work of the School.

3.4.3 Staff Training and Development

The Institute invests 3% of its payroll costs in staff development; the Institute views its staff as its most important and valuable resource.

In January 2007, a Continuing Professional Development Co-ordinator was appointed to co-ordinate central provision of training, liaising with line managers and maintaining effective open lines of communication with staff. To consolidate the link between the key priorities outlined in the Institute’s strategic plan, various staff focus groups with external facilitation took place and the WIT Staff Development and Training Strategy and Plan 2007–10 was launched in September 2007.

Since 2007, the following initiatives, in line with the strategy, have taken place:

- The support programme for new staff members has been extended;
- A programme of training for management at middle and senior levels has taken place;
- A programme of training for all staff in base-line computer literacy has been introduced;
- Academic staff have been encouraged to engage in research and scholarship in teaching and learning through, amongst other things, short programmes in practical pedagogy, academic writing and others and through the provision of relevant modules on the Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education;
- The Institute continues to commit significant resources to support the development of staff qualifications, as well as to support conference attendance and other professional development opportunities.

Staff training and development provision is reviewed by the Training and Development Committee which reports annually to the Executive Board on the achievements to date and the planned activities for the future.

3.4.4 Operation in Practice

The Institute community is made up of staff of very high calibre. Through Schools and other units, the Institute continues—within serious resource constraints—to support those staff in their development as teachers and researchers.

3.4.5 Critical Evaluation

School Review Peer Review Groups uniformly commended the Institute’s staff for their clear commitment to learners, to research, and to continuous personal and professional development manifesting itself in their pursuit of research degrees and other qualifications. The Institute needs to capture the full profile of staff qualifications and to invest in a system that will allow it to do so. This will make easier the process of commenting on the staff profile presented as part of programme evaluations and other quality review processes.
3.5 Element 5: Resources Available for Support of Student Learning

3.5.1 Available Supports for Student Learning

Described below are the services within the Institute dedicated to the support of student learning. These support services are subject to regular review as individual units, in some cases by external peers, as well as through processes such as the Internal Audit process and Institutional Review, as is described in the commentary below. The Institute has ambitious development plans for its student support services over the coming period, consistent with the theme identified in the Institute’s strategy of empowering a distinctive learner. The development plans of some of the units are also described below.

3.5.1.1 Library Resources

WIT operates two libraries, the main Luke Wadding Library, on the Cork Road campus, and a branch library on the College Street campus. Currently, there are over 170,000 items in the library collections. Over 15,000 online full-text academic are complemented by 497 print journal titles. Students may also access 26 online databases. WIT operates as both a requesting and supplying library for Inter-Library Loans.

The libraries on both campuses function also as learning centres. In the Luke Wadding Library there are over 200 PC workstations as well as postgraduate facilities including two designated suites with work stations, computers and telephone connections. Ancillary facilities also in the Luke Wadding Library include a display area, dedicated training room, assistive technology room, academic staff reading room, and seminar rooms.

Over one third of the library staff hold postgraduate library qualifications with some staff in addition holding postgraduate teaching and learning qualifications. These skills are applied in the library’s Learning Support Centre which offers induction and orientation programmes to all new library users and also gives tailored programmes throughout the year to enable students to get the best use from the library resources in their areas of research and study. Remote users are supported through online and telephone renewals and remote access to online databases and the library catalogue. Online book suggestions, book ordering and Inter-Library Loan facilities are available through the library website.

The library utilises data gathered through the following mechanisms to inform reviews of its provision of student support:

- Academic Liaison Team
- User surveys
- Questionnaires at learning support sessions
- Consultation with lecturers and other library users regarding journal titles
- Reflective feedback from library staff
- Stock-takes
- Usage statistics
- Meebo Instant Messaging

Feedback through the above has been largely positive and has resulted in action. For instance, feedback from lecturers has resulted in the cessation of subscriptions to certain journal titles, while the opening hours of the library have been extended in line with student requests.

The library benchmarks itself against other similar services elsewhere through the involvement of staff in professional networks, conferences and discussion lists.
The library’s development plans are articulated in its annual plan and its collection development plan. The staff of the library continue to engage with and support the Institute’s E-Learning project and other learning support programmes.

3.5.1.2 IT Resources

The following IT resources are available to students in all cases for class-based work and in some cases also for open-access learning:

- There are 558 PCs in the Institute’s Walton IT Building. There are 200 PCs in the Luke Wadding Library;
- There are 1,200 other PCs (as well as a number of Macintosh computers) in other dedicated labs;
- The Institute provides 100 wireless access points;
- All students receive a Novell account and network drive on registration. Students may also wish to establish a WIT gmail account;
- All students have a Moodle account created for them on registration.

No formal systems exist within Computer Services to review the effectiveness of services, but an abundance of opportunity is provided through the participation of the IT Manager and others from Computer Services in committees within the Institute and in various operational groups. Service calls to the service desk and elsewhere are reviewed by technicians who identify common problems across the Institute community.

3.5.1.3 Administrative Support

The first point of contact for students with general queries is the Reception Desk service at both the Main campus and College Street. Students receive information from Reception on grants, fees, their registration status, the admissions process to the Institute, examinations, awards, and related areas.

Administrative queries relating to their programme of study are dealt with directly by the relevant School office. The submission of continuous assessment, for instance, is in some cases through School offices.

Core administration within the Institute has been subject to several recent reviews, including some aspects of Governing Body-sponsored internal audits (see Appendix 3a for a list of those audits). The core administrative functions within the Institute are currently engaged in a quality review as part of a larger review of the Office of the Registrar. This review will conclude in 2010-11.

3.5.1.4 Learner Services: Student Life and Learning

Programme-related supports for students are almost always delivered by the relevant academic School. The first point of contact naturally for any requests for support is the relevant member of faculty. Schools additionally provide tutorial and other support where possible and necessary.

Students may also avail of assistance from the Student Life and Learning (SLL) office for subject-specific support in certain circumstances. Specifically SLL makes available study skills and examination preparations workshops and supports the Maths Learning Centre but also offers support in other discipline areas. The student induction process, a process that takes place in two phases through year one, has been designed also in part to support students’ academic development.

Central support services are administered by SLL. Services available to students include the services of the chaplain, the counselling service, the Institute nurse and medical centre. Learners may also avail of the services of the Careers Office for assistance with career planning and in identifying employment opportunities.

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16 Until the beginning of the academic year 2009-10, SLL was known as CHART, the Centre for Helping Access, Retention and Teaching.
It should be noted that part-time students usually cannot avail of the full range of student support services, particularly students who attend programmes after office hours. The resources associated with providing a full range of student support services that would cater for part-time as well as full-time learners is a considerable challenge.

Learner support needs are captured in the first instance through surveys carried out through the Quality Office, the Support for Teaching and Learning subcommittee of Academic Council, the Careers Office and other bodies. Support services also capture learner satisfaction at service level through student surveys, evaluation forms and by liaison with the Students’ Union. Learner satisfaction is also gauged by the uptake of services. In addition, some services engage with relevant external stakeholders and carry out reviews in this manner. The services provided to students under the European Social Fund and Department of Education and Science have been externally audited regularly in the last five years. The compliance requirements associated with this funding stream is wide-ranging and ensures accountability and transparency in the disbursement of public monies. In addition the requirements especially associated with the disability legislation also ensures ongoing monitoring and review. Staff from each service within SLL are represented on a range of national networks, committees and professional bodies where national data regarding changing student profiles and needs analysed and gaps in provision are identified.

A culture of reflective practice and action research underpins service provision within SLL and fosters on-going review and evaluation; the incorporation of scholarship into the overall ethos of the student support areas is a priority for development within SLL into the future. Innovation is encouraged within the services and this proves to be a good counter-balance to other aspects of their work which have heavy compliance requirements associated with them, for instance, Student Assistance Fund, Disability Fund and various Dormant Account projects.

### 3.5.1.5 E-Learning Support Unit

The E-Learning Support Unit works to support staff and students in effectively integrating E-Learning into their teaching, learning and assessment practices. This unit has been established consistent with the strategic commitment of the Institute to the support of flexible modes of learning delivery. Services provided by the E-Learning Support Unit are routinely monitored in terms of quality and effectiveness through the following means:

- Comparative analytical analyses are regularly conducted—where usage and uptake are compared to past periods to see if there is a marked improvement in volumes of users;
- Service calls are monitored to identify areas of improvement;
- Informal evaluations of training are regularly conducted;
- The E-Learning Support Unit regularly interfaces with e-learning “champions” who develop and co-deliver training sessions within Schools and Departments.

### 3.5.1.6 Technical Services

All laboratories in the Institute are supported by laboratory technicians. Central support is also provided to students in IT through the IT Reception Desk. The majority of generic student IT queries are dealt with in this manner.

### 3.5.1.7 Premises and Maintenance Services

The Estates Office has responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the Institute’s buildings. A substantial body of support staff—porters, maintenance staff, cleaning staff, security staff and others—discharge this responsibility daily.

An annual review of facilities takes place to update the Institute’s investment plan in capital projects and to review current physical infrastructural provision. A sub-committee of Executive Board is in place to manage the allocation of resources to specific projects based on the annual review.
The Capital Projects and Estates Offices contribute annually to the review and revision of the Institute’s development plan regarding physical infrastructure. Several new buildings are planned for the coming period, including two major buildings on the Cork Road site, and the refurbishment of existing facilities remains a priority.

3.5.1.8 Other Services

The Institute’s website and Moodle are the prime means by which the Institute communicates with students, though correspondence of an especially formal nature (such as correspondence associated with the offer of a place and admission to the Institute) takes place by letter. The website also functions as the external face of the Institute and is an important mechanism through which the Institute promotes its mission.

The website is maintained by the IT Manager with a selection of staff authorised to make updates to current information, including the Academic Affairs Office, Marketing and Communications Office and some School offices. The position of webmaster at the Institute is currently vacant.

Moodle is primarily deployed as a resource to support teaching and learning. However, it also supports communication within the Institute and is essentially the Institute’s Intranet. The Quality Manager has prime responsibility for managing the sections of Moodle that relate to internal communications.

3.5.2 Management of Resources for Student Support

A number of offices and bodies are involved in the management of student supports across the Institute and with the provision of resources in support of programmes of study. The following table summarises the management responsibilities of each area within the Institute as they apply to the provision of resources in support of programmes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital Projects Office</td>
<td>This office oversees the development of the Institute’s estate and has responsibility for co-ordinating major capital projects such as new buildings and significant pieces of new infrastructure. The Capital Projects Manager is a member of MCF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estates Office</td>
<td>The Estates Office maintains the existing physical infrastructure of the Institute. The Estates Manager is a member of MCF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Services</td>
<td>This office maintains and develops the provision of teaching supports, including maintaining all resources attached to individual classrooms such as data projectors. The office also oversees the Institute’s reprographics service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Life and Learning</td>
<td>Student Life and Learning provides support in the form of direct support to learner groups and to individual learners in the academic sphere, as well as managing the central support services such as the counselling service. The Head of Student Life and Learning is a member of MCF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Council</td>
<td>The Academic Council has a subcommittee dedicated to matters relating to support for students, the Support for Learning, Teaching and Research Committee of Academic Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Learning Support Unit</td>
<td>The E-Learning Support Unit is run by E-Learning Co-ordinator (reporting to the Head of School of Education) with responsibility for overseeing all aspects of E-Learning provision at the Institute. An E-Learning Co-ordination Committee advises on the development of the services. The E-Learning Co-ordinator serves as a member of the Support for Learning, Teaching and Research Committee of Academic Council.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Computer Services
Computer Services supports the IT infrastructure of the Institute and therefore supports the IT resources available to students in various laboratories, the Walton IT Building, the Library and elsewhere. Computer Services operates a service desk for general queries from students. The IT Manager currently manages the Institute’s website in the absence of a webmaster. The IT Manager is a member of MCF.

WIT Libraries
The Institute operates two libraries, the Luke Wadding Library and a branch library in College Street. Within the Luke Wadding Library a range of other student support services are provided. The Librarian is a member of MCF.

Schools and Departments
Schools and Departments provide the main academic support for students through faculty and through School offices. The Heads of Department are members of MCF, the Heads of School of Executive Board.

Central Timetabling Unit
Student and staff timetables are constructed in the case of six of the Institute’s Departments through the Central Timetabling Unit, which reports to the Assistant Registrar. The Unit oversees the efficient distribution of class-room space through the Institute. The Assistant Registrar is a member of MCF.

Marketing and Communications Office
The Marketing Office publishes the Institute’s prospectus and other materials that are supportive of applicants to WIT. It also manages the Institute’s website and Schools’ Liaison service. The Marketing Manager is a member of MCF.

Postgraduate Support Unit (PSU)
The Postgraduate Support Unit (PSU) provides a wide range of central supports for postgraduate students including marketing and promotion of postgraduate opportunities, guidance and information for prospective students, induction and training and student feedback monitoring and reporting.

Research Support Unit (RSU)
The Research Support Unit (RSU) within the Office of Research and Innovation provides postgraduate students on funded research projects with specialised support and guidance for their research. In addition to identifying and providing information about sources of funding for research, the RSU provides an abundance of resources to support research postgraduate learning.

International Office
The International Office at WIT co-ordinates the admissions, administration and support for international students and is the first point of contact for international applicants. The International Office Manager is a member of MCF.

Table 10: Management of Resources for Student Support

3.5.3 Operation in Practice
The remarks above have given a comprehensive overview of the supports available within the Institute for learners. Student experience of the supports available is very good, as is clear from student surveys. The resource constraints under which the Institute operates continues to pose a challenge for the extension of these supports; however, the provision of a high-quality learning environment is a priority for the Institute.

3.5.4 Critical Evaluation

*Despite the increasingly limited resources available to the Institute and to Higher Education, the Institute has built an infrastructure that ably supports student learning. The Institute is conscious, at the same time, that as student demands change—and particularly as student cohorts change—its infrastructure will need to evolve appropriately. An integrated strategy for the development of the learning environment in all its aspects needs to be developed over the coming period with representation from all relevant stakeholders on the bodies charged with developing the strategy.*
One of the principles of quality at the Institute espoused above indicates that quality improvement is a continuous process. While the Institute is confident in the quality of the learning environment and support structures for students, opportunities for enhancement remain. These will be identified through a programme of self-assessment quality review, subject to peer-review, in all units to take place over the coming period.

As part of this process it is planned to investigate and develop a tool to be used for quantitative data collection in student support services. The aim would be to record data from each service that ensures consistency in reporting across services. Connected to this is the plan to develop an online performance measurement tool for student services which would primarily enhance quantitative data collection.

The Institute is proud of the student supports it has available, given the significant increase in demand and severe funding restrictions. Of particular note is that the student support team are leaders in the Institute in scholarship and research into matters relating to student service provision; the extension of this research-informed approach to all areas dealing with student support is to be explored.

### 3.6 Element 6: Collection, Analysis and Use of Information for the Effective Management of Programmes and Activities

#### 3.6.1 Goals and Objectives for Information Systems Provision

The Institute is committed to developing an integrated information systems (IS) that will provide quality information to managers and faculty to aid in both teaching and learning and strategic decision-making, the latter through assisting management identify and report on key performance indicators and measures. Furthermore, the Institute is committed to making this system easy to use by ensuring that it is both fit for purpose and user-friendly.

The goals for the development of IS within the Institute are inseparable from the Institute’s commitment to assisting students to become responsible, critical thinkers who are ready for employment and to take leadership roles in society. Developments in IS have encouraged increasing levels of self-service and seek to empower all who interact with the information systems to make informed and timely decisions.

#### 3.6.2 Current IS Provision

The Institute currently utilises Banner17 as the means for managing data related to students and programmes. This system has been supplemented by BanExtra, a locally-developed tool for interacting with Banner. Administrative offices use BanExtra for most eventualities; few offices interact directly with Banner. The development of BanExtra is a direct result of the Institute’s commitment to the provision of user-driven and user-friendly information systems. Banner and BanExtra are supported by the Institute’s MIS Office. That office is also responsible for the development, maintenance and support of BxExams, an examinations system that largely replaces the examinations system that normally operates from within Banner. It was necessary to produce this examination system because of increasing reliability difficulties with Banner and the system better facilitates the Institute’s developing modular system. The MIS Office also has developed, and maintains and supports, online application, admission and payment software.

It is acknowledged by the Institute that the IS system should also support strategic planning and decision-making by assisting management identify and report on key measures and metrics. In this respect the Institute recognises the standards established in the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) good practice guide for institutional research and particularly its relevance to quality assurance.

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17 BANNER is software developed by SunGuard Inc. for management of student records in educational institutions. It is used throughout the Institute of Technology sector and in some universities in Ireland.
3.6.3 Management of IS Infrastructure at WIT

The day-to-day management of the Information Systems at the Institute is the responsibility of the MIS Office. This office reports to the IT Manager who in turn reports to the Registrar.

The development of MIS Strategy at the Institute is the responsibility of the Institute’s Executive. To assist in this strategic development, an MIS Steering Group was established in 2007 and met through that year. The Group is chaired by the Secretary-Financial Controller and includes representatives of the Office of the Registrar as well as Finance and Research offices and representatives of academic staff. A Data Quality Committee was established in 2009 to review the current data within the information systems of the Institute and to advise on the further development of the systems with data quality in mind. This forum includes representatives from the administrative offices with direct input into IS at the Institute as its members.

3.6.4 Programme-related Reports to Schools

The reports listed in Appendix 3b are available to Schools through the Office of the Registrar and relate directly to programmes. These reports include routine reports (for example, class lists), reports that have been used for teaching and learning purposes (for instance, reports on students’ CAO profiles), reports that have facilitated reviews (for instance, achievement profile reports) and reports for purely administrative and operational purposes (for example, marks entry reports). Additional reports are regularly developed by the MIS Office on request from Schools, the Office of the Registrar and others offices within the Institute.

3.6.5 Further Development

Future development of the information systems within the Institute is contingent, in some ways, on continued participation in the national information system co-ordinated by An Chéim. Two projects in the short term originating nationally will have an immediate impact on information systems within the Institute, the Banner upgrade scheduled for the summer of 2010 and the pending implementation across the sector of the CAPP add-on functionality to Banner. The MIS team within the Institute is fully engaged in the consultation process related to both these projects but the impact of both on the Institute will be outside the Institute’s control.

The MIS Office is engaged currently in a number of other projects of various sizes, including the following:

- Development of the Institute Module Catalogue database;
- Development of analysis and reporting tool on CAO trends and student profile for Marketing Office;
- Continued support for development of a Unit Cost model across the Institute.

While individual areas within the Institute continue to monitor and report on KPIs—such as student demand, research funding awards, numbers of publications, training and development activities and so on—and the Institute continues to refine its KPIs, a sophisticated central system has not yet been developed. Notwithstanding this, the Institute has developed a central repository for general data and has embedded a measurement-based approach to its activities. Academic areas, in particular, are now seeking greater volumes of data for review and planning purposes (for instance the Executive Board recently discussed the importance of developing a “dashboard” for executive reporting). The extension of this practice and the development of a central repository are areas for future development.

3.6.6 Operation in Practice

Faculty have available to them a significant amount of data relating to programmes that remains somewhat under-utilised in the management of its programmes; some enhancements have been made in this regard. In practice, the IS infrastructure is not seen as offering support to programme managers and teachers—the important information available through the Institute’s IS needs to be more widely publicised. Generally, the Institute’s
information systems are robust though challenges remain in aligning IS development with academic developments, especially in the area of curriculum reorganisation (consequent on the implementation of modularisation and semesterisation).

3.6.7 Critical Evaluation

The Institute’s IS infrastructure has evolved rapidly, mainly in response to demands from the internal community (for the IS system to support modularisation, for instance), from learners (for ease of access to the Institute’s admissions and examinations processes, for example) and from external sources (for reports on student enrolment and progression, for instance). The system has now reached a point of maturity and—consistent with other recommendations elsewhere in this report—has now to identify a clear strategic path forward. Appropriate structures need to be developed to support strategic development in this area. A more complete review of current IS provision in the form of a quality review of the relevant offices and functions would provide useful indicators of how such a strategy might develop.

Efforts should continue to build a central Institute database and develop key performance indicators across all areas in the Institute. The publication of the Institute’s progress according to these indicators is important in continuing to ensure public confidence in the Institute’s activities.

3.7 Element 7: Provision of Information to the Public on Programmes

3.7.1 Goals and Objectives for Public Information Provision

WIT is committed to the provision of relevant information to its stakeholders in timely ways. The Strategic Plan 2007–2010 outlines how WIT has strengthened its structures to deepen the capacity of the Institute to anticipate and respond to market needs and communicate more effectively with stakeholders through the appointment of a Marketing and Communications manager, the creation of a Schools’ Liaison service, the creation of an External Services Office and the strengthening of the information database on student demographics and preferences.

The Institute’s communication with learners has already been considered in chapter 1 above.

3.7.2 Quality Assurance of Public Information

The Institute has defined protocols to help ensure the accuracy and clarify of information; these include the authorisation and centralising of public statements. In addition, the Marketing and Communications Office coordinates and directs the publication of the prospectus and other programme information to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Both undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses are checked in advance of publication by Admissions and other staff within the Office of the Registrar to ensure accuracy. These checks are carried out against standard Institute databases for programme titles (cross-checked with HETAC’s Order of Council), entry requirements and details on syllabus. The Registrar formally authorises the publication of the prospectuses before printing.

Where changes occur to programmes mid-season, notices of amendments to the prospectus are posted on the Institute’s website. A newsletter is also sent to career guidance counsellors advising of any changes to the printed prospectus; because of the dynamism of the web-based version, changes are reflected there instantly. Sections of the website relating to programme information may only be accessed by authorised persons within primarily the Office of the Registrar; information relating to programmes to be published on the Institute’s website, therefore, must be checked with the Office of the Registrar before posting.
Institutional Review Self-Evaluation Report 2010

The Institute further strives to produce information in the language of the users in order to enhance clarity and relevance. Thus programme material contains learner comments and profile to tie more directly with the learner experience. As indicated above, the Institute sees external feedback as a critical plank in assessing performance. In that respect, there are regular meetings (at which data is collected) with groups such as second-level teachers and career guidance professionals in addition to assessments of potential students’ experiences at open days or other information events.

The Marketing and Communications Office is subject to internal audit and works with internal auditors to ensure agreed improvements to communications are delivered. Furthermore, the Marketing and Communications Office is part of a network of Marketing & Communications Officers in both the IOTI and HEA networks against whom it can benchmark its activities. Finally, in common with other units with the Office of the Registrar, the Marketing and Communications Office is in the process of conducting a self-assessment quality review.

3.7.3 Information Accessibility and Currency

The following initiatives co-ordinated by the Marketing Office ensure the dissemination of quality information about the Institute’s programmes:

- Copies of the prospectus are sent to every school in the country by the beginning of the school year and to career guidance councillors.
- Information on programmes is available through the WIT website and this is the central source through which learners may locate information about the Institute. A full list of programmes is available on external websites: the website of CAO; gotocollege.ie, nightprogrammes.com and postgrad.ie.
- A newsletter of programme changes, and other relevant information, is sent to schools and CAO applicants annually.
- The Institute organises open events throughout the year for students, applicants and parents.

The undergraduate prospectus and undergraduate quick guide are updated on an annual basis. The Marketing and Communications Office manages this process, working closely with the Office of the Registrar, Schools and Departments to ensure the accuracy and consistency of information. Once this information is approved by stakeholders and finally the Institute’s Registrar, the website is updated. The Registrar ensures accurate information is provided to the CAO. The Marketing and Communications Office checks that all programmes are correctly listed on the CAO website and that all links are live and working.

All changes to programme information throughout the year are communicated from the Office of the Registrar to the Marketing Office and all communication channels (WIT website, CAO website, newsletters) are updated where possible. The Marketing and Communications Office produces a newsletter for schools whose main purpose is to inform Career Guidance Counsellors of any changes to programmes or other significant changes at the Institute. A similar newsletter is produced for CAO applicants to WIT. The Schools’ Liaison team also plays a major function in communicating any changes directly to schools through school visits and other events.

Ad hoc queries relating to undergraduate programmes are mainly dealt with by the Schools’ Liaison Office. Their number and email address is printed on all relevant communications. Each programme page also lists contact details for the programme leader who can be contacted by email. Postgraduate enquiries are dealt with initially through Postgraduate Admissions. Specific enquiries are then forwarded to the relevant department or research area. Mature applicants are currently directed to individual areas or to REGSA by the Admissions Office. The Institute is currently considering setting up a central area to deal with initial mature applicant queries.

3.7.4 Information on HETAC

The Institute’s quality documents and website reference WIT as the awarding body under delegated authority from HETAC.
3.7.4.1 Operation in Practice

Comprehensive information on programmes is provided by the Institute through its website, prospectuses and in day-to-day communication with learners, secondary schools, and prospective students. The Institute’s website is now the primary means by which information is communicated to the public relating to programmes. The website, as is indicated in the enhancements below, requires redevelopment better to serve public information needs in a more comprehensive, accessible and appealing manner.

3.7.5 Critical Evaluation

The Institute’s strategy has been such that it has developed a comprehensive website and has encouraged stakeholders to view the website as the prime means by which the Institute conducts its business. As identified elsewhere the website requires further investment if it is to continue to perform these functions and adequately represent the Institute to the public.

Information on individual modules is not routinely and formally presented to the public by the Institute. The development of a web-based interface with the Institute’s module catalogue will ensure that information on modules is presented to stakeholders as well as current and potential students.

The Institute fully supports the principle of having open quality assurance processes and is of the view that the publication of the results of quality reviews enhances confidence in the institution. Accordingly, the Institute is committed to making available all School Review reports and the outcomes of reviews of other units in time.
4 Access, Transfer and Progression and the National Framework of Qualifications

Learners and Access, Transfer and Progression and the NFQ:
In implementing the National Framework of Qualifications, HEIs assist learners in making informed decisions about programme choice and make it easier for learners to identify access and progression opportunities and career paths. The Framework is also a means to assist potential employers in understanding the type and standard of the qualification of the holder. Implementation of the Framework is supported by a range of other initiatives designed to assist learners to realise their potential and progress either to further study or to employment.

The implementation of access, transfer and progression policy has been reviewed within the organisation at both an operational and a strategic level. By combining an operational and a strategic approach, the actual implementation of policies and procedures directly pertaining to access, transfer and progression and its impact on the Institute community and culture may be considered.

The methods used for review involved consultative forums with staff, with students and with stakeholders, the compilation of documentary evidence through desk research, the review of completed audits of functions and services and, finally, reflection on the findings.

The NQAI defines specific policies, actions and procedures through which it will meet its objectives in relation to access, transfer and progression. These are:

- Credit accumulation;
- Entry arrangements;
- Transfer and progression routes;
- Information Provision.

WIT operates its credit system in line with the principles and guidelines proposed in the NQAI Principles and Guidelines for Implementation of a National Approach to Credit in Higher Education and Training (2004). These guidelines have informed this review.

4.1 Implementation of the MAP Credit-Based Modular System

Over 13,000 students have been conferred at WIT with awards ranging from Level 6 to Level 10 (PhD) since 2005. In that year WIT introduced a modular system of programme delivery. Called MAP, it is a semesterised, credit-based modular system (CBMS) that complies with national and international standards. MAP incorporates the key elements of access, transfer and progression as outlined under the National Qualifications Framework. Therefore, in WIT, the vehicle by which the implementation of access, transfer and progression has been primarily reviewed is MAP. As an organisational framework, MAP can help to deliver the commonality needed to ensure the comparability and transferability of third-level education awards and to encourage the mobility of faculty and students as a way of promoting development of the European project.

MAP is to a great extent embedded in the work of each School and Department. WIT programmes are therefore constructed according to a common standard design. This has helped to ensure that the amount of learning is comparable for programmes of the same type.

The key achievements in the delivery of MAP are shown in the table below.
### Feature Pre-MAP MAP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Pre-MAP</th>
<th>MAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standards of programme design</td>
<td>No Institute-wide policy or standards—depended on the designers and the evaluation panel.</td>
<td>WIT policy defined by MAP—compliant with ECTS credits and time allocation specified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject/module design</td>
<td>As above—subject size seemed to depend on perceptions of subject’s relative importance.</td>
<td>Standard module size of five credits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of concurrent subjects taken by full-time students.</td>
<td>Undefined—varied between one and eleven.</td>
<td>Six standard modules or their equivalent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of semesters</td>
<td>Three variable length terms.</td>
<td>Two semesters, each of 15 weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment load for learners</td>
<td>Generally concentrated into final examinations in May/June—minor assessments in December and at Easter.</td>
<td>Assessment load split into two equal parts, with a greater emphasis on continuous assessments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Achievements of MAP

MAP should provide more choice for the learning community and permit the learner to set his or her own pace of study. It should provide a teaching, learning and assessment environment that will assure comparability across the Institute. For faculty, the system should also allow redistribution of workload to enable research and other activity. MAP also presents the opportunity to be efficient and cost effective while delivering on educational objectives. As yet many of these benefits to the system remain unrealised. In some cases, national agreements remain as barriers to the development of the system. For example, if the module is to become the central building block of a modular structure, existing institutional structures and staff contracts and terms of employment would also need to change. To date, the student funding model—which funds year-long programmes rather than funding according to credits—militates against the full realisation of the benefits of modularisation.

#### 4.1.1 Review of MAP

As part of the overall quality enhancement process regarding MAP the Institute commissioned auditing firm MAZAR to carry out an audit of MAP. As part of the 2007 Internal Audit Plan, a review of the status of the objectives of semesterisation / modularisation was undertaken, including assessing whether:

- Some programmes have become more flexible in terms of the options to take various modules
- The potential for attracting more students as a result of an increasingly flexible programme offering has been exploited
- Transferability between WIT and international colleges has been improved

In addition, the adequacy and effectiveness of the structures in place for monitoring and communication during the ongoing implementation of semesterisation / modularisation was reviewed.

The audit generated the range of recommendations outlined in the “Towards a Quality Enhancement Plan” document and their attainment provides a measure of evaluation for this review. The overall conclusion of the audit recognised that significant progress had been made in implementing semesterisation/modularisation. However, the audit pointed out the need to articulate the plans for the next stages of MAP development across the Institute in order to enhance its capacity to accurately measure its own effectiveness and develop a shared sense of purpose. The Institute is currently considering how best to address this matter in order to consolidate and expand the progress made to date. A dedicated curriculum development unit resource is recommended to drive and support the development of MAP.
4.2 Student Life and Learning Services

Student Life and Learning (SLL) offers a range of student support measures designed to encourage student retention and progression and has developed a range of access initiatives designed to make the Institute more accessible (see Appendix 4a for usage levels). The overall aims of Student Life and Learning are to:

- Make the Institute more accessible to those who traditionally may not have considered third level education as an option for them (e.g. socio-economic disadvantaged students, early school-leavers, mature students, ethnic minorities, students with a disability).
- Improve retention of all students within WIT by helping them in a range of ways to complete their programme.

Amongst the student support measures in place are the following:

- Following initial orientation for all students in September, ongoing induction also takes place each semester and is timetabled and delivered by the student support team. Students are made aware of the range of supports available and of the key academic guidelines and regulations central to their progression and success.
- Study skills and exam preparation workshops are delivered on a rolling basis aimed at helping students to master key academic skills. In 2010, a collaborative project with the newly established Maths Learning Centre aims to provide online tutorial support for mature students both prior and post entry.
- First Year Registration Audit is an early intervention retention measure which combines a data collection instrument with a pastoral intervention aimed at confirming actual student numbers, identifying and supporting students at risk of non-completion or falling behind in their studies and providing more robust data for reports and dissemination.
- SLL offers individual Educational Guidance to students experiencing programme-related difficulties. A report has been compiled on deregistration data over a two year period and distributed to the Heads of Department and the Office of the Registrar. This informs decisions and policy-making in this area.
- SLL co-ordinates access, transfer and progression programme and project development activity. Recent projects to address the economic downturn in collaboration externally with FÁS, DSFA, City Council and the UNITE trade union and internally with the Office of Strategic Planning and the School of Education include the WIT Labour Market Activisation Programme and the development of a ten credit module in Study Skills and Recognizing Prior Learning for a cohort of thirty two people who were recently made redundant. Work also took place in other areas of policy development relating to and impacting on issues of engagement e.g. deferral /deregistration, student transfer, service learning and RPL activities.
- The Student Assistance Fund (SAF) offers direct financial assistance to all full-time registered students who experience financial difficulties. The demand for this fund is significant and over the last two years the profile of the applicant is changing due to the recession. SLL is contributing to the national debate with the HEA, regarding future approaches to student finance through the networks of Access Officers, Access Made Available (AMA) and DAWN, the association of Disability Officers.
- Health Promotion initiatives, information and events for staff and students are delivered by the Institute nurse. These comprise of country markets, wellness days and health clinics on a range of issues.
- The Disability Support service provides supports and reasonable accommodations to students. Each student is needs assessed individually in order to tailor the support package to meet individual requirements. 255 students are currently registered with the Disability Service—see Appendix 4g.
The **Careers Centre** supports students and recent graduates in developing and implementing successful career plans, and facilitating the recruitment process for students and employers. Services provided include one-to-one career counselling, a careers information library, a careers education programme consisting of seminars, workshops and briefings on aspects of career choice, job-search, recruitment and selection processes as well as postgraduate study. Employer presentations, on-campus interviews, and an annual WIT Careers Fair opens the job market to current students and a series of other fairs in partnership with other HEIs is also run annually. In addition to a range of career literature, handouts and the graduate survey, the Careers Centre website provides information on the full range of support services and resources.

The **Student Counselling** service offers a psychologist-led psychological support service to all full-time students. The service is free of charge and accepts direct self-referral by students. As well as individual counselling, the Student Counselling Service also facilitates group psycho-education workshops, provides consultation to staff who have concerns about the psychological well-being of a student, provides mediation in student interpersonal disputes and designs and runs needs based information and training sessions for staff. A progressive increase in the uptake of individual counselling has been observed since the academic year 2000-2001 as illustrated in Appendix 4f.

### 4.3 Access

SLL develops policies and practices which enhance opportunities for students to access, to participate in and to complete programmes in higher education. In addition, through its range of Access programmes, SLL adopts a proactive approach to issues of educational disadvantage at the pre-entry stage and it links with key external agencies to develop new widening participation projects and initiatives for communities in the region. SLL has since 2005 made a number of successful peer-reviewed funding bids under the Equality Measure for Women, Dormant Accounts and Pobal in order to develop projects designed to further equitable access to higher education.

SLL also participates in a number of access initiatives, as follows:

- **The Summer School for Mature Students** is an annual event for adults, which offers them opportunities to sample higher education provision across a diverse range of disciplines;

- **The Regional Educational Guidance for Adults** (REGSA) provides guidance to adults who are considering a return to education;

- **The Introductory Studies Certificate** targets educationally disadvantaged and disenfranchised adult learners and it specifically targets long-term unemployed men; women; those with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. Those who successfully complete their chosen programme reach a standard of academic ability that prepares them to enter first year of an undergraduate course. Despite the difficulties they experience emanating from their socio-economic difficulties their progression and completion rates are very good as is clear from Appendix 4e.

### 4.3.1 Early Intervention Measures

Early intervention measures with local schools and communities which widen participation have been fostered by WIT since 1999 when WIT pioneered an access programme for school-leavers called REACH, an access programme aimed at senior cycle students in second-level designated schools in the region. In the REACH programme, the secondary schools nominate students who have the ability to succeed academically but may lack the necessary supports. The assessment for the awarding of places in first year is done by a direct entry application to WIT in addition to the CAO system. Students may be offered places at reduced points but must have the minimum entry
requirements for the programmes being offered. A range of post entry supports (finance, books, mentoring) are available to these students in order to support them to complete their course. On average thirty REACH places are available annually.

Since 2005, over 1,000 primary and secondary school students from disadvantaged communities/schools participated in early intervention activities (Appendix 4b). In addition, 140 students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds were offered REACH scholarships. In 2009, two students who entered WIT via a REACH scholarship some years ago were awarded PhD’s.

Other early intervention measures are identified in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Partners</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior Access Programmes</td>
<td>Waterford School Completion Programme</td>
<td>Junior Access Programmes target primary school children from disadvantaged areas in order to encourage them to remain in education and familiarize them with the Institute’s facilities and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennium Project</td>
<td>Second Level Schools</td>
<td>The Millennium Project is aimed at second level students in the locality who have the ability to succeed academically but who lack the economic means or the necessary social support and encouragement. WIT students (Buddies) are formally trained to act as their mentors and role models on day outings, college and library tours, laboratory demonstrations, project work and additional tuition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational Learning Programmes</td>
<td>Waterford School Completion Programme</td>
<td>The Intergenerational Learning Programme works with pupils and their parents/families and is aimed at enabling parents to understand their children’s educational needs and to encourage them to persist in the educational system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Support to Traveller Children</td>
<td>Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers, Carlow IT</td>
<td>Targeted Support to Traveller(^{18}) children aims to enhance academic performance of traveller children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genzyme Buddy Programme</td>
<td>Genzyme Inc.</td>
<td>Genzyme Buddy Programme is an annual partnership project with an international pharmaceutical company which aims to enhance transferrable skills and foster civic awareness in a group of WIT Science and Engineering students in their role as buddies for local schoolchildren.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: SLL Early Intervention Programmes

4.3.2 Entry Arrangements

The Institute facilitates entry for a broad diversity of learner cohorts as evidenced in the following table:

\(^{18}\) An indigenous ethnic minority group.
First Year Admission - Non Standard 2005-09 (extract relevant to access, progression and transfer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further Education</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other School Leaving Exams (incl. GCE/GCSE)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education - Previous Third</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach Programme</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>887</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: First Year Admission - Non Standard 2005-09

Strong alliances and innovative links have been forged with regional further education providers and second-level schools. A number of link schemes are in place with VECs, including with providers in Waterford City, Enniscorthy, and Dublin. An institute-wide policy is now required to co-ordinate these activities.

In addition to students born overseas, now resident in Ireland and who apply through the CAO, the International Office has been instrumental in the development of cultural diversity in WIT by attracting to full-time programmes almost 1300 students from 27 countries since 2004. These students pursue undergraduate and post graduate programmes in a range of disciplines. WIT also plans to enrol another 320 students from Saudi Arabia over the next four years. Also since 2004, another 616 students primarily on European Erasmus programmes (and a small cohort on international exchanges) from 19 countries have studied in WIT for at least one semester. In 2009 42 WIT students in turn are availing of Erasmus opportunities abroad.

To ensure continued success, the Institute is cognisant of its responsibility in providing on-going support mechanisms for students from diverse backgrounds and which extend beyond the point of entry. On-going student tracking and support, especially in first year, is provided through the Registration Audit process. However, the real challenge for the Institute is in facilitating the full participation and completion of these cohorts. The increasing percentage of “non-standard” students raises two distinct issues. These are the need to enhance the support services and the need for staff to develop inclusive curricula and pedagogies which foster student engagement and programme completion.

4.3.3 Credit: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The Institute has for many years implemented RPL, particularly through the Department of Adult Education in support of life-long learning. RPL has also been applied in the entry assessment criteria of “non traditional”, mature students through the CAO. In 2010, the application procedure gives formal recognition to evidence of non-formal learning from voluntary, community or work-based contexts. Therefore, in this context, WIT is currently drafting a new policy for the recognition of prior learning. This policy was initiated by the Admissions and Awards committee of Academic Council and has been circulated for comment and review to the Institute community as a white paper.

In February of 2010, WIT launched a new ten-credit module entitled Study Skills and Recognising Prior Learning which was developed to meet the needs of recently unemployed Waterford Crystal employees. This programme
has a significant RPL component and its development involved WIT working in partnership with local agencies FÁS, the UNITE trade union and the local Department of Social and Family Affairs. Information regarding this new programme was circulated through the offices of the partner agencies and the WIT website. Similarly, in 2009, as part of a national response to up-skill recently unemployed individuals under the Labour Market Activation programme, the HEA awarded places to WIT on a portfolio of programmes all of which recognised prior learning. Applicants for these programmes gained entry and exemptions from certain modules on receipt of appropriate evidence.

4.3.4 Awarding of Additional Points

Analysis of retention data highlights that students often drop out to return through the CAO. To support this category of learners, the Institute has developed a process for learners who wish to re-enter the third-level education systems having failed to complete a programme of studies previously at the Institute. In cases where a student has not attained sufficient points to be offered a place on their choice of programme through CAO, it may be possible to be awarded additional points for successful completion of at least one semester of a course at the Institute subject to certain rules and requirements.

4.4 Progression and Transfer

The National Framework of Qualifications relates progression with student mobility and is predicated on the achievement of an award. However, progression must also consider the student’s personal, professional and intellectual development cumulated over the duration of the programme. This demands a focus on learning outcomes at programme as well as at module level and a consideration of how the assessment and measurement of this type of progression can be carried out. The WIT graduate profile (described in the Strategic Plan and embedded in the Institute’s Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy) outlines the core competencies and skills required from graduates of all programmes at the Institute and this has informed thinking on programme-level outcomes at WIT. WIT’s thinking in this regard is consistent with the demands of HETAC’s Assessment and Standards.

The relationship between awards is clearly delineated through the advanced entry information available online and through the prospectus. Most of the Institute’s awards have direct internal progression routes but a small minority do not. The students on these programmes generally go to another college to complete their next stage. However, specific progression issues need to be clarified—for example progression routes for trades/craft apprentices (also a recommendation of the School Review in Engineering). This matter is being addressed at a national level.

4.4.1 Retention: Institutional Policies and Interventions

The Institute completed a retention audit in 2007. Following this, an Institute’s retention strategy was articulated and a Retention Forum established. In this way, measures are developed aimed at improving student retention and hence progression in the broader sense. Currently, a range of measures exist which have been designed to accommodate and support students (where possible) to help them engage more fully with their programme and with the Institute in general and also to improve the overall student experience. New measures and policies will continue to be developed. An outline of specific retention measures is presented below.

4.4.1.1 Advanced Entry

The A4 Advanced Entry transfer process whereby students transfer from an external college or progress internally to an “add-on” year of an undergraduate programme, or where students apply for a postgraduate programme, illustrates the mobility inherent in implementing the Framework. These applications can now be made online. Undergraduates apply directly to the Institute and this year postgraduate applications by means of the PAC (the

19 MAZARS Retention Audit, WIT, 2007.
national online system for taught postgraduate entry) commenced. Student mobility is enhanced by the credit accumulation process and institutional transparency is evidenced in the allocation of undergraduate advanced entry places based on the commonality created by a credit-based modular system.

4.4.1.2 WIT First Year Transfer

Over the last number of years, first year students in WIT are offered a brief opportunity early in the first semester to transfer to another course. Admission to an alternative programme is subject to CAO guidelines and transfers are only possible if the applicant fulfils the minimum course requirements, has attained sufficient CAO points and space is available on the programme. This process is reviewed annually. 33 students transferred in the first year of this process and 23 in the second.

MAP facilitates progression within a programme in that, under MAP rules, students may progress to the next stage of a programme without having completed successfully all modules on the previous stage. This has had many positive effects and does permit the student to continue with his or her class group, with all the learning benefits attached. At the same time, some students who have progressed in this manner have found it increasingly difficult to cope with added workloads. Also, some students have taken a more strategic approach to completion, encouraged by the opportunity to progress while failing certain modules. It has been noted that once students pass first year they are more likely to complete the programme. The manner in which progression has been embedded in MAP has to an extent facilitated students in moving past first year, but, where students progress while carrying modules, this masks real progression in terms of the achievement of learning outcomes. This needs to be addressed in the context of the continued evolution of MAP and ongoing discussions about the first year experience.

4.4.1.3 The Development and Implementation of a Registration Audit Process

In September 2008 an Institute-wide approach to tracking and monitoring of first year students in both semesters was implemented. Its implementation involves collaboration amongst academic departments, School offices, the Office of the Registrar, the MIS office and CHART (now SLL). Although this audit is part of a wider institutional retention strategy it is particularly relevant to the issue of “drop out”: students who leave their programme but do not formally de-register.

The registration audit measure is aimed at identifying at an early stage—and providing support for—students at risk of non-completion or falling behind in their studies, confirming actual student numbers and providing more robust data for examinations reports.

From 2008-9 students deemed at risk of non-completion either by less than adequate attendance or performance can be identified in both semesters by academic departments. From this auditing exercise letters are sent to students which are standardised across all departments creating correspondence records on the student information system. This approach is both quantitative, by clarifying actual student numbers, and qualitative, by initiating early dialogue with students regarding their attendance and performance. This intervention is a result of a collaborative approach with Heads of Departments through the Retention Forum. The audit is now an annual process and the outcomes will be compiled and disseminated in semester one of the following year. (See Appendix 4h for more detail).

4.4.2 Development of Deferral and Deregistration Policy

This deferral/deregistration policy was developed in 2008-9. The policy is concerned with the general principles relating to deferral and deregistration and with procedures for applying for a deferral during the academic year. This policy provides clear and concise information for students and staff on all aspects of these processes. The policy is described in the Academic Regulations, Section 3.2.
4.5 Critical Evaluations

In order to build a shared sense of purpose in the implementation of the next phase of MAP (particularly related to access, transfer and progression), the Institute needs to strengthen and further communicate its plans such that they can be measured against defined objectives. Further development of MAP will also involve continuing local and national policy development, IT infrastructural development, the strengthening of the Institute’s strategic information capacity, and structures for student support and staff training. Also, an institution-wide module catalogue in a format that can be used as a mechanism to enhance the availability of student information, to aid recruitment and marketing, to support retention and to assist in financial planning is required.

In order for the Institute to be able to respond on a wider scale to market trends and to comply with NQAI guidelines, it needs to strengthen and further extend its RPL policy and framework. This will cater for new learner cohorts whose formal and non-formal learning needs to be easily and consistently codified and assessed.

The increasing percentage of “non-standard” registered students is evidence of a changing learner profile. The Institute’s policies in this regard are aligned to the national objectives around participation. However, non-traditional students require additional support in order to complete programmes and this places an added responsibility on the Institute to ensure that the resources are in place to address this trend. Equity of access is inherently connected with equity of outcome and this involves supporting students throughout the duration of their studies.

In relation to progression, students in the main tend to succeed and progress if they overcome obstacles they meet in first year. Council has commenced this work with a green paper which focuses on the first year experience. This needs to be developed to a full policy through appropriate participative mechanisms (particularly including the learner constituency). This policy also needs to address any challenges that are either structural or curriculum based.

The Institute has a significant non-standard entry cohort and will continue to prioritise these communities (subject to resource constraints). For instance, useful partnerships have been developed with Further Education institutions and growing numbers of applications are being received from mature learners. However, in order to further and consistently facilitate access to WIT by students from this sector, an Institute-wide plan may be required to co-ordinate this activity and ensure appropriate balance in the learner experience.
5 The Operation and Management of Delegated Authority

Delegated Authority and the Learner:
For learners, awards are associated with particular institutions. In this context, the delegation of authority to make awards is an expression of earned independence and maturity in an organisation. The delegation of authority is thus a means by which learners may have confidence in the quality of awards, as well as in the distinctiveness of the award of a particular institution. This chapter reviews the operation and management of delegated authority at WIT.

5.1 Delegated Authority at WIT

WIT received delegated authority to make awards in 2005, consequent on a HETAC review of the Institute. Waterford Institute of Technology has Delegated Authority at:

- Levels 6, 7, 8, 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications for all taught programmes;
- Level 9 for research in all fields within the Schools of Science, Humanities, Business, and in Engineering within the fields of Mechanical and Electronic Engineering;
- Level 10 - degree of PhD for research in all fields within the School of Science.

A restructuring of Schools within the organisation subsequent to that review created two new Schools, Health Sciences (developed from within the School of Science) and Education and Professional Development (developed from within the School of Business). Changes in structure within the organisation—both management structures (such as changes to the configuration of Schools and Departments) and other structural changes, related to the modularisation of programmes and the consequent development of interdisciplinary programmes, including research programmes—present a challenge when it comes to articulating delegated authority arrangements.

The Institute also has a HETAC-validated Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) at Level 10 in the School of Business.

Delegated Authority was appropriate for the Institute in 2005, given its growth trajectory—in student numbers, in academic activity and achievement, in the organisation of the Institute, and in the kinds of programmes under development. The comprehensive endorsement of the Institute that was the delegation of authority to make awards was a signal of the Institute’s maturity and also of its potential for future growth and development.

Delegated Authority has permitted the Institute to strengthen its dialogue with external institutions; the devolution of authority to validate programmes to the Institute has meant—in practical terms—that the Institute now engages external panel members for programme validation itself. Delegated Authority has resulted in the building of expertise in the Office of the Registrar as that Office responds to the administrative challenges arising from delegation. Most importantly, the responsibilities associated with delegated authority have driven the Institute towards more maturity and reflective practice. This has in part expressed itself in a greater level of ownership of quality issues at School level.

The Institute has not sought an extension to its delegated authority since 2005. The Institute sought rather to consolidate in the period after 2005, at least in certain respects, and to ensure the continued high quality of awards made under delegated authority. In particular, the Institute emphasised in the period a consolidation of its regulations and procedures relating to postgraduate degrees and placed considerable emphasis on the development of a structure for the management of postgraduate degree students in that period (given the growth in numbers in this area within the Institute). The Institute’s policy and regulations in this regard were reviewed and approved by HETAC in January 2007.
The Institute’s application for University designation, made in February 2006 under Section 9 of the Universities Act, still awaits a response. The preparation for this application provided the Institute with the opportunity to review all its processes, procedures and structures. The reviews from that period have informed this current review.

There has been strong investment into research capabilities across the Institute and the ongoing future development of research capability of the Institute will form the basis for consideration of future developments with regard to delegated authority.

5.2 Programmes Approved Under Delegated Authority

Under Delegated Authority, the Institute has approved the programmes listed in Appendix 5a. The Institute has ceased or significantly amended the programmes listed in Appendix 5b. The programme validation process is described and reviewed in more detail elsewhere in this self-assessment report. Enhancements suggested below are based on a review of the programme approval reports for the programmes approved under delegated authority and represent supplementary enhancements to the enhancements suggested in the chapter relating to Objective 3 above.

The Institute’s programmatic review process is currently in train and will be complete before September 2010. It is described in more detail in section 3.2.3 above. A review of the process is planned for September 2010. In the meantime, review panels and the chairman (who was common to most of the reviews) have supplied data that has informed the ongoing implementation of the process and will inform the upcoming review.

5.3 Collaborative Provision

The Institute has developed a range of programmes with external bodies in a variety of domains. These collaborations are set out in Appendix 5c. The arrangements for the quality assurance of collaborative provision at the Institute are described in “Guidelines for International Collaboration in Course Provision”. These arrangements align with HETAC policy on collaborative provision.

Transnational collaboration require a three-stage process. First of all, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) must be established between WIT and the partner institution. Frequently this memorandum follows from a history of collaboration and dialogue in other domains, such as research, and sometimes involves also some staff and student exchange activity. WIT will have visited the partner institution in advance of any memorandum being agreed.

Schools and Departments within the Institute who wish to collaborate on the delivery of a programme with a partner institution with whom an MOU has been signed are required to submit a proposal to the Institute’s Academic Council through what is referred to as the CE4 process. The CE4 submission contains, *inter alia*, general information on the programme, details on student applications, selection and admission, details on resources, information on the proposed teaching, learning and assessment strategies, and detail on the quality assurance arrangements that will apply. This proposal is reviewed by a panel involving external peer reviewers, in line with the general principles of quality assurance outlined above.

Following the approval of a CE4 proposal, a School may proceed to make a formal activity agreement with the partner college. This activity agreement specifies the arrangements for the overall management of the programme, as well as incorporating details agreed as part of the CE4 process.

5.4 National and International Comparability of Awards Standards

The Institute ensures the comparability and compatibility of its awards with national and international standards in a number of ways.
First of all, all review panels—either for programme accreditation purposes or for School and programmatic review—include academic specialists from Ireland and, often, abroad and industry practitioners. This ensures that best national and international practice is brought to bear on programme development as well as on the periodic review of programmes. The profile of reviewers suggests that the Institute consistently measures itself against the Irish university sector, predominantly, and against international standards (see tables in 1.2 above). It is important to note that the attendance of colleagues from other institutions and from abroad represents also evidence that the Institute is continually in dialogue with other providers of third-level education.

The position of the external examiner in the Institute’s quality assurance structures is described in more detail elsewhere in this review. It is noted here—secondly—that the external examiner plays an important role in ensuring the compatibility of WIT standards with those of other institutions. External examiners play an increasingly developmental role within the Institute’s structures. Through the Academic Quality and Planning Committee of the Academic Council, the Institute has recently updated its regulations on the role and responsibilities of the external examiner (to align with HETAC’s own recent policy documents). The emphasis in the Institute’s thinking on the role of the external examiner is on the developmental contribution that such examiners can make.

Thirdly, the Institute measures the compatibility and comparability of its awards against the published HETAC awards standards in the relevant discipline areas. This measurement takes place at the validation stage and through programmatic review.

5.5 Conditions Attaching to Delegated Authority

The Institute is satisfied that it has fully adhered to the conditions attached by HETAC to the delegated authority to make awards.

5.5.1 Adherence to wording on parchments.

The recommended wording on parchments is adhered to by the Institute. Parchments are published by the Office of the Registrar with responsibility lodged in the Awards Office.

5.5.2 Co-operation and provision of information to HETAC and the NQAI.

WIT fully co-operates with HETAC and the NQAI in discharging its responsibilities relating to delegated authority. The point-of-contact for HETAC and the NQAI is the Office of the Registrar, specifically the Academic Affairs Office for all matters other than those relating to postgraduate research degrees which is the responsibility of the Awards Office.

5.5.3 Consultation with other providers

Through the mechanisms outlined above for programme approval, monitoring and review, the Institute is in regular consultative dialogue with other providers of third-level education in Ireland and abroad. Through research, involvement with professional bodies, conference attendance, consultancy work and through other means the Institute’s staff have developed a wide-reaching network of collaborators nationally and internationally. The Institute draws informally and formally on this network in developing and monitoring new programmes, in developing and refining Institute strategy, and for other purposes.
5.6 Critical Evaluation

The endorsement of the Institute’s work that is delegated authority has been important in affirming the Institute’s strategic development, the commitment of staff and the quality of programmes, as well as giving the public added confidence in the Institute. WIT has adhered to the conditions attaching to delegated authority and looks forward to extending its delegated authority to all levels of award across the entire Institute in time.

Challenges remain and some areas of enhancement have been identified. These pertain to larger quality questions and have to do with faculty understanding of learning outcomes, credits, assessment strategies and so on. The Institute is committed to developing further the competencies of its faculty in these areas and will invest in appropriate staff training in the coming period.

The Institute is outward-facing and has engaged proactively for mutual benefit with many external bodies, including bodies abroad. The Institute is conscious of its responsibilities with regard to delegated authority when it comes to collaborative provision and will continue to refine its regulations to ensure these responsibilities are articulated and clearly met.
6 Recommendations for Enhancement and Improvement

Learners and the Institute
This review places the learner at the centre of the Institute’s activities. In particular, quality enhancements are focused on the learner experience. In this respect all aspects of the learner engagement with the Institute, from initial contact to life engagement, should be subject to enhancement.

Since 2005, considerable changes have occurred at Waterford Institute of Technology including significant growth in student numbers and a changing student profile, the implementation of modularisation and semesterisation, dramatic growth in research activity, and the opening of new buildings and the refurbishment of others. In addition, the Institute’s six Schools have undergone major periodic review during the past year and the current strategic plan is nearing its end. Because of these and other important changes in the external environment, the institutional review comes at a critically important time in the Institute’s development.

The comprehensive approach adopted by the Institute to self-evaluation has enabled it to take stock of the impact that these changes have had on the Institute as reflected in the student journey and experience at all stages in the student lifecycle.

In this final section of the report therefore the major findings of the review are examined and the proposed enhancements from the self-evaluation are mapped to the following stages of the student cycle:

i. Pre-entry and Enrolment;
ii. Transition into the Institute, Retention and Progression;
iii. The Student Experience of Programmes, Teaching, Learning and Assessment;

In keeping with international good practice in academic quality management, this review process is enhancement-led. The enhancement orientation recognises that all activities are capable of future improvement, notwithstanding strengths that have already been developed. Recommendations therefore in the text below are highlighted. This reflects the Institute’s attempt to identify potential avenues of development and enhancement.

6.1 Pre-Entry and Enrolment
The Institute has a profile regionally, nationally and—increasingly—internationally as a leader in the provision of higher education and in research. The growth in student numbers in recent years, and particularly the growth in the numbers of research and other postgraduate students, as well as the significant growth in recruitment of international students, endorses the Institute’s leadership position and confirms the quality and currency of the Institute’s programmes of study. This has further been confirmed by the regular self-assessment exercises conducted by the Schools within the Institute and by processes at Institute level such as this current institutional review. The Institute has aligned its programmes of study with the National Framework of Qualifications and is fully compliant with the regulations relating to higher education provision as set out by HETAC. Many of the Institute’s programmes have been accredited by professional bodies, further confirmation of the quality of programmes on offer at WIT.

The Institute has done much to embed itself into the region and to provide access routes into its educational programmes for school leavers, adult learners, students with disabilities, students from areas of disadvantage, and many others from the region and beyond. The Institute has formalised progression routes from regional further education providers in a number of cases. It has developed a network of communication with regional and national career guidance counsellors as a means for disseminating information on its programmes as well as for gathering advice on the future configuration of its provision.
The Institute has developed an infrastructure to permit greater accessibility to the Institute for applicants—the Institute where possible invites applications online. Recently, the Institute became the first Institute of Technology to join PAC, the online national postgraduate application system. The Institute’s sophisticated approach to information systems is consistent with its broad support for innovation in teaching and learning; the interface between the Institute and applicants and learners is part of the learning environment the Institute wishes to cultivate.

The central means by which the Institute communicates with applicants, parents, stakeholders and the general public is through its website. The website requires further investment and support and a thorough overhaul is planned for the near future with the relevant resources already committed. An area for enhancement is the centralisation of information about and concerning the Institute: the complexity of the Institute, and the increasing demands on it from various bodies to produce reports on various matters, requires further investment in a central Institute database. The development of this database is a pre-requisite if the Institute is more effectively to measure its performance against key performance indicators.

The Institute has—as indicated above—developed many successful Access programmes. However, Recognition of Prior Learning procedures at the Institute can be strengthened and applied more frequently. The recent publication of the Institute’s RPL Policy will provide a framework within which an extension of RPL across a broad range of applicant cohorts can be implemented. For 2010 entry, the Institute’s mature student process will offer applicants in this category a more nuanced instrument by which they can record and be adjudicated on formal and informal prior learning.

The publication of the Institute’s module catalogue in accessible, web-based form will offer potential students the opportunity to examine academic offerings at the Institute in advance of enrolment. The publication of the catalogue will be a means by which the Institute further enhances its reputation as a national leader in higher education.

6.2 Transition into the Institute, Retention, Progression

The transition for students into higher education and the responsibilities learning in higher education places on them is recognised by the Institute. Therefore the Institute has developed an induction programme to support students through the experience. Included in this induction programme is an introduction to the learning resources of the Institute, including the library. The programme complements the modules delivered across most programmes in the Institute in the first semester relating to the development of critical thinking skills and competencies in communications and in the use of information technology. Once registered with the Institute, students may avail of the support services listed elsewhere in this report. The location of Student Life and Learning alongside the main reception desk of the Institute has had the effect of creating a “one-stop shop” for all student-related queries, from administrative queries to queries of a more pastoral nature.

Student Life and Learning, in the person of the Retention Officer, has made a resource investment in supporting the Institute’s strategic prioritisation of student retention. The convening of a Retention Forum and the Retention Audit that takes place in each semester represent initiatives designed to support student engagement with the Institute and to bring to light at the earliest opportunity barriers to the student’s successful completion of the programme.

The role of Schools and Departments in supporting students through the transition to third-level and in developing and implementing various measures to support retention, progression and completion cannot be underestimated. It is notable, in this respect, that—uniformly—recent School Reviews at the Institute highlighted the commitment of faculty, in collaboration with colleagues in administration, to student welfare. The Institute needs clearly to publicise the commitment of staff to student welfare as a measure in support of public confidence, as a mark of distinction, and as an expression of the Institute’s stated commitment to student-centredness.
The expectations of postgraduate research students are not insignificant and represent a different kind of transitional challenge for many students. The Institute has again developed a support structure for postgraduate students involving Schools and Departments (through research supervisors, research committees and others) but also central offices such as the Research Support Unit, the Postgraduate Support Unit and the Office of the Registrar. The ongoing evolution of the postgraduate induction programme, part of a longer generic skills training programme, is evidence of the Institute’s commitment particularly to this cohort of students.

MAP presents an opportunity to the Institute to continue to be flexible with its programmes and to model programmes for particular learner cohorts. Thus far, for reasons set out elsewhere in this report, the potential of MAP has not been fully realised. The Institute development plan for MAP will involve developing the potential of the system not only to facilitate greater access to the educational opportunities provided by the Institute (by allowing, for instance, more part-time students take programmes over a longer period, for the purposes of continuing professional development amongst other things) but to promote and facilitate student choice.

The Academic Council has undertaken the task at several points over the recent past of interrogating the first year experience. Some of the initiatives listed above—such as the inclusion of generic modules on programmes in semester one—have arisen from the work of Council. Academic Council will further refine its thinking on first year structures better to enable a profitable transition for all students into the third-level learning experience.

6.3 The Student Experience of Programmes, Teaching, Learning and Assessment

In permitting the Institute take a uniform approach to programme design, MAP—at least potentially—ensures learners on programmes in diverse disciplines are treated equitably in terms of assessment and credit-related effort hours. The ongoing refinement of the regulatory environment around MAP will ensure learners continue to be treated equitably across all programmes of study.

The learner requires clear, accurate and accessible information from the Institute in respect of the regulatory framework under which programmes are designed, managed and assessed. There is a defined need to generate a published module catalogue that allows learners access relevant information on the content, purpose and assessment methods of their programme. This also relates to the use of internet facilities and E-Learning tools to keep students up-to-date and informed. The enhancement of the Institute’s website is central to improved information provision to students.

The Institute is confident that it has a portfolio of programmes that meets the needs of learners, the region and the nation—the strong student recruitment to the Institute and the endorsement of graduate competencies by employers and others testifies to this. Myriad programmes, many of them unique nationally, have been developed at the Institute since 2005. The development of programmes has not always been aligned to institutional strategic priorities, however, notwithstanding the Institute’s many successful new programmes in the last five years.

The Institute’s quality assurance infrastructure for programmes is robust and, in line with developments in the organisation and design of programmes consequent on the implementation of MAP, is evolving to continue to ensure the quality of the learning experience. The Institute’s quality assurance arrangements as they are applied to research degrees are similarly robust and evolving—the Institute’s commitment to growing the population of research students necessitates the continued evolution of the system.

At the heart of quality enhancement at the Institute is the principle of peer review. The profile of peer reviewers at the Institute—those involved in programme validation, School Review, ongoing programme monitoring as external examiners, and as external assessors for postgraduate degree students—indicates that the Institute measures itself against the highest national and international standards. As indicated in the body of this report, the Institute draws on peers from the university sector, from outside Ireland, and from the professions and industry. The
inclusion of many reviewers from this latter category functions better to measure the relevance and applicability of academic activity at the Institute; the Institute is confident in this way that it provides relevant and current programmes of study to its learners in all disciplines and at all levels. Further benchmarking the quality of the Institute’s programmes through the use of key performance indicators is an area for enhancement that will supplement the many commendations of the Institute’s performance by peers.

The management of programme-level quality assurance is the responsibility of the Schools and Departments of the Institute, working through Programme Boards. These boards have proven a very effective instrument and are deeply embedded within the Institute’s structure. They are supported by effective School and Department administrative structures. While there is great clarity regarding the role of the Programme Board—as the instruments of Academic Council—in ensuring quality, less clear are the roles of the Institute’s Management Coordinating Forum, Executive Board and other bodies in this regard. As the Institute’s complexity grows, it is increasingly necessary to ensure absolute clarity with regard to responsibilities for quality assurance. The Institute is also challenged further to formalise its reporting on quality assurance matters into and through the Academic Council, as well as communicating more effectively changes and developments (both technical and cultural) in quality procedures and processes to the community. While the Institute is confident in the quality of the programmes it offers, it needs to continue to improve quality and, to do this, it is conscious of the necessity to marshal, review and act on feedback in a more consistent manner.

Learners are well supported by the units across the Institute with responsibility for maintaining and developing the learning environment. A plan for the development of the learning environment—from the point of view particularly of physical infrastructure, as well as library and other services—will be required into the future to ensure effective co-ordination of the diverse resources and to continue enhancing the quality of the learner experience. This will be particularly important given the resource challenges faced by the Institute. The Institute has identified the need to conduct quality reviews in a number of central units.

The Institute is also cognisant of the importance of listening to the student voice in ensuring quality and in the ongoing development of the Institute’s programmes. Thus students are represented on Programme Boards and on the Academic Council. The Institute works closely with the Students’ Union to continue to ensure that the student voice is listened to. The Institute will ensure that students are represented on all appropriate committees.

The quality of the curricula on programmes at the Institute is realised by the Institute’s faculty, commended by peers in recent School Reviews not only for their commitment to student welfare (as indicated above) but also for effective and innovative teaching practice at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The Institute supports the development of faculty as both teachers and researchers through various means, including accredited training programmes in pedagogy that are open to all staff. The Institute’s teaching and learning strategy has been formalised and articulated and provides a set of principles to guide faculty and the larger Institute.

The Institute has at its disposal a body of information to inform curriculum development and quality improvement. The Institute will make more use of this information into the future to inform planning and decision-making. The continued development of the Institute’s information system will allow for more sophisticated reports relating to learning progression and retention. The refinement of the reporting capacity of the Institute’s information system should form part of the development plans for information systems at the Institute. The articulation of this plan is a short-term priority.

6.4 Transition into Employment and Civic and Social Roles, Career Development, Lifelong Learning

In the range and type of programmes in its portfolio, the Institute has shown itself able to respond to regional and national demands, as well as to a diverse range of learner cohorts. In recent times, the demands on the Institute to respond as a continuing professional development provider have increased; the flexibility afforded by MAP has enabled the Institute at least to begin to respond to these demands. Further development of MAP to facilitate
part-time learning will assist in this regard. Refinements of MAP—in particular with RPL in mind—will be of particular assistance in presenting further flexible opportunities. The Institute has invested in the provision of learning on-line and is currently engaged in developing its thinking and its infrastructure for E-Learning. The further development of the Institute’s capacity in the area of E-Learning is important for the coming period.

Demands for continuing professional development stem from the Institute’s strong relationships with regional industry and other stakeholders built over many years through personal contacts, consultancy work, and research. The Institute’s reputation externally is as a provider of high-quality programmes. Many of these programmes have attracted professional accreditation and this has added an important dimension to the confidence external stakeholders have. But the primary means by which this confidence has been engendered is through the positive experience employers have had of Institute graduates. WIT has graduated learners of distinction over its history. WIT graduates benefit from the industrial placement components that exist on many programmes, as well as from the strengths in the core curriculum and (increasingly) generic skills components also integrated into programmes, and identify themselves to employers very clearly as employment ready. The Institute’s high levels of employment for graduates—indicated in annual graduate surveys—testifies to the value attached to WIT graduates. The Institute Careers Office—in collaboration with faculty and others within the community—has been important in providing support to students in finding employment and developing professionally.

The Institute supports national strategy in developing a knowledge economy and its strategic focus on level 8, 9 and 10 graduates—while still continuing to serve learners at other levels on the Framework—highlights this support. Strategic and formal engagement with external partners in the region and nationally will continue into the future to ensure that the Institute, its programmes and indeed all its activity maintains currency. Only in this way will the Institute continue to be well placed to serve the nation and the region and the students who decide to enrol on its programmes.

6.5 Transition Plan

As was indicated in the prefatory remarks to this report, the Institute has been transformed over the last five years. The coming five year period promises further transformation. This Institutional Review process has assisted the Institute identify ways in which it can drive and manage that transformation in a way that will enhance and develop the provision of quality educational experiences to learners. The Institute achievements to date are in large part due to its focused and prioritised approach to tackling particular issues. Prioritising is a central part of any transition plan and the myriad issues identified in this self-evaluation and the feedback from the review panel will need to be coalesced into a prioritised action plan.

The Institute recognises the different types of enhancements, strategic and operational, identified through the review process. Acting on these challenges will be a priority for the Institute for the coming period. However, it is recognised that such action will necessarily involve several steps and the attention of multiple groups within the Institute. The following remarks attempt to outline some aspects of the transition required to ensure action takes place on enhancements.

The Institute’s transition plan to ensure the enhancements identified are acted upon will involve three steps. First of all, in the immediate future, the Institute must embrace a restructuring of its activity better to facilitate the achievement of many of the enhancements identified. Such restructuring will involve the clearer articulation of strategic priorities and the clarification of strategic plans in key areas, as identified above.

Secondly, the Institute will need to act through the appropriate offices to ensure compliance with regulations. This will necessarily involve revisiting the structures through which information is disseminated and responses received, specifically with regard to Academic Council. The recalibration of Institute quality assurance procedures against new and emerging HETAC policies will also form part of this exercise.
In the longer term, the more strategic enhancements identified in the body of this report will inform thinking on the new strategic plan for the Institute. This plan will guide resource allocation, programme development, research and other activity within the Institute to 2014. The Institute is confident in its capacity to develop and mature over that period. The self-assessment component of this Review process has been a valuable contributor to the Institute’s growth in confidence.

6.6 Concluding Statement

WIT is one of Ireland’s leading providers of educational programmes. Public confidence in the quality of programmes at the Institute is high: the demand for programmes at the Institute from learners has grown in recent years, and programmes at the Institute have been recognised for their quality by HETAC (through the delegation of authority to make awards to the Institute), through the Institute’s own system of peer review, and through professional accreditation (Objective 1). The governance structures of the Institute are sound and, given the complexity of the institution and the rapidly changing complexion of higher education in Ireland, work well. The Institute plans its growth in a strategic fashion (Objective 2).

The Institute has a robust quality assurance system, built on strong interaction with learners, that is evolving to meet emerging needs. The Institute—through its Academic Council and other offices—has developed appropriate mechanisms to satisfy itself as to the quality of its programmes and activities and is open and transparent in its reflections on these activities (Objective 3). The Institute benchmarks against external authorities further to guarantee the highest of standards. In this context, programmes at the Institute are aligned to the awards standards set out in the National Framework of Qualifications (Objective 4). The standards required for the effective management of the delegated authority awarded to the Institute by HETAC have been met (Objective 5).

This Review has offered the Institute a valuable opportunity to restate its strengths, to examine the effectiveness of its policies and operations, and to plan to enhance its activities in the best interests of the region and the community of teaching and learning centred around WIT.