

C O R K I N S T I T U T E O F T E C H N O L O G Y

Academic Quality System

BOOK 1



Introduction & Overview

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Foreword

Cork Institute of Technology is a large and complex institution. Its students and staff, the variety of courses and activities and the extent of its campuses, all give testimony to a thriving Institute of national and international importance. CIT's achievements and its ambitions for the future are well encapsulated in our coat of arms motto "Rísam Uile" - let us all achieve.

At the heart of this great public enterprise is the fundamental activity of learning. CIT exists above all to conduct this all-important human endeavour of acquiring, expanding and sharing knowledge and skills.

The relationship between the student and the lecturer is of critical importance in education. Irish and European culture has traditionally placed great value on the independence of thought and action of the teacher/lecturer. More recently, an equal respect has developed for the rights of the student. In modern democracies this recognition now extends to the right of the whole community to fair and equal access to life long learning opportunities.

CIT in its mission statement has adopted these principles and has also set itself further goals of meeting social and economic needs through the application of scholarship, research and creativity.

In order to prosper, teaching and learning need a proper environment. This environment includes resources such as buildings, libraries, and information technology systems. It also includes our team of lecturers, administration and ancillary staff. Their quality and professionalism has been recognised by the recommendation of the Interim Review Group that CIT should have devolved authority to make awards in its own name. The necessary environment for the continued success of CIT and its students also includes a sound and self-critical academic framework, within which the teaching and learning activities of CIT are planned, executed and reviewed. This is the academic quality system.

ABOUT THE MANUAL

This Manual describes the academic quality system of CIT. It aims to organise and make accessible the procedures and practices which our staff has developed through the Academic Council. By making available in a single publication the main academic procedures of CIT, this manual should simplify the work of lecturers. Most important of all, proper application of the Quality System should enable constant improvement in teaching and learning processes.

It may be useful also to specify what this manual does not set out to do.

It does not seek to burden lecturers with excessive paperwork and form-filling. The forms and reports in this document are those which have already been judged essential for the basic planning and review of our academic work.

It does not in general introduce new procedures or policies.

The manual does not claim to be a comprehensive fixed model. It can and should be regularly modified and extended, and all users are encouraged to submit their observations using the procedures in section 1.8. Future editions will incorporate improvements derived from such feedback, and will broaden the scope of the quality system to include areas such as staff development and the use of learning resources.

Each edition of this Manual must be

- Approved by the Academic Council on the advice of the relevant committees
- Circulated to all staff with academic quality functions
- Available for inspection and use in its up-to-date authorised form from Heads of Department and the Registrar's Office, and in the CIT Libraries.
- Updated for authorised users on the CIT website.

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission Statement of the Institute is

To provide a wide range of higher educational opportunities through a variety of levels and modes of study;

To enable students to achieve their full potential within a supportive environment;

To encourage and advance learning, research and creativity for the benefit of the economic, industrial, social and cultural development of the region and the community at large.

This mission statement was the result of consultation and consideration across the entire Institute in the months following the passing of the 1992 Regional Technical Colleges Act. The mission statement is inclusive of all the disciplines and levels of the Institute; it defines students as the primary clients of the Institute and commits CIT to serving the industrial, social and cultural needs of the community and the region.

1.2 THE ACADEMIC PLAN

The principles of public service and responsiveness to society's needs expressed in the Mission Statement are amplified in CIT's Academic Plan. The Academic Plan was adopted following widespread consultation in January 1998.

Strategic Goals of the Academic Plan

The mission of the Institute is to be met through the implementation of the following six strategic goals. These goals are interdependent, but each addresses a different aspect of the Institute's mission.

- Goal 1
 - to enhance the educational services offered by the Institute to industry, business and the community;
- Goal 2
 - to develop the education and training provision of the Institute thus enabling it to offer greater access, opportunity, and diversity;
- Goal 3
 - to further develop the research activities of the Institute;
- Goal 4
 - to ensure the highest quality of provision at every level;
- Goal 5
 - to enhance the learning environment and the learning experience of our students;
- Goal 6
 - to place the Institute at the forefront of higher education provision in Ireland, as a centre of excellence in the advancement and application of learning, research, and the visual and performing arts.

1.3 THE ETHOS OF CIT

The Academic Plan sets out the **ethos** of the Institute.

- A commitment to quality across all aspects and activities of the institution;
- A vigorous and responsive approach to meeting the needs of society, through the application of the Institute's core strengths in Science, Engineering, Business, Humanities and the Arts;
- Co-operative collegial effort to build a stimulating environment in which students and staff develop their capabilities together.

Taken together, the Academic Plan and the Mission Statement are the fundamental statements on which the quality system is based.

1.4 QUALITY PRINCIPLES OF CIT

The Institute aims to meet the commitments of the Mission Statement and the Academic Plan through the application of the following Quality Principles.

a)

Quality Is Central to our Mission

The achievement of appropriate standards and quality objectives is central to the mission of Cork Institute of Technology.

b)

All Staff Have A Quality Function.

The achievement of quality objectives is dependent on the contribution of each member of staff of the Institute. CIT staff have traditionally been well versed in their responsibilities and have carried them out to a very high standard. To ensure continued academic success and quality improvement, academic responsibilities and accountability must be clearly defined, coupled with appropriate levels of resourcing and support.

c) Quality Is Achieved Through Partnership

Collaborative processes are essential to the effective operation of the Institute. Collective responsibilities of staff are exercised through co-operation and partnership. This is particularly important in the setting of standards, the monitoring of performance and the identification of actions to be carried out through Course Boards and other committees.

d) Quality Is Important In All Activities Of CIT

Quality assurance is necessary for all aspects relating to the student experience. The Institute recognises that all aspects of its operation influence the quality of our students' experience; all aspects may impact on both the formal and informal learning processes and thus may affect student achievements.

e) Quality Needs External Involvement

The Institute is committed to the involvement of external academic staff, professional bodies, practitioners and employers in the review of its operation. This is fundamental to the

maintenance of appropriate standards and for demonstrating accountability for the use of public funds.

f)

Quality Needs Effective Communications and Feedback

Effective communications are necessary for the functioning of quality systems and require a structured approach for their effective operation. Particularly important is feedback from students and graduates on the quality of their educational experience.

g)

Continuous Quality Improvement

CIT has committed itself to a continuing process of enquiry, debate and self-evaluation of all aspects of its operation, including its management and academic structures. (CIT Response to the IRG Report, October 1998). The academic quality system should lead to an ongoing enhancement of the quality of courses and programmes and of the activities of the Institute in general.

h)

Monitoring and Improving the Quality System

The working of the quality system itself needs constant monitoring and refinement. To this end, the Academic Council will annually consider feedback through the channels set out in Section 1.8 and will implement necessary changes to the system.

1.5 EVOLUTION OF THE INSTITUTE'S COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

a) Traditions

Cork Institute of Technology is a higher education institution with a long and proud history. From its origins in the early 1800s, through its time as Cork RTC to its present status and title, excellence and service have been the traditional goals.

b) Autonomy

The achievement and maintenance by CIT of ever-greater academic autonomy and control of its own affairs, along with an enhanced status for the Institute in Irish Higher Education, has been a long-held aspiration. The considerable advances made in this process in recent years must be underpinned by a comprehensive academic quality system which is effective, transparent and accountable.

c) Delegation of Authority

CIT received a positive recommendation from the Interim Review Group in favour of having delegated authority to make its own awards (Report of the Interim Review Group on Cork Institute of Technology to the Minister for Education & Science, January 1999). The Report stated inter alia

"The IRG received an overall impression of real concern for quality and of effective measures being taken to put sound procedures in place with a view to creating an ethos to underpin individual and collective responsibility for quality.

Such procedures should be made available in written form as a set of guidelines for quality assurance."

d) Impact of the Qualifications

(Education & Training) Act 1999

Under the Act (section 28) a provider is required to

"establish procedures for quality assurance for the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of education and training".

the procedures established shall include—

(a) evaluation at regular intervals of the programme of education and training concerned, including evaluation by persons who are competent to make national and international comparisons in that respect,

(b) evaluation by learners of that programme, and

(c) evaluation of services related to that programme.

e) The Educational Climate

Several other factors have facilitated the evolution of a more defined academic quality culture in the Institute.

- Lecturers, departments, and management have had considerable experience in liaising with industries, institutions and agencies which place a premium on quality systems and quality management.

- There has been an extensive educational debate stimulated by the National Education Convention, the White Paper "Charting our Education Future" (1995), the NCEA and the HEA. This debate has placed emphasis on finding educationally appropriate solutions to quality issues.

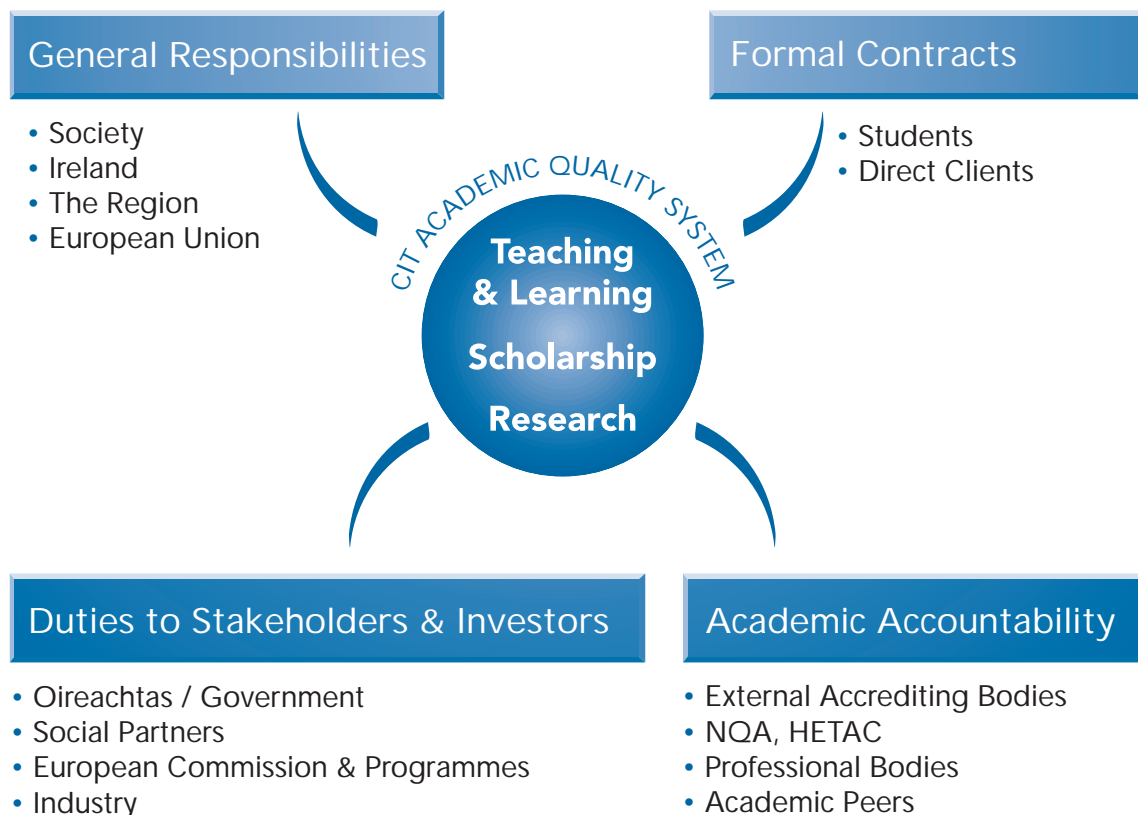
- Successive national agreements between the social partners and Government have raised issues of greater effectiveness in public enterprises and linked these with the achievement of improved conditions for staff. The current lecturers' agreement negotiated under Clause 2(iii) A of the PCW has a section covering quality issues which is included in Section 1.7 of this Manual.

1.6 ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Cork Institute of Technology acknowledges its responsibilities to society in general and to its students, partners and clients. The Academic Quality System exists to ensure that teaching, learning and research work are carried out to the highest accountable standards in accordance with CIT's mission, so as to meet these responsibilities.

1.7 THE RÔLE OF ACADEMIC STAFF

The ultimate guarantor of academic quality is the lecturer. As a professional, he/she is committed to the education and development of students. There are individual and also collective responsibilities for the lecturer. The lecturer's personal responsibility (subject to the terms of the individual's contract) is essentially to carry out his/her academic duties in a professional manner. Collective responsibilities are met through involvement in Course Boards, departmental committees and meetings, the Academic Council, and through many other activities.



The current national agreement between the Teachers' Union of Ireland and Management (PCW, 1999) on conditions of service for lecturers addresses the quality rôle of the lecturer as follows.

"Setting and achieving appropriate academic standards and levels of quality, are key issues in third level education. Quality measurement and quality management must contribute to the enhancement of quality and its deliverance at all levels of the higher education institutions. Each Institute is, therefore, committed to achieving the highest possible academic quality through the involvement of all stakeholders, on a collective and individual basis. In relation to academic standards the pivotal statutory instrument to give effect to this process in each Institute is the Academic Council.

Assuring the achievement of excellence in student learning and development requires appropriate feed-forward and feedback. Academic quality assurance encompasses all the policies, systems and processes which are directed at ensuring that the agreed objectives of educational programmes are consistently achieved and constantly improved. This is the responsibility of all members of staff of the Institutes involved, through their ownership of the process and by engaging in their individual and collective professional capacities with the students in a positive and interactive feedback process. Management and Senior Academic grades have a particular responsibility with regard to quality assurance and enhancement. This includes:-

- Academic Leadership
- Team Building
- Organisational Aspects
- Facilitation of the process.

"We believe quality is best developed and enhanced in a culture based on trust, consultation, team building, feedback and feed-forward, development of collegiality and academic freedom. It is envisaged that each Institute will resource and develop a Quality Assurance Mechanism which will respond to the

objectives set out above and which will not only be effective, but be transparent in its implementation. This commitment to a quality culture will be underpinned by the provision of resources and ongoing commitment to staff development and training.

In setting out the responsibilities of academic staff in relation to Quality Assurance and enhancement the following must be provided for:-

- Peer interaction and co-operation
- Student evaluation of courses appropriately provided for
- subject evaluation administered and owned by individual lecturers and reported on to Course Boards
- Information from assessment and examinations
- External Examiner's report

All staff will participate in a professional manner appropriate to their individual and collective responsibilities in the quality assurance activities of the higher education institutions.

Duties of academic staff in relation to quality assurance and enhancement in addition to lecturing, include the following:-

- Course Development
- Course Promotion
- Course Committee Meetings
- Course Operation
- Examination Boards
- Periodic Course Review
- Facilitation and Interpretation of Academic Reviews
- Facilitation and Interpretation of Student Review and Feedback
- Institutional Review."

1.8 FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

A successful academic quality system is neither a book nor a static set of procedures. It is a constant process which responds to new requirements and perceived better ways of achieving the mission of the Institute.

All users of the CIT Academic Quality System are therefore entitled and encouraged to express their views on its operation.

The responsibility for co-ordinating such feedback and bringing it to the attention of the Academic Council lies with the Registrar's Office.

CORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY | INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA CHORCAÍ

AMENDING THE ACADEMIC QUALITY SYSTEM

FORM FQ

1. NATURE OF COMMENT: (check relevant boxes)

- Presentation of Manual (appearance, wording of text, typographical & spelling errors)
- Procedures (logical structure of system, reporting arrangements, streamlining etc)
- New Section or Procedure Proposed
- Other

2. COMMENT / PROPOSAL (on additional pages if required)

Please refer if possible to a particular page number or section of the manual.

3. FROM:

GROUP _____

(e.g. course board, committee etc)

or

INDIVIDUAL _____

(e.g. lecturer, head, administrator)

DATE: _____ TO BE RETURNED TO REGISTRAR'S OFFICE, CIT.

SECTION 2. ORGANISATION

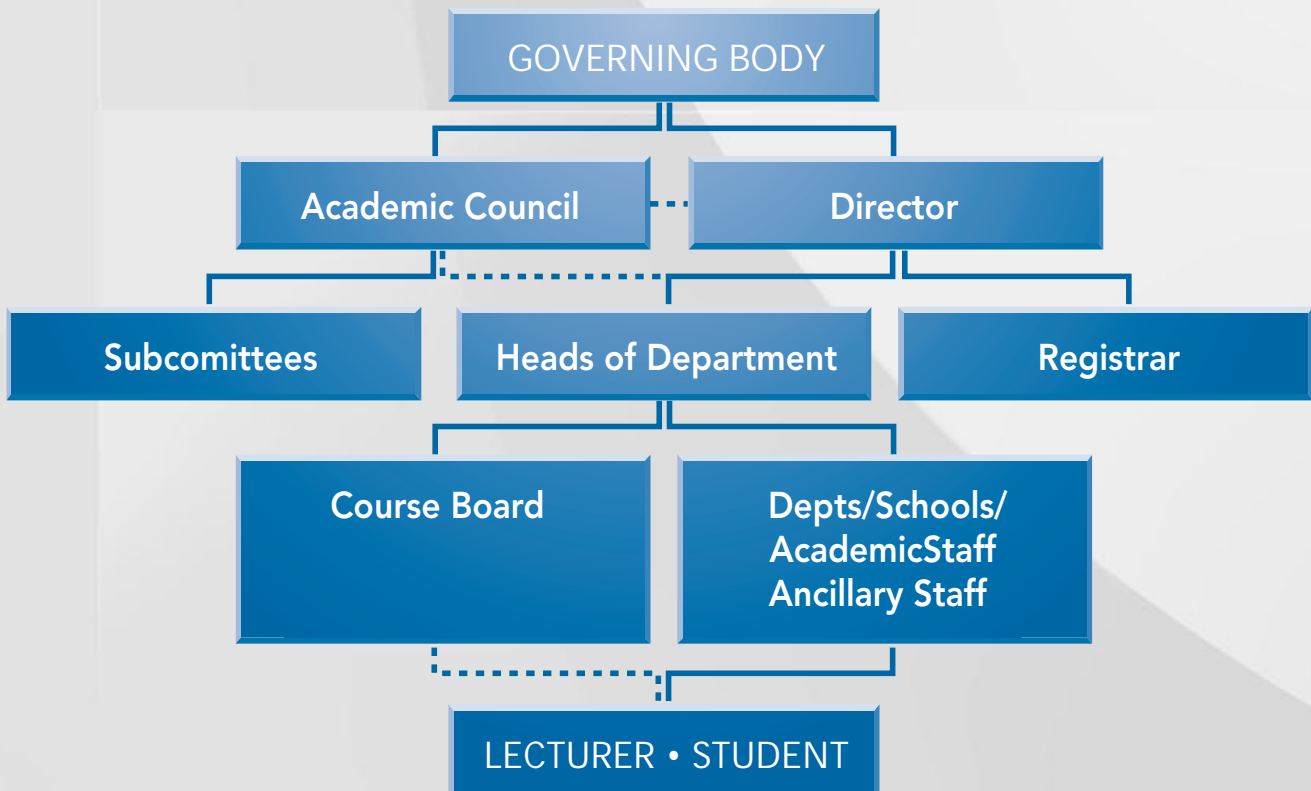
2.1 MAIN BODIES AND AGENTS

The main bodies and agents with responsibility for academic quality in the Institute are:

- Governing Body
- Director
- Academic Council
- Registrar
- Heads of Department
- Departments/Schools
- Academic Staff
- Course Boards

Each of these persons/agencies has specific responsibilities in the academic operations of the Institute. There are also many interactions between them. This section of the manual summarises the specific responsibilities and also the various reporting relationships and interactions.

2.2 RELATIONSHIPS IN THE ACADEMIC QUALITY SYSTEM



Key:

MANAGEMENT LINE RELATIONSHIP —————
 COMMUNICATION / LIAISON RELATIONSHIP - - - - -

*Reports from Course Boards to the Academic Council are transmitted by the relevant Head of Department.

2.3 SUMMARY OF FUNCTIONS: THE GOVERNING BODY

The Governing Body, under the terms of the 1992 Regional Technical Colleges Act, "shall manage and control the affairs of the college...and shall perform the functions conferred on the college by this Act". **It is, therefore, the authority established by law to govern the Institute.**

The Governing Body receives reports from the Director and senior officers of the Institute, evaluates them and makes strategic and policy decisions as required. Implementation of these decisions is entrusted to the Director and delegated to the appropriate officers of the Institute. On academic matters the Governing Body is advised by the Academic Council.

Extract from 1992 Act - Section 7: Functions of Governing Bodies

"(1) Save as otherwise provided by this Act, the governing body of a college shall manage and control the affairs of the college and all property of the college and shall perform the functions conferred on the college by this Act, and shall have all such powers as are necessary or expedient for the purpose of those functions subject to such policies as may be determined by the Minister from time to time and to the programmes and budget approved annually by the vocational education committee and the Minister under section 13 of this Act.

(2) The governing body may, from time to time, appoint such and so many committees as it thinks proper to assist it in such manner as it shall direct and the governing body may assign to any committee so appointed such duties as it thinks fit.

(3) The acts of a committee established under this section shall be subject to confirmation by the governing body.

(4) In performing its functions, a governing body shall have due regard to the preservation, promotion and use of the Irish language and to the preservation and development of the national culture.

(5) In performing its functions a governing body shall have regard to the attainment of gender

equity and of equality of opportunity in education.

(6) In performing its functions a governing body shall have regard to the statutory responsibilities in the provision of vocational and technical education of the vocational education committee."

2.4 SUMMARY OF FUNCTIONS: THE DIRECTOR

The Director is the chief officer of the Institute, with executive responsibility for all staff and overall responsibility for the development and implementation of policies. This is enabled through ex-officio membership of the Governing Body and of the Academic Council, and leadership of the management team. The Director delegates operational matters to the appropriate members of the management team.

The functions of the position are set out in the Third Schedule of the Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992.

1992 Act - Third Schedule: The Director. (Extracts)

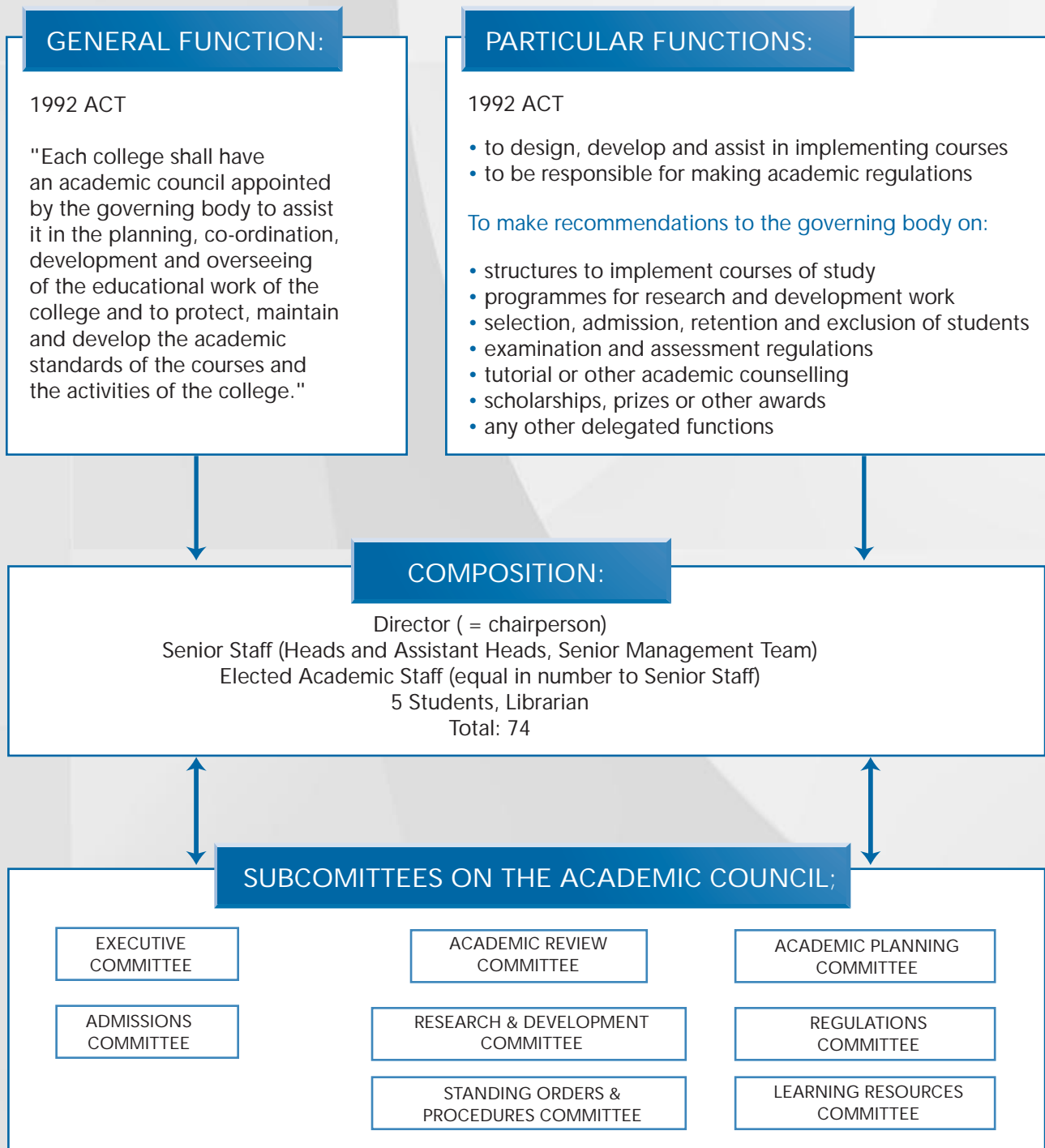
1. "The Director shall, subject to the provisions of the Act, control and direct the activities of the college and shall control and direct the staff of the college in the implementation of such activities and be responsible to the governing body therefor and for the efficient and proper management of the college.

2. The Director of a college shall not hold any other office or position without the consent of the governing body.

3. The Director shall be ex-officio member of the governing body and shall be entitled to be a member of every committee appointed by the governing body.

4. The Director shall be ex-officio a member of the academic council and, if present, shall preside at all meetings of that council and shall be entitled to be a member of every committee established by the council."

2.5 STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL



2.6 THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL AND THE 1992 ACT

"Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992 Section 10 - Academic Council

1. Each college shall have an academic council appointed by the governing body to assist it in the planning, co-ordination, development and overseeing of the educational work of the college and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the courses and the activities of the college.

2. (a) Each governing body may by regulations made under this section provide for the membership and terms of office of the academic council.

(b) The majority of members shall be holders of academic appointments within the college and at least one shall be a registered student of the college.

(c) The members appointed to the academic council shall hold office for a period of three years and shall be eligible for reappointment.

3. Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) the academic council shall have the following particular functions -

(a) to design, develop and assist in implementing courses of study in accordance with the programmes and budget approved annually under section 13 of this Act and consistent with the functions of the college;

(b) to make recommendations to the governing body for the establishment of appropriate structures to implement the courses of study referred to at paragraph (a) of this sub-section;

(c) to make recommendations to the governing body on programmes for research and development work;

(d) to make recommendations to the governing body for the selection, admission, retention and exclusion of students;

(e) be responsible, subject to the approval of the governing body, for making the academic regulations of the college;

(f) to propose to the governing body, subject to the requirements of the National Council for Educational Awards or of any university or other authority to which section 5 (1) (b) applies, the form of regulations to be made by the governing body for the conduct of examinations and for the evaluation of academic progress;

(g) to make recommendations to the governing body for the award of scholarships, prizes or other awards;

(h) to make general arrangements for tutorial or other academic counselling;

(i) to exercise any other functions, consistent with this Act, which may be delegated to it by the governing body;

(j) to assist in implementing any regulations which may be made by the governing body concerning any of the matters aforesaid.

4. The academic council, with the approval of the governing body, may -

(a) establish such and so many committees, consisting either wholly or partly of persons who are not members of the college, as it thinks proper to assist the academic council in the performance of its functions under this Act, and

(b) determine, subject to the provision of this Act, the functions of any committee established under paragraph (a) of this subsection.

5. The acts of a committee established under subsection (4) (a) shall be subject to confirmation by the governing body unless the governing body dispenses with the necessity for such confirmation.

6. Subject to the provisions of this Act and to the directions of the governing body, the academic council may regulate its own procedure."

2.7 THE REGISTRAR: SUMMARY OF FUNCTIONS

The Registrar has Institute-wide responsibility for academic affairs. The Registrar works directly with the Heads of Department and other academic staff in promoting and ensuring the quality, relevance and development of courses. Long-term academic planning and the work of the Academic Council fall within this remit. The Registrar has responsibility for services supportive of the academic programme.

The range of responsibilities* Includes:

- Co-ordination of the business of the Academic Council.
- The Institute's academic plan.
- Promotion of the development of joint courses with other institutions.
- Student admission/registration/examinations/records.
- Student services.
- Student Affairs/Student Discipline/Students Union.
- Co-ordination of staff development.
- Schools' liaison and promotion of the Institute's courses.
- Articulation and student transfer/exchange.
- Liaison with the NCEA and all other accrediting bodies.
- Quality Assurance procedures.
- Management of course reviews.
- Course Boards.

* (Subject to the terms of the individual's contract)

2.8 HEADS OF DEPARTMENT: SUMMARY OF FUNCTIONS

Heads of Department in CIT's Bishopstown Campus report to the Director of the Institute; the Heads of Department in the Crawford College of Art & Design and the Cork School of Music report to the Head of the College / School.

Heads of Department are part of the senior management team. Within their departments, they are responsible* for:

- a) Quality and effectiveness of the Department
- b) Academic leadership
- c) Control and direction of staff
- d) Department budget
- e) Assignment of teaching staff to courses
- f) Ensuring efficient and effective teaching
- g) Course co-ordination, planning and development
- h) Preparation of tests, assessments and examinations
- i) Efficient use of all material and physical resources
- j) Monitoring of student attendance, behaviour and application
- k) Academic counselling and guidance for students
- l) Staff development
- m) Industry liaison
- n) Research
- o) Forward planning and development
- p) Promotion of the Institute

* (Subject to the terms of the individual's contract)

2.9 THE ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS / SCHOOLS: SUMMARY OF FUNCTIONS

The departments are the basic academic units of CIT, and are the organisational units to which academic staff are appointed. In view of the variety and complex nature of the programmes of study offered, the Institute has adopted the approach that 'ownership' of courses resides primarily in the academic departments. The Interim Review Group Report (January 1999) encouraged greater inter-disciplinary communication and more cross-departmental initiatives.

The departments/schools have central academic quality assurance functions.

- Ensuring the proper functioning of Course Boards
- Consideration of the work of Course Boards (receiving reports, giving views)
- Allocation of educational resources such as lecturers, rooms, laboratories
- Examinations and student affairs
- Liaison with the Academic Council (receiving reports, giving views)
- Finance
- Strategic planning including the initiation of new course proposals and franchising arrangements.
- Liaison with other departments/schools in cross-curricular activity.

Departmental staff meetings are an important forum for discussion and information purposes. Guidelines and an indicative agenda are given in Section 2.10.

2.10 GUIDELINES FOR DEPARTMENT/ SCHOOL MEETINGS

Good department staff meetings are critical to achieving the co-operation and partnership on which the academic quality of the Institute depends. Such meetings must therefore be regular, structured, open and minuted. As a general guide, they should be held twice per term. The agenda for a department meeting will normally include most or all of the topics listed below. The list is given as a checklist and not as a prescribed format.

STAFF MEETING: (DRAFT AGENDA)

Time :

Date :

Location :

1. Minutes of Department Staff Meeting held on _____
2. Matters Arising
3. Reports from Course Boards
4. Reports from Sub-committees (e.g. Examinations & Assessment Results)
5. Timetabling and Allocation of Resources; Personnel
6. Student Affairs
7. Academic Council (Reports, discussion)
8. Finance
9. Strategic Planning (new course proposals, industry liaison, graduate feedback)
10. Liaison with other departments/schools - cross-curricular activity
11. Building and Safety Matters
12. Date of Next Meeting.

2.11 COURSE BOARDS

(Document Approved by Academic Council 5/11/98)

1. All courses in the Institute shall operate under the aegis of a specific Course Board.

2. A Course Board may have one or more courses, full-time or part-time, within its remit.

2.1 Where appropriate a single Course Board should operate for the following categories of courses:

A Certificate/Diploma/Degree "ladder" suite of courses or parts thereof

- Ab-initio Diploma courses
- Ab-initio Degree courses
- Full-time and part-time deliveries of the same course

2.2 It may also be appropriate to have single Course Boards for other groupings of courses such as groups of part-time courses.

3. Formation and composition of Course Boards

3.1 The Head of Department shall nominate the Course Co-ordinator(s)*, the members of a Course Board and the Chairperson of a Course Board.

3.2 The composition of the Board shall be:

- Head of Department (ex-officio) or a nominated Assistant Head of Department
- Course Co-ordinator(s)*
- Lecturers on the course (typically 5 - 6) representing the key subject areas of the courses concerned with representation from service subject areas to be included.
- Student representation.

4. The composition and operation of each Course Board shall be reviewed annually.

5. A Course Board will have the following functions.

- (a) Monitor the operation of the course(s) including examination performance and arrangements for entry and transfer.
- (b) Make proposals regarding the operation of the course(s).
- (c) Plan course developments.
- (d) Prepare the monitoring reports on the course and submit them as appropriate.
- (e) Carry out a study of the course for the purpose of the Programmatic Review.
- (f) Assist with the preparation for the Programmatic Review.
- (g) Partake as appropriate in the Programmatic Review.

6. The Course Board shall keep records of its meetings and these records shall be available to other staff members involved in teaching the course(s).

*** Course Co-ordinator:**

In many Departments, one lecturer is given special responsibility for the operation and development of a particular course. This rôle is known as "course co-ordinator". Otherwise, this responsibility may be assumed to be that of the course board chairperson.

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