1. Document Details

Title:	**Policy on Curricular Structure and Credit Profile of CIT Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes**
Editor(s):	Office of the Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs
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Review Date:	11 November 2016

Important Note: If the 'Status' of this document reads 'Draft', it has not been finalised and should not be relied upon.

2. Revision History

Version Number	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Changes tracked?
1.0		Initial draft amalgamating several related policy documents and positions approved by AC and GB 2006 – 2011	

3. Relevant/Related Existing Internal Documents

P. Sliney / FOCUS Team	2006	*The Implementation of Semesterisation and Modularisation in Cork Institute of Technology. Report to Academic Council February 27th 2006 ("FOCUS Report")*
AC Working Party on Module Levels	February 2009	*Report to Academic Council [Containing Proposals on Module Level Designation and Undergraduate Programme Module Level Profiles]*
AC Working Party on Large Credit Modules	February 2012	*Criteria for Approving Modules of More Than 5 ECTS Credits*
Dean of Graduate Studies	October 2011	*CIT Template for Taught Masters*
CIT	June 2013	*Regulations for Modules and Programmes (Marks and Standards) Version 4.0*

4. Relevant/Related Existing External Documents

NQAI	2004	*Principles and Operational Guidelines for a National Approach to Credit*
NQAI	2004	*Descriptors for Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Award-Types*

5. Consultation History

This document has been prepared in consultation with the following bodies/functions:

6. Approvals

This document requires following approvals (in order where applicable):

Name	Date	Details of Approval Required
Academic Council	**11 Nov. 2015**	Re-approval of previously approved policy as updated, collated into one document, and integrated into the CIT policy template
Governing Body		

7. Purpose

This policy sets out the regulations and principles governing the curricular structure and module level profile of CIT taught programmes, thereby providing guidelines for new programme design and review.

8. Scope

The present policy is a 'portmanteau' policy. It amalgamates several separate but related policies of Cork Institute of Technology which together serve to define and regulate the curricular structure and credit profile of CIT taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes as currently approved and operated.

The policies brought together in this document were originally approved by Academic Council and, where relevant, Governing Body between 2006 and 2011. Some of the documents approved, however, were outline proposals which were not resubmitted to Academic Council in finalised form; some were reports where policy positions are embedded in contextual narrative making the case for their introduction. In these cases, the original text was carefully edited and updated by either removing or amending existing text or inserting additional text. The objective in all cases was to produce a clear and unambiguous final version setting out current CIT policy as per the intentions of Academic Council and Governing Body on approval. Where it became necessary to backfill a certain amount of implied detail, this drew on subsequently developed and circulated operational guidelines where available.

9. Interpretations

None specified

10. Audiences

This policy is addressed to all members of CIT as well as external academics engaged in the design, delivery and review of CIT taught programmes.

11. Responsible Officer(s)

This policy is maintained by the Office of the Registrar & Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

12. Policy

Sections:

A.   The CIT Curriculum Model

B.   Criteria for Approving Modules of More Than 5 ECTS Credits

C.   CIT Module Level Designations

D.   Credit Profiles for CIT Undergraduate Degree Programmes

E.   Curriculum Model and Credit Profiles for CIT Taught Masters

A.   The CIT Curriculum Model

(First approval of policy as presented in: P. Sliney / FOCUS Team, *The Implementation of Semesterisation and Modularisation in Cork Institute of Technology*. Report to Academic Council, February 27th, 2006. Approved by Academic Council 27 February 2006 / approved by Governing Body 2 March 2006.)

In 2008, CIT completed the transition to a modularised and semesterised delivery model for all of its academic programmes. While the curriculum model then established has been refined in the intervening period, the essential features remain.

- The CIT curriculum model is credit-based. It aligns with the ECTS norm of **60 ECTS credits for a full-time year of study**, which is associated with a maximum annual workload of 1200 – 1300 hours for the average learner.

- The standard programme assumed by the CIT curriculum model is the predominantly campus-based, **full-time undergraduate degree programme leading to a major higher education award**.

   For undergraduate degrees delivered in alternative modes (part-time/ACCS; online, outreach or industry-based) and for short programmes leading to non-major awards **some** features of the curricular model may vary, as approved by the CIT Academic Council from time to time.

The approved curriculum model and credit profile for taught CIT Masters programmes is set out in Section E below.

A.1 Standard Features of Modularised and Semesterised Programme Delivery at CIT

a) CIT programmes are delivered in a modularised and semesterised format.

b) A full-time Stage (i.e. year of study) accrues 60 ECTS credits and is divided into 2 equal semesters of 30 ECTS credits each.

c) Each Semester is 15 weeks in duration, comprising

- 13 weeks of delivery (incl. 1 week of revision);
- 2 weeks of assessment and examination; and
- 2 weeks of assessment and examination processing.

d) The standard CIT Module attracts 5 ECTS credits, meaning that the standard CIT Semester comprises six 5-credit modules.

- Each module requires a workload of 105 hours from the average student over the course of a 15-week semester.

- For the average student, this equates to 7 hours of weekly learner workload (incl. periods of independent learning) per 5-credit module.

e) Each standard 5-credit module is based on a norm of 5 Learning Outcomes, each of which must be assessed.

- A standard variation of 4 – 6 Learning Outcomes is acceptable.

f) Large Credit Modules (multiples of 5 credits) may be offered *by exception*, provided the learning fulfils certain defined criteria (see Section B below).

- Depending on the nature of the intended learning and the module level, large credit modules may specify a proportionately greater number of learning outcomes, or may specify outcomes of proportionately greater complexity.

g) <u>CIT Module</u>: Semester 1 of each ab-initio programme includes an Institute-wide common module designed to assist the student in the transition to third-level education.

- The current approved module descriptor for this common module is CMOD6001, "Creativity, Innovation & Teamwork" (CIT).

h) <u>Free Choice Elective</u>: To foster learner ownership of the education process, all other semesters include a minimum of one free choice elective.

- *Exempt from this* are semesters which contain significant project or placement elements (e.g. in the award stage) or which form part of a focused 1-stage programme (e.g. Higher Diploma).

- In addition, the CIT Academic Council may grant derogation from the free choice requirement in a given semester for other valid and significant reasons (e.g. conditions attached to professional accreditation).

- The current approved placeholder module descriptor for the free choice elective is FREE6001, "Free Choice Module".

i) <u>Terminal Exams Maximum</u>: The achievement of module learning outcomes may be assessed by continuous assessment, terminal examination, or a combination of both. However, a maximum of 4 modules / 20 ECTS credits per semester may be assessed by terminal examination.

- In semesters which include elective modules (free or cognate), it follows that no more than 3 mandatory modules / 15 ECTS credits may conclude in terminal examination.

- The CIT Academic Council may grant derogation to exceed 4 terminal exams in a given semester where there is good reason (e.g. conditions attached to professional accreditation).

B. Criteria for Approving Modules of More Than 5 ECTS Credits

(First approval: Approved by Academic Council 29 February 2012 / noted by Governing Body 5 April 2012)

B.1 Introduction

Cork Institute of Technology has developed a framework for the design of its modularised programmes of study. This framework is based on modules of 5-credit size (each generating a weekly learner workload of 7 hours), with larger modules (10, 15 or 20 credits) allowed only by exception. This standardisation of module size confers a number of benefits on learners, programmes, and the Institute. These benefits include, *inter alia*,

- Increased flexibility for learners in terms of when and how they choose to learn;

- Increased learner choice in terms of electives;

- Removal of artificial barriers to learner progression;

- Ease of module re-usability - resulting in simpler and more timely programme development;

- Efficiencies achieved through shared module delivery - allowing the Institute to maintain a diverse range of programmes.

Although the majority of modules are worth 5 ECTS credits, the Institute recognises that there may be sound pedagogical reasons why the nature of specific learner knowledge, skills and competences requires a larger module size. The following criteria detail the nature of the learning experiences that underpin why and when the *learning and the assessment of learning* should be consolidated into a single, larger, integrated experience.

B.2 Criteria

Modules approved for more than 5 credits will have **ALL** of the following learning characteristics:

a) Integrated Learning: The assessment of the overall learning experience is not amenable to sub-division into a number of smaller learning experiences that may be assessed separately.

b) Synthesis: The learning experience builds on, brings together and develops a broad range of knowledge, skills and competences previously encountered by the learner.

c) Authenticity: The learning experience requires the learner to tackle a real-world, authentic problem associated with the discipline area. By its nature, the problem is complex and requires significant learner time and effort, resulting in an appropriately higher ECTS credit allocation.

d) Predominately Self-Directed: The learner is primarily responsible for his/her own learning, and there is comparatively low academic staff contact.

At undergraduate level, there is a limit to the volume of primarily self-directed work the learner may reasonably be expected to undertake, and this must be appropriately less than that which is required for Taught Masters programmes. Normally, for taught programmes, the maximum size of a module is 10 credits at Fundamental Level, 15 credits at Intermediate Level, 20 credits at Advanced Level, and 30 credits at Expert Level (see Section C below for an explanation of CIT module level designations).

C. CIT Module Level Designations

(First approval of policy as presented in: AC Working Party on Module Levels, *Report to Academic Council*, February 2009. Approved by Academic Council 25 February 2009 / noted by Governing Body 5 March 2009)

C.1 Introduction

Progression in educational programmes develops along two axes: depth and breadth. A programme may progressively deepen the learner's existing base of knowledge, skills and competences in one or more specific subject areas; it may broaden the learning by helping the learner acquire knowledge, skills and competences in additional new areas; or it may aim to achieve a combination of both. These two complementary pedagogical aims need to be taken into account when determining an appropriate model for the designation of academic module levels.

National approach to credit[1] specifies that no programme leading to a major award should have less than 60 credits at award level. Within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), levels are ascribed to programmes only and not to the modules within them. If NFQ levels are applied to designate the academic level of individual modules, some modules deemed appropriate to the educational aims of the programme, particularly those linked to extending range, could not be accommodated. Examples could include language or management subjects in the award year of an

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[1] NQAI, *Principles and Operational Guidelines for a National Approach to Credit*, July 2006, p. 18

engineering programme – both of which could be allocated an academic level below that of the award of the hosting programme.

For this reason, CIT differentiates between programme level and module level designation.

C.2 Academic Module Levels

a) To indicate the academic level of a module, CIT employs the following categories:

- Fundamental
- Intermediate
- Advanced
- Expert

b) In general terms, the academic level of a module is determined by reference to an award in the field of study of the module for which it is considered to be core material.

Example: An Intermediate module in Programming would sit comfortably in the award stage of a Level 7 Computing degree.

Table 1 below links each module level to a representative award.

Table 1:

Core Material for	Module Designation
Higher Certificate	Fundamental
Ordinary Bachelors Degree	Intermediate
Honours Bachelor Degree	Advanced
Postgraduate Degree	Expert

C.3 Module Credit and Award Classification

For purposes of award classification, credits associated with modules follow the NFQ level of the award for the programmes containing the modules.

Example: A 5-credit Intermediate module in Management attracts 5 ECTS credits at NFQ Level 7 when used in a Bachelor of Business in Management (L7). The same module attracts 5 ECTS credits at NFQ Level 8 when used in a Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Process Engineering (L8).

Awards thus continue to be classified by their award stage as per current CIT regulations.

D. Credit Profiles for CIT Undergraduate Degree Programmes

(First approval of policy as presented in: AC Working Party on Module Levels, *Report to Academic Council*, February 2009. Approved by Academic Council 25 February 2009 / noted by Governing Body 5 March 2009)

D.1 Credit Minima / Maxima at Specified Module Levels

To safeguard the standards of its awards, CIT needs to ascertain itself that each of its programmes contains a sufficient amount of material at an academic level which justifies the award. The Institute has therefore determined standard credit profiles for its undergraduate degree programmes, specifying minimum and maximum numbers of module credits to be obtained at specific academic module levels to qualify for an award.

Table 2 below sets out the minimum number of modules at Fundamental, Intermediate, Advanced and/or Expert levels which graduates of CIT undergraduate degrees need to have completed in order to qualify for the award.

Table 2 also specifies the maximum number of credits at Fundamental level which can be taken for awards at the specified levels.

Table 2: Minimum / Maximum Number of Credits at Specified Module Levels

Programme Level	Major Award	Expert Modules Minimum	Advanced Modules Minimum	Intermediate Modules Minimum	Fundamental Modules Maximum	Total Credits
8	Honours Degree		45	60	130	240
7	Ordinary Degree			50	130	180
6	Higher Certificate				120	120

The standard CIT credit profiles should be taken into account when determining the distribution of mandatory and elective modules during the programme design and revision stages.

D.2 Credit Profile Deviations

Programmes which deviate from the standard credit profiles set out above require formal clearance from Academic Council. The ability of learners to obtain the minimum number of credits at specified module levels to qualify for the award needs to be safeguarded.

E. Curriculum Model and Credit Profiles for CIT Taught Masters

(First approval of policy as presented in: E. Cashell, *CIT Template for Taught Masters*, February 2009. Approved by Academic Council 5 October 2011 / noted by Governing Body 5 March 2009)

E.1 Taught Masters in Full-Time Delivery Mode

The CIT taught masters for full-time delivery should normally conform to the 90-credit model outlined in Table 3 below:

Table 3: CIT Model for Taught Masters – Full-Time Delivery

1.	Duration:	3 semesters = Full calendar year (Sept-Sept or Feb-Feb)
2.	ECTS Credits:	3 x 30 credits per semester = 90 credits in total
3.	Level of Credits:	A minimum of 60 credits at Expert and a maximum of 30 credits at Advanced Level.
4.	Taught Modules:	60 credits (30 credits per 1st and 2nd semester)
5.	Project/Dissertation:	30 credits (3rd semester)
6.	Postgraduate Diploma (Optional):	60 credits (1st and 2nd semester)

E.2 Taught Masters in Part-Time Delivery Mode

The CIT taught masters for part-time delivery should normally conform to the 90-credit model outlined in Table 4 below:

Table 4: CIT Model for Taught Masters – Part-Time Delivery

1.	Duration:	6 semesters = Two calendar years (Sept-Sept or Feb-Feb)
2.	ECTS Credits:	6 x 15 credits per semester = 90 credits in total
3.	Level of Credits:	A minimum of 60 credits at Expert and a maximum of 30 credits at Advanced Level.
4.	Taught Modules:	60 credits (normally 15 credits per 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th semester)
5.	Project/Dissertation:	30 credits (normally 3rd and 6th semester)
6.	Postgraduate Diploma (Optional):	60 credits

E.3 60-Credit Masters

Where there is justification for a 60-credit Masters in the special circumstances of denominated entry, the approach recommended is to establish a standard 90-credit Masters incorporating an embedded Certificate (Special Purpose Award) comprising 30 credits at the Advanced Level that are either drawn directly from the associated Level 8 programme, or are closely equivalent.

Students coming from the associated specialised undergraduate Level 8 programme or who have achieved the learning outcomes of these modules through work-based or other experience may be exempted the certificate portion through recognition of prior learning (RPL) and thus be only required to take the remaining 60 credits to gain the Masters award. External applicants or applicants from cognate Level 8 programmes would normally be expected to take all 90 credits.