

Institutional Review Report 2019

Dundalk Institute of Technology



QOI REVIEW

CINNTE 

Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important statutory functions is to ensure that the quality assurance (QA) procedures that institutions have in place have been implemented and are effective. To this end, QQI carries out external reviews of Institutes of Technology on a cyclical basis. This current QQI cycle of reviews is called the CINNTE cycle. CINNTE reviews are an element of the broader quality framework for Institutes of Technology composed of: Quality Assurance Guidelines; Quality Assurance approval; Annual Institutional Quality Reports; Dialogue Meetings; the National Framework of Qualifications; Delegation of Authority; and, most crucially, the Quality Assurance (QA) systems that each institute establishes. The CINNTE review cycle runs from 2017-2023. During this period, QQI will organise and oversee independent reviews of each of the Universities, the Institutes of Technology and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI).

Each CINNTE review evaluates the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each institute. Cyclical Review measures each institute's compliance with European standards for quality assurance, regard to the expectations set out in the QQI quality assurance guidelines or their equivalent

and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures. CINNTE reviews also explore how institutions have enhanced their teaching, learning and research and their quality assurance systems and how well institutions have aligned their approach to their own mission, quality indicators and benchmarks.

The CINNTE review process is in keeping with Parts 2 and 3 of the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#) (ESG 2015) and based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to reviews, including:

- the publication of Terms of Reference;
- a process of self-evaluation and an Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER);
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers;
- the publication of a Review Report including findings and recommendations; and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This QQI CINNTE review of the Dundalk Institute of Technology was conducted by an independent review team in line with the Terms of Reference in Appendix A. This is the report of the findings of the Review Team. It also includes the response of Dundalk Institute of Technology to the report.

The Review Team

Each CINNTE review is carried out by an international team of independent experts and peers. The 2018 Institutional Review of DkIT was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The Review Team was trained by QQI on 15 October 2018 and the planning visit to DkIT took place on 16 October 2018. The Main Review Visit (MRV) was conducted by the full team between 3 and 7 December 2018.

Review Team for the Institutional Review of Dundalk Institute of Technology

CHAIR

Marc Vandewalle has been Vice Chancellor of University College Leuven-Limburg (UCLL) since the academic year 2016-2017. UCLL is a University of Applied Sciences with a wide range of Bachelor and Advanced Bachelor programmes. Before this (2009-2016), he was Secretary General of VLHORA, the Flemish Council of University Colleges, organising cooperation between the Institutes, external representation, negotiation and policymaking and also responsible for QA programme visits in Flanders. Marc has been a member of the Board of EURASHE for four mandates (2010-2018). He was a member of the Steering Committee of the Universities of Applied Science Network (UASnet) for almost six years, prior to which he was Head of the Business Department of Katholieke Hogeschool Limburg (the Limburg Catholic University College), in Belgium. He held this position for 12 years, during which period the educational approach was directed towards professional practice, competence-based learning, teamwork and innovation.

COORDINATING REVIEWER

Kim O'Mahony is a Quality Officer in the Quality Support Unit, University of Limerick (UL). With over 30 years' career progression at UL, she began working in the field of quality management in 2000 with the implementation of a quality management system in the Information Technology Division, which was accredited to ISO (International Organization for Standardization). The remit of Kim's current role as Quality Officer includes managing the operations of the unit, coordinating the assessment of institutional compliance with statutory QA requirements and guidelines, managing the internal quality review process, and supporting the development of quality management systems. She has previously participated in quality reviews both nationally and internationally. Kim has a Diploma in Information Technology from Dublin City University (DCU) and a Master of Science in Quality Management from UL.

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

In 2005, **Dr Zorica Pantić** became President of Wentworth Institute of Technology, in Boston, Massachusetts. Since then, Wentworth has introduced 10 new undergraduate programmes and seven graduate programmes, achieved university status, increased enrolment by 20%, doubled its operating revenues and its endowments, invested \$300M in state-of-the art facilities, and improved its rankings.

Before joining Wentworth, Zorica was the founding Dean of the College of Engineering at the University of Texas at San Antonio; the Director of the School of Engineering at San Francisco State University; a Fulbright fellow at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and an Associate Professor at the University of Niš, Serbia. Zorica has served on various boards and professional organisations, including the Board of Directors for the World Association for Co-operative Education, the American Association for Presidents of Independent Universities and Colleges, the New England Association for Schools and Colleges, the Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board, Massachusetts Cyber Security Council, and the Presidents Council for the NCAA Division III.

LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE

Oluwasegun Seriki is currently a PhD candidate in Construction Management at Technological University Dublin. He holds a Master of Engineering degree from Tsinghua University, Beijing, and an honours Bachelor of Engineering degree from the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria. He is participating in the NStEP (National Student Engagement Programme), a collaborative initiative of the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and QQI. The NStEP develops student capabilities and institutional capacity to enhance engagement at all levels across the higher education system.

QUALITY ASSURANCE REPRESENTATIVE

Fiona Crozier is Head of International at the United Kingdom (UK's) Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and is responsible for its international strategic engagement and review work, and for in-country reviews of UK transnational education. She first joined QAA in 1998. From 2013-2015 she worked as Director of Quality at University College Cork, before returning to QAA in her current role. Her experience ranges from policy development, design and implementation of review methods, to the management of reviews. Fiona was responsible for the drafting of the revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EGS, 2015). She was Vice-President of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) Board from 2009-2013 and is a panel chair for ENQA reviews of QA agencies across Europe.

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVE

James Flynn manages university programmes at IBM that are based in the Innovation Exchange, which is part of the IBM Ireland Lab. In this role, he leverages novel business models to drive technical innovations for IBM, its customers and partners. Having established sustainable relationships with academic institutions over many years, he has contributed to a collaborative environment involving over 150 partners through various research framework activities. Leveraging the Ireland Lab's broad mission and expertise, these joint university and business partner projects target domains including, but not limited to, Health, Telecommunications, Security, Automotive, Logistics and HR. James runs education programmes on a variety of computer science, engineering and business topics that provide industry and technology with insight into both students and faculty, and which help to prepare students for their professional career in the industry. As part of this role, he has contributed to skills initiatives such the American Chamber of Commerce Ireland (AMCHAM) / HEA joint initiative to develop the Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Practice. He is also a member of the Board of FIT (FastTrack to IT).



Section

A

Introduction and Context

Brief Profile of Dundalk Institute of Technology

Contextual Factors

Approach to Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Introduction and Context

Brief Profile of Dundalk Institute of Technology

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) was founded in 1970 and is an autonomous institute, established under the *Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992*. It has earned its reputation as the leading higher education provider in the North Leinster-South Ulster region (serving Cavan, Monaghan, Louth, Meath, North County Dublin and the northern counties of Armagh and Down) through its first-class teaching and learning, research and engagement.

DkIT differentiates itself from other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as a cross-border institute with a distinctive mission and commitment to the educational, economic, social and cultural development of the North Leinster-South Ulster region. DkIT is strategically positioned mid-way along the Dublin-Belfast Corridor, on the border with Northern Ireland, which presents unique opportunities economically, socially and culturally. Additionally, the region encompasses rural and urban communities.

DkIT's mission is to provide learner-centred higher education dedicated to serving the educational needs of its learners, empowering its staff and delivering high-quality learning and teaching, research and engagement relevant to the educational, economic, social and cultural development of the North Leinster-South Ulster region and beyond.

The DkIT Strategic Plan 2017-2019 – *Connected Learning, Connected Communities, Connected Future* – was approved by Governing Body (GB) in February 2017. The Institute is currently in the process of reviewing and developing a new five-year strategic plan for 2019-2024 (academic years) to reflect its AMBITION strategy (2018-2023) to strategically position itself, through coherent and integrated planning, as a cross-border HEI within the HEI landscape, aiming to achieve greater scale in terms of student numbers and campus development. The mission and vision for the Institute have been updated to reflect its AMBITION strategy.

Strategic Planning at DkIT has been developed in the wake of the recent global recession and at a time of great uncertainty, particularly as a consequence of the decision by the United Kingdom (UK) to exit the European Union (EU) (Brexit). For an IoT situated beside the UK's only land border with the EU, this is of particular relevance. DkIT's strategic plan is therefore set firmly against this backdrop. The plan articulates the Institute's strategic direction towards 2019 and, through AMBITION, commits to a renewed sense of purpose to contribute to the North Leinster-South Ulster region and to relevant national policies.

As a leading HEI in the North-East, DkIT is a major contributor to the educational, economic, social and cultural development of the region, with over 5100 registered students based in four academic schools. Most learners (4,509) are enrolled on full-time programmes with 670 part-time students and approximately 195 apprentices. DkIT is particularly successful in attracting international learners, of whom there are 959. Mature learners (23 years +) make up 16% of the student body and postgraduate students make up 2%.

The Institute employs 497 staff members (full-time equivalent) and is located on an impressive 90-acre campus, which includes state-of-the-art sports facilities. The campus serves as a knowledge and enterprise hub, through the Regional Development Centre (RDC) for the area.

In 2004, DkIT was awarded delegated authority to make awards from level 6 to level 9 (taught) on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The School of Science and Health and the School of Informatics and Creative Arts were given approval to award at levels 9 and 10 in designated areas from 2008. As a result of the strategic partnership with Dublin City University (DCU) and the establishment of the DCU/DkIT Graduate School, DkIT can register students at levels 9 and 10 in all areas.

Contextual Factors

This review took place against the backdrop of reduced public funding, the need for greater accountability, and an emphasis on efficiency. Simultaneously, a requirement exists to respond to a broad government agenda embodied within the *National Strategy for Higher Education 2030*

(otherwise known as the *Hunt Report*, 2010), *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape* (2012), *Supporting a Better Transition from Second Level to Higher Education: Key Directions and Next Steps* (2013) and the *National Action Plan for Education 2018*.

Approach to Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The 2009 Institutional Review advised moving from a culture of QA compliance to one of best practice. Some of the key recommendations related to:

- developing an overarching strategic planning process;
- developing a research strategy;
- benchmarking through a cycle of annual quality audits;
- improving student feedback;
- developing processes for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL);
- improving the format for external examiner reporting;
- reviewing the structure of Academic Council (AC); and
- appointing programme coordinators for each area.

These areas have been addressed in the intervening years and the recommendations relating to promotional styles and materials have been undertaken. The Main Review Visit (MRV) provided the Review Team with evidence of actions undertaken to address the recommendations outlined above.

The DkIT *Quality Manual* is the overarching policy regarding academic QA and is based on the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance within the*

European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015).

Revisions are carried out at least every three years and the effectiveness of policies and procedures is regularly monitored through consultation with staff and students. This manual was in the process of being updated during the MRV.

Each year, DkIT submits an Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR) to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The AIQR reports on internal QA within the Institute. Part 1 gives an overview of internal QA governance, policies, procedures and schedules within the Institute. It changes little from year to year. Parts 2-6 give an overview of QA activities, themes, changes, enhancements and impacts for the reporting year. The Review Team was given copies of AIQRs for 2016, 2017 and 2018, along with the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER). The Review Team found evidence of compliance with ESG outlined in these reports, as well as examples of how the Institute is initiating quality enhancement activities. During the MRV, the Review Team found evidence of adherence to QQI *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*.

DkIT ensures an integrated system of QA in relation to its collaborative activities. It has been a linked provider of DCU since September 2014, and postgraduate research students registered since that date have been studying for DCU awards through the DCU/DkIT Graduate School. The QA of these awards is governed by specific regulations that are aligned

to DCU QA policies and procedures in relation to research awards. A number of other policies support high-quality research, including the *Code of Practice on Authorship*, the *IP Policy* and the *Ethics Policy*.

DkIT has begun work on the development of a Programmatic Portfolio Plan for the period 2018 to 2028. The portfolio strategy supports the delivery of the DkIT strategic goals of providing a career-oriented education that reflects and addresses the current and future needs of society, community and enterprise. The consultation process will guide the Institute towards the development of a set of prioritised actions to ensure that programme design and delivery are relevant to market needs. The Institute is working towards developing and aligning a suite of programmes in DkIT that is relevant to future needs, while simultaneously supporting a distinctive practice-based, research-informed learner experience.

This institutional review involved a critical evaluation of all the Institute's QA functions through an analysis of QQI CINNTE review objectives 1-5. The 2009 institutional review of DkIT by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), one of QQI's predecessor agencies, advised that an evaluation of key areas such as QA and quality enhancement should be undertaken. From this analysis, a set of strategic priorities has emerged which, together with the *Institute Strategic Quality Plan* and DkIT AMBITION, form a basis for moving forward through the *Institutional Self-Evaluation Action Plan (2019-2029)*. Through the self-reflection process, existing weaknesses were identified, and these form the basis for sets of actions requiring priority over the lifetime of the review. Some of these actions sit alongside AMBITION and the Institute's strategic plan, pointing to the integrated nature of planning within the Institute. This AMBITION is embedded within the Institute's new Higher Education Authority (HEA) *Mission-based Performance Compact 2018-2021*.



Section

B

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

Methodology Used to Prepare the ISER

Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

Methodology Used to Prepare the ISER

A steering committee for the institutional self-evaluation was appointed in January 2018, to undertake and manage the institutional self-evaluation process. Membership of the steering committee included the Registrar (Chair); the Assistant Registrar; the Head of Research and Graduate Studies; the Head of Human Resources (HR); the Head of the Department of Creative Arts, Media and Music; a Lecturer from the School of Business; the Head of the Department of Visual and Human-Centred Computing; a Lecturer from the Department of Built Environment; a Research Project Officer; the Head of the School of Health and Science; and the President(s) of DkIT Students' Union. In addition to the steering committee, four working groups were established to consider: QA Compliance and Operation and Management as an Awarding Body; Quality Enhancement; Access, Transfer & Progression; and International Learners.

In order to provide feedback regarding Institute-wide QA and quality enhancement, several documents were consulted as part of the process, including Institute reports and documents relating to teaching, learning and scholarly activities at strategic and operational levels, QA documentation for programmes, analysis of the *Programmatic Board Reports* and tracking processes, analysis of AIQR submissions since 2014 and analysis of the *Student Satisfaction Surveys* for the last four academic years, and in particular the *Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)*.

The steering committee also conducted an all-Institute staff survey, held meetings with staff and students through the fora of AC, programme committees, student representative meetings, and meetings with Schools, to present and elicit responses in relation to the Institute Self-Study. All documents relevant to the review were made available on a dedicated OneDrive link.

The outcome of the process overseen by the steering committee was used to inform the ISER, which was also provided to all staff for comment in advance of its final submission to QQI.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE INSTITUTIONAL SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS

During the course of the five-day MRV, the Review Team met with various representative groups from a wide variety of internal stakeholders – members of GB, the senior management team, members of AC, academic and support staff, and students, as well as external stakeholders, including industry partners. All participants engaged fully in discussions and were very forthcoming with their commendations about services provided and interactions with DkIT. Supporting commendations are outlined in the report sections that follow. Both the internal and external stakeholder groups also assisted the Review Team in identifying areas that could be further improved. The Review Team heard about the excellent interaction between staff and students. Many stakeholders referred to this in the course of conversations and it was the answer to many questions on “how things worked here”.

COMMENDATION 1

The Review Team commends the high level of engagement and enthusiastic interactions of staff, students and internal and external stakeholders during the QQI CINNTE MRV.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ISER

While the Review Team was satisfied that consultation on the ISER process had taken place, it found overall that the written report was more descriptive than evaluative in nature. It therefore failed to see a clear picture of the overarching QA framework, which led to



requests for additional information prior to the MRV. The Review Team did, however, find interesting and relevant information in the appendices, particularly the ISER sub-team reports, which did not appear in the main ISER. This, the Team felt, was also a missed opportunity.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Review Team recommends that, for future reviews, DkIT ensure that the ISER is more evaluative than descriptive in nature and that it clearly outlines the QA/quality enhancement overarching framework.

ENGAGEMENT OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE REVIEW PROCESS

DkIT provided ample opportunity for external engagement during the quality review MRV. All external stakeholders engaged openly in the process and provided relevant examples of current good practice, as well as making some suggestions for improvement.

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commendations

1. The Review Team commends the high level of engagement and enthusiastic interactions of staff, students and internal and external stakeholders during the QQI CINNTE MRV.

Recommendations

1. The Review Team recommends that, for future reviews, DkIT ensure that the ISER is more evaluative than descriptive in nature and that it clearly outlines the QA/quality enhancement overarching framework.



Section

C

Quality Assurance/Accountability

REVIEW OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Objective 1 – Current Quality Assurance Procedures
- 3.2 Objective 2 – Procedures for Awarding
- 3.3 Objective 3 – Quality Enhancement
- 3.4 Objective 4 – Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression
- 3.5 Objective 5 – Provision of Programmes to International Learners

Quality Assurance/ Accountability

Review Objectives

3.1 Objective 1 – Current Quality Assurance Procedures

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

DkIT states in its ISER (p. 3) that, since its review in 2009, it has transitioned from a culture of QA compliance to one of best practice. While the Review Team believes that there are still aspects of that transition to be completed (see below under the concluding paragraph to this section), it is nonetheless of the view that there has been clear improvement since 2009, particularly in the area of formalising the work of programme boards and using that work to feed both upwards to institutional bodies and downwards to academic groups. Key aspects of improvement are detailed below.

USE OF THE ANNUAL INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY REPORT

In relation to the overall framework of QA procedures adopted by DkIT, the AIQR (an external reporting tool) has been integrated into the internal QA cycle by using the same AIQR headings for programme board reports and for the self-studies required for programmatic review. The Review Team noted the efficiency of ensuring that an external requirement is yielding useful information for DkIT and, at the same time, streamlining processes and reducing burden.

PROGRAMME BOARDS

Programme boards and their reports are described in the ISER as a “quality tracking mechanism” and are clearly seen as such by senior staff and those working in the schools and departments. They provide the point at which feedback from various stakeholders, internal and external, is gathered, analysed and

captured in a series of action points. The Review Team spoke to a range of staff about the work of the programme boards and their reports. Those interviewed were clear which of the action points contained in the reports would be dealt with locally and which would constitute Institute-wide themes that would be filtered up by the Assistant Registrar to AC via the Academic Quality Sub-committee. The Review Team saw evidence of the individual and summary programme board reports operating at local and institutional level.

DkIT may wish to consider the suggestion made by heads of school, who stated to the Review Team that they should be asked to sign off the relevant programme board reports before they progress through the system.

A second function of the programme boards is to allow DkIT to see how the strategic institutional objectives are being pushed forward within the schools, and this is the point at which the programme board process dovetails with the programmatic review process.

COMMENDATION 2

The Review Team commends the clear progression of the work of programme boards since the last institutional review in 2009 as a core “quality tracking mechanism” (ISER), which results in an annual programme board report that takes on board feedback from students, external examiners and other stakeholders.

COMMENDATION 3

The Review Team commends the role played by the programme review board (PRB) reports in

streamlining processes by using the same headings for the PRB reports as for the AIQR (which provides external information to QQI) and in the self-study reports for programmatic review (allowing for internal focus).

PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW

The programmatic review process is guided by the *Programmatic Review Handbook*, which has recently been updated for the current review period (2017-2019). As stated above, the starting point for any review is the production of a self-study for the relevant programme that follows the headings used for the AIQR and the programme board reports. Portfolio planning in each department was the starting point for the current round of programmatic reviews. An understanding of this process and its purpose extended from the departments to GB, as was clear from the various meetings with stakeholders during the MRV. Likewise, all levels had a clear understanding of the links between portfolio planning and programmatic review, and the purpose and objectives of programmatic review. The Review Team was told that the Registrar had spoken to representatives of programmes at the start of the current round of review to ensure that participants were clear not only about the strategic direction of the Institute, but also about the key strategic aims contained in the AMBITION plan that should be considered at programme level during the review. Staff who spoke to the Review Team confirmed that this had been appreciated and it was clear to the Review Team that such communication had served to inform academic staff at programme level of institutional priorities and allowed for them to be discussed at that level. A high level of knowledge and understanding of AMBITION was clear to the Review Team across the different groups interviewed. It was also clear that the role of programmatic review was perceived as important in helping to embed specific goals across the Institute. Surveys carried out for the purposes of the ISER will also be fed into the current round of programmatic review.

The Review Team was able to consider examples of programmatic review reports from 2008-2009 and 2013-2014. There were clear examples of recommendations that had been made in 2009 which had been acted upon by the 2013-2014 cycle. From the 2013-2014 cycle in the same school, the Review

Team read recommendations that were being picked up in the current round and indeed at AC/institutional level in the AMBITION goals. Recommendations and encouragement for further engagement with industry is a good example of an area that can be tracked through programmatic review to the present day.

COMMENDATION 4

The Review Team commends the role of the programmatic review process (recognised widely across groups of internal and external stakeholders) in taking a pivotal role in communicating the strategic goals of AMBITION to the schools, with a view to self-studies being written to address the global goals at local level. The resulting reviews then provide external views on how far the local goals are in line with those of the Institute.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Given the effectiveness of the programmatic review process in providing a 360-degree view of the local and institutional level goals in each academic school, the Review Team recommends that the Institute consider the value of also including support units in the review process, to further enhance and add to the completeness of the outcomes and information available.

POLICIES

The introductory paragraph to this section states that some aspects of the transition from QA compliance to a culture of best practice were still to be achieved. This refers specifically to the institutional culture that the Review Team observed through talking to many groups of staff and which indicated a strong dependency on policies, to the extent that, in relation to assessment, for example, there are at least three policies in place. Staff told the Review Team that ideas or recommendations that emerged from all kinds of reports would be turned into policies. As evidenced by the example of assessment, this can result in a possible unnecessary proliferation of policies. The Review Team is of the view that the well-placed confidence demonstrated by the Institute in other aspects of the development of its QA framework should extend to its approach to the development, revision and implementation of policies. Currently, the impression is one of constant addition rather than rationalisation of policies – of adding to rather

than proactively deciding which policies assist in the implementation of the framework and allow the Institute to be agile in seeking to truly embed a culture of best practice, rather than mere compliance. This view was corroborated by members of GB who spoke to the Review Team. (See recommendation in Section 3.3 Alignment of the Institute’s Mission and Targets for Quality).

The Review Team considered all aspects of the QA framework and has highlighted above those areas that are particularly effective and valuable, or which might be reconsidered. It can confirm that all other aspects of the framework, such as validation processes and procedures for considering major/minor modifications, are documented and implemented. The validation process, while effective, has the potential to be lengthy and time-consuming, and involves three stages. Some staff interviewed by the Review Team felt that the process could be streamlined, although many were content with the current approach and said that a lengthy validation process was the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, the Review Team encourages DkIT to evaluate the current validation process.

The Review Team saw a consortium agreement with one of DkIT’s collaborative partners and, following discussion with representatives from partners, can confirm that the consortium agreement template provided to the Review Team clearly sets out the same QA framework as that used for DkIT provision. Partners interviewed by the Review Team were clear about the requirements and responsibilities expected from the framework.

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Responsibility for the governance and management of QA at DkIT is clearly understood at each level of the Institute.

MANAGEMENT

Final responsibility for QA management lies with the Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar. Currently the Institute’s QA function is overseen by the Assistant Registrar, a post filled on a rolling fixed-term basis by an academic member of staff through secondment to the Registrar’s Office. The function sits outside the structure of other posts of the Registrar’s office, where other areas are managed by a head

of function (e.g. the International Office; Student Services). The Review Team does not wish to prescribe a structure for the management of QA at DkIT but, in line with its recommendation that the Institute consider rolling out its QA framework in terms of periodic review to include support units, it may wish to consider a dedicated post to manage the QA functions of the Institute. The value of having an academic member of staff in the role is undisputed but, given the inclusive as well as external and internal-facing nature of such a role, there may be other models that could be considered. Any such role to be effective should focus its remit on core QA matters.

The role of the programme boards, as described above, ensures that the heads of school and other members of academic staff are aware of their responsibilities for QA at programme level. Students are members of programme boards and their views are fed into the management of QA at this level and through membership of AC and GB.

Fora such as the Academic Heads’ Forum and the Institutional Management and Planning Committee also contribute to the management of QA and representatives from these bodies told the Review Team that they found them to be a useful conduit. (See below under “Governance” for further comment).

GOVERNANCE

The governance of QA is centred around the role of AC and its six sub-committees. AC reports to GB and members of GB who spoke to the Review Team confirmed that this was an effective relationship. GB members saw its role not as one of interference but as one of oversight at the highest level. Members told the Review Team that GB could place trust in the decisions made by AC and that its relationship with the leadership team meant, increasingly, that matters which did not need to be escalated to GB were resolved by the executive. It was apparent to the Review Team that the oversight role of GB is effective and supportive.

The role of AC is key to the governance of QA and was widely viewed as such by those who spoke to the Review Team, from GB to academic lecturers. Decision-making and debate at AC were described as “robust” and the Review Team was given examples of matters where AC required further information on a matter before approval was granted. The definition

of research-active staff and the introduction of programme boards were two such examples.

Currently, the membership of AC stands at 54, including student members. There are five meetings per year. AC's work is facilitated by six sub-committees: the Standing Committee, the Academic Quality Sub-committee, the Programme Evaluation Sub-committee, the Research Sub-committee, the Learning and Teaching Sub-committee, and the Graduate Research Studies Board. The work of the sub-committees is, in turn, supplemented by working parties on particular topics as and when necessary.

The Review Team met with members of the six sub-committees and considered the role of each. It was not convinced of the need for all six. For example, assessment and standards sit under the Academic Quality Sub-committee but the appointment and management of the role and function of external examiners, the cornerstone of confirmation of standards in Ireland, sit within the Standing Committee. The Programme Evaluation Sub-committee was described as a "clearing shop" and, while its remit is important, it may be that such tasks might be covered in another way.

The Review Team does not wish to prescribe a governance structure but is mindful of the Institute's desire and need to be agile in its decision-making and to ensure that its framework for the management and governance of QA is effective and streamlined, with a view to maximising the potential impact of the strategic plan and the goals embedded in AMBITION. The Review Team saw no evidence to suggest that AC was anything other than highly functioning. However, it is a large body and receives reports from six sub-committees and a number of working parties. To that end, the Review Team makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Review Team recommends a reconsideration of DkIT's framework for the governance of QA in light of how far it currently supports the objectives in DkIT's new strategic plan and in AMBITION. This includes consideration of the role of AC and its sub-committees and whether anything is missing from the framework that could further support the implementation of the strategic plan.

PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

DkIT was given delegated authority in 2004 to make awards from levels 6 to 9 (taught) on the NFQ. In 2008, the School of Health & Science and the School of Informatics & Creative Arts were given approval to award at levels 9 and 10 in designated areas.

In order to provide opportunities for research programmes at levels 9 and 10 in all areas, DkIT formed a strategic partnership with DCU and established the DCU/DkIT Graduate School. As outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and in accordance with the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012*, DCU is the awarding body for research programmes at levels 9 and 10 and DkIT is the linked provider for DCU. All QA arrangements undertaken by DkIT are reported and submitted to the DCU Graduate Research Studies Board (GRSB). As outlined in the 2012 Act, DCU conducts a review of the effectiveness of the QA procedures of DkIT as its linked provider – the next review is scheduled for 2020.

Awarding and assessment methods are outlined in the DkIT *Quality Manual*, which is reviewed every three years and has been aligned with ESG 2015 and with QQI *Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (Core)*. The teaching and research programmes are evaluated on a regular basis, both by programme boards and external evaluators. Feedback from external examiners is channelled to the relevant programme board, head of school and head of department from the Registrar's Office. Issues that arise are then dealt with at programme level and the efforts to arrive at a solution are supported by senior management. There is evidence that the recommendations of the external examiners have been implemented to their satisfaction. External accreditors include: the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland; Engineers Ireland; the Veterinary Council of Ireland; and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants. Annual programme board reports are evaluated and assessed by the Academic Quality Sub-committee of AC and the summary is reported in the AIQR. For example, the 2014/15 AIQR outlines that the analysis of the programme reports was helpful in identifying and highlighting the requirement to review the following policies and procedures: a) Marking; b) Criteria Group Work; and c) Technology Enhanced

Learning. The evidence shows that these issues were addressed in 2015/2016, thus closing the feedback loop. Since each AIQR includes improvements made in the previous year, the staff felt that reviewing AIQRs over a four-year period was an interesting and useful exercise for tracking their own progress in preparing the ISER and in preparation for the review visit. The AIQRs are in clear compliance with the ESG and very comprehensive. Exemplars outlined in the AIQRs include: HR Excellence in Research Logo; Teaching Team Expert Award from the National Forum; RDC reaccreditation to ISO9001-2008 quality standard; and implementation of the *Student Voice Policy*. Also, the AIQRs noted the following accomplishments as a result of strategic plan implementation and based on the preceding AIQRs: the establishment of three research areas; the formation of the DkIT/DCU Graduate School; the development of the School Industry Development Board; the development and implementation of programme board reports; and the launch of the DkIT Careers & Employability Centre.

APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMMES

Apprenticeship programmes are a recognised means by which people are trained to become craftspeople in Ireland and typically take four years to complete. DkIT runs a number of apprenticeship programmes, including Carpentry, Electrical Trades, Motor Mechanics and Plumbing. The Department of Engineering Trades and Civil Engineering works in close cooperation with SOLAS (the national agency that manages apprenticeship programmes), employers and other agencies to develop and deliver these programmes.

SOLAS is the coordinating provider for craft (pre-2016) apprenticeships. It is required to have its QA procedures in line with QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* and to work with collaborating providers in implementing these.

The Review Team met with a representative from SOLAS, who outlined details of the MoU currently in place with DkIT's Department of Engineering Trades and Civil Engineering. DkIT is currently implementing the change from the older version 2.2 curriculum to the new version 4 curriculum in three trades, namely Carpentry and Joinery, Plumbing, and Electrical Trades.

Apprenticeships are now a viable path for many learners and DkIT is embracing these changes.

The apprenticeship programmes are strong and well respected and supported by industry partners, as evidenced during conversations held with representative stakeholders during the MRV. Continuous assessment by employers provides feedback both to the student and the Institute, thus helping student learning as well as quality assessment and programme improvement by the Institute. However, the Review Team failed to find specific QA procedures for these apprenticeship programmes.

QA processes are expressly the remit of SOLAS, and the MoU reinforces this with the clear instruction that the Institute's QA processes are to be applied, unless and until there is a conflict with such policies as SOLAS may generate. In the absence of such QA guidelines from SOLAS, the Institute must, and does, apply the DkIT QA processes, as outlined in DkIT's *Assessment and Standards Policy* (June 2018) and the related academic policies, including those related to continuous assessment, conduct of examinations, and academic integrity.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Review Team recommends that DkIT work in collaboration with SOLAS (coordinating provider for pre-2016 apprenticeships) to ensure that QA procedures are developed and implemented for apprenticeship programmes, in line with QQI Topic-Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Apprenticeships.

COMMENDATION 5

The Review Team commends DkIT for the strong relationships that it has established with industry partners.

STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

The Review Team notes the commitment of DkIT to best practice in staff recruitment, professional development, and transparency in recruitment process. The Review Team found that the QA process within HR is largely directed by rules laid down by the Department of Education and Skills, and such policies serve as guidelines for recruitment activities. Examples of such guidelines, which are also considered best practice, include the number

of people on an interview board, the constitution of the board to include industry personnel, and job descriptions. The Review Team also notes the *Gender Equality Policy* adopted by the HR unit in this regard. However, it was noted by the HR representatives that the current recruitment process is prescriptive and outdated. The time taken to recruit staff and its accompanying processes are considered to be insufficiently agile.

COMMENDATION 6

The Review Team commends the relative flexibility employed within DkIT's HR Policy via the design of custom procedures for recruitment, using templates such as those of the Irish Universities Association (IUA), while adhering to national standards.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Review Team recommends that DkIT make the recruitment process more agile and flexible, as opposed to the current structure in place, which is perceived to be prescriptive and outdated.

The Review Team also notes the initiatives in place at DkIT to encourage newly recruited assistant lecturers to proceed to a master's degree or PhD. It found evidence of this in programmes such as the *Master's in Learning and Teaching* (MALT) programme, which has been undertaken by a considerable number of academic staff members at the Institute. Evidence of how staff development is encouraged via the use of the eLearning tools for pedagogy training was noted, and the role of technology in advancing staff professional development is commendable. The Review Team notes, however, the plethora of resources offered on the Moodle site and the shortfalls in its use as a tool for providing assessment and feedback.

COMMENDATION 7

The Review Team commends the Institute's commitment to continuing professional development (CPD), based on the further educational needs of staff.

The Review Team notes the constraints inherent in academic staff teaching hours based on individual teaching workloads, which restrict the ability of staff to commit to further education. During the MRV, the Review Team was told that teaching workloads were defined based on the contracts and that it may be

onerous to change the teaching focus and workload of academic staff. The Team therefore recommends that alternative methods of professional development be devised in consultation with heads of department and staff. While the Team saw evidence of efforts of the HR unit to connect staff members with short-time placements in the industry, it notes the cumulative effect that this will have on defined in-class hours included in staff teaching contracts.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Review Team recommends that DkIT consider mechanisms to enable staff to take time out to pursue academic and professional development.

Lastly, DkIT has shown evidence of a commitment to staff development and wellbeing. Evidence of programmes such as the *Employee Assistance Programme*, GDPR training for staff, and offsite training for technicians were noted. The Review Team also notes the challenges with resourcing, financial climate and further constraints such as the *Employment Control Framework*. From an HR perspective, the Institute may choose to focus on retraining existing staff to match skills required, rather than seeking to employ new staff. An example cited by the HR Manager, which the Review Team noted, was that, during the recession, many staff members in the trade and apprenticeship areas were made redundant and needed to be retrained and reassigned.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Review Team recommends a review of the procedures currently in use for staff development, in order to maximise current HR.

DkIT has an ambition to double its international student population over the next few years. While the international student office is largely responsible for this, the Team notes that training from the HR department would be required to sensitise staff to the needs of international students.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Review Team recommends that the HR unit of DkIT provide staff training in relation to interaction with international students and the management of cultural diversity.

Overall, the Review Team notes the *Non-discriminatory Policy* for treatment of academic and non-academic staff within DkIT. The members of staff at the Institute feel that they are all treated in the same way and avail of the same opportunities for professional development, which was evidenced across staff interactions during the MRV. In addition, the fact that over 90% of staff (both academic and non-academic) have upskilled and furthered their education since being recruited at DkIT further buttresses the equal opportunities for career development available to all staff. The links with industry at all levels of staff reflect the commitment of DkIT to the professional development of employees. The Review Team was made aware of the main challenges being faced by the Institute, including the changing political environment, new EU regulations, and GDPR.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

DkIT is a learner-centred institute, educating and preparing students through various programmes aligned with industry needs for immediate employability and seamless entrance into the workforce. The programmes are delivered in face-to-face, online or hybrid mode in four different schools: the School of Informatics & Creative Arts; the School of Engineering; the School of Health & Science; and the School of Business & Humanities. The Teaching and Learning sub-committee of AC oversees the quality assessment and feedback for improvement of teaching and learning in the programmes and overall quality assessment and feedback. The assessment process, as outlined in the AIQR, is used to provide feedback to the strategic planning process. One example cited was the TEAM project, which focused on teaching and learning enhancement. The Review Team was advised that students were active partners throughout the project and presented at a conference. Consequently, the project was cited by a national forum as an excellent example of student feedback and engagement in teaching and learning improvement.

The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) provides online and face-to-face support for teachers and students. CELT helps teaching staff to develop excellence in pedagogical delivery and to implement innovative teaching and learning

strategies. The academic staff and CELT staff are very enthusiastic about supporting and guiding students through their educational journey. The students outlined their satisfaction with the programmes and teaching staff, their availability, and their support. They also felt that their voice is heard and that their feedback is used to improve teaching and learning. The 2014 *ISSE* shows that the students expressed a concern that the Learning Management System (LMS) Moodle was not being employed frequently enough by staff members. CELT and IT worked together to resolve this issue by helping the staff with LMS implementation. The Team found evidence of a 10% increase, year on year, in the usage of this online teaching and learning tool by staff and students, with over 96% of staff using Moodle. This evidence was corroborated by the self-reporting staff survey that was recently conducted by DkIT, with some schools reporting almost 100% usage.

COMMENDATION 8

The Review Team commends the array of activities undertaken by CELT to improve student learning, as evidenced by the MALT programme, which helps staff to improve their teaching performance, and the increased use of LMS Moodle and other teaching and learning tools.

As part of the *Research Strategy 2017-2019*, DkIT is committed to driving research excellence in a number of prioritised areas, to include Health, Ageing, and ICT; Energy and Environment; and the Creative Arts. Through highly successful collaborative research programmes such as those run from the Smooth Muscle Research Centre and the Regulated Software Research Centre, learners are informed of the latest thinking and innovation within their discipline area and their application to the real world. The Review Team heard comments, from a wide section of those interviewed, that research enriches teaching and the Institute. Research and education are synergistic activities at DkIT, each nourishing and informing the other. Research feeds into teaching and a number of new courses have been developed as a direct result of research. However, as was pointed out by several academic staff members at different meetings during the MRV, the challenge of required teaching hours is a legacy issue. Also noted was the fact that the heads of schools and departments were supportive of research.

DkIT staff are actively engaged in research through various research centres and feed the knowledge acquired through research into their teaching. In the words of one of the staff members: “The importance of research for teaching cannot be overstated – this is where new knowledge is generated.” This is also a way to inform the academic programmes and keep them current and aligned with the societal needs.

An example of research contributing to teaching was given, whereby third-year degree students contribute to research findings of level-4 project programmes. There have been 40 such projects. The students work alongside PhD students. Some have published their projects, some go on to do PhDs, and others complete their degree course. It is of benefit to both parties if research dovetails with teaching. One of the PhD students interviewed by the Review Team explained how she enrolled in a HDip in Computing, working on a Medical Device Track, which was part of a major collaborative research programme with industry. This resulted in her completing a PhD in this domain. Such projects also provide opportunities for supervisors to develop their skills.

DkIT has also been recognised by the OECD (*State of Higher Education 2015-2016 OECD Higher Education Programme*) for embedding entrepreneurship throughout the curriculum, as well as entrepreneurial behaviour and an entrepreneurial mindset among the staff and students, helping graduates to learn and practise creativity, critical thinking and teamwork.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

DkIT’s *Assessment and Standards* document sits within the remit of the Academic Quality Sub-committee and is aligned with QQI’s *Assessment and Standards* (2013). It contains an appeals process, and this includes procedures to be followed for students with mitigating circumstances. The Review Team saw evidence from external examiners that the assessment procedures used are “well designed and carefully managed”.

The *Assessment and Standards* document provides overarching guidance beneath which three other policies sit: the *Assessment and Learning Policy*; the *Framework for Management and Development of Assessed Group Work*; and the *Continuous Assessment Procedures*. There is also an *Academic*

Integrity Policy. In line with the recommendation under “Policies”, above, the Review Team encourages the Institute to ensure that the policies and frameworks surrounding assessment are streamlined.

Associated statistics on student progression within programmes are also reviewed annually and barriers to progression are reviewed at programme level by programme boards, so that appropriate actions can be taken to improve the learner performance. Progression rates for all levels across all fields of study for DkIT for 2013/2014 to 2014/2015 averaged 83% (joint 1st in the IoT sector), compared to the IoT average of 79%.

DkIT student satisfaction rates are strong, as measured by the *ISSE*. For example, DkIT’s 2016 score for educational experience at the excellent/good level is 73%, compared to 80% for all IoTs. It was significantly improved in 2017. The DkIT 2017 rate of satisfaction with educational experience at excellent/good level is 83%, compared to 82% for all IoTs. *ISSE* feedback indicates that student engagement at DkIT is comparable to student engagement at other IoTs.

SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

DkIT’s commitment to supporting learners is quite evident from its student-centred approach to teaching and learning at all levels of the Institute. The Review Team also saw evidence of DkIT’s commitment to lifelong learning, particularly in partnering with industry to develop programmes and create opportunities for learners. An example cited during the MRV was the programme in electrical engineering, which was established as a partnership between DkIT and industry. Other exemplars of support provided to students include the open-door policy and cordial working relationship between learners and teachers. Further supporting evidence of the commitment of the Institute to supporting part-time learners, who have previously been disadvantaged, includes the appointment of part-time programme directors, who make themselves available on demand in the evenings to cater to the needs of part-time students.

The Review Team, however, notes the staffing constraints and working hours’ time limit, i.e. typical 9-5 office hours, for support staff catering to part-time students. Since most student services close at 5pm, part-time students do not receive as much support as full-time students. The Review Team

acknowledges that the Institute is constrained by resourcing from addressing this challenge.

COMMENDATION 9

The Review Team commends the integration of teaching and learning with lifelong learning, an example cited being the programme in electrical engineering, which was established as a partnership between DkIT and industry, as a mechanism through which lifelong learning is supported.

As programme content should ideally be more aligned with industry needs, in line with the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, the Review Team notes that DkIT is working assiduously to link the learning outcomes of their programmes with those needed in industry. An example of such commitment is their successful application for the *Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund, Strand 2: 1916 Bursary Fund* and *Strand 3: Higher Education Access Fund*. Access to these funding schemes and similar initiatives highlights the Institute's drive to achieve excellence in support for its learners.

The Institute has also begun moves to create an online student support hub and has introduced a blended learning approach to teaching. The Institute also has a good support service for students who need pastoral care and counselling services. These services are introduced to students during the induction, and the students attested to the crucial nature of the services within their academic experience. During meetings with student stakeholders, however, the Review Team found a low level of awareness among the student population of the *Student Charter* and *Student Handbook*. This low level of awareness was evident among both full-time and part-time students.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Review Team recommends that DkIT endeavour to increase awareness among the student body of the *Student Charter* and *Student Handbook*, both of which are crucial documents for enhancing the experience of students while in education.

DkIT attracts quite a number of Erasmus and international students, and the Review Team noted the commitment of the Institute in catering to this student body. The Review Team found evidence of supports such as social integration programmes, field trips and other activities.

The library forms an integral part of the student experience at DkIT, and the Review Team found evidence of support provided by the library to its students. During interviews with the library support staff, the Review Team did not find any evidence of student user groups within the library unit. The library support staff informed the Team that they maintained strong links with the student population via scheduled library information presentations and class representative meetings. A key element of the QA process for this student support is the use of surveys and focus groups. This feedback, in conjunction with headcounts, is then used to improve the service and provide recommendations.

Another vital support service provided by DkIT to learners includes the Reach-Out scheme, which is a website for student-related queries and mental health issues. This scheme is available to all students. Other learning supports available to students at DkIT include the Student Learning and Development Centre, the Maths Learning Centre and the Information Technology Learning Centre. The Institute also engages with students via the Clubs and Societies initiatives, which have considerably increased its student engagement (evidenced by the level of engagement on its social media platforms and in-person meetings).

The Review Team also found evidence that DkIT provides support for mature learners and learners with disability through various programmes. Some of these programmes are targeted at learners with disabilities and mature learners, Traveller communities and single parents. The Review Team noted the challenge of the changing needs of students, such as the increase in the number of students needing support with regard to mental health, and its implications for service delivery. The Review Team also notes the challenges in providing supports to postgraduate students, who have more specialised and focused learning support needs than undergraduates.

COMMENDATION 10

The Review Team commends the current support system in place for diverse student needs, particularly in terms of staff training to meet evolving student demands.



In conclusion, the Review Team also found evidence at DkIT of adequate support for students going on placements and work experience schemes in industry. DkIT may, however, wish to address perceived inconsistencies around which programmes should have placements incorporated into their structure. The Review Team perceived that some students felt their programme should have a placement component, which is currently not available. The Team found evidence of a standard, quality-assured support system available to learners at DkIT and believes it will be in the interest of the Institute to improve this, particularly with a more systematic, student-focused approach.

COMMENDATION 11

The Review Team commends DkIT placement officers for helping students before and during placements, as evidenced by the feedback from students.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Review Team recommends the development of a more robust, systematic, routine and student-focused approach for outlining which programmes require the incorporation of placement components, thus ensuring an integrated approach across all faculties.

INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Within higher education and other sectors, one of the most pressing issues currently is adherence to the newly introduced General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which came into effect in 2018. DkIT prepared itself by organising training for staff members to upskill in terms of information and data management. The Review Team found evidence that the Institute placed information and data management at the forefront of its activities, since it is a client of HEAnet Network Operations and uses Banner, Core, Agresso and Millennium as its information management tools. These are nationally adopted information and data management tools and are used for informing quality decision-making. One of the best practices adopted in data management within DkIT is the use of data on student registration, progression and dropout, conferring of awards, and graduate destinations as a feedback mechanism for programmatic reviews. During the meeting with representatives from the six sub-committees of AC, the Review Team noted how data was being used as a tool for continuous improvement and quality improvement within DkIT. A key example is how data from the *ISSE* survey is used to improve the student experience via teaching and learning. The Review Team further notes the time taken to analyse results and feedback, with

presentations made to AC and individual reports sent to schools within the Institute. The Review Team notes that while the ISER provides evidence that Evasys software is being used as a tool for obtaining formal student feedback about their programmes bi-annually, the Institute is faced with a challenge to acquire data in the form of feedback from students on one-to-one provision and other services.

The Review Team found that, in some instances, information could be more clearly/effectively communicated to students, as some students – particularly those participating in the Erasmus programmes – found it cumbersome to access information about their modules and programme content. The Review Team also noted a disconnect in the synthesis of data across units, i.e. a lack of consolidation/coordination of data across units. While the current website migration project may have been responsible for the present lacklustre nature of information and data management, a more coherent strategy is required.

COMMENDATION 12

The Review Team commends the Institute's use of data as a tool for decision-making. One of the best practices in data management adopted within DkIT is the use of data on student registration, progression and dropout, conferring of awards and graduate destinations as a feedback mechanism for programmatic reviews. Another piece of evidence found during the MRV was how the ISSE survey data is used to monitor and enhance the student experience in both academic and non-academic dimensions.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Review Team recommends the implementation of a more coherent strategy to manage, consolidate, communicate and disseminate information to both staff and students via all channels.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

The Institute's policy on public information is set out in the *Quality Manual* and is the responsibility of the Marketing and Communications Office. Although the new website was under construction at the time of the review, the Review Team was able to see transparent

publication of the information cited in the policy, including the reports from previous programmatic review processes. It noted that students interviewed said they had been involved in helping to create the new website and that they had enjoyed and valued this involvement.

By and large, all stakeholders interviewed by the Review Team confirmed that the information they had looked at was accurate. The Review Team saw no evidence to suggest that DkIT's public information and its communication to stakeholders and the wider public was inaccurate, although it was informed by international postgraduate students that they would go to the Research Office for information, rather than the website or the International Office, since this was the office with which they had most interaction. However, all stakeholders interviewed by the Review Team were clear that they knew where they could go for information or knew whom to ask for direction.

OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

COLLABORATION

Engagement with industry and external stakeholders is a central part of DkIT's strategy, feeding into its mission to contribute to the region. Such engagement is well established throughout DkIT, as is evidenced by the fact that many programmes include industry advisory boards in each school to advise on ongoing programme development, student placements, industry days, Springboard+ programmes, joint research, and such like.

The Review Team met with heads of departments, staff members and the Head of the Research Office, members of GB, postgraduate students, representatives from linked providers, and representatives from industry.

It is clear that there are strong links between the external stakeholders and the Institute. Research is an increasingly important part of DkIT's activity, and the Institute has successful partnerships with industry, with recent successes in the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, among other programmes. DkIT has established a successful partnership with DCU, which involves the two institutes taking a multidisciplinary approach to

academic programme development, research, enterprise support, and internationalisation.

LINK TO LOCAL INDUSTRY

DkIT has a good track record of engaging with industry and agencies such as the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) within the teaching portfolio, in terms of programme validation and skills initiative for current and new industries. It has set up a cross-disciplinary group to establish programmes such as Data Science for Engineers.

DkIT has established a successful Innovation Centre, with plans to expand it further. Considering the *National Strategy 2030* and the possibility of being involved in clusters – Midlands, East and North Dublin (MEND) cluster, alliances along the eastern corridor, and the partnership with DCU – there is an opportunity to use the “untapped resource” represented by regional partners in research programmes. It also provides an opportunity to grow numbers at undergraduate, postgraduate and part-time levels by involving schools, business and linked providers. The recent success achieved in the highly competitive Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund is a good exemplar of collaboration between DkIT, MNC, a local SME, a university and a teaching hospital.

COMMENDATION 13

The Review Team commends the Institute’s success in the highly competitive Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, which is an exemplar of successful collaboration.

RECOMMENDATION 12

The Review Team recommends that the Institute leverage the success of research activities to increase its engagement with local industry.

SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Review Team saw examples of DkIT’s self-evaluation, monitoring and review processes through various conduits. For example, the ISER provided for the review was the Institute’s self-evaluation of its overall framework for QA (see section 2), the

AIQR documentation and programme board reports provided clear examples of annual monitoring (see section 3.1), and the programmatic review process as described above sets out the approach to programmatic review.

In line with Section 28(2) of the *Qualifications, Education and Training Act* (2012), programmatic quality review is undertaken on a five-year cycle. It gives the academic schools an opportunity to conduct a critical evaluation and assessment of their programmes and assists in the development of a five-year plan for the school in question, which is aligned with the Institute’s strategic plan. A policy on the design and approval of programmes was established in 2000 by AC, which has been updated and amended every two years. Students serve on programme boards and have a chance to provide their feedback. The programme assessment reports are published online.

As mentioned above, the assessing and monitoring of programmes is undertaken by programme boards, school boards and external examiners. At the same time, student intake, progression and graduation are monitored by the Registrar’s Office, the *ISSE*, and feedback from class representatives.

The quality control and assessment of student learning in research-focused programmes is achieved through formal and informal meetings to ascertain student progress and to provide constructive feedback. These meetings are documented by the supervisory team(s) at the formal meetings of the Research Centre/Group. The students are required to submit an annual progress report, which is made available through the Institute’s Research Management System. Evaluation of each annual progress report is carried out at school level – it is completed by the principal supervisor(s), approved by the supervisory Review Team, endorsed by the relevant graduate research programme board, and then submitted to the Registrar’s Office. A student representative serves on the Graduate Research Studies Board and he or she can bring forward any issues for the postgraduate body at institutional level.

The Review Team found that DkIT has a rigorous process for developing new programmes to support the Institute’s strategy and industry needs. As evidenced by the submitted materials and online publications, all proposals include: a) Demand; b) Award; c) Institute Strategy Alignment; d) Entry

requirements; e) Access, Transfer and Progression; f) Standards and Outcomes; g) Programme Structure; h) Teaching and Learning; i) Strategies for Assessment Strategy; j) Resource Requirements; and k) QA. This ensures the quality and relevance of the new programmes. Using this approach, DkIT has begun work on the development of a Programmatic Portfolio Plan for the period 2018 to 2028, to align its programmes with industry and the needs of the geographic region.

COMMENDATION 14

The Review Team commends DkIT on the rigorous process for establishing new programmes, which ensures their quality and relevance.

RESEARCH

DkIT is an institute committed to teaching and learning, but research is also central to its objectives. The Review Team found evidence among members of the research centres and Graduate Research Studies Office of the crucial role played by the research community at DkIT within Dundalk and the eastern corridor. The Review Team found evidence of DkIT research centres securing funding and of their success in research output and collaborations. The challenge posed by teaching loads for academic staff is noted, which is due in part to the contracts for IoT staff members. The contract prescribes a specified number of teaching hours for academic staff, leaving little time to engage in research. The Review Team also notes that most academics are only paid for teaching hours and need to fund research externally. The Review Team notes that it is not easy for academic staff to balance teaching hours with research.

The research landscape has changed greatly over the years, and the Review Team found evidence of this during the MRV. Examples such as the Graduate Research Regulations, Research Integrity Training and Ethical Approval Processes were cited as best practice and QA measures for research. Evidence of the Institute’s support for researchers to access funding was also provided, and research infrastructure provision, such as office space and equipment, was recorded. However, the Review Team notes the difficulty associated with involving new academics in research, due to workload requirements for assistant lecturers.

DkIT employs good practice in research QA by being very supportive of quality enhancement procedures for research. This is particularly the case with heads of department and heads of school, who organise training for researchers.

COMMENDATION 15

The Review Team commends the supports in place for researchers at DkIT, including infrastructure, training and administrative support.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Review Team recommends that the Institute establish a balance between teaching and research for new lecturers starting employment.

Central to DkIT’s research is the issue of funding, which tends to take priority over the local needs of the community within which the Institute is located. The Review Team notes that, although funding for research determines prioritisation, DkIT may also need to factor in the local research needs of Dundalk and the region, when designing its research focus/ strategic direction. The Review Team understands that the current research direction is dependent on supply (financing).

RECOMMENDATION 14

The Review Team recommends that the Institute prioritise the research needs of the local community and industry within the region, in line with the DkIT AMBITION.

The current model at DkIT does not recognise research as a means of teaching. However, interaction with staff showed that research is a crucial component of the teaching. The staff involved in research presented evidence to show that DkIT needs to recognise that master’s and PhD supervision is fourth-level teaching and is critical to overall teaching effectiveness.

The strategic location of the DkIT campus helps the Institute to serve as a place for connectivity and cohesion within the region. The Institute recognises that its research should not be merely inward looking but needs to have a local voice. The Review Team therefore found evidence of the Institute’s commitment to grow its student numbers in research locally and internationally. A particular example found

within research programmes is the commitment to recruiting part-time research students and Northern Ireland students, in line with DkIT AMBITION, via the creation of additional pathways. A specific example is a former student, who – having previously been a construction labourer – entered DkIT as an apprentice and went on to graduate with a PhD.

The challenges generally associated with research in IoTs also apply to DkIT, as researchers feel that they are hampered by the number of teaching hours to which they must commit. Some undergraduate students engage in joint research with PhD students, and examples were provided of such research being published.

COMMENDATION 16

The Review Team commends the cross-fertilisation of research and teaching, with particular reference to how research feeds into taught programmes right down to undergraduate levels.

Another good practice within research in DkIT is the introduction of a conversion course targeted at bringing people from industry into research, with some progressing to obtain PhDs. One of the graduates of this programme has gone on to start up a very successful company, which is employing graduates.

In the research domain, publications form a metric for the measurement of output and QA. However, the Review Team did not find any evidence of publication targets and although publication is encouraged, it is left to the discretion of the individual researcher. The funding model for research at DkIT does not define publication targets, and thus does not take into account the publication record of the Institute.

The QA process for researchers at DkIT is well defined, and there are specific examples of how it is conducted between supervisors and students. The Review Team also noted that all DkIT research regulations were aligned with those of DCU, and that both institutes meet regularly to provide feedback.

The overall QA process for research degrees and awards is, however, governed by DCU policy for postgraduate students and QQI sectoral protocols for research. An example of such a policy that is shared across the two institutions is the *Research Integrity Policy*. The Ethical Approval Committee is

local to DkIT but is in compliance with DCU guidelines. The research office also makes great efforts to train researchers via the use of online programmes, including the Research Ethics module, which was well commended by researchers interviewed during the MRV.

The Review Team notes further the constraints faced by the Institute in terms of access to academic journals for its research scholars. While the Review Team understands that the problem is not unique to DkIT, a longer-term solution needs to be established. As there is a clear link between access to academic journals and quality of scholarship, it may be worthwhile exploring means of obtaining increased access to e-journals.

DkIT showed solid links to industry and practice within its research programmes, especially with its recent acquisition of a patent for a product developed within the Institute.

COMMENDATION 17

The Review Team commends DkIT for its current practice of permitting research involvement in programmatic reviews, as this allows for the programmes to be well rounded in their design. The Review Team encourages the continuation and optimisation of this practice for informing module content. The Review Team further commends the introduction of a conversion course that targets people from industry and brings them into research, allowing them to progress all the way to level-10 qualifications (PhD).

RECOMMENDATION 15

The Review Team recommends the establishment of a long-term solution to tackle the problem of restricted access to academic journals.

Research activity is reported to AC and GB. There is currently a three-year research strategic plan; planning for a new research strategy is underway. Research is driven to a large degree by funding providers such as the HEA and by the national agenda. Given the increasingly important role played by research in the Institute, and the knowledge, experience and connections gained through research, the Review Team recommends that research feature more prominently in the AMBITION process.

RECOMMENDATION 16

The Review Team recommends that the Institute ensure that research features more prominently in the AMBITION process and that it use research to further improve its teaching and learning focus in catering for the needs of the region.

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMENDATIONS

2. The Review Team commends the clear progression of the work of programme boards since the last institutional review in 2009 as a core “quality tracking mechanism” (ISER), which results in an annual programme board report that takes on board feedback from students, external examiners and other stakeholders.
3. The Review Team commends the role played by the PRB reports in streamlining processes by using the same headings for the PRB reports as for the AIQR (which provides external information to QQI) and in the self-study reports for programmatic review (allowing for internal focus).
4. The Review Team commends the role of the programmatic review process (recognised widely across groups of internal and external stakeholders) in taking a pivotal role in communicating the strategic goals of AMBITION to the schools, with a view to the writing of self-studies to address the global goals at local level. The resulting reviews then provide external views on how far the local goals are in line with those of the Institute.
5. The Review Team commends DkIT for the strong relationships it has established with industry partners.
6. The Review Team commends the relative flexibility employed within DkIT’s HR Policy, via the design of custom procedures for recruitment using templates such as that of the IUA, while adhering to national standards.
7. The Review Team commends the Institute’s commitment to CPD, based on the further educational needs of staff.
8. The Review Team commends the array of activities undertaken by CELT to improve student learning, as evidenced by the MALT programme, which helps staff to improve their teaching performance, and the increased use of LMS Moodle and other teaching and learning tools.
9. The Review Team commends the integration of teaching and learning with lifelong learning, an example cited being the programme in electrical engineering, which was established as a partnership between DkIT and industry, as a mechanism through which lifelong learning is supported.
10. The Review Team commends the current support system in place for diverse student needs, particularly in terms of staff training to meet evolving student demands.
11. The Review Team commends DkIT placement officers for helping students before and during placements, as evidenced by the feedback from students.
12. The Review Team commends the Institute’s use of data as a tool for decision-making. One example of best practice in data management adopted within DkIT is the use of data on student registration, progression and dropout, conferring of awards, and graduate destinations as a feedback mechanism for programmatic reviews. Another piece of evidence found during the MRV was how the *ISSE* survey data is used in monitoring and enhancing the student experience along academic and non-academic dimensions.
13. The Review Team commends the Institute’s success in the highly competitive Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, which is an exemplar of successful collaboration.
14. The Review Team commends DkIT on the rigorous process for establishing new programmes, which ensures their quality and relevance.
15. The Review Team commends the supports in place for researchers at DkIT, including infrastructure, training and administrative support.
16. The Review Team commends the cross-fertilisation of research and teaching, with particular reference to how research feeds into taught programmes right down to undergraduate levels.

17. The Review Team commends DkIT for its current practice of permitting research involvement in programmatic reviews, as this allows for the programmes to be well rounded in their design. The Review Team encourages the continuation and optimisation of this practice for informing module content. The Review Team further commends the introduction of a conversion course that targets people from industry and brings them into research, allowing them to progress all the way to level-10 qualifications (PhD).

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Given the effectiveness of the programmatic review process in providing a 360-degree view of the local and institutional level goals in each academic school, the Review Team recommends that the Institute consider the value of also including support units in the review process, to further enhance and add to the completeness of the outcomes and information available.
3. The Review Team recommends a reconsideration of DkIT's framework for the governance of QA in light of how far it currently supports the objectives in its new strategic plan and in AMBITION. This includes consideration of the role of AC and its sub-committees and whether anything is missing from the framework that could further support the implementation of the strategic plan.
4. The Review Team recommends that DkIT work in collaboration with SOLAS (coordinating provider for pre-2016 apprenticeships) to ensure that QA procedures are developed and implemented for apprenticeship programmes, in line with QQI Topic-Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Apprenticeship Programmes.
5. The Review Team recommends that DkIT make the recruitment process more agile and flexible, as opposed to the current structure in place which is perceived to be prescriptive and outdated.
6. The Review Team recommends that DkIT consider mechanisms to enable staff to take time out to pursue academic and professional development.
7. The Review Team recommends a review of procedures currently employed for staff development, in order to maximise current HR.
8. The Review Team recommends that the HR unit of DkIT provide staff training in relation to interaction with international students and the management of cultural diversity.
9. The Review Team recommends that DkIT endeavour to increase awareness among the student body of the *Student Charter and Student Handbook*, both of which are crucial documents for enhancing the experience of students while in education.
10. The Review Team recommends the development of a more robust, systematic, routine and student-focused approach for outlining which programmes require the incorporation of placement components, thus ensuring an integrated approach across all faculties.
11. The Review Team recommends the implementation of a more coherent strategy to manage, consolidate, communicate and disseminate information to both staff and students via all channels.
12. The Review Team recommends that the Institute leverage the success of research activities to increase its engagement with local industry.
13. The Review Team recommends that the Institute establish a balance between teaching and research for new lecturers starting employment.
14. The Review Team recommends that the Institute prioritise the research needs of the local community and improve their teaching and learning focus industry within the region, in line with the DkIT ambition.
15. The Review Team recommends the establishment of a long-term solution to tackle the problem of restricted access to academic journals.
16. The Review Team recommends that the Institute ensure that research features more prominently in the AMBITION process and that it use research to further improve its teaching and learning focus in catering for the needs of the region.

3.2 Objective 2 – Procedures for Awarding

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PROCEDURES FOR AWARDING

The ISER states that DkIT’s “quality assurance framework is guided by its responsibilities as an awarding body under authority delegated by QQI”. Key aspects of the QA framework have been described above, in particular the role of validation, programme boards and programmatic review, in ensuring that the programmes offered are of the appropriate standard.

The programme validation policy clearly states that the “qualification resulting from a programme must be clearly stated and communicated and defer to the correct level of the National Framework of Qualifications”. The Review Team was given an example of the life cycle of one particular programme and discussed this with relevant members of staff. It clearly demonstrated the role of the validation and approval system in ensuring that the design and approval of new programmes is aligned with the institutional strategy and goals; that the initial stages involve external consultation; and that the final stage of the process, involving the validation event, has strong external input. The Review Team reiterates its comment that, on occasion, the three-stage validation process might be more cumbersome than necessary.

The *Assessment and Standards* document clearly describes matters such as the responsibility for assessment, the role of internal and external examiners, and the functioning of examination boards.

The roles and responsibilities for external examiners are clearly documented in *Assessment and Standards*. They cover two main areas: confirmation that the location of the award on the NFQ and the standard of the work assessed are appropriate; and confirmation that the assessment carried out is fair and consistent. The appointment of external examiners is carried out by the Standing Sub-committee of AC. External examiners are required to report annually on their work and this is an important part of the feedback considered by the programme boards in their annual reports. The external examiner reports seen by the Review Team provided examples from all four schools. The reports demonstrated some inconsistency in the approach to completing the reports, with some

ticking boxes and others providing helpful comments. Their usefulness to the Institute is, therefore, variable. Further briefing on the role of the external examiner in advance of their appointment and guidance regarding expectations on reporting would be useful to ensure that DkIT receives maximum benefit from an important part of the NFQ. The Institute may also wish to revise the template for reports, to ensure that it encourages comment.

RECOMMENDATION 17

The Review Team recommends that the Institute provide external examiners with advance briefing on the expectations of the role and clearer guidance on reporting.

The Review Team examined the procedures for making awards in respect of programmes offered with collaborative partners and can confirm that they do not differ from any other programme at DkIT.

THE GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

The governing structure and the governing procedures at DkIT are aligned with the *THEA Code of Governance for IoTs and QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (Core)*. A very dedicated and enthusiastic GB exercises its fiduciary duty and oversees overall strategy and QA, while working closely with the president and his executive team. The president chairs AC, which has six sub-committees.

DkIT has a number of governance committees that support the QA process, as outlined in the *DkIT Quality Manual*, which is aligned with *ESG 2015* and with *QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (Core)*. The work of these committees is aligned so that the data collection, analysis, and decision-making regarding the programme improvements and resource allocation are coordinated and aligned with overall strategy.

During the economic downturn, GB was forced to make some difficult decisions when DkIT experienced a difficult financial situation. Exercising its fiduciary duty, it took on this challenge and tasked the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee with examining in detail all finances and developing a strategy to deal with



the financial downturn. GB put in place a very tough financial plan that helped turn the situation around – the Institute achieved a small surplus last year and put DkIT back on the path of sustainability.

As stated above, *Assessment and Standards* is the responsibility of the Academic Quality Sub-committee of AC, with the appointment of external examiners sitting with the AC Standing Committee. All results are recommended to AC and awards are granted on the endorsement, by that body, of the outcomes of each examination board. The *Assessment and Standards Policy* also sets out the process for the revocation of an award.

Currently, the governance process for quality and standards includes the Academic Quality Sub-committee of AC. The Review Team is aware that its recommendation that the Institute consider rolling out its programmes of periodic review to all support units (above), and also its recommendation on the

governance structure for QA, might impact upon the roles of the various sub-committees of AC, of which this is an example. Nevertheless, it encourages the Institute to look at these recommendations across its processes for the assurance of quality and for standards through its awarding function, with a view to ensuring that its structures are streamlined, robust and that they allow for effective and timely decision-making.

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. The Review Team recommends that the Institute provide external examiners with advance briefing on the expectations of the role and clearer guidance on reporting.

3.3 Objective 3 – Quality Enhancement

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

The Review Team found multiple instances of a very direct and hands-on approach to quality enhancement at DkIT. The Team could find many examples in the ISER section on quality enhancement and in the detailed AIQRs. During the MRV, examples of that approach were given in almost every meeting. Representatives brought forward problems that had been raised during meetings, consultations and informal talks, and indicated the planning and implementation of relevant solutions. This was particularly clear when meeting student representatives from different levels (class representatives, Students' Union). DkIT's open culture and informal interaction between student and staff ensure a very direct feedback culture with good follow-up on that feedback. Students indicated that this has resulted in revised modules of various subjects or in the further development of the website. In rare cases, where issues could not be resolved through direct communication and feedback, further steps through programme boards or other commissions could lead to appropriate conclusions. External stakeholders and alumni testified to the same direct feedback line and the follow-up on that feedback.

COMMENDATION 18

The Review Team commends the excellent communication between students and teaching staff and the explicit mutual learning phases as a result of that communication, the close community feel on campus, the benefit of small class sizes, and the proactive response of staff to delivering on learning assessment strategies to suit the diverse cohort of learners, as evidenced during conversations with a range of stakeholders during the MRV.

The Team sees and appreciates that the programme boards play an important role in quality enhancement. Partly as a follow-up to the previous institutional review, the programme boards have become a core "quality tracking mechanism". Not only do programme board discussions result in direct action, but they also result in annual reports summarising a set of actions

with action owners. The input is diverse and based on student feedback, reports and data (e.g. on intake, progression and graduation). The Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) loop is closed through a monitoring system. These reports are reviewed at institutional level and, through a filtering process, common issues and themes are taken up by AC.

COMMENDATION 19

The Review Team commends the important role played by programme boards in quality enhancement.

The introduction of *Guidelines on Assessed Group Work* is an example of how feedback on difficulties with workload, reporting, and assessment with student group work was taken up and led to a marked drop in negative student feedback.

The Review Team found evidence during the MRV of a strong emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning at DkIT. It is the view of the Team that this is supported by quality enhancement measures both in the fields of staff development and student support. Professional development in learning and teaching through CELT is a good example of how enhancement measures can be anchored in the Institute. The Team found evidence of the positive impact of this professional development in the programme board reports and in the feedback through the staff survey used in preparation for the ISER. Likewise, the Student (Maths/IT) Learning and Development Centre monitors the operations through student and stakeholder feedback. There is a positive deviation for the DkIT responses to the ISSE questions on learning support, when benchmarked to the average IOT's. The participation (as a partner or lead) in seven multi-institute enhancement projects on teaching and learning since 2014 is further proof of the focus on teaching and learning and of the standards of DkIT.

COMMENDATION 20

The Review Team commends DkIT's quality enhancement achieved through informal and formal processes of collecting feedback, responding to it, and monitoring results.

The Review Team is of the opinion that necessary governance principles are in place to support this systematic quality enhancement method. Student and stakeholder participation at all levels are important assets for this. The Team also found that policies and procedures were constructed and discussed in a very participative way through intensive consultations. Although the Team appreciates this participation and consultation, it also advises the Institute to be careful not to lose agility in taking the right measures and to keep the focus on the most relevant themes and measures.

THE ALIGNMENT OF THE INSTITUTE'S MISSION AND TARGETS FOR QUALITY

The Irish educational system imposes regulations upon its institutions through compacts, AIQRs, funding mechanisms, award systems, etc. The Review Team has the impression that DkIT has prepared for and/or reacted to these regulations by drawing up institutional procedures to cover as many items as possible. The ISER refers to some of the procedures resulting from external regulations and requirements. Likewise, DkIT puts a lot of energy into drawing up procedures, irrespective of whether this energy leads to effective quality enhancement on priority issues.

All of the above, combined with the inclination to turn almost every issue arising into a policy or a procedure, has led to an abundance of each. Many participants during meetings with the Review Team referred to a multitude of procedures or “a web of procedures”, which did not always lead to effective quality enhancement. Reference was even made to policies and procedures that were insufficiently known or implemented throughout the Institute, or “rested on the shelf”. The Review Team itself found a similar accumulation of procedures and measures in the ISER, but did not detect an overall system linked to the Institute’s mission and broader strategic goals.

RECOMMENDATION 18

The Review Team recommends that DkIT conduct an integrated review of all policies and procedures, possibly linked to the ongoing review of the *Quality Manual*. This would entail a significant rationalisation of the many policies and procedures and a review of their fitness for (more than one) purpose.

RECOMMENDATION 19

The Review Team recommends that DkIT simplify the remaining policies and procedures and streamline them in a logical and traceable scheme. The Review Team advises the Institute to use the mission, vision and strategic plans as a basis for that scheme. In particular, the Team sees AMBITION, the update of the strategic plan for 2018-2023, as the starting point for a QA and quality enhancement framework (see also Recommendation 3)

This means that the Institute focusses on the core principles of the AMBITION framework (Serving the region; Deepening the engagement in Northern Ireland; Building Strategic Partnerships; Serving the Students; and Serving the Stakeholders) and prioritises its quality activities along these lines. During the MRV, senior management laid sharp focus on: 1) a more systematic integration with Northern Ireland and the recruitment of Northern Irish students; 2) the stimulation of part-time education; and 3) a fundamental review of all undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes.

By taking this as a lead principle for QA and enhancement at institutional level, and for priority-setting at all levels, the Institute will be able to move from preparation for, or reaction to, external pressure (or demands) to an internally driven system.

The Review Team is convinced that this is compatible with the direct and participative approach at DkIT. It will help the Institute to link the separate measures to what the Review Team sees as “the bigger picture”. This lies in the alignment of policies, procedures and measures with the mission, vision and strategic plans (and with AMBITION). The Review Team advises the Institute to take this as the basis for focus and prioritising. In line with this, a revision of the role of AC and its sub-committees on the basis of that “bigger picture” is required (see also Recommendation 3). This could lead to concluding whether anything is missing from the framework that could further support the implementation and improvement of the strategic plan. This advice is meant to implement the PDCA loop on the higher level of institutional goals and their realisation.

RECOMMENDATION 20

The Review Team recommends the use of indicators on the focus lines of AMBITION, so that they can become instrumental in achieving a clearer goal, clear monitoring and appropriate follow-up actions.

Taking into account the above, the Review Team points to the programme reviews and the activities of the programme boards as examples of processes and procedures perfectly in line with the focus line of the programme portfolio review to reflect the needs of the region. In addition, student ambassadorship for Northern Ireland students or the structural cooperation with Northern Irish institutes are smaller but significant examples of alignment of actions with AMBITION.

On the other hand, the Review Team noticed a gap between the ambition to stimulate part-time study and to increase numbers, and the lack of enhancement activities to reach that goal. The Team feels that the Institute should improve with respect to welcoming and catering for part-time students, particularly in the case of adapted student support services, campus-organisation, opening hours of facilities, Students' Union funding, etc.

RECOMMENDATION 21

The Review Team recommends that the Institute review enhancement activities undertaken in support of part-time students, to ensure that appropriate supports are in place to deal with increased intake.

The Review Team is convinced that a more relevant and consistent quality management and quality enhancement system will result from the above-mentioned recommendations. It would advise senior management to facilitate this transition and focus by committing to storytelling about AMBITION and about the strategic goals of the Institute. This would involve the leadership team in using AMBITION as a central means of communication, to give a framework for actions, feedback, or implemented policies. It means that, through repetition, this story will become central to what the institution undertakes in the medium term and that a quality culture will be created around that ambition. The Team found that AMBITION provided the opportunity and possibility to connect different parts of the Institute (e.g. schools and programmes

vs. central staff and senior management) and to bring different groups of staff (e.g. academic vs. non-academic) closer together. Essentially, this storytelling has the potential to stimulate a quality culture driven by that ambition, rather than doing what has to be done to satisfy external requirements. It would also lead to wider knowledge of the binding principles of the QA and quality enhancement measures.

RECOMMENDATION 22

The Review Team recommends that DkIT use AMBITION as a central and repeated means of communication, to give a framework to actions, feedback or implemented policies.

The Review Team is aware that the above recommendations increase the need for dedicated QA capacity. The system of revising, rationalising, re-organising, prioritising and aligning all of this with the Institute's strategic planning will require time and energy. This is also the case for setting and monitoring indicators and for putting in place the relevant follow-up procedures (see recommendation under Policies in section 3.1).

INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

PARTNERSHIP WITH DCU

The Institute has established a strategic alliance with DCU, which involves taking a multidisciplinary approach between the two institutions to academic programme development, research, enterprise support and internationalisation. The QA arrangements are relatively straightforward, with DCU's regulations and requirements taking precedence. DkIT has oversight over level 9 and 10 awards for registered students. The partnership is split into two phases, with phase 1 ending in September 2019. DCU awards the PhD and sets the alignment of regulations that inform policies, with oversight from both sides. In order to support the QA work-flow between the two institutions, it was agreed that the DCU Dean of Graduate Studies would become a member of the DkIT Graduate Studies Board and that the DkIT Assistant Registrar would join the DCU Graduate Studies Research Board (GRSB).

In DkIT, all postgraduate students undertake annual progress monitoring. This is completed by the student

and the supervisor and is also visible to, and open to comment by, the student. The increase in staff co-supervision with DCU staff has allowed for capacity planning within DkIT, with the result that there are 70 formally trained supervisors, with a further 10 recently recruited, which will allow for seeding research areas and growing existing areas.

The Review Team recognises the benefits of the partnership in terms of enriching the teaching programmes within the Institute and increasing the capacity to engage in research programmes. As stated earlier, research should feature more in the AMBITION process.

RECOMMENDATION 23

The Review Team recommends that DkIT continue to support the partnership with DCU and encourage staff involved in research programmes to engage more with local industry and along the eastern corridor.

THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS IN TERMS OF PROVIDING FEEDBACK, PART-TIME EDUCATION, PLACEMENTS, RESEARCH AND CROSS-DISCIPLINARY MODULES

It was clear from the meetings held during the review that the Institute has a strong link to industry. It is evident that external stakeholders play a really important role, with the Review Team being shown many examples of input being provided in various programmes, such as the Certificate and Higher Diploma in Data Analytics, the Diploma in Food and Agri-Business, and specific courses for the pharmaceutical industry. The Review Team also noted with appreciation that the external stakeholders have a good understanding of the common or mutual goal of their organisation or company and the Institute.

COMMENDATION 21

The Review Team commends DkIT on its strong commitment to being relevant to the region and across the border.

The AMBITION initiative is a way of consulting with the broader region. It is helping to demonstrate that the Institute's activities are all integrated with each other – teaching and learning, research and community engagement. An exemplar was given of a recommendation made by a school strategic plan

to the academic planning portfolio process in 2017, which identified opportunities for full- and part-time programme development with other schools. It resulted in a programme being developed for the pharmaceutical industry. This will help to inform the development of future strategic plans with defined objectives.

DkIT has strategic alliances with corporate and business groups, government agencies, schools and colleges. A new corporate partnership programme is in the pipeline.

RECOMMENDATION 24

The Review Team recommends that DkIT continue to engage with external stakeholders, in order to achieve greater communication and integration between all the working groups and to bring together all the elements in a cohesive format.

PART-TIME PROGRAMMES

Recent trends show a growth in demand for part-time and distance learning, due to increasing requirements for CPD and upskilling. During the MRV, industry representatives cited many examples of bespoke part-time programmes, including Springboard+ programmes, that were successfully run by DkIT. However, there were also many suggestions on how part-time provision could be improved.

As mentioned in section 3.1 above (Apprenticeship Programmes), apprenticeship programmes are another viable pathway for many learners. Stakeholders in industry are now seeking apprenticeships in many fields but there is work to be done by all stakeholders to share information about the benefits of apprenticeship programmes and to make programmes more accessible by eliminating barriers, thus encouraging participants from a variety of backgrounds.

The Institute continually reviews local industry needs and its link with other providers – the North East Regional Skills Forum, further education colleges, Education and Training Boards and industry are involved through their engagement in periodic reviews. This work is ongoing and has produced some good results.

RECOMMENDATION 25

The Review Team recommends that DkIT continue to consult with partners on modes of delivery to develop CPD programmes.

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMENDATIONS

- 18. The Review Team commends the excellent communication between students and teaching staff and the explicit mutual learning phases as a result of that communication, the close community feel on campus, the benefit of small class sizes, and the proactive response of staff to delivering on learning assessment strategies to suit the diverse cohort of learners, as evidenced during conversations with a range of stakeholders during the MRV.
- 19. The Review Team commends the important role played by programme boards in quality enhancement.
- 20. The Review Team commends DkIT's quality enhancement achieved through informal and formal processes of collecting feedback, responding to it, and monitoring results.
- 21. The Review Team commends DkIT on its strong commitment to being relevant to the region and across the border.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 18. The Review Team recommends that DkIT conduct an integrated review of all policies and procedures, possibly linked to the ongoing review of the *Quality Manual*. This would entail a significant rationalisation of the many policies and procedures and a review of their fitness for (more than one) purpose.

- 19. The Review Team recommends that DkIT simplify the remaining policies and procedures, and streamline them in a logical and traceable scheme. The Review Team advises the Institute to use the mission, vision and strategic plans as a basis for that scheme. In particular, the Team sees AMBITION, the update of the strategic plan for 2018-2023, as the starting point for a QA and quality enhancement framework (see also Recommendation 3).
- 20. The Review Team recommends the use of indicators on the focus lines of AMBITION, so that they can become instrumental in achieving a clearer goal, clear monitoring and appropriate follow-up actions.
- 21. The Review Team recommends that the Institute review enhancement activities undertaken in support of part-time students, to ensure that appropriate supports are in place to deal with increased intake.
- 22. The Review Team recommends that DkIT use AMBITION as a central and repeated means of communication, to give a framework to actions, feedback or implemented policies.
- 23. The Review Team recommends that DkIT continue to support the partnership with DCU and encourage staff involved in research programmes to engage more with local industry and along the eastern corridor.
- 24. The Review Team recommends that DkIT continue to engage with external stakeholders, in order to achieve greater communication and integration between all the working groups and to bring together all the elements in a cohesive format.
- 25. The Review Team recommends that DkIT continue to consult with partners on modes of delivery to develop CPD programmes.

3.4 Objective 4 – Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION (ATP)

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ATP

DkIT has committed itself to creating pathways for students from disadvantaged communities and underrepresented groups, as evidenced in its *ISER* and *AMBITION* plan. The Review Team found a range of initiatives in place at the Institute for access and pathways to entry into third-level education. Students from Northern Ireland, first-generation higher-education students, mature students and students with disabilities are some of those who benefit from DkIT access programmes. A notable example is the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) scheme, which provides an alternative admissions scheme for school-leavers whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education. DkIT has been successful in implementing the scheme, as well as other access/pathways programmes for mature students, among others. During the MRV, the Review Team met with students who availed of these pathways to entry, and who commended the effectiveness of these programmes. The Institute has also engaged in the Springboard+ national initiative, which aims to bring unemployed people back into education and training. The Review Team also noted the RPL initiative at DkIT, and the effectiveness of same. The Review Team found evidence of students, particularly on the research programme, who had undergone the RPL process on enrolment at DkIT.

COMMENDATION 22

The Review Team commends the decentralisation of the *RPL Policy*, allowing decisions to be viewed on a case-by-case basis, thus enabling more people to avail of the programme.

While the Team notes that a working group has been set up to review the *RPL Policy*, as stated in

the *ISER*, the current policy is perceived not to be user-friendly from an industry perspective as only accredited modules from other institutions are considered as part of the RPL, but non-accredited industry-based learning is not. Another key indicator of the commitment of DkIT to improving access to education is evidenced by its work with Louth Leader Partnership. The Review Team found evidence of an Outreach access course (Pathways) running in Dundalk, Ardee and Drogheda.

DkIT further demonstrated its commitment to improving its ATP initiatives via the initiatives it has put in place for mature learners, such as the Mature Entry Route. The Review Team also noted the enhancements being put in place to improve the current progression rates for mature, part-time and Northern Ireland students.

RECOMMENDATION 26

The Review Team recommends that DkIT encourage students from Northern Ireland to serve as ambassadors for the Institute, which will help with the institution's ambition to attract more students from the region.

Evidence was found of the existence of pathways for access to education for diverse groups of students. This is crucial for reaching people who otherwise may not have opportunities to access third-level education. It may also be helpful for DkIT to maintain focus on pathways for people within their community and within the geographical cluster, in tandem with its ambition to increase cross-border student intake.

COMMENDATION 23

The Review Team commends the creation of pathways for access to education to groups such as Traveller communities and lone parents.

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMENDATIONS

22. The Review Team commends the decentralisation of the *RPL Policy*, allowing decisions to be viewed on a case-by-case basis, thus enabling more people to avail of the programme.
23. The Review Team commends the creation of pathways for access to education to groups such as Traveller communities and lone parents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

26. The Review Team recommends that DKIT encourage students from Northern Ireland to serve as ambassadors for the Institute, which will help realise the Institute's ambition to attract more students from the region.



3.5 Objective 5 – Provision of Programmes to International Learners

DkIT has increased the number of incoming international learners in the Institute to a significant level since it began recruitment of international students in 2002. Combined international and EU student registrations currently average 650 students, or 12% of the Institute's student population. International learners come to DkIT from countries across the globe, and from a range of its 60+ European partner institutions. As outlined in the Strategic Plan (2017-2019), the broad cultural mix of learner profiles meets the Institute's commitment to "widen learner experience and global awareness" for all students.

A key Institute objective is to double these numbers. This is clearly outlined in AMBITION. Internationalisation of the curriculum benefits the students, who will be operating in an increasingly global market and it will also afford staff opportunities to acquire and exchange knowledge.

The Review Team saw evidence of supports provided to international students in accordance with the *Code of Practice for the Provision of Education and Training to International Learners*. The Institute publishes a range of documentation (examples being – *International Fees and Scholarships, Institute Admissions Policy, English Language Requirements, Academic Programme-Information, International Student Handbook*) relevant to international students and provides many supports to international students at Institute level. Examples were given of specific initiatives that have been developed across the schools to enhance the experience of the international learner. Many of these engagements involved working on projects at European partner college destinations.

COMMENDATION 24

The Review Team commends the provision of supports to international learners in accordance with the *Code of Practice for the Provision of Education and Training to International Learners*.

The Review Team met a group of international learners during its visit. Overall, the students had a positive experience at DkIT, reporting that lecturers and

support staff are helpful. They cited the reputation of the Institute and the good care provided for international students. The Foundation programme was commended by the students. However, the students found that some relevant information relating to courses was not available to them and that there was insufficient information about some of the courses in general. Also, the need for greater integration with Irish students within classes and socially was emphasised by the students.

RECOMMENDATION 27

The Review Team recommends that DkIT improve the overall quality of information provided to international and Erasmus students. It further recommends that DkIT consider the challenge of doubling the international student intake and assessing the impact that this will have on resources.

During the MRV, the Review Team heard concern about international learners from various groups within the Institute. Clearly, there is a large imbalance in the inbound / outbound flow of students, particularly with the ERASMUS programme. Erasmus is not embedded at programme level. It was suggested that the greatest barrier to participation is the students' lack of confidence. A number of initiatives have been undertaken to encourage more students to participate in the programme, such as taking a group of second-year students to France to shadow French students. This gives them the confidence to sign up for the programme. Furthermore, as part of the Erasmus strategic partnerships, students go abroad for two weeks as a taster experience.

It was suggested by several members of staff that there needs to be an improvement in integration across all programmes within DkIT, such as requiring students to work on team projects. Some of these issues are being addressed, as work is underway to provide a hub for students at a central location on campus to encourage better integration between Irish and international students. The Review Team also heard from the Institute that a new marketing post has been established to improve communication with international learners.

RECOMMENDATION 28

The Review Team recommends that DkIT increase its efforts to ensure that all international students are given the opportunity to have contact and classes with local Irish students, by establishing student ambassadorships.

RECOMMENDATION 29

The Review Team recommends that DkIT consider the introduction by PRBs of special projects that will facilitate collaboration between Irish and international students.

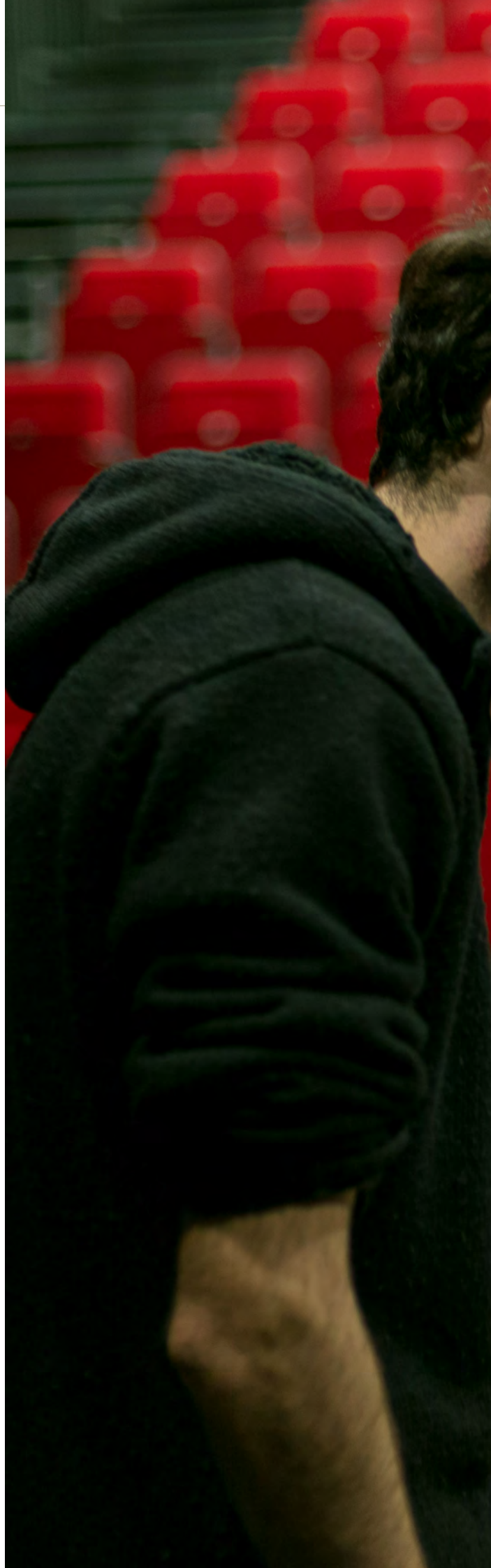
SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMENDATIONS

24. The Review Team commends the provision of supports to international learners in accordance with the *Code of Practice for the Provision of Education and Training to International Learners*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

27. The Review Team recommends that DkIT improve the overall quality of information provided to international and Erasmus students. It further recommends that DkIT consider the challenge of doubling the international student intake and assessing the impact that this will have on resources.
28. The Review Team recommends that DkIT increase its efforts to ensure that all international students are given the opportunity to have contact and classes with local Irish students, by establishing student ambassadorships.
29. The Review Team recommends that DkIT consider the introduction by PRBs of special projects that will facilitate collaboration between Irish and international students.



Section

D

Conclusions

Overall Findings and Conclusions

Top 5 Commendations and Recommendations

Overarching Statements about QA

Conclusions

Overall Findings and Conclusions

The Review Team concludes that, since its last review in 2009, a positive approach has been taken by DkIT to ensure that the Institute has an effective, robust and well-understood QA framework. It believes that, in moving on from a legacy of more stringent external QA compliance requirements, the Institute has risen to the challenge of operating in a system that allows it to implement a framework appropriate for its mission and vision. Since 2009, it has transitioned considerably from the former compliance culture to one that seeks to take responsibility for QA and quality enhancement within the national and international frameworks. The Review Team finds the Institute to be aligned with QQI's QA Guidelines and with the ESG.

Findings

This final section draws together the commendations and recommendations made throughout this report and prioritises the most important five of each.

COMMENDATIONS

1. The Review Team commends the high level of engagement and enthusiastic interactions of staff, students and internal and external stakeholders during the QQI CINNTE MRV.
2. The Review Team commends the clear progression of the work of programme boards since the last institutional review in 2009 as a core "quality tracking mechanism" (ISER), which results in an annual programme board report that takes on board feedback from students, external examiners and other stakeholders.
3. The Review Team commends the role played by the PRB reports in streamlining processes by using the same headings for the PRB reports as for the AIQR (which provides external information to QQI) and in the self-study reports for programmatic review (allowing for internal focus).
4. The Review Team commends the role of the programmatic review process (recognised widely across groups of internal and external stakeholders) in taking a pivotal role in communicating the strategic goals of AMBITION to the schools, with a view to self-studies being written to address the global goals at local level. The resulting reviews then provide external views on how far the local goals are in line with those of the Institute.
5. The Review Team commends DkIT for the strong relationships it has established with industry partners.
6. The Review Team commends the relative flexibility employed within DkIT's *HR Policy* via the design of custom procedures for recruitment using templates such as that of the IUA, while adhering to national standards.
7. The Review Team commends the Institute's commitment to CPD, based on the further educational needs of staff.
8. The Review Team commends the array of activities undertaken by CELT to improve student learning, as evidenced by the MALT programme, which helps staff to improve their teaching performance and the increased use of LMS Moodle and other teaching and learning tools.
9. The Review Team commends the integration of teaching and learning with lifelong learning, an example cited being the programme in electrical engineering, which was established as a partnership between DkIT and industry, as a mechanism through which lifelong learning is supported.
10. The Review Team commends the current support system in place for diverse student needs, particularly in terms of staff training to meet the evolving student demands.
11. The Review Team commends DkIT placement officers for helping students before and during placements, as evidenced by the feedback from students.

12. The Review Team commends the Institute's use of data as a tool for decision-making. One of such best practices in data management adopted within DkIT is the use of data on student registration, progression and dropout, conferring of awards and graduate destinations as a feedback mechanism for programmatic reviews. Another piece of evidence found during the Review Team visit was how the *ISSE* survey data is used in monitoring and enhancing the student experience along academic and non-academic dimensions.
13. The Review Team commends the Institute's success in the highly competitive Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, which is an exemplar of successful collaboration.
14. The Review Team commends DkIT on the rigorous process for establishing new programmes, which ensures their quality and relevance.
15. The Review Team commends the supports in place for researchers at DkIT, including infrastructure, training and administrative support.
16. The Review Team commends the cross-fertilisation of research and teaching, with particular reference to how research feeds into taught programmes right down to undergraduate levels.
17. The Review Team commends DkIT for its current practice of permitting research involvement in programmatic reviews, as this allows for the programmes to be well rounded in their design. The Review Team encourages the continuation and optimisation of this practice for informing module content. The Review Team further commends the introduction of a conversion course that targets people from industry and brings them into research, allowing them to progress all the way to level-10 qualifications (PhD).
18. The Review Team commends the excellent communication between students and teaching staff and the explicit mutual learning phases as a result of that communication, the close community feel on campus, the benefit of small class sizes and the proactive response of staff to delivering on learning assessment strategies to suit the diverse cohort of learners, as evidenced during conversations with a range of stakeholders during the MRV.
19. The Review Team commends the important role played by programme boards in quality enhancement.
20. The Review Team commends DkIT's quality enhancement achieved through informal and formal processes of collecting feedback, responding to it, and monitoring results.
21. The Review Team commends DkIT on its strong commitment being relevant to the region and across the border.
22. The Review Team commends the decentralisation of the *RPL Policy*, allowing decisions to be viewed on a case-by-case basis, thus enabling more people to avail of the programme.
23. The Review Team commends the creation of pathways for access to education to groups such as Traveller communities and lone parents.
24. The Review Team commends the provision of supports to international learners in accordance with the *Code of Practice for the Provision of Education and Training to International Learners*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Review Team recommends that for future reviews, DkIT ensure that the ISER is more evaluative than descriptive in nature and that it clearly outlines the QA/quality enhancement overarching framework.
2. Given the effectiveness of the programmatic review process in providing a 360-degree view of the local and institutional level goals in each academic school, the Review Team recommends that the Institute consider the value of also including support units in the review process, to further enhance and add to the completeness of the outcomes and information available.
3. The Review Team recommends a reconsideration of DkIT's framework for the governance of QA in light of how far it currently supports the objectives in its new strategic plan and in AMBITION. This includes consideration of the role of AC and its sub-committees and whether anything is missing from the framework that could further support the implementation of the strategic plan.
4. The Review Team recommends that DkIT work in collaboration with SOLAS (coordinating provider for pre-2016 apprenticeships) to ensure that

QA procedures are developed and implemented for apprenticeship programmes, in line with QQI *Topic-Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Apprenticeship Programmes*.

5. The Review Team recommends that DkIT make the recruitment process more agile and flexible, as opposed to the current structure in place, which is perceived to be prescriptive and outdated.
6. The Review Team recommends that DkIT consider mechanisms to enable staff to take time out to pursue academic and professional development.
7. The Review Team recommends a review of procedures currently employed for staff development, in order to maximise current HR.
8. The Review Team recommends that the HR unit of DkIT provide staff training in relation to interaction with international students and the management of cultural diversity.
9. The Review Team recommends that DkIT endeavour to increase awareness among the student body of the *Student Charter* and *Student Handbook*, both of which are crucial documents for enhancing the experience of students while in education.
10. The Review Team recommends the development of a more robust, systematic, routine and student-focused approach for outlining which programmes require the incorporation of placement components, thus ensuring an integrated approach across all faculties.
11. The Review Team recommends the implementation of a more coherent strategy to manage, consolidate, communicate and disseminate information to both staff and students via all channels.
12. The Review Team recommends that the Institute leverage the success of research activities to increase its engagement with local industry.
13. The Review Team recommends that the Institute establish a balance between teaching and research for new lecturers starting employment.
14. The Review Team recommends that the Institute prioritise the research needs of the local community and industry within the region, in line with the DkIT AMBITION.
15. The Review Team recommends the establishment of a long-term solution to tackle the problem of restricted access to academic journals.
16. The Review Team recommends that the Institute ensures that research features more prominently in the AMBITION process and that it uses research to further improve its teaching and learning focus in catering for the needs of the region.
17. The Review Team recommends that the Institute provide external examiners with advance briefing on the expectations of the role and clearer guidance on reporting.
18. The Review Team recommends that DkIT conduct an integrated review of all policies and procedures, possibly linked to the ongoing review of the *Quality Manual*. This would entail a significant rationalisation of the many policies and procedures and a review their fitness for (more than one) purpose.
19. The Review Team recommends that DkIT simplify the remaining policies and procedures, and streamline them in a logical and traceable scheme. The Review Team advises the Institute to use the mission, vision and strategic plans as a basis for that scheme. In particular, the Team sees AMBITION, the update of the strategic plan for 2018-2023, as the starting point for a QA and quality enhancement framework (**see also Recommendation 3**).
20. The Review Team recommends the use of indicators on the focus lines of AMBITION, so that they can become instrumental in achieving a clearer goal, clear monitoring and appropriate follow-up actions.
21. The Review Team recommends that the Institute review enhancement activities undertaken in support of part-time students, to ensure that appropriate supports are in place to deal with increased intake.
22. The Review Team recommends that DkIT use AMBITION as a central and repeated means of communication, to give a framework to actions, feedback or implemented policies.
23. The Review Team recommends that DkIT continue to support the partnership with DCU and encourage staff involved in research

- programmes to engage more with local industry and along the eastern corridor.
24. The Review Team recommends that DkIT continue to engage with external stakeholders, in order to achieve greater communication and integration between all the working groups and to bring together all the elements in a cohesive format.
 25. The Review Team recommends that DkIT continue to consult with partners on modes of delivery to develop CPD programmes.
 26. The Review Team recommends that DkIT encourage students from Northern Ireland to serve as ambassadors for the Institute, which will help realise the Institute's ambition to attract more students from the region.
 27. The Review Team recommends that DkIT improve the overall quality of information provided to international and Erasmus students. It further recommends that DkIT consider the challenge of doubling the international student intake and assessing the impact that this will have on resources.
 28. The Review Team recommends that DkIT increase its efforts to ensure that all international students are given the opportunity to have contact and classes with local Irish students, by establishing student ambassadorships.
 29. The Review Team recommends that DkIT consider the introduction by PRBs of special projects that will facilitate collaboration between Irish and international students.



Top 5 Commendations and Recommendations

COMMENDATIONS

1. The Review Team commends the role of the programmatic review process (recognised widely across groups of internal and external stakeholders) in taking a pivotal role in communicating the strategic goals of AMBITION to the schools, with a view to self-studies being written to address the global goals at local level. The resulting reviews then provide external views on how far the local goals are in line with those of the Institute.
2. The Review Team commends the excellent communication between students and teaching staff and the explicit mutual learning phases as a result of that communication, the close community feel on campus, the benefit of small class sizes and the proactive response of staff to delivering on learning assessment strategies to suit the diverse cohort of learners, as evidenced during conversations with a range of stakeholders during the MRV.
3. The Review Team commends the cross-fertilisation of research and teaching, with particular reference to how research feeds into taught programmes right down to undergraduate levels.
4. The Review Team commends DkIT's quality enhancement achieved through informal and formal processes of collecting feedback, responding to it, and monitoring results.
5. The Review Team commends the array of activities undertaken by CELT to improve student learning, as evidenced by the MALT programme, which helps staff to improve their teaching performance and the increased use of LMS Moodle and other teaching and learning tools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Given the effectiveness of the programmatic review process in providing a 360-degree view of the local and institutional level goals in each academic school, the Review Team recommends that the Institute consider the value of also including support units in the review process, to further enhance and add to the completeness of the outcomes and information available.
2. The Review Team recommends a reconsideration of DkIT's framework for the governance of QA in light of how far it currently supports the objectives in its new strategic plan and in AMBITION. This includes consideration of the role of AC and its sub-committees and whether anything is missing from the framework that could further support the implementation of the strategic plan.
3. The Review Team recommends that the Institute leverage the success of research activities to increase its engagement with local industry
4. The Review Team recommends that the Institute prioritise the research needs of the local community and industry within the region, in line with the DkIT AMBITION.
5. The Review Team recommends that DkIT simplify the remaining policies and procedures, and streamline them in a logical and traceable scheme. The Review Team advises the Institute to use the mission, vision and strategic plans as a basis for that scheme. In particular, the Team sees AMBITION, the update of the strategic plan for 2018-2023, as the starting point for a QA and quality enhancement framework (**see also Recommendation 3**).

Overarching Statements about QA

The Review Team is confident that DkIT has taken essential steps in institutional development and QA since its last institutional review. Since 2009, it has transitioned considerably from the former compliance culture to one in which it seeks to take responsibility for QA and enhancement within the national and international frameworks. It has done so under difficult budgetary circumstances. The Review Team met with committed external stakeholders, staff and students and noted the excellent relationship between these groups. The Team feels that there is confidence in, and support for, the relatively new presidency and the process of planning and implementing AMBITION.

Based on a thorough examination of DkIT's ISER, the appendices and supporting documents, the AIQRs, the QA manual and additional documents, and the intensive consultations during the MRV, the Review Team can confirm that DkIT has sufficient and robust QA policies and procedures in place. The Review Team states that these policies and procedures can guarantee the quality of teaching and learning in a more than sufficient way. Therefore, the Review Team concludes that the Institute's QA procedures are aligned with the ESG and have appropriate regard to QQI *Statutory Quality Assuranced Guidelines (Core)*.

In line with its recommendations, the Review Team advises DkIT to simplify its remaining policies and procedures and streamline them in a logical and traceable scheme; and to reconsider its framework for the governance of QA, in light of how far it currently supports the objectives in its new strategic plan and in AMBITION.

Following the review, the Team also concludes that the Institute has in place and is implementing appropriate procedures as an awarding body and that delegated authority is exercised in a satisfactory and guaranteed manner.

The Review Team has seen evidence that necessary governance principles are in place to support a systematic quality enhancement method. Student and stakeholder participation at all levels are an important asset for this. The Review Team commends DkIT's quality enhancement achieved through informal and formal processes of collecting feedback, responding to it, and monitoring results.

The Institute provided evidence of the implementation of a compliant set of procedures with respect to access, transfer and progression, in line with QQI's *Policy for Access, Transfer and Progression*. The Review Team equally saw evidence of supports provided to international students, in accordance with the *Code of Practice for the Provision of Education and Training to International Learners* but recommends that DkIT improve the overall quality of information provided to international and Erasmus students.





Section

EE

Institutional Response

Institutional Response



Dundalk Institute of Technology Formal Response to the QQI CINNTE
Institute Review Report carried out in December 2018

Introduction

The Institute welcomes the QQI CINNTE Review Report carried out in December 2018 by an international panel of experts and peers evaluating the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of Dundalk Institute of Technology. The Review provided the Institute with a timely opportunity to undertake a critical evaluation of all the Institute's quality assurance (or QA) functions and an evaluation of key areas such as quality development and enhancement undertaken since the Institute Review 2009.

Through the self-reflection process, existing weaknesses and potential opportunities have been identified and form the basis for sets of actions requiring priority over the lifetime of the Review. Some of these actions, along with the recommendation arising from the panel review, will sit alongside the HEA Compact and DkIT AMBITION Steering Group and its resulting strategic plan to ensure the Institute continues to grow and develop in an organic manner and that planning and prioritisation proceed in a flexible and responsive manner.

Response to Review

The Institute welcomes the positive and helpful nature of the report and in particular the top level commendations relating to the transparent and communicative process involved in the preparation for the Institute Review itself. We are pleased that the panel recognised the efforts taken to ensure that through the Institute Review process, we have ensured that AMBITION has been communicated to the schools thus enabling the Institute strategic context to be set effectively. The confidence expressed by the Review Team regarding institutional development and quality assurance is welcomed.

The Institute welcomes that the close community feel on campus is recognised together with small class sizes and the individual learner attention which results in the positive delivery of learner assessment strategies to a diverse cohort of learners.

Linked to this, the commendation from the review panel regarding the role of CELT in assisting staff improve their teaching (not least of which includes the roll out of the MALT programme) is most welcome. Similarly, the embedding of research into teaching at undergraduate level is noted with welcome.

The work undertaken within the Institute in the area of quality enhancement since the 2009 review (the focus of which was quality development) and the monitoring of the same is gratefully acknowledged.

Recommendations

The Institute welcomes the recommendations set out within the scope of the study which will assist in the implementation of the themes for future focus, underpinned by strategy and policy as described within the main body of the Review Self Study.

1. Appointment of a Head of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance

Taking the top level recommendations arising from the review, the Office of the Registrar is particularly pleased that the Review Team see fit to recommend that the Institute consider the value of including support units in the review process. The Institute is in the process of considering the appointment of a Head of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance, who will lead the development of an Institute Quality Office and hold responsibility for the maintenance, co-ordination, review and further development of the Institute's quality assurance processes and procedures. Working closely with the heads of departments, heads of school and the chairpersons of programme boards in relation to the development and review of academic programmes and ensuring the development and improvement of all aspects of the Institute's Academic Quality System, the office holder will also work with the Registrar on the systematic implementation and monitoring of the objectives set out within the Institute Review Self Study alongside recommendations of the Institute Review. A reorganisation of the functions within the Registrar's area will be undertaken as a starting point in early Autumn.

2. Establishment of Review Implementation Group

An institutional review implementation group will also be established to plan and oversee the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Review.

Key recommendations arising from the recent school level programmatic reviews (February 2019-May 2019) will be grouped into common local level institutional clusters of QA goals and a plan and timeframe for implementation will be developed.

3. Framework for Quality Assurance Governance

The review implementation group will take cognisance of the review panel recommendation regarding DkIT's framework for the governance of QA in light of how far it currently supports the objectives within the AMBITION Strategic Framework. The role of AC and its sub-committees will be examined so that structures can further support the implementation of the strategic plan.

4. Rationalisation of Policies and Procedures

In line also with supporting the forthcoming strategic plan and the AMBITION Framework, the Institute Review Implementation Group will examine the simplification of policies and procedures with a view to increasing the agility of the Institute so that the culture of best practice can be better embedded in an overarching contextual sense.

5. Leveraging Success of Research locally

The Institute notes the recommendations around the successful leveraging of research activities to increase the Institute's engagement with local industry and the need to prioritise the research needs of the local community and industry in line with the DkIT AMBITION.

Engagement with local stakeholders is already a central part of DkIT's Strategy and is integral to ongoing programme development and delivery through School Industry Advisory Boards and the Work Placement office which coordinates the placements of over 700 students per year across a range of programmes.

A key strategic initiative for the period of the new HEA Compact and the Institute Review Plan is the introduction of a Corporate Employer Partnership Programme with industry and the community. The Corporate Employer Partnership Programme will offer an organised framework for DkIT and industry/ community to develop mutually beneficial relationships with high profile organisations within the region. By providing an informal yet structured approach, carefully managing the interaction rather than relying on an ad hoc process, opportunities will be optimised to facilitate mutually beneficial interactions in all areas of activity including research. Establishing this coordinated and managed programme will provide for a sustainable approach to partnership which has the capacity to evolve and grow in a planned manner and will provide an integrated link between teaching, research and industry and community. In addition, it is recognised that there is a need for the management of academic collaborative partnerships. As these collaborative partnerships begin to emerge across the schools, a structure for the management and maintenance of these academic relationships will be established.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Review Implementation Group will establish a timeplan for the consideration of the topline recommendations set out in the QQI CINTE Review Report but will also work across functional areas including Human Resources, Student Services, Students Union, International Office, Schools and Departments and CELT to assist the various units in considering the valuable recommendations in areas including staff professional development, managing cultural diversity, managing data, enhancing staff and student awareness of quality assurance, potential expansion of placements and management of collaborative partnerships.

Finally, the Institute is pleased that the review panel acknowledge that DkIT has developed a framework of quality assurance policies and procedures that ensure compliance with ESG/QQI requirements. It is managing a number of complex collaborative provision arrangements, underpinned by robust quality assurance frameworks. Decision-making is becoming more informed and is meeting the needs of academic staff and learners. However, the review highlighted that while policies and procedures have demonstrably led to enhancement, more support is needed for their implementation and evaluation. This will be the primary focus of activity in the Institute as we move forward with the implementation of the emergent recommendations and actions arising from the panel review alongside the DkIT Strategic Plan, the HEA Compact and DkIT AMBITION frameworks. The Institute thanks the panel most sincerely for its work which will assist us in developing in an organic, flexible and responsive manner.

APPENDICES

Appendices

A: Terms of Reference

B: Main Review Visit Schedule

Appendix A

Terms of Reference (Terms of Reference for the Review of Institutes of Technology)

SECTION 1 **Background and Context for the Review**

1.1 Context and Legislative Underpinning

These are the Terms of Reference for the Review of an Institute of Technology (non-Designated Awarding Bodies) and encompass the following institutions:

- Athlone Institute of Technology
- Cork Institute of Technology
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
- Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
- Institute of Technology Blanchardstown Institute of Technology Carlow
- Institute of Technology Sligo
- Institute of Technology Tallaght
- Institute of Technology Tralee
- Letterkenny Institute of Technology
- Limerick Institute of Technology
- Waterford Institute of Technology

In 2016, QQI adopted a [policy](#) on cyclical review in higher education which sets out in greater detail the scope, purposes, criteria, model and procedures for review. These are represented in the Terms of Reference and the Handbook for the Review of Institutes of Technology. QQI has introduced an annual reporting process for institutions whereby institutions are required to submit an Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR). The aim of the AIQR is to provide a contemporary account of quality assurance (QA) within an institution. Information is provided through an online template and it is published. Collated annual reports are provided to periodical Review Teams. Annual reporting allows institutions and QQI to engage on a regular basis. Published annual reports assist with documentation management for institutions in reviews and lessen the burden on institutions in the lead-up to a review.

This review cycle is being conducted in a very changed context for higher education. The landscape for higher education has been significantly reshaped since the last cycle of reviews commenced. Smaller colleges have been merged with universities and many institutes of technology are reorganising and preparing mergers as part of the Technological University process. New alliances and partnerships envisaged by *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape* have commenced. A new approach to public funding has been introduced and operated by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Initiatives for enhancement such as the *Irish Survey of Student Engagement* (ISSE) and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL) have been formalised at national level. These developments mean that there are new sources of information and external benchmarks available to institutions that can be used to inform self-evaluation in this review cycle. Key measurements such as entry profiles, student retention, graduate profiles and staff and student satisfaction rates can provide a quantitative source of information for institutions to assist in internal decision-making and to help demonstrate evidence of the quality of an institution's offer.

The 2012 Act states that QQI shall consult with the HEA in carrying out the review. QQI has agreed with HEA that this will take the form of engagement with QQI on the Terms of Reference and confirmation of the status of the institution within the higher education system, sharing individual institutional profiles and data with the Team. Further details of the agreement can be accessed [here](#).

Institutes of Technology completed a statutory review cycle from 2009-2012. Prior to this, IoTs were reviewed for the purpose of granting Delegation of Authority. This review cycle commenced in 2017 and will terminate in 2022.

The 2017-2022 Review Cycle Schedule is:

INSTITUTION	COMPLETION DATES			
	ISER	Planning Visit	Main Review Visit	Report
Institute of Technology, Sligo	Q4 2017	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	Q4 2017	Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018
Dundalk Institute of Technology	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019
Waterford Institute of Technology	Q2 2019	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020
Institute of Technology, Carlow	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020
Technological University Dublin	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021	Q2 2021
Limerick Institute of Technology	Q4 2020	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Q3 2021
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology	Q2 2021	Q3 2021	Q4 2021	Q1 2022
Munster Technological University	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023
Athlone Institute of Technology	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023

1.2 Purposes

The Policy for the Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions highlights four purposes for individual institutional reviews. These are set out in the table below.

PURPOSE	ACHIEVED AND MEASURED THROUGH:
<p>1. To encourage a QA culture and the enhancement of the student learning environment and experience across and within an institution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emphasising the student and the student learning experience in the review - providing a source of evidence of areas for enhancement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them - exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures - exploring quality as well as quality assurance within the institution
<p>2. To provide feedback to institutions about institution-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emphasising the governance of quality and quality assurance at the level of the institution - pitching the review at a comprehensive institution-wide level - evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards - evaluating how the institution has identified and measured itself against its own benchmarks and metrics to support quality assurance governance and procedures - emphasising the enhancement of quality assurance procedures
<p>3. To contribute to public confidence in the quality of institutions by promoting transparency and public awareness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent - publishing the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences - evaluating, as part of the review, institutional reporting on quality and quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible
<p>4. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using the expertise of international, national and student peer reviewers who are independent of the institution - ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence - facilitating institutions to identify measurement, comparison and analytic techniques, based on quantitative data relevant to their own mission and context, to support quality assurance - promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation

SECTION 2

Objectives and Criteria

2.1 Review Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1

To review the effectiveness and implementation of the QA procedures of the institution, through consideration of the procedures set out, primarily, in the AIQR. Where necessary, the information provided by the AIQR is supplemented by additional information provided through documentation requests and interviews. The scope of this includes reporting procedures, governance and publication. This also incorporates an analysis of the ways in which the institution uses measurement, comparisons and analytic techniques, based on quantitative data, to support quality assurance governance and procedures. Progress on the development of QA since the last review of the institution will be evaluated. Consideration will also be given to the effectiveness of the AIQR and Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports (ISER) procedures within the institution.

The scope of this objective also extends to the overarching approach of the institution to assuring itself of the quality of its research degree programmes and research activities.

This objective also encompasses the effectiveness of the procedures established by the institution for the assurance of the quality of alliances, partnerships and overseas provision, including the TU clusters, mergers, transnational provision, joint awarding, joint provision and regional fora.

OBJECTIVE 2

To review the procedures established by the institution for the governance and management of its functions that comprise its role as an awarding body. The Team will focus on evidence of a governance system to oversee the education and training, research and related activity of the institution and evidence of a culture that supports quality within the institution. Considerations will centre upon the effectiveness of decision-making across the institution.

OBJECTIVE 3

To review the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

To review the congruency of QA procedures and enhancements with the institution's own mission and goals or targets for quality.

To identify innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement.

OBJECTIVE 4

To review the effectiveness and implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression.

OBJECTIVE 5

Following the introduction of a statutory international education QA scheme, to determine compliance with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

2.2 Review Criteria

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 1

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the effectiveness of the QA procedures of the institution and the extent of their implementation. The report will also include a specific statement on the extent to which the QA procedures can be considered as compliant with the *ESG* and as having regard to *QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (Core)*. These statements will be highlighted in the report of the review.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements, recommendations and possibly recommendations for directions in reference to this objective.

The criteria to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- *ESG*
- *QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (Core)*
- *QQI Sector Specific QA Guidelines for Institutes of Technology*
- Section 28 of the 2012 Act
- *QQI Policy and Criteria for Making Awards* (including FET provision)

Where appropriate and actioned by the institution, additional QQI guidelines will be incorporated:

- For Apprenticeship, QA Guidelines for Apprenticeship Programmes
- Sectoral Protocols for Research
- Sectoral Protocols for Joint Awards
- The institution's own objectives and goals for quality assurance

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 2

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the effectiveness of the procedures established for the overall operation and management of the institution as an awarding body.

The statements may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements, recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criteria to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective are *ESG* (Parts 1.1 and 1.4 in particular), *QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (Core)*, *QQI Sector Specific Institute of Technology Quality Assurance Guidelines* and *QQI Policy and Criteria for Delegation of Authority*.

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 3

The Review Report will include a specific qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality by the institution through governance, policy, and procedures.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations in reference to this objective. If identified, innovative and effective practices for quality enhancement will be highlighted in the report.

The criteria to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective are:

- The institution's own mission and vision
- The goals or targets for quality identified by the institution
- Additional sources of reference identified by the institution

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 4

The report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI policy for Access, Transfer and Progression.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criterion to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective is QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression

CRITERIA FOR OBJECTIVE 5

When the statutory international education quality assurance scheme is in place, the report will include a qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are compliant with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

This statement may be accompanied by a range of ancillary statements and recommendations and possibly recommendations for conditions in reference to this objective.

The criterion to be used by the Team in reaching conclusions for this objective is the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes to International Learners.

Key questions to be addressed by the review for each objective

- How have QA procedures and reviews been implemented within the institution?
- How effective are the internal QA procedures and reviews of the institution?
- Are the QA procedures in keeping with European Standards and Guidelines?
- Are the QA procedures in keeping with QQI policy and guidelines, or their equivalent?
- Who takes responsibility for quality and QA across the institution?
- How transparent, accessible and comprehensive is reporting on quality assurance and quality?
- How is quality promoted and enhanced?
- Are there effective innovations in quality enhancement and assurance?
- Is the student experience in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
- Are achievements in quality and QA in keeping with the institution's own stated mission and strategy?
- How do achievements in quality and QA measure up against the institution's own goals or targets for quality?

SECTION 3 The Review Process

3.1 Process

The primary basis for the review process is this handbook.

3.2 Review Team Profile

QQI will appoint the Review Team to conduct the institutional review. Review Teams are composed of peer reviewers who are students and senior institutional leaders and staff from comparable institutions as well as external representatives. The size of the Team and the duration of their visit will depend on the size and complexity of the institution but in general the Review Team for an Institute of Technology will consist of five or six persons. Each Review Team includes a Chairperson and Coordinating Reviewer, and may be supported by a rapporteur, who is not a member of the Team, to take and collate notes of meetings. A single team may undertake the review of two different institutions.

Reviewers are not QQI employees, but rather peers of the institution. The institution will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of their Review Team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest, and QQI will ensure an appropriate and entirely independent team of reviewers is selected for the institution. QQI has final approval over the composition of each Review Team.

There will be appropriate gender representation on the Review Team. The Team will consist of carefully selected and trained and briefed reviewers who have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their tasks. The Team will operate under the leadership of the Review Chairperson.

The Review Team will be appointed in keeping with the following profile:

1. A Review Chairperson

The role of the Chairperson is to act as leader of the Review Team. This is an international reviewer who is a (serving or recently former) senior third-level institution leader – usually a head of Institution or deputy head of Institution or a senior policy advisor who:

- » possesses a wide range of higher education experience;
- » demonstrates a deep understanding of the complexities of the higher education system;
- » understands often unique QA governance arrangements;
- » has proven experience in the management of innovation and change.

2. A Coordinating Reviewer

The role of the Coordinating Reviewer is to act as secretary to the Team as well as to be a full Review Team member. This is usually a person with expertise in the Higher Education system and prior experience in participating in external reviews. As the coordinating reviewer is responsible for drafting the report, he or she will possess proven excellent writing abilities.

3. A student reviewer

The role of the student reviewer is to represent the student voice in the Review Team. The student reviewer will be typically a student with significant experience of higher education or an undergraduate student who has completed a QA training programme and can represent the viewpoint of students.

4. An industry representative

The role of the industry representative is to bring an industry perspective to the Review Team. This representative should understand that their role in the review is to represent industry as a whole and not any particular industrial sector. QQI may seek guidance on the suitability of a particular profile for an industry representative from the institution.

In addition to the specific roles above, the full Team complement will include a range of experts with the following knowledge and experience:

- » Experience of higher education QA processes
- » Experience of postgraduate research programmes
- » Experience and proven ability in the advancement of teaching and learning

Details of Review Team roles and responsibilities can be found in Appendix B.

3.3 Procedure and timelines

The outline set out in the policy (below) will be elaborated further and timelines will be set out to accompany it, through discussion and consultation.

STEP	ACTION	DATES	OUTCOME
Terms of Reference (ToR)	Completion of an institutional information profile by QQI Confirmation of ToR with institution and HEA	9 months before the Main Review Visit (MRV)	Published Terms of Reference
Preparation	Appointment of an expert Review Team Consultation with the institution on any possible conflicts of interest	6-9 months before the MRV	Review Team appointed
Self-evaluation	Forwarding to QQI of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)	12 weeks before the MRV	Published ISER (optional)
Desk Review	Desk review of the ISER by the Team	Before the initial meeting	ISER initial response provided
Initial Meeting	An initial meeting of the Review Team, including reviewer training and briefing	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	Team training and briefing is complete and Team identify key themes and additional documents required
Planning visit	A visit to the institution by the Chair and Coordinating Reviewer to receive information about the ISER process, discuss the schedule for the Main Review Visit and discuss additional documentation requests	5 weeks after the ISER, 7 weeks before the MRV	An agreed note of the Planning Visit
Main Review Visit	To receive and consider evidence on the ways in which the institution has performed in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the ToR	12 weeks after the receipt of ISER	A short preliminary oral report to the institution

STEP	ACTION	DATES	OUTCOME	
Report	Preparation of a draft report by the Team	6-8 weeks after the MRV		
	Draft report sent to the institution for a check of factual accuracy	12 weeks after the MRV		
	Institution responds with any factual accuracy corrections	2 weeks after receipt of draft report		
	Preparation of a final report by QQI	2 weeks after factual accuracy response		QQI Review Report
	Preparation of an institutional response	2 weeks after final report		Institutional response
Outcomes	Consideration of the Review Report and findings by QQI together with the institutional response and the plan for implementation	Next available meeting of QQI committee	Formal decision about the effectiveness of QA procedures In some cases, directions to the institution and a schedule for their implementation	
	Preparation of QQI quality profile	2 weeks after decision	Quality profile published	
Follow-up	The form of follow-up will be determined by whether 'directions' are issued to the institution. In general, where directions are issued the follow-up period will be sooner and more specific actions may be required as part of the direction			
	Preparation of an institutional implementation plan	1 month after decision	Publication of the institutional implementation plan by the institution	
	One-year follow-up report to QQI for noting. This and subsequent follow-up may be integrated into annual reports to QQI	1 year after the MRV	Publication of the follow-up report by QQI and the institution	
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through the annual institutional reporting and dialogue process	Continuous	Annual Institutional Quality Report Dialogue Meeting notes	

Note: The total period from start to finish is approximately 15 months but will depend on QQI committee meeting dates.

Appendix B

Main Review Visit Schedule

Day 1: Monday 3rd December, 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH
09.00-09.30	Institutional Coordinator
09.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting
10.00-10.30	President
10.30-11.00	Senior Management Team and 5 Members of Academic Council
11.00 - 11.45	Private Review Team Meeting
11.45-12.30	Governing Body Representatives (Chair, 2 External Reps and 2 Internal Reps)
12.30-1.00	Private Review Team Meeting
1.00 -2.15	World Café Style Lunch Review Team and 20 Students from across all disciplines and levels and backgrounds and service users (UG and PG)
2.15-2.45	Private Review Team Meeting
2.45-3.30	Heads of School
3.30-4.00	Private Review Team Meeting
4.00-4.45	Members of the ISER (Self Study) steering committee
4.45-5.30	Private Review Team Meeting



Day 2: Tuesday 4th December, 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH
09.00-9.30	Institutional Coordinator
9.30-10.15	Ambition Team
10.15-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting
11.15-12.00	Representatives from each of the 6 Sub-Committee of Academic Council
12.00-12.30	Private Review Team Meeting
12.30-1.15	Selection of Heads of Departments and AHF and IMPC
1.15- 2.15	Private Review Team Meeting and Lunch
2.15-3.00	Managers and Officers of Student Support Services
3.00-3.30	Private Review Team Meeting
3.30-4.15	Meeting with Academic and Support Staff representatives from all schools
4.15-5.00	Meeting with Industrial Liaison Personnel
5.00-5.45	External Stakeholders e.g. local industry, representatives from the sector the provider is working in, community groups etc.

Day 3: Wednesday 5th December, 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH
09.00-9.30	Institutional Coordinator
9.30-10.15	Research Directors
10.15-11.45	Private Review Team Meeting
10.45-11.30	Academic and Support Staff – Research to include PhD supervisors. Early Career Researchers, Research Support Staff
11.30-12.00	Private Review Team Meeting
12.00-12.45	Management and Staff involved in Internationalisation
12.45- 1.30	Private Review Team Meeting and Lunch
1.30-2.00	International Students – Incoming and Outgoing
2.00-2.30	Private Review Team Meeting
2.30-3.00	Management and Staff involved in HR and Staff Development, Careers
3.00-3.30	Private Review Team Meeting
3.30-4.30	Linked Provision
4.30 -5.30	Collaborative Provision
5.30-6.00	Private Review Team Meeting



Day 4: Thursday 6th December, 2018

TIME	MEETING WITH
09.00-9.30	Institutional Coordinator
9.30-10.15	Private Review Team Meeting
10.15-11.00	Students Union Officers
11.00-12.30	Private Review Team Meeting
12.30-1.30	Private Team lunch
1.30-2.30	Private Review Team Meeting
2.30-3.00	Meeting with President
2.30-3.00	Parallel meeting of QQI and Institutional Coordinator
3.00-4.30	Private Review Team Meeting
4.30-5.00	Oral Report

Day 5: Friday 7th December, 2018

Private meeting of Review Team to prepare the Review Report

Glossary

Glossary of terms, acronyms and abbreviations from this report

Term	Definition
2012 Act	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
AC	Academic Council
Agresso	A financial management system
AHF	Academic Heads Forum
AIQR	Annual Institutional Quality Report
AMBITION	A DkIT strategy for the period from 2018 to 2023
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
CELT	Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
CINNTE	The name given to QQI's first cyclical review period
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education
DCU	Dublin City University
DkIT	Dundalk Institute of Technology
Erasmus	European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EURASHE	European Association of Institutes in Higher Education
EvaSys	Suite of software for organisational surveys, research projects, course and training evaluations, exams and assessments
FET	Further Education and Training
FIT	FastTrack to IT
GB	Governing Body
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
GRSB	Graduate Research Studies Board
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEAnet	Ireland's National Education and Research Network

HEI	Higher Education Institution
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council (one of the four agencies that amalgamated to form Quality and Qualifications Ireland)
HR	Human Resources
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IMPC	Institute Management and Planning Committee
Infra	IT Solutions Software Systems
IoT	Institute of Technology
IP	Intellectual Property
ISSE	Irish Survey of Student Engagement
ISER	Institutional Self-Evaluation Report
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IUA	Irish Universities Association
LMS	Learning Management System
MALT	Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching
MEND	Midlands, East and North Dublin cluster
MNC	Multinational Corporation
Moodle	An online learning management system
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRV	Main Review Visit
NCCA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
NFETL	National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NStEP	National Student Engagement Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PATH	Programme for Access to Higher Education (fund)
Pathways	An Outreach Access Course
PDCA	Plan, Do, Check, Act
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PRB	Programme Review Board
QA	Quality Assurance

QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK
QAG	Quality Assurance Guidelines
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
RDC	Regional Development Centre
Reach-Out	Website for student-related queries and mental health issues
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SOLAS	State Organisation with responsibility for Funding, Planning and Co-ordinating Further Education and Training (FET) in Ireland
Springboard+	An upskilling initiative in higher education offering free courses in areas where there are employment opportunities
TEAM	Technology-Enhanced Assessment Methods (in Science & Health Practical Settings)
THEA	Technological Higher Education Association
ToR	Terms of Reference
TU	Technological Uninersity
UASnet	Universities of Applied Social Sciences Network
UCLL	University College Leuven-Limburg
UL	University of Limerick
USI	Union of Students in Ireland
VLHORA	The Flemish Council of Universities of Applied Sciences and Arts







