DUNDALK
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA
DHÚN DEALGAN

Programmatic Review Handbook

2023-2025

October 2023

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1.1 Introduction

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) holds a proud and extended tradition of excellence in programme delivery. In order to ensure that the currency of programmes remains relevant in a fast-paced world of work, it is incumbent upon the Institute to regularly review its programme provision.

The Institute holds Designated Awarding Body status under the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act* 2019. Under the Act, DkIT retains responsibility for Quality Assurance (QA). DkIT's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework requires that periodic review of all provision, including a review of programmes of study, is conducted as laid down in the statutory obligations specified in the 2012 (and amended 2019) Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Acts and QQI's core statutory guidelines which are aligned to ENQA's European Standards and Guidelines and other quality assurance standards. The purpose of such self-evaluation is to review, evaluate and report on the education, training, research and related services provided, in combination with the quality assurance system and procedures which underpin these.

In DkIT, five-yearly internal reviews are carried out at the level of the Academic School. A Programmatic Review is a self-study of the Academic School operations and strategy. It provides an opportunity for the School to reflect and analyse what has been achieved in the previous five years and plan for what should be done during the next five years with a view to the achievement and enhancement of educational quality. The self-critical review should acknowledge the strengths and identify and plan to address the challenges experienced by the School. Development planning is facilitated by an environmental scan resulting in a prioritised School strategy, which will align with the Institute's Strategic Plan 2023-2028 (currently under development). The study should also analyse the proven ability of the School to respond to the changing needs and demands of all of the Institute's stakeholders.

Programmatic Review is grounded in the Quality Assurance Agreement that DkIT has with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) under Section 28 (4), Section 46 and Section 54 of the *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012*, as *amended* and the ENQA *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ENQA, 2009). The Programmatic Review is aligned with DkIT's Strategic Plan 2023-2028 (currently under development) and will form its evaluation within the key performance indicators (KPI's) which will be identified in the strategic plan. Programmatic Review is one of the principal instruments in the assurance of the quality of programmes of education and training and it makes a significant contribution to the maintenance of public confidence in awards made by DkIT (whether solely or under a joint awarding agreement). The Programmatic Review process provides an opportunity for the institution to reflect on what it is doing, how well it is doing it and how it can respond to changing circumstances. Programmatic Review is an opportunity to look back, within a continuous monitoring and improvement cycle, at what has been achieved, to evaluate its effectiveness and to plan for enhancement and for the future. During the Programmatic Review quality process, external peer evaluators analyse the effectiveness of a suite of programmes in a school, with an emphasis on quality, standards and flexibility of response to changing needs.

1.2 Objectives of the Programmatic Review

Programmatic Review is a Quality Assurance requirement intended to address specifically DkIT's statutory obligations under Section 46 and Section 54 of the Qualifications and Quality (Education and Training) 2012 Act as amended and also detailed in of *QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines*. Section 3.3 of QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines implicitly defines programme review, stipulating that academic programme delivery should be monitored in a way which allows for the identification of needs and modification of the programme and delivery method as appropriate. Periodic review of a programme is used as an opportunity to evaluate the programme with the benefit of experience of programme delivery, incorporating feedback from staff, learners and other stakeholders. With the benefit of a cycle of delivery, there is evidence available on the performance of the programme which must be analysed in order to evaluate the programme (progression and completion rates, learner, staff, employer and/or industry feedback). This evidence then underpins the achievement of the objectives of programme review, which are to:

1. Critically reflect on the programme and its operation, to identify areas of improvement and assess whether current strategies align effectively with intended outcomes;
2. Ensure that the programme remains appropriate, and to create a supportive and effective learning environment;
3. Ensure that the programme achieves the objectives set for it and responds to the needs of learners and the changing needs of society;
4. Review the learner workload;
5. Review learner progression and completion rates;
6. Review the effectiveness of procedures for the assessment of learners;
7. Inform updates of the programme content; delivery modes; teaching and learning methods; learning supports and resources; and information provided to learners;
8. Update third party, industry or other stakeholders relevant to the programme;
9. Review quality assurance arrangements that are specific to that programme.

It is important that Programmatic Review should be understood, both internally and externally, as only one element of a continuous monitoring and improvement cycle, rather than a once-off effort to be survived and forgotten about.

1.3 Programmatic Review Process

Under DkIT's Quality Assurance Framework, Programmatic Review is conducted in a single-stage, two-part process:

- **Part 1: School Self-Assessment** is concerned with strategic high-level issues and results in the production of a **Self-Assessment Report (SAR)**;
- **Part 2: Review of Programmes** is concerned with a detailed programme-by-programme review and re-validation of programmes for a further five years and results in the production of programme documentation for the revised programmes.

Programmatic Review involves the review of existing programmes previously approved through a validation process. While the review of strategy shall consider new programmes currently submitted and any school plans for programme development over the following five years, all new programmes shall be validated

separately in accordance with DkIT's Policy on the *Design and Approval of Programmes*. The Peer Review Group (PRG) report (see later) shall have regard to the proposed new programme(s).

Regular programme monitoring (normally completed annually) will provide valuable input to periodic programme review activities. Data and other information collected during the ongoing monitoring of programmes (e.g., annual programme board reports, external examiner reports, learner feedback) should be considered during the programmatic review. The review is expected to consider the following elements:

- Developments in higher education landscape as appropriate and the needs of society and economy.
- Response of the School to market requirements and educational developments.
- Future viability of the programme based on intake, progression data and projections for the next five years.
- Feedback mechanisms for learners and processes for responding to feedback
- Requirements of stakeholders e.g., employers, industry, service providers, service users, professional bodies and national and international developments.
- External Engagement with industry, service providers, business and the wider community (including feedback)
- Research-led approach to learning and teaching.
- Physical facilities and resources provided for programmes.

1.4 Programme Viability

Any programme review should ask whether a programme should continue to be provided. Therefore, a programme review should always be planned to be capable of making and defending a recommendation to cease providing the programme in case this may prove necessary.

Where programmes are not attracting students, programme teams should discuss with their Head of Department and consider validating a new programme offering. Where the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (VPAAR) and Head of School (HoS) have agreed a new programme offering is required, then Programmatic Review will also facilitate the validation of new programme offerings subject to advance notice given to the Registrar's Office. This exercise should be conducted in tandem with the review of future viability of existing programmes.

Programmatic Review provides an opportunity to review intake and progression data for a programme over the preceding five years (plus additional year(s) if programme validation was extended). Working with the appropriate data sources, programmes will be reviewed for each School, clearly identifying those programmes that are not performing well in the market on CAO and/or that require amendment, reconfiguration and/or retirement. Decisions will need to be taken jointly regarding the best allocation of scarce resources. This step must be undertaken by each School in advance of commencement of Programmatic Review. Heads of School should liaise as appropriate to complete this evidence-based step. Programme Boards should then be informed of the outcome of these decisions.

The review process should be led by the Head of School in collaboration with Heads of Department and Heads of Section. The process should be transparent, inclusive and collegial. Students should be centrally involved in the review process (e.g., through programme board representatives). The European Standards

and Guidelines (2015) and DkIT's Student Voice Policy require that the learner's voice is fully represented in reviews.

1.5 Terms of Reference

Planning for the Programmatic Review in a School should result in the development of written *Terms of Reference* for the review that are agreed between the Registrar's Office and the School. The Terms of Reference should:

- Set out the review leaders (including Programme Directors);
- Identify the programme(s), including delivery modes, to be reviewed and where relevant new programmes that will be developed (using a separate process as indicated above);
- Set out the contents of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR);
- Set out the timelines for the review (which will be guided by the Institute agreed schedule);
- Set out when, how and by whom the necessary documentation, reports and responses will be prepared and approved.

A well-structured and comprehensive Terms of Reference for a programmatic review is essential to ensure that the review is conducted thoroughly and fairly, leading to meaningful improvements in the School and the programme(s). It also helps provide clarity and transparency to all stakeholders involved in the review process. A template for the Terms of Reference will be provided to the School by the Registrar's Office.

1.6 Programmatic Review Schedule

The overall Programmatic Review timelines for all Schools can be found in Appendix 1.

1.7 Themes for the Programmatic Review

Review of academic programmes involves a comprehensive assessment of programme goals, resources and outcomes, along with an understanding of the broader context and available supports. A programmatic approach should be employed for the review to ensure that academic programmes remain effective, relevant, and supportive of student success. A programme-level approach keeps the focus on student success and Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs), by careful consideration of the interconnections and synergies within the programme. It assesses how different components of the programme work together to achieve the desired outcomes.

The following themes should be considered by programme development teams for inclusion in programme(s) as part of Programmatic Review:

- Employability and Graduate Attributes;
- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD);
- Inclusive learning teaching and assessment, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Training and support session(s) will be provided to programme development teams on how to incorporate the guiding principles as part of programmatic review. As the focus is on the programme, the themes will be interpretated and embedded across the programme rather than, necessarily, in every module. We recommend prioritising actions that will have the greatest impact for the student experience.

1.7.1 Employability and Graduate Attributes

At DkIT, employability and graduate attributes go together. Graduate Attributes are the core abilities and values a higher education institute community agrees all its graduates should develop. For us, they align with, and complement the abilities employers deem necessary for today's knowledge workers and graduate success and represent a synergy between attributes developed by the Institute and singular qualities or characteristics whose combinations are unique to the individual.

In 2021, DkIT embarked on a strategic Embedding Employability initiative to develop a shared vision of the DKIT graduate. A Steering Group led by our Careers & Employability Centre, with representation from the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), our four Academic Schools, Student Union and Employers (Northeast Regional Skills Forum) worked together to provide a strong evidence-base to inform the development of:

- *DkIT Employability Statement*;
- *DKIT PCs Graduate Attribute & Mindsets Framework*;
- Online *Embedding Employability Toolkit* for Academic Staff (AHECS Award winner for Graduate Employability 2022);
- Suite of online resources for to support students identify their graduate attribute development – *Graduate Futures Toolkit;*

The research and consultation with all our stakeholders lead us to the consensus that, when twinned with innovative pedagogy, these graduate-attribute initiatives will produce outstanding graduates.

Our framework – The "*PCs Graduate Attribute & Mindsets Framework*" (Figure 1), denotes four key capstone graduate attributes of precedence (1xP and 3xC):

- P - Practical,
- C - Communication Skills,
- C - Collaborative Skills, and
- C - Confidence.

The sub-attributes that make up each capstone, such as Technically Skilled, Creative, Emotionally Intelligent, Operationally Savvy, or Professional Confidence, were each carefully researched to ensure they authentically reflect the DkIT graduate body. At DkIT we are committed to developing graduates who possess the necessary attributes to bring practical solutions to a complex world. Our graduates are practically skilled, excellent communicators, collaborators and confident changemakers.

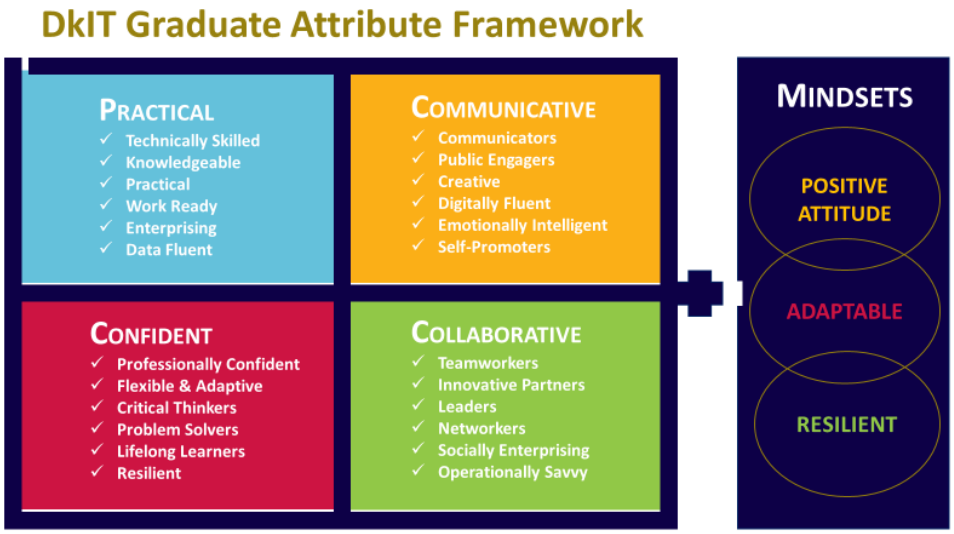

Figure 1: DkIT PCs Graduate Attribute and Mindsets Framework

Attribute-led Employability

Our PCs Graduate Attribute & Mindsets Framework is supported through a range of Embedded Employability initiatives to deliver programmes and student career services that nurture a range of in-demand skills and competencies across all disciplines.

Embedded in a multi-dimensional, and experiential curriculum, as well as in other institutional processes and provisions, a full picture of modular content across programmes ensures that students are exposed to the widest variety of employability practice that DkIT can offer. In particular, the Online *Embedding Employability Toolkit* provides the resources for staff to review their assessment and learning enhancement practices, to connect Learning Outcomes with graduate attributes, employability skills, and to engage in formative and summative feedback to empower students to become career-directed learners.

1.7.2 Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

UNESCO (2021) defines Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as:

"ESD empowers learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attributes to take informed decisions and make responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability, and a just society empowering people of all genders, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity. ESD is a lifelong learning process and an integral part of quality education that enhances cognitive, social, and emotional and behavioural dimensions of learning. It is holistic and transformational and encompasses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy, and the learning environment itself."
Education for sustainable development is a response to global challenges including climate change and inequality. Policy and legislation at both national and international levels support the sustainable development agenda. There is a growing sense of urgency and recognition in Ireland of the need to act now to address sustainability issues. As a result, supporting the development of knowledge and skills to address these challenges is increasingly important. Such knowledge and awareness will be needed across all professions and societal roles.

In 2021, the HEA developed a submission to inform the development of a *National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 2030*. This reflects the increasing emphasis on the important role of the Higher Education sector in implementing ESD and contributing towards a sustainable future. Higher Education presents valuable opportunities to implement ESD, not only through sustainability-focused programmes and modules, but through its integration across curricula, innovative research, student engagement and activism, campus management, community and industry engagement and international linkages.

Global sustainability objectives can be supported by incorporating (aspects of) the United Nations (UN) *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* into programme development and by raising awareness of their relevance within the curriculum. The Sustainable Development Goals are a collection of seventeen interlinked objectives, designed to serve as a "*shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future*" (UN; Figure 2). They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.

Figure 2: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; UN)

AdvanceHE and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2021) defined 'Sustainable development' as "*an aspirational ongoing process of addressing social, environmental, and economic concerns to create a better world*".

In an educational context, this relates to the UN's (2020) SDG 4.7 which sets the following target: "*By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender, equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development*."

This Programmatic Review offers an opportunity to consider sustainable development within the context of the academic programmes offered at DkIT. For some programmes the relevance will be very explicit, and teams will have a well-developed, shared understanding of it. For others, this will be a chance to start this conversation.

There is an opportunity with Programmatic Review to integrate a strong theme of Sustainable Development in revised curricula. Programme teams should consider carrying out this exercise, in consultation with key stakeholders, as part of the upcoming review. The 17 *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, their targets, indicators and interconnections should be considered collectively by programme teams in relation to each academic programme. Identify how the programme(s) align with the SDGs and which specific goals and targets are most closely related to your programme's objectives. Programme teams should be cognisant of the fact that not all of the SDGs will fit.

Incorporating the SDGs into the programmatic review helps to retain programme relevance to pressing global challenges and equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to make meaningful contributions to sustainable development.

1.7.3 Inclusive learning, teaching and assessment, incl. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

The values of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) foster an environment where all students and staff are valued and can thrive. DkIT currently holds Bronze Athena Swann accreditation and is seeking to build on this. Module 3 of the *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education* training (available on Moodle) can support staff to reflect on their teaching from the perspective of EDI.,
DkIT is committed to inclusive approaches to learning, teaching and assessment and to respect the diversity of the student body and ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn and to flourish. **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** is an educational framework that aims to make learning accessible to all individuals, by providing multiple means of representation, engagement and expression. Including UDL principles, involves designing and implementing features and strategies that cater to diverse learners' needs and preferences and removes barriers to learning.

According to *CAST's Universal Design for Learning Guidelines*, the three core principles of UDL are:

- **Providing multiple Means of Representation:** Provide information in various formats (e.g., text, audio, video) to accommodate different learning styles and preferences.
- **Providing multiple Means of Engagement:** Offer diverse ways for learners to engage with the content and foster motivation and interest.
- **Providing multiple Means of Expression:** Allow learners to demonstrate their understanding in various ways.

No programme is expected to be fully incorporate UDL for Programmatic Review. UDL should be seen as a 'pathway' where the aim is to improve accessibility and inclusivity of all programmes, one step at a time (by making regular small changes that support the core principles). The goal should be to make continuous progress toward greater inclusivity and accessibility in all programmes. Guidance is available to support programme teams to implement UDL as part of programmatic review and specific training and support will be provided.

EDI is further supported by provision of an Inclusive Curriculum, an aspect being considered as part of the N-TUTORR project's Sustainable Higher Education Futures Curriculum Framework (currently under development), referring primarily to the programme core content, but also including enabling factors concerning delivery in the context of programme and module design.

The '*Embedding Equality Diversity & Inclusion in the Curriculum of the new Technological University Sector*' (EDIT) Project, funded by the HEA and comprising of SETU, MTU, TUS, ATU and AdvanceHE, define an 'Inclusive Curriculum' as:
"a curriculum which is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all students, in which the content and teaching materials, teaching methods and practice, theories and modes of assessment are intentionally designed and delivered in order to relate to, respect, and affirm diverse cultures, histories, identities and life circumstances among our staff and student body as well as the wider world" (EDIT Charter).
Training and support session(s) will be provided to programme development teams on how to incorporate each of the guiding themes for Programmatic Review.

N-TUTORR Project

At a sectoral level, the *National Technological University Transformation for Recovery and Resilience project (N-TUTORR)* is developing a sustainable higher education futures curriculum framework. Here, a series of guiding principles for the curriculum, in combination with a toolkit, will provide additional support and guidance to staff across partnering Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The N-TUTORR project, funded by the European Union and NextGenerationEU, aims to deliver transformative change for the technological higher education sector by empowering and transforming the learner experience across the sector through technology and staff/student collaboration, in alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

N-TUTORR aims to transform learning, teaching and assessment by focussing on transforming the student experience, and developing the capabilities of all staff to address a sustainable pedagogical and learning environment, with particular and critical focus on supporting six core themes, namely:

1. **Education for Sustainability** - *Supporting a culture of change across the sector, integrating the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the delivery of the project.*
2. **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** - *Supporting an improved student experience across the technological higher education sector by promoting more flexible methods of teaching and assessment.*
3. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** - *Fostering an inclusive, diverse, safe and respectful culture across the technological higher education sector.*
4. **Digital Transformation** - *Enabling transformation by implementing digital ecosystems to support teaching, learning and assessment.*
5. **Academic Integrity** - *Equipping staff and students with the tools to ensure honesty, trust and fairness in teaching, learning and assessment in the context of rapid technological advancements.*
6. **Employability** - *Empowering students to be successful after graduating from their TU/IoT and throughout their working lives.*

N-TUTORR's programme of work builds on significant enhancements in learning, teaching and assessment capabilities which have been achieved within and across, participating institutions over the past decade, in particular The project is informed by sector-wide evidence gathered as part of the *Next Steps for Teaching and Learning: Moving Forward Together* project coordinated by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, which addressed and reflected on, key lessons learned during the pandemic. The project also takes account of the data on students' experiences during the period of public health restrictions in addition to their overall experiences of higher education gathered as part of the national *Student Survey*. The project responds to the *TURN Report* (TU Research Network) which highlights the

importance of digital infrastructure and ICT provisions for Technological Universities and the wider technological sector. Enhanced and 'future-proofed' digital ecosystems will act as enablers for the project objectives. They will enable the technological Higher Education (HE) sector to meet and address regional and national needs for digitisation, to cater for 21st-century learning and research and to ensure that the technological sector is sufficiently equipped to deliver the returns on the *National Strategy for Higher Education*.

2.0 Part 1 - School Self-Assessment

2.1 Introduction

Part 1 of the Programmatic Review, the School Self-Assessment is comprised of four key phases:

- Phase 1: Self-Assessment.
- Phase 2: Peer Review.
- Phase 3: Improvement Planning and Follow-up.
- Phase 4: Reporting, Publication, Implementation and Monitoring.

2.1.1 Phase 1: Self-Assessment

This phase involves a period of self-assessment, involving all staff within the School under review, which aims to critically assess the activities of the School. The Self-Assessment phase of quality review is led by the School Quality Committee (SQC), whose membership should be reflective of all staff within the School. Supporting structures/committees can be setup as appropriate by the Heads of School. The Committee co-ordinates self-assessment activities, including the use of evidence-informed approaches to self-reflection and assessment, leading to the development of a Self-Assessment Report (SAR). During the period of self-assessment, the School under review is encouraged, and supported by the Registrar's Office to conduct research to help gather information on the effectiveness of their activities. This may include surveys, focus groups, benchmarking, or statistical analysis of data (as determined by the School under review). This Self-Assessment Report (SAR) forms the basis of the evaluation of the Peer Review Group (PRG) in Phase 2: Peer Review.

Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

The purpose of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR), which is typically forty to fifty pages plus appendices, is to provide a succinct, but comprehensive and reflective statement of the School's activities, and analyse the School's activities. The contents of the SAR will be as follows (a template for the SAR will be provided to the School by the Registrar's Office):

- Introduction and Context.
- Approach to Self-Assessment.
- Progress Made Since the Last Review.
- Self-Reflective Analysis:
    - Planning and Overall Strategic Direction of the School.
    - Effective Management of Resources.
    - Teaching, Learning and Assessment.
    - Research and Scholarship.
    - External Engagement.
    - Communications and Provision of Information.
- SWOT/SWOC Analysis (or equivalent).
- Areas for Enhancement.

The SAR will be developed by the School and signed off by the Head of School for submission to the Registrar's Office. Some aspects of the document will require information from the Institute (see below).

School teams should use links to websites and hyperlinks in the document where appropriate. The information to be compiled by the School (see below).

Institute Input: (to be provided by the Registrar's Office)

- Historic Development of DkIT.
- Institute Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan (currently in development).
- Institute Governance and Organisation Chart(s).
- School and programme-level data for previous five years (plus additional year(s) if programme validation was extended):
    - Admissions (standard (CAO) and Non-standard (mature, Further Education and Training (FET), international, Northern Ireland, advanced entry, deferrals)).
    - Withdrawals data (where applicable).
    - Progression data.
    - Graduation data.
    - Graduate Destination Analysis (high level overview for each Department). Provided by the Careers and Employability Office.
- Academic Quality Assurance:
    - Academic Governance (Academic Council and Sub-Committees, etc).
    - Programme Management.
    - Academic Policies and Procedures (including web links).
    - Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies (including Virtual Learning Environment (VLE))
    - Learner supports and addressing special needs:
    - Student Feedback (programme-level, StudentSurvey.ie).
- External Engagement (outreach, school liaison, employers/industry, placement, alumni).
- Research Strategy.
- Institute Facilities.

Academic School Input (to be completed by the School using the headings below)

Background

Set the context for the review by describing briefly an overview of the School including the following:

- Description, context and strategic development of School since last Programmatic Review (over the past five years (plus additional year(s) if programme validation was extended) – structural change e.g. new departments, discipline direction etc.) (Max 3 pages).
- School organisational chart (and changes in organisational structure since last review) (1-2 pages). Suggest (1 page).
- List of current programmes/awards and validation dates, with reference to programmes developed since the last review (full time and part time programmes).
- Feedback from last Programmatic Review and Response of School (how School has actioned those findings in the interim) (Presented as a Table)
- School Strategy/Strategic Work Plan for previous five years (plus additional year(s) if programme validation was extended) and whether achieved (presented as a Table).

- Human Resources of the School (overview not CVs) (academic, administrative, technical support, other) – One summary paragraph listing total number in each role not names.
- Physical facilities of School (short summary of learning facilities and large-scale equipment; not room measurements e.g. "14 tiered classrooms ranging from 40-60 capacity; 6 IT labs of capacity 20; 4 Science labs of capacity 18") (presented as a table).

Environmental Scan (can be reported at Department or School level)

Analyse the internal and external environment that the School functions within in order to answer the question "*where are we now*?" and include the following:

- Background information / Context (high-level overview of national policies and predictions on growth and employment, government strategy for the subject area, e.g. FORFAS reports, Government Department publications of relevance) (1-2 pages).
- Summary of learner statistics for past five years (plus additional year(s) if programme validation was extended) (at Department and programme level) (Tables):
- Admissions (standard (CAO) and Non-standard (mature, FET, international)), Withdrawals (where applicable), progression rates, graduation statistics.
- Graduate Destination Analysis (high level overview for each Department).
- Academic Placements – brief outline of prevalence and success of placements. Explain how learning is delivered and assessed in the placement / workplace and how this is integrated with the programme to form a coherent whole. This learning must be intrinsic to the programme.
- Summary of Research / Innovation activities (brief review of activity highlights). Engagement – community; industry; professional bodies; other colleges etc
- International partnerships and staff/student mobility (brief overview).
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategies – include any School or Department–level initiatives or documents (not programme level as this will be included in Programme level documents).
- Links to themes of Employability and Graduate Attributes; Education for Sustainable Development (ESD); Inclusive learning teaching and assessment, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
- Quality Assurance – structures and mechanisms for compliance with Institute Continuous Assessment policies (Programme Directors, Stage Convenors, Programme Boards, Graduate Research Programme Boards, School Faculty Board, Ethics Committees, etc.), summary of 3 or 4 main points raised in annual Programme Board Reports over the past five years (plus additional year(s) if programme validation was extended) detailing any outcomes/actions taken as a result of external examiner feedback, learner or faculty feedback. This should be done at Department level for SAR.
- Staff development - overview of past five years (plus additional year(s) if programme validation was extended), priorities for next five years, showing focus on upskilling faculty (e.g. attendance at training, conferences, undertaking research, CPD, Institute training initiatives e.g. MALT, Data Protection).
- SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) or SWOC ((Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges) analysis (where Schools wish to undertake).

Informed Reflection and Planning

This section combines the information gathered above and aims to answer the question "*where do we want to be five years from now?*" based on an analysis of that information. It includes conclusions which inform:

- School strategy for next five years (2-3 pages with high level points).
- Integration with Institute Strategy and alignment with strategic priorities (Strategic Goals, Strategic Objectives, DkIT Performance Indicators, DkIT Targets (Strategic Compact), School Action Area, Departmental Actions).
- Areas for enhancement/improvement: Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Research and Scholarship, External Engagement, Communication and Provision of Information.

School Submission of Documentation to the Registrar's Office

The draft Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and associated appendices from the School are signed off by the Head of School and then submitted in Microsoft Word format to the Registrar's Office (protocols regarding submission of documentation will be communicated to the Schools by the Registrar's Office). The Self-Assessment Report (SAR) will then be circulated to the Peer Review Group (PRG) (see Phase 2: Peer Review). The School should submit the draft Self-Assessment Report (SAR) at least three weeks prior to the date of the Registrar's Office circulating the final SAR to the Peer Review Group (PRG).

2.1.2 Phase 2: Peer Review

The Self-Assessment Report (SAR) is reviewed and evaluated by a panel of external peers, the Peer Review Group (PRG). The Peer Review Group (PRG) is appointed by the Registrar's Office with nominations being accepted from the School (with the exception of the Chair). The Peer Review Group (PRG) has the following composition (seven members in total):

- Chair (with a high level of experience in higher education and specifically with Programmatic Reviews and programme validations (e.g. Academic Registrar or equivalent from another Higher Education Institution (HEI)).
- Two external academics with expertise in the broad field of learning within the School.
- Two industry, service user or professional body representatives with experience and/or expertise of relevance to the field of learning within the School.
- Secretary to the PRG, Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar (or nominee).
- Student representative, external to DkIT.

All PRG members are considered full reviewers during a quality review, and all members will participate fully in PRG Visit meetings and contribute to the completion of the PRG report (see below). There are a number of defined roles within the Peer Review Group as follows:

Role	Responsibilities
PRG Chair	• Along with PRG colleagues, ensure that all PRG members are allocated themes of focus on, aligned to the PRG report. • Preside over meetings during the PRG Visit and ensure the review process is conducted in a spirit of co-operation and constructive dialogue. • Keep all meetings on schedule. • Deliver the PRG's high-level findings at an Exit Presentation at the close of the Review Visit. • Sign-off on the draft and final PRG Report, in collaboration with the PRG Secretary.

PRG Secretary	• Ensuring that the quality review is conducted in accordance with DkIT's quality assurance and enhancement (QAE) framework. • Take notes during the PRG Visit meetings, assisting the PRG with the development of commendation(s) and recommendation(s). • Make requests on behalf of the PRG for additional material or documentation, or requests to meet additional staff or other stakeholders during the PRG Visit. • Coordinating the writing of the PRG Report.

PRG members for Part 1 of the Programmatic Review (School Self-Assessment) will, in so far as is possible/ practicable, participate as PRG members for Part 2 of the Programmatic Review (Review of Programmes).

The PRG will visit the School under review over minimum of a one day period. This PRG Visit is central to the peer review process and will be planned by the School in close collaboration with the Registrar's Office. During the PRG Visit the PRG evaluates the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) in a constructive and supportive dialogue with School management, learners, staff and other relevant stakeholders. The visit may include tours of both Institute and School facilities. The purpose of the PRG visit to the School is to gather, clarify, test and verify the information collected as part of the School self-assessment process. The PRG reviews the effectiveness of activities of the School in the light of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR).
The PRG receives the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) at least four weeks in advance of a PRG Visit. In line with good international practice and in agreement with sectoral policy, DkIT does not make the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) available beyond the Peer Review Group (PRG). Retaining the confidentiality of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) to the PRG enables and supports the aims of self-assessment in identifying difficult issues and allows for greater openness and candour in the School self-reflection.
Following the PRG Visit, and consideration of Self-Assessment Report (SAR), the PRG will present its findings in the form of a written report, the PRG Report, which will include commendation(s) and make recommendation(s) for improvement. The PRG Report will identify and commend areas of good practice within the School and will make recommendations on opportunities for further quality enhancement within the School. Once checked for factual accuracy, the School is required to provide a response to the PRG Report (which includes a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)). A template for the PRG Report and Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) will be provided to the School by the Registrar's Office.

2.1.3 Phase 3: Improvement Planning and Follow-up

Quality Enhancement Planning, which follows the finalisation of the Peer Review Group (PRG) Report, is a crucial aspect of the overall quality process. The Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act (2019) note the responsibilities of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to implement each of the recommendations of the PRG Report, unless it would be impractical or unreasonable to do so. The decisions on improvement made in the follow-up process provide a framework within which each School can continue to work towards the goal of developing and fostering a quality culture in the Institute.

Typically, the process of Quality Enhancement Planning will be led by the Head of School under review, and will include broad consultation across the School. The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) will address all the recommendations in the Peer Review Group (PRG) report, and develop and action plan for quality improvement, including a timeframe for implementation. A draft QEP is usually developed within three months of the PRG Visit and is provided to the Chair of the Peer Review Group as the basis of a follow-up meeting, at which the School's QEP is agreed. The draft QEP should include:

- Actions that can realistically be achieved in the following year.
- Actions that can achieved over three years.

In addition to the School response to the PRG Report, the Executive Board also submit an agreed Institute Response to relevant aspects of the PRG report.

2.1.4 Phase 4: Reporting, Publication, Implementation and Monitoring

The PRG Report and the PRG Response (including quality enhancement plan) will be presented to Academic Council and subject to approval, will be published on the Institute website and included as appropriate in the Institiute Annual Quality Report (AQR) which is submitted to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The PRG Report and the PRG Response are also noted at the DkIT Governing Body. Finally, the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is implemented and monitored post the quality review as appropriate.

3.0 Part 2 - Review of Programmes

3.1 Introduction

Part 2 of the Programmatic Review, the Review of Programmes is comprised of three key phases:

- Phase 1: Programme Documentation.
- Phase 2: Peer Review.
- Phase 3: Reporting and Publication.

All programmes within the School are required to be presented for validation, irrespective of whether their validation period has expired or not. The review of programmes should be consistent with the *DkIT Academic Policies and Guidelines (https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html.*

As mentioned previously, Programmatic Review involves the review of existing programmes previously approved through a validation process. While the review of strategy shall consider new programmes currently submitted and any school plans for programme development over the following five years, all new programmes shall be validated separately in accordance with *DkIT's Policy on the Design and Approval of Programmes*. Approval of programmes through Programmatic Review is valid for five years, or until the next Programmatic Review.

A programme-focused approach should be adopted to enhance the overall quality of the programme and ensure that graduates are well-prepared for their future careers. A systematic evaluation of the graduate attributes, the curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment strategies will improve the overall effectiveness of the programme(s) under review.

3.1.1 Phase 1: Programme Documentation

In order to keep the level of documentation at a manageable level, a programme document should be presented for each programme or group of related programmes (as determined by the School). Programmes which link through a ladder system of progression should be presented together (e.g., Higher Certificate, Bachelor Degree, Honours Bachelor Degree), as should programmes which are closely related (i.e., have a significant number of common modules or common entry routes). Non-major Awards should be presented in conjunction with related parent programmes. The rationale and justification for revalidation of a group of related programmes should address all of the programmes in the suite (e.g., the entry requirements section should cover the different entry requirements for the Higher Certificate, Bachelor Degree and Honours Bachelor Degree if presenting an *ab-initio* Level 8 Honours Degree group). A programme review document template will be provided by the Registrar's Office for programmes under review. In addition, a separate programme template will be provided for new programmes.

Each submission document for programme review should contain the following sections:

- School and Department Background
- Programme Development Process
- Programme Details
- Entry Requirements

- Graduate Profile
- Background, Context and Rationale
- Programme Statistics
- Feedback on Programme
- Changes to the Programme
- Programme Structure
- Student Experience
- Programme Management
- Resources
- External Engagement
- Transition Arrangements
- Appendices

School and Department Background

Briefly describe the School and Department structure, including the programmes delivered.

Programme Development Process

Briefly describe the overall process that was followed for the Programmatic Review of programmes.

Programme Details

Programme Title

Include the Award Title and the Specialisation (Table 1). When choosing the proposed programme title, or changing the title of an existing programme, it is important to ensure that it accurately and concisely reflects the programme and its intended Learning Outcomes. Programme titles should be formal, complete and fit for the purpose of informing prospective learners and other stakeholders. Abbreviations should be avoided.

Table 1: Examples of appropriate Award and specialisation title

Named Award Title	Specialisation
Bachelor of Science (Honours)	in General Nursing
Certificate	in Programming

Award Type

Ensure that each award made is recognised within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), including those awards made on behalf of linked providers (see also the DkIT *Awarding Policy.*). The NFQ classifies qualifications into 16 types of Award (from Certificate to Higher Doctorate, see Figure 3).

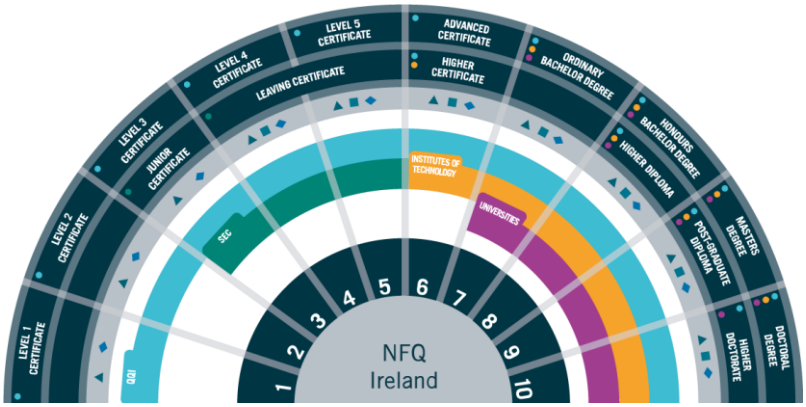

Figure 3: *National Framework of Qualifications,* used to describe the Irish Qualifications system.

Award Class

Awards at DkIT are classified as Major Awards and Non-Major Awards.

On the NFQ framework, **Major Awards** are those with 60 ECTS credits or more in each academic year or programme stage. In the case of taught programmes at DkIT, Major Awards include the Higher Certificate (NFQ level 6), Ordinary Bachelor Degree (NFQ level 7), Honours Bachelor Degree (NFQ level 8), Higher Diploma (NFQ level 8), Postgraduate Diploma (NFQ level 9) and Taught Master's Degree (NFQ level 9).

The term **Non-Major Awards** is used for awards with a smaller volume and more narrow Learning Outcomes than Major Awards. These awards are often gained through part-time study and made at each of the NFQ levels (6 to 9). There are three categories of Non-Major Award: **Minor, Supplemental** or **Special-Purpose Awards**. Non-Major Awards normally have at least 10 ECTS credits and less than 90 credits. All Non-Major Awards at level 6 are termed 'Certificate'. Non-Major Awards at levels 7 or above with less than 60 credits are also termed 'Certificate', those with or in excess of 60 credits are termed 'Diploma'. Embedded Awards (incl. **Exit Awards**) (where desired) must be presented with their parent programmes. Students, who formally exit from a programme prior to its completion, may be eligible for an Exit Award, provided such Exit Award has been validated under the Institute's validation processes and provided they have attained the requisite minimum number of credits. Exit Awards are intended for use in exceptional circumstances only, for more details, see also the *Exit Awards Policy*.

Micro-credentials are small, focused educational credentials that provide individuals with specific skills or knowledge in a particular subject. They are designed to be shorter and more targeted than traditional degrees or certifications. Micro-credentials offer a flexible, targeted way to help people develop the knowledge, skills and competences they need for their personal and professional development. Individual modules can be considered as part of Programmatic Review for delivery as micro-credentials. Modules to be delivered as micro-credentials should typically focus on a specific skill, competency, or topic and offer a concentrated learning experience with clear Learning Outcomes. A separate institutional policy on micro-credentials is currently under development.

Award Level

Ensure that the Award level(s) of the programme(s) reviewed match the Award level(s) on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The NFQ classifies qualifications into ten levels (See Figure 3).

ECTS Credits
Awards (and modules) are specified in units of credits using the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), to enhance the transparency, comparability, and mobility of qualifications and credits within the European context.

Delivery Mode
Programmatic Review (and new programme development) should consider the following programme delivery mode(s):

- Full-Time
- Part-Time
- Full-Time Blended
- Part-Time Blended
- Full-Time Online
- Part-Time Online

Entry Requirements

Provide the entry requirements for the programme and opportunities for transfer and/or progression within DkIT or elsewhere. Include standard entry requirements (CAO) and non-standard entry requirements (mature, Further Education (FET), international and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), advanced entry, deferrals).

Transfer and Progression

Details of the processes for the transfer and progression of learners should be provided (see also the DkIT *Transfer and Progression Policy*).

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can be applied for candidates who do not meet the formal academic entry requirements, but have considerable other relevant certification or experience, the DkIT *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Practice* may be applied. This allows an applicant to request entry to a programme based on a combination of formal certified learning and/or learning through experience.
Due to the individual nature of the programmes offered by the departments within DkIT, it is important to clearly state the availability of RPL in each. Availability or restrictions should be outlined for each, for example:

- Advanced entry to year 2, 3 or 4 (dependant).
- Module exemptions can be applied for on this programme. Any module specific exemption criteria may be provided as part of the relevant module descriptor.
- Are there regulatory body requirements, such as: '*all modules within the programme must be successfully completed*'. In such cases, no advanced entry or exemptions are available on the programme.
- Exemptions may not be available for certain mandatory modules, for example:
    - Placement modules
    - Modules linked (e.g.: CA) with another module in the programme.

Graduate Profile

Description of programme aim graduate attributes and career opportunities for graduates – refer to evidence provided in the School SAR document.

Graduate Attribute Development is supported at an Institute level as detailed in the *DkIT Employability Statement,* which forms DkIT's strategic commitment to employability, employers and the development of the region. It recognises the importance of facilitating opportunities for students to excel personally and professionally both within and outside of their programmes of study.

The *DkIT Embedding Employability Toolkit* provides a mechanism to bring the DKIT PCs Graduate Attribute and Mindsets Framework to life at an Institute, programme and module level through curricular and co-curricular activities. Further information is available here: *DkIT Embedding Employability Academic Council Presentation*. All programmes should embed the DkIT Employability Statement and DkIT PCs Graduate Attribute & Mindsets Framework as appropriate.

Background, Context and Rationale

The background section of the Programme document should contain a short description of the rationale for the programme(s) and include the programme's alignment to the Institute and School Strategies. Programme specific information, which was provided in the School SAR should be included, as well as the programme context (a brief overview of national policies & predictions on growth, employment and government strategy for the subject area(s)). Programme level reference to School strategies such as research or external engagement should be included where appropriate.

Programme Statistics

Statistical information on student intake, student progression, graduations, work placements (where appropriate) and graduate destinations. Relevant statistical data as detailed in the Annual Programme Board Reports since the last Programmatic Review, should be incorporated.

Feedback on Programme

Include student/learner feedback, employer feedback, graduate feedback and external examiner feedback that has been gathered and analysed. Feedback from various stakeholders as detailed in the Annual Programme Board Reports since the last Programmatic Review, should be incorporated.

Changes to the Programme

Broad programme structure and a summary table showing significant changes to the programme since last validation (e.g., a table showing original modules compared to updated modules) should be included.

Programme Structure

Programme, Stage and Module Structure

All programmes at DkIT are modularised and semesterised. Modules form the building blocks of programmes and have specific Learning Outcomes which are constructively aligned to the relevant award standards, to indicative content and to assessment. ECTS credits are awarded for each module studied and learners accumulate credits to achieve an award at the appropriate type and level. Modules are associated with NFQ levels, which define their level of complexity and most appropriate stage on a programme. In DkIT, module levels are described using the same NFQ system used to indicate the standard of an award (Figure 3: *National Framework of Qualifications).*

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) classifies qualifications into ten levels based on descriptors that outline the expected Learning Outcomes. These Learning Outcomes are divided into three main strands: knowledge, know-how & skill, and competence. These strands are further subdivided into eight sub-strands (knowledge–breath, knowledge–kind, know-how & skill–range, know-how & skill–selectivity, competence–context, competence–role, competence–learning to learn, competence–insight).
In a Major Award it is important to demonstrate the achievement of Learning Outcomes under each sub-strand, although some may be more important than others, depending on the type of programme and its purpose. In the case of Major Awards consisting of more than one stage, progression of complexity in knowledge, know-how and skill and competencies should occur within each sub-strand over the duration of the programme.

Minor, Supplementary and Special Purpose Awards can be differentiated from Major Awards by both the volume of the Learning Outcomes and comprehensiveness of the sub-strands. In the case of most Minor, Special Purpose and Supplementary Awards, the focus is narrow and only a small number of Learning Outcome sub-strands of NFQ levels will be met. Non-Major Awards do not require the full completion of all eight sub-strands of knowledge, know-how & skill and competence, as defined for the NFQ levels. The Learning Outcomes for a Non-Major Award should be mapped to outcomes achieved from the Learning Outcomes of the modules undertaken.

Professional Body accreditation can be linked to achieving modules at specific NFQ levels. DkIT will adopt the following module designation for internal use (Table 2).

Table 2: Module level designation for use in DkIT

NFQ Level	DkIT Designation
6	Fundamental **(F)**
7	Intermediate **(I)**
8	Advanced **(A)**
9	Expert **(E)**

In order to ensure compliance with NFQ programme design, all programmes, where possible, should adhere to the following design at a modular level (Table 3).

Table 3: Modular level design of programmes - DkIT Awards (including NFQ Level and ECTS Credits)

Major Award	NFQ Level	ECTS Credits	Structure of Full Time Programme (normally*)
Higher Certificate	6	120	Years 1 & 2 modules at Fundamental level
Ordinary Bachelor Degree	7	60/180	Years 1 & 2 modules at Fundamental level Year 3 modules at Intermediate level
Add-on Honours Bachelor Degree	8	60	All modules at Advanced level
Honours Bachelor Degree	8	180	Year 1 modules at Fundamental level Year 2 modules at Intermediate level Year 3 modules at Advanced level
Honours Bachelor Degree	8	240	Years 1 & 2 modules at Fundamental level Year 3 modules at Intermediate level Year 4 modules at Advanced level
Higher Diploma	8	60 /75	All modules at Advanced level
Postgraduate Diploma	9	60	All modules at Expert level
Master's Degree (Taught)	9	75/90	All modules at Expert level
Master's Degree (Structured)	9	90	All modules at Expert level
Master's Degree (Research)	9	120 to 180 (aligned with Dublin City University)	N/A
Doctoral Degree	10	240 to 360 (aligned with Dublin City University)	N/A
Minor, Supplemental, Special Purpose Award	**NFQ Level**	**ECTS Credits**	
Certificate	6	10 to 90	All modules at Fundamental level
Certificate	7-9	10 to 50	All modules at level as appropriate to learning
Diploma	7-9	60 to 90	All modules at level as appropriate to learning
Postgraduate Certificate	9	10-30	All modules at Expert level

All credits contributing to the Award must be at the level of the Award, this may not be appropriate where the Award grade is made up of a combination of credits from the final and penultimate stages. Such cases should be discussed with the Registrar's Office.

Curriculum Sequencing

Curriculum sequencing is an important consideration. A well sequenced and aligned curriculum provides scaffolding, helps students to connect their knowledge, and develop their skills across different modules. A poorly sequenced curriculum can result in a disjointed experience for students. There are different approaches to sequencing (e.g., linear, spiral, thematic) and all have their merits. The most important thing, however, is for programme teams to explicitly discuss sequencing and to agree an approach appropriate to the programme.

In addition to discipline-specific knowledge and skills, also consider the opportunities to cultivate key generic skills across the programme (e.g., group-work, digital skills, academic writing, presentation,

discipline-specific skills) - do students have adequate opportunities to practise these and receive feedback to develop them?

Modules are specified in units of credits using the *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).* Modules in programmes should have 5 ECTS credits or multiples thereof. Modules of 7.5 credits should only be used in exceptional circumstances, where a valid rationale is provided for same.

Modules should normally be of one semester duration. Up to two modules of 2-semester duration (year-long) are allowable per stage on each programme. 'Year-long' modules should, however, be used sparingly and considered carefully. For example, the inclusion of year-long modules can interfere with learners' opportunities for Erasmus participation and for attend-repeating.

The size of a module is specified in ECTS credits. The multiplier used by DkIT in this regard is approximately 20-25 hours of work per 1 ECTS credit. The workload can be made up of a number of individual elements including 'contact' hours (lectures, tutorials, workshops, laboratory classes, work experience, online classes, etc.) and 'non-contact' hours (student independent study, directed reading, student-directed online activities, preparing assessments etc.). These elements should be clearly shown in the workload section of each module. It is worth noting that in this context, workload refers to the notional time/effort within which the average learner may expect to complete the required Learning Outcomes for a given module. Credit is not directly related to time input by a student: for example, the learning effort for work placement may only be a fraction of the hours spent working.

For a 'normal' semester (i.e. without a work placement), the average weekly workload should be based on 15 weeks of delivery (to include study for, and participation in examinations). Contact based workload should conform with the DkIT *Policy on the Design and Approval of Programmes*. The remaining hours should be allocated to specific student-directed learning activities. Some guidelines for total weekly workload hours are as follows:

- 5-credit module: 7-8 hours total per week (average);
- 10-credit module: 14-16 hours total per week (average).

The ratio of contact hours to independent hours can vary considerably across different disciplines depending on the nature of the discipline e.g., it is generally accepted that laboratory- or studio-intensive programmes that require a high level of skills acquisition will have higher contact hours, compared to disciplines that require extensive reading, assignment and/or essay work. This is reflected in the HEA funding model that categorises programmes as either:

- Laboratory-intensive programmes (RGAM 1.7);
- Computing / building engineering / studio / laboratory / fieldwork element (RGAM 1.3);
- Programmes with a studio, laboratory or fieldwork element (RGAM 1.3);
- Other programmes (RGAM 1.0).

For all types of programmes: as a student progresses through each academic stage, contact hours typically decrease, reflecting the expectations for greater independence of learning as knowledge is developed. This would mean that the ratio shift between stage 1 and stage 4 of an undergraduate degree would be

significant with a steady growth in the number of independent hours, and consequent decrease in the number of contact hours.

Table 4 shows the DkIT Programme Delivery Hours as per the DkIT *Policy on the Design and Approval of Programmes*. The table outlines indicative contact hours for each different programme type (based on the HEA classification) and for each stage. So, for example, in a four-stage, laboratory intensive programme the contact hours per stage should normally not exceed 24, 22, 20 and 18 hours (a total of 84 hours over the stages). It is noted that cognisance must be taken of programmes where professional body requirements apply, and such requirements would take precedence in respect of these guidelines.

Table 4: DkIT Programme Contact Delivery Hours The numbers listed are maximum contact delivery hours. For combined stages, the relevant stage contact delivery hours are added, plus a maximum of 1 hr (e.g., a 2-stage laboratory intensive programme can be up to a maximum of 24 (stage 1) + 22 (stage 2) + 1 = 47 contact delivery hours).

Programme Classification	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	2-Stage Total	3-Stage Total	4-Stage Total
Laboratory Intensive (RGAM 1.7)	24	22	20	18	46±1	66±1	84±1
Computing / Building Engineering / Studio / Laboratory / Fieldwork Element (RGAM 1.3)	24	22	20	18	46±1	66±1	84±1
Studio/Laboratory/Fieldwork Element (RGAM 1.3)	22	20	19	17	42±1	61±1	78±1
Others (RGAM 1.0)	20	19	18	17	39±1	57±1	74±1

Where there are particular programme requirements, some variation on the contact hours for individual stages may take place provided that the following all hold:

- The total number of hours over all stages should not exceed the recommended total by more than one hour (Table 4);
- The principle of increased independent learning per successive stage is normally not breached. e.g. in a 3-stage studio programme, the normal pattern would be 21, 18 and 16 hours respectively for each stage giving a total of 55 hours. In particular circumstances, a pattern such as 20, 18 and 17 hours is also possible.

Successful completion of a module relates to the achievement of a pass grade across all the Learning Outcomes. If programme teams require individual module Learning Outcomes to be achieved in order for learners to progress, this must be done through a 'Failed Element' process and presented in the programme documentation as a Special Regulation. It is advised that this option is only used where essential.

Pre-requisite Modules

In some circumstances, it will be appropriate to identify pre-requisite modules or equivalent knowledge where students must demonstrate specific knowledge and/or skills before undertaking more advanced learning that builds on this foundation. Where this is applicable, a module/s can be identified as a pre-

requisite for another module/s on the programme schedule. As this may have implications for progression and for transfer, pre-requisite modules should only be used when essential. It should be noted that learners may not be prevented from progressing from one semester to another within a stage, so pre-requisites cannot apply within a stage.

Elective Modules
Use of elective modules should be considered carefully to ensure equivalent alignment with the Programme Leaning Outcomes for proposed electives. Core knowledge required should not be impacted / diluted by using elective modules. Due consideration should be given to resource and timetabling constraints. Ideally, each stage of a programme would seek to offer no more than two elective choices.

Generic Modules
Programme development teams must consider if changes in programmes / modules will result in transition issues, which may require contingencies to be put in place. For example, movement of modules from one stage to another may leave repeat students in a situation where their total ECTS credits do not allow them to progress/graduate. Students cannot be awarded credits for completing the same module content twice (i.e., two modules with the same Learning Outcomes). A general rule of thumb to identify when modules are too similar is when they share 50% or more of the Module Learning Outcomes. In such cases, a contingency for providing students with an opportunity to gain alternative credits should be put in place and validated as part of the Programmatic Review (e.g., using **transition** modules).

The use of **generic modules** such as 'Research Skills', 'Communications' or 'Academic Skills' modules can be useful in this regard and offer a range of credit weighting (e.g., 5, 10 ECTS). When preparing the Programme Schedule, Programme Teams must decide on which 'transition module' to include at the appropriate NFQ level. This module should be designated 'Optional' status on the Programme Schedule in Akari. In the 'Special Regulations' section it should be noted that "*this module will only be used in exceptional circumstances to facilitate transition*". This will allow the School to include the module for students who are 'short' of credits, due to implementation of new programmes. Where transition modules are to be used to fill gaps in credits, students must be able to achieve all of the learning outcomes for the programme (PLOs) through completion of the validated modules.

Student Experience

Learning and Teaching Strategy
Summary of and rationale for learning and teaching methodologies employed in the programme,
See the *Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy* and UDL implementation guidance.

Programme Assessment Strategy
Refer to the *Assessment and Learning Policy,* the *Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy* and the *Continuous Assessment Procedures* and UDL implementation guidance.

Samples of assessment schedules for each stage of the programme(s) should be included. Note the Assessment and Learning Policy is under review and a new version will come to Council before Christmas. **Assessment** should be considered at the level of the programme and stage and should be used to promote learning. Programme boards should be careful to avoid 'over-assessment' of students. During programme design/review, the development team should consider the volume, nature and purpose of assessment at

each stage (assessment strategy) and agree on how to allocate assessments to modules, ensuring constructive alignment with module Learning Outcomes.

All of the Learning Outcomes for a module must be assessed. There should be a mixture of assessment types as appropriate (e.g. presentation, exam, essay, project, lab report, screencast, video, practical skill, etc.). Detail any specific approaches to the first semester of the first year of the programme. Demonstrate how assessment is inclusive and culturally sensitive where appropriate.

The assessment strategy should explicitly address Academic Integrity and explain how this is developed and addressed across the programme. The impact of generative artificial intelligence (such as ChatGPT) should be considered as part of the assessment strategy. See also the *Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Staff Guidance* document. Review of assessment methods should be ongoing and flexible to adapt to changing circumstances and technological advancements.

Integrated assessments can be used, where possible, between modules (i.e., the assessment for one module may represent demonstration of Learning Outcomes from another module within the same stage). Clear assessment criteria and rubrics should be provided to reflect the Learning Outcomes and competencies associated with the individual modules. It should be noted that modules from different stages or from different semesters cannot be used for integrated assessment purposes.

Student group-work as a form of assessment should be considered carefully and should be used only where the process or product is aligned with a module Learning Outcome. The programme team should consider the role of assessed group work in the programme. This should inform the nature of the group work, where it sits in the programme and how it is supported and scaffolded across the programme. Please see *Assessed Group Work: A Framework and guidelines*.
An overview of all assessments in the programme should be provided (e.g., an assessment table). Include a rationale for the choice of the assessment tasks and map these to the graduate skills.

Programme Management

List any programme specific management and learner supports to be provided.

Programme Schedules

Programme Schedules should be provided, listing the programme title, Award title, stages, Award credits, module titles, module credits, contact hours, component marks (breakdown of module mark by components: Continuous Assessment (CA) / project / Practical / Final Exam) and special regulations where appropriate. Separate Programme Schedules should be produced, where relevant, for part-time delivery; blended delivery, online delivery and/or Embedded Awards.

Akari Curriculum Management Tool

All programmes and modules must be authored using Akari Curriculum Management Software. Training on the use of this software will be provided and guidelines will be issued on protocols to be applied in the entry of information. The software allows both programme and module documents to be downloaded in PDF format and included as appendices to the programme submission documents.
The link to Akari software is available online at: *Akari Curiculum - DkIT Staff Login*

Resources

Resource requirements for the programme(s). Staff, placement office, physical facilities, equipment, library, staff development, the programme costing template provided by the Finance Office should be completed as appropriate.

External Engagement

Engagement with external stakeholders specific to the programme, e.g., linkages to external partners through work/clinical placements, professional body accreditation, collaborative delivery, etc.

Transition Arrangements

Arrangements for transitioning from existing to new programmes, once the programme validation process is complete. All Schools will need to propose the most appropriate method in relation to the roll-out of new programmes following programmatic review:

- **Phased** (starting with implementation from year 1) or
- **'Big bang'** (immediate implementation for all years)

Appendices

The programme appendices should include the following:

- Main Programme Document
- Programme Schedules and Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO) for Embedded Awards (e.g., Exit Awards) must be presented in addition to those for the parent programme.
- Module Descriptors (from Akari Curriculum).
- Staff *Curricula Vitae* (template to be circulated by Registrar's Office).
- Other appendices deemed relevant.

School Submission of Documentation to the Registrar's Office

The programme documentation and associated appendices from the School are signed off by the Head of School and then submitted in Microsoft Word format to the Registrar's Office (protocols regarding submission of documentation will be communicated to the Schools by the Registrar's Office). The documentation will then be reviewed by the Registrar's Office before being circulated to the Programme Peer Review Group (PPRG). The School should submit the documentation at least four weeks prior to the date of the Registrar's Office circulating the documents to the Programme Peer Review Group (PPRG) This ensures that any edits required can be made and that the agreed timelines can be adhered to.

3.1.2 Phase 2: Peer Review

The programme documentation for each programme will be evaluated/assessed against the programme validation criteria (in accordance with the DkIT *Design and Approval of Programmes* Policy) by a panel of external peers, the Programme Peer Review Group (PPRG). The Programme Peer Review Group (PRG) is appointed by the Registrar's Office with nominations being accepted from the School (with the exception of the Chair).

The Peer Review Group (PRG) has the following composition:

- Chair, drawn from the Peer Review Group (PRG) from Part 1, School Self-Assessment (or in exceptional circumstances a nominee).
- One external academic for each of the specific disciplinary areas under review. Some of these academic members will be the same as those on the Peer Review Group (PRG) from Part 1, School Self-Assessment.
- Two industry, service user or professional body representatives, with experience and/or expertise of relevance to the field of learning within the School. One or both of these members of the Programme Peer Review Group (PRG) may be the same as those on the Peer Review Group (PRG) from Part 1, School Self-Assessment.
- Secretary to the PPRG, Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar or the Head of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance (or in exceptional circumstances a nominee).
- Student Representative, internal to DkIT.

The Programme Peer Review Group (PPRG) receives the programme documentation in advance of a PPRG Visit. During the PPRG Visit the PPRG evaluates the programmes in a constructive and supportive dialogue with School management, learners, staff and other stakeholders (e.g., service providers). The PPRG Visit may include tours of learning facilities of relevance to the programme(s) under consideration. The PPRG will also request a meeting with current learners on the programme so Programme Teams should arrange for representative students to be available.

The first step of the PPRG Visit will involve the Head of School making a brief presentation (15 minutes) to the PPRG outlining the outcomes from Part 1 (School Self-Assessment) of the Programmatic Review process. The presentation sets the scene for the programme level review and clarifies decisions taken in advance of the evaluation of individual programmes.

At the end of the PPRG Visit, the PPRG will present its preliminary oral findings. At a later stage, the PPRG will present more detailed findings in the form of a written report, the PPRG Report, which will make recommendations regarding the re-validation of the programmes presented. Recommendations may be provided on areas for improvement and some of these may be conditional. The School will provide a response to this PPRG report which will then be signed off by the Chair of the PPRG.

3.1.3 Phase 3: Reporting and Publication

The PPRG Report and Response will be presented to Academic Council and, subject to approval, will be published on the Institute website and included as appropriate in the Institute Annual Quality Report (AQR) which is submitted to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

3.2 References

- AdvanceHE and Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. (2021). Education for Sustainable Development Guidance. [online]. Available from: https://tinyurl.com/4jph5r2u
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- UNESCO. (2020). Education for Sustainable Development: A roadmap [online]. UNESCO. Available from: https://tinyurl.com/4andh2vx
- QQI. (2022). Programme Review Manual – A Guide for Providers on HET Programme Review and Revalidation. [online]. Available from: https://tinyurl.com/mrxwnbzk
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Appendix 1: Programmatic Review Timelines – Subject to Change

DUNDALK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA DHÚN DEALGAN

Programmatic Review 2023/2025
Timelines

	Task	Responsibility	Deadline
1	Extension of Programme Validations at Academic Council for Schools to allow sequencing.	Registrar's Office, Heads of School	April 2023
2	Agree order that Schools will be reviewed: 1. **School 1:** Early February 2025 School of Engineering; 2. **School 2:** Early February 2025 School of Business and Humanities; 3. **School 3:** End March 2025 School of Informatics and Creative Arts; 4. **School 4:** End March 2025 School of Health and Science;	Registrar's Office, Heads of School	June 2023
3	Approval of Programmatic Review Handbook and associated motions(s) by the Academic Council and launch of the Programmatic Review.	Academic Council	October 16th 2023
4	Circulate individual School schedules.	Registrar's Office	End of October 2023
5	Setup file management system for review documentation (SharePoint)	Registrar's Office/ Computer Services	November 2023
6	Schools notify the Admission Office of the intention to develop new programmes (separate validation process) (implications for CAO).	Heads of School	November 2023
7	Provide documentation templates for the School Self-Assessment (Part 1) and Review of Programmes (Part 2) to Schools.	Registrar's Office	November 2023
8	Update curriculum management system (Akari Curriculum – Document and Publish) support manual and provide to Schools.	Registrar's Office	December 2023
9	Provide Institute information (as detailed in the Programmatic Review Handbook) for the School Self-Assessment Report (SAR). This includes School and	Registrar's Office / Vice-President for Strategic Planning	December 2023

	programme-level data for the previous five years (plus additional year(s) if programme validation was extended).	Communications and Development / Research and Graduate Studies Office	
10	Establish School Quality Committee (SQC) (and associated structures / committees) Assign School Self-Assessment (Part 1 of review) workplan.	Head of Schools / Heads of Department(s)	December 2023
11	School completes Environment Scan – Jan 2024 – Sept 2024		January 2024 – September 2024
12	Agree and deliver training and support sessions for Schools (can be complimented with ad-hoc sessions at the request of Departments as required). This will include sessions on the following (not exhaustive): • The Programmatic Review Process (to compliment Handbook). • Curriculum development (writing learning outcomes, curriculum management system (Akari Curriculum), etc.). • Themes for the Programmatic Review: o Employability and Graduate Attributes; o Education for Sustainable Development (ESD); o Inclusive learning teaching and assessment, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL).	Registrar's Office / Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)/ Careers and Employability/Other Areas as Required	May/June 2024 September 2024
13	School Self-Assessment (Part 1 of review) team(s) report to Head of School.	Head of Schools/Heads of Departments	Mid-October 2024
14	Advise Registrar's Office of new programmes.	Heads of School	End October 2024
15	Review of Programmes (Part 2 of review) by programme development teams and production of required programme documentation (as detailed in the Programmatic Review Handbook). Sign off of programme documentation by the Heads of School.	Heads of School	October 2024-November 2024
16	Schools provide Peer Review Group (PRG) (Part 1: School Self-Assessment) and Programme Peer Review Group (PPRG) (Part 2: Programme Review) nominations (except Chairs) to the Registrar's Office.	Heads of School	End November 2024
17	Appointment of Peer Review Group (PRG) and Programme Peer Review Groups (PPRG).	VPAAR	December 2024
18	Completion of Self-Assessment Report (SAR) (output of Part 1 of review) and sign off by Head of School	Head of School	End December 2024
19	Programme documentation (review programmes and new programmes) submitted to Registrar's Office by School following sign-off by Heads of School and Heads of Department(s).	Heads of Schools/ Heads of Departments	End December 2024 for PRG and PPRG Visits in February 2025

			(Engineering, Business and Humanities) End January 2025 for PRG and PPRG Visits in March 2025 (Informatics and Creative Arts, Health and Science)
20	Review of documentation by the Registrar's Office and feedback provided to School. **Subject to change.**	Registrar's Office	Week 3 January 2025 for PRG and PPRG Visits in February 2025 (Engineering, Business and Humanities) Week 2 February 2025 for PRG and PPRG Visits in March 2025 (Informatics and Creative Arts, Health and Science)
21	Signoff by Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar of all documentation – School Self-Assessment (Part 1) and Review of Programmes (Part 2). Documentation sent to Peer Review Group (PRG) (Part 1) and Programme Peer Review Group (PPRG) (Part 2) **Subject to change.**	VPAAR	End January 2025 for PRG and PPRG Visits in February 2025 (Engineering, Business and Humanities End February 2025 for PRG and PPRG Visits in March 2025 (Informatics and Creative Arts, Health and Science)
22	Preparation of Presentation for School Presentation (to cover outcomes from Part 1 (School Self-Assessment) of the Programmatic Review process.	Heads of School	End January 2025

23	Complete peer review visits (Peer Review Group (PRG) Visit (Part 1: School Self-Assessment) and Programme Peer Review Group (PPRG) Visit (Part 2: Review of Programmes)).	Registrar's Office	Early February 2025 for Engineering, Business and Humanities End March 2025 for Informatics and Creative Arts, Health and Science
24	Complete review reports and responses: • Peer Review Group (PRG) Reports and Responses (Part 1: School Self-Assessment). • Programme Peer Review Group (PPRG) Reports and Responses (Part 2: Review of Programmes).	Registrar's Office/Head of School	March 2025 for Engineering, Business and Humanities. April 2025 for Informatics and Creative Arts, Health and Science
25	Programme setup in the Student Management System (Banner)	Registrar's Office	April 2025 for Engineering, Business and Humanities May for Informatics and Creative Arts, Health and Science
26	Market and promote programmes Marketing & Communications of new programmes.	Marketing and Communications Schools	June 2025